

Grace be unto you from God our father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

It has begun. With a provisional constitution, a one-year only without possibility of re-election interim bishop (Bishop Paul Spring), and a budget of roughly \$474,000.00, the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) has been established. This new entity came into being around 11:30 AM on Friday, August 27, 2010 at the annual convocation of Lutheran CORE. The intention in the formation of this new Lutheran witness is to retain the traditional orthodox teachings of the one, holy, catholic (Christian), and apostolic church.

There are many who believe the current ELCA has strayed from these Biblical and doctrinal teachings over the last 23 years, most particularly exemplified in the change of theological teaching and policy regarding marriage and same-sex relationships. It is to be noted that those who support the NALC believe that the issue over marriage and same-sex relationships is only a symptom of the overall shift of the ELCA's ministry and theology to a more secular humanism/Gnostic view of life.

Briefly, Gnosticism is a heresy that undermines the authority of Scripture, subordinating it to one's human and emotional experiences, or inner wisdom. For a Gnostic, the problem is not sin, but ignorance. Rationalizing away the scriptures, there is movement toward freedom to do what one's conscience, now unbound by God and God's intentions for holy living through Law and Gospel, wants to do. Thus, in the recent case of the ELCA, the redefining of family and marriage by allowing publically accountable, lifelong monogamous same-sex relationships among clergy in particular is the result of such rationalization away from sound generational Biblical teaching and doctrine on sin, justification, and sanctification.

As such, the NALC and members of Lutheran CORE believe the ELCA is the entity that has left the one, holy, catholic (Christian) and apostolic church, and that the establishment of the NALC is an attempt to remain with what has been traditionally been taught as the true church in Christ our Lord for those who believe this.

The other purpose of the NALC is to build a pan-Lutheran witness in North America focused on mission through the local congregations, while at the same time working on church-to-church relationships with other communions around the world. The NALC will be seeking membership in the Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, and other parachurch organizations within the purview of the NALC's vision for mission and understanding of the Gospel.

Without a cumbersome administrative structure, the hope and vision is that the NALC will serve the congregations through a limited structure. There will be one bishop with the ministry of teaching and pastoral care, working closely with the elected NALC church board who will handle more of the administrative matters. Regional deans (who may have their own church) will be selected to maintain and build relationships with local congregations. Ministry will happen to, for, and with congregations being served by the NALC rather than the congregations serving a cumbersome structure of synods, regions, and a huge national office with staff.

Congregations will have a stronger voice in terms of significant teachings or policy changes. That is to say, unlike a simple 559 majority vote at a national assembly turning over 2000 years of Christian teaching, the NALC constitution requires a 2/3 majority vote of its member congregations for ratification. This provision helps prevent special interest groups from taking over the church.

Please understand that this is only a summary of what the NALC is, and is shared for your information. As current members of the ELCA, you need to be aware of what is happening in Lutheranism across North America. I and your Parish Council have been following the developments and concerns over the last couple of years and are in prayerful dialogue regarding the future direction of our parish. There will be more opportunities made available to you for input and dialogue as time goes on. However, you are encouraged to speak with me and/or members of council that we may continue to discern what is best for our ongoing mission and ministry as Christian Lutherans.

In the meantime, keep praying for God's holy church, read your Bible, attend worship and Bible study opportunities, and do the work of Christ in all you say and do in your daily vocations of life. May God bless us all as we seek to be faithful.

Peace,
Pastor Steiner