



NORTH AMERICAN  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH

## MIDWESTERN AREA NEWSLETTER January 2024



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

It was Christmas day evening and all feasting was finally over. I stayed up to watch TV and let my stomach settle from the day's festivities. As I clicked by the channels, I stopped at a documentary about an isolated African tribe in Sudan. A man was interviewing four African men about a three-month contest they were about to embark upon.

The interviewer asked, "What do you hope to do?" One by one, each of the young African men said, "I want to get fat, very fat!" These men were involved in a contest to see who could become the fattest. As the documentary followed the contest, each man drank large quantities of (pure) cow's milk, and did as little exercise as possible for three months. I was intrigued, as my stomach churned. If I were in that contest, I would already have a fair head start on the competition! Oh, that fat was so admired in our culture! It makes sense for their culture. Most are thin. A lot of their time is spent staving off starvation. Well, it reminded me that I need to make my New Year's resolution. As always, part of my resolution is to lose a little weight. More importantly, that Sudan tribe reminded me how important it is for all of us to be spiritually fat! So, I will plan a diet of Scripture, prayer and devotional reading. In the next few weeks, I hope you will remember with me the young African men's enthusiastic creed, "I want to get fat, very fat (spiritually)!"

– *Pastor Jess*

## Latest and Greatest News!

### Disaster Response

April 30, 9a-4p. Train the Trainer for NALC Disaster Response training.

May 2. - Pastor Amy Little will dedicate the new NALC Volunteer Training & Retreat Center in Caldwell Ohio, time to be determined.

Contact Mary Bates for more information and how to get involved, [batesm55@gmail.com](mailto:batesm55@gmail.com)

### Celebrating Pastors and Congregations

**Newcomerstown, OH – St. Paul.** Welcome Pastor Mark Brod, who will join the NALC roster and be called to St Paul in Newcomerstown.

**Centerville, OH – Living Waters.** We give thanks to God for Pastor Mark Daniels and his many years of pastoral service, as he retires. Living Waters will hold an event to celebrate his service on January 6 at 3pm. Never fear that such pastors have nothing to do! Pastor Mark will continue with a little “busy-ness” by **serving as the Dean of the SW-Ohio Mission District** and convening Dean of the Ohio Mission Region. Praise the Lord for that!

### Events in January

#### NALC Clergy Retreat

**Orlando, FL – 16-18 Jan.** Hopefully, if you are able to attend, you have visited the NALC website and registered. The focus this year is on “rest and spiritual health”.

#### Support for Full-Time Chaplains

It is important for our Chaplains (both hospital and military) to be able to gather annually to collaborate and support each other in their unique ministries. Thanks to the NALC and various congregation, we are able to support a limited number of scholarships for them to

attend the annual Clergy Retreat (or the biannual Convocation).

### **Ohio Youth Efforts**

"Youth directors of congregations are invited to a Zoom phone call on Monday, **Jan. 8th** at Noon for a 60 minute brainstorming session about how we can do youth ministry in Ohio at this time. Specifically what can we do for youth and/or youth directors at our annual Ohio Mission Region gathering on May 3-4 in at St. John - Grove City. Further might we plan for a Summer event? Camps? Or a Fall Event? It will be a time of sharing and asking God's guidance to our important work. Rev. Teresa Peters, director of NALC youth ministries will join us for this Zoom call. Please respond to Rev. Michael Koch for your zoom invitation. [mekoch46@gmail.com](mailto:mekoch46@gmail.com) (330) 635-8008. Michael Koch for the Ohio Mission Region Board.

### **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.

**Michigan MD** pastors and lay leaders via zoom, generally the second Saturday of each month at 10a. Pericope devotion followed by sharing of faith journey and concerns for prayer. Next: Jan 13<sup>th</sup>. Contact Pr. Abbott at [midwesternaab@thenalc.org](mailto:midwesternaab@thenalc.org) for Zoom invitation.

**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

**NC-Ohio MD**, Pastors Fellowship 10am 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)

### **Marital / Premarital Counseling Tool**

Zoe [www.zoescore.com](http://www.zoescore.com). Currently, the tool is used by approximately 10,000 pastors/therapists around the country and world.

Pastor Brian Salminen would gladly welcome the opportunity to train any NALC pastors / lay leaders on the use of the tool for free. If interested, contact Pr. Salminen at [drsal\\_123@yahoo.com](mailto:drsal_123@yahoo.com)

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

Khrystle Sullivan, North American Lutheran Seminary network (NALS), Iowa MD.

Michelle Kouse, North American Lutheran Seminary network (NALS) / Fuller Seminary, M.Div program. SW Ohio MD.

Monica Barman, Fuller Seminary, M.Div program. NC Ohio MD.

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.

Ethan Zimmerman, NALS Center at Trinity School for Ministry, M.Div program. NE 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**

#### **February 23-25, 2024 Great Rivers Mission District Youth Gathering**

The event will take place at American Lutheran Church (ALC) in Rantoul Illinois. The registration cost for the event is \$60 per person. This includes meals and accommodations. The guest speaker will be Rev. Teresa Peters, the NALC Director of Youth and Family Ministries. She will be speaking on the “Greater Calling,” of Christians. The goal is to get youth to recognize that they are called by God. Contact Aaron Dawson for registration forms and further information [dawsjr98@icloud.com](mailto:dawsjr98@icloud.com)

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!

July 21-27, 2024 **NEXUS Institute**, at Grand View University, Des Moines. The week is being sponsored by the NALC. For more information: <http://www.grandview.edu/NEXUS>

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 [southernaab@thenalc.org](mailto:southernaab@thenalc.org) or Pastor Teresa Peters at [tpeters@thenalc.org](mailto:tpeters@thenalc.org) The current plan is to start new groups next September.

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

#### **On Line Sermons**

Pastor Jess Abbott posts services / sermons on YouTube. Go to YouTube and search “Abundant Grace Lutheran Church Westchester”. Or contact Pastor Jess at [midwesternaab@thenalc.org](mailto:midwesternaab@thenalc.org)

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

These numbers constantly change based on new information each month, or corrections to prior erroneous information. As time passes the number are expected to become increasingly accurate.

Congregations with Pastors.....	90
Pastors with Congregation calls.....	99
Congs w/o Pastors, IN Call process ....	27
Congs w/o Pastors NOT in Call process	19
Interim Pastors (in congs w/o Prs.).....	9
Pastors of Specialized ministries.....	10
Retired Pastors (not Interim now).....	35
Seminary Students.....	7
Home Churches (not congs yet).....	3
Total Congregations .....	136
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.

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### 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:

**Jan 16-18, 2024** – Pastors Conference, Drury Plaza, Disney Springs, Orlando, FL

**Apr 8-10, 2024** – NALC Seminarian Interns retreat.

**May 4, 2024** – Ohio Mission Region (and all Ohio Mission Districts) Convocation

**Jun 10-11, 2024** – Iowa Mission District Pastors Retreat

**Aug 9, 2024** – NALC online Convocation

**Sep 21, 2024** – Iowa Mission District Convocation, St. John, Western Douglas

### Midwestern Area Deans

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