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A Publication of the Mid-Northeast Mission District

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

Preach the word; be ready in and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (2 Tim. 4:2)

Calling A Pastor In the Mid-Northeast Mission District

The Rev. Dr. Alden W. Towberman, Dean

One of the most frequent questions I am asked as Dean by congregations and pastors in our Mission District is how we go about the call process in The North American Lutheran Church. Calling a new pastor to shepherd and lead a congregational family is one of the most important decision a church will make. Equally so it is one of the most important times in a pastor's life and in the life of his or her family as well. Here's an overview of our call process... It all begins with seeking to understand the meaning of "The Call of God."

Having just completed a year of serving on the Constitution Task Force of the NALC tasked with giving careful consideration to the way we go about calling (electing) a bishop to serve our church body and giving careful consideration to Scripture, past practices and procedural considerations I can tell you that our church is well served in the way we seek to go about the call process.

I can tell you that the priority for us, whether the calling of a bishop or calling a pastor to serve our congregations is to facilitate the greatest opportunity through faithful discernment and honest reflection/conversation for the Holy Spirit to identify God's choice for the pastoral office.

Each of our congregations has gifts, strengths and weaknesses. The same is true of our pastors. Pastoral gifts and experience vary. God has blessed the NALC with an impressive cadre of pastors with many talents for ministry. Their dedication in using those talents to

proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a strength of our church body.

We have strengthened and refined the call process since the NALC was organized in 2010 and will continue to do so to best serve Christ's Church. There are both spiritual, theological and practical considerations involved in calling a pastor.

The NALC maintains a roster of clergy in good standing of those we believe qualified and called by God to the

Pastoral office in the North American Lutheran Church. Our standards are high for the sake of the Gospel. The pastoral office is a holy calling.

We struggle as do most Christian denominations today with a shortage of clergy and seminarians which at times makes it particularly difficult to fill vacancies in our part-time, smaller and rural congregations that are in isolated

areas of the country.

Salary is a concern for some of our churches and pastors understandably. In the NALC recommended salary and compensation is based on averaging mainline protestant clergy salaries in a particular geographic area based on the size of the congregation and experience of the clergy. For recommended compensation within the United States, the NALC subscribes to a resource from Christianity Today that

"...the priority for us....is to facilitate the greatest opportunity through faithful discernment and honest reflection/conversation for the Holy Spirit to identify God's choice for the pastoral office."

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PRAYER REQUESTS

This month, our prayers for:

The Family of Pastor Craig W. Duffield who died on The Epiphany of our Lord, January 6, 2017. First Lutheran Church in Ridgway, PA was preparing to call Pastor Duffield this past October when Pastor Duffield was unexpectedly diagnosed with a fast spreading cancer. Our prayers surround the people of First Lutheran as well as Pastor Duffield's family. Funeral services were held in Ridgway on January 10, 2017.
"Bless your faithful servant, O Lord, to be received among the saints in glory."

The administrative office has the following new email address:

randrae.midnemdnalc@gmail.com

Please update your email contacts to reflect this change. Thank you!

Please visit our mission district web site at

www.midnemdnalc.org



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

OUR LEADERSHIP

Dean

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





BIBLE BOWL 2017

April 30, 2017

St. Mark's Lutheran, Butler, PA

Time: 3:00 – 6:00 pm



Teams consist of youth in 6 – 12 grade

At least three youth on a team

Only six youth at a time participating. Once a round starts, those participating continue till the next round.

All questions will be based on the English Standard Version (ESV).

This year's competition will be the books of Daniel & Jonah

REGISTRATION FORM FOUND AS AN INSERT – DEADLINE IS APRIL 10TH

The competition consists of three rounds

First round will be questions from the 1-8 chapters of Daniel
(with each question the chapter and verse will be announced)

Break with refreshments

Second round will be questions from the 9-12 chapters of Daniel and the Book of Jonah

Third round will consist of three questions needing a list – the answers will be written down (spelling counts)

- * No electronic devices, Bibles, notes, etc. (except paper given for the third round) are permitted at the table
- * Each question is read twice before the team is required to answer.
- * Each team has 10 seconds to answer the question; time starts after the second reading of the question.
- * If an incorrect answer is given, another team will be given an opportunity to answer.
- * Each team will be given the opportunity to answer the same number of questions.
- * Judges have sole discretion about the closeness of any particular answer.

Any questions, please contact:

Rev. Nila Cogan – 814-483-0296 or Lncogan@comcast.net

Rev. Mark Werner – 724-244-4248 or revmaw@wpa.net

EVERYONE is invited to attend this wonderful event! A congregation does not have to have a team participating in order to attend and be part of the audience and fellowship! Hope to see YOU there!

2017 Mid-Northeast Mission District Bible Bowl

Team Registration Form

Date of Competition: April 30, 2017

St. Mark's Lutheran, Butler, PA

Time: 3:00 – 6:00 pm

Bible Books for Competition: Daniel & Jonah, ESV

Congregation_____

Address_____

Phone_____Email_____

Name of Pastor_____Phone_____

Name of Youth Leader_____Phone_____

Please mail this form to:

Rev. Nila Cogan
212 Hilltop Road
Friedens, Pa. 15541

Deadline for registration is April 10, 2017

Insert

Let's meet

**St. Paul, 108 Dutch Hill Rd., Latrobe, PA
(Trauger village)**



St. Paul Lutheran Church joined the North American Lutheran Church in July, 2011. Since then, we have seen God bless us in abundant ways.

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.” The words recorded in Isaiah 40:1 were significant as we said goodbye to members who did not want to see us leave the ELCA. Yes, we did our grieving as people do with the end of a relationship or a death. Yet, our identity is not based on who we lost. Yes, St. Paul’s has received many new members since joining the NALC. However, our identity is not based on who we gained. We find our identity rooted in Christ, the incarnate, crucified, risen and ascended Lord. For as that passage from Isaiah goes on to say, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.” (Is. 40:8).

Over the five and a half years our focus has been on creating a culture of discipleship, where we see ourselves not simply as members of a congregation, but as disciples of Jesus who happen to worship together at a place we call St. Paul. As with any significant change, it takes time.

One of the fruits that has emerged from this new culture is the emphasis placed on Bible study. Not only does a significant portion of each meeting begin with study of a particular scripture passage, but the weekly Bible studies on various books are extremely engaging and well attended. As of this writing, we are midway through Revelation which is not bad considering we started at the end of August. Our ongoing question is whether we’ll complete this Bible study before Christ returns.



One of the greatest blessings we have received is the direct mission partnership with Nile Evangelical Church in Rochester, New York. There have been numerous visits among the lay people over the years. Members of St. Paul have traveled to New York to share in worship, fellowship, Bible study, Sunday school lessons, etc. Members of Nile have traveled to St. Paul, sharing the blessings of Christ in the preached word from Pastor Nestory, as well as the beautiful music of Nile’s women and children’s choirs. We have walked with them in prayer, helping appeal for funds that they might be able to purchase a place to worship. Through our partnership, the Mission District was pleased to do its first mission trip to Nile to lead Bible school. The partnership with Nile has helped us see much more clearly the response of the lawyer’s question to Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” Of course, with a mailing address of Latrobe, it is always a beautiful day for a neighbor, as Mr. Rogers would say.

St. Paul also has a significant impact in the Latrobe, Mt. Pleasant township area. Over the past five years we have begun the year offering a free meal of Pork and Sauerkraut on New Year's Day. The cost of the food is completely donated without any free will offering. Our purpose of this meal was several fold:

1. To provide a free meal for those who are in need.
2. To provide an opportunity for those living alone to engage in fellowship with neighbors.
3. To provide a meal for families to enjoy without the work of preparing a meal at home.

Over the years, we have seen attendance at this event grow. We have served as few as 100 and as many as 160. In addition, we have provided food to meals on wheels and the Union Mission in Latrobe.



Additionally, St. Paul has participated in the ministry of Bread for the World. Bread equips citizens of the United States to use their voice in expressing to elected leader's policies that will benefit those who are food insecure. We have also served as a distribution site for the Westmoreland County Food Bank's Operation Fresh Express.

Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship: Come on Board! That is the Mission Statement of St. Paul. It is a joy to share with you some of the ways we live out this mission.



Clockwise from top left: Octogenarian Sunday 2016, Easter Sunday 2016, Children's Christmas Program 2016, Sunday School Program 2016, Visit from Pastor Jordan Long (President of Lutheran Church South Sudan) and Pastor Nestory (Nile Evangelical Church, Rochester, NY), 2nd picture from the same visit.

The Rev. Mark A. Werner serves as pastor at St. Paul in Latrobe (Truager), PA.

that provides recommended ranges of pastoral compensation. The resource bases salary ranges on actual compensation of mainline church clergy and considers variables such as the annual budget of the congregation, average worship attendance, region, context of ministry, educational level of the pastor, and years of experience. From a practical standpoint, our expectation is that appropriate salary for fulltime clergy (most of whom have at least four years of college and four years of seminary education) should be at least similar to a public school teacher's salary and benefits in the area being served.

Also of primary importance is that our congregations realize that they are "not hiring a pastor" but "Calling a Pastor," God chosen, by mutual discernment as God's choice to Shepherd and lead according to the call of God. Pastors as well are expected to think of pastoral ministry not so much as a career but as a "calling from God" and therefore are asked to be open to serve where the Church has need through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Admittedly, such discernment is not without practical considerations of importance. It is not always easy when employment opportunity for a clergy spouse is part of meeting a clergy family's needs and ability to serve a particular church. Some of our clergy families have large educational debt and children who have special needs. Such respect for the call process, pastoral office, and practical considerations is necessary for a church and pastor to have a healthy environment for a successful ministry. It goes both ways. Simply put: "Good/faithful congregations make good pastors and good/faithful pastors make good congregations."

The call process varies in different denominations. The one common exegetical, Scriptural truth in the calling and election of leadership for the people of God in the Old and New Testament is an openness to the variety of ways and sometimes surprising ways, God makes known God's choice for the leadership of the Church. Therefore in the NALC congregations and clergy are given a greater part in the discernment/call process than was the case in our predecessor church bodies. Our call process is guided by our four Core Values: "Christ Centered, Mission Driven, Traditionally Grounded and Congregationally Focused."

Ours is an "Open Call Process." By that I mean both congregations and clergy can initiate the call process. The Bishop's Office, Dean or a congregation in the search process can ask any pastor currently on the clergy roster of the NALC to consider interviewing for a congregation pastoral vacancy. Any NALC pastor can ask to be considered for any pastoral vacancy in the United States and Canada.

At a time of congregational vacancy the congregation council contacts Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism. A discernment process begins, usually lasting around six months during which time the Mission District Dean arranges for a Pastoral Care and Transition Team (P-CAT) to lead a one day workshop with the congregation council and call committee of the congregation. Once time has been taken for reflection, discernment, and self-evaluation a congregation profile is prepared and sent to Pastor David Wendel and the Dean. Pastor Wendel then places the congregation on a list of NALC Congregational Vacancies that is made available monthly to all NALC clergy. Any NALC pastor who is on the Approved Clergy Roster in Good Standing of the NALC may contact Pastor Wendel's Office to ask to receive a copy of any congregation's profile on the approved vacancy list of our churches.

Clergy in good standing who wish to be considered for call or who are asked to consider a call prepare their resume using the NALC "Pastor Available for Call Forms" obtained from and returned to the Office of Pastor David Wendel. Once a pastor has requested and received a congregation profile and then expresses interest in having his/her profile sent to a congregation search committee - he/she notifies Pastor David Wendel's Office. Upon approval by Pastor Wendel, Maddie Benson, Pastor David Wendel's secretary immediately forwards the pastor's profile to the congregation search committee who then decides if they would wish to interview the pastoral candidate. The Dean's Office is also notified at this time that a congregation and pastor are in initial conversation regarding the possibility of call.

In the NALC we trust the discernment of our congregation's and pastors with the oversight of the Office of the Assistant to the Bishop and Dean. We believe this open discernment process allows the greatest opportunity for good order, transparency and the work of the Holy Spirit to guide us, even in sometimes surprising ways that are consistent with the intent of Scripture, seeking to know God's choice and call to the pastoral office.

The list of congregations seeking to call NALC pastors is available on the NAIC website at www.thenalc.org/pastoral-vacancies.

In Christ,

Pastor Al Towberman, Dean

CALENDAR AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENT	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT(S)
Mission Trip (Youth and Adults)	March 17-19, 2017			Pastor Mark Werner revmaw@wpa.net
Chrism Mass	April 11, 2017	11 a.m. <i>(Lunch provided following the Mass for clergy and rostered lay ministers)</i>	St. Mark's Butler, PA	Pastor Alden Towberman, Dean atowberman@zoominternet.net
Youth Bible Bowl	April 30, 2017	3 p.m.	St. Mark's Butler, PA	Pastor Nila Cogan Incogan@comcast.net Pastor Mark Werner revmaw@wpa.net
Clergy Retreat	June 8-9, 2017		NALS Trinity School For Ministry Ambridge, PA	Rebecka Andrae, Admin. Assistant randrae.midnemdnalc@gmail.com
Mission District Council Meeting	June 22, 2017	10 a.m.-2 p.m.	Zion (Brentwood) Pittsburgh, PA	Pastor Alden Towberman, Dean atowberman@zoominternet.net
DEDICATION of the NALC IN-TENTS LUTHERAN CHURCH CAMP	July 24, 2017	TBA	In-Tents Lutheran Church Camp Hooversville, PA	Rebecka Andrae, Admin. Assistant randrae.midnemdnalc@gmail.com
Youth Camp	July 24-27, 2017		In-Tents Lutheran Church Camp Hooversville, PA	Pastor Nila Cogan Incogan@comcast.net

Discipleship Class – ME 700 – North American Lutheran Seminary at Trinity in Ambridge, PA
Jan. 16-20, 2017 – Taught by NALS President Amy Schiffrin and NALC Bishop John Bradosky



Participants included students (Lutheran and Anglican) in the MAR track, MDiv track, and DMin track along with global missionaries, NALC pastors, Anglican priests, and local community members.

(About 1/3 of the class was not present for this photo.)

Photo courtesy of: The Rev. Dr. Johann WH van der Bijl III, SAMS Missionary



The four photos above credited to Trinity School for Ministry

ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

March

The Rev. Ann Miller Smith '76 (41 years). Pastor Smith serves at Evaline and Grace, both in Pittsburgh, PA.

The Rev. Roger Keller '96 (21 years). Pastor Keller serves at St. Luke's in Saxonburg, PA.

The Rev. Mack Smith, Jr. '81 (36 years). Pastor Smith served as Mission Developer at Christ, East Amherst, NY until Feb. 2017.

April

There are no anniversaries on record for April.



March For Life 2017

The annual rally and march took place on Friday, Jan. 27 in Washington, D.C.

The NALC was represented as a voice for children in the womb along with app. 400,000 marchers.

Our Dean, Pr. Al Towberman, and one of our Assistants to the Dean, Pr. Carl Johnson, made the trip and are pictured (center and center-left).

Photos courtesy of Pr. Towberman



MID-NORTHEAST MISSION DISTRICT

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

