

Communications to ELCA Leaders

by [Pr. Dennis D. Nelson](#), Lutheran CORE Executive Director



I would like to tell you about two communications which I recently sent to ELCA leaders. The first one I sent to Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. The second one I sent to a synodical bishop. As usual, I have heard nothing from Bishop Eaton. I am very grateful to the synodical bishop, who I feel has very graciously and respectfully listened to and heard my concerns.

My communication to Bishop Eaton had to do with the slowness of her response to a crisis brewing within the ELCA's Sierra Pacific Synod (SPS - northern California and northern Nevada). Last December the SPS synod council took action to terminate the call of a Latino mission developer, and they implemented their decision on a day that is very special to the Latino community. Please notice that I am not taking a position regarding the action taken by the SPS synod council. What I am taking a position on is only the slowness of Bishop Eaton's response – particularly in light of how quickly she will take a position and send out a communication on other matters that are not within her scope of authority, responsibility, and expertise. Here is what I wrote to Bishop Eaton.

* * * * *

Continued on [page 6](#)

In This Issue:

- Bp. Eaton Should Clean Up Her Own House
- How to Get Social Media to Work for Us
- What Is Bp. Dan Selbo Saying about NEXUS?
- Can Small Churches Thrive without a Professional Pastor?
- The "Herr Pastor" Model of Ministry
- New Video Book Review for March
- Early-Bird Registration for Pro Ecclesia Conference



Inside this Issue:

Communications to ELCA	p. 1
Spineless Christianity	p. 2
One Way to Reach Our Youth.	p. 3
The NALC Pastors' Conference	p. 4
The Clergy Availability Crisis	p. 5
Video Book Reviews "A Harvest of Lutheran Dogmatics and Ethics" " by Braaten.....	p. 8
Early-Bird Pro Ecclesia Registration.....	p. 10
Coming Events	p. 10

Spineless Christianity

by [Pr. Chris Johnson](#), Secretary of the Board of Lutheran CORE

The life of a Christian isn't always an easy one. Wasn't it Jesus who said, "the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matthew 7:14)? Not only that, but a cursory reading of the many letters of the New Testament, including Revelation 2 and 3, shows that life in the early Church was "everything" but idyllic. If that was the case 2000 years ago, why should it be any different today?

The challenges we face now, many of which we try to articulate and address at Lutheran CORE, are myriad: Critical Race Theory, soup-de-jour sexual ethics, finding a pitcher large enough to contain "gender fluidity," the waning of Scriptural authority, substantial clergy shortages, a high degree of apathy among the "nones" in America (to say nothing about spiritual malaise among some of the faithful). Life in the Church today is everything but idyllic. The challenges we are facing seem, at times, overwhelming.

What if something else is amiss? What if we have gone too soft, lost our moxie, can't find our "get up and go" because it "hurried up and went"? It's easy to point fingers at many things *out there*, and there certainly are viruses more noxious than COVID-19 which have entered the bloodstream of American Lutheranism. But what if the fundamental issue isn't *out there* but a problem with *in here*? C.S. Lewis wrote about "men without chests" in the *Abolition of Man*, a staggering assessment and stinging indictment on modern man (the 1940's British man, at least) for their lack of character. Or to put it in another way, I've heard criticisms of a heartless or a mindless Christianity, but what about a spineless Christianity? The body of Christ surely has a spine, does it not? Surely we aren't just a sagging bag of skin!

When I talk with some of the older members of the churches I currently serve and think about those saints I have served, one of the common comments I hear about pastors of ages past is how forthright they were. They weren't forthright in a mean-spirited way, something akin to a rabid political protestor or a politician trying to show their constituents how righteous they are or (perhaps more likely) to show off the deep pockets that fund their ambitions. They were forthright in a pastoral, Christian way. Of course, the occasional mean, curmudgeon of a pastor would happen from time to time. But at least the coarse pastors got their point across clearly.

Perhaps we need to recapture or revamp that old



"Herr Pastor" model of ministry. Those "Herr Pastors" had a strong backbone. The pastor spoke and led; the parish listened and followed (sometimes). The prophets and apostles spoke and led; Israel and the Church (sometimes) listened and (sometimes) followed. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, spoke and led and like the prophets before and the apostles after Him; some listened, some followed. This might not be considered the "perfect" way to lead a Church but it is a Biblical way to lead. It is a way to lead with a spine, a spine that is held steady and secure, like a good back brace, by God's grace and power.

Perhaps this is the kind of moxie we should like to see in our pastors and church leaders. Forthright, yet tender; stern and loving, just like Jesus. Not domineering but also not flapping back and forth like a reed in the wind. Jovial without being trivial. Gentle (a fruit of the spirit!) while also having gravitas. And this is the kind of character we should like to see in the people of God, the flock of Christ's pasture, is it not?

Think of the saints of the New Testament whose spines were strong because of the one true faith passed on to them through their preachers and pastors; Priscilla and Aquilla, Lydia, the authors of the Gospels, and all those names Paul often mentions at the end of his letters. Think of all those early Church fathers who wrote voluminously against heresy and paganism, even at the cost of their lives and livelihood. Think of all those faithful women through the ages who taught the faith to their children and, through their love and devotion, many of them became the means by which their unbelieving husbands came to be saved (1 Corinthians 7:16).

Continued on [page 7](#)

One Way to Reach Our Youth

by Ms. Kim Smith, President of the Board of Lutheran CORE and editor of CORE Voice

Have you ever wondered what good it does to “like” something you read on social media?

Lutheran CORE mostly posts information, such as newsletter articles, devotions, and prayers, while others may post about their children or pets. We don’t see everything everyone posts and they don’t see everything CORE posts either. It turns out that each social medium platform (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are examples) uses math to decide who sees what.

So how do we reach people, especially our youth, who don’t already know about us? It turns out that each platform uses social signals (likes, comments and shares) in deciding what is popular and important. The mathematical formula tracks the social signals and the people doing the social signaling. It also tracks the posters’ friends and their interests.

Why? Because the platform tries to decide whether each post is of general interest or just of interest to your little corner of the Internet. It also considers whether people in other places are interested in the topic. *Like it or not, you won’t see a post unless the platform’s math formula decides that it is right for you.* To quote Big Commerce [emphasis added], “Increased social signals indicate good domain authority and demonstrate a URL’s value. When large numbers of users share and like a page, it indicates that the page is genuine and contains substantive or entertaining content.” ([BigCommerce](#))

Most of you are probably aware of Facebook or Twitter at this point, but what about Instagram? Instagram is a social media platform that emphasizes photo and video sharing and, more importantly, *lots of young adults and high school students use it.*

If we want to combat the secular world by making it possible for our children and grandchildren to read our posts, then we need to use the apps they use, write the way they absorb information, and do all we can to let the various platforms know that our posts are worth reading.

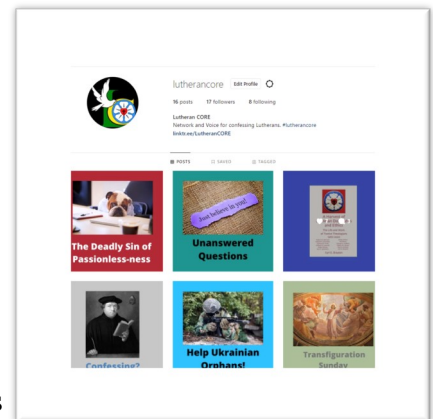
How do we do that? In a nutshell, we start by creating accounts for each of the major social media platforms. We then need to increase the popularity of a page and its posts by liking / following the posts, and by occasionally sharing them or writing substantial comments. We may get flagged as spam if we only write generic comments such as “Awesome post!”

Even better than being a one-man band is to get a



small team doing these things regularly! Maybe your bible study or young adult group would accept the challenge. Children and youth may be hesitant to share a post, but they may be very willing to “like” a post. That helps too.

Lutheran CORE began publishing to Instagram on February 17th, 2022. We currently have 17 Instagram followers. How many will we have two months from now when our May issue is released? It could literally be hundreds if our dedicated readers create an Instagram account and start to like, share, comment, and follow our posts.



Click [here](#) to visit Lutheran CORE’s linktree which includes links to Lutheran CORE’s Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube pages as well as other posts of interest.

You can also click (or select) on the links below to go directly to Lutheran CORE’s accounts. When you visit our YouTube channel, please subscribe and enjoy the video book reviews we have posted there.

⇒ [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#)

Jesus said, “Go!” and this is one practical way you may help reach the lost and looking.

The NALC Pastors' Conference: One of the Best

by [Pr. David Charlton](#), Vice-President of the Board of Lutheran CORE

It is always a joy when you go to a Pastors' conference and leave with a sense of energy and enthusiasm for ministry. Over my twenty-eight years of ministry, I have been to my share of such events. They have been a mixed bag. To quote Forrest Gump, they "are like a box of chocolates. You never know what you'll get." Some are definitely worth your time. Others are mediocre, but since you have the chance to see old friends, you don't mind. Others leave you positively frustrated. Of all the conferences I have attended, good, bad and indifferent, I must say that the NALC Pastors' Conference held in Orlando, Florida, from February 15 to 18, was one of the best.

Although I am not a pastor in the NALC, I was able to attend as a representative of Lutheran CORE. The theme of the conference was: "Always Be Ready: Apologetics in Real Life," based on 1 Peter 3:15. The keynote address was given by the Rev. Dr. Mark Mattes, with plenary addresses by Rev. Dr. Maurice Lee, Rev. Dr. Dennis DiMauro, and Rev. Dr. Thomas Jacobson. Each speaker addressed the topic of apologetics from a different perspective. Rather than giving a full synopsis of every presentation, I will mention what were the highlights for me.

Mark Mattes identified one of the major mistakes that Christians made in the second half of the 20th Century. This was to adopt the world view of unbelievers and skeptics, in an attempt to show that the Christian faith can be made to fit into those worldviews. Instead of arguing against people from the point of view of modernity or post-modernity, we should argue with them from the point of view of the Christian faith. Our goal should be to help people see what difference it would make if the Christian worldview were true.

Maurice Lee reminded us of the approach taken by Justin Martyr. As his name indicates, Justin Martyr was not only an apologist, but died as a martyr. Justin sought to refute false rumors about Christianity and engaged with pagan philosophers like Socrates and Plato. However, he had a third strategy. This was to describe what happens in the liturgy of the Eucharist. In addition to saying what Christianity is not, we need a picture of what it is. There is no better place to find this than weekly Sunday worship. The same is true in 2022.

Dennis DiMauro recounted an experience he had while doing door to door evangelism. A young man whom he met shocked him. He wasn't interested in general information about Christ, or the Church.



What he wanted to know was what had happened in Pastor DiMauro's own life to make him believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He reminded us that while there are intellectual arguments and rhetorical strategies that can be helpful, what is most important is being able "to give an account for the faith that is in us." Lutherans tend to shy away from the term testimony. Nevertheless, we need to be able to testify to what God has done for us.

Thomas Jacobson reminded us of the class differences that need to be taken into account in reaching the unchurched. Lutherans have tended to follow Schleiermacher by focusing on the "cultured despisers" of Christianity. The problem is that the largest group of un-churched people in America today are not the cultured people of the upper middle-class. They are the blue collar and the poor. In recent decades, church attendance remained fairly stable among the successful and well to do. Meanwhile, among the poorer classes, the bottom has fallen out. We need to find a way to speak to them too.

While at the NALC Pastors' Conference, I was also able to attend two break-out sessions. The first was led by Rev. Doctor Russell Lackey of Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa. He spoke about the NEXUS Institute, a summer theological institute for high school youth, which is held each summer at Grand View. (This summer it will be held on June 12-18.) Pastor Lackey shared information about research that has been done on such summer theological institutes. This research was cross-denominational, cross-cultural, and multi-faith. It indicated that summer theological institutes are very effective. As many as 25% of young people who at-

Continued on [page 8](#)

The Clergy Availability Crisis: What are the Implications for Your Congregations' Future?

by [Dr. Don Brandt](#), Director, [Congregations in Transition](#) for Lutheran CORE

Lutheran CORE's Congregations in Transition ministry (CiT) was launched back in 2019 to assist Lutheran congregations who are contending with the shortage of available pastors to serve their churches. This ministry challenge has only become more severe during the pandemic.

This crisis is so widespread it has now come to the attention of the mainstream secular press. A recent article, in the *Wall Street Journal*, is entitled, "Houses of Worship Face Clergy Shortage as Many Resign During Pandemic." This article was just published last month, on February 21, 2022. And while the article focused on the degree to which the pandemic has directly contributed to the number of clergy leaving the ministry, the shortage of pastors — as you probably already know — has been an issue for many years. This pandemic has only made a bad situation even worse.

1. Consider the many factors which, over at least the last twenty years, have contributed to a shortage of available ordained pastoral candidates looking for a call.
2. A very large percentage of pastors have or are about to reach retirement age.
3. Seminaries in general are struggling to recruit new students. And many of the students they do enroll are far older than was typical when I was ordained back in 1981. This of course means that many of our more recent seminary graduates will only be in the ministry for a limited number of years.
4. The rate at which our culture is becoming secularized is only increasing; this directly impacts how many people feel "called" to the ordained ministry. Consider this: Pew Research recently reported that millennials — most American adults under 40 — are the first American generation where those identifying as Christians are in the minority.
5. And, as reported by *Wall Street Journal*, the pandemic has contributed to the number of ordained clergy who are leaving the ministry. This includes Boomer pastors who, due to pandemic-related stress and congregational conflict, are retiring earlier than they had originally planned.



Then, in addition to the shortage of available pastors, the local church, more often than not, is struggling. Thom Rainer is a pastor who is CEO of Church Answers, a large congregational coaching ministry. Church Answers describes itself as "the largest online community in the world for practical advice on church growth." In a recent podcast Pastor Rainer stated that, even before the pandemic, 90% of American churches were experiencing a decline in worship attendance. He also claims that the pandemic has accelerated that rate of decline by three years.

So what can congregations do to address these challenges? And especially smaller congregations? Because the clergy supply crisis presents particular challenges for small churches, and the hard truth is that the shrinking number of available pastors will tend to accept calls to mid-sized and larger congregations.

At this point I want to focus on those of you who attend smaller churches; let's say churches with 100 or fewer members. I pick this dividing line because Mike Bradley, the Service Coordinator for the LCMC, just revealed that over 500 LCMC churches in the U.S. have 100 or fewer members. (This out of a total of 786 LCMC churches in the United States.) It is my conviction that with the combination of your congregation's size and the clergy supply crisis, *it is time for your lay leaders to consider and plan for a future where you might not be able to find and call a seminary-trained, experienced pastor.* And that might even be the case whether or not you have the financial resources to *pay* a full-time pastor's salary with benefits.

Continued on [page 9](#)

Communications to ELCA ...

Continued from [page 1](#)

Dear Bishop Eaton –

I was astounded to learn that it took you over three weeks to send a communication to the ELCA Latino Ministries Association regarding the termination of call of the mission developer for the Mision Latina Luterana in Stockton, California.

You have said that, as presiding bishop, you have no authority to interfere with the actions of synodical councils and synodical bishops, but I do not understand why it would take you over three weeks to reach out to the Latino community and acknowledge their confusion and pain over the loss of their pastor.

When the verdict regarding Kyle Rittenhouse was announced, you almost immediately had a response and you spoke critically of the judicial system, as if you knew the facts of the case far better than those who were involved day after day with the case.

In your communication on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, you did honor the veterans of World War II, and you did honor the memory of those who died in that conflict, including at Pearl Harbor, but you could not let it stay at that. You also had to speak against racism.

There are plenty of issues, situations, and problems that need your attention in the organization over which you have oversight and responsibility. I would suggest that you clean up your own house before you claim to be able to speak helpfully, insightfully, and authoritatively concerning matters over which other people have oversight and responsibility.

As one who has a deep love for Jesus,

Dennis D. Nelson
Retired ELCA Pastor

I purposefully signed the letter as “Retired ELCA Pastor” rather than “Executive Director of Lutheran CORE,” hoping that might increase the chances of my receiving a response. So far it has not.

* * * * *

WOKE FRAGILITY

My letter to a synodical bishop had to do with

that synod’s joining with the ELCA in making a Statement of Land Acknowledgement as a primary part of all of its communications.

First, some background information.

The February 2022 issue of ELCA Worship News contains a section entitled “Resources for Land Acknowledgement.” A link to that section can be found [here](#).

Reading that section raised several questions in my mind as I realize that the ELCA Church-wide offices on Higgins Road, as well as the offices of all sixty-five of the ELCA synods, as well as all of the ELCA congregations, are all located on land formerly occupied by native Americans.

First, the whole matter of land acknowledgement must be very important to the ELCA because its Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People commits the ELCA “to begin the practice of land acknowledgements at all expressions of the church.” The importance of this practice is also displayed in the fact that the introductory letter suggests all kinds of occasions and ways in which land acknowledgement statements could be used – read aloud at the beginning of every worship service, printed at the top of worship bulletins, used to create outdoor signage and a plaque for the narthex, and used at the beginning of zoom meetings.

Second, this practice is clearly based upon the premise that all land in the United States is stolen land. The resource document states, “All land is Indigenous land.” The introductory letter states, “A land acknowledgement is a ritual intended solely to show gratitude to the land and acknowledge the original and Indigenous peoples from whom the land was stolen.” (A whole other issue is the fact that I do not know what it means to show gratitude to the land – not gratitude for the land, gratitude to God for creating the land and making it a good land, or gratitude to those who developed the land, but gratitude to the land.)

Third, both the introductory letter and the resource document clearly state that the practice of land acknowledgement is only a first step – and an easy first step. The introductory letter says, “This is arguably one of the easier commitments.” The resource document adds, “We understand that this protocol is only a first step and that, as we venture into

We hear a lot about “white fragility.” I think instead we should hear about “woke fragility.”

Continued on [page 7](#)

Communications to ELCA ...

Continued from [page 6](#)

the world, we must learn more, do more and realize healing and justice for the Indigenous peoples whose lands we now occupy.”

In my communication to this synodical bishop, I summed up the content of the introductory letter and resource document. I then made the following three observations. I believe that this issue is even more significant and poignant in light of the fact that the congregations in that synod are significantly diminished, the giving from the congregations to the synod has dropped significantly in the past decade, the annual spending plan for the synod is much greater than the anticipated income, and a significant part of the shortfall is made up from funds obtained by selling the properties of closed congregations. Here is what I wrote to that synodical bishop.

“First, if the synod feels that the land now occupied by its offices and congregations is stolen land, then the synod is morally obligated to return to native American people at least the value of the land whenever a congregation is closed and the property is sold. If the synod does not do that, then the synod is clearly being complicit in the stealing of land from Indigenous persons. The word ‘complicit’ is a word that the ELCA uses often to describe those whose attitudes and actions it is critical of. Before I accuse someone else of being complicit, I need to ask whether there is any area where I am being complicit.

“I can certainly understand the synod’s not returning also the value of the buildings, because the buildings were not present when the land was stolen. But if the synod does not want to be complicit in the stealing of land by holding onto the value of stolen land, and for the synod to act in a way that is consistent with its values, statements, and priorities, then the synod would need to return to Indigenous persons at least the value of the land.

“Second, if the synod chooses to remain complicit in the stealing of land, how could the synod have the integrity and moral authority to have a statement of land acknowledgement as part of its communications and worship services? Having such a statement without also returning to Indigenous people the value of stolen land gives the impression that the synod is in favor of justice only if being in favor of justice does not cost the synod anything.

“Third, if the synod chooses to remain complicit in the stealing of land, how could the synod have the integrity and moral authority – along with the ELCA – to advocate for reparations for people of African

descent?

“I am reminded of what John the Baptist said to those who came out to hear him and be baptized by him. ‘Bear fruit that befits repentance.’

“When the ELCA, including the (Synod), calls upon our country to repent of past evils and injustice, then the ELCA, including the (Synod), also needs to think through whether there are any ways in which they are being complicit in perpetuating those evils and injustices.

Blessings in Christ,
Dennis D. Nelson

I am constantly amazed over how arrogant, self-righteous, ungrateful, and inconsistent the “woke” agenda actually is. You take what they say, bring it out to its logical conclusions, apply their standards and criteria to them, and it collapses. We hear a lot about “white fragility.” I think instead we should hear about “woke fragility.”

Spineless Christianity

Continued from [page 2](#)

Like the Church today, they all no doubt had bouts of uncertainty, seeing an easy road to travel through compromise...if they only gave in just a little. But as we all know and have seen, especially in various denominations, when you give an inch, soon you will be giving up a mile. Perhaps those early Christians failed more than we realize as did those who lived during decades of swelling Church numbers in the 1940’s and 50’s. But they had a burly backbone, a strong spine.

We also know that we share in the same faith, the same baptism, the same Lord: Jesus who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Jesus, the Lamb of God, has conquered the world (John 16:33) and will return to this weary world soon (Revelation 22:20). And Jesus has promised that even the gates of hell will never overwhelm the Church (Matthew 16:18), the “pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Because of Jesus and Him alone, can we have a spine capable of withstanding any backlash against the Church from wherever it may come. Because of Jesus can we witness to the truth of God “with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience” so that if we are slandered, those who “revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Peter 3:15-16).

The NALC Pastors' Conference: One of the Best

Continued from [page 4](#)

tend these summer theological institutes end up entering the ministry in their respective religious communities. With the growing shortage of ministers in the Lutheran Church today, institutes like NEXUS are extremely valuable.

In the summer of 2022, there are twenty-five spots for young people at NEXUS. Bishop Dan Selbo challenged the pastors at the conference to make sure that there will be fifty attending NEXUS in 2023. *I was so impressed that I rushed home and nominated a young person from my congregation for this year's institute.*

The second break-out session that I attended featured Pastor Dave Keener. It was an introduction to the newest phase of the Life-to-Life Discipleship. I was excited to hear that the NALC is developing its own resources for Discipleship ministry. These resources will be tailored specifically for Lutheran congregations. The first will be a 24 week-long introductory curriculum on discipleship. Those resources are meant to be available on the NALC website in the near future.

Of course, like most conferences, there was good fellowship. I was able to reconnect with old friends and make new friends. I also enjoyed visiting my hometown of Orlando, where I was born in 1964. As I returned home, I was grateful for the six insights that I shared above. They either confirmed what I am already doing or gave me new areas of ministry to explore. If you have never been to the NALC Pastors' Conference before, I encourage you to attend next year. I also encourage you to get in touch with the speakers above if you want to learn more about what they shared.

Video Book Reviews—"A Harvest of Lutheran Dogmatics and Ethics"

Lutheran CORE continues to provide monthly video reviews of books of interest and importance. Many thanks to Steve Shipman, NALC pastor and former director of Lutheran CORE, for his review of the book, [A Harvest of Lutheran Dogmatics and Ethics: The Life and Work of Twelve Theologians 1960-2020](#) by Carl Braaten.

As Pastor Shipman points out, Carl Braaten personally knew or knows all of the people whose life-work is described in this book. His concern is that the contributions of this notable group may be forgotten rather than remembered and built upon.

Steve tells us, "The names are a Who's Who of Lutheranism in my lifetime. If you want to understand the Lutheran theological giants of the generation immediately preceding or including most of us, this book is an excellent place to begin. I would wish that it would be required reading for anyone preparing for parish ministry."

Carl Braaten shared, "During the pandemic lockdown in our community, I could think of nothing better to do than write a book." Steve Shipman commented, "We can hope that there are many more books to come from his keyboard and that God will continue to bless him with health, strength, and wisdom."

This review, as well as seventeen others, have been posted on our YouTube channel. A link to the channel can be found [here](#).

PLAYLIST

If you would like to watch Lutheran CORE's playlist of all of our video book reviews, click [here](#), then scroll down and start the video by selecting the play button or click on the three vertical lines near the top right of the first video to select a new video from the list that will pop up.



The Clergy Availability Crisis: What are the Implications for Your Congregation's Future?

Continued from [page 5](#)

So assuming your church leaders are ready to address this possible future scenario — a future where you are unable to find a competent, ordained pastor — what then? Well *then it will be time to identify one or two active members whom you can convince to become ministers-in-training; ministers who will eventually serve your congregation.* Here are some of the steps that would be involved in pursuing this ministry strategy:

- A. Most important, identify the *right person!* (Lots of prayer will help.) The “right” person would be someone who is already known as a congregational lay leader and as someone with the personal integrity, faith commitment, and skills to become your future minister.
- B. Next would be the challenge of convincing that individual to say “yes” to this ministry opportunity.
- C. Offer, as a congregation, to pay for online seminary classes to help your future “minister” prepare to serve your members. These classes, taken on a very part-time basis, would not necessarily lead to ordination. (That would be up to your “candidate.”) But either way, they would give this person the tools to better serve your congregation in the future. The LCMC has a list of recommended Christian seminaries; all of which offer most of their courses online. Just one example: St. Paul Lutheran Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, offers an occasional six-week preaching class for just \$50. These seminaries also, of course, offer courses in biblical studies and Lutheran theology.
- D. Determine your “minister’s” eventual job description; including whether it would be part-time or full-time. Note: If you assume it needs to be full-time you just might be ruling out the best person for your future ministry. Be open to the possibility that your minister-in-training would always be bi-vocational, that is, serving your church while continuing with his or her secular employment. Also, this job description needs to be based on a combination of your congregation’s needs and your future minister’s ministry gifts.

- E. Eventually determine this person’s length of service once he or she is officially employed. One year, two years, three years?
- F. At the appropriate time decide on the number of working ministry hours in a typical week, and the financial compensation.
- G. Identify a mentoring pastor who will have an on-going, informal “coaching” relationship with your minister-in-training. This could be either an LCMC or NALC pastor serving in your community or region. Or, a Congregations in Transition coach could serve in this role by offering online coaching and emotional/spiritual support for your minister-to-be.

It would be presumptuous of me to speculate any further on what this ministry strategy might look like for your congregation. There are simply too many possible scenarios, which would be and should be based on what is unique about your congregation’s needs, and your ministry context.

Congregational leaders of smaller churches need to start thinking “outside the box” when it comes to the assumption that viable and vital church ministries always require the leadership of an ordained seminary graduate. Too often smaller churches — when they are unable to find and call a pastor — assume their only options moving forward are to either settle for “rotating,” occasional supply preachers, or to simply shut their doors.

Remember one of the most important lessons from early church history: The Body of Christ need not rise or fall based solely on the presence or absence of ordained pastors to lead a congregation’s ministry. The Apostolic church thrived — often under persecution — *without* the benefit of a professional clergy class. This is about the priesthood of *all* believers, not a priesthood limited to the ordained. Or to put it another way: Sometimes the life and ministry of Christ’s church is simply too important to be left solely to the “professionals.”

Don't Miss Out on Early-Bird Pro Ecclesia Registration

by [Pr. Steve Shipman](#), STS, CCET Executive Director



April 1 is coming, so don't be fooled and miss the end of the early-bird registration rate for our annual Pro Ecclesia Conference.

In case you forgot the details, a group of ecumenical scholars will reflect on the Christian figures from past times who have most greatly influenced them in a positive way and ask the question, "What did these teachers get wrong in the light of what they got right?"

The conference will again be at Loyola University of Maryland in Baltimore, and will begin in the evening of Monday, June 6, 2022, and end before lunchtime on Wednesday, June 8.

You can find full information regarding the speakers and the link to register on our [website \(click here\)](#).

We are often asked about COVID policies for the conference, and we can't answer those questions three months out. We can tell you that the city of Baltimore is loosening their requirements, and Loyola continues to reflect on what will be most responsible for them to do. We will keep you informed as the conference draws closer and more decisions are made. We have no control over these policies.

It looks more hopeful that we might be able to hold our annual banquet, but at this point the university is not able to make a commitment. If we are permitted to have it, all attendees will be invited, and we will ask for an additional voluntary donation for the cost of the meal. All we can say right now is, please bring your checkbook!

Regardless, we encourage you to register now and to share [this link](#) with others who might be interested. It helps us to plan if you register early, and therefore we offer you the conference at a lower cost. We will not be mailing a brochure given issues with the postal service and the costs involved. You can

register online by credit card, or print out the form and mail us a check. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Coming Events

- **Pro Ecclesia Conference** - Baltimore, MD - June 6-8, 2022. Click [here](#).
- **The NEXUS Institute** - Des Moines, IA - June 12-18, 2022. Click [here](#) to register.
- **2022 NALC Convocation** - Virtual event - August 5-6, 2022. Click [here](#).
- **2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly** - Columbus, OH - August 8-13, 2022. Click [here](#).
- **2022 International Luther Congress** - Thousand Oaks, CA - August 14-22, 2022. Click [here](#).
- **LCMC 22nd Annual Gathering and Convention** - Lakeville, MN - October 2-5 2022. Click [here](#).
- **2024 ELCA Youth Gathering** - TBD - Click [here](#).

More events: <http://lutherancore.website/events/future/>

CORE Voice Newsletter

Published by Lutheran CORE;
[Kim Smith](#), Editor

To contact Lutheran CORE, please
email lcrowebmail@gmail.com or
call 1-888-810-4180