

ATLANTIC MISSION REGION DEAN'S MESSAGE

September 2021

The Rev. David McGettigan

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

What to say in my last Message for The Vine after over ten years on the Atlantic Mission District/Region Council with six of those years as

Dean? Well just a bit of mission encouragement coupled with a few observations, mostly, prayerful hopes...



This coming Sunday the Old Testament reading from Isaiah inspired me, ***"The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may***

know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught" (50:4).

I've spent quite a bit of recent time writing and speaking about the power of the tongue, for the most part, the tongue's negative or destructive capability. Isaiah 50 reminds us the tongue is God's gift for the most powerful and positive purpose among the ***"taught,"*** those who have been brought ***"into the light"*** by the Word of truth, Jesus, and now follow as disciples or learners. We are the ***"taught"*** and our tongues are given for the mission of bringing that saving Word to ***"the weary"*** far and wide.

Remember Paul in Romans, ***"How are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?"*** (10:14). Our tongues have been all too silent about the gift of truth with which we have been taught and formed. Time to loosen those tongues.

I am a fan of SOLA Publishing SOWeR Worship resources. Their helpful Lectionary Text Study comments on Isaiah's use of ***"awakens;"*** ***"The prophet asserted that it was God who 'awakened' him to hear His Word. This awakening is not just to be roused from sleep, rather it is to be brought to attention, ready to serve in obedience"***.

Isaiah 50 lights the way further, ***"Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God."*** Yes, we can feel overwhelmed by the darkness around us in the culture, the shadows of our depressive decline in "membership," recently, disease among us, and yes, just general degradation of the institutions on which we have depended. Now where do we go every time we feel ourselves going down? Exactly where the Prophet points...back to our only sure trust and ultimate reliance...to our relationship with Christ and His hope that constantly lifts us and sends us out again with hopeful tongues speaking the joy and assurance we have received in Christ to many.

Three Spirit-driven Bishops, Paull, John, and now Daniel, have led and guided the NALC through a process moving from a mere institutional or "membership" model of Church to a dynamic discipleship culture in our congregations – both the deepening of our own discipleship in Christ as well as our call to make new disciples for Christ. Now is the time to embrace with full heart that movement. New, exciting, and very "Lutheran" resources are available through the AMR Renewal and Discipleship Team (RDMT) under Lee Mills' leadership and working with Pastor Phil Gagnon from the Bishop's staff to assist you.

Which brings me to another observation. To whom do we go with those loosened, confident, and joyful tongues? Well, Paul quoted earlier reminds us we go

Continued

to those ears and hearts who have not yet heard or who have heard and wandered from the assuring Word in Jesus, to the so called “unchurched” or “seekers,” to God’s children who do not yet know the depth and promise of their relationship with Jesus. It is also time for the AMR to get more serious and devoted to creative and non-traditional Mission Planting for the sake of those to whom we are sent.

While thanks to God’s work among us we have had significant success in some Mission Plants, we have also lost others. And we made a decision a few years ago that our internal renewal in discipleship needed greater attention for a time so we formed the Renewal & Discipleship Ministry Team (RDMT). Now Pastors Jill Stellman and Dennis DiMauro have agreed to initiate an AMR Mission Planting Team (MPT) and, again, working with Pr. Phil Gagnon to assist congregations and individuals to ramp up new plants of various models to undergird the proclamation of Christ in the world.

My observation is that until now the largest portion of our growth relied on congregations and pastors from other church bodies having, like us, experienced the disillusionment of denominational drift into unfaithfulness began seeking fellowship with other orthodox disciples. This ministry must and will continue as we welcome faithful brother and sister Christians ministering with healing grace to what I call the “spiritual PTSD” they frequently bring from the struggles for faithfulness that we all remember. But providing this safe harbor for the faithful, important as it may be, is not the principal call of the Great Commission. Nor need it be the largest portion of our growth.

By God’s grace faithfulness is given to us not for our own comfort alone but for the challenge of the mission field speaking His Word of grace to the agnostic, the antagonistic, the atheist, to all who still suffer ignorance of abundance of life in Christ alone. We have not been as devoted to this most difficult mission and remained much too shy about our gift. This is how the early Church grew and exponentially – they went out to even the pagan and gave them Jesus! And, indeed, our early faith ancestors suffered for their effort and that itself – that willingness to suffer for Jesus’ Great Commission – grew the Church.

Consider the opportunity to plant creative communities around you, perhaps to become Mission Congregations one day, serving the wandering and confused who may not yet be ready to enter the rather daunting doors of the traditional church building but who may be ready to receive Christ beginning in a new setting.

Again, it is about the “*hearing*,” not the church building, nor location, not even the full congregation presence that brings faith, “*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*” (Romans 10:17). Consider what non-traditional methods, places and locations you might develop and plant so that the “*word of Christ*” reaches yearning ears. The AMR and NALC have ample resources to assist you or your congregation in this new initiative as well.

Enough of my ramblings. To close, another verse that brings all of you, the AMR congregations and disciples, to my mind and heart whenever I hear or read it, “*For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints...*” (Ephesians 1:15-18).

I am so deeply grateful to God for each of you, for the moments we have spent together, some quite joyful and some quite trying, for the love and respect which you have bestowed on me, for your struggle with grace and transformation in the most difficult of times, for your faith and fellowship, for your steady reliance on the hope that is Christ alone. These years as your Dean have been high points of blessing in my long time serving Jesus. And when I leave the office of AMR Dean at the October Convocation, these memories will remain sharp and consoling. My desire for your growth in Christ will not wane, and, I promise, my prayers for you will be ceaseless.

God bless you in every way you need and desire.

*David**

2020 VISION #1 – DISCIPLE-MAKING CULTURES & #2 – CONGREGATIONAL MULTIPLICATION

*By The Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions &
The Rev. Phillip Gagnon, STS, Assistant to the Bishop for Domestic Mission & Discipleship*

*The report to the 2021 NALC Convocation of the # 1 & # 2 Visions is reprinted with permission.
Added reprint highlights in red or in brackets are intended to draw attention to resources.*

Greetings in the Name of Jesus!

As we enter the 2021 Lutheran Week, we are celebrating God's goodness and faithfulness. In 1 Peter 2:6 (ESV) we read: *For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*

There are many discouraging things that we face today in this world: a continuing global pandemic, civil unrest, political instability throughout the world and natural disasters. But these things should not come as a surprise to us since the fall in Genesis 3. We do not ignore the challenges, but rather, we proclaim the faithfulness and goodness of our God. We proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ which does not change, even in the midst of a changing world. And we know that other things may be shaken and fall away, that we rest securely because of the unshakable cornerstone. We rejoice in the privilege that God has called us into mission together as living stones, built upon the rock that is Jesus Christ.

To that end, our strategy for 2021-2022 continues:

A Paradigm for Revival — In Psalm 85, we have a paradigm or blueprint for revival. The practical nature of what the renewal and revival of the church looks like practically speaking.

vv. 1-4: Remember God's Faithfulness – The same God who has called us His own through the death and resurrection of his Son, who has claimed us in baptism, sealed us by His Holy Spirit, and continues to feed us at his table is faithful. He who began a good work in us will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ.

vv. 5-6: Acknowledge The Present – It is critical not to dismiss our current reality. Not dismissing the difficult things that stand before us or in our midst, the struggles, and our own need for repentance.

vv. 7-9: The Word – Renewal and revival only come by the Word of God. It is critical that we listen and

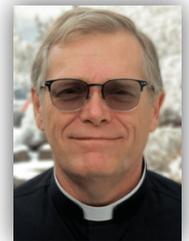


Rev Gemechis Buba

submit to the Word of God and be sustained by His Word.

vv. 10-13: Look to God's Promises – Looking to the future as we are called to be ambassadors, living agents of God's grace. Living into our call of the Great Commission to: "Go

therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."



Rev Phillip Gagnon

The NALC is Mission Driven. We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel and to make disciples for Christ. We believe that making disciples — in our congregations, in our communities and nations, and around the world — must be a priority of the Church in the present age. The NALC Mission Office has a primary focus of mobilizing congregations, leaders, and mission districts for mission. To achieve this, systematic organization for mission is critically important. It is vital that we continue to work in these five categories in order to mobilize the whole denomination: **New Mission Starts, Congregational Renewal, International Mission, The Great Commission Society, and Multi-National Mission.** A plethora of information regarding our work in 2020-2021 is available on our website in each focus area. Some key areas and projects we would like to emphasize are:

- **Congregational Renewal** – Throughout 2020-2021, our Renewal Team has worked hard to meet the articulated needs of our mission districts, congregations, and leaders. Through "The Academy," we have found a light-weight and effective vehicle to deliver some of these much needed resources,

including both video and podcast options. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been able to assist in providing resources, such as: a listing of congregations that host worship services and sermons online, hosting a special Bible study series with Dr. Gemechis Buba, and establishing a digital bulletin board to help share grass-roots resources. We are hard at work to continue development of resources in 3 other key areas under the direction of Pastor Brad Hales and the Renewal Team: prayer, senior ministry and the launch of an online course for small and rural church ministry.

- **New Starts: Plant, Grow, Bloom** – Continued resource development for church planting in the NALC as well as welcoming Pastor Phil Gagnon to the team. This year we have focused on: care of current mission starts, a monthly onboarding opportunity for those interested in learning more about New Starts in the NALC, monthly coaching for new mission start leaders, additional coaching opportunities for those who have already been engaged in church planting, and a strategy to assist congregations and mission districts in planting churches. The New Starts Team is working on a dual certification process to provide more in-depth training in the future. They have recently been certified by City to City, as well as in NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship so life-to-life culture is engrained in the DNA of all new mission starts in the NALC.

- **The Great Commission Society** – The purpose of the Great Commission Society of the NALC is to mobilize disciples for the work of the Great Commission. Our mission is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a world that is in desperate need of the Good News. We propose to do this by networking congregations and individuals who have a passion for the proclamation of the Gospel and a commitment to the calling of the Great Commission. In 2020 and 2021 GCS has continued to connect with mission districts and leaders as the Mission Connections team called every mission district dean or district mission team leader. These calls are a wonderful way to not only hear of God's faithfulness but also become more aware and see the present joys and challenges happening in the field.

- **Multi-National Mission** – Continuing to providing individual consultations, a training opportunity, and working to find more effective

ways to maximize opportunities for our current missions as they thrive in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. We have also begun to provide additional online training opportunities.

Additionally, Ordination Under Special Circumstances — Diaconate (OUCS-D) is under development. This concerns the training of those under special circumstances in smaller communities of Canada and United States that cannot afford to call a regular M.Div. pastor. Those in this program might be later career individuals, mature in faith and longing to serve Christ but cannot do an M.Div. These individuals would go through a two year program online and some intensive training, with mentoring to follow and ongoing education, so that these communities in want or on the front lines of ministry such as in Mexico/Latin America might find themselves able to be receive pastors from amongst their communities to serve. These persons are likely to be those already serving in some capacity or seen as being the community's pastor in practice already.

- **International Mission** – Focusing on the care of our current Global Workers, 60 launching several new global workers, and working on a pan-African youth initiative together with EECMY . We have also been working to form critical relationships for the sake of the Good News of Jesus Christ, as well as partner with ministry partners to maximize critical networks.

- **NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship** – An online training course for Discipleship Guides has been developed. This training will be grounded in Scripture and focus on various areas of personal development for those wishing training to disciple others in their walk with Christ.

[The Atlantic Mission Region currently has 8 enrolled in this first training course including members of the AMR's Renewal and Discipleship Ministry Team. Also, this next section highlights a number of excellent discipleship and other resources that have been highlighted in red for the Atlantic Vine.]

Below are a few of the tangible resources produced by our five national mission teams, as we continue to equip and resource our congregations for mission:

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- **The Academy** – 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 are hosting a free webinar based on expressed needs by NALC Leaders, for NALC Leaders. For details:
<https://missions.nalcnetwork.com/tag/academy/>
- **Small and Rural Church Ministry** – It's not about the size, but the relationships. And the small, rural church is truly vital today because of these relationships. For resources on this topic, including access to the new online course, please visit:
<https://missions.nalcnetwork.com/tag/smallandruralchurch/>
- **Mission District Mission Team Resources** – The extended version of resources compiled from various trainings and conferences in the last four years: <https://goo.gl/uFPmfU>
- **CROSS Talk** – CROSS Talk is a weekly online lectionary study led by Dr. James Nestingen in conjunction with St. Paul Seminary. Join each Tuesday at 4 pm EST. For more information or to register—please visit:
<http://www.semlc.org/contact-us>
- **GoodNews Media! Resources** – Throughout the pandemic, we worked to compile a list of congregations hosting online worship services or sermons, a digital bulletin board, and other resources:
<https://missions.nalcnetwork.com/goodnews-media-resources/>
- **NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship** – If you are interested in receiving more information or joining future online cohorts for training, please visit:
<https://airtable.com/shrUFNBtQWDVhHJIF>
- **Multi-National Leader Training** – Joining together in 2020 with DiscipleLife 2020, this training was critical to help equip our multi-national leaders and provide access to a variety of resources designed to assist in their unique situations with a focus on discipleship and mission. We also hosted individual consultations.
- **Mission Finder** – Mission cannot be done in isolation. It is about relationship and building strategic mission networks. Find information about other hands-on mission and ministry projects in the NALC (including short-term mission trips):
<https://missions.nalcnetwork.com>
- **Mission Grants**—The NALC continues to offer short-term grants for mission starts, global worker support, international mission projects, congregational renewal, and emergency aid. This support comes from the NALC Great Commission Fund.
- **GCS Mission Partners** – Short Term Grants are only one piece of the puzzle. We invite mission starts, international projects, renewal projects, those seeking emergency aid, and others to apply for our GCS Vetting Process. Approval of an application places the ministry on a special portion of the NALC's website, comes with assistance in forming long sustaining relationships, and provides partners with an assurance that the ministry is supportive of the NALC's Core Values, meets fiscal standards & ministry standards, etc. For an application, to see the newly designed website, and approved ministries as we live into the GCS's 1 x 1 x 1 Vision, please visit: www.thenalc.org/GCS
- **Quarterly Book Study** – Last spring the GCS Mission Connectors Team heard the expressed felt need for connection, so the development and offering of six week digital book study was created, as a time to gather and find community with other leaders. The studies have grown each time: in number of participants, in depth of discussion, and in community. They have been a blessing and we will continue to explore this ministry offering as long as participants are hungry for a virtual community that is grounded in God's word, prayer, learning, and exploring how to lead and live as ambassadors and agents of God's grace.
- **Unveiled** – The other new project the Great Commission Society accepted in 2020 was offering a digital missions conference, UNVEILED. Again, led by input the Mission Connections team received from their calls, we designed a three day online conference experience

that offered daily worship and biblical teaching, mission stories, mission engagement tools, prayer, and even a time to gather virtually with people in live-time during post-conference coffee hours hosted by different NALC leaders and mission partners. UNVEILED had two goals- raise money for the Great Commission Society grant fund and offer community for mission driven leaders. By the power of the Holy Spirit and a team of 60 experts and volunteers the goals were met. We had more than 120 participants and raised over \$5000 to give to mission leaders in grants.

- **Mission Resources on NALC Website** – Designed specifically to connect pastors, leaders and congregations to requested resources. Includes video teaching, “how to” and other administrative documents, past training events

and more. We are grateful to the NALC Communications Office for their assistance in updating this portion of the NALC website: <https://thenalc.org/missiondriven/>

We have had a very fruitful year, and we would like to personally express our gratitude to Pastor Brad Hales, serving as the Director of Renewal Ministries, for his passion for the Gospel. Together with our national mission teams, we are blessed with an abundant number of gifts, talents, and resources. It is truly a pleasure to serve together.

As always, we would like to give thanks for our national mission teams who serve so faithfully and the countless number of those who volunteer their time, gifts, and treasures for the sake of the Gospel. Thank you for your continued prayers and service. May God continue to richly bless you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO PROMOTE OUR CORE VALUES & DISCIPLESHIP

Take time to view a number of the Lutheran Week sessions. Find them posted at: <https://thenalc.org/2021-lutheran-week-archive/>

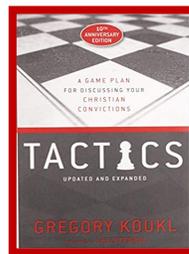
You will find a video of the Braaten-Benne Lecture in Theology as well as speaker notes from The Very Rev. Patrick Readon, The Most Rev. Dr. Ray Sutton, and the Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen. Among the speakers two impactful guest included Dr. Steven Paulson, professor of Lutheran Theology at Sioux Falls Seminary; and Melissa Ohden, Founder & Director, The Abortion Survivors Network. Melissa is the survivor of a failed saline infusion abortion.

TACTICS: A GAME PLAN FOR DISCUSSING YOUR CHRISTIAN CONVICTIONS *by Gregory Koukl*

This is a resource brought to our attention at Discipleship Guide Training.

In a world increasingly indifferent to Christian truth, followers of Christ need to be equipped to communicate with those who do not speak their

language or accept their source of authority. In *Tactics* Gregory Koukl demonstrates how to artfully regain



control of conversations, keeping them moving forward in constructive ways through thoughtful diplomacy. Learn how to stop challengers and how to turn the tables on questions or provocative statements. Most important, you'll learn how to get

people thinking about Jesus. *Tactics* provides the game plan for communicating the compelling truth about Christianity with confidence and grace.

Drawing on extensive experience defending Christianity in the public square, Koukl shows readers how to ask questions plus:

- Initiate conversations effortlessly
- Present the truth clearly, cleverly, and persuasively
- Graciously and effectively expose faulty thinking
- Skillfully manage the details of dialogue
- Maintain an engaging, disarming style even under attack

NALC DISASTER RESPONSE

TOOL TRAILER NO. 3 COMPLETE, COMMISSIONED, NOW SERVING!

The Disaster Response Tool Trailer #3 is complete. It was constructed and outfitted by Zion Lutheran Church, Saint Marys, OH. It was commissioned and immediately sent to a work site to assist and rebuild as a result of a disaster. It was constructed in the same pattern as Trailer #1 & #2.

There were many from Zion involved, but Bob Hinschlager, Ed Yahl, John Yahl, Tim Hanover, Dwayne Hoenie, Pastor Bill Maki, and Cody Sharp were mainly involved.



Cody commented that it's difficult to gauge how long it would have taken our group to do this trailer pre-Covid. The guys that did most of the work are retired, and had more time during the week to work on things. It was a great group effort, and the friendships and fellowship that developed over this project were one of the best aspects of being a part of it. I'm glad that we were selected to bring this to fruition. It was nice to work on something that has the potential to help so many others!

AN IMPORTANT NOTE FROM MARY BATES

Emanuel Elmer LC, NJ is a Disaster Response distribution point and will be hosting volunteer teams responding to Hurricane Ida. A tornado devastated Mullica Hill NJ, in addition to 3 other communities. St. Matthew LC, Middle River, MD had a good inventory, however, we cleaned them out. They are empty! The devastation of Hurricane Ida is bad.

Your help is needed....please bring, or send with your representatives, quilts, flood buckets, health kits, Bibles and gift cards, other listed items, as many as possible, to the Atlantic Mission Region Convocation. Any monetary donations may be sent to

**NALC Disaster Response, P.O. Box 860565,
Minneapolis, MN 55486**

Mary will be at the AMR Convocation in person on October 22-23, 2021. See the additional information below regarding "Stuff the Truck."

WOMEN OF THE NALC SPONSOR "STUFF THE TRUCK"

The NALC Disaster Response Team is diligently working to assist those who have been affected by the multiple disasters the U.S. has faced during the last year. The latest, Hurricane Ida has devastated a large geographic area plus recent tornadoes have touched down in several states. Help "Stuff the Truck" at the October 22-23 AMR Convocation at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Nazareth, PA.

You can also help by volunteering, or arrange a group of volunteers. Contact Mary Bates, NALC's Disaster Response Coordinator, at batesm55@gmail.com or call 740-509-1132. Items listed were emailed to every congregation. The updated 2021 list includes Bibles, Flood Buckets, Health Care Kits, Quilts & Blankets, Elementary & High School Kits, miscellaneous items and Home Depot, Lowes, & Walmart gift cards. See the AMR website for flyer copies at Atlantic-NALC.org. That sheet provides information on how to pack, label packages and what should be included with the kits. Financial donations can be mailed to:

**The North American Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 860565
Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565**

ATLANTIC MISSION REGION 2021 ANNUAL CONVOCATION

“THE FULLNESS OF GOD’S WORSHIP”

Friday, October 22 & Saturday, October 23

HOLY CROSS EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

696 Johnson Road, Nazareth, PA 18064

Friday: Registration opens at 10:30 AM; Convocation opens at 12:30 PM, lunch & dinner included

Saturday: 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM, lunch included

FEATURING PLENARY SPEAKERS:

The Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, *President, North American Lutheran Seminary*

The Rev. Christopher Porter, *Lebanon LC, Lebanon Church, VA*

The Rev. Jay Jackson Jr & Ryan McAllister, *Trinity ELC, Joppa, MD*

Lara Bhasin, *M.Div. student at the NALS*



ADDITIONALLY:

Friday morning 9:30 AM: Our 3rd Annual AMR Women’s Conference with Mary Bates presenting and an Informal Bible Study led by Rev. Eric Riesen

Stuff the Truck for Disaster Response! Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response Coordinator will be joining us.

Registration, agenda, hotel and other information is available on the AMR website: www.atlantic-nalc.org, or ask your pastor.

Congregational members are encouraged to attend.

ATLANTIC MISSION REGION WOMEN’S CONFERENCE INVITATION

THEME: CARING.... BEARING.... SHARING

When: Friday, October 22, 2021, 9:00-11:30 AM

Guest Presenter: Mary Bates, Director, NALC

Disaster Response will have a presentation.

Amy Werner, the WNALC facilitator for our Region, will be leading the conference.

Time: 9:00 a.m. Registration and refreshments.

The conference will commence at 9:30 a.m..

Beverages, muffins, pastries, fruit, and hard-boiled eggs will be available for you to enjoy.

Cost: \$10 per person

(covers printing, honoraria and snacks)

You may pay online when you register.

Please follow this link to register:

<https://atlanticmissionregionnalc.regfox.com/2021-womens-conference>

Where: Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church,
696 Johnson Road, Nazareth, PA 18064

Activity: A “hands-on” service project this year...
assembling health kits and school kits for NALC Disaster Response.

NOTE: Each congregation is being asked to bring components to create 5 complete health kits and 5 complete school kits (see complete list at Atlantic-NALC.org. Please DO NOT assemble kits beforehand. We will assemble kits together.

Consider applying for a Thrivent grant to help defray the cost!

Registration Deadline: October 8

THE ATLANTIC MISSION REGION
3RD ANNUAL THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE
“EMBODIMENT - MUST REAL PRESENCE BE IN PERSON?”

Thursday, September 16, 2021

St. John Lutheran Church, 1035 Old River Road, Birdsboro, PA 19508

Keynote Speaker: The Rev. Dr. Nathan Yoder,
 Dean, Catawba Valley Mission District Carolinas Mission Region



Registration & fellowship at 8:30 AM

Conference: 9 AM — 3 PM

Registration fee: \$25 (lunch included)

Registration deadline: September 7

Available: GoToMeeting virtual option

For more information: www.atlantic-nalc.org

Whispers of God's Love Women's Retreat

By Robin Harris, Administrative Assistant to the Deans and AMR Council

After fourteen months of COVID restrictions and many, many hours of virtual gatherings, the women of the Atlantic Mission Region turned off the computer and enjoyed the first in-person gathering in the AMR since our 2019 Regional Convocation at Trinity ELC in Joppa, MD! Seventeen women from around the Atlantic Mission Region met on May 1, 2021 at Zoar ELC, Lebanon, PA for the first annual AMR spring all-day Women's Retreat. And what a wonderful day it was!



The theme for the retreat was *Whispers of God's Love* based on Isaiah 43:1 (*I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine*). We heard how God made each of us as His own beautiful creation, and all were reminded that He knows and loves each of us, His precious daughters. Great conversation, prayer, laughter, and even some tears flowed.

Much time was spent in the small discussion groups, but we did come together (rather spread out) for a

fun ice breaker game, a wonderful lunch, and a closing worship. Gifts were given to all participants, and no one went home hungry. Amy Werner, our WNALC facilitator, gave a short presentation on the national WNALC organization. She even brought “The Map” – the large map of the U.S. and Canada with every congregation in the NALC represented and labeled by a dot. The best aspect of the day was simply being together! We had participants from the Central, Northeast, and Southern Mission Districts.



Plans are underway for our next Women's gathering on Friday, October 22 at Holy Cross ELC, Nazareth, PA where we will be assembling kits for Disaster Response. Stay tuned for more information on how your congregation and your women can participate! Plans are also being made for a Women's Retreat to be held in the spring of 2022 – and this one might be an overnighter! Stay tuned!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SPRING MISSION DISTRICT CONVOCATIONS

“HOW GOOD, LORD, TO BE HERE!”

By Robin Harris, Administrative Assistant to the Deans and AMR Council

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, no one was prepared. Gatherings became non-existent. We learned new terms like “Zoom fatigue” and “asynchronous.” We started carrying colorful face masks everywhere we went. The elbow bump became the new handshake. Some of us attended church online while wearing our pajamas, cup of good Lutheran coffee in hand. We all got pretty tech savvy, too, from figuring out how to put fancy backgrounds on Zoom and learning that the mute and camera buttons came in very handy. All our gatherings in 2020 were virtual, from Council meetings to the national Convocation. We were tired of gathering electronically and not seeing each other in the flesh.

Thankfully with the arrival of the COVID vaccines and the easing of the pandemic folks were able to begin to get out and gather again. And here in the Atlantic Mission Region the Council decided that the spring 2021 Mission District Convocations would be hybrid – in person with a virtual option. We were ready to go back out into the world and see each other and enjoy some in the flesh fellowship!

The first Convocation to be held was the **Central Mission District** (*southcentral PA*) on May 8. We gathered at St. John Lutheran Church in Birdsboro, PA. There were 24 disciples from the CMD in attendance plus 5 guests from other Mission Districts for a total of 29 in attendance.

The assembly re-elected Joan Oliphant (Vinemont, Reinholds, PA) to her second term as the lay representative from the CMD to the AMR Council. This term is 3 years in length. Reports were heard from CMD Dean Pr. Dan Schaefer and AMR Dean Pr. David McGettigan. The CMD endorsed the proposed 2022 AMR Ministry Spending Plan for presentation at the October AMR Convocation. Lee Mills, chair of the Renewal & Discipleship Ministry Team (RDMT) gave a short presentation on what has been going on in the RDMT and gave a thought-provoking discipleship and personal testimony. The Central Mission District then got to hear from four members of the Reformation Lutheran Church

(Culpeper, VA)’s Prayer Ministry and Deliverance Team. We heard moving, personal testimonies from them about the success of their prayer ministry, and we were given good ideas about how to start prayer ministries in our own congregations.

The second Mission District to gather was the **Northeast Mission District** (*northeastern PA, New Jersey, eastern New York, and New England*). We met on May 15 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Clarks Summit, PA. There were 19 disciples from the NEMD plus one from another Mission District for a total of 20 participants.

Reports were heard from NEMD Dean Pr. Brett Jenkins and AMR Dean Pr. David McGettigan. The NEMD also endorsed the proposed 2022 AMR Ministry Spending Plan for presentation at the October AMR Convocation. Lee Mills joined us virtually and gave the report from the RDMT.

There was a lot of discussion surrounding the NALC national restructuring and the NEMD’s nomination for an Assistant to the Bishop. Several names were mentioned, and these individuals will discern the call before declaring their willingness to be nominated at a future mini-NEMD Convo over the summer.

The NEMD attendees were presented with a Bible study and spiritual fitness discussion written by their Dean, Pr. Brett Jenkins. Good discussion ensued. All the participants were encouraged to take the Bible study home to share with their congregations.

The **Southern Mission District** (*eastern Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia*) was next on May 22. We gathered at Lebanon Lutheran Church in Lebanon Church, VA. There were 20 disciples from the SMD and 5 from other Mission Districts for a total of 25 in attendance.

The gathering heard a report from their Dean Pr. John Kulczycki and another from AMR Dean Pr. David McGettigan. The SMD endorsed the proposed 2022 AMR Ministry Plan and also discussed the NALC continental restructuring. The SMD also

Continued

heard from RDMT chair Lee Mills who gave an update on the team and the discipleship initiative.

The highlight of the SMD Convocation was hearing from the Reformation LC (Culpeper, VA)'s Prayer Ministry and Deliverance Team. All of them joined us online and gave their testimony one at a time. It was a moving and informative presentation.

The final mission district to meet was the **Western Mission District** (*west of the Susquehanna River to the PA/MD border*). This gathering took place at St. Luke LC in Bloomsburg, PA. There were 15 disciples from the WMD plus 5 from other mission districts for a total of 20 participants.

WMD Dean Pr. Steve Shipman was elected to serve a second term as Dean of the Western Mission District. This term is three years in length. The assembly also officially elected Philip Polstra (St. Luke, Bloomsburg, PA) as the WMD lay representative to the AMR Council. Phil was appointed by the AMR Council in 2020 to fulfill the unexpired term of Dick Anderson who was elected in June, 2019. This term expires in 2022.

The WMD gathering also heard reports from WMD Dean Pr. Steve Shipman and AMR Dean Pr. David McGettigan. The WMD endorsed the 2022 proposed AMR Ministry Plan and discussed the

NALC continental restructure. We heard from RDMT chair Lee Mills twice when he first gave a short Bible study on discipleship then came back later to give the RDMT report.

The WMD then had a good discussion on the development of several congregations' virtual services during the time of the pandemic. It was interesting to hear how the methods changed as the need was met and how congregations adapted to that need.

Each Mission District's spring Convocation was distinctive – from discussion of virtual worship to prayer ministry testimonies to Bible studies. Even the food was distinguished – from central PA hoagies (subs) to southern barbecued chicken and brisket to lovely main dish salads. These differences are what make the Atlantic Mission Region so unique.

But the unifying theme across all the four Mission District spring Convocations, besides the large pot of good Lutheran coffee, was the love of Jesus and the desire to serve Him as true disciples. Yes, we talked about logo design contests, ministry spending plans, and the upcoming election for a new Regional Dean in October. But, underneath it all we heard the Lord's voice calling us to gather to worship Him and to further His kingdom in our corner of the world. And we, as four distinct Mission Districts in the Atlantic Mission Region, responded.

July 17, 2021 AMR Council Meeting Highlights

By Robin Harris, Administrative Assistant to the Deans and AMR Council

- The AMR Council met via GoToMeeting on Saturday, July 17, 2021. Four deans, two lay representatives, and Robin were in attendance.
- Treasurer Kathy Lilley presented the second quarter financial reports which were approved, pending audit, by the Council. No changes were made to the proposed 2022 Ministry Spending Plan at any of the four Mission District meetings.
- The 2021 Theological Conference (scheduled for Thursday, September 16) will be held in person (with a virtual option) at St. John LC, Birdsboro, PA. We have had a total shift in topic. The Rev. Dr. Nathan Yoder (Carolinas Mission Region) will be our Keynote speaker on *Embodiment: Must*
- *Real Presence Be In Person?* Registrations are ready to be sent out to the Region.
- The 2021 AMR regional Convocation, *The Fullness of God's Worship*, is scheduled for an in person gathering on Friday, October 22 & Saturday, October 23 at Holy Cross ELC, Nazareth, PA. The focus will be on worship with four plenary sessions and an added experiential component. The Convocation will be streamed for those who wish to view the action virtually.
- Each dean and lay representative gave a report of congregations in transition or situations from their respective Mission Districts.

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- The Central Mission District will be nominating Pr. David McGettigan for the position of Assistant to the Bishop for the Eastern Mission Area.
- The Northeast Mission District will be nominating Pr. Carol Fryer for the position of the Assistant to the Bishop for the Eastern Mission Area.
- The Southern Mission District and the Western Mission District still need to have their mini meetings to select their Assistant to the Bishop nominee.
- There was continued conversation re: the media advertising initiative being considered for presentation at the October Convocation.
- The upcoming election of a new AMR Dean was discussed. Since there have been no nominations to date the Council began brainstorming alternative ways to find willing nominees.
- Pr. Luke Seamon (Lancaster, PA) is officially on leave from call.
- The Rev. Mark Chavez stepped down as General Secretary of the NALC effective April 30 to serve as interim at Reformation LC, Lancaster, PA. He assumed the full time interim position on May 10.
- The Rev. William Gies was rostered NALC clergy on April 29, 2021. He is part of the Southern Mission District.
- The Rev. J.D. Cutlip has been a rostered member of the NALC since 2010. He has since been added to all lists and is in the Southern Mission District.
- The Rev. Roger Keller was installed at St. Timothy, Camp Hill, PA on June 13.



Roster Updates since April

- The Rev. Gerald Kramer was rostered NALC clergy on April 1. He served as part-time interim at Reformation, Lancaster before Pr. Chavez began full time. Pr. Kramer is willing to be on the supply list. He is in the Central Mission District.

The Rev. W. Stevens Shipman finished serving as interim at St. Timothy (Camp Hill, PA) on April 17.

- The Rev. John Kulczycki retired from St. Matthew, Middle River, MD on June 30.
- Rev. Caleb and seminarian Lynnae Douglas transferred their membership to a congregation in Milwaukee, WI and are no longer in the AMR.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Submitted by Judi Reeder, Reformation Lutheran Church, Lancaster

In most U.S. states, the first week of August is enhanced by a *National Night Out* celebration. *“National Night Out enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. Furthermore, it provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances.”* (natw.org)

We have two churches in our Mission District that participate in their local festivities: Holy Trinity in Abington, PA and Reformation Lutheran in Lancaster, PA. In both cases, the churches are the only religious institution represented among the

only religious institution represented among the police, firefighters, rescue, armed services, and other social service agencies plus food vendors. Members from Holy Trinity have been participating in the Pre-Night Out in Abington for over 15 years and look forward to getting out into the community to share God's Word and His love. This year they gave bottles of water and a case of Bibles to their neighbors. There was sharing of information about the Bread of Heaven Food Pantry, their upcoming VBS, one of the few in the area being held during the day, and the 4th annual Water Mission 5K. They also let everyone know about Operation Christmas Child Shoebox

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drop-off location and gave out some empty boxes with instructions on how

to fill them and when and where to bring them in November.



Reformation Lutheran has participated for the last four years and used the opportunity to invite their neighbors to the 'Food, Fun and a Flick' evening which is held on the 2nd Saturday of September. The last two years they have also had members creating balloon characters for the children plus distributed Bibles and Christian materials and snacks.

To locate the nearest National Night Out, a search of the internet should result in those nearby. A call to the police station in your municipality should pinpoint the officer who



oversees the arrangements. We have found that they are happy to add organizations to the roster. For more information, contact Judi Reeder (JudiReeder718@gmail.com)



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Editorials are not the practice in the *Atlantic Vine* however recently I was driving and listening to Family Talk XM Radio. That day a poem was read by the radio host, one that continues to bring reflection to mind in multiple ways. Due to the cultural times we are living in, with hurts and frustrations that hinder us for various reasons, given the theme of our NALC 2021 Convocation “*God the Father Creates...*,” plus the NALC’s Discipleship Guides current training session that focuses on family relationships, I’m led to share the poem with you. If you need strength and encouragement to grow in Christ, and to share who He is in your life, may the Lord speak to you in this poem.

You Are Who You Are for A Reason

You are who you are for a reason.
 You're part of an intricate plan.
 You're a precious and perfect unique design,
 Called "God's special woman or man"

You look like you look for a reason.
 Our God made no mistake.
 He knit you together within the womb,
 You're just what He wanted to make!

The parents you had were the ones He chose,
 And no matter how you may feel,
 They were custom-designed with God's plan in mind,
 And they bear the Master's seal.

No, that trauma you faced was not easy;
 And God wept that it hurt you so.
 But it was allowed to shape your heart
 So that into His likeness you'd grow.

You are who you are for a reason.
 You've been formed by the Master's rod.
 You are who you are, Beloved,
 Because there is a GOD.

— Russell Kelfer

<https://russellkelfer.org/poem-You-are-Who-You-are-for-a-Reason.htm>

GOD THE FATHER CREATES

CONVOCATION THEME 2021

“In the beginning God created...” —Genesis 1:1

