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## UNEXPECTED TRANSFORMATION

Beginning with this issue of *The Atlantic Vine* we begin a new series titled *Unexpected Transformation*. This series will highlight the unexpected impact the Holy Spirit has brought into the ministry and lives of our clergy and laity who are growing in their relationship with the Lord by implementing discipleship initiatives as they engage focus on the Great Commission and the Great Commandments. We thank those who have and will be submitting their stories.

We hope you will find them inspiring. We hope, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you will gain insight to broaden your vision of transforming initiatives to touch the lives of others in new and meaningful ways.

May our love for the Lord, and our leading to serve Him, continue to grow in our daily lives to bring ever greater glory to His name as we focus on the command set forth by our Lord to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”

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### “HE MUST INCREASE”

*By Rev. H. Brian Triller  
Emanuel Lutheran Church, Elmer, NJ*

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” So says John the Baptist in John 3:30 (ESV) as he lifts up Jesus as the Christ and humbles himself. This Bible verse is an excellent starting point as I seek to describe some changes in my life and ministry since becoming actively engaged in the discipleship process.

At the 2015 AMD Convocation, I listened intently as Pr. Ray Scheck described how being engaged in the discipleship process had led to new life and increased joy being breathed into his pastoral ministry. I said to myself: “I want to experience what Pr. Ray is experiencing.” So I signed up to be contacted by the Navigators, and that led to my entering a discipleship coaching relationship with Cedric Brown early in 2016.

Pr. Ray was not the first person whom I had heard speak positively about the discipleship process since I had been received into the NALC in 2014. He is one of several persons whom God has used to draw me into the discipleship process. Participating in this process has led to my giving

greater glory to our Lord through humbling myself and sharing Him with others.

At the heart of this discipleship coaching process is a focus on God— what God says in His Word and what God has done for the world through Jesus Christ. For me, this focus on God centers on the relationship He initiated with me when I was baptized. The Holy Spirit worked faith in my parents, faith that prompted them to bring me to be baptized “...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

Cedric and I do most of our communicating by phone—usually two calls per month—with each conversation lasting about an hour. From the beginning, Cedric established a routine that always includes prayer during our conversations. Usually he leads the opening prayer, and I lead the closing prayer at the end of each phone call.

Having times of prayer as “bookends” to our conversations helps maintain our focus on God. And Cedric has modeled praying that is based on God’s Word. His example has helped me to shape

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my prayers so that, more often, they connect with or respond to something that God says in His Word.

During the first year and a half, Cedric led me through two interactive Bible studies. The title of the first Bible study is *Growth Guide: Your Christ-Centered Journey* by Navigators Church Ministry. Doing this study gave me opportunities to practice applying God's Word to grow in fundamental areas of my life, including my relationship with our Lord, family life, stewardship, and service.

The other Bible study is entitled *The Ways of the Alongsider: Growing Disciples Life to Life* by Bill Mowry. This second study has three connected themes: "relationship with God and others; discovery and discussion around the Bible; and application, accountability, and affirmation." (p. xiv) The purpose of this study is: (a) to help disciples grow deeper in their relationship with our Lord, and (b) to teach them how to build relationships with other people that lead to these others maturing as disciples or becoming new disciples of Jesus.

From the beginning, Cedric helped me to improve my daily alone-time with our Lord. Before working with Cedric, my alone-time was a brief, hit-or-miss proposition that didn't happen every day.

These days, thanks to our Lord working through Cedric and others, my daily alone-time practice is much improved. I spend more time with our Lord, and I am less distracted. This time usually includes the following: praise and thanks to God, a prayer asking the Holy Spirit for guidance, meditating on a passage from God's Word, and responding to that passage with prayer. As the Holy Spirit leads, I form a plan to take the passage of a given day and apply it soon in a practical way.

This alone-time has been a means by which I have come to know and relate to God—Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit—in a more personal and intimate way. It has also led to my being more willing and able to share with other people the

love I am receiving from God. Since accepting the invitation to enter the discipleship process, my most precious experiences of God's love have been centered on the forgiveness which Jesus won—for me, for you, for the world—by His cross and resurrection.

In the discipleship process, as it relates to the congregational setting, one goal is to see maturing disciples come alongside other followers of Jesus. For what purpose? To share their faith, guiding and encouraging these other followers to mature in their relationship with our Lord.

As Cedric and others helped me to go deeper in relationship with Jesus, I became eager to develop "alongsider" relationships with some other followers of Jesus. Last summer, a door opened for me to share what I've been learning from him with four members of Emanuel Lutheran Church in Elmer, NJ. Their pastor is our Dean, Pr. David McGettigan, who was instrumental in getting members of the congregation on-board regarding the disciple-making process.

Since I started mentoring this "Seed Group," the five of us have built Christ-centered relationships with each other as together we have sought to follow Him more faithfully. I have shared with them what I've learned from Cedric and others regarding the following: alone-time with God, building one-on-one relationships, praying with each other, the dynamics of small group fellowship, and Bible study material on specific discipleship topics.

I modified some of the *Alongsider* material, making changes as needed to remain faithful to our Lutheran interpretation and application of the Holy Scriptures.

It's been exciting to see the progress our Seed Group members have made. Each of them has grown more mature in their relationship with our Lord. And all of them shared some of their discipleship experiences with the congregation during a special worship service this past April. Together we have experienced joy as we have prayed, studied God's Word, and shared how our Lord is at work in our lives.

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Before engaging in the discipleship coaching process, my life was full of challenges and difficulties. And so life remains even now. I am flawed in many ways. Temptations still come my way. And Satan is still prowling around, seeking people to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

However, today I am firmer in my faith than I was before engaging in the discipleship process. God's Word and Sacraments are even more precious to me now. In my weakness, I rely more

on our Lord's grace and mercy. This sinner is a saint because of Jesus Christ. Giving praise and thanks to God has a more prominent role in my life these days. Now I am more focused on relationships—with God and other people, and I am becoming less self-centered.

Over the past two years, I have experienced much joy as I have done more to deny myself and to follow Jesus (Mark 8:34) in fellowship with other disciples. More than ever, it is crucial that "He must increase, but I must decrease." Amen

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## **PART OF GOD'S PLAN TO RECONCILE THE WORLD TO HIMSELF**

*by Valerie Hobbs*

*Director of Adult Ministry, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Damascus, MD*

I have had the wonderful honor and privilege of discipling many women over the past 20 years. If I were to capture the great joy this has been for me, it would be to echo this verse in Ephesians: *Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.* (Ephesians 3: 12 NLT)

For me there is no greater blessing than to witness someone discover that they can boldly and confidently come into God's presence.

Discipleship is simply about helping someone meet with Jesus, primarily through prayer and scripture, and discover the depth of His love for them and His desire for them to become intimate with Him. They move slowly from being dependent upon me to help them know and be known by Jesus to being mature followers, able to recognize their shepherd's voice, expressing a love that responds in obedience, and a passion for sharing in the Mission of Christ.

My own story of maturing faith, began as my mentor who happened to be a pastor, helped me understand what I had professed to believe in but didn't know how to live into. For many of us, we have the mechanics of the Faith down (the head part) but flounder when it comes to the heart part. Grace has not made its way into our hearts and

we feel distant from the God who loves us. My sister-in-law's story illustrates my point.

About 18 years ago I found myself sitting across the table from my sister-in-law who was in tears telling me how she had always wanted to feel close to Jesus but some poor decisions in her past made her certain that she had failed and would never be welcome in heaven. She was a lapsed Catholic, but to be honest, I've encountered very similar stories from men and women of many denominations. I explained Grace and suggested she had misunderstood what she had been taught. Her teenage son wanted to be baptized and she was realizing that she had never taught her children anything about Faith. Now she wanted to make this possible for him. I suggested she take the time to explore her own relationship with God since her son would need to see faith in action in her own life too. So, began a journey for her that has changed her life and that of those around her. At my urging, she got involved in Alpha Course which I was leading at the time. From there she continued in one small group after another, laying a firmer foundation of faith and basic practices of reading and meditating on scripture and learning how to pray with confidence that she could connect with her creator.

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A few days ago, I happened to be at a family gathering where in a very natural and impromptu way she told her story to my son who is currently on his own journey of discovery. Her witness was powerful and honest. I was surprised, delighted and grateful for being given the chance to see how God is now using her to witness to others, not to mention that one of those was someone I love deeply.

Discipling someone can look different depending on the situation and needs of the one wanting to grow. I've met with women one on one, just reading the scriptures together and discussing what we have read. I share what I've learned and what I don't understand yet. I model what I hope they will learn to do. With one woman, I suggested we focus on prayer, particularly meditative prayer techniques because that was something I wanted to learn how to do. At other times, I've had a small group of women with whom I have used the *Discipleship 2:7* series by the Navigators. This series focuses on basic beliefs and practices common to all believers. I find it to be a great foundation for new or young Christians.

I met a woman a while back, who really wanted to grow in her faith. I suggested we do a Bible Study together but to make it worth my while to travel to her location, I asked her to invite 2 other

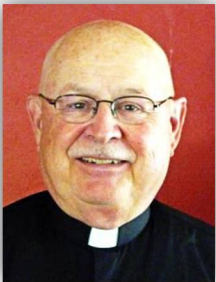
women to join us. For the next 4 years, I met with 5-6 women as we worked our way through the Navigator series. A few drifted in and out, but 3 remained faithful. We struggled to form habits of daily quiet times meditating on God's Word. We labored to memorize verses and discussed difficult passages and even more difficult understandings. We laughed together, went on a prayer retreat together, shared an occasional meal, and learned to show up for the difficult trials in our lives; the death of a husband, a run-away teenager, a child suffering with debilitating anxiety. Through it all, we learned to take our burdens to Jesus in prayer, to search the Scriptures for direction and comfort in our daily lives, and to live according to God's plan.

In the last year of our time together, I had explained that Jesus would want us to share what we have learned with others. I identified one of the ladies as a potential leader and spent extra time with her, honing her group leadership skills and encouraging her to take over the group. She went on to organize regular prayer breakfasts for the women of her congregation and to invite more women to join their little group. All the women are now serving God in ways they never thought possible. I don't take credit for any of this. I am simple grateful to be a part of God's plan to reconcile the World to Himself.

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## **MESSAGE FROM OUR DEAN**

***The Rev. David McGettigan, Dean  
The Atlantic Mission District***



***“All these things (the joys of heaven and earth) my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.”*** (Isaiah 66:2)

***“But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”*** (Mark 4:20)

One who desires to be an authentic disciple of Jesus strikes me as one ***“who is humble and contrite and trembles at my (the Lord's) word.”*** Perhaps the basic way in which the disciple of Jesus stands in contrast to the world is that very humble, contrite and trembling spirit – particularly before the Word of God, and an actual reason why the world despises, denigrates and snickers at Jesus' disciples.

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Our world more and more rejects or disrespects humility, contrition and trembling in awe. We are more than conversant with the hubris of the culture today and the hegemony of the individual "truth" (aka opinion) and of the ephemeral in the face of the traditional and the wisdom passed onto us from our forbearers. We are for all practical purposes addicted with our ability to transmit our every personal thought, view of things, experience and, most of all, critique of what has gone before – and the world is supposed to listen.

That Jesus' disciple stands before this aberration to say that in the presence of and immersion into the Word of God none of the above has a place for the Word is the true revelation of God to us and the genuine source, foundation, light and guide for our lives today. We come to the Word with humility, contrition and trembling that God might open to us who he is and who we are with clarity and assurance.

In a wonderful old book, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, Marva Dawn explains: *"It is important to stress that we must stand under his Word in order to truly understand it, for if we open the Scriptures in order to pick them apart or to elevate our own learning above the message proclaimed therein, we will not hear what the Spirit is saying to us. Only with humility and gratitude can we approach the table of God's Word to feast there on his eternal love"* (pg. 157).

Please, not to be misunderstood or appear anti-intellectual, the place of exegetical, historic, even critical study of the Scriptures is appreciated, particularly when we are approaching the Word in academic study. But for growth as a disciple we are approaching God's Word, not just as an intellectual exercise, but for the living Spirit's message and action thanks to the power of that living Word to us and for us.

What suggestions might be made to enhance and give proper focus to our feasting on God's Word?

- Well, always prayer, especially a humble, contrite and grateful prayer as we begin our time in the Word acknowledging this is not and cannot be "our" effort but the Holy Spirit moving in us.

- Perhaps continuing the prayerful spirit by using active and quiet meditation on the Gospel stories, placing ourselves within the words or scenes then quietly allowing the Spirit to bring the Word alive for us now.
- Pacing without haste or speed – reading prayerfully, deliberately and repetitiously – slowly repeating verses for focus – that the Spirit might open to us words or meanings we have never noticed before or whose meaning we have missed in the past.
- Dealing with distraction patiently – it is inevitable that distractions will assault us and we need to, again, humbly acknowledge our weakness, prayerfully place ourselves again within the Word, ask the Spirit's assistance to remain serenely in the Word, and try again!
- Jot down or journal a spiritual insight or experience the Spirit has provided to remember and take it to our regular prayer and daily life. Then, close with a grateful prayer to God for the banquet of his Word, or, if the time has been quite distracted or less "productive" than we hoped, humbly (that word again!) thank God for keeping us faithful to our time with the Word.

Marva Dawn again, *"If we are to feast spiritually, God must provide the manna of his Word. Only by his grace has he chosen to reveal himself to us; only by his grace can we understand and believe what his revelation declares"* (pg. 158). His grace alone – not our intellectual prowess or critical skills – will grow us closer to the way of Jesus through his Word. So as we come to the Word, we do so humbly, contritely, and in trembling awe that its seed might fall on **"good soil"** and we might be among **"the ones who hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit, thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold."** (Mark 4:20) That multiplying and abundant fruit is God's Holy Spirit, then, taking us out in the world to speak his Word and invite someone else to the feast of the Word and the way of Jesus that we have enjoyed.

May God bless you in his Word, and in its fruitful abundance both personally as well as in mission.

## **NALC Lutheran Week — August 14-17, 2018**

***“The Holy Spirit: Calling, Gathering, Enlightening, Sanctifying.”***

Registration remains open for the 2018 NALC Convocation and other events of **Lutheran Week Aug. 13-17** at the Crowne Plaza Denver Airport Convention Center in Denver, Colorado.

The **NALC Mission Festival and Convocation will gather Aug. 15-17** around the theme “*The Holy Spirit: Calling, Gathering, Enlightening, Sanctifying.*”

**Mission District meetings are on Wednesday afternoon and evening.** Registration for the Convocation and Mission Festival is \$200 and includes three meals.

Events preceding the Convocation are the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology (Aug. 14-15), the Women of the NALC Annual Gathering (Aug. 14), the NALC Youth Leaders Symposium (Aug. 13-14) and Discipleship Coaching (Aug. 14).



See the NALC website to register and make hotel reservations for the Convocation and any of the other events of Lutheran Week.

Remember **Financial Assistance Grants** are available to assist congregations in sending a lay delegate to the 2018 NALC Convocation.

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## **ATLANTIC MISSION DISTRICT CONVOCATION**

***“Sent to Serve, Seek and Share”***

***October 19 & 20***

***Messiah Lutheran Church, Lebanon, PA***

Mark your calendar to come hear our keynote speaker, the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission of the NALC.

The Convocation features two break-out sessions timed for everyone to attend both presentations. We'll also *Stuff the Truck for Disaster Response* – more details to come.

The Convocation will also include worship, a business meeting, elections, fellowship, good food with a Pennsylvania Dutch flair plus an *Open Mission Dialogue Time*, a “free” period to fellowship, have conversation with any of our

presenters, the Dean, members of the AMD Executive Council, members of the AMD Renewal and Discipleship Team, our WNALC Facilitator, other pastors, members and AMD leaders plus any vendor present.

**NEW THIS YEAR!** The Women of the NALC of the AMD will have a conference of their own on Friday, October 19 in the morning. This exciting event is in the planning stages so stay tuned for more information and registration materials to be available on our website and by email distribution in the very near future.

## The Dynamics Of Digital Discipleship

*Sarah Raley – Lay Leader*

*Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church, Nazareth, PA*

As a denomination and as a mission district we have been focusing on discipleship and what it means to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations” in today’s world. At our 2018 Atlantic Mission District Convocation presenting Pastors shared how their congregations are working on discipleship-building.

Our first *Atlantic Vine* newsletter continued the conversation with a very insightful article on “What we Mean by Discipleship” by Pastor Seamon and another from the Convocation Keynote Speaker, Pastor Hales focusing on the use of four components of worship, prayer, holy scripture and intentional outreach to “Renew the Local Church through Discipleship.” I would like to further explore how your congregation can increase the impact of each of those four aspects utilizing digital tools, starting with **worship** and your website.

Your church’s website is often one of the first places people look to see a reflection of your church life. Are there photos of people engaged in the discipleship and mission activity unique to your congregation? Do you have your worship times, Sunday school times, staff names and emails clearly reflected? It is also helpful if your phone number appears close to the top of each website page in the header.

Consider utilizing Google calendar at <https://www.google.com/calendar/about/> for all your church events which members can subscribe to and share. The calendar can change fluidly so any cancelations will update in one place and everyone who has subscribed will get that change. It can be linked to your website and a digital newsletter which updates instantly from one entry point as you log-in with a church Gmail account. If you don’t have one, they can be generated easily at <https://www.google.com/gmail/about/>.

This same Google account can manage your church’s Google listing with a map and directions, website, worship times, pictures etc.. For those with WordPress websites, the map can be linked from Google with an API key. Ask your website developer for more information, and if you are savvy a good set of directions for using the API key at <https://kb.yoast.com/kb/generate-set-google-maps-browser-key/>.

At Holy Cross Nazareth, we are working to be able to live stream our worship services digitally knowing the advantages can outweigh the initial technological hurdles including bandwidth requirements. This live feed will reach members in a nursing home, shut-ins and those who are traveling or ill enabling them to join us electronically in worship.

Keep in mind, music and video clips are copywrite-exempt in religious services held at a place of worship, but not when broadcast to a larger audience, so you will need to increase the level of permission. Starting a YouTube Channel to archive services is also on the horizon for Holy Cross.

We currently have a Podcast with the audio of the sermon, which allows those who have Sunday morning work or travel obligations to listen later in the week and not miss part of the collective teaching and growth. Even having attended a service, many of us find listening to the sermon a second time, we receive even more from the message.

Moving on to **prayer**, and becoming more personal with social media, the Facebook algorithm has learned that I will engage with content which uses the words ‘pray’ or ‘prayer’ as those Facebook posts are often at the top of my feed. I respond to the concerns of my Facebook community by typing a brief prayer in the comment section which often goes on to receive a

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few “Amen’s” joining in agreement. I often rejoice and praise the Lord (Yes, I use #PTL) for His blessings and will celebrate by typing a “Hallelujah!” for a victory in a Facebook friend’s life. One caveat is to remember the very private nature of prayer concerns and know that sharing them from someone else’s page to yours or to the church page is not appropriate.

Looking at **Scripture**, we share the NALC Daily Devotion on our church Facebook page then congregation members share it on their personal pages. We encourage folks to download the NALC “Walk of Faith” digital app for mobile access to a whole library of devotions. You can also receive the daily devotions via SMS (Short Message Service aka Text), by texting @NALCLEN to 614-682-8693.

Everyone can carry the Bible App on their phone and when looking for a verse to share in prayer with those battling in any arena you can Google search to find lists of verses which speak God’s love into any situation. For a wonderful review of Bible Apps and all their different features, you can check out this comparative resource from <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/create-or-edit-a-hyperlink-5d8c0804-f998-4143-86b1-1199735e07bf>.

Closing with **intentional outreach**, I echo Pastor DeBartolo who challenged us personally to remember our ABCs and **Always Be Casting**. I challenge you and your congregation to include the digital mission field of social media as way to cast a very large net. Individuals can share how Christ is moving in their lives, share personal prayer concerns, share praise and thanksgiving.

Some shun social media as they don’t want to engage in political conversations or find it depressing because it invites comparison. Some are not digitally inclined. Some feel the Marshall McLuhan quote “The medium is the message,” (no not a typo) applies and using social media as an institution messages or endorses it fully. I for one will be interested to see how David Hahn addresses this concern in his [NALC Lutheran Week Mission Festival Break-out Session](#) “The Technology in the Toolbag”.

We all have different evangelism styles and niches. If you are not active on social media already, then I don’t encourage its use for the sole purpose of casting a net, but if you already engage, think about being intentional as you share Christ in that mission field.

Facebook events allow congregation members to easily invite others to join through the platform’s “share and invite” function. A post linking to the Podcast is a great way to share a sermon with friends who might consider joining you in the future or who might benefit from that particular message. You can even text that link to that one person the Lord put on your heart as you heard it.

The NALC also has a Twitter account for those who prefer info short and sweet. Having worked with businesses and non-profits as a digital marketer, I encourage your congregation to pick only two social media platforms and keep them current. I also encourage an IT & Media Policy to guide responsible use and the flow of information. Feel free to contact me for a copy of ours at Holy Cross if you would like a framework [sarah@socialseedmedia.com](mailto:sarah@socialseedmedia.com).

Granted personal connections are important and face-to-face conversations are certainly put first, but a digital first or second impression can break the ice and provide a bridge for Jesus to shine His Light in the darkness. In closing, I hope you will “like us” on Facebook.



Sarah Raley, AMD Council Member & Council Vice-President, Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church, Nazareth, PA.  
[www.holycrossnazareth.org](http://www.holycrossnazareth.org)



## DO YOU KNOW ABOUT “THE ACADEMY?”

Are you aware the NALC has multiple digital links on the worldwide web? In addition to its main site, <https://theNALC.org>, there are a few links to many resources the NALC makes available. Why? The vast amount of information, along with its archives, makes it at times almost impossible to find and/or keep track of the “information highway” on one site. In addition to the NALC Facebook and Twitter pages, you will find a vast amount of information by checking out the web links noted in the bullet points below. Using these links you will find informative videos of NALC webinars plus those now being produced monthly.

- The 1<sup>st</sup> is a short explanation of *The Academy* at <https://missions.nalcnetwork.com/the-academy-june-2018/>  
As stated on the website “The NALC is committed to the renewal of all our congregations, working to develop and deliver resources that challenge and open the NALC to the work of the Holy Spirit in our ministry and mission. Each month we will be hosting a free webinar based on expressed needs by NALC Leaders, for NALC Leaders.”
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> you’ll find a video of the webinar by Pr. Tony Ede on *The Digital World*.  
<https://missions.nalcnetwork.com/the-academy-the-digital-world/>

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> is about “Ministry and Relationship” by Pr. Brad Hales.

<https://missions.nalcnetwork.com/the-academy-ministry-and-relationships-july-2018/>

In addition to other ‘senior ministry’ videos resources you can connect to the same video webinar noted above at

<https://missions.nalcnetwork.com/tag/senior-ministry/>.

This webinar adds to the excellent Bible study Pr. Hales wrote:

### ***Scriptural Retirement-Serving and Sharing Jesus***

This study is excellent and truly is *not* limited to senior ministry. This Bible study will be posted on our AMD website at [atlantic-nalc.org](http://atlantic-nalc.org).

- Logging onto <https://missions.nalcnetwork.com/> provides a wealth of resources about active ‘mission’ work and mission trips.

**Note:** When entering these particular site links always precede the link with <https://> which usually is not necessary. However we’ve found on occasion these site links take you to different places, sometimes without current information.

## PRAYING FOR OUR SISTER CONGREGATIONS

***by Karen Foard, Church Council President  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, State College, PA***

Ever feel a little isolated as a congregation? Wish you were more familiar with the names and locations of our AMD congregations? Would you like your congregation to be prayed for? Below you find a link to the AMD website with an alphabetically list of AMD congregations by name, along with their town and a Sunday date to add them to your prayers.

Feel free to change the dates. How great to know *your* congregation is being lifted up by others in the district on an ‘assigned’ date. Your congregation is covered in prayer, and that your ‘two or three’ gathered in His name has been expanded by many in pipelines to God! The download link for this list is: <https://www.atlantic-nalc.org/2018-19-amd-congregation-prayer-list/>.

## WOMEN WITH WINE BIBLE STUDY

By Robin Harris

Zoar Lutheran Church, Mt. Zion, PA

As I was sitting in Nashville at the 2017 NALC Convocation listening to Bishop John Bradosky speak about Life to Life Discipleship, I got very excited. I felt a need, a pressure, a calling to try to put together a Women's Bible study group at my church (which is part of a two-point parish made up of St. John, Fredericksburg and Zoar, Mt. Zion, PA). This pressure was palpable. And I knew I wanted the Bible study to be held during the week in the evenings after work hours when family obligations were lighter.

I went home and looked over what Sola Publishing had to offer. *The Proverbs 31 Woman* jumped out at me. Perfect! I put an announcement in our bulletin, and waited. The response was surprising! We started off with 11 ladies for the *Proverbs 31 Woman* study, and it has since swelled to 14 women from both churches ranging in ages from 23 – 65. We meet every first and third Tuesday night for two very fast hours. We are currently finishing our second study - Sola's *Through This Vain World* (a study of Ecclesiastes) and are preparing to pick our third study.

What makes this Bible Study group so special? Of course we study God's Word. But these women from two separate congregations ("we are sister congregations, not twins") have grown to know each other, love each other and support each other. We are learning so much about each other (we learned one woman has a childhood fear of chickens when our hostess' free range chicken decided to sit under her chair). We support each other (one woman is struggling to care for an elderly parent with no sibling help, and another is mourning the loss of a beloved child). We encourage each other ("Will I ever find a husband?" asks the 23-year old), and rejoice with each other when the blessings flow. This group is filling a hole we didn't even know was there.

Not only are we feeding our spiritual needs but we fill our bellies with delicious snacks as well! We take turns meeting at each other's homes (our circle is getting rather tight), and the hostess usually supplies us with snacks and wine or beer. At our last meeting, we all made recipes from our 2006 parish cookbook and had great joy announcing what we made with recipes submitted by our fellow sisters in Christ.

The enjoyment of each other's food has spawned an idea – a new cookbook! The cookbook our parish created in 2006 sold out after two printings. Why not do a new cookbook? We formed a small committee and we're off and running! We hope to have *Feeding the Flock* ready to print in time for a Christmas delivery (we chose the chicken themed *Feeding the Flock* since Fredericksburg's economy is heavily based in the chicken industry). All proceeds from this new cookbook will be divided into three gifts: to our local food pantry, to the NALC Disaster Response (national) and to Water Missions (international).

It still amazes me how God planted a tiny seed in my mind in Nashville a year ago and how that seed has sprouted into a vibrant circle of women who dive into God's Word twice a month with love, friendship and a visible deepening of our faith. Plus there's going to be a new cookbook with money raised going to food and water-based charities! How awesome is that?



## NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

By Judi Reeder

### Reformation Lutheran Church, Lancaster, PA

National Night Out — it's an annual community-building campaign. On the first Tuesday every August join with over 38 million neighbors across 16+ thousand communities around the nation for National Night Out, an annual event that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods a safer, more caring places to live.

National Night Out enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. Furthermore, it provides great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances. Millions of neighbors take part across thousands of communities in all fifty states, U.S. territories and military bases worldwide. Neighborhoods host block parties, festivals, parades, cookouts and various other community events with safety demonstrations, seminars, youth events, visits from emergency personnel, exhibits and much more.

There are at least two Pennsylvania churches in our Atlantic Mission District that participate in National Night Out; Holy Trinity in Abington, having also participated for years in Abington's 'pre-night out' on the first Monday in August, and Reformation in Lancaster who will be participating for the second time this year. The tables provide information about the church, distribute Bibles, cold water and other things that entice people to stop and talk.

Pastor Seamon reaches out to connect with the children as he makes balloon figures or objects of their choice.

This also provides opportunity to

connect with the children's parents.



#### What are National Night Out Objectives

- Meet your local first responders
- Engage and connect with your neighbors
- Continue to build a safer, more caring community
- Strengthen the first responder – community partnership
- Build connections within the community
- Share safety awareness information with neighbors
- Become part of a tradition celebrated across the Nation
- Get involved
- And from the discipleship perspective, model the love of Christ to all our neighbors.

You can gather more information by going to the National Night Out website at <https://natw.org/>

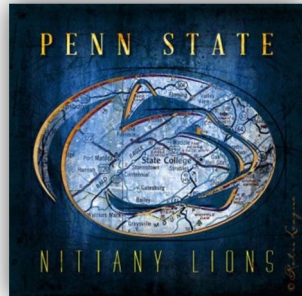
**How to get involved!** Having moved from Holy Trinity in Abington, PA to Reformation when I relocated to Lancaster, I was hopeful to get Reformation interested. So the first year I lived here, I attended the National Night Out location closest to our church. I took notes on the participants and was able to determine who in the local police department was the contact person. When presented to our Mission Team, interest peaked. We now have a great connection with our local police department especially since Reformation was the first church to ever participate in our area's National Night Out. We have a 'Fun, Food and Flick' celebration in early September open to the public so National Night Out is the perfect venue to hand out flyers inviting our neighbors and all of who visit our table which raises the number of attendees.

So give it a try – **National Night Out this year is August 7.** You can learn if your community participates by contacting the community relations officer at your local police department or try a Google search. It really is an enjoyable way to meet your neighbors plus introduce yourself and your church while modeling His love.

## GOING TO EVENTS OR A PENN STATE GAME IN STATE COLLEGE?

*By Karen Foard, Church Council President  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, State College, PA*

Going to a Penn State Football game or other event in State College, PA? Emmanuel Lutheran Church in State College reminds all congregation members of the Atlantic Mission District or NALC visitors from other areas that they are there for Sunday worship.



Also if you have a family member who is a Penn State Student, we are happy to be their church home away from home and would love to be the “in town contact and support persons” for them.

We have welcomed students for worship, have invited them to fellowship events, as well as gladly drive those without transportation to the local market or WalMart! If families would like to share the names of their students they will greet and encourage them, provide “finals bags” along with other supportive things. Members of Emmanuel would love to meet any of you coming through State College!

For more information feel free to contact [emmanuelNALC@gmail.com](mailto:emmanuelNALC@gmail.com), or contact our Council President at [KFoardLC@gmail.com](mailto:KFoardLC@gmail.com), or check their website for worship times and more information at [www.emmanuelNALC.org](http://www.emmanuelNALC.org)

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## THE NEW AMD RENEWAL AND DISCIPLESHIP TASK GROUP

*By Lee Mills, Interim Chair*

A new task group has been formed within the Atlantic Mission District. Their primary function is to provide leadership and guidance in the areas of congregational renewal and discipleship growth. Initial group members include Pr. Mark Chavez, Chuck Islip, Pr. Brett Jenkins, Pr. John Kulczycki, Judy Mills, Pr. Luke Seamon, Pr. Brian Triller and myself.

This new group has evolved from the prior AMD Mission Team and plans to build on the pioneer work of that task group. The accomplishments of the Mission Team over the past three years will be utilized and further developed in this new group. They include our website, the newsletter, links to other websites, books, and related articles. Many thanks to Pastor Paula Murray and the other members of that group for all the groundwork they did.

What is going to be different about this new group? First of all, we recognize that there are many ways to approach renewal and discipleship. It is not “one way fits all.” Our primary focus will be to provide personal support, together with examples of many different proven initiatives that encourage development of renewal and discipleship teams and initiatives in each of the district’s congregations.

A different congregational initiative will be highlighted in each upcoming edition of *The Atlantic Vine* with the objective of sharing “ideas that work” and stimulate thinking.

A district level “rapid response team” comprised of both pastor and lay leaders is available to any congregation that would like assistance. For more information, please email Lee Mills at [lmills.email@comcast.net](mailto:lmills.email@comcast.net).

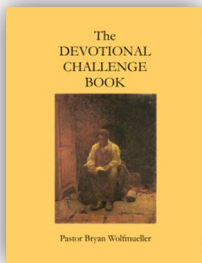


## RESOURCES TO GROW IN CHRIST

### THE DEVOTIONAL CHALLENGE BOOK

**Author: Bryan Wolfmueller**

The inspiration of this book comes from Psalm 1:2  
*"His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law  
 does he meditate day and night."*



The book helps persons to add order and consistency to their lives of prayer and study. A book also intended to share with new Christians who have NO IDEA how to approach devotions and also for those coming into

Lutheranism accustomed to a steady diet of books written topically or by non-pastors in non-denominational situations.

*The Devotional Challenge Book* is a workbook designed to help Christians and the Christian family to open the Lord's Word and hear the voice of Jesus. It can be used individually, as a family or with a group. It may be especially helpful for those who 'have no extra time in their day' to 'ease into' a daily devotion exercise. It's a great beginning 'small group' tool. It starts with just a very few minutes a day with more time required, reaching a maximum of 15-20 minutes each day. Its brief enough without being burdensome.

Each week introduces a new challenge. Each day offers the opportunity to engage with the Scriptures and pray for the Lord's mercy. The basic pattern of prayer is taken from Martin Luther's Small Catechism, and the strategies of meditation on the Scriptures and crafting our prayers grow out of the church's rich evangelical tradition of prayer and devotion.

<http://www.wolfmueller.co/devotionalchallengebook/>

There are several audios where Pastor Wolfmueller is being interviewed. We have obtained several but not all. We will do our best to upload them to the *atlantic-nalc.org* website under our *Resources* tab

The 180+ page workbook is available completely free for download. You can also purchase the fancy spiral-bound version through Lulu.

### **REVIEW BY PASTOR Luke Seamon**

Excellent workbook that is solid theologically and very practical in building a rich life in the Word from ground up. We're beginning to use this book in our life to life discipleship at my congregation."

*Web link for the 'free' download:*

<http://www.wolfmueller.co/devotionalchallengebook/>

*Free download:* <http://www.wolfmueller.co/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Devotional-Challenge-Book-Mar-8-with-cover.pdf>

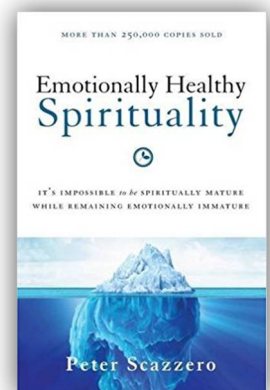
### DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCE: EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

**Author: Peter Scazzero**

**Submitted & recommended by Rev. Brett Jenkins**

What do you get when a congregation experiences early success, grows like a weed, sees clear evidence in its life of God's Spirit—even miracles—then descends into chaos and difficulty as the weaknesses that has always been present but unexamined in its life and the formation of its people came to the surface?

What do you get when an evangelical pastor purchases the success of his ministry at the cost of his marriage, family, and even health, then, when his life seems to be a hopeless mess, digs deep into the depths of the Christian tradition, spends significant time in Trappist monasteries and Orthodox sketes, and gets a degree in family therapy so he can also bring the best insights of modern psychology to bear on the issues that have plagued not only his



continued

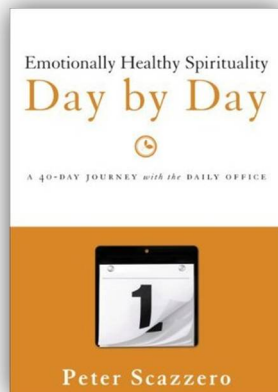
experience but American Christianity more generally?

You get *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*.

I first became aware of this book (now, after twenty years of development, a full set of resources with its own 501C3 organization to support it) about three years ago when it was recommended to me to deal with a crisis in my own life and ministry. Both my wife and I found the book to be unexpectedly deep and insightful. We have been through the Day By Day devotional twice as part of our personal spiritual life, and we before it merged its ministries with those of Holy Cross, Abundant Life had begun offering the course based on the book as part of its spiritual formation; eventually, Holy Cross will do the same.

It is rare to find a resource that doesn't just pilfer from the Great Tradition, but demonstrates a deep familiarity with its depths from Irenaeus through Augustine to Luther and Bonhoeffer. It is even rarer to find pastoral wisdom that doesn't simply juxtapose modern psychological understandings with Christian theology (or worse yet, try to dress them up in theological language) but integrates them with Christian theology into a holistic, Christ-centered approach to discipleship. Equally important (and perhaps more to the author's credit), they are accessible for the non-specialist without a watering down of the essential concepts.

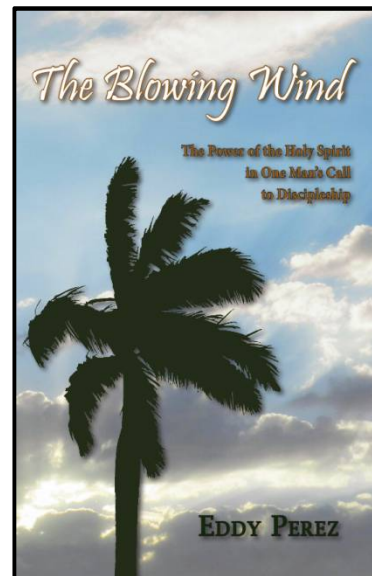
I have found the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality resources to function at this high level and recommend them as one of the best resources for any Christian's spiritual library.



## THE BLOWING WIND

**Author: Rev. Eddy Perez**

*The Story of One Man's call to Discipleship*



This autobiographical conversion story emphasizes the workings of the Holy Spirit's transformative power, which took Eddy Perez from a mostly unchurched childhood, through a young adulthood influenced by the sneaky sway of culture and the evil forces of false

religions, to faith in Jesus and a firm renunciation of Satan, to positions of church leadership and mission work spreading the joy of the Gospel, first in Cuba and now as a Lutheran pastor in the United States. Pastor Perez gives a heartfelt and unvarnished recounting of the Holy Spirit's amazing work in his life and in the lives of others. In addition to speaking to the power of the Third Person of the Trinity, Pastor Perez's story also offers readers a rare glimpse of the day-to-day struggles of simply being a Christian under Cuba's communist regime, culminating with the cliffhanger recounting of his escape to the United States.

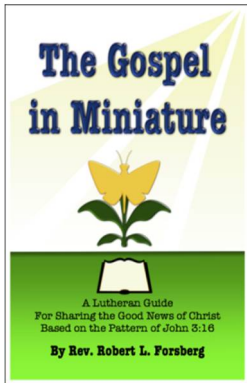
This tale of transformation is paired with an appendix that offers insightful questions on themes presented in each chapter, intended to help Lutheran readers reflect on the often neglected topic of the Holy Spirit's work in their own lives.

**Found at the Sola Publishing website,  
[http://solapublishing.com/the-blowing-wind\\_B-P100](http://solapublishing.com/the-blowing-wind_B-P100)**

## THE GOSPEL IN MINIATURE

### *A Lutheran Guide for Sharing the Good News of Christ Based on the Pattern of John 3:16*

**Author: Rev. Robert L. Forsberg**



*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have Eternal Life." (John 3:16)*

Martin Luther once called John 3:16: "The Gospel in Miniature," saying that the very heart of Scripture and the message of Christ is found in this passage. This booklet uses

John 3:16 as a biblical pattern to use in faith conversations that is simple enough to remember and can serve as a helpful tool for Christians to share their faith in Christ with others.

Written from a Lutheran faith-perspective, this booklet gives some practical advice on how believers can engage in the task of one-to-one evangelism. Combining the message of salvation in Christ with one's own personal witness, the booklet provides a basic pattern and example, along with prayers and texts from Scripture, helping readers feel more comfortable and prepared to take up the call to be "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20) in their everyday life.

*(5.5" x 8.5" booklet; 23 pages)*

Find "The Gospel in Miniature" at the Sola Publishing website: [http://solapublishing.com/the-gospel-in-miniature\\_E-3210](http://solapublishing.com/the-gospel-in-miniature_E-3210)

## **A FEW HELPFUL WEBSITE RESOURCES**

### **—CHECK THEM OUT**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/>

Multiple Bible versions for reading, studying, using a topical index; listen to the text via audio recordings, dictionaries, study helps and other tools.

<https://www.biblica.com/>

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/>

Same as above.

<http://biblehub.com/>

Multiple Bible versions for reading, study and more. Make use of their English Lexicon to look up the Greek or Hebrew meanings, plus many more tools including commentaries.

<https://thebibleproject.com/>

Bible audio visuals by books of the Bible, characters, and more. A real learning tool for all and a good tool for youth.

<https://www.thenalc.org/daily-reading-calendars/>

Several Bible reading plans are available.

<https://www.thenalc.org/> also has a daily devotion and several downloadable apps and many other resources.

<https://www.theopedia.com/>

An encyclopedia of Biblical Christianity.

## **HAVE AN EFFECTIVE RESOURCE?** **PLEASE SHARE IT WITH US!**

**Plain and simple...**

**sharing resources helps others grow.**

Share resources be they books, activities, websites, iPhone or Smartphone apps, or others you have found to be effective tools for you personally, or in your congregation, or ones you use in your small groups.

All will appreciate your sharing them.

Email your shared resource/s to

*'[newsletter@atlantic-nalc.org](mailto:newsletter@atlantic-nalc.org)'*

for the October 2018 edition. Let's keep adding those '*Building Blocks of Discipleship*' and ways to grow our personal relationships with Christ.

## RECOGNIZING OUR AMD COUNCIL



### *Left to Right*

Pastor John Kulczycki, St Matthew LC, Baltimore, MD  
 Kathaleen Lilley, AMD Treasurer, Messiah, Lebanon, PA  
 Sarah Raley, Holy Cross LC, Nazareth, PA  
 Pastor David McGettigan, Dean, Retired  
 Scott Miller, St. Matthew LC, Baltimore, MD  
 Robin Harris, AMD Administrative Assistant,  
 Zoar LC, Mt. Zion, PA  
 Lee Mills, Reformation LC, Lancaster, PA  
 Pastor James DeLong, Retired

## MAKE NOTE: THE NEXT AMD NEWS

***Next submission deadline for The Atlantic Vine  
 Tuesday October 30, 2018.***

*Email Judy with your communications and correspondence anytime between now and October 30<sup>th</sup> to:  
[newsletter@atlantic-nalc.org](mailto:newsletter@atlantic-nalc.org)*

- Share stores and events of what's happening in your congregation.
- Share about transformation initiatives in your congregation or in your personal life as a disciple.
- Publicize your upcoming special events on the AMD calendar.
- What are small groups doing or how are they serving?
- Tell us about activities that foster's relationships and growing in Christ.
- What resources, books or studies are working for you that might help others?



### PSALM 119:10-16

*With my whole heart I seek you;  
 let me not wander from your commandments!*

<sup>11</sup> *I have stored up your word in my heart,  
 that I might not sin against you.*

<sup>12</sup> *Blessed are you, O LORD;  
 teach me your statutes!*

<sup>13</sup> *With my lips I declare  
 all the rules of your mouth.*

<sup>14</sup> *In the way of your testimonies I delight  
 as much as in all riches.*

<sup>15</sup> *I will meditate on your precepts  
 and fix my eyes on your ways.*

<sup>16</sup> *I will delight in your statutes;  
 I will not forget your word.*

