

## PRAYER JOURNEY OF JESUS FOLLOWERS

*By Reverend Jay Jackson, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Joppa, MD*



Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ our risen savior and Lord. Amen.

In September and October of 2020 Trinity Church in Joppa MD walked through a churchwide study based on Max Lucado's Life lessons from Ezra and Nehemiah. What a journey it was.

As I share a few insights, let us begin in prayer (taken from Nehemiah)... *"Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants. We are listening, speak Lord to our souls."* Amen.

Ezra-Nehemiah (*written as one book, but separated in our scripture*) walks through the journey of the Israelites as they begin to come back to Jerusalem after their exile and Babylonian occupation. They come back to a temple that needs rebuilding and walls lifted back up. What struck us as we walked through this study was just how important prayer was among the people of God. If you have a moment right now, please stop and read Nehemiah 1 and 2. (*The whole book is an easy read, but the rest of this reflection will deal with the first 2 chapters of Nehemiah.*)

Ezra and Nehemiah were both men of God and rooted in prayer. In our study, we saw how powerful prayer can be, and we focused on four attributes of prayer. (*We know there are many more, but these were for the purposes of our study.*)

### **1. Prayer makes us wait.**

We see that in Nehemiah 2 very clearly. In verse 4 the king asks Nehemiah, "What do you want?" and he

tells us.... "Then I prayed to the king of heaven." Before he did anything, or even answered the king, he stopped, and he prayed. Prayer makes us wait. We cannot pray and act at the same time.

Prayer is the act, and when we pray first, we are turning the problem or the situation over to God. We are acknowledging that we cannot act on our own, and we need the great and awesome God to lead the way. So the first thing prayer does for us... makes us slow down, and wait.

### **2. Prayer clears our vision.**

My family and I have only been in Maryland for a little over two years now, and there have only been a handful of times when we have experienced fog. But there have been a couple of times when that fog was really thick.

Sometimes, our lives are so full of fog, that we don't know which way we are heading or where we even want to go, and if we just get in our car and roll our windows down a bit to see, it still doesn't clear things up. Prayer removes the foggy in our lives. Prayer will burn through the fog and help us to see more clearly where it is that God wants us to go.

### **3. Prayer quiets our hearts.**

We cannot worry *and* pray at the same time. Prayer releases our anxiety and replaces it with God.

When we are up against a situation, or sometimes when I am facing a hard decision, or yes, have to do something I don't want to do, there is a place for anxiety, and I'll admit to you, I feel better dealing with that situation when I stop and pray. It's also why we begin any meeting with prayer. It not only quiets our hearts, but it can begin to quiet the situation.

This is a really anxious time right now, and when someone challenges our beliefs or our stance on what we believe is right, our natural instinct is to fight back. It is! We want to defend ourselves or our position.

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And there are times to do that, but first, **stop and pray**. If it is really bothering you, pray harder. Pray deeper. It will begin to quiet your heart.

- Pray, God, how would you respond?
- Pray, God, help me to love this person, although I can't agree with them.
- Pray, God, help me to see them as one of your children and as brother or sister who you went to the cross for. Folks, I promise you, prayer in that instance, will begin to change our approach to others immediately.

#### 4. *Prayer activates our faith.*

This is by far my favorite thing that prayer does for us. It's going to be the focus of the rest of this reflection. It equips us to handle whatever it is coming our way. It activates our faith to go and do. To put our faith into action and show others who God is to us.

The more we pray, the more we begin to trust God to lead us, and when we know that God is leading us, it is easier to go where we are being led. When God alone is leading it takes us...

- To go into those places that we wouldn't normally go.
- To go into the communities that we may intentionally avoid.
- To befriend those whom we would normally cross the other side of the street to get away from.

When God is leading us, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished in his name, and I'm here to tell you that we don't pray enough. I don't pray enough. And we don't always pray expecting God to answer our prayers. We think that God may only answer the big prayers that we read about in the Bible, but folks, God is moving and is working right now... waiting for us to activate our faith.

I don't know who is reading this, but I'm betting that someone you know in the last 6 months has lifted up the need for a revival. I continually hear from friends and family "I wish we would have another revival." They lift up 2 Chronicles 7:14 – "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." And then they say, if only....

***It's time to activate our faith!*** When I shared this proclamation with the incredible folks at Trinity, I shared with them a story of revival...like the one that happened in 1857. I remembered reading about this revival, but because it was so long ago, like a number of Bible stories, we may not fully appreciate the power that prayer had in this time.

"Jeremiah Lanphier," was an up and coming young businessman in NYC, who simply believed in the power of prayer. In 1857, the nation was divided by slavery. Racial divides were everywhere. Drunkenness was rampant. People were filled with fear and anxiety (1857, not 2020).

Lanphier asked God, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" And he felt the tug, and God led him to start a prayer meeting at noon on Fulton Street in the financial district of Manhattan so other businessmen could come and pray. He told colleagues and friends that it was time to come and pray. And out of a population of 1 million in NYC at that time, 6 people showed up the 1st week, 1/2 hour late.

But God kept tugging, and Jeremiah kept praying.

They met again the next week – 14 showed up.

Again, the next week – 23.

And the next week - 40.

Now it wasn't he, but they... *they* decided to meet every day. Within weeks, thousands of business leaders, prominent New Yorkers and others from around the area were meeting every day for prayer.

God was moving powerfully throughout the nation as a revival broke out and began to spread, without social media! When it was all said and done, it has been estimated that 1 million people were saved out of a national population of 35 million, including 10,000 people coming to Christ every week in NYC for a time. Because one person...one person prayed!

If you don't think that you can be that one person, then let's activate your faith. Because I know most of you believe that we need a revival right now. Besides, it isn't you doing it, its God working through you.

- How many of you believe that we need another revival like that in our nation?
- How many of you believe that God could do that again?
- How many of you believe that God WANTS to do that again?

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- How many of you are willing to do whatever God wants YOU to do to bring about that kind of revival in our nation again?

It's one thing to wish and pray for a revival... But it's another thing to be active in one and participate. Because if we don't hit our knees before our God and ask Him to pick us up and move our feet then we will still be waiting. It only takes one to begin a revival, and what if that one is you, or me? Are we ready? Are we going to move to the place that God wants us to go? Are we willing to speak up to the powers in control like Nehemiah did and ask to go and serve God?

It may feel daunting to try and tackle it all, and maybe there is part of us that thinks it may never happen, but if God is calling us to activate our faith and use it for his Kingdom, what then shall we do?

Thank you for allowing me the time for this brief reflection... But I close with these thoughts....

Are we ready to activate our faith? Pray about it. Pray first, pray last, pray hard, pray loud... but when God says go... we have to GO.

We don't just pray with the expectation that God is going to do something, but we pray with the assurance and knowledge that God has **already** done something. He's already sent us the biggest answer to any prayer in the life and death and resurrection of his only son. Jesus came so that when we pray, we can have the faith and the assurance that we are covered in the protection of Almighty God.

One final testament...

When D.L. Moody was just starting in the ministry he heard a preacher say, "*The world has yet to see what*

*God can do with a man fully surrendered to Him.*" That night Moody said, "*By God's grace I'll be that man!*" Moody had little formal education, and he was not a polished speaker. But God used Dwight L. Moody to reach two continents with the Gospel. He presented the plan of Salvation, by voice or pen, to at least one hundred million people. He often spoke to audiences of ten to twenty thousand people. It is estimated that over a million souls came to Christ as a result of his ministry.

Be the next D.L. Moody. Be the next Jeremiah Lanphier. Be the next Nehemiah. Not on our own, but because we have submitted ourselves to God and we allow Him to use us! Don't ever sell yourself short. Jesus died for you too.

Don't think that God can't use any one of us to do great things, but we can be assured that nothing will get done if we don't begin in prayer. This is a hard time and a hard place to be living in... You may not like where you are, where the Church is, where society is, and I may not like where we are...

So please, weep, cry, fast, and lament. Turn away from the things that are holding us back, yes... but don't stay there. Pray, and go to work. Prayer is action. It's time for us to activate our faith. Amen.

Thank you for the honor of contributing a little bit of my faith and how prayer helps not only me, but can help us in our journey to make followers of Jesus. Brothers and sisters in Christ, thank you for your partnership in the proclamation of the Gospel!

In Christ,  
Jay Jackson

## A CALL TO THE NATION

### PRAYER MARCH ON THE NATIONAL MALL – WASHINGTON, DC

*By Lee Mills & Judy Mills, Reformation Lutheran Church, Lancaster, PA*

On Saturday, September 26, 2020, several carloads of NALC pastors and lay leaders joined over 100,000 other enthusiastic fellow Christians gathered on the National Mall in Washington DC in a call to pray for our country. Two organizing groups emphasized slightly different objectives but came together with a

shared focus: restoring our country in the midst of spiritual crisis.

To the east, facing the capital, in the morning, organizer Jonathan Cahn's theme was "The Return," a 24 hour time of prayer. Cahn spoke of how inhabitants of Israel turned away from their divine

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purposes. Yet, the Lord heard Israel's prayer of repentance and asking for mercy to save Israel when the people turned back to Him. This group continued with speakers, music, singing and prayer all day.

To the west, beginning at noon, Evangelist Franklin Graham led thousands in a prayer march that started on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Prayer there focused on humbling one's self in repentance and asking God to forgive our sins and heal our land.

The march next moved to the WWII Memorial to pray for our military, police and other law enforcement so we may have security and peace throughout our Nation.

The third stop was the Washington Monument where prayer focused on salvation of the lost, renewed strength in our families, solutions to the coronavirus pandemic, and an end to abortion.

Next the march moved on to the Museum of African American History where there was prayer for compassion and kindness toward one another, respect and reconciliation between races, and healing in communities torn by violence and injustice.

The fifth stop was at the National Archives to pray for religious freedom and for churches to boldly stand firm with the Word of God as they preach Jesus Christ in a troubled world.

Lastly, facing the U.S. Capital Building, prayer was made for Congress and other national, state, and local leaders at all levels including our judiciary.

While there were American flags, and only a handful of political shirts or hats, there were many shirts, hats and flags, even some banners, that professed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of all who will believe in Him.

There was more prayer offered up to Christ at one time by more people in one place than any of us who attended the walk had ever witnessed before. People prayed with the leaders, they prayed with others one-



*View toward Lincoln Memorial  
& Washington Monument*

on-one, together in groups, prostrate, and on their knees, in circles, with hands raised, with tears in their eyes, with joy and praise, and while they walked... prayer was lifted up to our Almighty and one Lord, Jesus Christ. Everyone was polite, there was no trash found on the ground, and no political talk even as Vice-president Pence greeted the crowd and prayed with everyone too. Jonathan Cahn said *"If you want to hear a politically correct message, you came to wrong place."*

The theme verse for the march was *"...the Lord was moved by prayer for the Land..." (2 Samuel 24:25)*. It was certainly awesome seeing and hearing so many people openly and passionately praying for our country, particularly in our troubled time. Two fellows quickly stopped to pray for us when Lee was overheard saying "my feet are going to be hurting tomorrow." We insisted that we were fine, that prayer not be said for us but for all present and for our country. The four of us bowed our heads and prayed together...strangers they were, yet brothers in Christ.

As we drove back to the home of Pastor Di Mauro, all of us said we'd do it again in a heartbeat. We all encourage you to pray for our country every day, that our faith in Christ will be renewed, and our country repent of all that divides us including racism. You can simply pray similar to what was prayed at each stop and/or add your own prayers. God does hear our prayers... *"Lord, hear our prayers! Amen."*

## **WHERE RECONCILIATION BEGINS**

*The Reverend Trina Petersen, A New Thing Christian Church, Lithonia GA*

This year has afforded us the opportunity to see things we have never seen before and have experiences we have never had before – including, but not limited to a global pandemic, racial tension and cultural dis-ease. And though Scripture forewarns us of such events and assures us of the Lord's presence through it all, it is our responsibility as

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God's ambassadors here on earth to respond in a godly manner. When asked by the planners of the AMR 2020 Convocation to share how to begin the process of racial reconciliation in a nation where racial discrimination, injustice and tension are so deeply woven into history and culture, I went to God in prayer. The Holy Spirit led me to John 5:1-9. Allow me to share with you, the insight shared with me.

## The Context

<sup>1</sup> Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. <sup>2</sup> Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda<sup>[a]</sup> and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.



The text opens by setting the scene. Jesus is in Jerusalem (the city of peace). He is at the temple, specifically Bethesda (House of Mercy). Not only are they surrounded and covered by grace (the five porches, five being the

number of grace) they can hear the voices of the sacrificial sheep who are being led into the temple. This is a beautiful picture for believers reminding us of our context – the Church. As believers we are blessed and able to find peace in Christ. We are able to gather, whether virtually or in person, in “houses of mercy,” we are surrounded and covered by God’s grace and we hear the voice of the Sacrificial Lamb, Jesus, the Logos, the Word. Surely this setting is one of bliss. However, as we continue to read, we find that challenges exist – even in the Church.

## The Challenge

<sup>3</sup> Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. <sup>5</sup> One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

The challenge is not in the context, it exists in the people. The people are disabled – their senses, movements and activities have been limited. Some have been limited due to blindness, an inability to see, lacking perception, awareness, or discernment. Some are lame, they walk with difficulty due to injury or disease. Then there were those who were paralyzed, those who were incapable of movement.

I submit that this is very much a reality within the Church. It is a gathering place of people who have been limited in the movement, activity, and spiritual sensitivity. Scripture reminds us, on multiple occasions, not to use our natural senses and walk in alignment with the Holy Spirit. Yet many remain spiritually blind or visually impaired, unable to see the racial disparity and injustice. There are those whose spiritual walk has been impeded due to experience – personal or reported, past or present. Then there are those who are paralyzed by a myriad of reasons – analysis, acceptance, cultural upbringing, ignorance, and fear, just to name a few. Thank goodness God loves us too much to leave us disabled and invalid.

## The Conversation

<sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” <sup>7</sup> “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

Jesus asks a question that requires us to consider our desire and willingness to accept accountability. “Do you want to get well?” I hear this as it relates to many challenges we face, even that of racial reconciliation. Do we want to experience racial wholeness, equality and unity? Do we want things to change?

If we want to enter the arduous process of racial/ethnic unity, we will need to respond to this direct question with a “yes” or “no,” not with excuses of what others have failed to do. The question is not asking what has been, but what we want it to be. This man rehearses history rather than His-story (the story of Christ). Christ’s story of death, resurrection and ascension does not leave us as invalid. It validates us and gives us power!

So, what is your answer? Do you want to be made whole? Does your desire embrace reconciliation and restoration? I submit that it is in answering these questions reconciliation begins. I submit that each of us has to answer these questions.

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## The Command

*<sup>8</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."<sup>9</sup> At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.*

Reconciliation without restoration is similar to faith without works – death. Once we have decided that wholeness is what we want, it's time to respond in obedience. Sunday morning remains one of the most segregated times of the week. If racial reconciliation is what we want, we have to "get up" from our places of

complacency and be intentional about interacting with people who don't look like us. We have to pick up our mats, the history of what held us, and respond according to Christ's narration of our lives. We have to walk. Walk in love, walk in faith, and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is time for us to walk, to move forward. Racial reconciliation and restoration are possible. Unity in the body of Christ is possible. *All things are possible through Christ Jesus! (Philippians 4:13)*

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## "MY HELPER, MY DELIVERER – LORD, DO NOT TARRY"

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*By the Rev. David McGettigan, Dean  
NALC Atlantic Mission Region*

*"Jesus said to His disciples, 'Then the Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.'"*  
(Matthew 25:1)

I am a news junkie. But a little over a week ago I virtually shut down the news around me or at least the bulk of it...even *Outnumbered* and *The Five!* There, now you know my news network of choice! Why did I take this unprecedented move for me at least? Simple... I awoke one day realizing the anxiety, the burden I was feeling, fed by the news, and what it was doing to me inside and out. It wasn't pretty.

I even began flipping quickly through the pages of the two newspapers I get each day until I reached a point of NO campaign news. There were days when I nearly had to reach the Sports page before relief arrived. If it wasn't the election mess featured early and often in those pages, it was more negative news about COVID...I needed that, too?

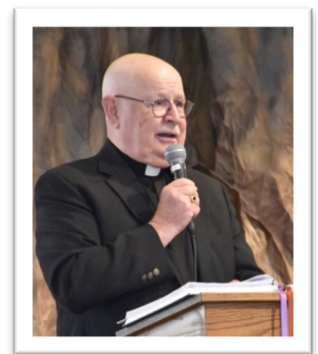
Prayed a bit about my plight and came to this realization – the crux of my problem – I was waiting for the wrong person to arrive and bring me joy and security. I suddenly realized I was giving these two guys running for the presidency much more value and time than they deserved...even my favorite candidate. And what might otherwise had been a joyful experience was blurred and nearly bloodied by the infighting I saw, the lies I was wading through searching for truth, the fantasy that either was going to guarantee something in my life that I did not

already possess and in abundance. I was consumed and it spilled over into nearly everything.

So I shut down the news and made a commitment to Jesus that I would spend as much of that time until November 3<sup>rd</sup> as I could focused on Him and speaking with Him about the hope and promise He actually guaranteed, and bring to Him my dismay and anxiety that I had dumped on me by campaign refuse.

It was finally reading the Gospel for this Sunday (11/8) preparing a sermon that it was clear. There is only One for whom I need wait who will, and who actually does already supply my every need and fill me with hope and promise and joy. It is the Lord Jesus. Unlike the two characters who have usurped so much of our time, attention, and national energy these weeks, indeed months, the One for whom I am counseled to wait is not elected or chosen by me, but He chooses me for His Kingdom.

I read a Sola Devotion that mentioned Luther preaching on this Gospel in 1522 saying "...the ten virgins were ten Christians. However, not all of them were faithful to the Lord. The wise virgins, he said, represent true Christians, whereas the foolish virgins represent phony Christians." That hurt a little because my excessive expectations waiting upon the arrival of an election



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winner and the dread of “my guy” possibly not winning seemed to put me in the phony category, certainly foolish.

The wedding feast in Jesus’ day in Palestine was a glorious and long event, a week of celebration in the village. The bridegroom at a time of his choosing – anytime day or night -- came out of his house with a herald before him crying out, “*Behold, the bridegroom is coming.*” All those invited who had been waiting for the moment also came out and followed the bridegroom to the home where his bride waited. The invited guests were in and out for the week marking not only the marriage ceremony but celebrating the new union. If you missed the bridegroom’s journey and arrival, you were lost and barred from the party.

This, Jesus tells us, is an image of His Kingdom where one day we will be called to join the heavenly feast. Unless, of course, you are not waiting, focused, and prepared. Unless you are foolish or phony, as Luther put it, only pretending to be centered on Jesus’ arrival while really steeped in the matters of this kingdom, its pleasures, its concerns, its gods, even its elections as if they have ultimate significance.

As I finish this message our election is not decided and no one knows for sure when or even how it will be. I pray by the time you read this, it’s over! But here is what a Kingdom focus for a true disciple of Jesus reminds us – whoever wins the presidency know there will be other elections for these men are temporary and I need not suffer anxiety even should the one I consider the best man loses. Their significance and influence on the true purpose and meaning of my life and its unfolding is actually minimal before authentic Kingdom waiting.

There is One unelected among us who has elected and anointed us to be His presence especially in peril and persecution...He is Jesus Christ, our only Savior and Lord...most assuredly our only true hope. And while we wait upon His coming, He establishes us as His presence on earth, the body of Christ that in our love and unity, even as we disagree about the temporal political realities, will be what draws more and more of the world to see the joy of the coming feast and the true value of joining in faithful waiting.

What these political realities and battles have done to us, and I mean the Church, cries out. The excessive weight and value we have given our political leaders has split the very body of Christ, congregations, in

many places. Paul reminds us we have been gifted and made a member of the body of Christ for its edification, its building up, “*...so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love*” (Ephesians 4:14-16).

My prayer is for forgiveness and forbearance as this country goes forward from this decision, particularly in the body of Christ, the Church, followed by a willingness to cooperate again for the common good no matter our political tastes and preferences.

Let me close with a measure of a promise I made to keep before me in every challenging situation or moment we all face...to ask myself regularly: “*What am I waiting for? Better -- Who am I waiting for? Is my focus in waiting wise or foolish, phony or true discipleship? Am I awake and ready for the only One who is worthy of my time, my waiting, my energy and devotion?*” And humbly to pray with the Psalmist in my waiting, “***But as for me, I am poor and needy, come to me speedily, O God. You are my helper and my deliverer; O Lord, do not tarry.***” (70:5-6)

Let’s pray for a healing in our nation, and let us pray with and for each other, disciples of Jesus waiting faithfully. God bless.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> NALC Disaster Response Tool Trailer Dedicated

### *Emanuel Lutheran Church, Elmer, NJ*

Followers of Jesus gathered at Emanuel Lutheran Church, Elmer, NJ on Sunday September 27, 2020 to dedicate a tool trailer for use by the North American Lutheran Church’s (NALC) Disaster Response. The service took place at the Scheese family pavilion located behind the church.

Pastors David McGettigan, Atlantic Mission Region Dean, and Mark Werner, Senior Pastor, led the service. Mrs. Mary Bates, Director of the NALC’s Disaster Response gave a testimony of the ministry

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and was on hand to receive the tool trailer. The project was spearheaded by Sam and Anette Manno, members of Emanuel.

Their work on this project was done for the glory of God and in memory of Anette's son, Matthew Montana who died last summer. Friends and family assisted them in outfitting the trailer, raising funds, and purchasing the tools.

"This will be a visible sign of the love of God to people recovering from natural disasters," says Pastor Werner. "NALC Disaster Response stays in hard hit areas on a long-term basis until not only the physical needs, but also spiritual care needs are met."



*Pr. Mark Werner, Mary Bates, Anette & Sam Manno*

## **WHEN MARY BATES CAME ROLLING THROUGH**

*by Robin Harris, AMR Administrator*

**The bad news:** Due to the annual AMR Convocation being changed to a virtual format this year the "Stuff the Truck for Disaster Response" event normally held at the "in person" annual Convocation had to be cancelled.

**The good news:** When word got out that a new Disaster Response tool trailer was being dedicated at Emanuel, Elmer, NJ on Sunday, September 27 – and Mary Bates was literally driving through two of our Mission Districts to get to NJ – an idea was hatched. Why not hold individual Stuff the Truck events in the two Mission Districts Mary was driving through?

And that is precisely what happened. Congregations of the Western Mission District and Central Mission District quickly got busy. Flyers and contribution wish lists were distributed to these two Mission Districts congregations, and the people responded!

Word of Mary's travel plans even reached a congregation out of our Region who jumped at the chance of being able to contribute.

Mary, along with her husband Ken and son Zach, pulled a 40' trailer from OH all the way to St. Timothy, Camp Hill, PA (Western Mission District) where she picked up 27 health kits, 10 prayer shawls, about 40 Bibles and a couple of gift cards from St. Timothy. While there they also collected donations that were brought to St. Timothy from First Lutheran

Church (Ridgway, PA – Mid-Northeast Mission District) - 12 flood buckets, 10 brooms, and also 10 boxes of sewing supplies to be taken back to Caldwell, OH and shipped to Haiti. Next, Mary and company continued their travels eastward and stopped at Zoar LC, Lebanon, PA (Central Mission District) where five CMD congregations had brought donations. They loaded 43 blankets & afghans, 33 health kits, 51 school kits, 2 baby kits, 17 flood buckets, 1 mop, 7 brooms, 3 shovels, 2 rakes, multiple gift cards, and 4 boxes of Bibles. Between these two stops Mary's 40' trailer was over halfway full.

Mary so appreciated all the efforts and contributions of the participating congregations. What Mary picked up on September 26 during her two stops eastward will be used very quickly. She told those at Zoar how the week before this 40' trailer, which was packed to the gills upon arriving in Pensacola, FL, was emptied in 2 hours following Hurricane Sally earlier in the month. She even had to call the Kings Mountain, NC warehouse for more supplies which were also quickly distributed. So, THANK YOU to all who participated in this small, but important event.

For more information about Disaster Response and how you can contribute either monetarily or how to ship completed kits to the DR warehouse in Caldwell, OH please go to <https://thenalc.org/nalc-disaster-response/>.

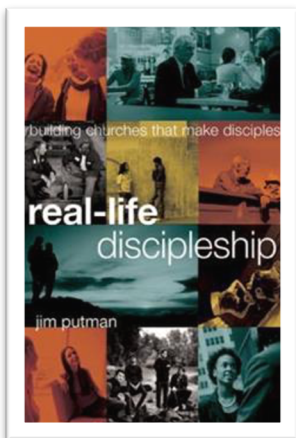


## **MINISTRY RESOURCES – REAL LIFE DISCIPLESHIP**

*Lee Mills, AMR Renewal and Discipleship Ministry Team*

### **REAL LIFE DISCIPLESHIP...BUILDING CHURCHES THAT MAKE DISCIPLES**

Are you looking for a fresh approach to effective discipleship? Would you like to see your



congregation thrive and grow in numbers and maturity while creating intentional followers of Christ who in turn learn how to make other disciples?

This entertaining book is filled with proven tools and strategies offered by the senior pastor of one of America's fastest-growing congregations. It will

strengthen your small groups and help build even smaller, personal relationship-focused, disciple-making Life-to-Life groups.

It is filled with real-life examples and a companion training manual that can take you and your group through various aspects of discipleship training. You will learn how to identify, recruit, and create gifted leaders from within your congregation, and/or community, who will not only learn to become better disciples themselves, but also learn how to go out and make other disciples, who will then go out to make disciples...the fruit of multiplication!

Having read this book, I highly recommend it. I first heard about it and received it from a close Christian

neighborhood friend who effectively used the book and its' companion training manual (*Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual: Equipping Disciples Who Make Disciples*) for some time with very positive results.

If you are looking for a disciple-making resource, that can make a positive difference, this is an ideal, practical, time-tested resource to consider.

### **YOUR "IN PERSON RESOURCE"... THE AMR RENEWAL & DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY TEAM (RDMT)**

In support of Bishop Selbo's #1 vision statement for the NALC, the RDMT is continuously working to support planting seeds of 'discipleship' in our regional congregations. The team is ready, willing and able to visit congregations who have a desire to take the first step. A developed presentation will assist with discussion to move forward with that first step, one suited for your particular congregation. Contact Lee Mills, or any team member below to learn more about returning the Church to a disciple making culture.

Chair, Lee Mills	<a href="mailto:lmills.email@comcast.net">lmills.email@comcast.net</a>
Rev. Mark Chavez	<a href="mailto:mchavez@thenalc.org">mchavez@thenalc.org</a>
Rev. Brett Jenkins	<a href="mailto:pastorjenkins.sts@gmail.com">pastorjenkins.sts@gmail.com</a>
Rev. John Kulczycki	<a href="mailto:john.kulczycki@verizon.net">john.kulczycki@verizon.net</a>
Rev. Brian Triller	<a href="mailto:briantriller@protonmail.com">briantriller@protonmail.com</a>
Rev. Luke Seamon	<a href="mailto:pastor@reformation-nalc.org">pastor@reformation-nalc.org</a>
Judy Mills, Ex Officio & Admin	<a href="mailto:news.atlantic.nalc@gmail.com">news.atlantic.nalc@gmail.com</a>

## **RESOURCE TO PROMOTE OUR CORE VALUES**

### **MAKING YOUR CONGREGATION VISIBLE IN THE COMMUNITY**

*By Reverend Brett Jenkins, AMR Council Member, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Nazareth, PA*

As the many changes that have come to American society over the last few decades demonstrate, awareness-raising is an effective tactic. Having a coherent, consistent, concise message and attaching it to your name and/or organization helps people know

who you are, what you stand for, and most importantly, *why they should value that too.*

Whether you call it promotion, advertising, or branding what makes it effective are the three C's: being **coherent**, **consistent**, and **concise**.

Continued

As the NALC, we are blessed to have had visionary organizers who made sure through our core values that we are coherent; we are Jesus-centered people whose understanding of Christ following is traditionally-grounded on a mission to bring Him to the world, something we believe happens best through local gatherings of the faithful who know their own mission field, not national initiatives with grandiose visions. We can and should give thanks that our organization accurately reflects the coherence of the Biblical gospel!

However, our congregational focus has made it hard to resource ourselves for outreach; not every congregation has all the gift sets and skills relevant to doing effective outreach in a rapidly-changing world. While each of knows our own mission fields best, only together are we truly the Church of Jesus Christ.

That is why a group from the AMR has been working on an advertising strategy for our region that will let us maximize the uniqueness as congregations while letting us all put forward a coherent message as the NALC in this region; one of our challenges is to distinguish ourselves from other churches that carry the name Lutheran but are not faithful to that tradition or the Great Tradition of Christianity more generally!

Conciseness has also not been a gift of the Lutheran tradition, so we are seeking to keep the main thing the main thing by keeping our advertising snappy and focused; catechesis and nuance will be your job once people have come knocking on your door.

And getting them knocking on your door is our strategy. Embedded in pictures like the attached, which will you will be able to use to advertise on the internet in your own neighborhood, will be information called *metadata* that will lead people directly to your website so they can come visit you in person. They merely click on the picture, and they come knocking directly on your virtual front door!

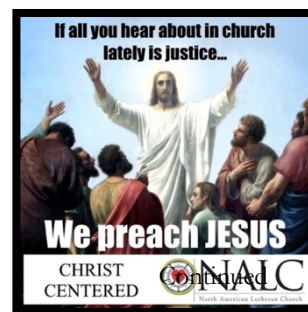
Of course, that means that your website better be a place worth visiting; many of us put far more thought into whether our church entrance is attractive than into our website landing page despite the fact that in today's world **80% of people will visit our church webpage** before they ever set foot in our church. Our congregation's website landing pages need to be

focused on *invitation, not information*. If your webpage needs attention, get someone on it ASAP. It is absolutely true that you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Secondly, while we want our regional advertising efforts to be successful in getting new people to visit us, we must remember that this is not the end-game; Christ's commission to us was to make *disciples*, not visitors. If we want to be faithful in our charge, we must have a functioning plan to welcome people without smothering them, help them get engaged in congregational life without simply "putting them to work" on existing congregational projects, and most importantly, grow in their commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, which is best measured in their willingness to be obedient to Christ at cost to themselves.

The efforts of our regional team will only be fruitful if each of our individual congregations gets ready to receive the people we hope will visit as a result of our initiative, including asking ourselves if we are really ready to receive them *for Christ's sake*, making our absolute best efforts from first contact to fully-engaged membership to clear the path for them to totally committed discipleship.

The region is preparing to help you reach your community... are you ready? As Peter will remind us in the upcoming Advent season, we want to be "be diligent to be found by [Jesus] without spot or blemish," about His work as His Church, welcoming the stranger and like the friends of the paralytic in Mark 2:3-5, carrying them faithfully to Jesus.



## DISCIPLING THROUGH FAITH WEBBING

*Submitted by Gary (and Laurie) Pecuch, faithwebbing.com*

Based off of the articles on the concept of Faith Webbing in the two previous *Atlantic Vine* issues, Gary & Laurie Pecuch share a Faith Webbing story. In discipling and reaching our future generations, the couple has served on the youth ministry staff of St. John's Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio since the early 1980's. You can catch more of Gary & Laurie by visiting [faithwebbing.com](http://faithwebbing.com).

### ***Taylor: My BFF Church Moms***

The Friday after Thanksgiving, Taylor and I were scheduled to meet at the church to work together on a project. She was a freshman in high school. Of course, it was Black Friday, and she told me she had planned to go shopping that day and she would call me when she got back. "No problem," I told her, "Take your time and call when you get home."

Sometime soon after 8:00 a.m., I got the call. "I'm back," said Taylor.

Being 8 a.m. in the morning, I asked, "Back from what?"

"From shopping," she replied.

I said, "Oh, you didn't do that four-in-the-morning, Black Friday shopping thing, did you?"

"Oh, yeah, and I got everything I wanted," she replied.

I went on to say, "God love your mom for getting up at that hour to take you Christmas shopping."

She replied, "My mom didn't take me. I went with my BFF church moms."

It turned out that two parent-aged ladies in our congregation were talking with Taylor at church when she expressed a desire to go shopping early on Black Friday morning to buy presents for her parents. The

two ladies simply said, "Well, if you can't find someone to take you, let us know." Taylor took them up on the offer.

These two (affectionately referred to by Taylor as her "BFF Church Moms," which stands for "*best friends forever*") picked up Taylor and a friend of hers early on Black Friday morning, and off they went to go Christmas shopping. Yes, like at 4 am in the morning.

What a loving testimony to two dear adults who helped a young lady from our congregation buy Christmas gifts for her parents. It's all part of the Faith Webbing concept. Building relationships among our church members to the point where they see themselves as "church family." By going out of their way to help Taylor these two moms communicated to her the love and joy of Jesus. Our Sunday School lessons may be forgotten. Our youth group devotions may have helped Taylor get through the day. But, the experience Taylor had with her BFF Church Moms will be remembered forever. As I write this article 12 years later, the three of them remain connected. This is what people webbed in faith do for each other.



## AMR COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

**SEPTEMBER 12, 2020**

- Treasurer Kathaleen Lilley will disburse \$2,000 to the NALS from the Seminary Support line item in the 2020 Ministry Plan.
- Dean David will speak to Bishop Dan with regard to language the AMR and AMR congregations should add to their constitutions regarding electronic voting in special circumstances. This will be addressed at the October Convocation.
- The Regional Dean will have a new, dedicated email address that will be used by whoever holds that office. This will eliminate any AMR Dean from using their personal email for AMR business.
- Two congregations in the AMR are currently actively working on a discipleship initiative with guidance from the AMR Renewal & Discipleship Ministry Team.

Continued



- Robin's hourly compensation was increased due to the extra work she is doing since we regionalized.
- The Theological Conference has not been re-scheduled yet, but the two presenters have been secured.
- The annual AMR Convocation is scheduled for Saturday, October 17 from 9 AM – 12 PM via GoToMeeting teleconference. Pr. Trina Petersen will lead the discussion on ethnic and cultural tensions and the divisiveness our communities and country are experiencing.
- The Convocation business meeting agenda was discussed and planned.
- Reports were heard from the deans and lay representatives from all four Mission Districts.
- Video publicity will be going into production in the coming weeks as a new means of advertising the

AMR on local TV stations, beginning in the Easton, PA area.

- The AMR Women of the NALC are planning their first day-long Women's Conference to be held on Saturday, May 1, 2021 at Zoar ELC, Lebanon, PA.
- Dates for the 2021 spring Mission District Convocations were set. All venues are TBD:
  - Central – Saturday, May 8
  - Northeast – Saturday, May 15
  - Southern – Saturday, May 22
  - Western – Saturday, June 5

Respectfully submitted,  
Robin Harris  
Administrative Assistant to the Deans  
and AMR Council

## **WHERE RESTORATION BEGINS**

### **A REPORT OF THE ONLINE 2020 AMR CONVOCATION**

*By Robin Harris, AMR Administrator*

2020 has been quite a year, one full of unexpected changes, stresses, and adaptations to the way we used to do things. Congregations have been figuring out new ways to get the Word out to their members through live streamed liturgies, emailed newsletters, and Zoom Bible studies. Communion practices have become "safer" yet in some ways more complicated. Virtual meetings are being held everywhere. And the 2020 AMR Convocation was no exception.

It was with a heavy heart that the Convocation planning team made the decision to have a virtual regional convocation this year. And with the change in venue came a sudden change in focus. The originally planned theme on worship would not have

translated well online. So, with only months to start over and plan a new focus the team worked very hard with our Regional Dean David McGettigan to put together an extremely pared down but equipping online Convocation. This Convocation – ***Where Restoration Begins*** – was held the morning of Saturday, October 17 via GoToMeeting teleconference with a total of 52 participants (25 clergy, 14 voting lay delegates, and 13 visitors).

Isn't it amazing how our God works all things for good? Our sister in Christ, Pastor Trina Petersen (dean of the Mid-South Mission District and pastor at A New Thing Christian Church in Lithonia, GA) graciously took on the role of the Convocation's presenter with very little time to prepare.

Pastor Trina led the participants in a discussion around John 5:1-9 with an emphasis on vs. 6, "*Do you want to be healed?*." She emphasized the need we all have for spiritual healing, especially in the divisive world we are all living in. Her presentation was timely and very well received and appreciated. (*See her follow-up in this Vine's issue, on pages 8-10.*)

### **HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING**

- The 2021 Ministry Spending Plan was approved as presented. This Ministry Plan had been endorsed at all four Mission District meetings in the spring, however the approved plan included a few increases due to wanting to support our multiple seminarians and new AMR initiatives.

Continued

## **Mission Districts & Additional Reports**

- **Central** – Dean Dan Schaefer reported on the counseling services now being offered to pastors called *Caring for Those Who Care*. This initiative is being offered to pastors, their families, and lay leaders who may be overly stressed due to recent events. Pastor Dan is a licensed counselor, and this service is confidential. Go to [www.atlantic.nalc.org](http://www.atlantic.nalc.org) for more information (the News & Events tab).
- **Western** – Dean Steve Shipman reported on the three (3) pastoral vacancies in the WMD.
- **Southern** – Dean John Kulczycki reported on an overnight pastoral retreat being planned in November in the SMD. Lay representative Jerrie Rosenfeld reported on a Prayer Ministry initiative she is currently helping to organize that will be launched in the new year.
- **Northeast** – Dean Brett Jenkins reported on the media initiative that he, CMD Dean Dan Schaefer, and the AMR Tech Ministry Team has been working on. This media initiative will get the NALC and local congregations' website information on the top of the Google list when people search for words like "traditional" or "confessional," etc. (*See pages 9-10 for more information.*)
- There was no objection to extending Regional Dean David McGettigan's term of office for one additional extraordinary year, so the motion was declared passed. His term of office will expire at the October 2021 Convocation.
- Lee Mills gave a report from the AMR Renewal & Discipleship Ministry Team. He updated the assembly on the work the team is doing on discipleship initiatives around the Region. (*See additional notes on page 8.*)
- Mary Bates gave a report from the NALC Disaster Response. She thanked all for their continued support and especially to Emanuel LC (Elmer, NJ) for sponsoring the construction of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Disaster Response tool trailer.
- Pastors celebrating a milestone anniversary were recognized, and pastors and congregations new to the Region and our seminarians were introduced by way of a PowerPoint presentation.

- Announcements were made re: the 2021 AMR and Mission District events. Please see pages 11 and 14 for a more complete list.

The 2020 Convocation was definitely different from years past. There were no conversations by snack tables or in hallways. There were no meals together. Even though we were not able to meet "in person" there was fellowship and good conversation. It was good to hear Pastor Trina and see those who logged on. And it was wonderful to worship together at the close of the Convocation. Thank you to Pastor Trina and Pastor Brett Jenkins (on guitar) who led us in the closing worship. And may we all be together – NEXT YEAR, not in Jerusalem, but in NAZARETH (Pennsylvania, that is).

To see and hear the 2020 Convocation in its entirety please go to the AMR website at [www.atlantic-nalc.org](http://www.atlantic-nalc.org). The link is currently on the homepage and can also be found on the 2020 Convocation in Review page under the "News & Events" tab (2020 AMR Convocation in Review).

## **SOUTHERN DISTRICT UPDATE FROM DEAN JOHN KULCZYCKI**

It is so easy for the local parish and pastor to become isolated in what we are doing from day to day. I'm aware that I am well known for simply following my nose every day dealing with the tyranny of the moment. Our NALC congregations are separated not only by the daily demands of parish life but also the distance of miles; some further than others. I have found the support of other pastors have been an important part of my ministry for many years. The statistics on how we can become discouraged are surprising. I recently read 91% of pastors have experienced some form of burnout in ministry and 18% say they are fried to a crisp right now. Pastor Dan Schaefer, Dean of the Central Mission District, says that pastors and policemen are the least likely to look for help when it comes to difficulties in their professions. The Regional Council is putting into place pastoral support. (More information to come.)

One of the ways we can help and encourage each other is to be in contact with each other. Because we are far apart, the online format, "GoToMeeting" is one way we can connect. Each of us have different experiences and skills that can be shared depending

on the person or situation. It is helpful to find out what other pastors and churches are doing outside of our own.

Developing relationships among each other is one way we can support each other in our unique ministries and callings. We meet "on line" every 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month. I send an email with the link to connect before the meeting.

Also, on Friday and Saturday, November 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> the district hosted a retreat at Mar Lou Ridge in Maryland. Pastor Di Mauro arranged an excellent rate that included the hotel, meals, worship, presentations and free time and break away. The retreat was open to all AMR pastors.

### AMR ROSTER CHANGES

**The Rev. Bruce Foster** (Lynn, MA)  
was rostered as NALC clergy on July 16.

**The Rev. Richard Blue Jr.**  
was called to serve as pastor of  
First L C of Gray Manor, Dundalk, MD  
beginning August 1. He was installed October 4.

*Welcome*

### **THE PASSING OF BISHOP EMERITUS PAULL SPRING, 1938-2020**

**Bishop Paull Spring** was called to his eternal home with his Lord on October 17, 2020.

Please continue you prayers for his wife, Barbara, and their family, along with prayers of thanks for the life he lived and the life he now lives in Jesus.

### **EXTENDING RETIREMENT WISHES**

*Well done good  
and faithful servant!*

**The Rev. David Letscher** retired from Bethany LC, Montoursville, PA on September 30.

**The Rev. Kerry Maurer** retired from St. Luke LC, Bloomsburg, PA on September 30.

### **WELCOME TO THE NALC & THE AMR Sattazahn Lutheran Church**

Pastor Ted Hummel  
Mailing address:  
21 Ditzler Lane, Jonestown, PA 17038  
on October 29.

## **SANCTITY OF LIFE CONFERENCE & MARCH FOR LIFE**

Election results will not change the emphasis of sanctity of life events.

**The March for Life in Washington DC remains set for Friday, January 29, 2021.**

**The 2021 theme "Together Strong: Life Unites."**



On Thursday January 28, the NALC will gather at Reformation Lutheran Church, Culpeper, VA for prayer and focus in this moment of time and unity of the pro-life movement. (Details to come.)

On January 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> we must bring our voices together in defense of the littlest ones in the womb. More than ever, let's stand together continuing to fight for the right to life for the unborn.

## **THE NEXT ATLANTIC VINE**

***Submission deadline — Tuesday February 2<sup>nd</sup>***

*Email communications and correspondence to [news.atlantic.nalc@gmail.com](mailto:news.atlantic.nalc@gmail.com).*

*Share with the region, your district and others.*

*Share resources effective in your congregation.*

***Something interesting happening in your congregation or area?***

***An email broadcast can be sent to our region anytime.***

***Send an email to [news.atlantic.nalc@gmail.com](mailto:news.atlantic.nalc@gmail.com)***

***Remember... share, invite, provide notes of interest, and more.***

***The Atlantic Vine and [news.atlantic.nalc@gmail.com](mailto:news.atlantic.nalc@gmail.com) are just two of your communication tools.***

***Note  
the  
Date  
2/2/2021***