

CORE Connection

News from Lutheran CORE

July 2013

ELCA, LCMC and NALC: Can we begin the journey toward forgiveness and reconciliation?

By Rev. Stéphane M. Kalonji, MDiv, MA; Reformation Lutheran Church, New Bern, North Carolina

Within the past decade, hundreds of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations have gone through a process that led either the whole congregation or only a few members to leave and join Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) or the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). In many cases this was a rough and painful experience. There is no doubt that our sinful nature has made its mark on a split that has revealed where we stand with regard to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. In many cases, both those staying in the ELCA and those joining the LCMC and NALC acted toward each other in hurtful ways. These continue to hold us captive to the past and to weaken our witness of the saving Gospel to our communities and the world. Fortunately, we have hope of a better future in Jesus Christ, who has given us the ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are at the heart of the Church's ministry and central in our

proclamation of the Gospel, because Jesus Christ came to forgive sins and reconcile us to God the Father. In 2 Cor. 5:18-19, the Apostle Paul teaches us that God has reconciled us to Himself through His Son, and entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation. God has entrusted this ministry to us not only for those outside the Church but also for us—NALC, LCMC and ELCA—members of the Body of Christ. The sinful attitudes and behaviors that have accompanied our separation call us to exercise this ministry to heal the hurting Body of Christ. In his article "The Father's Ministry of Reconciliation through His Son" (*The Word at Work*, Vol. 2, Easter 2013, p.9), the Rev. Dr. Dan Lioy writes, "The Apostle Paul wanted everyone to know that if they procrastinated—namely, if they delayed in appropriating the Son's work of reconciliation—their souls would be in mortal jeopardy. For this reason, Paul urged them to embrace and act on the message of reconciliation while they still had the opportunity to do so." Since many of our congregations split in sinful terms, we are called by the Word of God to act on the message of reconciliation, and to do so while we

still have the opportunity—before Satan uses time to harden our hearts and while the members who have sinned against each other still live. Our church bodies therefore need to be intentional and, trusting in God the Holy Spirit to lead, begin the journey toward forgiveness and reconciliation.

The journey toward forgiveness and reconciliation is a process. In his book *The Ministry of Reconciliation. Spirituality and Strategies* (1998), The Rev. Dr. Robert J. Schreiter presents what this process entails: "First comes repentance on the part of the wrongdoer, then the victim forgives, and then there is reconciliation. There must be some act of apology or acknowledgement or repentance by the wrongdoer. Guilt must be admitted. Then the victim can summon up forgiveness. And then wrongdoer and victim can be reconciled." (p.64) In my ministry in New Bern, NC, I have used funeral services that brought together members of my congregation and those of the congregation from which we split as an opportunity to share the message of reconciliation. I also invited members of my congregation

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MissionConnect: Church of the Living God – Houston, Texas

By Pastor Steve Shipman, Director, Lutheran CORE

The Church of the Living God in Houston is unlike most of the ministries we are suggesting for your MissionConnect support. It is largely self-supporting, with a significant worship attendance in the 70s or 80s most Sundays and a history of eight years in a rented Presbyterian church building. A few members are professionals, but many have come from China to be near their children, and the currency conversion left them with limited resources.

Lutheran CORE was attracted to include them as one of the ministries we are asking you to support because of their vision: To purchase or build a facility that they will then be able to share with other ethnic ministries in the greater Houston melting pot. Since they are paying rent of \$2,310 per month for their current facility, they would prefer to use this money to finance a building they could use to bring more people to faith in Jesus.

Houston is now the fourth largest city in the United States, and its population is expected to eclipse Chicago and move to number three in the next census. It is growing quickly, with a rich ethnic diversity.

Church of the Living God is composed of members of Chinese ethnicity, mostly from the mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Most of them came to this country to engage in medical research in one of the major Houston facilities. And because of China's one-child policy, many of their parents have followed them here to be near their offspring, since Chinese culture places a high value on children caring for their parents. This has opened a channel for ministry in senior living facilities, where many members state that had they not moved to the United States, they would never have heard the Gospel.

There are approximately 100,000 Asian people in Houston, 40-50,000 of them Chinese. Three Lutheran



The Church of the Living God in Houston, Tex., worships in space rented from a local Presbyterian Church. Their vision is to build a facility that they can share with other ethnic ministries in the greater Houston area.

congregations serve this population—two ELCA plus Church of the Living God (NALC). Pastors of the three congregations cooperate, meet together, and support one another. I was able to enjoy a Chinese buffet lunch with Pr. Joshua Ong of CLG, Prs. Jesse and Joy Pan of the Taiwanese Lutheran Church, and Pr. John Hann of Chinese Lutheran Church. The lunch also gave Joy Pan the opportunity to share with the owners of the buffet, a young couple who are not yet Christians.

The congregation makes effective use of lay leadership, including for the three weekly Bible studies in different senior apartment complexes. Non-Chinese residents are often invited to join the church people to share meals and fellowship.

A retired architect from China, Ranjiang Chan, has drawn plans for one possible facility, although the congregation also is looking at existing buildings. One of the weekly Bible studies is held in the community

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MissionConnect: Church of the Living God

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room of Penelope Senior Apartments, where Mr. Chan and his wife live. She is a leader of the Bible study.

The congregation estimates that they will need between \$450,000 and \$500,000 to secure a facility for outreach and sharing with other missions in the Houston area.

One possible means of financing such a facility would be to ask members, other congregations, and mission-minded Lutherans to loan the congregation a sum of money, perhaps through a bond issue, which would be repaid with interest. This arrangement could be a model for funding mission starts in other places as well. It could be a way that congregations with investment funds can advance the Great Commission while maintaining

their resources, and would provide congregations with a source of funds at less than commercial interest rates so they can devote more to their ministries.

The congregation is warm, exciting, and on fire with the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. They welcome inquiries from potential mission partners, and would be eager to receive visits from supporting individuals and congregations. I can guarantee from personal experience that if you visit them, you won't leave hungry!

I tell congregations I visit that while they may need financial support for a time, the congregations and individuals sending that support need the Spirit and excitement of these congregations. For your own sake as well as the sake of those who can be reached by these

ministries, prayerfully ask how you can participate in MissionConnect. Our goal is that every Lutheran CORE congregation and member be linked to one North American and one international ministry.

Church of the Living God is evidence that God is sending the mission field to us and opening doors to faith in Jesus. As you consider your financial stewardship, remember that as our Lord said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. As you come to know these vital congregations, your own faith and love will grow through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For further information, contact Pastor Joshua Ong, Church of the Living God, 7200 Bellaire Blvd, Houston TX 77074-3508, clgchurch@yahoo.com.



ELCA, LCMC and NALC: Forgiveness and reconciliation

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and the ELCA congregation from which we split to a presentation on forgiveness and reconciliation. Unfortunately, that presentation did not receive the full participation of its intended audience because the members of my congregation were the only ones who attended. This “failure” did not end our efforts to address forgiveness and reconciliation. We will continue to use every opportunity to be ambassadors of reconciliation.

In light of the un-Christian handling of separation that has characterized the process when members of a congregation decide to leave the ELCA and join LCMC or the NALC, our three church bodies are called by the holy Gospel to work, with respect for each group's identity, on forgiveness and reconciliation. Intentional get-togethers between members of congregations that have split, to open themselves up to one another on their experiences of separation, can put us on the road to forgiveness and reconciliation. At the “institutional”

level, our church bodies could form groups of women and men to pray and help congregations to act on the forgiveness and reconciliation ministry which, as St. Paul says, God has committed to us (2 Cor. 5:18). An organization like *Thrivent Financial for Lutherans* also could consider going beyond its current focus, to include the ministry of reconciliation. In many places, *Thrivent* provides a forum that brings together members of the various Lutheran bodies. This forum could be used as an opportunity to address Christian forgiveness and reconciliation.

MissionConnect: Trinity Lutheran Church – Gothenburg, Nebraska, and the Lutheran Church of South Sudan

The Lutheran CORE Steering Committee seeks to remind congregations of the challenge that Lutheran CORE makes to member congregations to support one local and one international mission partner. This article continues the narrative of congregations that are making this kind of direct mission connection.

By Pastor Dennis Nelson

The people of Trinity Lutheran Church of Gothenburg, Neb., feel a close kinship with the Lutheran Christians of South Sudan. Their congregation and the African country have both been in existence for about the same amount of time—around two years—and both were born out of situations of great struggle.

South Sudan is the world's youngest nation. The country gained its independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011, after a civil war that claimed more than 2.5 million lives.

Trinity Lutheran Church was born out of a failed vote to leave the ELCA. Within a week of the vote, a group of people were worshipping at a different location. Pastor Russ Saltzman, Dean of the NALC's Great Plains Mission District, guided them through the process of forming a new congregation. As they continued to organize, they became ready to call a pastor. They called Pastor Jeff Cottingham to be their spiritual leader.

The congregation is affiliated with both Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). They enjoy fellowship and support with the many other LCMC churches in the state of Nebraska, and they appreciate the way in which the NALC was able to help them with the process of incorporating and calling a pastor. According to Pastor Cottingham, with dual affiliation “we get the best of both worlds.”



(L-R): Pastor Jeff Cottingham, Nyanhial Long, Pastor Jordan Long, and Pastor Cathi Braasch. Nyanhial is Pastor Long's daughter; she accompanied him to Trinity.

The congregation currently rents meeting space that is too small for them, so they are in the process of undertaking a building program. They are buying land and have just received the first concept drawings of a possible new building. They know it will be a very expensive venture. The estimated cost for a first-phase multipurpose room came in at over \$1.3 million.

Many congregations facing costs like that would become focused internally on how they could raise the money for their own building. But not Trinity Lutheran.

Pastor Jeff Cottingham met the Rev. Jordan Long, president of the Lutheran Church of South Sudan, at the NALC Convocation in Golden Valley, Minnesota last August. When Pastor Cottingham was packing to go to the convocation, he took along two clergy shirts that no longer fit him. When he heard Pr. Long speak, he heard him tell of the people of South Sudan, who will walk for miles and will meet under trees to worship God and to hear the Gospel. They can put up a church building for only about \$10,000, which includes the supplies to build the building as well as the transportation costs to get the supplies to the building location. In addition, for only about another \$2,400, that church can have a pastor for an entire year. Pastor Cottingham thought, “Wow! Wouldn't it be great if we could do that here?”

Pastor Cottingham found Pr. Long to be a man who had an incredible fervor for the Gospel. He was describing a young nation that is just beginning to form and a Lutheran church that

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MissionConnect: Nebraska and South Sudan churches

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is just beginning to emerge. Pastor Cottingham thought, “What a great opportunity to even have a small part in helping Christians in South Sudan build their church. What a great opportunity to be in on the ground floor of church building.” And when he heard Pr. Long appeal for supplies for the South Sudanese pastors, he knew why he had brought along those clergy shirts that no longer fit.

Pastor Cottingham invited Pr. Long to come to Nebraska the next time he was in the United States. On Sunday, March 3, 2013 Pr. Long worshipped with them and preached at their morning worship service. He told of a church that is nicknamed “The Church Without Walls,” because the people literally gather under the trees for worship each week. He told of a national church that has about as much infrastructure as their entire nation, which is really nothing. As Pastor Cottingham said, “We have more paved roads in rural Dawson County, Nebraska, than the entire country of South Sudan.”



Pastor Jordan Long informing the members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Gothenburg, Nebraska, about the Lutheran Church of South Sudan.

Trinity congregation responded by taking up a special offering during the month of March and by designating their April benevolence to go to the Lutheran Church of South Sudan. They have already sent about \$5,300, which was enough to complete a church building that was already in the process of construction. In addition, they have given two chalices and two patens to be used by the African congregations, even though that gift meant that they would not have their own communion ware.

Pastor Cottingham is in the process of urging the congregations of the Great Plains Mission District of the NALC and their fellow Nebraska LCMC churches to consider designating a portion of their benevolence offerings to go towards the Lutheran Church of South Sudan, or to consider taking a special offering. In a letter to these churches he wrote, “Yes, we need to think about our own building program, and we are working on it, but if our churches band together, we could truly make a huge difference for the Sudanese Christians! Imagine how many church buildings we could provide funds toward!”

Pastor Cottingham also hopes that Trinity congregation will be able to build more of a relationship with the Lutheran Christians in South Sudan than just sending funds. He said, “At some point it would be really exciting to be able to send a delegation from our

congregation to South Sudan to worship with them.” Then he added, “They have an excitement for the Gospel that we want here.”

When I asked him whether it was difficult to get his people to give money for building a church in South Sudan when they needed to build their own building, he replied, “We have a membership that is so focused on discipleship, evangelism, and mission. That is what we are all about. That is what we are called to do—to be selfless and look to the needs of others before our own needs.”

If you and/or your congregation would like to respond to Pastor Cottingham’s challenge, Lutheran Church of South Sudan’s partner, the Institute of Lutheran Theology, will accept checks written to ILT that state “LCSS” on the memo line and forward them to the Lutheran Church of Sudan (Institute of Lutheran Theology; 910 4th Street; Brookings, SD 57006). You also could send support through Trinity Lutheran Church, PO Box 68, Gothenburg, Nebraska 69138. Pastor Cottingham would like to have congregations take up this challenge between now and Reformation Sunday of this year. They are willing to act as an agent for the funds and will send one check, while identifying all congregations who gave as well as the amounts given.

Rebuilt: A Catholic parish's renewal

Who do you think said this? —

“We can call our congregations to the challenge of discipleship and get them growing as fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. We can make our parishes well-springs of vitality and spirit that energize our disciples to help them become more convincing witnesses in the community. We can make an impact on the next generation for Christ.”

This doesn't sound like your father's Roman Catholic priest, does it? But it comes from a book by Fr. Michael White and Mr. Tom Corcoran, as they describe the renewal of Church of the Nativity in Timonium, Maryland, just north of Baltimore.

So why does a Lutheran pastor recommend a book by a Catholic priest heavily influenced by Rick Warren? Three groups of Lutherans will object immediately: those who oppose anything Catholic, those who oppose anything Rick Warren says, and those who are appalled a Lutheran would speak well of either.

Nevertheless, rushing in where angels fear to tread, I recommend to Lutherans (clergy and lay) that you may want to read *Rebuilt* by Michael White and Tom Corcoran, Ave Maria Press, 2013. You can order it online from the church website churchnativity.tv, which

will link you to the usual sources. You might even investigate the site and see how it fits with all your prejudices. I promise that no hands will reach out from your computer and drown you in the Tiber.

My enthusiasm for this book started when a pastor friend invited me to visit Church of the Nativity for their Saturday mass. While there I was sufficiently impressed (though not by everything; I really am a Lutheran and those folks are faithful Catholics) that I bought the book.

The book jacket describes the situation White and Corcoran faced when they reluctantly were tapped to serve as a team leading the parish:

- “1. Our parish wasn't working.
2. We didn't know how to fix it.
3. We can learn from churches that are getting it right.”

Fr. White describes with humor and humility how he realized that many of the younger Catholic dropouts were joining evangelical churches in the area, and he reports his experience as the only Catholic at a Rick Warren seminar. He notes how he came to realize that most of the people at Nativity were consumers of religion, not disciples, and he is honest about the costs of changing the culture. He was

reported regularly to the diocese for being “too protestant,” and a number of large givers left the parish.

But still, can you imagine a Catholic parish that has replaced bingo with tithing? Can you imagine women having a prominent role in their masses and their leadership? Can you imagine a Roman Catholic Church that holds its Christmas and Easter masses at the state fairgrounds to accommodate the crowds?

Over time (and they freely admit their many mistakes along the way), White and Corcoran realized that the key to renewal at Nativity was to reach “Timonium Tim,” a lapsed Catholic who, if he got involved, would bring his family and friends along. Everything was redesigned to bring Tim back a second time and encourage him to find spiritual renewal in Christ.

No, we do not as Lutherans want to adopt many elements of their Roman Catholicism, nor do we want to buy into Warren's decision theology. But the way this leadership team translated some of Warren's best insights into a Catholic context may guide Lutherans in a similar act of translation.

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Rebuilt: A Catholic parish's renewal

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Those who reject Warren or Roman Catholicism and all their works and all their ways will question my orthodoxy and be unimpressed by the book. If you think so, skip it and pray for me.

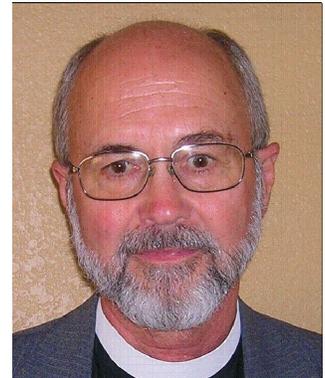
But if you have the humility and open-mindedness to learn from those in different traditions, you might just find helpful insights. Whether you accept Southern Baptist theology or not (and I hope none of us do), God has used Rick Warren to draw many people to Christ, and he is one of the few pastors effectively reaching

unchurched people in North America. And Fr. White and his team have created genuine disciples of Jesus and a vital parish life in a hide-bound, aging and dying setting without selling their soul to consumer religion.

Someday I may get really outrageous and invite Fr. White to address a Lutheran CORE Convocation. Relax; you're safe this year! But you might just learn a few things if you are willing to think exactly as he learned to think, "outside the Catholic box."

God is at work in North America in many settings. Church of the Nativity certainly evidences the

fruit of genuine faith and discipleship. Luther might even appreciate a lot of what he would find there!



Pr. Steve Shipman, director of Lutheran CORE, can be reached at sshipman@lutherancore.org or 570-916-7780.

Lutheran CORE statement on the recent Supreme Court decisions

We were not surprised by the recent decisions of the Supreme Court that struck down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and effectively disenfranchised 7 million California voters, but we are disappointed. Especially disturbing is the language the court's majority used to attack the motives of Congress and by extension those of us who believe marriage is defined by God as the lifelong union of a man and a woman. The majority failed to reflect on the historical fact that constitutional law is rooted to a large extent in biblical moral traditions, but instead it relied on current social fads and philosophies.

Lutheran CORE from the beginning has supported the Christian vision that God's creative purpose is for human community to be founded on the faithful and loving relationship of a man and a woman, who together transmit God's gift of life from generation to generation. Certainly the Bible teaches us to celebrate those, such as

our Lord and the Apostle Paul, who willingly serve God's Kingdom in singleness. We honor those who choose the path of chastity as their response to same-sex attractions.

We call upon our members and congregations to continue to pray for all families and to live faithfully and chastely as married or single disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For now our situation is counter-cultural, but this is not the first time God's people have been called to stand apart from prevailing trends. We need to let our own lives witness to God's plan for humanity, and to love and pray for those who disagree with us.

May God in his mercy open hearts and minds to the beauty of His plan for humanity, and for the proper expression of His gift of sexuality in ways that uplift human dignity and build true community.

What the local church is uniquely equipped to offer

It was a *Mennonite World Review* article that went viral this last March that caught my attention. The article was apparently written by a disillusioned young adult who no longer attends church.

She wrote, “I will be the first to admit that part of the problem with twenty-somethings and church is that we’re bored. We wake up early and put on a skirt only to be met with baby dedications and a sermon that is twenty-seven minutes too long. We sigh over sharing time and roll our eyes at long-winded announcements.”

She continued, “There’s also the whole business of cynicism. We’ve become hardened by youth pastors who turned out to be pedophiles, preachers who turned out to be adulterers, spiritual leaders who give advice on subjects they know nothing about, Christian fundamentalism at its worst.”

The article generated many comments supporting this young woman’s sentiments. But thankfully there were also comments from young adults who are still active in their congregations. My favorite of these: “Who can’t find fault with most any group... Do I get bored at church? Sure, often. So [am I] more insightful, on the ball, committed if I sleep in from church, avoid the hard work of self-examination and building community? ... What better illustration of a self-centered, validated generation than the ennui that avoids church?”

Among the unchurched we are finding an incredible amount of

Pursuing Great Commission Evangelism in Your Congregation

skepticism regarding the institutional church. This includes, of course, those who are not convinced of the truth of the Gospel. However, this group also includes those who self-identify as Christians but have rejected the very concept of “organized religion.”

So what does the local church—your church—have to offer? What can we say in response to this skepticism and cynicism? What can the local church offer that cannot be found through the individualized pursuit of personal spirituality?

These questions are not optional; we need to be prepared to answer. And I’d suggest there are at least *two* responses to these questions. In fact, given some of the current trends in contemporary American society, I would suggest that organized faith communities are more needed and necessary than ever.

The **first**, and most obvious, benefit of belonging to a local church is the difference it can make in lives that—increasingly—are characterized by

loneliness and isolation. I came across a fascinating article entitled, *In a Crisis, Humanists Seem Absent*. In this article by Samuel Freedman, it was pointed out that after the Newtown tragedy this last December the twenty-six families who lost loved ones were supported in very conspicuous ways by local faith communities. Freedman wrote, “This illustration of religious belief in action... an example at once so heart-rending and so affirming, has left behind one prickly question: Where were the humanists?”

Freedman then quoted the humanist Harvard chaplain Greg Epstein. (That’s right, Harvard University has a “humanist chaplain.”) Epstein, author of the book *Good Without God*, said, “It is a failure of community. What religion has to offer to people at moments like this—more than theology, more than divine presence—is community.”

As the saying goes, I couldn’t have said it better myself. Given the realities and trends in contemporary North American society, the kind of community provided by local faith communities is needed now more than ever.

I am astounded at how rapidly the social fabric of our culture seems to be unraveling. Some examples:

- Christian author Charles Arn states, “Nearly every membership-based organization is losing members. Most people still come to faith through a relationship... regardless of generation.”

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The local church

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- U.S. Census data indicates we have now reached the point where over 40% of all babies born in the United States have single mothers.
- The suicide rate among Americans is increasing. Among those thirty-five to fifty-four years of age the rate has increased nearly 30% between 1999 and 2010.
- One in three Americans over forty-five identify themselves as “chronically lonely,” up from just one in five a decade ago.

purpose is far greater than your personal fulfillment.” That might sound counter-intuitive given this column’s emphasis on meeting personal needs through our ministries. However, I feel this particular benefit is central to what the Body of Christ has been called to do. We are here as the Church—in part—to help individuals identify and respond to God’s call on their lives. As I’ve shared more than once with the people of my congregation, this discovery of purpose is about determining where our God-given gifts, our passion, and the world’s need

about care-giving ministries? Your hospitality ministries? And do you provide multiple small groups, which are especially needed in mid-sized and larger congregations? I recently visited with a terminally ill member and heard his amazing testimony of how his small group has helped him face his death.

Regarding the matter of people pursuing God’s purpose for their lives, are you providing multiple opportunities for appropriate volunteer ministries? What about occasional “workshops” where participants can identify their ministry gifts?

Ultimately, part of our outreach to those outside the Body of Christ consists of finding ways we can meet their realized—and often urgent—needs. Only then will many of them give us the opportunity to lead them into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Our outreach to those outside the Body of Christ consists of finding ways we can meet their realized—and often urgent—needs. Only then will many of them give us the opportunity to lead them into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

New York Times columnist (and Christian) Ross Douthat writes, “For many people, the strongest forms of community are still the traditional ones—the kind forged by shared genes, shared memory, shared geography. And neither Facebook nor a life coach nor a well-meaning bureaucracy is likely to compensate for these forms’ attenuation and decline.”

A **second**, perhaps not as obvious, benefit of belonging to a local faith community is the prospect of finding purpose in one’s life.

As Christian author and pastor Rick Warren has said, “It’s not about you. It’s really all about God, and your

intersect. Our congregations should continually be striving to assist members in pursuing God’s purposes through the use of their personal, God-given gifts.

Both these needs—for community and for a sense of purpose—can be met by the local church. These are examples where our biblical mandate and the very real and apparent needs of the unchurched coincide.

So evaluate your own congregation’s ministries. Is there anything more you could be doing to foster a healthy, loving sense of community, especially for visitors and your members who are in crisis? What



Pr. Brandt welcomes comments and questions. Contact him at donb@oursaviorssaalem.org

Social media and the Gospel

Pr. Eric Swensson, our social media consultant, offers some insights on leveraging social media for the Gospel.

Hashtags

Hashtags are nothing but a very clever shortcut into the conversation going on across any given social media. By putting the number sign (#) in front of a word, you will see every instance of that hashtag as well as some of the posts that include that word. This has been used to great effect for a long time on Twitter. Just recently, Facebook adapted it. Go ahead and try it out on both as either a search feature, or to insert yourself into a larger conversation.

There are manifold possibilities for obtaining and disseminating

information with hashtags. With the upcoming 2013 Lutheran CORE and NALC Theological Conference and Convocations in Pittsburgh, hashtags could facilitate information flow during the pre-conference period and disseminate it during the conference itself to those who are unable to be there. For a general hashtag we could use #LCORE. Or add another word to it for topics and themes, such as #LCOREdiscipleship or #LCOREevangelism or #LCOREworship.

Have fun, be creative, and remember that social media is a tool for connections and more effective communication.



Rev. Eric Jonas Swensson works with the Institute of Lutheran Theology in marketing, development and international theological education. The owner of Sound Shore Media, a social media marketing business, he has been using the web to connect with people evangelistically for fifteen years. A historian and a writer, Pr. Swensson can be reached at ejsvensson@gmail.com or 914-235-0361.

2013 Convocation workshops: Exciting opportunities to explore and connect

This year's Lutheran CORE Convocation is just around the corner! The following is a tentative list of workshops and breakout sessions that will take place the afternoon of Tuesday, August 6. The thematic connection of all the offerings is keeping Christ's Great Commission front and center as we mobilize confessing Lutherans for evangelical renewal.

MissionConnect: Giving Goes Both Ways

Pr. Dennis Nelson and Lutheran CORE Missions Team

Building Leaders for a Global Harvest (BLGH)

Dr. Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, The North American Lutheran Church

Resources for Congregational Renewal & Discipleship

Pr. Steve King, General Editor, Sola Publishing, and Bill Oehlschalger, Outreach Director, Lutheran Lay Renewal.

Update on Lutheran Benefits Plan

Verlyn Hahn, Hahn Financial Group

Staying Faithful in the ELCA

Prs. Cori Johnson and Steven Gjerde

Lutheran CORE Outreach to Congregations: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities

Prs. Paul Ullring and Steve Shipman

Upcoming events

August 6, 2013	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Lutheran CORE Convocation, “A Life Worthy of Our Calling,” at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel. Registration fee is \$70.00 and includes lunch. Hotel rate information and registration details available at www.lutherancore.org .
August 6-7, 2013	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Lutheran CORE/NALC Theological Conference, “On Being the Church in These Precarious Times,” at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel. Registration fee is \$115 and includes lunch on August 7. Hotel rate information and registration details are available at www.lutherancore.org .
August 8-9, 2013	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	North American Lutheran Church (NALC) Convocation, “Come to the Water of Life!” at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel. Registration fee is \$95.00 and includes lunch and dinner on August 8. Hotel rate information and registration details are available at www.thenalc.org .
August 12-17	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, “Always Made New: 25 Years Together in Christ.” Details available here.

Now Available

Preaching and Teaching the Law and Gospel of God

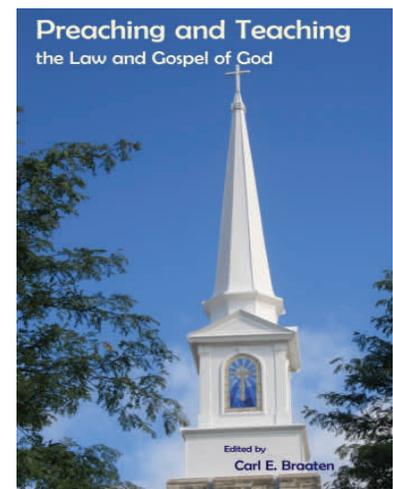
This book collects the papers presented at the 2012 Theological Conference co-sponsored by Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minnesota.

Dr. Carl E. Braaten, who served as the book’s editor, calls the proper distinction between law and gospel in Scripture “the hallmark of classical Lutheranism.” The overall theme of the conference illustrated how pastors need to understand the law/gospel principle and to reflect it in preaching and worship in their churches.

The presentations examine the law/gospel distinction from many angles including:

- Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholic perspectives
- Luther’s understanding of St. Paul and that of current New Testament scholarship
- Historical Lutheran disagreement about the Third Use of the Law
- Implications for preaching and worship

The book is 174 pages and is available from the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau for \$14 plus postage. To order or for more information, go to www.alpb.org or call 607-746-7511.





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Phone: 888-551-7254

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Rev. Carter Askren, editor
editor@lutherancore.org

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