



EASTER MESSAGE FROM NALC BISHOP DAN SELBO

This year, once again, millions of people all over the world will be celebrating what is, without question, the most important event in human history. Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus of Nazareth was nailed to a cross and left to die, hung out for the entire world to see. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead, changing the course of this world and our lives forever.

That's the reality of what Easter accomplished. It's the celebration of God bringing hope out of despair, victory out of defeat, triumph out of tragedy, life out of death. It's God's victory song for us and our victory celebration in Christ.

In his witness to Cornelius, the apostle Peter proclaimed the saving truth that is ours in Jesus: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts those from every nation who fear Him and do what is right ... We are witnesses of everything He did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed Him by hanging Him on a tree, but God raised Him from the dead on the third day ... All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name" (Acts 10:34-35, 39-40, 43).

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*The Resurrection of Christ by Noël Coypel (1628-1707)
(From [Wikimedia Commons](#))*

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More than anything, I want you to know that you are loved infinitely and eternally by God. No doubt. No question. No second thoughts for even a moment. God loves you more than you can imagine. And God will never stop loving you no matter what.

That's the message of the Bible. That's the message entrusted to the Church. It's also the life-giving truth of Easter. Don't forget it. Don't wonder whether it's true. Don't think it doesn't matter. It does. It makes all the difference in the world, not only when we face death but also as we live life.

If there is any greater misunderstanding being circulated in our world today than that of those who think that the Easter event doesn't matter while we are living, that God does not really understand our plight, and that His primary concern for us is not so much for this life but only for the next, I do not know what it is. God is just as concerned with what happens in your life today as He is with what happens when your life on this earth comes to an end.

Don't shortchange the Christian Gospel, the love of God for His people, by thinking that what took place on Easter was something that happened only to give us an answer to the things we face when we die. It does that to be sure, and there is nowhere else where those answers can be found. But Easter is also a message for this life, relevant for every life situation you face. In fact, so relevant is the Easter message that there is no greater mistake you can make in life than to center your life in anything but the resurrection of Jesus.

Easter is an all or nothing proposition. Either the tomb of Jesus was empty, or it was not. Either Jesus is Lord of your life, Master of this world, or He is not. Either our Lord's death and resurrection give us answers in this life and hope and promise for the next, or we are dead in our sins, separated eternally from God, and a sorry lot at best for having believed the whole thing to be true.



Supper at Emmaus by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) (From [Wikimedia Commons](#))

The apostle Paul said it well: "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all people" (1 Corinthians 15:19). What a joke. What a farce. What a ride upon which you and I have been taken if Jesus is still in the grave and death continues forever to have the final say.

If this is "for this life only," Paul is right, "we are of all people most to be pitied." But, in fact, he goes on to say, "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

I've always been fascinated by the Scriptural witness to what happened on that first Easter morning. In each of the four Gospel accounts, there was confusion and sadness and uncertainty among those who were first to reach the empty tomb. The stone had been rolled away. The body was no longer there. The grave clothes were folded neatly inside, but they still could not believe. In John's account, Peter and John returned to their homes while Mary stood outside the tomb and wept.

Sound familiar? It should. It's the same reaction

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many people make today as they hear the story of Easter proclaimed and the message that Christ is alive. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, they walk away with questions, doubts, and fears, having a hard time believing that such a miraculous event could happen.

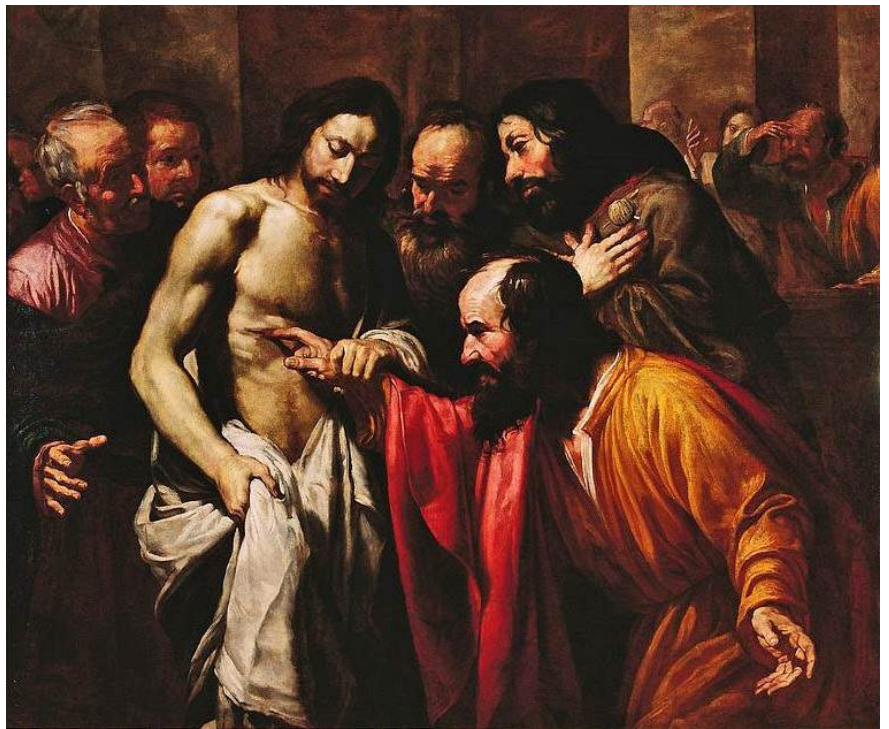
It's like looking at a lake after a stone has been thrown into the middle, only to see the concentric circles, ripples on the water making their way from the inside out. Imagine seeing the ripples and then denying the reality of the event that caused it to happen.

That's what it's like for many who hear the news of Easter. It's real. It happened. It's a piece of history with more than sufficient and confirming evidence that only the foolish would deny. And yet that's exactly what so many do, if not in word, then in deed. They deny the event, ignore the impact and implications of what happened and live as though Easter is not real. Nonetheless, the ripples continue to spread out, all the way from that first Easter morning until today.

My friends, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a doctrine that grew up in the Church but a reality around which the Church grew up. The convincing evidence of Easter is not the absence of a corpse, but the every day, here and now, present reality of the living Christ.

There's a lot of talk these days about living healthy lifestyles. Regular exercise, healthy diets, keeping a balance between work and play, family and career. There are more books being written, blogs posted, and answers being given on how to stay healthy than ever before. And it's all good. There's nothing wrong with finding new ways to live a healthy life.

Do you know what the number one health issue is in North America today? It's not what you might think. It's not stress. It's not loneliness. It's not depression. It's not arthritis or cancer or heart disease or being overweight. It's addiction. The number one health issue in North America today is addiction.



Jesus reveals himself to doubting Thomas by Giovanni Serodine (1600-1630) (From [Wikimedia Commons](#))

The dictionary defines “addiction” as “a habitually destructive behavioral pattern that we chronically deny.” A habitually destructive behavioral pattern that we chronically deny.

Now, there are many addictions in our world, many destructive patterns in our lives that we pretend not to exist. Drugs and alcohol are among the most prevalent. But addiction touches many areas of life.

A person can be addicted to things like money or power, violence or greed, self-interest and pride, self-indulgence and sex, worry and fear and hatred and prejudice. All kinds of things can become addictive. There is much in this world that serves to destroy the life given to us by God. And as harmful and destructive as the things just mentioned are, they are nothing compared to the number one addiction that exists.

The most destructive addiction in our world today? I'm not sure what to call it. The Bible talks about it as deceit or deception or convincing oneself that apart from Jesus, apart from the power of Easter, apart from the cross and the empty tomb, that somehow God is going to work to make everything right.

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Don't be deceived. It is Satan's greatest ploy. Don't be fooled into thinking that it can happen in your life apart from Christ. It can't. There is no other way, nor will there ever be one. Only in the cross of Calvary do we find forgiveness for our sin. Only in the empty tomb of Easter do we find any lasting purpose and meaning for this life. And only in the saving and sacrificial work of Jesus do we have any hope and promise for the next.

Don't miss the importance of what happened on that first Easter morning. If Easter is true, it means everything. If it is not, then it means nothing. But don't fool yourself into thinking you can have it both ways. That's an addiction. That's a pattern that can destroy life. A little bit of Jesus. A little bit of faith.

A little bit of this thing we call Christianity, added to whatever it is you hope and pray and have convinced yourself might work. That's not how it works. That's not what Easter is all about.

Easter is about life—about the giving of a life on a cross, the raising of a life from a tomb, and the granting of a life eternally, from this moment onward, to fallen, addicted, sin-filled people like us.

God's encounter with our world was not some distant, far-removed, impersonal way of relating to and communicating with those He created. No, His encounter with His world and with us is personal, just as it was with Mary and those early disciples who were there when it happened and who saw and believed in the risen Christ.

He calls us by name. Wherever we are, whomever we are, whatever it is we bring to the table or try to hide from Him. God calls us by name, calls us to faith, calls us to leave our past in the past and trust our future to Him.

That was Mary's experience standing outside the tomb. That was Paul's experience on the Damascus Road. That was Martin Luther's experience in the monasteries of his day. And it can be your



Jesus giving the Great Commission to the apostles depicted in a stained glass window at St. Patrick's Pro-Cathedral in Dundalk, County Louth, Ireland (Photo by Andreas F. Borchert from [Wikimedia Commons](#))

experience as well as you listen to His voice, respond in faith, and trust your life to Christ.

Do you remember the name of John Newton? He is most often remembered for authoring the hymn, "Amazing Grace." Just before he died, he said, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things. Number one, that I am a great sinner. And, number two, that Christ Jesus is a great Savior."

Sir James Simpson, who discovered the use of chloroform as an anesthetic, was asked by a friend to name his greatest discovery. He replied, "That Jesus is my Savior!"

Karl Barth, the great Swiss theologian, when asked to identify his most profound insight, simply said, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

The events of Good Friday and Easter changed the history of our world forever. Those same events can change your life history as well. Believe it. Trust it. Build your life upon it. Don't be deceived. He is calling your name. He loves you more than you will ever know, now and forever. It is time to respond.

LUTHERAN WEEK TO CELEBRATE NALC AND NALS ANNIVERSARIES

Lutheran Week for the North American Lutheran Church is set for Aug. 3-8 at the historic Omni William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Lutheran Week 2025 will celebrate the 15th anniversary of the North American Lutheran Church and the 10th anniversary of the North American Lutheran Seminary around the theme “running with endurance ... fixing our eyes on Jesus.” The theme is based on Hebrews 12:1-2.



The 2025 NALC Mission Convocation will be held Wednesday, Aug. 6, through Friday, Aug. 8. Registration fee is \$300 (\$350 after June 1) and includes a banquet on Wednesday night and lunch on both Thursday and Friday. The convocation begins at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday and is scheduled to conclude at 5 p.m. on Friday.

The convocation will elect members of the NALC Executive Council, Court of Adjudication, and North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents.

Convocation business will include consideration of the proposed NALC budget as well as reports from staff, task forces, and ministries. The convocation will also consider proposed amendments to the NALC Constitution and the creation of bylaws.

The Carl E. Braaten-Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology are set for Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning, Aug. 5-6. The emphasis of the lectures will be the relationship of mission and apologetics. Drawing from the Lutheran Week theme, the lectures will explore the Church’s call to remain rooted in the apostolic faith while engaging the world in mission.

Speakers for the lectures include the Rev. Dr. Peter Beckman, the Rev. Arica Demme, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Jacobson, the Rev. Dr. Jukka Kääriäinen, and Dr. Alex Pierce. Registration fee is \$175 and includes lunch on Wednesday.

A Faith Formation Festival will be held from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 4. This dynamic, one-day event is designed to equip and inspire those who serve children, youth, and families in the church. Cost is \$75 and includes lunch.

The Women of the NALC Gathering is on Tuesday, Aug. 5, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Registration fee is \$125 and includes lunch.

There will be an opportunity to visit the North American Lutheran Seminary Center at Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday morning. Cost is \$15 for lunch and an additional \$15 for transportation if needed.

All events are open to both delegates and visitors. Go to lutheranweek.com to register or for more information. Registration is expected to open in mid April.

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR 2025 MISSION CONVOCATION

The NALC Nominating Committee is receiving the names of candidates to serve in positions to be elected at the 2025 NALC Mission Convocation, Aug. 6-8, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The 2025 Mission Convocation will elect two lay people and two ordained ministers to four-year terms on the NALC Executive Council.

The convocation will also elect four people to four-year terms on the Court of Adjudication and one person to a six-year term on the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents. Both lay members and ordained ministers may be elected to the Court of Adjudication and Board of Regents.

Information on the nominating process including the nomination form and descriptions of the positions is available online at thenalc.org/nominations. All nominations must be submitted electronically.

The Nominating Committee is asking that nominations be submitted by May 1 to allow the committee time to compile biographical information and meet the constitutional deadline to distribute it to NALC members 90 days prior to the convocation.

Pastor Dawn Rister of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Pomaria, South Carolina, is chair of the Nominating Committee. You may contact her with questions about the process at nominations@thenalc.org.

CANADIAN ROCKIES THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE FEATURES YODER, LUY

“The Apostolic Faith and Why it Matters” is the theme of the 2025 Canadian Rockies Theological Conference April 29 through May 1 at the Coast Canmore Hotel and Conference Centre in Canmore, Alberta—just outside of beautiful Banff National Park.

Featured speakers for this year’s conference are the Rev. Dr. Nathan Yoder and Dr. David Luy of the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS). Dr. Yoder is also director of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. Dr. Luy is also associate professor of systematic theology at Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. Both locations are a part of the NALS Network.

The conference includes free time in the afternoons to enable participants to enjoy the area.

The conference is sponsored by the Canadian Mission District of the NALC. It is open to all lay and clergy from



Nathan Yoder



David Luy

Canada and from outside of Canada. Registration fee for the conference is \$375.

For more information on the conference go to thenalc.org.

EARTHQUAKE IN MYANMAR

A devastating 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar on March 28, claiming the lives of more than 3,600 people and injuring 5,000 more. Many people remain missing, and thousands have lost their homes and access to basic necessities. The damage is widespread, and the need is great.

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is a country in southeast Asia between India and China.

Please pray for the people of Myanmar—for those grieving the loss of loved ones, for those still missing, and for the communities working to recover and rebuild. May God's comfort, protection, and provision be poured out in this time of suffering.

Pastor Martin Lalthangliana, an NALC global worker and president of the Lutheran Church in Myanmar, is coordinating efforts to care for church members and neighbors affected by the earthquake. You can support that work through Awakening Lives to World Mission, an NALC partner agency. For more information or to support the church's relief efforts go to alwm.org/myanmar.

Water Mission, an NALC recognized ministry, is on the ground in Myanmar and Thailand providing clean water to communities in crisis. For more information or to support their work go to watermission.org.

ORDINATIONS



Jonathan Thompson was ordained on March 2 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Dallas, Oregon, where he is called to serve as an associate pastor.



E. Dale Stanley was ordained on Saturday, March 22, at St. John's Lutheran Church in Statesville, North Carolina, where he is called to serve as pastor.

KEENER STEPS DOWN AS DIRECTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP AND RENEWAL

The Rev. David Keener stepped down from his role as director of discipleship and renewal for the NALC on March 31. Pastor Keener began serving in this part-time capacity in 2021, amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past few years, he has significantly contributed to the spiritual growth and renewal of NALC congregations.

Under his leadership, the NALC launched the Life-to-Life Discipleship Experience, an initiative designed to enrich congregational discipleship practices. Pastor Keener also spearheaded the creation of various editions of the *Life-to-Life Discipleship Manual*, equipping individuals to follow Jesus with renewed passion and clarity.

Throughout his tenure, Pastor Keener actively supported renewal and re-visioning efforts within congregations and led the NALC's church planting efforts during a season. His boundless energy and enthusiasm have positively impacted not only his immediate team but the entire NALC staff.



David Keener

“Pastor Dave has been a true asset to our team,” said Bishop Dan Selbo. “His ability to keep things light and, at the same time, focused on what matters has been a blessing. We will miss his positive spirit, energetic and contagious love for the Lord, and his heart for sharing the Gospel.”

While Pastor Keener will be stepping back from his official responsibilities on our staff, he will continue to serve as a trusted consultant for ongoing ministry initiatives in the future.

“Being a part of the NALC staff has been a blessing for me,” said Pastor Keener. “It has truly been a joy to work alongside others who share my passion for spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. Moving forward, I plan to continue to be supportive in the areas of renewal and discipleship but, hopefully, at a leisurely pace.”

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Pastor Keener for his faithful service and pray for God's blessings upon this next chapter of rest and renewal in his life.

AVOIDING PITFALLS IN THE PARISH

“Avoiding Common Pitfalls in the Parish” is the theme of a Zoom seminar for pastors led by Pastor Tom Brashears, director of leadership for the NALC. The seminar will be offered on Wednesday, April 30, from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. ET.

Join fellow pastors for a practical and engaging online seminar focused on navigating the challenges of parish leadership. This session will explore some of the most common pitfalls facing

church leaders today—such as decision making, managing change, and building effective organizational structures.

Whether you're new to ministry or a seasoned leader, you'll leave with valuable insights and strategies for leading with clarity and confidence.

The seminar will be recorded and available for viewing later by those who cannot participate live.



Tom Brashears

NALS JUNE INTENSIVE TERM WILL FOCUS ON DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

The June intensive course at the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALC) will focus on the life and legacy of German Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The course is set for June 9-13 at the NALS Center at Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

“This course will examine Bonhoeffer’s deep commitment to Christ-centered discipleship and the vital role of congregational life in shaping faithful ministry,” a course flier explains.

The course is designed for NALC seminary students, but it is open to clergy and interested lay people. You may audit the course or take it for credit.

All candidates seeking ordination in the NALC are required to take at least two one-week June intensive courses as part of their seminary education. The NALC covers most of the cost of these required weeks of learning together.

One purpose of these June seminary weeks is for students to “learn together about and discuss the unique ethos of the North American Lutheran Church.” These June offerings allow the NALC to focus on specific content for all of its seminarians. The June terms have focused on at least one of the NALC’s Core Values.



Michael Pasquarello

Another purpose of the June course is to bring all of the NALC students together in the hope of building ongoing relationships with other future pastors that will continue throughout a lifetime of ministry.

The course will be taught by the Rev. Dr. Michael Pasquarello III, a pastor of the United Methodist



Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a German Lutheran pastor and theologian. His writings focused on the Christian faith, community, grace and ethics. He is known for his 1937 book “The Cost of Discipleship.” His resistance to the Nazis led him to participate in a conspiracy to assassinate Adolf Hitler. He was imprisoned for the last two years of his life and was executed on April 9, 1945, a month before the end of World War II in Europe.

Church, who is the author of the book *Dietrich: Bonhoeffer and the Theology of a Preaching Life*.

Dr. Pasquarello retired in 2024 after serving on the faculty of Beeson Divinity School for six years. Prior to that he was on the faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary for 14 years and then Fuller Theological Seminary for three years. Beeson and Fuller are both seminaries in the NALS Network. He also has been a speaker for the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology held prior to the NALC Convocation.

For more information on the course, please visit thenals.org/intensive.

SPANISH-SPEAKING MINISTRIES

*By Pastor Mark Braaten
and Pastor Carol Fryer*

One of our exciting growth areas in the NALC is our ministry with Spanish-speaking people. We have a growing number of congregations and pastors who speak Spanish. It is an absolute joy to share these cross-cultural experiences and to see the Holy Spirit at work.

We, as the NALC, are working to connect and network our Spanish-speaking congregations and pastors. We also want to keep these ministries in front of the entire NALC.

Here are some of our ministries among Hispanic people:



Christo Rey Lutheran Church in Joliet, Illinois



San Miguel Lutheran Church in Fort Worth, Texas

San Miguel Lutheran Church in Fort Worth, Texas: The Rev. Juan Portillo is the pastor of this growing and thriving congregation which averages around 200 people in Sunday morning worship. San Miguel shares many neighborhood ministries and does many baptisms, confirmations, and quinceaneras.

Transfiguration Lutheran in Rockwall, Texas: This ministry is led by the Rev. Pedro Portillo. The congregation worships at Joy Lutheran Church in Rockwall. Pastor Pedro is well known across east Dallas and does a driving ministry that covers miles. Each year he does hundreds of baptisms, confirmations, and quinceaneras.

Iglesia Santisima Trinidad (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church) in Arlington, Texas: The Rev. Jose Galvez is the pastor here. Santisima Trinidad worships at All Saints Lutheran in Arlington. They average about 100 in worship each Sunday, with a congregation of predominately young families and many children.

Christo Rey (Christ the King) Lutheran Church is a mission start in Joliet, Illinois: The Rev. Keith Forni is the pastor. Christ the King began just over a year ago with about 40 in worship on Sunday morning. It is an exciting, welcoming, and growing congregation.

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Iglesia Luterana San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist) in Santa Maria, California is served by the Rev. Esteban and Angie Salazar. This congregation is hosted by Bethel Lutheran Church. San Juan Bautista works predominately with farm workers in the area, a powerful and much-needed ministry. The ministry includes worship, food distribution, and care for those in need.

And a now a congregation in Mexico. We find this very exciting as we are expanding to truly be the *North American Lutheran Church!*

El Shaddai Ministry in Maneadero, Mexico is served by the Rev. Carlos and Mireya Santiago. This is a multi-faceted ministry that includes an orphanage and many children's ministries as well as a mission in Oaxaca. El Shaddai is not yet an NALC congregation, but is an NALC recognized ministry, and Pastor Carlos is approved and working toward Ordination Under Special Circumstances in the NALC.

We have additional Spanish-speaking ministries, but we will highlight these now. It is a joy to know that we as the NALC share in this work! Please keep these ministries in your prayers. Many of them are struggling these days with immigration issues. Please consider setting up a mission partner relationship with them. One of our goals in the NALC is that all of our congregations have partner



Carlos and Mireya Santiago and family of El Shaddai Ministry in Maneadero, Mexico



First Communion
San Miguel Lutheran Church in Fort Worth, Texas

relationships with other congregations. This is a great opportunity to do that and to learn and experience cross-cultural ties. It is amazing what our Lord is doing in so many different areas.

For more information about these ministries, or about our work with Spanish-speaking people, please contact Pastor Carol Fryer, director of missions, at cfryer@thenalc.org, or Pastor Mark Braaten, Southern Area assistant to the bishop, at mbraaten@thenalc.org.



Iglesia Luterana San Juan Bautista in Santa Maria, California

AN INVITATION TO SUPPORT AN NALC GLOBAL WORKER

*By Pastor Carol Fryer
Director of Missions*

As you all know, one of our NALC Core Values is Mission Driven.

The NALC website explains it this way: “We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel and to make disciples for Christ. We believe that making disciples—in our congregations, in our communities and nations, and around the world—must be a priority of the Church in the present age.”

I am inviting you to think about how you and your congregation are living out that Core Value, particularly with respect to “making disciples ... around the world!”

As a denomination, we say it is a priority for us. How are we doing in living that out?



*Denis and Ela Shallari (couple with baby on right side of front row),
NALC global workers in Albania*

Historically, Lutheran churches in America have supported missionaries. Growing up in the church, I remember hearing about missionaries in Africa. Sometimes they would come and visit our congregation. I was fascinated by them, and I tried to imagine going to Africa to help people whose lives seemed so different from mine—so exotic, even.

In those days our congregations had “missionary societies” which raised money to send pastors and others as missionaries to work in the “mission field.” We were devoted to spreading the Gospel in remote places where no one had heard it. We supported missionaries—it was a part of our Christian identity.

Undoubtedly, the world has changed. We now know that the Gospel has reached every continent on earth. And yet, there are still many who have not heard about Jesus and His saving love. The effect that communism, for example, has had on the



Dagaga Gemachu, NALC global worker in Kenya

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Christian faith across the globe is staggering. In addition, there are more than 50 countries in the world where Christians are currently being persecuted. The Bible is being translated into many languages, but there still remains about 7,000 languages spoken by people who have no access to the Word of God.

I am pleased to say that we have global workers who are working in all these areas. And I am grateful that, so far, we have had the resources as a church body to support each of our missionaries with \$12,000 of grant money each year.

However, it is our vision that each NALC congregation would also support at least one of our global workers! I don't mean just by sending money, but by praying for them, getting to know them and their ministry—by developing a relationship with them.

The results of the 2023 congregational report revealed that only 8 percent of the 411 NALC congregations that responded were supporting NALC global workers. That's about 34 congregations. We have a long way to go!



Martin Lalthangliana, NALC global worker in Myanmar



Slavomir Slavik, NALC global worker in Slovakia

We now have more than 20 global workers, many of them are family teams. Rather than asking congregations to pick one from a list of 20, we are recommending four global workers to each of the five regional areas of the NALC based on the Area Assistants to the Bishop (AAB).

Please know that this does not change any relationships with a global worker that is already in place. We are grateful for those relationships and want them to continue. It also does not mean that your congregation cannot choose one who is not recommended for your area.

We are suggesting this for the purpose of helping to facilitate connections for all of our global workers. One of the reasons for dividing up the global workers in this way is that, when they come to visit, their travel to visit supporting congregations may be kept within one area rather than having to travel from one end of the continent to the other.

Another consideration for dividing the global workers up is that some of newer ones need more support. So, we have mixed them up according to the level of support needed. Also, some areas have more congregations than others. We kept that in mind as well.

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Here are the recommendations from the mission team along with their sending agencies (see list of sending agencies below for abbreviations):

East Area (Pastor Bill White, AAB)

Dagaga Gemachu in Kenya (ALWM)
Kathleen Lutz in Kenya (WMPL)
Heidi Punt in Haiti (SMI Haiti)
Swapon Sarker in Bangladesh (ALWM)

South Area (Pastor Mark Braaten, AAB)

Jonathan Gowin in Gambia (WMPL)
Dr. Hang in Vietnam (AWLM)
Denis and Ela Shallari in Albania (SON)
Thomas Thorstad in Laos (ALWM)

North Area (Pastor Kevin Ree, AAB)

Valery Hryhoryk in Belarus (ALWM)
Martin Lalthangliana in Myanmar (ALWM)
Neeraj and Nijhar in India (WMPL)
William and Margaret Obaga in Kenya (WMPL)

Midwest Area (Pastor Jess Abbott, AAB)

Gemechis Buba in Ethiopia (SON)
Aleksandr Gross in Ukraine (SON)
Stephen Katterhenrich in Tanzania (Wycliffe)
Tunsubilege Mwasongwe in Tanzania (OPG)
Ndumieshi Nkya in Tanzania (OPG)



Ndumieshi Nkya and Tunsubilege Philemoni Mwasongwe, NALC global workers in Tanzania

West Area (Pastor Marv Combs, AAB)

Sam Chim in Cambodia (ALWM)
Didi and Serafina Panzo in Congo (WMPL)
Slavomir Slavik in Slovakia (SON)
Randy Stubbs in Tanzania (ALWM)

Again, if your congregation already has a relationship with one of these global workers, please continue with that relationship! But if you do not yet have a relationship with one of our global workers, I invite you to think about the ones recommended for your area. Go to the website of the sending agency (see below) to find out more.

If you would like to talk with me about adopting/supporting one of these NALC global workers, please contact me at cfryer@thenalc.org. I would be pleased to help you find the right relationship for you and your congregation.

Here are the websites for the Sending Agencies:

Awakening Lives to World Mission (ALWM): alwm.org

One Plus God (OPG): oneplusgod.org

SMI Haiti: smihaiti.org

Spiritual Orphans Network (SON): sonetwork.org

World Mission Prayer League (WMPL): wmpl.org

Wycliffe Bible Translators: wycliffe.org



Randy Stubbs, NALC global worker in Tanzania with his family

NALC GREAT COMMISSION FUND GRANT RECIPIENTS FOR 2025

*By Pastor Carol Fryer
Director of Missions*

Each year the NALC awards grants in four categories: grants for new mission starts; global projects around the world; grants that help to support our global workers; and renewal grants for NALC congregations.

This year the Great Commission Fund has awarded 35 grants totaling \$365,600.

Six grants were approved for new mission starts totaling \$63,000. Of those six, three are \$12,000 first-year grants, and three are \$9,000 second year grants.

These grants are supporting a variety of mission starts: two are in Canada; and one each in Mexico, Iowa, South Carolina, and California. Four of these missions serve multinational congregations: two Hispanic, one Korean and one Ethiopian.

Nine grants totaling \$59,600 were awarded for global projects. Global project grants range from \$10,600 to \$4,000.

These grants support a variety of programs in South Sudan, Kenya, Gambia, Cambodia, and Myanmar. Two projects will provide ministry and discipleship



Pastor Samuel Chim, an NALC global worker in Cambodia, with three Cambodian pastors.



Kathleen Lutz, NALC global worker in Kenya, found a cross amidst the ashes of the recent fire at Theovsion in Kenya.

for youth. Others will support a seminary library, a pharmacy, and an agricultural office and seed bank. One will help to rebuild an audio Bible recording studio that was destroyed by fire. Others will support ongoing outreach among the unreached; combat food insecurity; a ministry that serves young girls in the global south; and provide a much-needed vehicle for one of our global workers.

Nineteen of our NALC global workers received grants totaling \$228,000. Each grant is \$12,000.

Many of our global workers depend upon these grants to support them and their families as they dedicate their lives to fulfilling the Great Commission.

One of our NALC congregations submitted a very detailed proposal for a renewal grant and was awarded \$15,000.

We are very grateful for all those who generously support the NALC Great Commission Fund which provides these grants.

CELEBRATING PASTOR DAVID BAER'S LEGACY AND WELCOMING ARIEL WICKER AS EDITOR OF 'NALC NEWS'

By the Rev. Dcn. Andrew S. Ames Fuller
Director of Communications

With a heart full of gratitude—and maybe just a hint of reluctance—we announce that Pastor David Baer will be stepping down as editor of the *NALC News* this April.

Since the formation of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) nearly 15 years ago, David has faithfully served as its first—and until now, only—editor. From the first heartbeat of the NALC, David has been its guiding pen, skillfully narrating the unfolding story of our community with both precision and grace. His fingerprints are not only on each issue of the *NALC News* but also deeply embedded in the broader history of the renewal movements from which our church sprang.

David's passion for journalism began during his undergraduate studies at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where he earned a Bachelor of



Baer, who is known for sitting in the front row during NALC events, listens intently as he prepares a story for the NALC News. Baer says that he's "had a front row seat for most of the NALC's history, both literally and figuratively."



Baer speaks at the 2013 NALC Convocation held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Arts (B.A.) degree in journalism in 1985. His journey continued at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary (now Luther Seminary), earning a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree in 1989 and later a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree in 2007.

David uniquely combined his love for journalism with ministry from early on. His experiences at newspapers in Rapid City, Sioux Falls, and Minneapolis during his high school, college, and seminary years honed his ability to clearly and

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compellingly communicate the stories of the church. He notably served as editor of *The Concord*, Luther Seminary's student newspaper, covering historic Lutheran events including the final convention of The American Lutheran Church (ALC) in 1986 and the founding convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1987.

David was editor of the newsletter for Lutheran CORE for three years—covering the significant events that led to the formation of the NALC. He then transitioned into the role as *NALC News* editor.

"I've always tried to edit the *NALC News* mindful of the importance of communicating in each local congregation," David remarks, "so that their members feel a part of the NALC and know what's happening." And communicate he did, from meticulously timed Convocation bulletin inserts to monthly newsletters that became an essential staple in congregational life.



Baer and Ames Fuller visiting Mount Rushmore in 2018.

"I'm told I'm sort of a historian for the NALC. I've been able to tell the story of the NALC from even before it was formed. It has been a very significant thing in my life to have been able to serve God and the Church in this role and to have been able to serve in the NALC with so many faithful people," he said. "I have seen God continue to draw people to the NALC as we have grown from the 17 congregations we had at the NALC's Constituting Convocation to more than 500 congregations today. I like to think I've played a little part in that growth by telling the NALC's story. I look forward to seeing what God has in store for the NALC in the years to come."



The NALC communication team during a planning meeting at the North American Lutheran Seminary Center in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, in March. From left to right: Steven Neaton, Ariel Wicker, Jessica Spohr, Emily Clark, and Andrew Ames Fuller.

Working alongside David has been both a joy and an honor. I vividly recall visiting him at his home in the Black Hills of South Dakota in 2018, shortly after beginning my role as director of communications. Not only was David a gracious host and enthusiastic tour guide of the sights near his home—including Mount Rushmore, the Crazy Horse Memorial, and especially my favorite, the Chapel in the Hills, a replica of Norway's ancient Borgund stave church nestled in Rapid City—but of the diverse voices and histories

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within Lutheranism that came together to form our church.

David became my personal gateway into the living history of Lutheranism. His encyclopedic knowledge, shared eagerly with a Diet Coke in hand, has been invaluable to me. David has continually supported me professionally and personally, generously sharing his wisdom, historical insight, and encouragement. It's always been a joy to reconnect at NALC events, and he has warmly tracked the growth of my own family along the way.

Reflecting further on his role, David expressed deep gratitude for the community he served: "Another joy of doing the newsletter has been all of the wonderful people I have had the opportunity to work with. It has been so encouraging to see the quality of people—from the first days until now—that God has drawn to the NALC. We have been blessed with fantastic leadership in our bishops and church staff members, but we've also been blessed in the behind-the-scenes folks who do so much."

Bishop Dan Selbo added his appreciation, saying, "David Baer has not only been a gifted communicator and historian for our church, but his faithful witness and deep care for our congregations have significantly shaped who we are today. We are deeply thankful for his years of dedicated service."

Though David steps back as editor, thankfully, he is not stepping away. He continues his roles as dean of the Western Dakotas, Montana, and Wyoming Mission District and pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Whitewood, South Dakota.

"Leaving this role is certainly bitter-sweet. I've told Bishop Selbo and Andrew for several years now that it would be best for the newsletter to be produced by the church's full-time communications staff. Having staff who are more familiar with the newer technology will enhance communication within the NALC and beyond," he noted.

David will continue to guide and enrich our communications with his best historical anecdotes whenever needed!



Ariel Wicker

As we mark this transition, we are delighted to announce Ariel Wicker as the new editor of NALC News. Ariel, the NALC's associate director of communications and now in her fifth year on our staff, is no stranger to our community.

Known for editing our cherished Advent and Lenten devotionals and crafting the weekly update videos alongside Bishop Selbo, Ariel brings energy, innovation, and passion for storytelling to her new role.

With a degree in communications and history from Malone University, along with experience as a communications director and parish administrator in a local congregation, Ariel looks forward to building upon David's strong foundation by guiding the NALC News toward a digital-first platform for timely updates and enhanced accessibility.

As we embrace this transition, please join us in heartfelt prayers of thanksgiving for David and warm welcome for Ariel. And do take a moment to drop David a note this month at news@thenalc.org —after all, every editor appreciates a good reader response!

PASTORAL VESTMENTS FOR ETHIOPIA

Pastor John Conrad of First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Floresville, Texas, led a group of five pastors and three lay people from the North American Lutheran Church on a trip to the North Central Synod of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. The goal of the trip was to facilitate partnerships between congregations and ministries. Ten congregations were visited.

The northern part of Ethiopia has recently been through a civil war and unrest. There were many stories of conversions to Christianity and persecution for the faith. Simple items such as stoles, albs, and clergy shirts are in short supply.

A call went out to those attending the 2025 NALC Clergy Retreat in San Antonio, Texas, to bring extra vestments with them. Six boxes of vestments were collected and brought to Ethiopia. The pastors there were very grateful.

There will be similar opportunities to donate vestments in the future.



NALC FOUNDATION GRANT GOES TO BYLD INITIATIVE FOR YOUTH

The first-ever NALC Foundation grant will help to launch the NALC's new initiative, BYLD (Building Youth as Leaders who are Disciples of Christ).

The NALC Foundation was founded in 2023 "to provide long-term, perpetual financial support for NALC congregations, seminarians, and missions." Each year, the Foundation distributes a grant to the NALC Executive Council to be allocated toward the mission and ministry of the NALC.

The first NALC Foundation grant total was \$32,000. The Executive Council decided to allocate these funds toward a brand new NALC initiative, BYLD. BYLD is a week-long experience for high school students that focuses on leadership skills, theological education, and discernment, all grounded in the NALC's four Core Values.

"BYLD is a place where high school students will experience dynamic worship, impactful classes and workshops, a mission opportunity, and fun activities. The NALC Foundation grant will give them the opportunity to grow in their faith and develop their leadership skills as disciples of Christ, while making lasting friendships," Pastor Teresa Peters, NALC director of Youth and Family Ministry explained.

As giving toward the NALC Foundation continues to increase, so will its impact on the mission and ministry of the NALC. We are grateful to announce that the foundation has reached the milestone of more than \$1 million. This is a testament to the



generosity of many individuals who have a heart for what God is doing through the NALC.

To learn more about the NALC Foundation and how you can include the NALC in your legacy planning, please contact, Maddie Benson, NALC director of development at mbenson@thenalc.org or 682-382-7641.

To learn more about BYLD, please contact Pastor Teresa Peters, NALC director of Youth and Family Ministry at tpeters@thenalc.org.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

Rev. Dr. David J. Baer, *editor*
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NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

Please copy and share this newsletter widely.

NALC FOUNDATION REPORT

Scott Kramer
Chair, NALC Foundation

The NALC Foundation allows God's people to create a legacy through their financial benevolence toward the mission and ministry of the North American Lutheran Church.

The NALC Foundation was formed in March of 2023 to serve as a stewardship resource for alternative methods of giving and lifetime asset transfers. Periodic offerings are directed to the foundation, as well as individual bequests.

Estate gifts are a final act of stewardship, allowing one's testimony of faith to continue for many years into the future. As you prepare your own estate documents, we invite you to consider including the NALC Foundation in your plans.

Please reach out to Maddie Benson, NALC director of development at mbenson@thenalc.org if you have questions about making an estate gift or about the NALC Foundation.

Through generous offerings and skilled investment management, the NALC Foundation has already reached a balance of \$1,012,674 as of Dec. 31, 2024. Total proceeds from interest, dividends, and capital gains in the year 2024 were \$61,233.

A Foundation Committee administers the funds and recommends disbursements to the NALC Executive Council annually in February. The Foundation is conservatively managed and is focused on putting funds to work toward NALC mission and ministry.

In its short existence, the Foundation has already disbursed \$95,000 toward NALC initiatives.

Through the NALC Foundation, we can provide a harvest of perpetual support for the mission and ministry of the NALC.

Here is the information needed for including the NALC Foundation in your estate plans:
NALC Foundation; 2113 Harwood Road, Suite 309,
PMB 409; Bedford, TX 76021-4703 USA.
EIN: 27-3736567

BYLD EVENT FOR HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH IS JULY 7-12

BYLD (Building Youth as Leaders who are Disciples of Christ) is a week-long event for high school students that focuses on leadership skills, theological education, and discernment from the perspective of the NALC's four Core Values: Christ Centered, Mission Driven, Traditionally Grounded, and Congregationally Focused.

BYLD will take place July 7-12 at Geneva College, only 14 miles from the North American Lutheran Seminary Center at Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

The cost for students is \$100 and the cost of their transportation to Pennsylvania. A travel subsidy is available for those coming from further away.

Spaces are limited to 24 youth, so be sure to register soon. Registration closes on May 15 or when the registration limit is reached.

For more information or to register contact Pastor Teresa Peters, director of Youth and Family Ministry, at tpeters@thenalc.org.

DOES YOUR CHURCH HAVE A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY?

Does your church have a child protection policy?

The NALC is advising all congregations to have child protection policies to create safe environments for children, protect staff and volunteers, and maintain the integrity and trust of the congregation.

Here are some key reasons:

1. Ensure Child Safety. Children are among the most vulnerable members of society and a gift from God. A well-defined child protection policy helps prevent abuse, neglect, and harm, ensuring that children can participate in church activities safely.

2. Prevent Abuse and Misconduct. Having clear guidelines for screening, training, and supervision of staff and volunteers reduces the risk of abuse occurring within the church. It also sets clear boundaries for appropriate interactions with children.

3. Legal Compliance and Liability Protection. Many jurisdictions require organizations that work with children to have safeguarding measures in place. A strong child protection policy helps churches comply with legal requirements and insurance requirements. It may also reduce the risk of legal liability in case of an incident.

4. Protect Church Staff and Volunteers. A structured policy outlines proper conduct and procedures, helping to prevent false accusations against staff and volunteers. It also ensures that everyone is aware of their responsibilities in safeguarding children.

5. Build Trust and Credibility. Churches are built on trust within the community. Parents need assurance that their children are safe while attending church programs. A clear child protection policy fosters



YOUTH AND FAMILY

REV. TERESA PETERS
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH
AND FAMILY MINISTRY

confidence among families and strengthens the church's reputation.

6. Establish a Clear Response Plan. In case of suspected or actual abuse, a child protection policy provides a clear process for reporting, investigating, and responding to concerns in an ethical, legal, and Christian manner.

If your church does not have a Child Protection Plan or if you would like to compare what you have with an example, check out a recommended template at thenalc.org/youthandfamilyministry. For more information, contact Pastor Teresa Peters, director of Youth and Family Ministry, at tpeters@thenalc.org.

CHILDCARE VBS AVAILABLE AT NALC CONVOCATION

The NALC will offer childcare Vacation Bible School for children ages three and up during Lutheran Week. Childcare VBS is intended for the children of parents who are attending as delegates, visitors, or volunteers. Childcare VBS will be available during the NALC Mission Convocation Aug. 6-8 and will be offered during session times. For more information or to register go to lutheranweek.com.

NALC DISASTER RESPONSE



NALC Disaster Response has now rebuilt 31 homes in western North Carolina that were damaged by Hurricane Helene.

These photos were taken on March 10—nearly six months after the hurricane hit.

Six volunteer teams have completed mission trips, being the hands and feet of Jesus while sharing the love of God. Mission trips are scheduled throughout 2025 in western North Carolina, southern California, and near Houston, Texas.

To do a Stuff the Truck or Disaster Response Sunday in support of our mission trips, please contact Mary Bates at 740-509-1132.

To schedule a mission trip, please contact Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response coordinator, at 740-509-1132 or disasterresponse@thenalc.org.

Monetary donations may be made online at thenalc.org/giving or mailed to: North American Lutheran Church, 2113 Harwood Road, Suite 309; PMB 409; Bedford, TX 76021-4703.

Cleaning buckets, disaster response kits, and supplies should go to your area disaster warehouse or be sent to: NALC Disaster Response; 16500 Noble Ave.; Caldwell, Ohio 43724.

NALC CONNECTS WITH ETHIOPIAN CONGREGATION IN OTTAWA

Pastor Kebede Dibaba of Peace Lutheran Church of Fort St. John, British Columbia, reports on a recent trip to Ottawa, Ontario, where Ethiopian Christians from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) are gathering to worship.

The trip to Ottawa Feb. 5-10 was an incredibly fruitful and spiritually enriching experience for the Rev. Gary Braeuer of St. John's Lutheran Church of Sherwood Park, Alberta, myself, and everyone involved. The time spent in fellowship, ministry, and connection was truly a blessing, and it served as a powerful reminder of the deep impact that intentional relationships and spiritual guidance can have in the lives of believers.



Meetings and Connections

The first two days were filled with meaningful interactions that set the tone for the rest of the trip. One of the most significant moments was when Pastor Gary and I met with the Rev. Terefe Diriba. Pastor Terefe is a pastor I've known from back home but hadn't been in contact with for four years. By God's grace, the time had come for us to reconnect, and our meeting was long and productive.

We focused on how Pastor Terefe could become rostered within the NALC and how he could serve the members of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) who have been worshiping in various churches.

I felt deeply moved as we discussed the possibilities for organizing Bible study groups in homes to further connect these believers. Our conversation was filled with mutual respect and excitement for the future of this ministry, and I was glad to offer guidance on the steps he could take to move forward in his journey with the NALC.

On Feb. 6, we gathered with the leadership of the remnant congregation over dinner at their home to discuss how we could cooperate in ministry. The warmth and openness of the meeting left a lasting impression on both of us. The leaders of this congregation are genuinely passionate about growing God's kingdom, and I felt encouraged by their eagerness to work together for the benefit of their community. Our time spent there laid a strong foundation for future collaboration.

Another important meeting took place on Feb. 8, with Pastor Tsige, the pastor of the congregation. Through our discussions, it became even clearer that God is doing incredible work within this community, and there is great potential for even more growth.

Cornerstone Oromo Evangelical Church

The pinnacle of our trip was the meeting at the Cornerstone Oromo Evangelical Church of Ottawa. What began as a simple phone call transformed into a deeply meaningful fellowship. The church

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welcomed us with open arms, and we shared in a special moment of spiritual growth and celebration with the eight confirmation students, who had been diligently learning and growing spiritually.

As these students shared their personal reflections, it was clear that they had embarked on a significant spiritual journey. One of the most impactful moments for me was hearing their stories—how their faith had deepened, how they had learned to trust God more fully, and how excited they were to continue their walk with the Lord. It was clear that this journey of confirmation was not just a rite of passage for them but a true milestone in their spiritual lives.

Even more moving were the heartfelt reflections of the families. Seeing the pride and joy in the eyes of parents and relatives as they watched their loved ones take this important step in their faith was a beautiful display of the power of community. The sense of unity and shared spiritual growth was evident in every interaction, and I could feel the Holy Spirit working in powerful ways among those present.

Gifts and Gratitude

As part of the celebration, Pastor Gary and I had the privilege of presenting each confirmation student with a personal, handwritten message from Bishop Dan Selbo. This simple, yet meaningful, gesture demonstrated personal care and love from the leadership of the NALC.

Additionally, each student was gifted a Bible from the North American Lutheran Church Canada Section by Pastor Gary. This Bible was not just a tool for learning, but a symbol of the church's commitment to supporting these young believers as they continue their walk with Christ.

In addition, I felt deeply grateful to Peace Lutheran Church of Fort St. John, British Columbia, for their dedication in allowing me to teach the youth the Word of God via Zoom. Their consistent support and teaching played an essential role in the spiritual development of these young people, and it was



wonderful to acknowledge their efforts. The Cornerstone Oromo Evangelical Church of Ottawa also expressed their gratitude for all the efforts made by the NALC leadership and the Canadian Mission District. Their appreciation was humbling and filled me with a sense of pride, knowing that the church is united in its vision and mission and that our work together is helping spread the Gospel to those who need it most.

A Future of Discipleship and Faith

The trip was not only about celebrating the confirmations but also about setting the stage for future growth. As part of the journey, I offered to continue teaching the confirmed youth and the congregation through a discipleship class. This new step could be pivotal in helping these young believers grow in their faith and in their understanding of the Scriptures. We are excited to see how this unfolds in the coming months.

Overall, the trip to Ottawa served as a beautiful reminder of the power of faith, the impact of shared experiences, and the vital role that community plays in spiritual development. It reaffirmed the truth that God is constantly at work in the hearts of His people, and these moments of confirmation are just the beginning of a lifelong journey of faith and growth.

I look forward to the next steps in our shared ministry and am deeply thankful for the relationships and connections that were strengthened during this time.

ALL PRAISE AND THANKS TO GOD

ENTRANCE RITE - KYRIE AND GLORIA

The Kyrie, (from the Greek, “*Kyrie eleison*” – “Lord, have mercy”) is a cry for mercy for ourselves and for others. It follows the Entrance Hymn (or, on occasion an Introit) and the Apostolic Greeting. Whether or not a given Sunday liturgy has included the Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness, on Sundays when the Kyrie is voiced, we have an opportunity for confession, for in many ways, that is what the cry “Lord have mercy” is.

If everything were right with ourselves or the state of the world, we would have no need to ask for mercy. In the Kyrie we pray for every manner of peace: for the peace from above, for our salvation, for the well-being of the Church of God, for unity, for each holy house in which we gather, and for all who are worshipping.

The last petition of the of the Kyrie spreads a wide umbrella over all the dimensions of our life and the lives of others as we pray, “Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.”

There is much that can make us anxious, and praying the Kyrie in the gathered assembly is one of the means that God gives us to put those anxieties into perspective. We are not alone in our pains, sorrows, or longings, nor are these things the last word concerning our existence.

This cry for mercy, like so many parts of our liturgies, is a way that the Holy Scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments are put into mouths. The cry for mercy is prayed myriad times in the Psalter. God’s mercy is recounted throughout the law, the writings, and the prophets.

Two Hebrew words that are often translated as “mercy” are *rahamim* and *hesed*. *Rahamim*, the plural of the word “womb,” is also translated as compassion or tender mercies. *Hesed* is often translated as steadfast love or lovingkindness.



ALL PRAISE AND THANKS TO GOD

REV. DR. AMY C. SCHIFFRIN
NALS PRESIDENT EMERITUS

When we pray for mercy we are bringing our need before God as we simultaneously remember this essential characteristic and work of God. Our voices join with the voices of all the faithful who have gone before when we cry for mercy. And we are able to do so with ultimate trust because over and over again this is what promises us, as “His mercies endure forever” (Psalm 136). Indeed, nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-29).

It is the Spirit who teaches us to pray, and within that life of prayer it is still the Spirit who enlivens us to give thanks and praise, even when we believe that such joy is beyond our own capacity (Romans 8:26).

The breath of the Spirit is mediated through liturgy. As we receive and engage in the assembly’s prayer, God opens our hearts to His goodness anew. And even when we have those days when we feel bereft of strength, the voices of those who cry out to God in joy have the capacity to uphold us until we can sing again.

So we come to the Hymn of Praise. Through the centuries, that has been through a setting of the canticle which we know as the Gloria. Before it was part of the Mass it had been sung as part of Morning Prayer. It carries the voices of the angels proclaiming the birth of our Lord Jesus, “Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth” (Luke 2:24). This verse becomes a repeated antiphon interspersed by three stanzas, each verse illuminating the goodness of God, Father, Son, and

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Holy Spirit. The text which draws on multiple verses of Scripture is filled with thanks and praise, so our voices, too, will proclaim His glory.

While there have been a number of hymnic settings of the Gloria that can be substituted for this canticle, especially if one is having a chorale setting of the eucharistic liturgy (LBW, page 120) the *Lutheran Book of Worship* introduced the hymn of praise, "Worthy is Christ." This canticle draws us into the future through its use of texts from Revelation 5, 7, and 19. Two older Lutheran hymnals, the *Common Service Book* and *The Lutheran Hymnal* included a canticle, "Worthy is the Lamb," based on texts from Revelation as well, but this was not included in the 1958 *Service Book and Hymnal*.

Many folks have come to know this newer hymn of praise, by its opening antiphon, "This is the feast of victory for our God." This looking forward to the messianic bequest recalls the words of Isaiah 25, "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear," along with New Testament imagery of the Lord's Supper, the wedding feast to come, and the victory over death. As we sing, we remember what God has done in delivering us from

sin in death in the raising of Jesus, and how He is ruling through His eternal love, "For the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign, Alleluia."

It has long been a pattern of the western Church that during penitential seasons of Advent, Lent, and Holy Week, such exuberance was not in concert with the solemnity of these Sundays, and so in these seasons the Hymn of Praise is omitted. There is a very helpful pattern suggestion for which Sundays it is most appropriate to sing the Kyrie and Hymn of Praise in the *LBW Ministers Edition*, page 211.

In the next edition of the *NALC News* this column will be devoted to the Prayer of the Day or Collect. The collect closes the Entrance Rite and serves as the lynchpin connecting the opening of the liturgy to the appointed lessons of the day, further preparing our hearts to hear the Word of the Lord.

This is a part of a series of columns on worship and music by the Rev. Dr. Amy C. Schifrin, president emerita of the North American Lutheran Seminary. Dr. Schifrin is a retired NALC pastor living in Montrose, Colorado. She served as president of the NALS from 2013 to 2019. She has taught music and liturgy on the college and seminary levels in addition to serving as a pastor in both Canada and the United States. She has a Ph.D. in liturgical studies and homiletics from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.

PODCAST CONSIDERS BONHOEFFER

"Cardigan and Collar," the podcast of the North American Lutheran Seminary, is now focusing on the life and work of German Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

In each episode, Professor David Luy and Pastor Maurice Lee interview guests, discuss books, trade insights, and seek wisdom in the conviction that theology is both Christ's gift to the Church and its responsibility.

The first season of the podcast focused on the ministry of catechesis.

For more information go to thenals.org.



Maurice Lee



David Luy

NICENE CREED IS 1,700 YEARS OLD

Christians around the world will note the 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed this year.

The Council of Nicaea met from May through July of A.D. 325 in Nicaea (now known as Iznik, Turkey). The council was a gathering of Christian Church leaders from throughout the world called by the Roman Emperor Constantine. Constantine wanted to end fighting among Christians about doctrine and achieve unity in Christian teaching throughout his empire.

The Nicene Creed was drafted by the Council of Nicaea to specifically address a controversy around the nature of Jesus in relation to God the Father. The issues at stake at the council are reflected in the creed's confession that Jesus is "the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father."

The creed we know today as the Nicene Creed is actually an expansion of the original Nicene Creed that was adopted by the Council of Constantinople (now known as Istanbul, Turkey) in A.D. 381. Scholars call the creed we confess today the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, but most people just call it the Nicene Creed. Both creeds were originally written in Greek.

The creed from the Council of Nicaea is sometimes called the Profession of Faith of the 318 Fathers, referring to the tradition that 318 bishops took part in the council. The later creed is sometimes called the Profession of Faith of the 150 Fathers, reflecting the tradition that 150 bishops took part in the Council of Constantinople.



The First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea depicted by an icon from the Mégalο Metéoron Monastery in Greece. (Photo by J. Jensen from [Wikimedia Commons](#))

The Nicene Creed remains the most widely accepted Christian confession of faith, confessed by Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and most Protestant Christians. Even those Christians who do not accept creeds, still confess the truths expressed by this creed.

Historian and theologian Jaroslav Pelikan said that "tradition is the living faith of the dead." Christians throughout the world continue to confess the living faith of those who formulated the Nicene Creed. Their words have echoed for 17 centuries wherever Christians have gathered for worship and continue to echo as Christians today make those ancient words their own confession of faith.