



## MIDWESTERN AREA NEWSLETTER November 2023



I invite you to submit material for inclusion in future newsletters, but keep your information concise, to the point, and use "links" if you want to provide the reader with access to "long readings". – Jess Abbott, Midwestern Area Assistant to the Bishop (AAB), 513-314-2028, [midwesternaab@thenalc.org](mailto:midwesternaab@thenalc.org)

### AAB Thoughts

I don't know about you, but it is now the time of year when I am tempted to eat, constantly. It all begins around Thanksgiving and continues on to Christmas. If it isn't eating the actual holiday feasts, it's obligatorily consuming the leftovers from them.

Before the holidays in 2005, the "fatty chickens (the millions I've eaten in my lifetime) came home to roost." I had a little hospital stay which resulted in the removal of my gall bladder. I remember going without eating for three days in the hospital as they did tests to diagnose my problem (interesting way to lose weight). I'm one of those guys that can go a long time without eating, but by the third day even pills were starting to look delicious. It is strange to think about fasting during a season of culinary delights. Waiting, hoping, and being thankful for abundant harvests are all spiritual postures of self-discipline. This season gives me pause to think about those that hunger and thirst in our world. It reminds me of when I did some military duty in Honduras. I was struck by how focused people were on food - it was something they had to work for every single day. It was not a "given" that there would be one, two, or three meals the next day; each day's food had to be earned.

My hunger reminds me of how blessed I am to live in this country of freedom, but it also reminds me that Jesus calls us to bless others by filling them. I think that one of the wonderful things about this time of year is that there are many opportunities to fill others; through food drives, gift programs for the poor, or putting change in the Salvation Army bucket. It all

somehow puts meaning into Thanksgiving and our hope of Christ's coming. I don't know about you, but sitting down at that Thanksgiving dinner is most satisfying when I know that in the process of celebrating Christ, I have fed others. May God bless you as you bless others this harvest season. AND, God bless you for your offerings and special giving that fill others around the world! – *Pastor Jess*

## Latest and Greatest News!

### Celebrating Pastors and Congregations

**Dorchester, IA – Waterloo Ridge.** Welcome Pastor James Glesne, who was installed in October. Thank you to all who attended the installation from the Mission District to welcome and pray for Pastor Glesne.

### Deans Meeting with Bishop in Dallas

Nov 8-9. Hopefully, every Dean can attend this important annual meeting to collaborate about how to best "pastor our pastors" and promote Mission District efforts in the Midwestern Area. One new issue we will discuss is the addition of a new staff position to the NALC; the Director of Area Support and Development (DASD), a part-time position, filled by Bishop Emeritus John Brodosky.

### Mission District Retreats

It is important for all NALC Pastors to maintain relationship with other pastors, especially within each Mission District (MD). Deans facilitate these relationships in a number of way; regular MD meetings in-person or zoom, pericope studies, etc. Another great way is doing an annual retreat of some kind. Pastor Jess has a number of subjects that could be injected into retreats, so feel free to call if you'd like to explore such possibilities.

### Mission District Pastors Meetings

These are provided in case you happen to live closer to another MD's meeting and would like to attend for pastoral fellowship and support. Or, if you can't travel, you might consider joining a video conference call.

**NE-Ohio MD, Every Monday** Pastor Pericope study, Zoom at 10am. Email Pr. Koch at [mekoch46@gmail.com](mailto:mekoch46@gmail.com) for Zoom invitation

**NE-Ohio MD, Pastors Fellowship Tuesday, Nov. 14** at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bolivar at 10 a.m. for fellowship and discussion. Pastor Michael Pozzuto, our host, provides very handsomely for all our needs, so please RSVP Pr. Koch at [mekoch46@gmail.com](mailto:mekoch46@gmail.com)

**NC-Ohio MD, Pastors Fellowship 10am. Nov 16<sup>th</sup>**, at Resurrection, Catawba Island, OH. And Feb 15<sup>th</sup> at St. Paul, Clyde, OH. Email Pr. Pennington for more information [penningtonkm@gmail.com](mailto:penningtonkm@gmail.com)

### Mission District Pastor Retreats

These are provided in case your MD doesn't have a retreat, or if you'd just like to get away from your area and enjoy the environs of other wonderful places.

**Iowa MD, Jun 10-11, 2024.** Contact Dean, Pr. Christopher Staley for more information; [cbstaley@netins.net](mailto:cbstaley@netins.net)

### Candidacy for Ordained Ministry Seminars in the Midwestern Area

Michelle Kouse, North American Lutheran Seminary network (NALS) / Fuller Seminary, M.Div program. SW Ohio MD. *Not entranced yet subject to approval October 9-10.*

Terese Whitten, Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT), M.Div program. Michigan MD. **Approved for ordination**

Monica Barman, Fuller Seminary, M.Div program. NC Ohio MD. *Not entranced yet subject to approval October 9-10.*

Scott Stine - Fuller Seminary, M.Div program. SE Ohio MD.

Keith Deak, NALS Center at Trinity School for Ministry, M.Div program. SE Ohio MD. *Not entranced yet subject to approval October 9-10.*

Ethan Zimmerman, NALS Center at Trinity School for Ministry, M.Div program. NC Ohio MD.

Molly King, St. Paul Lutheran Seminary, M.Div program. SE Ohio MD

Kent Haley, Ordination Under Special Circumstances Program. New Life, Gallipolis OH, SE Ohio MD.

Pam Grandmason, Trinity School for Ministry (NALS), Ambridge PA, Michigan MD

### Seminarians working on Certifications in the Midwestern Area

Rochelle Lemieux, St. Paul Lutheran Seminary, working on Pastoral Care certification, Heartland MD

Heidi Yahl, Institute of Lutheran Theology, Pastoral Ministry certification, NW Ohio MD

Christian White, Institute of Lutheran Theology, Pastoral Ministry certification, NW Ohio MD

*If you know of any seminarians in the Midwestern Area not listed here, please email them to Jess with school, degree / certification being sought, and their Mission District.*



## Youth News and Opportunities

July 1-4, **2024 NALC Continental Youth Gathering**, St. John's Lutheran Church, Boerne, TX (near San Antonio). **We Belong "I know my own and my own know me"**.

Registration now open. See updates and information at <https://thenalc.org/cyg/> This four-day gathering provides opportunities for NALC youth to grow in faith and relationship with others as the body of Christ. Youth will worship together, study God's Word, participate in large and small group sessions, reach out to the community through mission events, and engage in fellowship and fun!

May 5-11, 2024 **NALC Young Adult Gathering**, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. For those age 18-28. Application deadline is Dec 1. For more information, contact Pr. Teresa Peters.

### **"Solid" Lutheran Bible Camps**

- Ingham Okoboji in Milford, Iowa, which is near Minnesota, South Dakota, and Nebraska.
- Riverside in Story City, Iowa nearer the middle of the state.

### Resources for Congregations Without Pastors

**Online Confirmation Program** - contact the Southern Area Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Mark Braaten, 903-316-1594 [mbraaten@oslctyler.org](mailto:mbraaten@oslctyler.org) or Pastor Teresa Peters at [tpeters@thenalc.org](mailto:tpeters@thenalc.org)

**Confirmation / Catechism Web Courses [Free]** – Luther House of Study, <https://lutherhouseofstudy.org/courses/>

Pastor David Wendel posts sermons on YouTube [https://youtu.be/gCcD\\_lvwCbA](https://youtu.be/gCcD_lvwCbA), he also posts them on his Facebook page and the NALC Fellowship group; or contact Pastor Wendel at [dwendel@thenalc.org](mailto:dwendel@thenalc.org)

## Lutheran Adoption Conference

April 10-12, 2024

Join a gathering of Lutheran leaders at the Hyatt Regency Houston Intercontinental Airport at the Lutheran Adoption Conference. Enjoy the testimony and talents of Dove Award-winning musician and adoptee Mark Schultz. Experience the fellowship and celebration (did somebody say, "Banquet!"). Discover the expert information and exciting opportunities.

Join faith leaders, policy makers, adoption experts, life advocates, and more. Participants will explore possibilities for increasing distinctively Lutheran adoptions across the United States. For developing information and updates, visit <http://lutheransadopt.org/>

## State of the Midwestern Area

*As of Nov 1, 2023*

Congregations with Pastors.....	92
Pastors with Congregation calls.....	92
Congregations without Pastors.....	51
Interim Pastors (in congs w/o Prs.).....	15
Pastors of Specialized ministries.....	11
Retired Pastors (not Interim now).....	33
Seminary Students.....	5
Home Churches (not congs yet).....	2

Total Congregations .....	143
Total non-retired Pastors .....	118

## Congregation Vacancies

The NALC website has a great section to see congregations looking for a full-time or part-time pastor <https://thenalc.org/call-process/>

## NALC Life Ministries

The NALC Life Ministries Team focuses on life issues - from conception to the end of life. The Team offers support for participation in life marches and responding to life issue legislation. The Team is planning to develop educational materials based on Holy Scripture to help pastors and congregations address the entire range of life issues - reproductive technology, abortion, adoption, foster care, human trafficking, end of life and more. The Team is also willing to provide presentations

on life issues at events in your Mission District or in your congregations. You may contact any on the Team for more information.

Rebecka V. A. Frontz ([rebeckaandrae@gmail.com](mailto:rebeckaandrae@gmail.com); 724-787-7780)  
Pr. Dennis Di Mauro ([dennisdimauro@yahoo.com](mailto:dennisdimauro@yahoo.com); 703-568-3346)  
Pr. Al Towberman ([atowberman@zoominternet.net](mailto:atowberman@zoominternet.net); 724-698-3644)  
Pr Scott Licht ([slicht@lutheransforlife.org](mailto:slicht@lutheransforlife.org); 515-238-5496)  
Pr. Melinda Jones ([revmhjones@yahoo.com](mailto:revmhjones@yahoo.com); 843-270-3675)  
Pr. Amy Schifrin ([acschifrin@gmail.com](mailto:acschifrin@gmail.com); 563-929-0909)  
Pr. Steve Shipman ([prsteveshipman@gmail.com](mailto:prsteveshipman@gmail.com); 570-916-7780)  
Pr. Mark Chavez ([pastor@reformation-nalc.org](mailto:pastor@reformation-nalc.org); 717-823-7739)

### **Newsletter Distribution List**

If you know someone who would like to receive this newsletter regularly, please provide name and email address. It will only be emailed, and they will be Blind copied (Bcc).

**Midwestern AAB Schedule** Contact me if you'd like me to suggest some short presentations I can make at event. For convocations, I can provide a short update on NALC priorities and recent efforts.

The following events are on my radar to attend:

**Nov 8-9, 2023** – Bishop with Deans meeting  
**Jan 16-18, 2024** – Pastors Conference, Drury Plaza, Disney Springs, Orlando, FL  
**Jun 10-11, 2024** – Iowa Mission District Pastors Retreat

### **Prospective Specialized Ministries & Military Chaplains**

If a seminarian or pastor asks you about the possibility of serving as a military chaplain (Active Duty, Reserve or National Guard), Civil Air Patrol Chaplain, Hospital / Hospice chaplain, or fire, police, para-church minister; direct them for assistance to Jess Abbott at [militaryendorser@thenalc.org](mailto:militaryendorser@thenalc.org) Jess is the NALC's official Military Endorsing Agent for all NALC clergy currently servicing or seeking to serve in the U.S. or Canadian Military. See the "Our Work" tab in the NALC website for more information; <https://thenalc.org/specialized-and-military-ministries/>

### **Midwestern Area Deans**

Pr. Jess Abbott, Midwestern Assistant to the Bishop  
513-314-2028, [midwesternaab@thenalc.org](mailto:midwesternaab@thenalc.org)  
Pr. Bert Schultz, OH North West MD  
715-418-1037, [jcgracepastor@outlook.com](mailto:jcgracepastor@outlook.com)  
Pr. Mark Daniels, OH Mission Region & SW Ohio MD

740-603-5287, [markluth91@gmail.com](mailto:markluth91@gmail.com)  
Pr. Tom Jacobson, OH South East MD  
740-242-2192, [pastor@gracethornville.org](mailto:pastor@gracethornville.org)  
Pr. Michael Koch, OH North East Mission District  
330-635-8008, [mekoch46@gmail.com](mailto:mekoch46@gmail.com)  
Pr. Kathy Pennington, OH North Central Mission District  
715-554-4658, [penningtonkm@gmail.com](mailto:penningtonkm@gmail.com)  
Pr. Christopher Staley, IOWA Mission District  
515-357-9052, [cbstaley@netins.net](mailto:cbstaley@netins.net)  
[www.iowamissiondistrict.com](http://www.iowamissiondistrict.com)  
Pr. Jess Abbott, MI (lower peninsula) Mission District  
513-314-2028, [midwesternaab@thenalc.org](mailto:midwesternaab@thenalc.org)  
Pr. Doug Gast, Heartland (IN-KY) Mission District  
317-727-0612, [dqast1950@gmail.com](mailto:dqast1950@gmail.com)  
Pr. Mark Knappe, WI & MI Upper Peninsula MD (co-dean)  
262-844-2234, [solideogloria1@icloud.com](mailto:solideogloria1@icloud.com)  
Pr. Tom Reiff, WI & MI Upper Peninsula MD (co-dean)  
715-892-9914, [tireiff@outlook.com](mailto:tireiff@outlook.com)