

The EVANGEL

Issue No. 179—September/October 2016

A Publication of The American Association of Lutheran Churches



Inside this Issue...

- Pg. 2 — From the Editor
 Pg. 3 — From the Presiding Pastor
 Pg. 5 — ALTS Update 2016
 Pg. 6 — Being Missional
 Pg. 7 — The National
 Convention: Introduction
 Pg. 8 — Missions in the Inner City
 Pg. 9 — Graduation &
 Ordination Ceremony
 Pg. 10 — Servant Unique Family
 Ministries
 Pg. 11 — Reaching Muslims
 with the Gospel
 Pg. 12 — An Interview with
 The Rev. Dean R. Johansen
 Pg. 13-14 — Prayer Bookmark
 Pg. 13 — Meet the Seminarians
 Pg. 14 — A Helpful Resource
 Pg. 15 — Benson Called to Lead
 Peace Lutheran

Photo Credits:

Cover Photos — Rev. Dick Day

Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2007 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

Used by permission.

All rights reserved.

Editor: Lisa Cooper

Layout & Design: Lynette Macias

Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ! I am so thankful to have spent time with many of you at the National Convention a few weeks ago. It is such a great blessing to gather together for fellowship, for worship, and for the mutual edification of those involved in our association.

This edition of The Evangel contains a section devoted to our National Convention. I hope that these articles give you a sense of what was taught, and what was reported on concerning the mission work and direction of our association. I want to offer a special thanks to the Rev. Dick Day for taking all of the pictures of the Convention. Without his help, I would not have nearly as many pictures, nor would they be as great quality.

Also included in this edition, there are many church and mission updates. These are great examples of practical ways that our church body is working to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether it be through education, like the speech given about reaching Muslims with the Gospel, or through a missions organization like the Servant Unique Family Ministries, I hope that these articles will help encourage you all in your own congregations to reach out to those in your community.

In Christ,
 Lisa Cooper

Laborers Are Few

by TAALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins

This sermon was preached at the 2016 National Convention of the AALC. The text for this message is Luke 10:1-3

Grace be unto you and peace from God Our Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION: INCREDIBLE EVANGELISTS

Christians were persecuted for almost 300 years after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus. They were subjected to the most horrifying and inhumane tortures, in an effort to convert them, silence them, or simply exterminate them. But, the Christian faith could not be eliminated and Christian believers could not be silenced.

In fact, just the opposite was true. Christianity exploded. As Tertullian wrote, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." That was the truth; the more ungodly the culture, the more conspicuous the Christian faith.

In the year 251 AD, during terrible persecution by the Emperor Decius, life for the Christian became virtually unbearable. This was also the year of the great plague. As if persecution were not enough, add to it rampant disease. It was the worst plague that the Greco-Roman world had seen for a century or more. The last plague had killed 1/3 of the population. This time, everyone was terrified. Anyone who was able, fled the cities. Streets were littered with corpses. Pagan families threw out the infected to fend for themselves.

Once again, the valiant faith of the Christian people was conspicuous. Records indicate that Christian families and congregations assumed responsibility for the sick and dying. They brought plague victims into their own homes. They fed them, cared for them, nursed them, and loved them.

Jesus had told His disciples that what they did for the least of these His brethren, they did also for Him. Amazing acts of kindness like these characterized Christians across the Greco-Roman world. So much so that in about the year 362 AD the Emperor Julian wrote:

[W]hy do we not observe that it is their [Christian] benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead and the pretended holiness of their lives that have done most to increase atheism [Julian's word for Christianity]? I believe that we ought really and truly to practice every one of these virtues...For it is disgraceful that, when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Galilaeans support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us.

Christians demonstrated incredible kindness to communities, to strangers, and even to enemies in need. Christians refused to compromise or silence their faith, even in the face of unimaginable persecution. Therefore, Christianity grew in respectability and in numbers.

Who were these Christians? Who were these **incredible evangelists** who displayed God's love to friend and foe alike? Though we have record of notable bishops and church fathers, most of them were thousands of faithful laity, young and old, women and men. Their personal faith in Jesus was revealed in the way that they lived and often in the way that they died. And, the Church of Christ GREW!

THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL, BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW

The theme for our 25th General Convention, Missionally-Minded People, is based upon Luke 10. In it, we hear Our Lord Jesus tell His disciples: ***The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.***

Who are the laborers of the harvest? Who are the ones who are supposed to go out into the fields that are white and ready for harvest? Some people may think that the laborers are the apostles. But, that cannot be right. If that were so, then there would have been no harvest after the first century. Some people may think that the laborers are the pastors. But, that cannot be right either. Simply stated, the Bible does not say that only pastors will share the faith. What does the Bible say?

Here is a passage that you may remember:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God. I Peter 2: 9-10

Lutherans love this passage. It is about the priesthood of all believers. Every single baptized believer is a member of God's royal priesthood. We have been called out of darkness, into His marvelous light SO THAT we may proclaim the excellencies of God. Peter goes on to say that **with Christ in our hearts, we are always ready to make a defense to everyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us, yet with gentleness and reverence.**

It does not matter what our occupation: The butcher, the baker or the candlestick maker, the mother feeding her child or the farmer in his field. Every believer is called by God as a royal priest. Every vocation is equally pleasing to

God, each man and woman offers a sacrifice of praise to God, while also serving his or her neighbor. Luther explained that these sacrifices do not merit salvation or earn a place in heaven. Rather, they express our faith in Christ, by doing works that please Him and bless others. As Luther wrote: **“God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does.”**

Dr. Martin Luther went on to explain his doctrine of vocation by saying that each “little Christ” is a mask of God (larvae dei). God is milking the cow through the vocation of the milkmaid. God is at work in each of us as we live our lives in praise of God and in love of one another.

So, who are the laborers of the harvest? Every believer is a royal priest sent to labor in God’s harvest field. We pass on the Gospel that we have received. Whatever our vocation, we are God’s masks speaking the Word of God and doing the will of God wherever God has placed us.

In this way, there is never a conflict between the royal priesthood of all believers and the Office of Pastoral Ministry. God has called all the baptized as His priests. God has called some to the Office of Word and Sacrament. These pastors must be rightly called (AC XIV: rite vocatus), having been: educated and trained, examined and rostered, Called and ordained.

Ordained Pastors and royal priesthood, ordained and laity, are inseparable. The pastor serves the priesthood; the priesthood serves the neighbor. The pastor makes the public proclamation in the Church; the royal priesthood makes the personal proclamation in the world.

The pastor speaks the Word of Christ: the forgiveness of sins, the Word of God as law and gospel, and he administers the means of God’s grace: the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. The pastor also must witness in the world in order to know how to make the public proclamation relevant. But, the pastor must not be the only one witnessing in the world. Across the ages, millions upon millions of Christian laymen and lay-women have demonstrat-

ed their genuine faith in Jesus Christ by word and action in the world.

II. LAMBS AMONG WOLVES

Jesus sent out His followers as lambs among wolves. A wolf is vicious and frightening. A pack of wolves is bent on killing and devouring. In the world, wolves are those who are animated by evil and stimulated by Satan.

A lamb is defenseless. A flock of lambs is not murderous. The only thing that they eat is grass. In the world, lambs are not frightening, hateful, or malevolent.

Jesus sends us out as lambs among wolves!?! What is He thinking? What is going to happen to us? How long does He think that we will last??? If you read on in this chapter, things get even worse. Jesus tells His disciples not to take a money belt, a suitcase or even extra shoes. Who is going to take care of us?

Yes! Exactly! The One who sends you is the One who will take care of you. Jesus is going to watch over you as a Good Shepherd tends His sheep. He will protect you. He will provide for you. You can trust Him. You can have faith in Him.

But, He has said very difficult things to us:

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great.

Do not resist an evil person, but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Give to him who asks of you and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow.

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

How are you doing so far??? Are you doing these things??? Have no fear.

God is at work in you. God is moving you. He is the Great Evangelist. He is the Lord of the Harvest. He lives in you and works through you, so that by His Spirit, you are moved to LABOR in the harvest field.

Jesus said these words to His disciples. “Have no fear, Only Believe.” Now, Jesus says these words to you and me. **“Have no fear. Only believe.”** “Have NO Fear. Only Believe.” I will protect you. I will provide for you. You are My sheep. **I AM the Good Shepherd.**

And so, out we go; into the world, out to our vocations. Wherever we go, whomever we see, we glorify God and we serve others, **“[A]lways ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”**

CONCLUSION:

The harvest is great! The Lord of the Harvest already can see it. The human harvest only needs to be gathered in.

Jesus instructs us to **beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.** Pray for those who will carry His Word, for those who will Carry His Word, into the harvest field. For the laborers are few; pray for them.

Who are the laborers of the harvest? They are the Christians of all vocations, the pastors and the royal priests, ordained and laity, who glorify the name of Jesus with **sacrifices** of praise, and **service** to friends and foes alike. They are the **Believers** who could Not be Silenced; the **Incredible** Evangelists; the **Conspicuous** Christians; the **Lambs** among Wolves; the **Priesthood** of All Believers; the **Sheep of the Good Shepherd.** Who are the laborers of the harvest?

Look! I believe that I can see them now!

Amen.

The peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

ALTS Update 2016

by The Rev. President Richard P. Shields

Overview:

Greetings in the Lord, brothers and sisters. I have been privileged to serve as ALTS President since 2007. The last two years have been the most exciting, challenging, and rewarding times. Despite facing some setbacks and delays in plans, ALTS has continued to grow.

Five Year Goal for Students

About three years ago Dr. Leins and I began thinking about the future of The AALC and ALTS. With an ever aging pastoral roster, and few students coming through the seminary, we began praying for God's work so that we could teach, mentor, and equip men for pastoral service in God's kingdom. As we prayed, talked, and waited, Dr. Leins suggested and I proposed a far-reaching goal of having 50 men studying in our seminary from 2014 to 2019. At the time, even uttering that number was staggering. Yet the more we continued to pray and talk, we agreed that such a number was within God's possibilities.

Since 2011 we have grown from one student and two professors, to 23 pastoral students, three deaconess students, and seven professors. But those numbers do not tell the full story. As of the end of July, we have had more than 120 inquiries (Pastoral Students Deaconess Students) into ALTS. Of these inquiries we have several who plan to begin MTS studies this fall quarter (2016). Also, two young men will graduate in May 2017 from college and desire to enroll in ALTS and study at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. I try to maintain regular contact current students to check on them academically and spiritually.

Additional Faculty

With student population growing, one of the corresponding changes was to provide additional faculty to teach classes. We moved from three professors to seven. We have been blessed with men who faithfully teach Scriptures, doctrine, history, and practical service: Rev. Dr. Leins, Rev. Jordan Cooper, Rev. Dr. Craig Henningfield, Rev. Professor Jeffrey Pulse (CTFSW), Dr. Adam Francisco (CUI), Rev. Richard Shields, Rev. Dave Spotts. A special thank you to each one of these professors.

Support Needs

Corresponding to this growth we have changed and adapted technology to meet those needs. We use the live video technology from Cisco called WebEx. This allows live (video and audio) interactive classes with students throughout the country.

Additionally, the Seminary needed a more comprehensive plan to handle student information, class information,

record keeping for all students, transcripts, and professors, etc. After exploring database options, ALTS moved forward to use the Einstein online database system from Orbund.

My thanks to the CHE members who have taken up some important tasks, such as implementing Orbund database (especially Emily Gerken), rewriting the Academic Catalog, and looking at future steps for ALTS. CHE Members: Emily Gerken (chair), Rev. Len Brokenshire, Rev. Dan Dapelo, Rev. Chris Schroder, Laurie Dapelo, Deb Rokenbrodt, Rev. Roger Twito.

With all that has been happening in ATLS, one person stands out for special recognition: Bonnie Ohlrich, a diligent, faithful, and helpful servant in making sense of all the details of operating the seminary. Maintaining Einstein database, providing applications for all interested students, transcript preparation, and follow up of all outstanding items of ALTS. I can't thank Bonnie enough for all she does. Well done, good and faithful servant.

The Future of ALTS

Recruiting of Students

Two people who have been instrumental in letting the world know about ALTS: Pastor Chris Rosebrough, through his Pirate Christian Radio internet program and Pastor Jordan Cooper through his internet program, Just and Sinner podcast and his blog. Both are commended for being a strong Lutheran voice in a challenging arena and have been instrumental in reaching men for serving as pastors in God's Kingdom through ALTS.

Each congregational member know men who could be potential pastors. Pray for them in your congregation. Pray for women in your congregation who might be gifted to serve as deaconesses. Encourage them as they begin serving in the church. Speak words into their lives about this important area of service. Your words and encouragement can have a life changing affect on one person.

Praying for Current Students and ALTS Faculty

As Christians we are urged to "pray for all people." How much more important to pray for men studying to be pastors and women studying to be deaconesses! Many approaches to prayer are possible A group at Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran, Frazier Park, CA quarterly puts together a laminated sheet, with all seminary students and professors, for a prayer guide in weekly worship.

Financial Support

With the increasing needs of ALTS for students, faculty, systems, we have needs for financial support. This is the future of our church body. We invest in men and women who

(Continued on Page 14)

Being Missional

By The Rev. Dean A. Stoner, National Home Mission Developer

The word "*missional*" is not new ... it was coined by the church in the 1990's. But in spite of the relative longevity of the term, it nonetheless can sometimes be confusing and unclear as to what it means. Over the years, the idea of "*being missional*," especially within the Evangelical church communities, morphed into a slogan or purpose statement, believing this expression to be the mandate by which the church exists. If not properly understood, then, this term, "being missional" can be taken too far and become the mantra that congregations and ministries singularly espouse, leading to ministry that is unfortunately one-dimensional.

Taken to the extreme, such a perspective can also have negative consequences, perhaps even leading to how we understand and "do" church. For example, if our understanding of "being missional" means that we must "do" something to bring people to faith, then our theology is skewed, for only God the Holy Spirit chooses to do that; for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). If "being missional" means catering to the unchurched by making worship more acceptable and comfortable, even to the point of changing a sanctuary into concert hall, for example, then we have wrongly understood the idea of "missional." If the church focuses only on the unchurched, especially at the expense of those who are already a part of the faith community, then discipleship is harmed, and disciples damaged. And without discipleship, "making disciples" (Matthew 28) becomes a human work, rather than the divine mission that it is.

But there is a positive side to "being missional." From a Lutheran perspective, the term means viewing ministry beyond a congregation's own needs. It means seeing ourselves as Christ's ambassadors, lovingly reaching out to those who do not have a church home and "friending" them. "Being missional" focuses on the lost and broken outside of our faith communities, serving them in their needs, where they are, for the sake of Christ Jesus and His Gospel, with no strings attached or secret agenda. And "being missional," means being relational in all we do and say, for the most effective way to get people to church (and thus "make disciples") is to invite them;

but without a genuine relationship with the unchurched first, the invitation will fall on deaf ears.

We must remind ourselves that God is the Great Evangelist, not us. He is the One who makes disciples through the means of preaching of the Word. He is the One who calls His under-shepherds (clergy) of the Church to share the testimony of the apostles. And he is the One who uses us - ordinary people in our ordinary vocations in life - to bring forth the Gospel of grace in all we do and say. Such means are called the "masks of God," whereby the Lord chooses to use our vocations, or positions in life, as parents or children, students or teachers, neighbors or co-workers, or even bakers or candlestick makers, to proclaim that we are all beggars before the Lord and need His forgiveness. This "vocational witness" is a means by which the Gospel is shared, as we speak Christ into the lives of others.

Being missional, then, is nothing more than being comfortable in that role as a "mask of God", understanding that the real work of ministry, of bringing the Gospel to a lost and broken world, centers around relationships... making them, cultivating them, and nurturing them. Then, and only then, will invitations to join in worship and discipleship be effective. For it is precisely here - in Christ's church - where God, the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens us ... and keeps us all in the one true faith. It is here in the church, where we are divinely gifted and fed with Word and Sacrament, for missional living. Being missional is first and foremost living as a disciple, always learning from our Great Rabbi, Jesus. Secondly, being missional means baptizing people in the name of our Triune God, and then continually discipling those baptized. Being missional is being aware of how the Lord will gather the unchurched as His own through ordinary means, events, and people like you and me. This is God's work, and His passion. We are simply the tools or instruments He chooses to walk along side in this work. This is the mission of God, reconciling the world to Himself, and we have been privileged to join Him, and to live out our lives in Christ ... of "being missional."



The National Convention: Introduction

The 25th General convention of the American Association of Lutheran Churches took place on June 21-24th of this year. Pastors, delegates, church workers, and visitors from all over the country met in Saint Paul, Minnesota at the University of Northwestern to worship together, to learn together, to vote together, and to fellowship together. These days were jam-packed with discussions on resolutions, bible studies, break-out sessions, and reports from those in the national office and from the other association-appointed commissions.

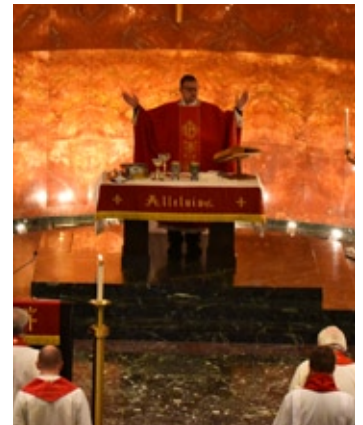
There were a number of break-out sessions to choose from. The Rev. Eric Ishimaru did a presentation on how to plan blended Lutheran worship services, and the Rev. Joe Dapelo did a session on "Teaching the faith." Along with these, the Rev. Larry Jurgensen spoke about "Sharing Jesus without fear," and our National Mission Developer, the Rev. Dean Stoner discussed congregational identity. The AALC Foundation hosted a Christian estate planning workshop with Jennifer Nohelty. We also heard Bible studies on missions from The Rev. Chris Rosebrough, using Luke 10 as his text.



The keynote speaker was The Rev. Steven Schave, a pastor in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, who works as the director of Urban and Inner-City Mission. He spoke on his own experiences doing mission work in the inner city. He also presented a workshop entitled "Mercy with Dignity:"

Three major resolutions were passed. The first focused on the Rostered Licensed Lay Pastor (RLLP) delegation, and resolved to be rid of that status in favor of a more confessional view of the ministry. Those who are in seminary and will be working at a church will now be called "vicars," and will not administer the sacraments. Those pastors who were installed into the ministry as RLLPs were thus ordained. The second resolution concerned our association's commitment to standing with the Christian churches of Syria and Iraq. Specifically, it was resolved that the AALC will encourage individuals and congregations to pray and provide material aid as they are able. The third resolution dealt with the Supreme Court and our nation's acceptance of same-sex marriages. In it, the AALC made clear the importance of holding to a Biblical and Confessional understanding of marriage in contradistinction to the Supreme Court's rulings in Obergefell v. Hodges.

The Women of Life met for a luncheon and business meeting, along with a morning prayer breakfast. We heard a devotion by Bonnie Ohlrich, and a presentation on "Threads of Love" by Kathleen Schuhmacher. And, since it was a business meeting, there were new co-chairs elected: Laurie Dapelo, and Karen Huskamp, and Katherine Cox was elected Secretary. Katherine Hofinga was reelected as Treasurer.



Missions in the Inner City

A Summary of the Keynote Address at the National Convention

by The Rev. Jordan Cooper

Photo Credit: Rev. Dick Day



Rev. Steve Schave

Our keynote address at the AALC National Convention was given by Rev. Steve Schave, on the subject of inner city missions. Rev. Schave has served as a mission planter in the inner city, and is the director of Urban and Inner City Mission for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. He gave two talks at the convention, first outlining the need for church plants in the contemporary culture, and second, he spoke about some of his own experiences working in the inner city, and bringing the gospel to those in need.

Church planting is something that Lutherans have been involved with since they arrived in the United States in the nineteenth century. Rev. Schave noted that in the first hundred years of the LCMS's existence, they averaged one new church plant per week. At one point, this average was up to one plant per day. While these kinds of dramatic numbers will not likely repeat themselves in the near future (though by the grace of God they might!), this demonstrates that God has used the Lutheran church

to bring new congregations to the people of this nation for many decades. God wants to continue this work through us!

In the AALC, the majority of our congregations are in more rural or suburban areas, rather than the inner city. There are, however, some vital reasons to consider the city as an important mission field. It is estimated that in the near future, over eighty percent of the population of the United States will be living within cities. Millennials, on the whole, are moving away from rural areas into the city. Thus, if we as church want to reach the next generation, this must be done—at least partially—through the cities. Rev. Schave pointed out that the Apostles often went to preach in cities, and these were the areas where the gospel spread. The cities of Rome and Jerusalem were early centers for the Christian church.

Along with encouraging other Lutherans to consider mission work in the inner city, Rev. Schave spoke about his own experiences doing work in urban areas. Following the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, that city broke out in riots and protests about police brutality, race issues, and other problems facing the people of that area. Rev. Schave was sent to Ferguson to minister to those hurting from this situation. It is important that those ministering to the community did not attempt to take sides in the controversies, but instead, they sought to bring the gospel to all people involved. This included both protestors and police officers. This mission work was extremely successful, as Rev. Schave was able to preach the gospel to, and pray with, many of the hurting people in this community.

Not all people are called to minister in Ferguson, nor are all people called to bring the gospel into the inner city. This is, however, an important mission field. As members of the AALC, we should pray that God would use our church to bring the good news to people in all areas, including cities. May God use us to plant churches where there is great need, that the gospel may shine forth even in the darkest places.

Graduation & Ordination Ceremony

by Lisa Cooper

On the last day of the National Convention, the final worship service also included a graduation and ordination ceremony. The graduate, David Spotts, is the leader of The Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry in Columbia, Missouri. Although he finished his school work with ALTS, he will remain the teacher of the Greek courses with the seminary. He was also ordained by the Association for his mission work.



Upon the passing of a resolution to be rid of the RLLP (Rostered Licensed Lay Pastor) title, three men were ordained to the Office of the Holy Ministry. These men include: John Morley of Sonland Lutheran Church in Casa Grande, AZ; Scott Neumann, who finished his training at Ascension Lutheran Church of Ames, IA, and is headed to his first call in Williston, ND; and Chris Rosebrough of Kongsvinger Lutheran Church in Oslo, MN. It was an exciting thing to see four called men be ordained into the ministry together in the fellowship of our association.



May God bless these men in their ministries, in their lives, and in their continued commitment to boldly proclaiming the Law and the Gospel in their God-given calls.



Photo Credit: Rev. Dick Day

Servant Unique Family Ministries

by Brian M. Smith, President/Director of SUFM

Greetings in the Name of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This article is to update you as to what has been happening this past year with Servant Unique Family Ministries (SUFM) as well as what we hope to happen and how you might help us minister to those less fortunate.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

As the above Bible verse says, He will give us rest and lighten our burdens. This past year Candy and I have really had our share of burdens. Candy has become my help maid and servant. I have been continuing to suffer many health issues which have put more work on Candy. My mind still wants to do the things in ministry that I have been doing for over 33 years now, but my body is just breaking down. I have suffered many setbacks over this past year and will probably be undergoing several surgeries before the year is over.

We have been looking for a new director to take over the ministry; but as of this date, we do not have anyone. We thought we had a couple who was a generation younger than us, but I feel that they have stepped back a little from moving forward in that direction for now. It would have been good because the wife had taken Spanish during all of her high school years plus some in college.

If we find a Director for a couple of years as well as some new people, I would want to continue to try to fulfill my duties as President of SUFM the best of my abilities and again travel to Mexico with some of those who had gone with us on mission trips in the '90s. We would again share the Gospel through the Ministry of the Arts in which a Spanish language VBS program would be

used along with puppets, clowning, miming, video/DVDs, etc. I was hoping that we would be able to do that in about three years, but time will tell; it is strictly in the Lord's hands. I hope to be able to continue the Humanitarian Aid part of SUFM's ministry.

We do hope to continue SUFM's ministry to gather and deliver Humanitarian Aid to those less fortunate. Although Candy has been doing the majority of the driving since my accident in November 2013, she will be driving full time now because I lost my driver's license the end of January 2016 for an indefinite amount of time. Sometimes when we go to pick up Humanitarian Aid items, Candy has a co-pilot sitting next to her (our German Shepherd Sara). Sara acts like my service dog who looks out for me night and day.

We plan on coming to the 2016 TAALC Convention and other opportunities that we might have to collect items as the Lord provides.

Our World Missions Committee at Ascension Lutheran is going to help gather items this summer by going to yard/garage sales. They will give those who are having garage sales information on who to contact afterwards if they would like to donate their excess items to SUFM. This will also give the Committee an opportunity to give them a pamphlet on our church and invite them to come and worship with us. So their visit will be two fold.

What I am so surprised at is that the World Missions Committee themselves between themselves will get the items out to our warehouse so I do not have to worry about this. I have never in the 33 years had a committee take charge and help us out in such a way to help others like that. I really appreciate this teamwork and praise God for their help.

We will be giving the Women of LIFE a list of some of the things that we are looking for and hope that some of you can bring these items to the con-

vention so that we can ship them down to the people who Latin American Lutheran Mission works with as well as an orphanage in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, that LALM has been assisting.

Over the years we have always put a great emphasis on the youth of Mexico and that is what LALM had asked for except in regards to clothing which included all ages. LALM has now started to ask us to have you put together kits for older people, and geriatric kits so that they can serve these people in their ministry too.

I also would like to collect good used musical instruments that I can take down to share and give the gift of music to those both in the churches that LALM works with through the ELCM and the children at the orphanage in Nuevo Laredo. It has been hard for me to get pictures of our work because other people are doing the delivering items to Laredo and we just do not get them, or there are times when I have had a chance but forget because I am too busy on a project with other people at the time. I am sharing one picture of the LALM Annual Meeting last fall with the Mexican pastors sharing in song with those of us who were attended the banquet that evening.

Please continue to pray for Servant Unique Family Ministries that we can continue on with our work and that He raises up workers to help with the work. Pray too for the work of Latin American Lutheran Mission with the ELCM and the churches in Guatemala and that of The AALC for the Lord to bring forth men and women to serve where they can in these ministries as well as ours.

God's Blessings, Peace, Wisdom, and His Unfailing Love Keep You and Your Loved Ones Now and Always!

Sincerely In His Service,

Brian M. Smith

President/Director of SUFM

Original letter dated February 2, 2016



Reaching Muslims with the Gospel

By Scott Strosahl, Director of Worship and Music at Ascension in Ames, Iowa

Matthew 9:37 says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few,” and that is certainly true when it comes to bringing the Gospel to the followers of Islam. 86% of all Muslims have never met a true follower of Jesus, and with 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide, and about 7 million in the US alone, there is plenty of opportunity for loving people to Christ.

That was the main message of Eric Seever, who was our special guest instructor during the Bible study hour for three weeks. Eric is the Midwest Mobilizer for the Saudi Advocacy Network, whose goal is to share Christ with the people of Saudi Arabia around the world. One of the best evangelistic tools they have is loving and serving the people they want to reach.

Eric taught us a lot about the history of Islam and corrected many of our misconceptions, but ultimately sharing the good news with Muslims comes down to caring about them enough to listen to them, learn about them, and pray for them. Oftentimes, this process lasts many years as you slowly build a relationship with the person and build the trust necessary for these conversations.

Learning about the history and customs of Muslims is beneficial, but often the individual beliefs will vary from person to person, as there are more than 70 different sects within Islam. The most common Islamic objections to the gospel are:

1. The Bible has been corrupted by Jews and Christians.
2. Jesus is not the Son of God.
3. Jesus was never crucified on the cross.
4. The Trinity: Christians worship three gods.

Study these issues and pray about how to respond to them, but also realize that apologetic arguments rarely bring anyone to Christ, and therefore it is important to engage in these discussions through the context of deep friendships, grace, and love. We cannot convince Muslims that they need Jesus; the Holy Spirit must do that.

So, if the Spirit is moving you to love someone to Christ, be courageous, “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (1 Timothy 1:7). You don’t need to be an expert in Islam in order to share the good news, and it’s okay to make mistakes for the Gospel’s sake, because God has the power to use them for good.

“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:18-20)



Photo Credit: Scott Strosahl

An Interview with The Rev. Dean R. Johansen

First, it would be great if you could give me a little background about you. When/where did you serve? What was your official title?

The senior ranking Chaplain was called "Command Chaplain" whereas a junior one was called "Chaplain".

What brought you into the AALC? Where are you serving now?

I am serving at American Lutheran Church, Mandan N.D. After I graduated from Lutheran Brethren Seminary I did not receive a pastoral call. At the same time I received a brochure from a pastor friend about being a Navy Chaplain. I asked for an endorsement from the A.A.L.C. to be in extended ministry in the military. It helped to have insight from my older brother Paul as to the differences between the Lutheran Brethren and our church body; to decide which way to go.

Can you speak about what it's like to have a vocation that holds to a specific authority structure?

It is clear from scripture that the Apostles functioned within an authority structure. The present day view of the church in America as an individualistic, perhaps "selfie" approach to worship is an historical aberration. An authority structure facilitates being a Chaplain, Pastor, and Christian. First, since the Command Religious Program belongs to the Commanding Officer you usually have his/her support, along with the Executive Officer and the Senior Enlisted. You are part of a team and everyone supports your role in that effort.

Second, there is no "buy in" process. You are everyone's chaplain and they are your people to include families. The authority structure works great when there are good people leading. When leadership is poor, then sin sucks. My opinion is that it is easier to be a Chaplain with the Marines than with the Navy, because the Marines have a tighter, no-nonsense, less political command structure. It helps that the most important cog of the Marine Corp is the Marine, whereas in the Navy it is keeping the ship afloat and operational.

Third, authority is more of an issue in the military. The tension between a Chaplain

who honors God's word, and the military leadership has increased because leaders understand less serving God as an ethical leader. We see less clearly the depravity of human nature. Which is why even senior officers far too often are removed from their command and even court martialled. When I entered in 1994 into the Navy approximately 50 percent of the new Sailors listed themselves as a Christian from a specific denomination. When I left active duty in 2006 I estimate that to be no more than 25 percent, probably lower. The reality is that military leadership takes the depravity of man and God's word less seriously than twenty years ago. This means that we are quickly losing the ability to determine what is true, honorable, and right. It will become more difficult to live as a Christian in what is largely a pagan society with outer wrappings of Christianity; whether that is within the military or civilian society. Authority must have a legitimate moral origin, otherwise authority becomes corrupt power. Think of the negligence, addiction, and corruption of accumulating 19 trillion in debt as an example. First you deny that you serve God. Second, you deny service to others as human depravity takes over.

How can you serve in submission to your earthly authorities while simultaneously serving God as your ultimate authority?

All military Chaplains as officers are unique. Prior to applying to being commissioned we have to be endorsed by a church body as a Chaplain. We are to follow the beliefs, and practices of our church body. I was prohibited by military regulations to do anything that would be different than what my church body believed and practiced. Also, Chaplains hold the ultimate solution. If I came to the position I could no longer minister in the military, I would request that my ecclesiastical endorsement be pulled and would be back "home" within two weeks. I would not do this except as a last resort. It is important to note that all positions of authority are positions of service to others. I don't mean in an ideological way. I mean in a professional way as a genuine human being. This is true leadership. If you are a leader that has forgotten that you are

there to serve others with humility, truth, and courage; then it is time to resign. Ultimately, for everyone if you can no longer serve in good conscience wherever you work, then you must move on.

Is bringing the Gospel to people in a crisis situation, or a war situation different than doing so in a normal context?

Personally, I can't speak to a combat situation. However, from talking to other Chaplains I have noted that worship services are attended in far greater numbers than when people feel safe. That is no different than the civilian side. People seek God when their world has been "turned upside down". Human nature is more likely to seek God when "I", is threatened. Portraying the Gospel in crisis reminds people through scripture, prayer, singing, and our presence that God is still God and loves them. Ultimately, in crisis we are more likely to be genuine people, and therefore more open to God's grace. Sinners are usually better behaved at a funeral, than a wedding.

How has your service influenced how you do ministry now?

I would have to think about this. It is perhaps too early to answer it.

Maybe it's me, but recently I have seen a lot more media coverage about PTSD than ever before. Do you have any advice for how we can minister to those in our congregations or communities who suffer with PTSD?

The official number is that 22 veterans commit suicide a day in our nation. Post Traumatic Stress has a large role in this crisis. In critical situations you call for help, perhaps 911. A non-critical situation calls for not "fixing" things. People that have suffered trauma initially want their normal life back. Short of a miracle, there is no way to go back. You can go forward from your new reality. Being heard and understood is important. Of course we want healing too. It is crucial that veterans have veterans for support, because they are facing similar challenges. Make time to be with them. If they want to talk, listen. It is most important to stay with them, and when able contact someone else to get help. Post Traumatic Stress can also come

through a physical assault, or an accident. You need not be central to it; you may be an observer. With the internet it is easy to learn about Post Traumatic Stress. Remember that God's grace works; for when we are weak He is strong. Healing from trauma resembles more a marathon than a sprint. On a practical side I encourage everyone to research Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy (EMDR). It can be very effective and after having been taught is self-used.

Connected idea: What are some ways we can minister to those who have previously served? Do you have any practical ideas for ways our congregations can reach out?

A Memorial service for those who have died is good, particularly for those who have died while actively serving. Also, every 11 November we have Veteran's Day to thank living veterans. An acknowledgement of sacrifices made, to include the families is good. A service acknowledging biblical

truths such as, "There is no greater love than that one give his life for a friend."; applies to veterans. A support group for anyone experiencing Post Traumatic Stress could be very beneficial. Certainly noting veterans on electronic media is a good place to start.

Some words about war and evil. It is vitally important to support our veterans. Also, we must never forget that war is not God's ideal. (We are not God's ideal as we are sinners.) There will be no war in heaven. Having written this; letting evil run rampant is not God's ideal either. Lethal force by military is the last option to be used. However, let's not be naïve and say that everything can be worked out by negotiation. When someone has been consumed by evil, there is little room for negotiation. The deeper, and longer the duration of evil the less room there is. Evil's aim is to consume its subject; whether you are the perpetrator, victim, or defender. Combat, and war will damage veterans (all participants) as regarding a moral or spiritual injury.

Prayer Bookmark

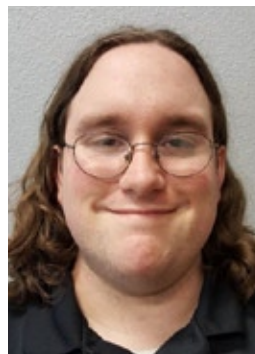
September

1. Good Shepard Lutheran *Sebring, FL*
2. Regional Mission Developers
3. St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran *Augusta, KY*
4. For the lost
5. Wittenburg Door ministry
6. Local AALC church
7. Faith Lutheran *Watseka, IL*
8. Christ Lutheran *Germantown, MD*
9. Christ the King Lutheran *Chesterfield, MI*
10. Women of LIFE committee
11. Refugees in the Middle East
12. Publications Committee
13. Christus Victor Lutheran *Fayetteville, NC*
14. Good Shepard Lutheran *Franklin, NC*
15. Trinity Lutheran *West Hempstead, NY*
16. Board of Directors
17. Peace Lutheran *Defiance, OH*
18. St. Paul's Lutheran *Napoleon, OH*
19. Parish Education Committee
20. Committee for men
21. Our Savior Lutheran *Piqua, OH*
22. Those who are grieving
23. Bethel Lutheran *Rowland, PA*
24. American missions commission
25. Board of Trustees
26. Hope Lutheran *Hampton, VA*
27. 50 seminary students in 5 years
28. Bible Lutheran *Dodge Center, MN*
29. World Mission committee
30. Regional Pastors

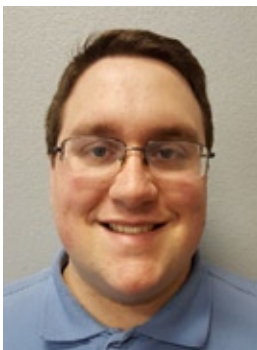
Meet the Seminararians

Abe & Alex McNally

We are twin brothers, born in 1987, the same year the AALC began. We have lived in Evansdale, Iowa and attended Ascension Lutheran Church in Waterloo all our lives. We grew up in the church and served as Deacons, 5th grade Sunday school teachers, and confirmation instructors at various times. We both graduated from the University of Northern Iowa with a degree in English language and literature. Through the encouragement of pastors, church members, and family, we both felt called to pastoral ministry, and in 2015 we were installed as interns at Ascension and began taking seminary courses through the ALTS online program. We are blessed to have so much support and encouragement from our home congregation as all the seminararians are blessed to have the support of the AALC at large.



Abe McNally



Alex McNally

Prayer Bookmark

October

1. Calvary Evangelical Lutheran *St. Paul, MN*
2. God would raise church workers
3. Local AALC church
4. Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
of Deephaven *Wayzata, MN*
5. Christ Lutheran *Chippewa Falls, WI*
6. Clam Falls Lutheran *Frederic, WI*
7. God would raise church leaders
8. Unity in the Church
9. Commission for women
10. Community Lutheran Church
of Mccalister *Wausaukee, WI*
11. St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran *Otis, CO*
12. Christine Stumpfs ministry
13. Commission for Evangelism
14. Mountain View Lutheran *Thornton, CO*
15. Ascension Lutheran *Ames, IA*
16. Hope Lutheran *Brighton, IA*
17. For our Youth
18. Pastors & Church workers
19. Calvary Lutheran *Crystal Lake, IA*
20. Prince of Peace Lutheran *Evansdale, IA*
21. Christians in Lebanon
22. Association Council
23. Regional Chairmen
24. Pilot Knob Lutheran *Forest City, IA*
25. Faith Lutheran *Holstein, IA*
26. St. Luke Lutheran *Traer, IA*
27. For all the seminary students
28. St. Paul Lutheran Congregation *Tripoli, IA*
29. Ascension Lutheran *Waterloo, IA*
30. Redeemer Lutheran *West Union, IA*
31. Christ Lutheran *Duluth, MN*

A Helpful Resource: The “Bible.is” Application

by Lisa Cooper

Two editions ago of *The Evangel*, we read about another “Faith Comes by Hearing” ministry called the Military Bible Sticks. The same idea that brought about that resource also brought to fruition this “Bible.is” application, (“app,” for short). The idea is this: the Scriptures are meant to be heard. Through these ministries, the Word of God is being spread to many nations and tongues all over the world.

This application is available on smartphones, iPads, and on any other app-enabled device. It is free to download, and you can use it to read the Bible, or *listen* to the Bible. There are dramatized and standard versions available in audio formats. Here’s the most interesting part—it’s not only available in English. This app has a catalogue of 1192 languages. Not all of these written languages are available in audio formats, but there are still hundreds of audio versions available in different languages.

I have found this app to be extremely beneficial. Instead of folding laundry listening to radio, I can put on whatever chapter I have been reading in my personal devotions, and listen. The dramatized version has been particularly helpful in my reading of some more difficult chapters in the Bible. It brings life and voices to the pages of genealogies, the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the good news of the New Testament.

I commend this app to you all as resource for all types of learners: those who are auditory can listen; those who are visual can read; those who are kinesthetic can listen and take notes. And, if you find yourself in conversation with someone who speaks another language, you will have a resource at your fingertips that can make available the words of the scriptures in their native tongue.

(Continued from Page 5)

will serve our congregations, and future generations. Consider giving to ALTS on a regular basis. We have a fund for seminary student support, to which you can make regular contributions.

Future Areas for Growth include International Seminary Training (inquiries from: Uganda, Ghana, Norway, Wales, Japan, Germany and Barbados), Lay Academy, and other degree programs.

Conclusion

This brief overview provides you with some background, but more importantly the plans for the future of ALTS. God has extended us far beyond our capabilities, and yet He provides for that extension. I invite you to

move forward with ALTS as we prepare, equip, and send future pastors and deaconesses into our congregations and into the world. Let’s walk together in God’s mercies to accomplish what Jesus has called us to do: make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

Alfred Rehwinkel (1887-1979) gave this advice to seminary students: “Know your Bible, love your people, speak their language, be humble.” May that be our heritage as a seminary training people for service in God’s kingdom.

Your servant in Christ,

Rev. Richard Shields, President
American Lutheran Theological Seminary

Benson Called to Lead Peace Lutheran

Pastor excited to be a part of church family in Defiance

by Tim McDonough

With a background in teaching as a tax analyst, Gary Benson of Minneapolis didn't hear a call to become a pastor until later in life. As a music teacher in Minneapolis, Benson was making an impact in the inner city until he lost his job when his position was cut. That led him to the business world.

Over the years, Benson worked his way from Minnesota to Arkansas, where he became one of the top tax analysts at WalMart Corporate. He had reached the pinnacle of his profession, but something wasn't right.

"Through all of that, I just wasn't feeling fulfilled," said Benson, who was installed as the new pastor at Peace Lutheran Church of Defiance on Sunday. "I thought it just might be missing teaching, but I realized the work wasn't really satisfying. The money was great, the prestige was great, but I just wasn't fulfilled.

"I had been a Christian all my life, in fact my parents would tell the story about when I was very young, I would say the minister's parts of the church service," continued Benson, a graduate of St. Cloud University in St. Cloud, Minn., with a bachelor's degree in education, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin with a master's of education administration and a graduate of Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus with a master's of divinity. "My parents always told me I was going to be a pastor, but it wasn't what I wanted to be. But lo and behold, when I was with WalMart, I decided to go to seminary in Columbus, Ohio."

Benson's first call following seminary was to Calvary Orthodox Lutheran Church in Lancaster, where he served for 8 1/2 years. From there he was called to Light of Christ Church in Williston, N.D., which he led for six years.

In November of 2014, Benson was called to the national office of the American Association of Lutheran Churches in Fort Wayne to serve as the administrative assistant to the national presiding pastor (Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins) and as an administrative assistant to the AALC. It wasn't long, however, until Benson realized that he missed leading a congregation.

"I enjoyed what I was doing, I was making a contribution, but I just missed serving the people," said Ben-

son, who replaced Pastor Fred Balke, who retired this past summer from Peace Lutheran. "Peace Lutheran is the closest AALC church to Fort Wayne, so I would come here to worship when I was available. To be honest, I really fell in love with the people here who are caring, hard-working folks.

"Pastor Balke had left in July, the church was looking for a part-time pastor, so I talked to my wife about applying for the position," added Benson, who has been married to his wife, Eileen, for 41 years and has two grown sons, Nicholas (37) and Joseph (34). "I told Eileen that as long as my health is there and my mind is there, I would like to pastor again. I applied for the position, I went through the process and I recently got the call. That's how a boy from Minneapolis ended up in Defiance, Ohio."

Now that Benson is at Peace Lutheran, he's excited about serving the people.

"Our first objective, which is our most important objective... is to love the Lord our God and to love each other," said Benson. "Our Bible studies and our worship services are all pointed in that direction. I'm looking forward to the journey with the people here, I know we're going to have fun serving God.

"I have a mantra, which is, 'We're having fun, doing church,'" added Benson. "What church really is, is opening up and helping your brothers and sisters, in good times and hard times. Church is family, and families can have fun worshipping and praising God, even when people disagree. For anyone who doesn't have a church, give us a try. We're not everyone's cup of tea, but if we are, you will be welcomed into our family. We live in precarious times, but our goal is to put God first... 'Let go and let God.'"

Sunday worship service at Peace Lutheran, located at 08525 Ohio 66, north of Defiance, begins at 10:30 a.m. Sunday school is from 9-10 a.m. and fellowship time is from 10-10:30 a.m.

For more information about the church, call 419-782-9411.

This article was first printed in *The Crescent-News* on January 22, 2016, reprinted with permission.

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

921 East Dupont Road, #920

Fort Wayne, IN 46825-1551

Address Service Requested



The
**American Association
of Lutheran Churches**

The Evangel — Issue 179

September/October 2016

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

Main Office Located at:

6600 N. Clinton St.

Augustine Hall

Fort Wayne IN 46825

Phone: (260) 452-3213

Fax: (260) 452-3215

Email: theaalc@TheAALC.org

Visit Us On The Web
www.TheAALC.org

The Evangel

The Evangel, a publication of The American Association of Lutheran Churches, is published bimonthly. A one-year subscription is \$10.00.

Mail your check and this form to:

The AALC

921 East Dupont Rd #920

Fort Wayne IN 46825-1551

_____ New Subscription _____ Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

Congregation _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Subscription \$ _____

Additional donation for The AALC \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____