

**MARCH
2016**

A Publication of the Mid-Northeast Mission District
western New York, western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, western Maryland

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

The Key to Understanding Easter

The Rev. Dr. Alden W. Towberman, Dean

As you receive this month's Witness, Holy Week and Easter stand just around the corner. Pastors of the Mission District and Lay Associates Ministers will be gathering for worship to renew their ordination vows and their call to the Office of Word and Service on Tuesday of Holy Week at a service we know as the Chrism Mass. Remember your pastors in your prayers not only during Holy Week, but every week. They are worthy of your very best encouragement and support; their calling is not easy. We have some of the finest pastors in the congregations of our Mission District that I have had the privilege to know over the forty years of my ministry.

To enter into the joy of Easter takes great courage whether one is clergy or laity. One must bend down and look into the empty tomb like the disciples and see that He has Risen. What do you mean by this some might ask? One must be prepared to see what one does not expect. Do you see the "Glory of Christ or the false glory of the world?"

Last Easter Pope Francis spoke profound words about Easter and humility. He stated that Jesus, "by His death and resurrection shows everyone the way to life and happiness: this way is humility." This is the path which leads to glory. Only those who humble themselves can go toward the "things that are above," toward God.

To enter into the mystery of God's love we need to bend down in love and service in Christ's Name to one another. Only those who humble themselves understand the glorification of Jesus that Easter is about and are able to follow Him in the way of glory.

Obviously that often involves being countercultural. Instead of putting ourselves first we Christians by the grace of Christ, crucified and risen, become the seeds by which God raises up those around us to new life. It takes humility to live in service to one another, not to be arrogant, but rather respectful, forgiving, and ready to act first to bring peace, comfort, hope, and help to those around us for Christ's sake. This is not weakness, but true strength.

Those who bear within them God's power, His love and His justice, do not need to have others tell them how great they are, do not need to insist on being "right," do not need to be served, they take others sins upon themselves and respond with grace. For when they look in the tomb they know that God serves them with grace, mercy and compassion beyond comprehension. Those who bend down in this way speak and act with the power of truth, beauty and love. We cannot live Easter without entering into this mystery of faith. It is not something intellectual, more than a promise we trust for salvation, more than hope for tomorrow. It is so much more! Entering into the mystery of faith means being able to wonder, to contemplate that Resurrection Life dwells within us and our congregations.

I pray that all in our Mission District and all in Christ's Church may see His Glory this Easter.

In Christ,
Pastor Al Towberman, Dean

MID-NORTHEAST MISSION DISTRICT OFFICES

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Juhree Polkowski

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PRAYER REQUESTS

Please keep the dean informed of any prayer request/concerns.

Thank you.

Please visit our mission district web site at

www.midnemdnalc.org



Love. Grow. Serve.
In Christ.

OUR LEADERSHIP

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If you're on [Facebook](#),
please join us in the
Mid-Northeast Mission District
group.
Can't wait to see you there!



Saturday, April 23, 2016 – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Registration @ 8:30 a.m.)

St. Paul Lutheran Church (Trauger)
108 Dutch Hill Rd., Latrobe, PA 15650

All congregations are
encouraged to send
individuals or teams!

NALC Disaster Response Task Force is providing disaster preparedness training at Level One Basic and Level Two Specialized. These educational workshops will provide training to volunteers in each participating congregation, preparing each to form disaster volunteer teams. The vision is that each Mission District assist in the formation of teams and the preparedness training. **Recognized credentials will be provided.**

Disaster Volunteer training includes components on:

Level One - unskilled disaster response for debris removal and basic information on FEMA regulations

Level Two - specialized trainings including:

- Case Management/Coordinated Assistance Network – how to identify and track client needs and the assistance they receive – BECOME A VOLUNTEER CASE MANAGER!
- Donations Management/Aid Matrix – how to coordinate and organize donated materials –
- Volunteer Management/Disaster Response Database – how to identify the skills of each volunteer and address risk management issues – FORM A DISASTER VOLUNTEER TEAM & HELP REBUILD HOMES!
- Spiritual and Emotional Care – how to identify and document qualified volunteers to provide spiritual care – PROVIDE SPIRITUAL CARE TO THOSE HURTING AND IN NEED – THOSE AFFECTED BY DISASTER AS WELL AS TEAM MEMBERS!

Training includes:

NALC Volunteer T-Shirt (*indicate size on registration form*)
CD Rom of Training materials
Certificate

NALC Volunteer I.D. Badge
Lunch

AGENDA

Level I Training: 9:00 -11:30 am

What the NALC does when disaster strikes.
Assessing Congregational preparedness.
Assessing personal skills & gifts.
Initial response



Level II Training: 12:00-3:00 pm

Volunteer Case Management
Donations Management
Volunteer Team Coordination
Spiritual & Emotional Care

Registration form found as an insert to this publication.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: April 15, 2016

+Pastor Nila Cogan and Pastor Carl Johnson have been appointed to serve as Assistants to the Dean of The Mid-Northeast Mission District in 2016. I am grateful for their continued faithful and excellent leadership.

+At the Orlando Florida NALC Leaders and Ministerium Meeting this past month Dr. David Yeago reported that consideration of a Three-Fold Office of Ministry of Ordained Ministry including a ministry of Word and Service continues to be under study. How we make sense of an Office of Ministry that does not include Word and Sacrament is problematic both for us as Lutherans and ecumenically. Should the Office of Ministry be other than Word and Sacrament? How does our biblical-theological understanding of this issue and our polity best serve the ministry of the Gospel as we move forward in being part of the holy, catholic, apostolic Church? How will our understanding of ecclesiology effect our relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and Missouri Synod, etc. The NALC Study Commission is not yet close to a recommended position for our annual convocation to consider but is working toward that goal.

+Also from our Orlando NALC Leadership Meeting – New NALC Communications Coordinator, Pastor Mark Ryman, has been asked to prioritize developing a website program available to all our congregations so that every NALC congregation small or large can have an effective website ministry engaging their community. A standard and premium user-friendly website program has just been designed and developed for our churches at a nominal cost. It looks good. I encourage you to consider it as you evaluate the effectiveness of your website ministry.

+Chrism Mass and Renewal of Ordination Vows will be held at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Butler, PA at 11:00 AM on Tuesday, March 22nd followed by lunch provided for pastors and Lay Associates of the Mission District at the Monroe Hotel following the service. Oil to be blessed for Baptism and Healing of the Sick may be brought to the service.

+Pastor Karl Schoch has been appointed by the Dean to serve as Interim (Vice-Pastor) to Springdale Lutheran Church in West Sunbury. Thanks to Pastor Carl Hendrickson and Pastor Sandra Towberman for their good and faithful ministry to the congregation these past three years.

+Interim Ministry Guidelines (Providing Pastoral Care for Congregations in Transition of the Mid-Northeast Mission District of the NALC) have been approved by the Executive Council.

+To grow their ministry, Christ Lutheran Church in East Amherst, New York, a mission congregation of our Mission District of under the pastoral leadership of Pastor Mack Smith is holding a congregation retreat with NALC General Secretary, Pastor Mark Chavez, April 23-24. The retreat will be followed by a weekend visit from Dr. Amy Schiffrin with emphasis on church growth and ministry on May 21-22. The Mission District Executive Council will be meeting with leaders of the congregation for our next Executive Council meeting on June 22-23 when making a road trip to visit congregations in the northeast part of the Mission District. Congratulations to Christ Lutheran in its desire to step out in faith to learn, serve and grow!

+The Mission District Executive Council has approved a special collection among our churches during Lent to help the family Pastor Emery Barnett with medical expenses prior to Pastor Barnett's death this fall.

+Bishop Bradosky has announced that a "Church Planting/House Church Planting Seminar" will be held this coming fall. Each of our Mission District's has been asked to plant at least one new mission start in 2016.

+I serve on the NALC Task Force to consider revision of the NALC election process for bishop. I welcome your thoughts.

+Christian Associates of Southwestern Pennsylvania, representing the judicatory leaders of 27 denominations including the NALC has moved its offices from Lawrenceville to the campus of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

2nd ANNUAL SUMMER YOUTH CAMP!

July 26-28, 2016

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 will include a trip to the Johnstown Flood national park and the Johnstown Flood Museum. Plan 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.**

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

CHRISM MASS

INCLUDING RENEWAL OF ORDINATION VOWS AND BLESSING OF THE OILS

Tuesday in Holy Week – March 22, 2016 at 11 a.m.

**St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church
201 West Jefferson Street
Butler, PA 16001**

LUNCH FOLLOWS FOR CLERGY AND AUTHORIZED LAY MINISTERS

Women's One-Day Retreat Report

On February 13, twenty-four women from our Mid-Northeast Mission District came together at Christ Lutheran Church, Shelocta for a delightful day of learning, fellowship, fun and a wonderfully delicious luncheon. They came from the south from Washington, Pa and as far north as Rochester, NY. We were led in study by Rev. Joyce Dix-Weiers with four sessions: a bible study on creation, Our relationship with God, Our relationship is ourselves and Our relationship with the world.



We made new friends throughout the mission district with fellowship as we made prayer beads. In our sessions, we learned that we all have gifts - and they vary - arts and crafts is not on all our lists. We had many laughs as some found that "crafty" was not a word in their description.

Karen George prepared a delightful luncheon fashioned on an "afternoon tea." As we were served with delicious soup, scrumptious salad and mouthwatering tea sandwiches served on china, conversation flowed. A variety of savory teas were served including peach, blueberry and cinnamon. Oh YUM!

After such a pleasant luncheon, we returned to finish our sessions with Pastor Joyce as she led us in discussion and a visualization story. We left the day looking forward to another time in the fall when again we will be able to get together for our fall retreat. We hope you will join us and bring a friend for another delightful day as sisters in Christ.

Pastor Joyce Dix-Weiers serves Elderton Lutheran Parish, a two-point parish comprised of Christ, Shelocta and Mt. Union, Elderton. Photo courtesy of Pr. Dix-Weiers.

ANNUAL YOUTH BIBLE BOWL

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2016 at 1 p.m.

First Lutheran Church
92 West Walnut St.
Washington, PA 15301

Everyone is invited to attend and watch our youth teams take on the book of Romans.

This is a fun event within our mission district family! We hope to see you there!

CALENDAR & ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENT	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT(S)
Chrism Mass <i>Lunch follows</i>	March 22, 2016	11 a.m.	St. Mark's Butler, PA	Dean Towberman 724-698-3644
Youth Leaders Mtg.	March 29, 2016	10 a.m.	St. Paul Trauger, PA	Pr. N. Cogan Incogan@comcast.net
Mission District WNALC Spring Meeting	April 2, 2016	TBA	Holy Trinity Grove City, PA	
Bible Bowl	April 9, 2016	1 p.m.	First Washington, PA	Pastor Mark Werner revmaw@wpa.net Pastor Nila Cogan Incogan@comcast.net
Disaster Preparedness and Response Training	April 23, 2016	9-3 (Registration at 8:30)	St. Paul Latrobe, PA	Rebecka Andrae rebeckaandrae@yahoo.com 724-787-7780
Mission District Clergy Retreat	June 9-10, 2016		NALS Ambridge, PA	Registrations via rebeckaandrae@yahoo.com 724.787.7780
Mission District Council meeting and church visits	June 23-24, 2016		New York	Dean Towberman 724-698-3644
Mission District Youth Mission Trip	July 8-12, 2016		Rochester, NY and Niagara Falls, NY	Incogan@comcast.net
Youth Camp	July 26-28, 2016		St. Thomas Grove Hooversville, PA	Incogan@comcast.net
NALC LUTHERAN WEEK	August 9-12, 2016		Anaheim, CA	Registration open at www.thenalc.org

ANNUAL MID-NORTHEAST MISSION DISTRICT CLERGY RETREAT



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.
Registration fee will be paid with mission district funds for all clergy on the mission district roster.
Registration is through the mission district office at 724-787-7780 or rebeckaandrae@yahoo.com.

Lodging is available next door to the seminary at Cobblestone Inn and Suites –
www.staycobblestone.com. Special group rate applies when attending the event at the seminary.

If you are in need of financial assistance for lodging, please contact the dean directly.

MARCH ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

Ann Miller Smith '76 (40 years). *Pr. Smith serves Evaline and Grace, both in Pittsburgh, PA.*

Roger Keller '96 (20 years). *Pr. Keller serves St. Luke's in Saxonburg, PA.*

final thoughts..

Any newsletter announcements should be sent to:

Rebecka Andrae, Administrative Assistant

rebeckaandrae@yahoo.com DEADLINE: 15th of each month

PASTORS and Councils:

Please share this newsletter

with your congregations.

Include announcements in bulletins and newsletters and post on bulletin boards. Make copies available to the people. Thank you!



WNALC Annual Gathering

Benne-Braaten Lectures in Theology

NALC Convocation

Register Now!

August 9-12 Anaheim, CA

Pastors and Councils:

You are encouraged to begin preparing for the NALC Lutheran Week events!

Selection of lay delegate(s), monetary support for pastor, authorized lay ministers, and delegates, and timely planning are advised.

Lay folks may also attend as visitors.

EVENT REGISTRATIONS AND HOTEL RESERVATIONS AT www.thenalc.org

MID-NORTHEAST MISSION DISTRICT

Administrative Office

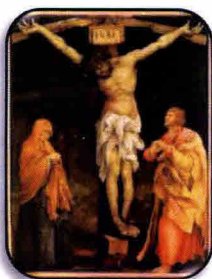
131 Starboard Villa Ln. #315

Greensburg, PA 15601

www.midnemdnalc.org



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



" 'Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit.' " Luke 23:46a