

Who Counts and Who Does Not

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



In my letter from the director for December 2022 I wrote about several concerns that arose in my mind as I read a November 16 news release from the ELCA about the November 10-13 meeting of the ELCA Church Council. A link to that letter can be found [here](#). In that letter I said that I would be writing to Imran Siddiqui, vice president of the ELCA, who also serves as chair of the church council. I would be asking him how it was decided that a representative from Reconciling-Works would become an advisory member of the church council and whether any consideration would or had been given to having a representative from a group with traditional views as an advisory member of the church council. Here is the letter which I sent him the morning of December 13. Please note that I also expressed my concern that the ELCA would be committing a massive breach of trust if in the revised human sexuality social statement traditional views on same sex relationships were no longer seen as valid and legitimate and having a place of respect within the ELCA.

Dear Mr. Siddiqui –

Congratulations on your election and thank you for your ministry of leadership within the ELCA. I believe that Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton was absolutely correct - as was described in the November 16 ELCA news release – when she drew attention to the “substantial work

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Jim Nestingen Tribute

by [Pr. Steve Shipman](#), Former Director of Lutheran CORE and Dean of the Atlantic Mission Region of the NALC

I first got to know the name James Nestingen through what I still believe is the best confirmation text ever produced — the first edition of *Free to Be* co-written with Gerhard Førde. (Jim was unhappy with the later revision of it by Augsburg Fortress.)



But while I heard him speak from time to time, the first occasion I spent at length with him was the Lutheran CORE Conference at Lindenhurst, Illinois, on September 28, 2007. Many of Jim's friends and students describe him with the word "prophet," and he was certainly in full prophetic mode at that event regarding the directions the ELCA was taking. The event gathered those of us who would lead the response to the sexuality decisions that would be made a few years later, leading to the change in strategy of Lutheran CORE and the formation of the North American Lutheran Church.

Jim represented a somewhat different version of Lutheranism than I had grown up with in my eastern LCA context, and I found it enlightening and refreshing, not to replace but to supplement the ways I had come to understand the faith. I learned from him to say with regularity, "we sinners," as I would preach and teach. Jim would tell us that we should always listen for a confession in conversations with people. He understood the brokenness of our fallen world, and exulted in the Word of absolution that we dare to speak on the authority of the Son of God Himself.

Not that Jim ever claimed to be anything other than one of "us sinners." And he could sin boldly from time to time. For him, theology was not an abstract intellectual enterprise, but God's life-saving intervention in the world with the Word of Life we are empowered to speak through Jesus. He stood on "grace alone," knowing that even our repentance is God's gift through the Holy Spirit, channeled through the Word and the Sacraments.

Jim was not given to moderation, because his life was a huge love affair with Jesus. He and I had one difficult time when he demanded that Lutheran CORE rescind our invitation to a speaker with whom he had personal and theological conflicts. When we refused, our relationship was tense for a while, but we both moved beyond it. Lovers sometimes over-

react, and Jim threw his whole being into the service of the Lord he loved. He was indeed a jealous lover of the Lord who he knew loved him with the same intensity.

As a speaker, nobody could hold the attention of an audience, lay or clergy, as well as Jim could. His repertoire of Sven, Ole, and Lena jokes along with often-scatological humor (which prevented most preachers from stealing his material) interfaced well with his profound theological insights, always centering on the Word of forgiveness Jesus proclaims through us. His North Dakota Scandinavian farmer persona helped humanize his brilliant teaching, and he could share personal stories of his encounters with real people and how the Word of forgiveness encountered them. Often he and all his hearers were in tears as he recounted these stories, even stoic Germans like me.

I still remember his story of visiting a dying friend, whispering in his ears as he was leaving this life, "The next voice you hear will be Jesus." That is how real and concrete Jim's faith was, and I know I became a better pastor because of my contacts with him.

Jim has been bothered these last years by painful ailments, and while he limited his travel he still managed to make it to NALC conferences and events, and to serve on our Commission on Theology and Doctrine (CTD). He arrived early in Dallas for the CTD meeting in November as my deans' meeting was ending, so we got to spend a little time conversing together. While he was in obvious pain, somehow he found a way to fly there and continue to offer his guidance to the church body he helped bring into existence. I remember with thanksgiving these last conversations I had with him until we two redeemed sinners meet again around the Throne.



Pr. Jim Nestingen

His death was sudden, and there was evidently nobody to whisper in his ear, "The next voice you hear will be Jesus." But Jim already knew the voice of the Good Shepherd whom he loved and served so faithfully, and he surely knew Who was welcoming him into his heavenly home.

The Potency of Missional Engagement

by [Pastor K. Craig Moorman](#), board member of Lutheran CORE and NALC pastor of River's Edge Ministries, Mt. Airy, MD

Dear Friends—

A most happy and blessed New Year to you and yours.

No doubt, many of us reading this article can readily receive such a greeting; but, for some, these words may be welcomed but not so easily received or even believed. This may include an individual who just discovered they have a very difficult illness to contend with or maybe it's a husband who lost a beloved wife of 35 years or one trapped in overwhelming bondage to an addiction or perhaps it's a family who experienced a natural catastrophe and lost *everything*. The list goes on. When facing such a reality, it can be much more difficult to receive a word of blessing, while happiness is illusive at best. This is precisely when the Community of Faith, the Body of Christ, is called to rise up and consider the potency of missional engagement. It is helpful for us, as brothers and sisters who are bound up in Christ, to be aware of those who are struggling and then allow the Great Commandment to settle deeply into that place of compassion: “... *and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*’ The second is this, ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’” (Mark 12:30, 31) This will necessarily push us towards mission which can quickly *and graciously* re-prioritize the living out of these most challenging days.

In 1 Corinthians 12, St. Paul paints a beautiful and profound picture of what it means to be a community of faith and concludes with these striking, life-altering words: “*If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*” (v. 26) The writer of Hebrews says it a bit differently in 12:12, “... *lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.*” Again, we can see our ‘calling’ to come alongside and help lift up and literally *be* the hands and feet of Jesus, especially for those whose hands are failing and knees and feet weak. This is what it means to be fully engaged in mission.

This brief article is an invitation for you to join us in an upcoming missional event or better yet, and more practically speaking, connect with a local church body and engage in mission ... in your own



backyard! Prayerfully consider engaging—Not only will it help bring restorative healing to any given situation *but you* will experience restoration and healing as well. Just engage.

Last year, I wrote an article for the July CORE Voice Newsletter (click [here](#)) regarding the power and potency of such missional engagement. It is there that I describe a particular outreach called *City Mission (CM)* which was birthed out of *Cross Country Mission (CCM)*. Dennis (Nelson) asked that I write this article to share just a bit about our upcoming *CCM*. Again, though I'm inviting you to participate in this event, more so I'm inviting you to simply participate in mission at some level, somewhere.

On January 30th through February 4th (click [here](#) for link with more details), *River's Edge Ministries* will be headed to Pine Island, Florida, for our eleventh disaster relief/rebuild effort. We are a multi-generational group of ordinary people coming together from many denominations to be His Church. Our fervent hope is to be a Christ-centered *family on mission* and avail ourselves to the needs of those who were severely impacted by Hurricane Ian, causing over 150 fatalities in Cuba, Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia; but most of the deaths were in Florida. Ian also caused catastrophic damage with losses estimated to be more than \$50 billion. The cities of Fort Myers Beach and Naples were particularly hard hit. Millions were left without power in the storm's wake, and numerous inhabitants were forced to take refuge on their roofs. Sanibel Island and Pine Island

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The Need for More Lay-led Lutheran Congregations

by [Pr. Don Brandt, *Congregations in Transition*](#)



It has, for decades, been an incredibly unfair reality faced by smaller rural and inner-city congregations. In a denomination that has traditionally insisted that viable, healthy congregations must be led by a resident, ordained pastor, the number of pastors willing to serve in these settings have often been “few and far between.” Even back when there were an abundant number of seminary graduates, the majority of those graduates often showed little or no interest in serving churches located in such communities. And this unfortunate attitude was not limited to graduating seminary students looking for a first call; it was also common among already ordained, serving pastors looking for their *next* call.

So what did these rural and inner-city congregations do when even new seminary grads had little interest in their calls? They waited. And they knew that eventually—if they waited long enough—their bishop or district president would find them a new graduate whom they could “take under their wing” and train. Unfortunately, as soon as these first-call pastors were “trained” they would usually move on, within two or three years, to a larger church in a suburban setting. Then the congregation’s pastoral search process would begin once more.

It used to be true—decades ago—that there was still an abundant supply of seminary graduates coming through the “pipeline.” As a result, the national Lutheran church bodies could continue to insist—or at least imply—that healthy and viable congregations were, by definition, led by an ordained pastor. But here we are in 2023. And unlike decades back, there are far fewer seminary graduates; Boomer pastors have already or soon will be retiring; and smaller rural congregations are more often than not located in declining communities. (Communities where the median age of their residents—and the congrega-

tion’s members—is in the late 50’s or 60’s.) As a result, that traditional Lutheran ministry model—that the only viable congregation is one that can find and call an ordained pastor—simply has to change. Unfortunately many of these congregations have been taught the false dichotomy that unless they can find and call an ordained pastor they might as well close their doors.

And that false dichotomy is not consistent with either the New Testament understanding of the church, nor with Martin Luther’s teaching regarding the priesthood of *all* believers.

Tragically most Lutheran church bodies have failed to adequately model or advocate for intentional, long-term lay-led congregational ministries when there is no reasonable expectation that a resident pastor will ever be “called and installed.” These congregations need a third option; not just the choice between an unending pastoral search process or closing their doors. That “third option” is to become a truly lay-led congregation; a priesthood of believers not just in theory, but in terms of ministry practice.

These congregations need a third option; not just the choice between an unending search or closing their doors.

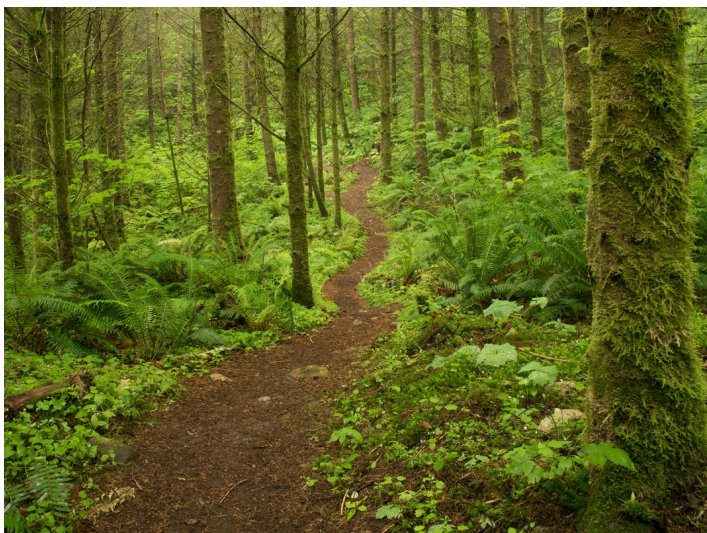
Here is the stark truth of what is happening “out there” among many of our smaller congregations: They have been looking for a pastor for *years*. In fact, some of them have gone three, four or more years without a resident pastor. The longer they assume that such a pastor is “their only hope,” the more likely they will not survive as an organized faith community. And they need to know that at least until the last Boomer pastor retires in the 2030’s, the number of pastoral vacancies will only grow, and grow dramatically.

Finally, these churches need to know that *the work of the Holy Spirit in congregational life and ministry is not dependent on the leadership and presence of a resident, ordained seminary graduate*. This was true in the time of the early Apostolic church almost 2,000 years ago, and it is still true today.

“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” 1st Peter 2:4-5 (NIV).

Better Call Saul: Discernment at Damascus

Pastor Jeff Morlock is Director of Vocational Discernment at the [North American Lutheran Seminary](http://www.northamericanlutheran.edu). He may be reached at jeff.morlock@thenals.org.



Ananias (not Sapphira's husband, but the other Ananias) is an obscure figure in the New Testament. He appears only twice, for a total of eight verses. Yet Ananias is much more than the answer to a Bible trivia question. The Lord used this ordinary man to change the world in unfathomable ways. His story teaches us to listen for God's call, discern our next assignment, and discover the astounding impact that obedience can have.

When God called him, Ananias' spiritual resume was a blank sheet of paper. Yet he was exactly the kind of person that God delights to use. Over and over, the Holy Spirit calls imperfect people with hang-ups, doubts, questions, and often, a rocky past (or present) to do His work and proclaim His Word. What these Biblical characters, from Aaron to Zerubabel, have in common is that when the Spirit of God nudged them and the voice of God came to them, they replied as Ananias did, *"Here I am, Lord."*

So what did Ananias hear God say? *"Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight."* (Acts 9:11b-12 ESV). The obedience that the Lord asks of us is often counterintuitive. It is rarely easy, but it ends up being one thread in the glorious tapestry He is weaving. We may or may not get to glimpse the finished project, but if God is calling you, then the role you play in God's plan will be important.

Yet not every thought and idea is from the Lord. So how will you know? Ananias had to discern his

call. To discern means to perceive, recognize, or distinguish. Although filled with fear and apprehension, Ananias sought clarity regarding God's will. Discernment is faith seeking understanding; not stalling indefinitely but listening for further direction and confirmation. So, Ananias asks, "Ugh, Lord, isn't Saul dangerous?" And the Lord revealed His plan: *"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."* (Acts 9:15b-16 ESV).

That sounds consistent with the witness of the Scriptures, which is another aspect of discernment. Beginning with Abraham, God gave His name to Israel in order to bless the nations of the world. And Jesus himself not only suffered for the sake of God's mission, but declared, "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). Biblically, to bless others and to suffer for the gospel are part of every disciple's calling.

God is always calling you to join him in his work. To discern a particular course of action, then, means asking certain questions. Does it take me out of my comfort zone? Does it require sacrifice? Is it consistent with Scripture? Does it sound like Jesus? If the answers are "yes," then it's likely from the Lord.

But there's one more question. What do other believers think about it? Ananias stepped out in faith and discovered that Saul was indeed at the home of Christian disciples who had taken him in and cared for his needs. With this confirmation, Ananias laid his trembling hands upon Saul, who had been blinded days earlier when he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus.

In that moment, God used Ananias to heal Saul, who regained his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit. Presumably, it was also Ananias who then had the privilege of baptizing the man who would go on to write two thirds of the New Testament! And Saul, who discerned his call to preach the Gospel, became Paul, the chief apostle and church planter for the non-Jewish world!

Although it was God who called Saul, He used Ananias to be part of it. After this brief episode in Acts, we never hear from Ananias again in the Bible. But where would we be without him? Where would

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Global Lutheran House of Studies

[Pastor Richard Blue](#) is a Co-Director of the Global Lutheran House of Study at United Theological Seminary. He is ordained in the NALC, the LCMC, and the Lutheran Orthodox Church.

[Introduction by Dennis D. Nelson](#): Two of the top priorities of Lutheran CORE are the raising up of the next generation of Biblically faithful and Great Commission minded pastors and the nurturing of youth and young adults in the life of Christian faith and following Jesus. In light of the first priority, in years past we have had articles that have featured several schools that are training the next generation of confessional Lutheran pastors. These schools include the North American Lutheran Seminary, the Institute of Lutheran Theology, and Saint Paul Lutheran Seminary. In this issue of CORE Voice we have an article about another such school, the Global Lutheran House of Studies at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. In light of the second priority, we have the first in a series of articles about residential discipleship ministries for young adults. We pray for God's blessings for the Global Lutheran House of Studies as well as for Faith Greenhouse, a ministry of Faith Lutheran Church (LCMC) in Hutchinson, Minnesota.

As the Directors of the [Global Lutheran House of Studies at United Theological Seminary \(UTS\)](#) in Dayton, Ohio (established in 1871), we are honored to announce the launch of a new program for pastoral ministry formation in the Lutheran Tradition that is deeply committed to The Historic Faith and Church Renewal. At UTS, we are motivated by the belief that the church is essential to the renewal of the world and the development of disciples of Jesus Christ. We are dedicated to empowering faithful and fruitful Christian leaders to fulfill this mission.

One way we aim to honor the legacy of Martin Luther is by emphasizing confessional Lutheran teachings and the importance of upholding and declaring the Lutheran Confessions. We believe that the church has a responsibility to remain true to its Lutheran distinctives and to pass on the rich heritage of the Lutheran tradition to future generations. This includes offering classes on the Lutheran Confessions and their relevance for practical ministry, as well as opportunities for students to learn from and connect with scholars and leaders from various Lutheran traditions.



The Global Lutheran House of Studies (GLHS) also supports its vision and goal by emphasizing education in global ministry, theology, and global Lutheran traditions. We believe that the church has a duty to confront the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing world, and we are dedicated to providing our students with the skills and knowledge they need to serve as church leaders worldwide. This includes classes on cross-cultural mission, global theology, and the unique Lutheran perspective on ecumenism, as well as opportunities for students to participate in international contextualization trips, mission trips, and internships as required by the programs we offer through UTS.

In addition to our emphasis on confessional Lutheran teachings and global mission, we are also committed to academic excellence and providing our students with a high-quality education. The Association of Theological Schools accredits United Theological Seminary, which includes The Global Lutheran House of Studies, and we are dedicated to helping our students achieve academic and professional success. We offer a range of educational programs and resources, including master's degrees (M.A., Masters in Christian Ministry, Masters of Theology, MDiv, MDIV/MBA), doctorate (DMin), certificates (Lutheran Ministry and others), and continuing education programs. United students can study in resident, hybrid, Live-online, or virtual courses.

As Directors of the Global Lutheran House of Studies, we are dedicated to our students' success and

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Introducing Faith GreenHouse

[Dave Wollan](#) serves as pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, MN. Dave and his wife, Andrea, are proud parents of four children.



More than an internship, a community for leadership formation!

Faith Lutheran Church, in Hutchinson, MN, is excited to be launching a new initiative to address the need for future leaders of the Lutheran church. Because our old leadership-training institutions can no longer be trusted, and because many of the new online institutions are not as ideal for young interested leaders, Faith Lutheran is cultivating an environment and community for learning and formation.

I have a gifted daughter who is about to graduate from college and is interested in pursuing a Master of Divinity degree. But where can she go to get that degree? Our old Lutheran institutions are no longer truly Lutheran, and while the new online seminaries are great, she hardly wants to get her M-Div. while living in her parent's basement! We need to cultivate quality learning environments, opportunities, and communities that will attract and accommodate young seminary students and other young adults interested in congregational ministry. Our friend, Pastor Nathan Hoff, has one such intern community at Trinity Lutheran in San Pedro, CA, and Faith Lutheran is now creating another in big-town rural Minnesota.

Faith Lutheran began to aggressively pursue this vision in the summer of 2021. We challenged the congregation to give towards the initiative and received \$75,000! Then, after a Sunday morning update on the vision, a member was so inspired that he and his wife donated \$100,000 to help secure housing. The Lord continued to move this last summer, when an old home a block-and-a-half away

from the church came up for sale. We presented our vision to the sellers and were able to purchase the house for \$20,000 less than the list price! We have named the house "The Ansgar House," after the Apostle to the North and the patron saint of Denmark. Recently, a group of young adults have started gathering there every Thursday night for food, fun, Bible study, and worship.



Pr. Dave Wollan

We have a house. We have a young adult community. And we have a plethora of opportunities for aspiring young adult leaders to plug into! Now we are praying for the Lord to call some interns!

Faith Greenhouse is an intentional intern community. An opportunity for young adults to enjoy intentional Christian community with one another, plug into a thriving confessional Lutheran congregation with a large variety of ministries, and explore how they are gifted for ministry. Interns receive free housing for 20-25 hours/week of church engagement. Interns will be mentored in theology and ministry, and will gain valuable experience and guidance in pastoral, children's, youth, seniors, and worship ministry plus much more. The internship is designed to run September through May, with a summer option.

**We are praying
for the Lord to
call some interns!**

Are you, or someone you know, interested or do you have questions? Please contact me at davidw@faithlc.com. You can also support this ministry financially by sending gifts to Faith Lutheran Church, 335 Main St S, Hutchinson, Mn, 55350.

*The house with the green roof above is a stock photo.

Video Ministries—January 2023

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



[Here](#) is a link to our YouTube channel. In the top row you will find both our Video Book Reviews as well as our CORE Convictions Videos on various topics related to Biblical teaching, Lutheran theology, and Christian living. You will find these videos in the order in which they were posted, beginning with the most recent. In the second row you will find links to the Playlists for both sets of videos. This month we want to feature a CORE Convictions video by NALC pastor Tim Hubert.

“INTERIM MINISTRY” BY PASTOR TIMOTHY HUBERT

Many thanks to NALC pastor Tim Hubert for his very wise and insightful video on interim ministry. A link to his video can be found [here](#).

Pastor Hubert has been ordained for forty years. For twenty-five years he served in regular calls; for fifteen years he has served various interim assignments. He has seen and experienced both kinds of situations - when a very beloved pastor leaves as well as when a pastor in a very troubled situation leaves.

Tim describes three questions that congregations will have regarding the new interim pastor –

- 1) Can we trust the interim pastor? Including, Can we trust the interim pastor to love us in the way our former pastor loved us?
- 2) Will the interim pastor stay long enough - until we are ready to call a new pastor? Church councils want a seamless transition in ministry.
- 3) Will the congregation allow itself to love the interim pastor, knowing that the interim pastor will be with them only for a short time?

He also lists three expectations that interim pastors have -

- 1) To be treated fairly and honorably. The congregation needs to remember that the interim pastor did not cause the former pastor to leave.
- 2) To be paid a fair and honorable salary. While some congregations will try to save money at the expense of the interim pastor, Pastor Hubert be-

lieves that the interim should be paid the same as the previous pastor. Otherwise, the congregation could be in for a real shock when they learn that they may need to pay their next pastor more than they had paid the previous pastor.

- 3) That the congregation will trust the process. Losing a pastor is a grief process – both when the former pastor was loved and when it was a troubled situation. All change creates pain. Even good grief can take up to two years to heal.

Tim recommends that a congregation have an interim for one to two years. In situations where there has been significant conflict, it can take longer to begin the process of healing. It is a good sign of healing when members are returning to worship and are becoming involved once again.

Tim’s closing advice is –

- Pray for interim pastors – there are fewer and fewer of them.
- Thank the Lord when He provides you with an interim pastor.
- Thank the Lord that He already knows and has chosen your next pastor.
- Remember that the Lord is in charge. As Jesus said in Luke 12: 32, “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”

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charged to the (ELCA Church Council) by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly” and when she said that the work done by the Council now will “have a significant effect on this church.”

I am writing because of my deep concern over two of the bullet points under the section entitled “In other actions” in the November 16 news release regarding the recent meeting of the Church Council.

Under the second bullet point it says that the Church Council has “scheduled for 2024 the initiation of a task force for reconsideration of the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*.”

I know that this process, as directed by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly, will include a reconsideration of the whole concept of bound conscience. I realize that those who all along have been driving for the elimination of bound conscience were correct in determining that the time had come when they would have more than enough support to pass this kind of a motion, but still, if this action is taken and the provision for bound conscience is eliminated, it will be nothing less than a massive breach of trust on the part of the ELCA against those within its community who hold traditional views. It will call into question whether the ELCA can be trusted on anything if it cannot be trusted to keep this promise to honor traditional views and those who hold them. This is a promise the ELCA made in order to gather enough support to get the social statement approved. Eliminating bound conscience will call into question the ELCA’s claim to have the moral integrity and authority to criticize other organizational entities for not keeping their promises – such as the way the ELCA criticizes the U. S. government for not keeping its promises to Indigenous persons – if the ELCA does not keep its promises.

And then under the sixth bullet point it says that the Council “adopted a continuing resolution establishing council advisory members to include . . . a representative of Reconciling Works.”

As I understand it, until and unless it is revised and/or replaced, the 2009 *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* social statement still represents the ELCA’s official position and policy on same sex relationships. This document describes four positions, which people within the ELCA hold “with conviction and integrity” (p. 20). It states, “This church, on the basis of ‘the bound conscience,’ will include these different understandings and practices within its life as it seeks to live out its mission and ministry in the world” (p. 19).

At this time traditional views on same sex relationships are still recognized as legitimate and valid and having a place within the ELCA. Therefore, why is there not also consideration being given to having a representative from a group with traditional views as one of the advisory members of the Church Council?

If the Church Council were to say that there are just too few people remaining within the ELCA who hold traditional views to have an advisory member with traditional views, then I would see the Council as doing two things. First, it is totally discounting a significant percentage of the actual membership of ELCA congregations. Second, it is ignoring, dismissing, and marginalizing those whom it sees as too small and/or too weak and insignificant a minority, and it is doing so even as the ELCA is constantly and sharply criticizing those whom it accuses of ignoring, dismissing, and marginalizing vulnerable, oppressed minorities.

I also wonder how it was decided that the Church Council would have advisory members, what will be the role and limitations of the role of advisory members, and how it was decided that a representative of Reconciling Works would be one of the advisory members.

I deeply appreciated the response you gave in the ELCA Clergy Facebook group when someone claimed that you had said that Robert’s Rules are oppressive and racist. Because of your response in that situation, I have great hope that you will be a voice for fairness, reason, good sense, and balance.

I look forward to your response.

Blessings in Christ,
Dennis D. Nelson
Executive Director of Lutheran CORE
Retired ELCA Pastor – rostered in the Grand Canyon Synod

* * * * *

That evening I received his response.

Pastor Nelson,
Thank you for your email and expressing your views and concerns. Please allow me to respond to each of your two concerns in order. Regarding the reconsideration of the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*. The vote of the 2022 Churchwide Assembly was overwhelm-

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ingly in support of reconsideration of the social statement. The Church Council is the interim legislative body of the Church between Churchwide Assemblies and is mandated to carry out the wishes of the Churchwide Assembly. The task force would be charged with bringing recommendations on the basis of the approved assembly actions to a future Churchwide Assembly. At that time, that Churchwide Assembly may approve or reject those recommendations. At the November 2022 meeting, the Church Council received the proposal for an editorial reconsideration to be considered first for the human sexuality social statement and then the task force would consider the bound conscience question.

Regarding Church Council Advisory Members, the advisory members were intended to give voice to those who have been historically marginalized within the Church. This allows those groups to have voice, but not vote, in Church Council decisions. This is especially necessary in actions that affect those who have been historically marginalized in our Church. For that reason representatives from ELCA Ethnic Specific Associations and a representative from Reconciling Works were named as Advisory Members to Church Council.

Thank you again for sharing your concerns,

Imran Siddiqui
Vice President
[Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)

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I can think of four things to say in response to his response.

First, I did receive a response, and in a very timely way – within just few hours.

Second, the ELCA feels totally empowered to do what it is doing.

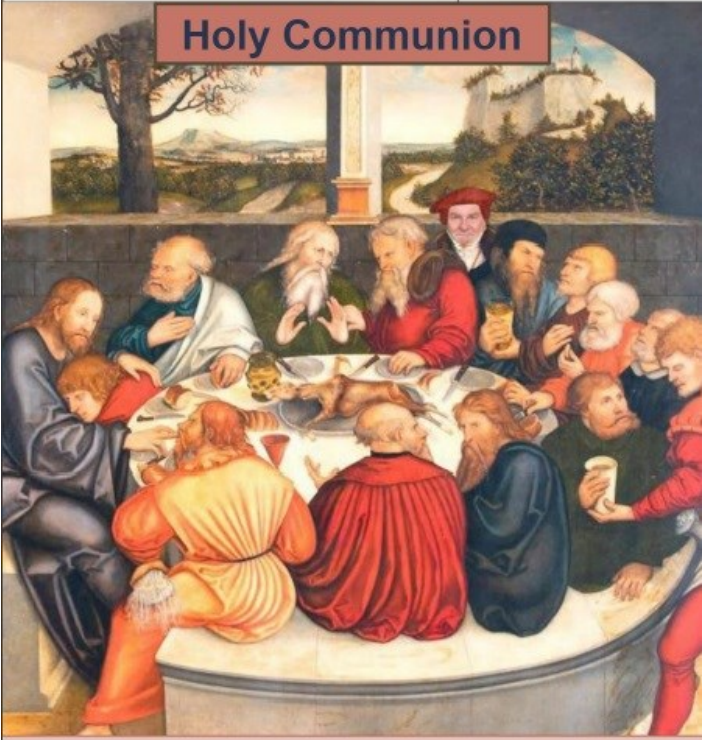
Third, the ELCA sees itself as having no reason to do anything other than what it is doing and no reason to consider any other views.

Fourth, the ELCA is only concerned for those whom it describes as “historically marginalized.” It has absolutely no concern for those who are currently being marginalized. And that total lack of concern is in spite of all that the “currently marginalized” have done in the life of the ELCA and its predecessor church bodies.

Fall 2022 SIMUL

by [Pr. Dennis DiMauro](#), NALC pastor and member of the Teaching Faculty at Saint Paul Lutheran Seminary

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Holy Communion

The Journal of St. Paul Lutheran Seminary

The Fall 2022 *SIMUL*, the Journal of St. Paul Lutheran Seminary, is out! Click on this link to read *SIMUL*: https://issuu.com/stpaulsimul/docs/simul_issue_5_12-15

In this issue, **Roland Weisbrot** starts with an insightful review of the eucharistic debate between Zwingli and Luther, explaining how their Christological views influenced their beliefs about the sacrament. **Andrew Weisner** discusses what the Eucharist means to us as embodied, but nonetheless spiritual beings. And **David Yeago** and **Nathan Yoder** explore Holy Communion as a means of grace in the era of “social distancing.” **Dennis Di Mauro** finishes out this issue with a review of **Bob Benne**’s history of Roanoke College.

SIMUL is available only online, which has two advantages. It allows the seminary to offer the journal **free** to the public, **and** it also allows readers to read the entire journal on a computer, **or they** can also scroll down to the individual articles that can be shared and read on a smartphone!

The Potency of Missional Engagement

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were hardest hit by the storm surge. Clearly, thousands are still in the recovery phase and are only now rebuilding their future. It will be our sacred honor to be part of that rebuilding.



Please note that we are currently working with Mary Bates (NALC Disaster Relief) who has established our base of operation, housing, missional work, etc. (Thank you, Mary, for all of your extraordinary work for the Kingdom of God, especially as it manifests itself in the midst of utter chaos and ruin.) Our plan is to arrive to First Baptist Church on Pine Island by the evening of January 30th. Upon arrival, we'll set up our base camp on the church grounds in their building and outside in the parking lot, etc. We will work from 9:00 until 3:00 on January 31st, February 1st and 2nd, and then depart on February 3rd and arrive back home to MD by February 4th. We will travel just over 1000 miles by car, van, and truck with the hope of bringing a small caravan of hurricane clean-up-rebuilding workers and prayer warriors. Some are even flying in. As alluded to before (cf. Mark 12), our hope is to minister to heart, soul, mind, and strength. There will be a broad range of work tasks, including ongoing clean-up, framing, electrical, drywalling, roofing, meal prep, and on-the-ground intercessory prayer. We are praying for many skilled and unskilled co-laborers, but mostly willing hearts! At the present time, nearly 20 have committed to this event; but, it seems that we'll have closer to 30 brothers and sisters participating in *Cross Country Mission: Pine Island, FL*; again, from 16 to 70+ years of age and at least 7-8 different denominations. And to think that we, a church of the NALC, get to sponsor this event—What an honor and joy!



If by chance you become interested in participating in this effort or have an interest in hosting a similar event in the future, please [register here](#) or contact me directly. But the gentle invitation *and challenge*

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Better Call Saul: Discernment at Damacus

Continued from [page 5](#)

Saul be without Ananias? Where would the Church be without Paul? Clearly, not everyone can be Paul. But everyone can absolutely be Ananias, who learned to discern, and who helped a brother do the same.



Pr. Jeff Morlock

If this passage seems detached from present day reality, let me assure you that, in recently discerning my own call to the North American Lutheran Seminary, God used a number of "Ananias's" to remove scales from my eyes when I was blind to God's plan, and how it fit perfectly with my gifts and passions. Part of my role now is to daily be an Ananias for others who are discerning a call to ordained ministry.

Recently, I spoke with a mid-career disciple named John, who had been praying about pursuing theological education. He told me how God used a stranger to confirm that this was indeed the Lord's plan. John was traveling and when he arrived at the airport, he presented his boarding pass to the airline attendant, who repeated John's full name and exclaimed, "With a name like that, you ought to be a pastor!" As I write this, John is completing his seminary application.

The fact is that God can and will use you as he used the people in my life, that airline attendant in John's life, Saul who became Paul, and Ananias himself. My prayer is that all of us will learn to consistently ask, "God, is there someone you would have me speak with today? Is there somewhere you would have me go? Is there something you would have me do?" Be listening. Be available. Be ready. You never know what difference you will make.

Pastor Jeff Morlock is Director of Vocational Discernment at the North American Lutheran Seminary.



Global Lutheran House of Studies

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helping them fulfill God's mission to create disciples of Jesus Christ and renew the church. We will work closely with them to provide the support and resources they need to succeed in their academics and their current and future vocations, and we encourage them to participate in school life and take advantage of UTS's numerous activities, events, and training opportunities.



Pr. Richard Blue

Overall, we are excited about the impact that the Global Lutheran House of Studies will have on the lives of our students and the church at large, and we are committed to carrying out this vital work in the coming years. We believe that our school is uniquely qualified to help confessional Lutheran students develop their faith and prepare for mission-driven leadership in the Church. For more information, visit <https://united.edu/global-lutheran-house-of-study/>. The first twelve admitted MDiv students receive 50% off tuition, with additional scholarships available for other programs, including the DMin.

The Directors of the Global Lutheran House of Studies at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, are Reverend Dr. Thomas Thorstad STS, Reverend Daniel Landin, and Reverend Dr. Richard Blue, Jr. The faculty and staff serve this house of study, who are all Lutheran pastors within various Lutheran denominations, have been approved and remain in good standing with ongoing approvals as of January 1, 2023. The faculty and staff include Reverend Dr. Douglas Schoelles, Reverend Dr. Wesley Teixeira, Reverend Dr. Rod Ford, Reverend Dr. Thomas Thorstad STS, Reverend Daniel Landin, and Reverend Dr. Richard Blue, Jr.

Image at top of article (left to right): Rev. Richard Blue, Rev. Thomas Thorstad, Rev. Daniel Landin

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The Potency of Missional Engagement

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from this article remains: Simply engage in mission somewhere ... it's right in front of you. I'd like to thank CORE and many individuals for supporting this missional endeavor with resources and encouragement.



Do take care, stay the course, and *keep your eyes on Jesus*, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith.

K. Craig Moorman

River's Edge Ministries, Mt. Airy, MD

(Images: Flickr)

Coming Events

- **Cross Country Mission—Pine Island, FL. January 30th—February 4th.** Click [here](#).
- **2023 Pastor's Conference—San Antonio, TX—** January 31– February 2, 2023. Click [here](#).
- **Pro Ecclesia Conference—Loyola University Maryland, Baltimore, MD.** June 5-7 2023. *Save the date!*
- **NEXUS Institute Summer 2023—Des Moines, IA.** July 16-22, 2023. Click [here](#).
- **ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering—Phoenix, AZ.** July 17-20, 2023. Click [here](#).
- **NALC Lutheran Week 2023—Oklahoma City, OK.** August 7-11, 2023. Click [here](#).
- **LCMC 23rd Annual Gathering & Convention —** St. Charles, MO. October 1-4, 2023. Details TBD.

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

CORE Voice Newsletter

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