



NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

MIDWESTERN AREA NEWSLETTER February 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

Latest and Greatest News!

Online Confirmation Program!!

Some good folks in the NALC Southern Area have been working on launching an Online Confirmation program in January. This is in response to the need



some congregations may have because they are currently without a pastor, have a small number of confirmation age youth, or both. If you or a congregation you know is interested, contact the Southern Area Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Mark Braaten, 903-316-1594 mbraaten@oslctyler.org

News From NALC Disaster Coordinator Mary Bates

Disasters take place every year without notice. Sometimes these disasters even strike close to home. Does your congregation have a Disaster Plan? How would your congregation help your own members if there was a disaster? Or others in a neighboring region?

The Heartland Mission District is gearing up to have an active response when disasters strike. Our Disaster Response Storehouse was constructed at Peace Lutheran Church, Connersville, IN.

Has your congregation considered being part of a Disaster Response Mission Trip in our region? Mary Bates will help you to “*Learn your strengths in disaster response*” at a **Disaster**

Preparedness Training on Saturday, Feb 11 from 9 am to 3 pm at St. John's Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne. Lunch and snacks will be provided. To register, or for more information, contact Mary Bates
16500 Noble Ave., Caldwell, Ohio 43724
740-509-1132
disasterresponse@thenalc.org

Lay Preaching Course

Some of our congregations without pastors have been asking about options to fill pulpits. One option suggested is to use a pastor’s sermon manuscript for presentation in preaching by lay preachers. Even if a lay person doesn’t want to be a formal preacher, this course may be of benefit in how to deliver and sermon.

On Thursday evenings, February 23rd through March 30th, 2023, from 6 to 8pm CT, St. Paul Lutheran Seminary will be offering an online course on preaching taught by Rev. Julie Smith. This six-class session, part one of two lay preaching courses, is designed for people who may be interested in occasional pulpit supply, as well as those who may be sensing a call to ministry and want to explore a bit. Indeed, this class may be just the thing for those who may sense a call into the ministry. In addition to the sessions, students are invited to attend a weekly online text study. Classes will be recorded so making up a missed class will be easy. Contact Jon at jjensen@semilc.org for more info!

* * *

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command



**Menagerie
Thoughts of
Jess...**

you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. - *John 15:12-15, ESV*

There was a lot of wisdom literature floating around in Jesus' time, and I wonder if he knew that wonderful apocryphal verse, "*A faithful friend is an elixir of life, found only by those who fear the Lord. The person who fears the Lord keeps his friendships in repair, for he treats his neighbor as himself (Sirach 6:16-17).*" What a wonderful word, "elixir"! Yes, another sage of our times gave us good advice, "Just a spoon full of sugar makes the medicine go down!"; thank you Mary Poppins. It seems to me there is tremendous wisdom in friends and friendship; and thank the Lord Jesus for befriending and loving us.

One sage in my life was my mother. She told me a proverb when I was young. "Jess, if you have just one good friend that stays with you your whole life, count yourself very fortunate." She said this shortly after her friend, Aleen, left from a visit. Even as a young child, I could see the love between them. They never gave up on each other.

I had an assigned friend in Army basic training. We were "battle buddies", and our short time of friendship gave me some wisdom about friendship. An image that has stayed with me is our time of "fire watch" together. We sat on a stump in the middle of our camp, leaning back-to-back. Our mission was to stay awake through half the night to watch for "fire" (enemy or natural). The way we sat, we had a combined 360 view of to camp; nothing could happen to us or our comrades without our notice.

Indeed, a friend is safety, and an elixir to the befriended. A friend is also, along with other friends, a blessing to the community. Think how amazing it is that Jesus is our friend. He not only laid down his life for us, but he persists in having our back, and using us to bless our communities!

- Jess

Identifying People for Ordained Ministry... that is a key goal of our 2020 Vision, and you can help! As you may know, our own Jeff Morlock (former Dean of NE-OH MD) is now the North American Lutheran Seminary's Director of Vocational Discernment. You will probably see him at some event or meeting, but if you have any person you are working with to discern pursuit of Word and Sacrament ministry, give him a call; 724-595-7595. Also, remember we have these events next year as tools to help someone you are working with deepen their discernment.

"**The Call**" is a retreat to be held at the North American Lutheran Seminary Center in Ambridge, PA from June 22-25, 2023. Learn more at <https://www.tsm.edu/thecall/>.

Youth Opportunities

Quake Events (LYO) at www.quakeevent.com
Jan. 6-8 in Cincinnati; Jan. 27-29 in Pittsburgh;
Feb. 10-12 in Wisconsin Dells
March 17-19 in Minneapolis

Feb. 10 Inquirer's Retreat at Laurel Ridge Conference Center in N.C. Info: revmhjones@yahoo.com 843-270-3675

May 5-6 Ohio Region NALC Convocation with workshops for youth leaders and adults. Grace Lutheran Church in Westerville, OH

June 11-14 Lutheran Disaster Response Camp for youth in eastern Kentucky. Info: MEKoch46@gmail.com

July 16-22 NEXUS Institute, a week-long event for high schoolers, will be held at Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa from July 16-22, 2023. Learn more at <https://www.grandview.edu/about/community/amps-clinics/nexus>.

Renewal Resources for Pastors & Spouses

Broom Tree Ministries

www.broomtreeministries.org
262-646-7774, btminwisconin@gmail.com
5-day Soul Care Retreats, food and lodging **free of charge**. The mission of Broom Tree is

to provide a gracious environment, secluded and private, protected with prayer, to which Christian pastor leaders and their spouses can retreat in order to spend time with God so that He can refresh, refocus, restore, encourage, energize, and equip them for the task to which He has called them.

Shepherd's Canyon Retreat Ministry

www.shepherdcanyonretreat.org

480-588-8837, Phoenix, Arizona

Each session of their week-long retreat features up to eight people with group, couple, and individual counseling led by professional Christian counselors (one male, one female) and a chaplain who provides spiritual guidance. Full accommodations are provided.

Ohio Mission Region Convocation 2023

Save the day. The 2023 OMR convocation will be May 6, 2023.

Luther Week 2023, Oklahoma City

August 7-11, 2023. Don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to an "in person" week of fellowship, learning, and convocation after our stretch of Zoom meetings. See developing details and registration process on the NALC website.

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/>

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:

6 May 2023 – Ohio Mission Region Convocation (includes convocations of all five Ohio Mission Districts)

Aug 7-11, 2023 - Luther Week 2023, Oklahoma City

Sep 16, 2023 - Iowa Mission District Convocation—Faith Lutheran Church, Monona, Iowa.

Oct 7, 2023 – Michigan Mission District Convocation TBD

Oct 28, 2023 – WI-UP Mission District Convocation TBD

Oct 31-Nov 2 – Bishop & Deans meeting TBD

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 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.

BOOK REVIEW by Rev. Michael Koch

Thank you Mike for the following review, especially since John Grabowski will be our speaker at the San Antonio Pastors conference.

SUMMARY OF: GENDER UNRAVELING By JOHN GRABOWSKI

Introduction: Obergefell v Hodges in 2015 prohibited states from enforcing laws against same sex marriage. This Supreme Court decision was a recognition of the collapse of biblical marriage. The doors opened for the dissolution of the concept of sexual difference. Bostock v Clayton County in 2021 added more fuel to the fire. The disconnect between sex and gender expanded. "Unlike the Catholic vision of seeing the sexually differentiated body as an integral expression of who we are as persons, our contemporary culture views it increasingly as a "surface" or "screen" on which to write self-constructed identities or currently held desires."

Chapter One: This is not a battle of the Church against persons who described themselves as LGBTQ+. They have experienced enormous hatred and violence from many groups in our society. The Church is called to speak a word of grace and mercy to all God's people. Rather than a culture of death, the Church brings love. "Gender ideology seeks to redefine what the body is and is for, and what it does." God as Creator of the world is discarded and the culture then becomes strange and unintelligible.

Chapter Two: Human sexuality and much of the animal world is binary. Male and female come together for reproduction. It is argued that male and female is merely a social construct. This leads to misguided medicine, where 13–15-year-old children seek to understand themselves and then are led to medicines, hormone treatments, surgeries. "80-95 percent of children who say they are transgender naturally come to accept their sex and enjoy emotional health by late adolescence" The rate of psychiatric hospitalizations for post-operative transsexuals is three times higher than a control group. Failure to use language designations has resulted in legal actions against teachers. The next logical step is the abolition of man and woman.

Chapter Three: The historical roots of gender unraveling began in Marxism, existentialism, individualism, and process thinking. Woman had to be freed from the shackles of their fertility and marriage.

Chapter Four: The author sees three revolutions: Industrial Revolution (1760-1840) saw men and women working outside the home; the Sexual Revolution searched for ways to regulate fertility and make abortion easily available; the Technology Revolution aided communications but brought pornography and further collapse of the family. Marital infidelity destroys marriages and even live-in arrangements dissolve quickly.

Chapter Five: The Old Testament is grounded in the doctrine of Creation, with a positive view of the body. The body is "very good." (Gen.

1:31) "The Christian proclamation extends even further: It is Christ's human body in His Incarnation, in His Passion and Death, and in his bodily Resurrection that is the very instrument of human deliverance from sin and death." Gnosticism explained the universe through metaphysical dualism: spirit is good and matter (body) is evil and illusory. Gender ideology does not bring happiness and sexual satisfaction, but see staggering rates of mental health issues and suicide.

Chapter Six: Receiving God's gift of sexual difference (male & female) and marriage as God's good design for this Creation has become distorted in our society. The human body reflects the reality of a person and the full measure of God's gift within creation. We are ordered to fatherhood and motherhood – the creation of family. A husband and wife can receive God's gift of children. Rigid gender roles are not demanded by the Church nor by our Creator.

Chapter Seven: Where do we go from here? As noted in Chapter One, we are not in a war, but we must not tolerate false anthropologies. We practice Christian charity, but we bring Jesus Christ into the middle of the conflict. Our weapons are truth, love and the grace of the Holy Spirit, which we use humbly. The Church becomes the Field Hospital, where we proclaim the Gospel of Sin and Grace to all. We become the healers of a broken and sinful world through our service to Jesus Christ.

Books cited by author:

When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment! New York: Encounter, 2019.

Humana Vitae, 50 Years Later: Embracing God's Vision for Marriage, Love and Life. Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2019.

"Good News for Gender Minorities" by Meghan DeFranza. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019.

"Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender

Theory in Education” 2019, Congregation for Catholic Education.

“*Christmas Address to the Roman Curia*” by Benedict XVI (2012)

Materials on Christian Marriage:

Marriage By God’s Design workbook & leader guide 2010 Concordia Publishing House.

A Prayerbook for Husbands and Wives.
Ruthanne & Walter Wangerin. 2000, Augsburg Pub.

The Five Love Languages. Gary Chapman. 2004, Chicago: Northfield Publishing

What Does Your Marriage Mean. Pamphlet. 1998, American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, Delhi, NY.

United In Christ: Preparing for Christian Marriage. 2010 Concordia Publishing House.

Midwestern Area Deans

- Pr. Jess Abbott, Midwestern Assistant to the Bishop
513-314-2028, midwesternaab@thenalc.org
- Pr. Bert Schultz, OH Mission Region & NW Ohio MD
715-418-1037, icgracepastor@outlook.com
- Pr. Paul Schultz, OH South West Mission District
937-594-1612, fasterpastor48@gmail.com
- Pr. Scott Smith, OH South East MD (co-dean)
740-603-2150, prscottsmith@gmail.com
- Pr. Tom Jacobson, OH South East MD (co-dean)
740-242-2192, pastor@gracethornville.org
- Pr. Michael Koch, OH North East Mission District
330-635-8008, mekoch46@gmail.com
- Pr. Diana Seaman, OH North Central Mission District
567-241-8494, pastordiana1054@gmail.com
- Pr. Christopher Staley, IOWA Mission District
515-357-9052, cbstaley@netins.net
- Pr. Jess Abbott, MI (lower peninsula) Mission District
513-314-2028, midwesternaab@thenalc.org
- Pr. Doug Gast, Heartland (IN-KY) Mission District
317-727-0612, dgast1950@gmail.com
- Pr. Mark Knappe, WI & MI Upper Peninsula MD (co-dean)
262-844-2234, solideogloria1@icloud.com
- Pr. Tom Reiff, WI & MI Upper Peninsula MD (co-dean)
715-892-9914, treiff@outlook.com