

Real Churches “Still” Don’t Kill Babies

by Pr. Steve Shipman, Former CORE Director and Editor

Child Sacrifice

As a child I was horrified to learn in school of the Aztecs and other “primitive” groups who sacrificed children to their gods. My Sunday School teachers had a hard time explaining the story of Abraham and Isaac. Closer to our own time, we can’t imagine the Holocaust and the way Jews, the mentally ill, homosexuals, and those with disabilities were murdered by the Nazis.

Why are we not equally horrified by the slaughter of unborn children, something that is not new (the ancient Christian writing *Didache* condemns abortion), but that the Supreme Court decided was legal after it discovered a “right of privacy” in the Constitution that nobody had noticed for nearly 200 years?



ELCA’s 1991 Statement on Abortion

The ELCA in 1991 adopted a statement on abortion that says, among other things, “*Because we believe that God is the creator of life, the number of induced abortions is a source of deep concern to this church. We mourn the loss of life that God has created.*” (I’ll bet you didn’t expect to read that in an ELCA document.) It also says, “The position of this church is that government has a legitimate role in reg-

ulating abortion.” And it says, “...this church supports legislation that prohibits abortions that are performed after the fetus is determined to be viable, except when the mother’s life is threatened or when lethal abnormalities indicate the prospective newborn will die very soon.” That’s not what I wish it said, but a lot better than what you hear from ELCA leaders and lobbyists today.

**We mourn
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ELCA Church Council Overrules

However, when the Board of Pensions (now called Portico) attempted to follow through on this statement regarding abortion in 1995 by restricting coverage of abortions to cases in which the life of the mother is threatened, the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest, or the fetus had lethal abnormalities, the ELCA Church Council in November of 1995 essentially overruled it by considering all abortions as “medically necessary services” covered by the health plan. The argument was made that this had always been the policy even in the predecessor church bodies to the ELCA. In April 1997 the Church Council agreed to restrict payment of abortions after the 20th week of gestation except in those cases listed above, which remains the official policy. Several synods submitted memorials to the 1997 Churchwide Assembly protesting the Church Council action. The Churchwide Assembly refused to overturn the actions of the Church Council. And the Board of Pensions admitted that it did not ask the reason for an abortion before paying for it.

**ELCA
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tially over-
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Real Churches

I personally knew two members of the task force, and I was one of the people interviewed to offer insight into my pro-life convictions. The last time I

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Real Churches “Still” Don’t Kill

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spoke to the one, he was livid over the way the statement the group had worked on so hard was twisted to serve the purposes of the radical feminists. (He eventually joined LCMC after a lifetime of faithful service in the ALC, including as a college president and teacher of the Church). A number of prominent pastors and leaders left the ELCA over this issue, and Pr. (now Fr.) Leonard Klein wrote a powerful editorial in *Lutheran Forum* entitled, “Real Churches Don’t Kill Babies.”

The statement the group had worked so hard to produce was twisted to serve the purposes of radical feminists.

Of course, this is not the only issue in which the ELCA has chosen to ignore or violate the decisions of churchwide assemblies, which we are constantly told are “the highest legislative authority” of the ELCA but in practice evidently are not.

When the *Common Confession* was issued, many of us objected that the issue of the sanctity of life was omitted. That was corrected in the statement issued jointly by Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church, “[The Lord Is With You.](#)” I commend it to you.

Top Leaders March for Life

The NALC has been diligent in its advocacy of the sanctity of human life. Each year the top leadership has joined in the March for Life in Washington, D.C., and more recently it has sponsored a Life Conference on the day before the March. Those of us from the ELCA and other church bodies who share the commitment to life are always warmly welcomed at this event.



I plan to participate in the March for Life again on January 18th, 2019 and to attend the [NALC Life Conference](#), to be held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Warrenton, Virginia, on January 17th. The NALC Life Conference is an afternoon event. Click [here](#) for more detailed information. Contact [Pr. Dennis Di-Mauro](#) for more information and to register. He can also give advice on lodging for those coming from a distance. I urge you to join us.

I suggest that if possible you begin the day of the March at the interdenominational worship service at D.A.R. Constitution Hall, 1776 D St. NW, at 8:30.

Clergy are encouraged to vest and sit as a group on the stage. You will also be invited to have a public role in the service. Please arrive by 8 if you plan to do so.



The Rally on the National Mall between Madison and Jefferson Drive begins at noon. A musical opening precedes it at 11. Realistically, you will need to listen to these on your mobile devices, as most of us will not get close enough to the stage because of the large crowds. But it is exciting to be with tens of thousands of people sharing our commitment to life (the media always underestimates the [crowds](#)).

The March

The March for Life begins at about 1:00 p.m. on Constitution Avenue between 12th and 14th Streets. We march to the Supreme Court and Capitol buildings. There are also several events after the March if you wish to participate. Usually I can get on the Metro heading back by 3:30 or so (but purchase a round trip SmarTrip metro card as the post-March lines are enormous).

Hold the ELCA accountable to its own Social Statement.

The March for Life [website](#) gives helpful information for those planning to attend. If you are at the NALC Life Conference the day before, you can also ask more specific questions.

Last year those of us in the ELCA had our own banner and our own tiny representation. I keep hoping more people can join our inter-Lutheran group and hold the ELCA accountable to its own Social Statement on the topic. And it is always a joy to be with friends from the NALC and LCMC, with whom we share a common faith.

Text Me

If you have trouble finding us, feel free to text me at 570-916-7780. There will be lots of people there, but you will be amazed at the friendliness and orderliness of the group. And we need more people to witness for life until, please God, this abomination will stop and we will appreciate life as the sacred gift of God from conception through natural death.



Congregations in Transition Ministry Initiative

by [Dennis D. Nelson](#)

Lutheran CORE is working with NALC pastor Don Brandt to offer an at-cost coaching and consulting ministry called Congregations in Transition (CiT). This new ministry will help congregations navigate both the challenges and the opportunities that arise during what can be an extended call process.



Challenges

Consider the *challenges* that are often part of times of transition:

- Decreased worship attendance
- Reduced financial giving
- Members drifting into inactivity.

Opportunities

But also consider the *opportunities* that can be pursued in times of transition:

- A new clarity as to your church's mission and outreach
- Seeing this as a time of congregational renewal as members step forward to lead
- Proactively and practically addressing the challenges listed above, e.g., through worship planning, Bible studies, home visits, and, if necessary, a financial appeal.

If you are a part of a congregation in transition and would like to know more about the CiT ministry, please contact either Dennis or Don:

- Dennis Nelson at dennisdnelsonaz@yahoo.com
- Don Brandt at pastordonbrandt@gmail.com.

Our coaches will be volunteering their time. Congregations will be compensating Lutheran CORE only for actual costs incurred as part of the consultation process.

The Congregations in Transition ministry initiative is intended for congregations that are *not* severely conflicted. While we deeply care about and pray for congregations that are torn by conflict, there are other resources that are better positioned to be of help to them.

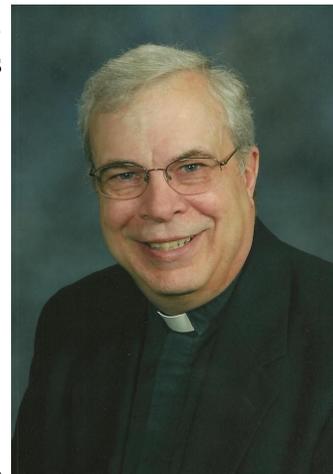


Rekindle Your First Love

by [Dennis D. Nelson](#)

Tim Hubert, NALC pastor and one of the presenters at the “Rekindle Your First Love” event, writes:

“All too often we become bogged down in meeting the needs of others, quenching those insistent little fires, balancing the needs of our family with the needs of the congregation. Who is feeding us? This is a time to rekindle our love of Jesus, to experience His love through prayer, song, conversations. This is a time for the Holy Spirit to heal OUR souls so we can continue to be a blessing to others.”



Speakers and Topics

This gathering will take place on Wednesday,

May 1, 2019 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Warrenton VA; it will be a full day of spiritual and emotional renewal for pastors. It will include presentations, discussion, processing, prayer, fellowship, worship, determining next steps, and personal ministry time. In addition to Tim, who will talk about “Rekindling Your First Love for Christ,” NALC pastor Wendy Berthelsen will speak on “Rekindling Your First Love for the Church as the Body of Christ” and ELCA pastor Brian Hughes will address “Rekindling Your First Love for Mission and Ministry as the Work of Christ in the World.”

“This is a time for the Holy Spirit to heal OUR souls.”



Faith Webbing

by [Gary and Laurie Pecuch](#)

His name is Robert Herron. My wife, Laurie, affectionately refers to him as the “pew pusher.” Mr. Herron didn’t actually push church pews, but every Sunday, my wife could count on him to make his way through the pews to the other side of the sanctuary just to say, “Hi.”



When Mr. Herron first greeted her, she would lower her head, mumble a barely recognizable greeting, and quickly turn to avoid more conversation. But Mr. Herron was persistent. Each week he came to her after worship, moving his way through the pews, with a big smile on his face and the words, “Good morning, Laurie. It’s good to see you. I’m glad you’re here.”

By the time Laurie was a junior in high school, the greeting had become mutual. She was eager to say hello and often looked for him at the beginning of worship. If Mr. Herron was not in worship, he was missed.

Over the years, without either of them realizing it, a surrogate grandfather-granddaughter relationship had been formed, and it all started with the simple greeting, “Good morning, Laurie. It’s good to see you. I’m glad you’re here.”

What Mr. Herron did for my wife was simple. He communicated to her “I care about you,” which to a young person quickly translates into “the church cares about you,” and that ultimately translates to “God cares about you.”

We Call It “Faith Webbing”

Our vision is to wrap children and youth in a web of faith so loving and caring that they will know Jesus and always want to be a part of a local congregation.

When we started in youth ministry there was a popular model called “relational ministry.”

Oftentimes, this relational ministry approach was a youth leader going to school activities or to community events or taking a couple of teens out to a restaurant for the sole purpose of building relationships. This relationship did prove important in the life of the young person and sometimes it was the only sig-

Faith webbing: relationships are sought, built, and sustained.

nificant connection to the church. However, if the youth leader became occupied with the busyness and demands of ministry, then the connection weakened. Worse yet, if the youth leader moved on, then the church connection was regrettably broken.



Faith Webbing is a much deeper and more purposeful approach to engaging youth to church and faith. Its premise is to intentionally identify relationship voids in young peoples’ lives and then fill those voids from within the body of Christ. Nothing is accidental. Relationships are prayerfully, purposefully, and intentionally sought, built, and sustained.

Filling the Void

For some youth, there might not be a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, older or younger sibling in their life. In Faith Webbing, we deliberately identify those relational voids and then aim to fill those relationship needs with loving, caring people from within the congregation. It is common for youth to develop “grandparent relationships” with several of the older members. We call them OWLS (Older Wiser Lutherans). The church becomes a place where youth develop needed surrogate connections.

The end result of this approach to ministry is that youth get to know scores of people of all ages within the congregation. They get to know these folks in a safe, fun, loving, and faith-nurturing environment. As this occurs, the church then becomes a “church family” of deep meaningful relationships.

We introduce the Faith Webbing concept to children and youth in various ways. Our focus with the elementary school-aged children is on the leadership team. We explain the concept to the adult and teen leaders during training sessions. As leaders catch the vision for Faith Webbing, we know our children will be surrounded with lots of faith relationships. We aspire to have at least a 2:1 ratio of children ... to leaders at events. The leaders understand that they are there to intentionally build faith relationships

We identify the relational voids and fill them with loving, caring people from the congregation.

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Faith Webbing

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with children. Together, we purposively love kids into the kingdom.

When youth get older, we offer specific Faith Webbing sessions. In these sessions youth get the opportunity to begin to define their personal faith web. They contemplate who is in their faith web and who needs to be in their faith web. We talk about the quality traits we see in the people in their web. We plant the seed that youth can develop these qualities in their lives and also be in the faith web of others. As this exercise is revisited, youth appreciate the people God has placed in their lives. They are reminded that they are not alone in their faith walk and they are encouraged to reach out and develop more faith web relationships.

Youth appreciate the people God has placed in their lives.

This exercise becomes a springboard for deepening relationships and identifying those relationship voids. Filling those relationship voids becomes a personal ministry plan. *Our mission jumps from sharing the vision to connecting people.* We become attentive to relationship needs and prayerfully seek to weave people together in a faith-based environment. God is the supreme faith weaver. We are privileged to be the vessel through which He weaves.

Interest-based Ministry

Ultimately, youth become connected to various age groups, which leads them to becoming involved in the life and mission of the church. No longer are children and youth separated from the congregation. *It has resulted in our congregation moving from aged-based programming towards interest-based ministry.* That is, adults and youth grow in faith together as they work side by side doing God's work. The concept has become a blessing to all age groups.

Faith Webbing is interest-based, not age-based.

Faith Webbing is an intergenerational approach to ministry. It's intentional, faith-based, healthy, and it works. And when Laurie and I move on from our congregation we can take comfort in knowing that although we will be missed, the youth will be surrounded by scores of other relationships that will keep them connected to church and faith.

[Contact us](#) if you'd like to talk more about how Faith Webbing can have a positive impact on your entire congregation (faithwebbing.com).

May God weave you into the lives of others, may others draw you closer to the heart of our Lord and Savior, and may we be woven together in His love. Amen.

Biographical Details

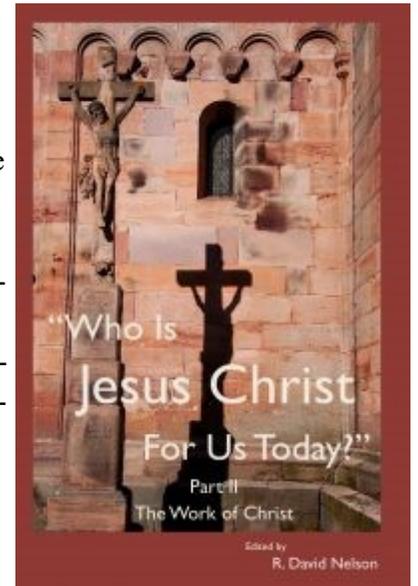
Gary and Laurie have been in youth ministry since the early 1980's when they spent time as summer camp counselors. After graduating from different colleges, both went through a youth ministry training program and were placed in churches in Grove City and Fremont, Ohio, respectively.



Married in 1986, the couple has based their ministry out of St. John's Lutheran in Grove City, Ohio. Together, they provide youth ministry coaching to over 600 congregations.

The Work of Christ

Love theology? The North American Lutheran Church (NALC) sponsored a theological conference in 2017 and this book contains the resulting eighth annual Braaten-Benne lectures. Both the 2016 and 2017 lectures wrestle with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's question, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?"



ALPB is publishing the proceedings of the Braaten-Benne Lectures so that these books will serve the catechetical needs of both churches and individual readers, instructing, enlightening, and empowering believers who live as an emerging Christian minority in North America.

To Order

Call 607.746.7511 or click [here](#).

Sponsoring an Event?

We Would Love to Help You Get the Word Out

If you are planning an event that you believe Lutheran CORE members would want to know about and that is consistent with the [Common Confession](#), please let us know. Brief articles and pictures are always welcome. We also can share them on our website and our Facebook and Twitter feeds. Contact CORE's editor, Kim Smith at kss01ohio@gmail.com.

Coming Events

March for Life 2019	Washington, DC	Jan.18, 2019	“Unique from Day One”	Click here.
SPLS / Georgia Fellowship: Theological Conference and Retreat	Jekyll Island, GA	Jan. 21-22, 2019	“By My Own Understanding or Effort”	Click here.
Lutheran CORE: Coach Training for Congregations in Transition Initiative	Carefree, AZ	Apr. 2-3, 2019	Training Lutheran pastors to be coaches who will help churches thrive in the transition period.	Click here
Lutheran CORE: Rekindling Your First Love Retreat	Trinity Lutheran Church, Warrenton, VA	May 1, 2019	For pastors who fear they have lost their first love.	Click here
NEXUS—for high school students	Grand View University, Des Moines, IA	June 23—28 & July 7-12, 2019	“Where God’s call meets your life”	Click here
ELCA Churchwide Assembly	Milwaukee, WI	August 5-10, 2019	“We are Church”	Click here
NALC Convocation	Indianapolis, IN	August 7-9, 2019	Election of new bishop	
LCMC Annual Gathering	Omaha, NE	Sept. 29 - Oct. 2, 2019	TBD	Click here.

We Are Very Grateful

We are very grateful for all of our friends – individuals as well as congregations – who support our work. This is the time of year when many congregations are determining their benevolence budget and mission dollars recipients for next year. *We urge you to speak with your pastor, and, pastors, we ask you to speak to your church council about including Lutheran CORE in the list of missions which will receive financial support from your congregation next year.* Thank you, and God bless you.

Donations can be sent to our Wausau office
PO Box 1741 Wausau, WI 54402-1741
or online at www.lutherancore.org.
Click [here](#) to make an online donation!

Updated Website

Lutheran CORE's [home page](#) has been replaced with a slider which highlights the new things CORE is doing. Please visit www.lutherancore.org.

Regular Website Postings

- * CORE connects confessing congregations and pastors on its [Clergy Connect](#) page.
- * CORE posts a [daily devotion](#) written by Rev. Jeffray Greene.
- * Check out our Worship page to see what Pastor Cathy Ammlung has posted for [Prayers of the Church](#), [Hymn Suggestions and Scriptures](#) and [Hymn and Liturgy Paraphrases](#).



CORE Voice

Lutheran CORE's Newsletter

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