



NORTH AMERICAN
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CHURCH

MIDWESTERN AREA NEWSLETTER February 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

AAB Thoughts

I've been thinking about my personal library of books lately; again. The reason I say “again” is because years ago I made a resolution to constantly get rid of books I've accumulated rather than let a mass of them become a problem for relatives if I suddenly shuffled off this mortal coil. I resolved to only keep those books I thought I might refer to again for some reason. Most novels have to go on down the road (to Good Will) for someone else to enjoy. You might think that I am a bit of a “book hater”, but really, I'm a “book lover”, thus the need for the discipline of restraining my propensity for accumulation. I've always liked books. They seem like an art form; how they look, feel, and smell. I feel like I'm holding someone else's thoughts, efforts, and even history in my hand (reading on an electronic device just doesn't do it for me). The unread books lay around in about three different places in my home. They seem to call to me if they go neglected. They must “get done”. They make me feel a little guilty about “loving” that TV more than them. They accuse, “All that time you could have spent reading me instead of filling your mind with that junk on the tube!”

Oh, then there's that book I could never sell or donate. I actually want that one to burden my relatives after I pass away. Unlike the other books, I kind of joined the author in writing my own synchronistic thoughts in the margins. Unlike the other books, it speaks to me differently as I age. Unlike the other books it actually has the word “Holy” on it to remind me that it is “set apart” from all the rest and was given by God to inspire people “set apart” in

the world by God. It has the simplest title of all. “Bible” means “book”! Oh, and yes, it calls to me also if it has just been lying around too long. Its voice is a little less accusing than the other books, though it does smirk at me about the TV time along with all the other books. It whispers questions. “Hey, want to know how God turns bad situations into good ones? Read the Joseph story. Hey, want to wrestle again with suffering? Read Job. Pssst, want to read about being a dad? Read the Prodigal Son in Luke. Hey! You interested in a talking donkey? That ogre Shrek is not the only one who had one, read Numbers 22!

It is no wonder the writer of Hebrews calls the Word “living and active”! I hope you find yourself rooted, planted in, or entangled by the Bible. I hope you find, like I have, that it enriches life more than some of the other things we read or watch!

– *Pastor Jess*

Latest and Greatest News!

Celebrating Pastors and Congregations

Owasso, MI – Redeemer. Welcome Pastor Tsena Dinssa manassaeh2011@gmail.com Redeemer concludes a very long Call process, and we rejoice with them and Pr. Dinssa. Installation date TBD.

Groveport, OH – Groveport Zion.

We rejoice with Groveport Zion on their calling of Pr. Brian McGee as their regularly called pastor! His installation service will be Sunday February 4 at their usual 11:00 AM worship service.

Hilliard, OH – Upper Arlington.

Congratulations to Pastor David Mann, long-time Pastor at UALC, upon his retirement.

Strawberry Point, IA – Mission in Christ.

Pastor Gary Burkhalter was honored on Sunday, January 27th, at Mission in Christ for his retirement. A reception was held following worship, and was attended by congregation members along with individuals from Gary's internship congregations in Minnesota, and also members from his most recent call in Danforth, IL. He and his wife, Betty, will remain active with the NALC Disaster Response, and look forward to traveling to see friends and relatives.

Pastoral Counseling Resource

If you are a congregation without a pastor, you ALWAYS have a pastor. Contact your Mission District Dean for pastoral advice. Or, your Area Assistant to the Bishop (Pr. Jess) is always available to provide pastoral counseling midwesternaab@thenalc.org

Area New Member Zoom Class

For congregations without pastors... Pastor Jess is doing a four session zoom to meet the educational requirement many congregations have for becoming a formal member of the congregation. Contact Pr. Jess at midwesternaab@thenalc.org. Sessions are Saturdays, 4:30p ET, 17Feb, 24Feb, 2Mar, 9Mar.

Sola Publishing Needs New Roof

Sola's roof at their building in Graham, NC needs replacing, and the leaks have been a long-term problem that have recently become more significant. They are estimating that it could cost about \$42K. Sola is an important part of the NALC, and many congregations are blessed by what Sola provides.

Deans, please consider bringing this important issue to your Mission District Councils for possible financial support.

See article on home page of their website <https://www.solapublishing.com/>

Disaster Response

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

March 9, 9a-4p. NALC Disaster Volunteer Training at Peace Lutheran Church,

Connersville, IN. Contact Dan Richards dr7521@comcast.net or Mary Bates for further information and to register

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

NEW Volunteer Training and Retreat Center, Caldwell, Ohio. The center is on the property of the national disaster warehouse and is available for service projects, and retreats.

Contact Mary Bates for more information and how to get involved, 740-509-1132, disasterresponse@thenalc.org

Ohio Mission Region Convocaton

May 3-4 at St. John, Grove City, Ohio. While the program is still in formation, Rev. Brad Hales will be the principal speaker and will focus on ministry to senior adults. Visitors are always welcome to take advantage of key note speakers and workshops. For registration information, contact Pr. Michael Koch mekoch46@gmail.com (330) 635-8008, 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: Feb 10th. Contact Pr. Abbott at midwesternaab@thenalc.org for Zoom invitation.

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

SE-Ohio MD pastors Text study, Mondays 10a, March 11, 18, 25 with Pr. Thomas Jacobson, Ph.D. Hosted online via Microsoft Teams. Please contact Pr. Tom pastor@gracethornville.org if interested.

NC-Ohio MD, Pastors Fellowship 10am Feb 15th at St. Paul, Clyde, OH. Email Pr. Pennington for more information
penningtonkm@gmail.com

NW-Ohio MD, Pastors Fellowship 9am Feb 22nd at Zion, St. Marys, OH. Email Pr. Bert Schultz for more information
bertschultz2@outlook.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

Marital / Premarital Counseling Tool

Zoe www.zoescor.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

Candidacy for Ordained Ministry Seminarians 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 Grandmaison, 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

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 or Pastor Teresa Peters at 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

Pastor David Wendel posts sermons on YouTube 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

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.

Pastors with Congregation calls.....	100
Congs w/o Pastors, IN Call process	25
Congs w/o Pastors NOT in Call process	19
Interim Pastors (in congs w/o Prs.).....	8
Pastors of Specialized ministries.....	10
Retired Pastors (not Interim now).....	36
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/>

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:

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

Pr. Jess Abbott, Midwestern Assistant to the Bishop
513-314-2028, midwesternaab@thenalc.org

Pr. Bert Schultz, OH North West MD
715-418-1037, jcgracepastor@outlook.com

Pr. Mark Daniels, OH Mission Region & SW Ohio MD
740-603-5287, markluth91@gmail.com

Pr. Tom Jacobson, OH South East MD
740-242-2192, pastor@gracethornville.org

Pr. Michael Koch, OH North East Mission District
330-635-8008, mekoch46@gmail.com

Pr. Kathy Pennington, OH North Central Mission District

715-554-4658, penningtonkm@gmail.com

Pr. Christopher Staley, IOWA Mission District
515-357-9052, cbstaley@netins.net
www.iowamissiondistrict.com

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, dcast1950@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, tireiff@outlook.com

Area Assistants to the Bishop

Pr. Jess Abbott, Midwestern Assistant to the Bishop
513-314-2028, midwesternaab@thenalc.org
MI, OH, IN, KY, WI, IA

Pr. Bill White, Eastern Assistant to the Bishop
901-569-1428, easternaab@thenalc.org

Pr. Mark Braaten, Southern Assistant to the Bishop
903-316-1594, southernaab@thenalc.org

Pr. Marv Combs, Western Assistant to the Bishop
513-314-2028, westernaab@thenalc.org

Pr. Kevin Ree, Northern Assistant to the Bishop
513-314-2028, northernaab@thenalc.org

Director of Area Support & Development

Bp. John Bradosky,
614-684-8484, jbradosky@thenalc.org