



NALC

North American Lutheran Church

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the witness

A Publication of the Mid-Northeast Mission District

western New York, western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, western Maryland

Change your hearts and lives and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. (Acts 2:38a)

The Power of the Holy Spirit

The Rev. Dr. Alden W. Towberman, Dean

This month as we prepare to celebrate the Birthday of the Church, the Festival of Pentecost on May 15th, there are words of inspiration filled with assurance that we need to hear – the ability to accomplish the ministry to which we are called is promised to us through the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

No matter the congregation, large or small, no matter the location, regardless of one's financial resources, irrespective of the reality that "church" seems to be less important in our increasingly secular society, - we

are all promised the power of the Holy Spirit so that the Church (any congregation) can be what God is calling us to be – Here, Now, Where we are!

As we reflect upon the mission of The North American Lutheran Church and of our congregations I can't over emphasize the importance of reclaiming the third article of the creed and the importance of preaching about, teaching, and practicing a faith in

word and deed that is constantly talking about the gift and work of the Holy Spirit. God has not left us powerless to succeed in that to which God has called us.

In the Pentecost text in Acts 2 we read of the Church that from its inception is highly contagious and is in fact even considered dangerous. It is a Church that is so contagious that it affects the community around it – transforming it with the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the proclamation of the Gospel. We read of

a group of people who are so passionate in their love for Jesus, so bold in their proclamation that their words and deeds are perceived as a threat by some. Others will never be the same as their lives are transformed in miraculous ways through faith in Jesus Christ.

In the narrative of Pentecost the metaphors of wind and fire tell what the Holy Spirit is going to do in our lives if we trust the gift that we have been given. The wind (the "ruach" God's breath) symbolizes the Holy

What empowers us is not our own confidence or conviction, our theology or intelligence, our personality or charm, but the Holy Spirit at work in us.

Spirit because you cannot see the wind. Yet the Holy Spirit like the wind pushes us along in the direction God is leading so that the breath of God can bring life to those to whom God sends us.

Fire is the other symbol. It both warms and helps us to see. It is a fire that does not consume, not unlike Moses' experience with the burning bush. Most important it is a fire that purifies and refines, burning

away the dross and ignites the Church for mission.

As the apostles began learning to believe in, to trust and call upon the power of the Holy Spirit they were able to inspire more and more people to join the family of God. The hearts, minds and souls of many people were changed. What began as a celebration of the harvest of crops became a celebration of the harvest of souls. The crowds heard many languages, many tongues, all proclaiming the truth of Jesus. But it was

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PRAYER REQUESTS

This month, our prayers for:

The Rev. Thomas Beam as he awaits testing results regarding surgery prospects on an aortic aneurysm (blood bubble) that has been discovered. *Pastor Beam serves at Hope, East Smethport, PA.*

The Rev. Heidi Holst who was recently under a doctor's care for diverticulitis and fluid around the heart. She is being monitored. *Pastor Holst serves Holy Trinity, Berlin, PA.*

Ms. Rebecka Andr  who will be undergoing a right knee replacement April 27. *Rebecka is the mission district's Administrative Assistant.*

Please visit our mission district web site at

www.midnemdnalc.org



**Love. Grow. Serve.
In Christ.**

OUR LEADERSHIP

Dean

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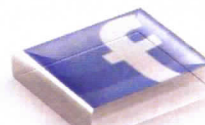
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**JOIN US IN OUR MISSION
DISTRICT FACEBOOK GROUP!**



2nd Annual Summer Youth Camp

July 26-28, 2016

PLEASE POST !!

St. Thomas Church Grove, Hooversville, PA

Theme: Rooted in Christ

Cost: \$40 (includes meals and activities)

Once again, the Mid-Northeast Mission District will have a youth camp for those from 6-12 grade at the grove of St Thomas Lutheran near Hooversville, PA. This year's theme will be "Rooted in Christ" as we look into our relationship with God and with one another and how our selfish actions can affect others.

This year's camp includes:

- a trip to the Johnstown Flood National Park and the Johnstown Flood Museum
 - all meals
 - all materials

Campers need to bring their own tents!

Registered campers will be provided a complete list of "need- to- bring items" prior to camp.

Plans are being made to have showers available this year for camp along with an afternoon at a lake for swimming.

**REGISTRATION FORM CAN BE FOUND
AS IN INSERT TO THIS PUBLICATION.**

Please copy and distribute widely!

Registrations and payments are **due July 1** to the mission district office.
Checks payable to "MNE Mission District."

Around the Mission District....

Dean's Notes

+As the North American Lutheran Church continues to grow the requests from congregations, pastors and congregation members for support, programs and services continues to expand.

More and more is asked of our Mission Districts in our present organizational model. Whether it is our seminary, or the Great Commission Society, our national NALC executive staff, the Mission Festival Leadership Team, Youth Organization, etc., I would say that the requests have more than doubled in the time I have served as a Dean; requests seeking pastors and laity from our Mission Districts to lead, serve and support a great variety of ministries. More and more we are finding that function and implementation of programs, support and services is desired/needed at the Mission District level similar in many ways to the old synodical structure. How do we deal with this reality? Know this is not a bad problem to have (it means we want to be Church!), but it is a problem nevertheless because we are being stretched too thin in our present organizational structure. It is clear to me we are going to need to evolve into a different organizational model going forward to meet all the hopes, needs and expectations we have of each other, and for our new church body. I have asked, along with others, that the Conference of Deans and our Executive Staff of the NALC deal with this reality so we can realize our potential in mission and ministry in the years ahead.

How can you help? If asked to serve or volunteer please give prayerful consideration (both laity and clergy). Please see that your congregation does its best to meet benevolence support for the work and ministry of the Church. Passion and enthusiasm for the ministry of the Church continues to be strength for us in the NALC. However, what has often been described as "The 80-20 Principle" tends to hold true for us as it did in our predecessor church bodies. About 20% of the people do 80% of the work and the giving to provide for the mission and ministry of the Church outside their own congregation.

Together we are the Body of Christ; God is counting on each of us to do our part!

This month at an up-coming Conference of Deans meeting with Rev. Dr. David Wendel, Assistant to Bishop Bradosky, we will be taking a first look at a new vetting panel program prior to certification for those being considered for the clergy roster and lay ministry roster of the NALC. Mission Districts are also being asked to form "Pastoral Care and Transition Teams" to assist deans and the NALC Executive Staff with intervention, congregation transition and to help deal with congregation conflict and clergy care. Changes to Congregational and Pastoral Profiles, and to the Manual on the Call Process will also be presented when we meet. I will share more about this with you after meetings this month.

This month I also meet with the "Election of Bishop Review Committee" to study and recommend revision to the Convocation in the election process for the Office of Bishop. I welcome your suggestions and thoughts.

+I will be away at a meeting in Richmond Virginia during the scheduled date of our Annual Clergy Retreat this year at Trinity School for ministry, June 9-10. That being said, I hope you will be able to attend. For me the time of theological reflection and fellowship has been an important part of the ministry of our ministerium. Christian Formation and Discipleship will be the focus of the presentations. You may still register if you have not already done so through our Mission District Administrative Office. Cost of the Conference/Retreat is provided by our Mission District for clergy and Lay Associates in Ministry. Assistants to the Dean, Pastor Nila Cogan and Pastor Carl Johnson will be available for consultation and assistance.

+A webinar meeting was held this past month among the Deans and those involved in NALC Youth Ministry to begin conversation about our future direction in Youth Ministry with the closure of Youth Encounter. Church camps, confirmation ministry, VBS, and organization of future national youth events was discussed.

+Thank You to congregations that have participated in a love offering to assist the family of Pastor Emery Barnett with medical expenses. Your offering may be sent by check to our Mission District Office.

The Power of the Holy Spirit.....continued from cover page.

more than an amazing experience. The words they spoke were Truth – the Good News of Jesus Christ. They proclaimed them through the power of the Holy Spirit in a way that many experienced the presence of God in their lives and many came to believe.

Several years ago, I met someone at funeral calling hours for a deceased member of a family in my congregation. I had no responsibilities for the service and as I was visiting with others after going through the receiving line and sharing my expression of sympathy with family members, I met a non-denominational church pastor who I have thought about more than once since our chance meeting. He told me that he often went to calling hours of people he did not know to meet others and speak informally about Jesus. He shared how he relied on the Holy Spirit to guide him to know who to speak with and what to say. Then he spoke of his joy in telling me how the mission church he had helped begin three years before had grown to be a worshipping congregation on Sundays of around 200 people. "How did you do it?" I asked him. "I learned to invite the Holy Spirit to be at work and God sends us to places no one else thinks about going. To belong to our congregation you are asked to be willing to give about fifty percent of your church time to serving and loving people outside the walls of the church – people that you do not know."

Is the spread of the Gospel and the growth of the church really that simple – being God's People called to love and serve the world by giving fifty percent of our time and

energy to serve people we do not know in our community and beyond, and the other fifty percent to serve the needs of the people within our church buildings? Perhaps more important than finding "a formula for success" is reliance and trust once again in the work of the Holy Spirit.

As we prepare to celebrate Pentecost, we must realize with humility that we cannot accomplish what Jesus commands us to accomplish in His name without the Holy Spirit. What empowers us is not our own confidence or conviction, our theology or intelligence, our personality or charm, but the Holy Spirit at work in us.

Take heart. The power of the Holy Spirit is available to fill us, transform us, and afford us the immediate presence of Jesus.

In our time the Church and the congregation that would speak for God must bring to bear what it alone possesses and is called to proclaim, the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

May the Holy Spirit Fill Us with True Faith and Boldness to Act Accordingly!

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Alden W. Towberman, Dean

EMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

EXPORT, PA

Emmanuel Lutheran Church has a long history in the Murrysville/Export region and we are facing new challenges and opportunities as we approach our bicentennial in 2020.

Our history begins with the German-Lutheran pioneers who settled in this region in the late 1700's and met for worship in cabins and clearings in the forest. We were formally organized in 1820 by Rev. John Steck, a circuit rider who served a number of churches in the area. The congregation's first house of worship was a tent. A small log structure constructed in 1831 was a Union Church shared by German Lutheran and German Reformed denominations which in 1856 was replaced by a brick structure which still serves Emmanuel Reformed United Church of Christ. In 1894 Emmanuel Lutheran congregation separated and constructed the white clapboard church still standing in Export. In 1965, in a decision to minister to the growing Murrysville community, the congregation moved to its present location just off highway 22 in Murrysville (though our mailing address remains in Export). The congregation dedicated a new sanctuary in 1997 which provided not only more worship space, but also a much-enlarged narthex and a basement configured for flexible classrooms.



Like many other congregations, Emmanuel was profoundly affected by the ELCA decisions in 2009, and it was only after a difficult process of discernment that we joined the NALC in the fall of 2012. We both lost and gained members at this time, and we have used this transition as an opportunity to reevaluate and focus our mission, which we now summarize concisely in our Mission Statement: Welcoming all in Christ's name; Growing Together in Faith; Sharing God's Love in the World.

Our present baptized membership is about 300 and our average Sunday worship attendance is on the order of 90 persons at our Sunday worship service, with a considerably smaller attendance at our Saturday evening vesper service. Information about worship and Sunday school times may be found on our website: www.ourlutheranchurch.org

Pr. Gregory Held has served Emmanuel for 29 years through a period of many changes; he is now working with our congregation's leadership in preparation for the transitions associated with his announced retirement in August.



Pastor Gregory Held presiding



2015-16 Council

July 26-28 will be our Youth Camp being held at
St. Thomas Church Grove near Hooversville, PA.
Theme: "Rooted in Christ"

**The cost for Youth Camp \$40.00 per person
(the fee includes meals and all activities)
same fee for youth and adult chaperones**

Participating congregations will need to provide tents for their campers
Registrations are due July 1, 2016

Youth Camp Registration Form

Name of youth participating _____ M___ F___
Name of parent(s)/guardian _____ Age of youth at camp time ____
Address _____ Primary phone
number _____ Other phone numbers _____
Home Congregation _____ Phone number _____

I, the undersigned parent / guardian, hereby grant my youth's advisor and/or chaperone the authority to obtain medical treatment for my child with the understanding that the pastor and/or leaders will get in touch with me as soon as possible. If I cannot be reached, please contact the following:

Emergency Contact other than parent/guardian noted above:

Name _____
Relationship _____
Phone Number (s) _____
Child's family physician _____ Phone: _____

This child takes the following medicine on a regular schedule:

This child is allergic to: _____
Please indicate if your child will be bringing emergency allergy applications such as an
Epi Pen _____

Parent's printed name: _____
Parent's signature _____
Date _____

I hereby grant permission for my child's image to be used as part of the publications of the
Mid-Northeast Mission District. _____

Parent/Guardian Initials

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Our congregation enjoys the part-time services of Matthew Lobe, a Duquesne University graduate student in sacred music, as our organist and choir director. Amy Foust carries dual responsibilities as our office secretary and coordinator of the Christian Education programs. Dan Plance, a recent college graduate in the community, was engaged this past year as a part-time youth leader.



Like most other congregations, Emmanuel has been operating with tight finances. Thus, it was gratifying this past year when our congregation substantially exceeded a matching-donation offer that is funding the youth leader position as well as a number of planned facility improvement projects.

In joining the NALC, Emmanuel committed to the concept of identifying local, regional, and global ministries with which it could become directly involved. In the global area, Emmanuel has been raising money and supplies to support the Good Shepherd Foundation which is a medical mission operating in the rural Grande Saline area of Haiti. During the past year two of Emmanuel's members participated in a medical mission trip on which over 700 patients were seen.

Emmanuel is very committed to supporting community service organizations. We have been the sponsors of Boy Scout troop 208 for many years and a new Venture Scouting troop (including both young men and women) is being formed. Alcoholics Anonymous and Al Anon use our facilities several nights of the week, as well as a brownie scouting troop.

Once a month a group of our youth and adults make a visit to a local nursing home where they visit and worship with the residents. An active quilting group annually creates lovely custom-designed quilts that are given to our graduating seniors as a tangible reminder of Emmanuel's caring.

In addition to the few examples named here, numerous other ministries and activities are supported by our congregation.

Come and visit us! We'd love to tell you more about our congregation, and learn more about yours!



First Communion Class Craft Activity



Senior Quilts



Outdoor worship



Vacation Bible School

ANNUAL CLERGY RETREAT

FOR CLERGY AND AUTHORIZED LAY MINISTERS OF OUR MISSION DISTRICT

JUNE 9-10, 2016

North American Lutheran Seminary

311 11th St., Ambridge, PA

**In conjunction with
TRINITY SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY'S
ANCIENT EVANGELICAL FUTURE CONFERENCE**



This year's conference will consider the goal of Christian formation, the classical resources of Christian formation, and ways of implementing these resources for the making of Christian disciples in our time. Framed in the context of Christian worship and community, this conference promises to inform, encourage and refresh all who attend. Speakers scheduled to present are Peter Leithart, Michael Gorman, D.H. Williams, Greg Peters, and Julia-Marie Halderman.

Lunch each day is included along with coffee and scones following morning prayer.

LODGING INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE AND WAS LISTED IN THE APRIL ISSUE (AVAILABLE ONLINE)

**CONFERENCE/RETREAT FEE IS COVERED BY MISSION DISTRICT FUNDS FOR ALL CLERGY ON OUR ROSTER
AND FOR PASTORS SERVING IN OUR CONGREGATIONS.**

**REGISTRATION (required!) IS VIA MISSION DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
AT 724-787-7780 OR rebeckaandrae@yahoo.com**

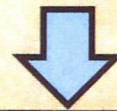
CALENDAR & ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENT	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT(S)
Clergy Retreat	June 9-10, 2016		NALS Ambridge, PA	Mission district office rebeckaandrae@yahoo.com
Mission District Council and church visits	June 23-24, 2016		western New York	Dean Towberman atowberman@zoominternet.net
Mission District Youth Mission Trip	July 8-12, 2016		Nile at Rochester, NY & Niagara Falls, NY	Pr. Nila Cogan Incogan@comcast.net
Youth Camp	July 26-28, 2016		St. Thomas Grove Hooversville, PA	Pr. Nila Cogan Incogan@comcast.net
NALC LUTHERAN WEEK	August 9-12, 2016		Anaheim, CA	www.thenalc.org

ART WORK AVAILABLE!

A large painting of the Ascension of Jesus. It has been in storage for several years but is still in good shape. It is about 12' high and 6' wide. It has a white frame. If interested, please contact Pastor Roger Keller at St. Luke's, Saxonburg, PA at prkeller@consolidated.net
A donation for the art would be accepted.

Perfect for mission starts, chapel rooms, etc.!



POSITION

Children's and Youth Director **Holy Trinity, Berlin, PA**

Part-time - approximately 10 hours per week
(adjusted according to needs and planning)

If interested, please contact:
The Rev. Heidi Holst at PastorHolstIHS@gmail.com
for additional information and to apply.



MAY ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

Carl Johnson. '87 (29 years). Pr. Johnson serves at St. John's, Kittanning, PA.

Shawn Smith '12 (4 years). Pr. Smith serves at St. Paul's, Sarver, PA.



MID-NORTHEAST MISSION DISTRICT

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

