The EVANGEL

Convention Edition



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From the Editor

Perhaps I say this every year, but each time I attend our convention, I am amazed how so many various gifts are on display, as the gathering goes about the work of the Church.

Each aspect of running a three-day convention is covered by someone the Lord has equipped with a talent or energy to match the need.

Even someone who, perhaps, showed up simply because their church was desperate to send a delegate, so they took time away from family and responsibilities at home to attend. Besides that, listening to the various business items and discussions, then being called upon to make a decision and vote? This is no small thing.

One of the jobs I'm most amazed by is that of parliamentarian, or the person who makes sure the meetings and votes and such are run according to *Robert's Rules of Order.* When a question is raised, I am always grateful that I am not the person responsible for making sure things were done according to the rules.

And the finances: how those in charge of the numbers make sense of it and keep it together is a feat like none other. Dr. Dan Kruger spent time on an article, so that none of you would have to try to understand the financial state of The AALC from my feeble attempts to summarize.

All this to say: there is a place for you here, in the Church, the body of Christ. God has brought you here and has a role for you—even if you puzzle over how you might actually help at a convention or in your church. Trust me, we need you.

While our church body benefited from orderly business meetings and a well-organized convention, the highlight was the fellowship of meeting with other believers. The evening services brought us together in worship, our voices raised in song, and the conversations between sessions and those that lasted late into the night were such an encouragement.

I encourage you to pray about attending the next convention. And in the meantime, pray about how you may help your local church and look for where the needs are. God has a place for you here.

In His Peace,

Gretchen Baker

Gretchen Baker
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Cover photo: *The AALC clergy procession at the start of the opening divine service of The AALC's 30th General Convention on Tuesday, June 23, 2026, on the campus of the Free Lutheran Bible College. Submitted photo.*

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Editor: Gretchen Baker
Layout & Design: Karen Young

Christ Jesus – Our Hope – Our Future



By Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson

I first shared these thoughts at the General Convention in June during my report as Presiding Pastor. Now, I want to offer a shorter version here in *The Evangel*.

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Heb 10:23). This verse was the theme for our 30th General Convention. It is the same hope we spoke of when The AALC began in November 1987: "Lord Jesus, our HOPE, our FUTURE." As our 40th anniversary nears, that message remains true. We hold on to Christ Jesus not by our own strength, but because He who promised is faithful, even in today's challenges.

As we get closer to our fifth decade in 2027, it seems like a good time to ask ourselves again, in a clear and simple way, "Who are we as a confessional Lutheran church body?" I plan to ask a group of pastors to reaffirm the values The AALC set in 1987 and to show how the Lutheran Confessions still guide our life together. Their findings will be shared at the 2027 Fall Pastors' Conference and the 31st General Convention, and you will also read about them here in *The Evangel*.

Over the past two years, we have focused a lot on caring for our smaller and vacant congregations. We also have several pastors considering joining the Association. I remember having brunch with a pastor who was learning about The AALC. During our conversation, he looked puzzled and said, "I don't get it. You have spent more time visiting with me than I ever spent with my own bishop. Why?" I told him it is because The AALC values real, trusting relationships in Christ Jesus. Your faithful giving makes this possible.

Since the last General Convention, there has been both joy and sorrow. Eleven pastors were ordained or installed, five men joined us through colloquy, and three congregations became part of our fellowship. We also mourned the closing of Mountain View Lutheran in Thornton, CO, even as we work to renew it. We remembered before the Lord Rev. Dr. Daniel Schroeder, Mrs. Mardell Lindberg, Mrs. Natalie Klawonn, Rev. David Swarthout, and Rev. Steve Smeback. Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed.

In this same period, Lisa Cooper and Lauren Fenn have joined me in prayer as we consider how to re-present the Deaconess Certification Program to a new generation of AALC women called to this important role. Dr. Jordan Cooper, who chairs the CDCR, and I agree that this program should be based on a clear confessional definition of the Office of Holy Ministry, so the deaconess office is honored without being confused with the pastoral office.

Our relationships outside The AALC have also grown stronger. Our nineteen-year partnership with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod continues, and I hope it remains based on mutual respect and honest accountability. Last December, Rev. Philip Hofinga and I visited Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt of SELK (the confessional Lutheran Church in Germany) at their seminary near Frankfurt to encourage our German brothers and sisters as they face their own challenges. This coming October, I will represent The AALC at the installation of Bishop Torkild Masvie's successor in Norway. Lutheran churches in Canada, England, South Africa, and Finland have also shown interest in fellowship. I was glad, and I believe for the first time, that an AALC presiding pastor has been invited to attend the Evangelical Lutheran Synod's annual convention this summer.

None of this would be possible without your generosity. The AALC has never charged dues or fees, and we rely completely on your gifts. I ask you to prayerfully consider your congregation's gifts to The AALC, so our work can grow beyond just maintaining what we have.

Finally, I am truly grateful and honored to serve another four-year term as your presiding pastor. I cannot fully express my gratitude for your trust and partnership as we work together for the sake of the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

Looking ahead, our priorities are clear. We want to start new churches for the sake of the Gospel, continue to provide care for our congregations, achieve ALTS accreditation, define the Office of Holy Ministry, renew the deaconess program, and build deeper confessional fellowship both here and abroad. The AALC has a bright future because Christ Jesus is our Hope and our Future. Thanks be to God for every pastor, church worker, and layperson who makes this work possible.

I am your servant in Christ Jesus.✝

The Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson was re-elected as Presiding Pastor of The AALC at the 30th General Convention.



AALC Meets for 30th General Convention

The 30th General Convention of The AALC convened June 23-26, 2026, on the campus of the Free Lutheran Bible College (FLBC), Plymouth, MN. This year's theme was "Christ Jesus—Our Hope—Our Future!" based on Hebrews 10:23: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."

Each morning, Convention Chaplain Rev. Anthony Voltattorni shared devotions from the Psalms, reminding the assembly that any anxiety about the future of The AALC or each person's future can be calmed in light of God's power and faithfulness.

The 30th General Convention of The AALC was called to order by Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, who opened the first session with prayer and Galatians 6:9: "[L]et us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

Around 100 voting delegates were present, both in person and online, representing 42 congregations. Various guests brought greetings to the assembly, throughout the business sessions.

The first task before the delegation was to accept three new congregations onto the roster of The AALC, which was accomplished with unanimous vote and hearty applause, followed immediately by the delegates standing to sing, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." The congregations welcomed were: Christ the King Lutheran Church, Waseca, MN; Trinity Lutheran Church, Alexander, ND; St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church, Wilmington, NC.

Wednesday afternoon brought a discussion time on the topic of altar and pulpit fellowship with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LC-MS), led by Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins (representing ALTS), and Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper (representing the Commission on Doctrine and Church Relations - CDCR). A resolution "To Reaffirm the 2009 Operating Agreement, Continue Dialogue with the LC-MS, and Charge Our Leadership to Bring Forward a Consensus Position" was brought forward by The AALC Executive Committee, ALTS Staff, and the CDCR. After a brief discussion, the resolution passed, authorizing Dr. Larson to form an ad hoc committee to determine next steps.

AALC Treasurer Dr. Dan Kruger provided an update on the finances and proposed budget of The AALC and ALTS (for more see page 7-8). The proposed budget included a new position of Church Plant Coordinator.

The convention's keynote speaker, Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper, presented on "Toward a Gracious Confessionalism," asking the question: "Can we be theologically rigorous and also treat others



with grace?" (For videos of these sessions, visit The AALC's YouTube channel).

Four workshops were offered on Thursday: "The Lamb of God in the Fourth Gospel" with Rev. Anthony Voltattorni; "A Proposal for a New American Lutheran Hymnal" with The Hymnal Committee of Rev. Steve Klawonn, Rev. Matthew Fenn, and Rev. Jon Holst; "Serving the Church in a Digital Age" with Vicar William Green; and "Thrivent: The Power of Membership" with Mr. Larry Burton.

The final divine service of convention was held Thursday evening with the theme, "The Great Commission and a Season of Preparation." This service included the seminary graduation of two Master of Divinity students: Rev. Jacob Schaeffer and Jonathan Guido; and one Master of Arts in Theology student: Karyn Guido.

The seminary also presented two new awards: the Seelsorger Award to Rev. John Anderson, and the Founders Award to Brian and Debra Friedrichsen, James and Rachel Nelson, and Doug and Donnette Taylor.

On the final day of convention, Rev. Dr. Cary Larson recognized a list of pastors with 25 and 50 years in the Office of Holy Ministry, noting the Rev. Dr. Duane Lindberg (in attendance) has 65 years of service. The assembly once again stood to sing the Doxology to praise God for His work through these men.

To close the convention, Rev. Dr. Samuel Zumwalt led closing matins, culminating with the tradition of the clergy going forward to sing the first verse of "Beautiful Savior."

"Beautiful Savior, King of creation,

Son of God and Son of Man!

Truly I'd love Thee, truly I'd serve thee,

Light of my soul, my Joy, my Crown."[1] ✝

1 Joseph Augustus Seiss, translator, "Beautiful Savior," accessed 7/13/2026 via hymnary.org. Public Domain.







Page 4: The AALC Clergy gathered at convention. Page 5 (left to right): Rev. Anthony Voltattorni served as Convention Chaplain; Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins and Rev. Dr. Duane Lindberg; Rev. Dr. Tom Stover and Rev. Phil Hofinga; Rev. Dr. Cary Larson celebrates the Sacrament during Divine Worship; clergy prepare to process in at the opening service of Convention; Rev. Nigel Brown brings the message during the Wednesday evening service; Rev. Eric Ishimaru played piano prior to business sessions to call the assembly back together. Photo credits: black and white photos by Rev. Chris Rosebrough. Additional photos by Vicar John Austin, Vicar Gage Garlinghouse, and Gretchen Baker.







Election Results

Presiding Pastor:
Rev. Dr. Cary Larson

Secretary of The AALC:
Rev. Nigel Brown

Clergy Commission:
Rev. Ben Baker
Rev. Mark Raitz
Mark Leonard

Board of Appeals and Adjudication:
Rev. Dan Dapelo, Rev. Phillip Hofinga
Rev. Dr. Craig Loving, Will George
Nathan Stauffer.

Commission on Doctrine & Church Relations:
Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey
Rev. Phillip Hofinga
Will Green

Commission for Higher Education:
Rev. Dean Stoner, Karen Holst
Dr. David Hurt

Commission for Commissioned Church Workers:
Ryan Christ, Lisa Cooper
Brad Longstreth

Foundation Board of Directors:
Mark Leonard, Scott Monson















Photos (from top) Rev. Kevin Beard, Chairman of the Credentials Committee addresses the delegates; Lisa Cooper, Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey, Vicar Gage Garlinghouse, and Vicar John Austin catch up between sessions; Rev. Dr. Cary Larson preaches during the opening service; Rev. Joe Marsh visits with Mark Leonard; Vicar Will Green; Rev. Eric Ishimaru discusses with Rev. Jon Holst; Rev. Jon Holst, Siriana Franco, Amanda and Rev. Tylan Dalrymple at convention. Photo credits: black and white photos by Rev. Chris Rosebrough. Additional photos by Vicar John Austin, Vicar Gage Garlinghouse, and Gretchen Baker.



AALC Treasurer Biennial Report to the 30th National Conventions

By Dr. Dan Kruger, Ph.D.

This summer it was my great pleasure to attend the 30th National Convention of The AALC and present my biennial report. It was a great time of fellowship, catching up with friends, worship and participating in key decisions affecting the future of The AALC, ALTS, and the AALC Foundation. I have been asked to share a summary of the financial information that was presented in this article and also relay the comments made to the convention delegation and leadership. My presentation summarized fiscal year FY 2025 and FY 2026 individually, but I am grouping the results together here. If you are interested in reviewing the report I presented, please contact the national office via email to obtain a .pdf copy of the exhibits and the PowerPoint presentation.

It was a joy to relate all the positive results for ALTS since the previous convention. Two years ago, ALTS had over $750,000 in assets on hand and nearly $200,000 in endowments managed by the AALC Foundation. As a result, that convention approved a budget to invest in additional faculty members, a registrar, additional accounting support, a digital library and accreditation. The plan anticipated using up to $170,000 of the $750,000 on hand to fund the additional expenses, if tuition, offerings and other income didn't grow to match the planned investment. Instead, the investment allowed ALTS to attract more students which increased tuition revenue and also inspired more donations from supporters. ALTS was blessed to maintain assets of more than $750,000 on hand and to increase funds in the endowments to over $400,000. The budget approved at this convention again plans for additional faculty, a doctoral degree program, more robust administrative support and further progress on accreditation.

I would invite you to request a copy of the Seminary President report compiled by Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins to read about all the great things happening at ALTS. Hopefully, you will appreciate the tremendous value the new pastors trained at ALTS will provide to The AALC and what a huge blessing it is to our pastors and the congregations who will call them not to be burdened with student loans and other debts.

By contrast, AALC general fund income and expenses have remained nearly flat with offerings lagging expenses by an average of just over $40,000 per year in the past two fiscal years. In fact, this is a pattern that has remained unchanged for the entire 14 years I have served as treasurer. Approved budget income and expenses over the 14-year period have only increased by about 10 percent. Over that time the fund has been able to maintain a positive balance due to estate gifts from members and pastors who have gone on to be with the Lord and from two congregations who have closed their doors and given the proceeds from the sale of their property to The AALC.

At the 2024 convention we were blessed to hear wonderful presentations on Biblical stewardship by two of our LCMS brethren, but the giving pattern continued just as it had for the previous twelve years. Perhaps the pastors and lay leaders comprising the convention delegation did not relay the messages we received. I concluded my report to the delegates this year with some additional information on congregational offerings to the general fund, encouragement to relay what they heard to congregational leaders who develop budgets for their churches and a short personal testimonial. My prayer is that sharing them again here will inspire everyone reading this to make a difference in their congregation and change the pattern before the next convention.

First, the budget approved at this convention needs an average annual offering to the general fund of approximately $8,500 from each of our 59 current congregations. That figure is not offered as any kind of law or requirement, only to help you understand what it takes to maintain AALC general operations. Hopefully, it will remind us of the light burden we carry in exchange for the many blessings the servants who perform this vital work return to us. Much of the effort they expend is unpaid or volunteered far beyond their salary. In calendar year 2025, eight of the 56 congregations who gave to The AALC or ALTS gave this amount or more to the general fund. My sincere thanks for their leadership. Nine congregations did not give to The AALC general fund.

continued on page 8

Treasurer continued from page 7

Second, I just want to tell you what a tremendous blessing and personal favor it was for my first AALC pastor, Rev. John Anderson, to tell our congregation about Biblical stewardship principles and to encourage our leadership to budget a tithe to The AALC general fund 35 years ago. It was a privilege for our council to lend him our support in that effort. We were blessed to watch our congregation progress from one of those that perceived itself as unable to give to the general fund to one that is now among those in the leadership group. I encouraged the delegation, and I want to encourage all of you dear readers to bring up regular, systematic support of The AALC general fund to your congregations' leadership at budget planning time this year. Please come beside your pastor in this effort, as well. Several pastors shared a sense of trepidation with me about asking their congregations to give because they don't want to appear self-serving, but I promise it can help your congregation the way it helped ours.

Third, my wife, Cheryl, and I were also blessed with a better life for which she gets most of the credit. Planning together to give first, save for the future second, and live on the rest changed us into less materialistic, more generous, more thoughtful, and surprisingly more prosperous people. I have to confess I was overcome with emotion talking about it during my report and again when I got to watch Pastor John receive the first Seelsorger Award at the convention.

In closing, I know that the congregations of The AALC in total are well able to support the general fund budget approved this year. Some congregations may not be able to respond yet for various reasons, but some will. God has blessed us with the resources; let us share them!

I hope every congregation will make it a priority to send their pastor and delegates to the next convention. It is the best way for us to strengthen The AALC, grow through fellowship and build for the future. ✝

Dr. Dan Kruger, Ph.D., is a member of Ascension Lutheran Church, Ames, IA.

Update on The AALC Foundation

By Doug Taylor

As my time on the Foundation Committee is ending, I would like to reflect on the past eight years. Initially, I would describe The AALC Foundation as a toddler. After eight years we have become a pre-teen: substantial development but a long way to maturity.

Eight years ago we were under $100,000, and now we are at $700,000; significant growth, but a long way to go.

There are four accounts in the Foundation:

a) Seminary Development

b) Pioneering New Congregations

c) Revitalizing Congregations

d) Dr. Duane R. Lindberg Professor of Biblical Studies

While all are important, we have emphasized the Revitalizing Congregations and the Dr. Lindberg Fund as the highest priority.

The seminary has grown significantly from a handful of students to over seventy. There are currently forty men studying for the Masters in Divinity.

Additionally, we have started a Doctoral Program. This has led to increased demand for professors. The goal of the Dr. Lindberg Fund is to reach one million dollars as soon as possible.

The structure of the Foundation allows us to distribute 5% of the balance each year. This distribution will significantly enhance the ability to compensate our professors. The current balance is about $260,000: a long way from our goal.

The other focus area is the Revitalizing Congregations Fund. We have smaller churches struggling to compensate a pastor. Distributions from this account can be used to assist a church in calling a pastor and give them a chance to grow and become self-sustaining. The balance is currently $204,000 and has a goal of one million dollars.

There are several ways to fund the necessary growth, not only in the Dr. Lindberg account, but also the other funds:

a) A testamentary gift. This is accomplished at one's death, most commonly through a gift of part or all of one's life insurance or IRA. This usually allows for larger gifts.

b) Designating the required minimum distribution from an IRA to a charity.

c) Direct gifts of money.

In summary I would be remiss if I failed to mention the Sola 500 annual contribution, in which one gifts $25 a month, or $300 a year to the Seminary. This is crucial to pay our day-to-day expenses.

Please prayerfully consider whether you have the financial ability to contribute and help us reach our goals. ✝

Douglas Taylor served as the out-going Chairman of The AALC Foundation.

CHE Updates Convention

By the Commission for Higher Education

Over the past two years, the American Lutheran Theological Seminary's (ALTS) faculty and staff, together with the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), have worked diligently to advance key goals and priorities. Seminary personnel have often carried double—and sometimes triple—responsibilities, managing administrative duties, teaching master's-level courses, shepherding congregations and vicars, and sustaining the significant workload required for accreditation.

In addition, the new ALTS website is now live, the ALTS Podcast has launched, and a Google Ads campaign is underway to reach the intended audience more effectively.

Areas of Focus:

Expand student enrollment.

A primary area of focus is increasing student enrollment. To support this goal, the seminary has divided responsibilities and created new positions, including Provost, Administrator, Registrar, Accreditation Coordinator, and National Communications Advisor. These changes have streamlined operations, shortened response times for prospective students, and made it easier for them to connect with seminary personnel and complete the required enrollment paperwork. In addition, inquiries have increased as ALTS has made significant progress toward accreditation.

Strengthen the seminary's long-term financial stability.

This topic will be addressed in the ALTS report [see pages 10-11].

Continue monitoring the ABHE accreditation process and meeting all required milestones.

As ALTS moves from Applicant Status to Candidate Status, the CHE and Seminary are working together to complete the many tasks required for full accreditation. Under Rev. Dr. Caughey's leadership, ABHE has approved a trial accelerated path toward accreditation.

Broaden the pool of adjunct faculty.

We are deeply grateful to our seminary instructors for their dedication to forming the next generation of Confessional Lutheran pastors and church workers. ALTS is more than an academic institution; it is a center for shaping Gospel-centered leaders whose ministry reaches countless lives. As enrollment grows and the curriculum expands, it is essential to continue strengthening the instructor pool to support the seminary's continued growth.

Regular coordination

- CHE and seminary staff meet monthly.
- These meetings keep accreditation tasks on track, review progress from the previous month, and set goals for the next quarter.
- CHE members have also volunteered to support the accreditation process as needed.

Duties of The Commission for Higher Education.

Policy

The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) shall develop policies ensuring that its mandate (contained in The AALC Constitution and Bylaws) is fulfilled in an effective and efficient manner:

I. When situations are required, the CHE shall propose by-law amendments and/or policy changes governing its work which shall be presented at the next Joint Council meeting for consideration.

II. The CHE along with input from the Seminary President shall develop institutional policies governing the effective and efficient operation of the Seminary, including the development of a faculty handbook.

III. The CHE shall ensure that all published materials, including catalogs, academic calendars and promotional literature, accurately represent ALTS as an institution of The AALC to the public including students and prospective students.

IV. All such policies shall be recorded by the Secretary of the Board and kept in appropriate policy and procedure manuals.

Reporting

I. The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) shall bring a report of activities and other necessary information of the ALTS to The AALC General Convention.

II. The CHE shall present to the Joint Council first and then to the General Convention any proposals for substantive changes in the emphasis, direction, organization, etc. of the Seminary.

We are proud to report that CHE members are working diligently with the President and staff of ALTS to support the seminary's success for our congregations and the future of The AALC.✝

Report compiled by the CHE members: Rev. Dr. Tom Stover - Chair; Rev. Steve Klawonn; Dr. Curtis Leins - ALTS Pres. Advisory; Rev. Dean Stoner; Gage Garlinghouse - Student Rep.; Rev. John Morley; Karen Holst; Dr. David Hurt; and Ted Knutson.



God's Hand of Blessing

By Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins

It has been two years since this church body last met. American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS) would like to use this report to declare the goodness of our God and to thank our Heavenly Father because the hand of the Lord our God has been upon us, upon this church body, and upon this seminary. May I say it again:

The hand of the Lord our God was upon us! And God's people Said: "*THANK YOU LORD!*"

First, thank you Lord, for the ALTS **Staff and Faculty**. They serve our students faithfully and equip them to serve ALTS churches and the world.

It really was not that long ago that the seminary had only two Staff workers, two employees: President: Pastor Rich Shields, and Office Manager/Secretary/Bookkeeper/Administrator/Registrar: Bonnie Ohlrich. What wonderful and faithful servants!

Today, God has provided some additional members to The ALTS Staff: Administrator: Pr. Jon Holst; Provost: Pr. Matthew Fenn; Accreditation Coordinator: Dr. Chris Caughey; Registrar: Pr. Ben Baker; Accountant: Ms. Julie Luther; Office Manager and Secretary: Ms. Bonnie Ohlrich; Engagement and Communications Advisor: Vicar John Austin; Accreditation Consultant: Dr. Kathryn Helleman; Staff Advisory Member and previous Seminary President: Dr. Jordan Cooper; new Staff Member as of July 1, 2026: Dr. Mark Mattes; and President, Dr. Curtis Leins.

In addition, the ALTS Faculty also has grown dramatically. God has provided: Professor of Doctoral Studies: Dr. Mark Mattes; The Rev. Dr. Duane R. Lindberg Professor of Biblical Studies: Dr. Chris Caughey; Professor of Biblical Languages: Pr. Ben Baker; Professor of Lutheran Dogmatics: Dr. Jordan Cooper; Professor of Church History: Dr. Curtis Leins; Professor of Practical Studies: Dr. Cary Larson; and Adjunct Professors: Pr. Lewis Polzin; Dr. Samuel Zumwalt; Dr. Nathan Greeley; Pr. Matthew Fenn; and Pr. Anthony Voltattorni.

Second: thank you Lord for new **Degree Programs** and existing Degree Programs. As you may know, ALTS is a graduate school that has built a strong reputation as "The Premiere Confessional Lutheran Seminary Accessible to the World." We have offered three Master's level degrees for a number of years. They are:

- The MAR or Master of Arts in Religion. This degree is for men and women who are preparing for dedicated service to the





(Page 10 photo) ALTS graduate Rev. Jacob Schaeffer received his diploma at the Thursday evening service. Pictured with ALTS staff present at Convention: (front row, left to right) Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper, Graduate – Rev. Jacob Schaeffer, Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey, Rev. Matthew Fenn, (back row, left to right) Rev. Anthony Voltattorni, Rev. Jon Holst, Rev. Dr. Mark Mattes, Rev. Dr. Samuel Zumwalt, Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, and Rev. Benjamin Baker.

(Current page, left to right) Doug Taylor pictured with the first Founders' Society Award given by ALTS to him and Donette. Additional recipients not pictured: Brian and Debra Friedrichsen; James and Rachel Nelson.

Rev. John Anderson received the first Seelsorger Award from ALTS. In attendance were these family members: (left to right) Geoff Puckett (son-in-law), Joan (wife), Rev. John Anderson, Nathan, Annika, & Marnie (daughter) Johansen.

Church as deacons, deaconesses, youth directors, directors of Christian education, missionaries, and more. Equipped with a foundation of biblical instruction, confessional education, and parish administration, students specialize either in Outreach, Pedagogy, or Administration.

- The MAT or Master of Arts in Theology. This degree is designed to provide men and women with comprehensive theological knowledge in a chosen area of study: Exegetical Studies, Doctrinal Studies, Historical Studies, or General Theological Studies.

- The M.Div. or Master of Divinity. This degree is designed to train men for pastoral ministry. Students are trained in exegetical proficiency, doctrinal soundness, historical understanding, and pastoral competence. A key component of this program is the vicarage, in which students receive practical experience in pastoral care, preaching, teaching, and congregational leadership. An essential element in pastoral formation is the inculcation of the heart of the "Seelsorger," the pastor as soul caretaker.

Beyond the Masters programs, a new D.Min. or Doctor of Ministry degree was added one year ago. The first cohort of nine pastors is hard at work. They have completed their first four courses and are working on their Initial Projects. The next four courses begin this fall. Final projects in 2027 and 2028 will enhance the lives and ministries of their own congregations or contexts of ministry.

These four degree programs are already in place and include some 87 courses that we offer at present, averaging 12 courses every quarter on a two-year cycle. In addition, we have two new degree programs that are soon to be implemented: a Th.M. or Master of Theology degree will enable those with a Master of Divinity to pursue additional graduate level academic study, research, and publication. Finally, a new Ph.D. or Doctor of Philosophy degree will train professional theologians to be Doctors of the Church through a rigorous program of classical studies including Bible, Historical and Doctrinal Theology, Ethics, Apologetics, and Liturgics, with language and colloquy examinations, and dissertation.

As ALTS continues to expand the courses and degree programs that we offer, we will need more faculty members who share our faith, values, and commitment. Surely, our Heavenly Father will graciously supply our needs according to His riches and glory.

Third: Thank you, Lord, for our **Students**. Obviously, all that we do at ALTS is designed to prepare men for the Holy Office of Pastoral Ministry, and to prepare men and women for service and ministry to Christ and His Church.

The growing publicity and popularity of ALTS are bringing student applications from Lutherans here and abroad, and from other Christian denominations around the world. At recent count, ALTS has approximately 40 men preparing for Holy Ministry, 15 of whom have completed more than half of their courses. We have 20 Master of Theology students, a handful of MAR students, 10 students who are Auditing courses, and nine Doctor of Ministry candidates.

ALTS expects to add to the student body because, in the coming year, ALTS, by God's grace, will begin a second cohort of D.Min. students, and will begin the Th.M., and Ph.D. programs. ALTS is growing! More students are making application every week. In the last two months alone, we have had 11 new applicants including applicants from Mexico, Zimbabwe, India, and Ethiopia. It is not uncommon for a course to have 14 to 28 students registered.

We are thrilled with the three graduates that we have this year, and I think that you will be astounded at the next convention when larger numbers of graduates begin to come through the pipeline!

May I say it again:

The hand of the Lord our God was upon us!

And God's people said: *"THANK YOU LORD!"* ✝

The Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins serves as President of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary.





Women of L.I.F.E. Meet at Convention

By Katherine Hofinga

On Wednesday, June 24, most of the women at Convention were able to meet together for the Women of L.I.F.E. (WOL) business meeting and luncheon. The lunch hour began with a devotional meditation on the WOL Theme Hymn "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less," led by pastoral advisor, Rev. Neil Cadle.



Co-Chair Katherine Hofinga gave an update on the 2027 Bible Study titled: "Oh Come, Let Us Worship and Bow Down: A Study of the Lutheran Liturgy" written by Rev. Richard Eddy. This study will be available to order toward the end of 2026.

A few highlights from the business meeting include:

1. Treasurer Donnette Taylor reported that since our 2024 Convention, the WOL had given $2,977 to both World Missions and American Missions and $850 each to AALC Youth, ALTS, and Lutherans For Life.

2. After discussion, it was voted to continue to support the same benevolences with the same percentages as before:

   a. AALC World Missions 35%
   b. AALC American Missions 35%
   c. AALC Youth 10%
   d. ALTS 10%
   e. Lutherans For Life 10%

3. Elections were held for three positions on the Board. Elected were: Karen Holst, Co-Chair; Siriana Franco, Missions Outreach Coordinator; and Kathleen Schuhmacher, Secretary.

After adjournment of the business meeting, the ladies enjoyed the luncheon and fellowship and also received handmade bookmarks and a goody bag.✝

Katherine Hofinga serves as Women of L.I.F.E. Co-Chair.



Pastor's Wives Get-Together at Convention

By Gretchen Baker

After several years discussing ideas for a get-together, AALC pastors' wives had the joy of a planned gathering prior to the General Convention on Tuesday, June 23, beginning at noon on the campus of the Free Lutheran Bible College.

The ladies met over lunch, introducing themselves to new acquaintances, and almost immediately jumped into a discussion on questions and experiences of being a pastor's wife, including expectations and relationships with others in the church.

After the lunch and discussion, the wives had the opportunity to learn from the Rev. Dr. Jordan and Lisa Cooper, who presented on virtues vs. duties, specific to the pastor's wife role. The Coopers shared the definition of virtue as a person's character; in contrast, duty is the "should" or obligations, oftentimes burdensome. Virtue is displayed in character traits such as trustworthiness, gentleness, and humility, and others, as found in Titus 2.

The Coopers based their presentation on the book The Christian Life: A Handbook of Christian Ethics by Joseph Stump, who focused the emphasis on the source: "All virtues flow from faith." When a person is at peace with God, she is then able to look toward her neighbor (specifically: husband, children, etc.) and ask how she can serve them. She is able to look outward at others in love, rather than having a self-centered focus.

The Coopers also shared the wisdom of self-examination: what are my strengths and weaknesses? What do I need to work on? Where have I done wrong and need to apologize?

The concluding discussion shared ways that wives can support and serve their pastor husbands by understanding the stress of his role, encouraging him, communicating well, and knowing what is not their calling as pastor's wives.

The common refrain following the time together was that it went by much too quickly and that all hoped for additional time in the future for these types of fellowship and learning. Pastor's wives: keep this in mind for, Lord willing, the next general convention! ✝

Gretchen Baker is a pastor's wife from Parshall, ND.



Page 12: Women gathered for the regular business meeting and lunch of The AALC's Women of L.I.F.E. on Wednesday during the convention. Rev. Neil Cadle, Pastoral Advisor to the WOL, shared devotions. Submitted photos.

Page 13: Pastor's wives enjoyed several opportunities to gather at convention, including the evening meal on Thursday (top photo), and a special session on Tuesday for lunch, discussion, and learning from Rev. Dr. Jordan and Lisa Cooper (bottom photo). Submitted photos.

Convention Report



Update from the World Mission Commission of The AALC

By Rev. Kevin Beard

The World Mission Commission now has full representation from all five regions of The AALC. Following a brief period of inactivity, the committee resumed meeting during the Pastors Conference in October 2025.

Members:

- Rev. Dean Stoner: Eastern Region 1
- Rev. Dave Spotts: Greater Heartland Region 2
- Rev. Eric Ishimaru: West Great Lakes Region 3
- Rev. Kevin Beard (Chairman): North Plains Region 4
- Karen Holst: Western Region 5

Since that time, the committee has reviewed the process used in distributing funds to overseas churches and mission efforts around the world. This work included reviewing our Mission Principles and updating the "Application for Financial Assistance" form required for those requesting financial support.

Churches / Missions supported from July 2024 to June 2026:

- Lutheran Church of Benin: $680
- Lutheran Church of Sudan: $2500
- Mission of Christ Network, Taiwan: $2000
- Hope for Horn of Africa, Pr. James Hoefer: $2000
- Spiritual Orphan Network, Pr. Scott Yount (pass-through): $6352 (Note: Designated funds are received from The AALC and passed on to SON).

All funds distributed by the World Mission Commission on behalf of The AALC must abide by our stated Mission Principles.

Mission Principles:

1. On behalf of The AALC, this commission gives prayer and financial support to approved benevolences which are declaring the glory of God outside of the US.
2. The ministry or individual must have some direct connection to The AALC or is deemed to be a close partner in proclaiming the Gospel.
3. The ministry must give an annual reporting to the Commission, and state whether future funding is desired.
4. This commission will also encourage congregations and individuals of The AALC to support these ministries as well.

The AALC has a World Mission Fund and gifts can be made out to The AALC and designated to the World Mission Fund.✝

The Rev. Kevin Beard serves as Chairman of the Commission on World Missions, as well as two parishes in Williston, ND.

(Top) Rev. Kevin Beard checks in with Rev. Dean Stoner between business sessions at the General Convention. Photo by Rev. Chris Rosebrough.

Convention Report



Commission on American Missions

By Rev. Joe Christina

The last couple of years have offered the Commission on American Missions (CAM) many opportunities to support. We have been able to lend support to vacant congregations, support various ministries, and continually seek out other home mission possibilities.

The following is a list of some of the activities CAM has been involved with:

- We have continued to lend quarterly monetary support to the Wittenburg Door Campus Ministry. This outreach meets many international students with the potential for global gospel impact.
- We have covered air travel costs for pulpit supply to Abiding Grace Lutheran Church in Gillette, WY. Rev. Steve Wadle and Rev. Abraham McNally served them in their pulpit and altar needs. We are grateful for their service. Please keep these brothers and sisters in your prayers.
- CAM assisted with visa and legal costs to bring a pastor to Mountain View Lutheran Church in Thornton, CO. And while this pastor has since left, another possible door of opportunity has been opened to us. CAM also covered an unexpected legal expense to cover for the previous pastor's costs of returning home to his country of origin. (More on this later.)
- We covered pulpit supply costs for Piqua, OH. Again, keep these brothers and sisters in prayer.
- With the help of Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, we have begun exploring possible opportunities of yoking existing congregations with non-AALC vacant congregations that might be willing to come our way.
- Finally, in regards to Mountain View (above), CAM has committed $25,000 annually to support this newly minted ministry. The property was deeded to The AALC after the congregation decided to close and it is, in our opinion, a great opportunity for a fresh mission start. Ideally, if the Lord wills, it will be a ministry that also serves the large Hispanic community of that region. Please keep this endeavor in prayer and be on the lookout for opportunities to support CAM in this endeavor.

Finally, a reminder of our main goals and objectives as a commission:

- Bring the Gospel to un-reached communities of the United States and its territories and of Canada and establish new congregations.
- Provide strategy and training for planting and nurturing new congregations.
- Encourage established congregations to adopt, initiate, and provide resources for new missions and congregations.

We will continue to focus our efforts as the Lord wills to work towards these ends. ✝

The Rev. Joe Christina serves as National Home Mission Developer.

(Top) Rev. Len Brokenshire visits with Rev. John Linch at the Convention. Photo by Rev. Chris Rosebrough.

Youth Conference Report



By Bethany Prasad

In 2025, we were once again blessed with the opportunity to host our National Youth Conference in July at the YMCA in Estes Park, CO. The theme was "Resilient," based on Philippians 1:27: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel…"

The Commission for Youth Activities selected this theme because our youth live in a world that is constantly trying to tear them down, and Satan continually seeks their hearts. Our prayer and goal throughout the week were to remind them that through Jesus, we are able to remain resilient and have steadfast faith even in the midst of trials and hardships. As our main speaker, Pastor Gabe Kasper, reminded our youth each day, "We have resilient faith in Christ, no matter what!"

Along with our excellent speaker, Swen and Dean once again joined us to lead the youth through songs, dances, silly stories, and more. Brad Longstreth, along with many others, led us in worship each day. Our Youth Commission and Planning Team hosted fun, and sometimes intense, minute-to-win-it games that sparked plenty of friendly competition. We are also thankful for the many pastors and sponsors who faithfully led workshops throughout the week. In total, we were blessed to have 13 churches, 111 participants, 41 sponsors, 15 program/committee/national office personnel attend our conference. We even celebrated one baptism that occurred on the trip! Thanks be to God!

After spending a week watching incoming eighth graders through outgoing seniors laugh, cry, sing, dance, play games, pray, and worship together, it is always evident why this conference holds such significance. What a blessing it is to provide our youth with an opportunity to separate from the pressures of the outside world and hear the promises of God and live in Christian community. Through this conference, our youth studied God's Word and their relationship with God was strengthened as they grew deeper in their faith.

During our week together, students learn more about God and His Word, ask questions that have weighed heavily on their hearts, receive prayer for struggles they may have never spoken aloud, and grow closer to people who were once strangers. Most importantly, they are reminded that they are children of God and can rest in His love without carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders. This conference, orchestrated by God through the work of the Holy Spirit, continues to move and shape the hearts of our youth, and what a beautiful opportunity it is for us to serve as stewards of this ministry.

Our Commission for Youth Activities and Conference Planning Team have already begun preparing for the 2027 Youth Conference, which will take place July 12–16. We ask for your continued prayers as we seek God's will in our planning and in the lives of our youth. We may not know who will join us next year, but God does. He knows exactly what each youth needs to hear, and He will continue to draw near to them in mighty ways, just as He always has.

The opportunity to grow in faith together in such a beautiful place, surrounded by fellow believers, is a unique and meaningful experience not everyone has the chance to encounter. We continually pray that this conference would encourage and strengthen our youth so they may know how deeply God loves them and that nothing can separate them from His love.

If you have questions about our conference or would like to learn more, please reach out to any Youth Commission member. We would be happy to share more about this conference and the many amazing things God has done through it.

May God be glorified! ✝

Bethany Prasad serves on the Commission for Youth Activities from the Western Region.

(Top) Rev. Len Brokenshire presents information on the 2027 Youth Convention. Photo by Rev. Chris Rosebrough

Ordination and Installation



Rev. Robert Alan Shivers was ordained on July 11, 2026, at St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church (AALC) in Wilmington, NC. The Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, Presiding Pastor of the AALC, was the preacher and ordinator. Pastor Shivers has been called to serve as St. Matthew's Associate Pastor. Senior Pastor Samuel Zumwalt was the presenter. Pastors Robert Kuppler and Peter Hoyer were lectors. Visitation Pastor Michael Bergbower served a chalice. Also participating in the laying on of hands were Pastors Joel Kettner, Russell Grateful, and David Brooks. Rev. Shivers graduated from the Institute of Lutheran Theology in May 2026. He interviewed with The AALC Clergy Commission at the General Convention in June and was approved for the Clergy Roster by the Association Council on June 24, 2026. St. Matthew's was accepted into The AALC at the General Convention on June 23, 2026. Submitted photo.✝

September 2026

PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. Western Region TAALC
2. Christ the Ray of Hope Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, NM
3. Rev. Joseph Dapelo
4. That churches teach the Lutheran Confessions
5. Christian Education Directors
6. For Call Committees
7. Rev. Darrel Deuel
8. To give our worries to God
9. Elim Lutheran Church, Brush Prairie, WA
10. Commission for Commissioned Church Workers
11. Rev. Rich Eddy
12. Sunday School Teachers
13. Commission for Women
14. Rev. Dr. James Hoefer
15. To better learn the Sacrament of the Altar
16. Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Bremmerton, WA
17. To see and confess our sins
18. Rev. Jon Holst
19. To learn what it means to be a Lutheran
20. Rev. Dr. Richard Shields
21. Nominating Committee
22. National Mediation Board
23. Rev. Michael Holsten
24. To learn how The Lord's Supper gives us life
25. For the Regional Conferences
26. To learn how Lord's Supper forgives our sins
27. Rev. Gary Koutsopoulos
28. For prospective Seminary Students
29. Local Community
30. New Committee Officers

October 2026

PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran Church, Frazier Park, CA
2. Military Chaplains
3. Rev. Tim Cartwright
4. Faith to receive absolution
5. Rev. John Morley
6. Online Ministries
7. Rev. Poul Erik Norgaard
8. To confess our sins of commission and omission
9. Sonland Lutheran Church, Casa Grande, AZ
10. For belief in the infallibility & inerrancy of Scripture
11. Commission for Pensions
12. Confirmation Students
13. St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church, Jurupa Valley, CA
14. Rev. Jerry Storrs
15. For pastors considering a call
16. Publications Commission
17. St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Elk Grove, CA
18. To share the message of Sola Scriptura/ Scripture Alone
19. Rev. Scott Yount
20. Julie Luther, Accountant
21. Pastors Conference
22. Rev. Jon Holst, ALTS Administrator
23. Protection for our military
24. New congregations in The AALC
25. That the Office of the Keys be taught
26. Sunday School Kids
27. To learn how The Lord's Supper gives us salvation
28. Rev. Jon Christenson
29. To see that Scripture has greater authority than our feelings
30. That we know the chief articles of our faith
31. Rev. Kent Sperry

News

AALC Meets with ILC



The International Lutheran Council (ILC) Banquet was held on July 20, 2026, in Phoenix, AZ. A plaque was presented to The AALC, recognizing it as a member church body of the ILC since 2007. Rev. Dr. Cary Larson was in attendance and is pictured with (left) ILC General Secretary Klaus Detlev Schulz and (right) Chairman Bishop Juhana Pohjola (Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland – ELMDF). Submitted photo.

"The International Lutheran Council is a growing worldwide association of established confessional Lutheran church bodies which proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ…

It exists to encourage, strengthen, and promote confessional Lutheran theology and practice centering in Jesus Christ, both among member churches and throughout the world…"

INTERNATIONAL
Lutheran Council

THE RHYTHM OF THE REDEEMED

By Rev. Joe Christina

Among my duties in music are the drums. Years ago when I was a younger man and still had working knees, I physically played them. But nowadays my knees get a senior discount at the diner, so I program and pattern them using software. And drums are important because they provide the heartbeat of the song. You need something to follow. It's why the drum corps almost always leads the band at the parade.

The Christian Church retains the Church Year and its Festival Days. They are like different "beats" for the Church to follow. Like the liturgy they give us, who so often go astray, a pattern to stay on. A path to follow. And not all of the Feasts are by any means necessary. But they, are nevertheless, a tremendous blessing.

We recently reintroduced a new (to us) hymnal to God's people in Fayetteville. And while it was at first not well received, repetition is the mother of learning. We patiently announced page numbers and took our time learning new liturgical chants, songs, and responses because it added more structure to the worship. The flock is getting used to it now to the point where if we decided to take it away from them like proper Lutherans…they'd riot.

Two things you can't take away in this world: my dogs and a Lutheran's hymnal. But such is the same for the Feast Days of the Church Year. We slowly began to introduce those into the Divine Service. Some never even heard of Saint Michael's Day. Some did not know that there was a Feast to honor Gabriel telling the Blessed Virgin that God would kick around in her womb. I do my best to post each day on Facebook but I need to do better. These Feasts have mattered to the Church of antiquity and they should matter to us. We would do well to march to the beat of the same drum whether you're lounging next to Abraham's side or whether you're still trudging through the valley of the shadow of death.

And the Church honors the cadence of the liturgy and the Feast Days because every single part of it marches us to one momentous event: the life, death, and resurrection of our Dear Lord. Whether it's a staunch defender or teacher of this faith, those who died horrible deaths for this faith, or all the Feasts that draw our eyes to the accounts of the Gospel, there's only one end goal to this song: our Dear Jesus.

I always tell my longtime friend and guitarist Kowalski (his name's actually Joel), that one day I'll finally retire from this music thing. But we will never "retire" from the beat of the Church. Our Savior bids us to walk to that beat. Until we don't need any more drums and can sing our heads off around the throne in praise. For the Lamb Who had been slain, is slain no more.✝

The Rev. Joe Christina serves Christus Victor Ev. Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, NC, and as National Home Missions Developer for The AALC.

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UPCOMING EDITIONS...

Themes for 2026: Six Church Seasons and High Feast Days
Please be in prayer for these upcoming editions:

Nov/Dec: Advent & Christmas *(deadline Sept. 1)*

Themes for 2027: coming soon!

Church News:
The Evangel welcomes submissions of what's happening in your congregation. To submit content, **email the editor** Gretchen Baker: theevangel@taalc.org

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