

# Analysis of Lutheran Church Bodies in the United States: Information to Support an Affiliation Recommendation

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# Background

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St. Timothy's Lutheran Church was formed in 1961 as an American Lutheran Church congregation. The American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church in America and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches merged to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1988.

In recent years, the ELCA has taken action that has caused St. Timothy's to reflect on the degree of alignment between our congregation and the national church body. In 2003, St. Timothy's joined the WordAlone Network, a reform group within the ELCA, from which arose in 2001 the national church body Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). In 2009, we also joined the Lutheran Coalition for Renewal (CORE), from which arose this year the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). A member of both reform and renewal movements, St. Timothy's remains today an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregation.

In 2009, the congregation resolved, among other things, that the Church Council make an affiliation recommendation to the congregation no later than January 2011. The Affiliation Team, convened to provide supporting research to Council, sees this discussion as having two parts (Figure 1). This document is not intended to be a comprehensive set of considerations, but rather to provide a framework for the discussion of the Council, and to provide salient information in a comparative format.<sup>1</sup>

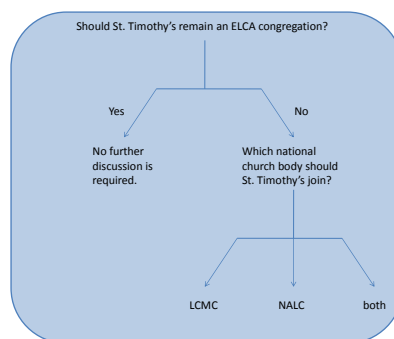


Figure 1: Decision Tree

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<sup>1</sup> While the Affiliation Team does not recommend giving undue weight to the considerations of other congregations facing similar questions, we nonetheless recognize that there is a significant body of thoughtful work that might be leveraged. Herein are contained references to and/or abridgements of such work. A particularly comprehensive analysis was done by Calvary Lutheran Church of Golden Valley, MN. The complete text of the analysis can be found at <http://www.calvary.org/files/pdf/Affiliations%20Assessment/Final%20Affiliations%20Task%20Force%20Report.pdf>. This group recommended that Calvary become an independent Lutheran Church, severing its ties to the ELCA but not yet affiliating itself with another national church body. Links to decisions by other churches can be found at <http://www.lcmc.net/news.html>. The Lutheran CORE website contains a list of member congregations ([http://www.lutherancore.org/menu\\_call\\_pages/LCORE\\_congr.shtml](http://www.lutherancore.org/menu_call_pages/LCORE_congr.shtml)), most of which can be presumed to be considering affiliation with NALC. This Affiliation Team did not peruse all of the many congregational websites listed therein, but it's possible that nuggets are hidden within.

## ***Why has the issue of continued affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America arisen?***

There are three primary trends that have concerned our congregation for some time, dating back at least to the 1990s.

- The first is a manner of decision-making that compromises the authority of Scripture, providing significant emphasis on, for example, enduring principles of unity. Theological decisions are made at Churchwide Assemblies, wherein complex matters are put up for a vote, resulting in policies that are binding upon congregations and clergy that may not have been part of the decision-making. One example of this is the adoption of the *Called to Common Mission* (CCM) document at the 1999 Churchwide Assembly.<sup>2</sup>
- Second, there is a growing hierarchy within the ELCA and a concurrent loss of representation. This is related to the issue of decision-making, *vis-à-vis* the Churchwide Assembly wherein decisions binding upon member congregations are made by relatively small numbers of “voting members” (in 2009, approximately 1045 voting members comprising both laity and clergy) who are charged not with the duties normally associated with being delegates but rather are “elected by Synod Assemblies to serve in the Churchwide Assembly, come together as representatives not only of their own congregations and synods but also serve on behalf of all the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.”<sup>3</sup>
- Third, there is a growing focus on doing things for one another (in very positive ways) rather than on the proclamation of Jesus. This is accompanied by a trend toward universalism,<sup>4</sup> the belief that there are paths to salvation other than acceptance of and faith in Jesus.

It may seem that the 2009 decisions regarding sexuality prompted St. Timothy’s to engage in this discussion of affiliation, but as summarized above and depicted pictorially below, there are significant issues that extend well beyond recent policy changes.

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<sup>2</sup> The traditionally Lutheran understanding of church is a place where the Word is preached and the Sacraments are administered, regardless of specific governance. This is in contrast to the Episcopalians, for whom church governance requires oversight by people deriving their authority from an unbroken, personal Apostolic Succession from the apostles of Jesus. See <http://wordalone.org/docs/wa-rogness-speech-2000.shtml> for a WordAlone convention document that describes the theological implications of CCM from a traditionally Lutheran perspective. For a discussion of the historic episcopate from the Episcopalian perspective, please see *The Historic Episcopate: An Episcopalian Viewpoint* by J. Robert Wright. Wright, an Episcopalian and one of the authors of the *Concordat*, defines the historic episcopacy, and provides insights into cultural, theological, and missional issues which Lutherans raised in the period of time leading to the 1999 Churchwide Assembly. This article can be found at <http://www2.elca.org/lutheranpartners/archives/histepi.html>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Secretary/ELCA-Governance/Churchwide-Assembly/About/Preparation-Information/Role-of-the-Churchwide-Assembly.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/New-or-Returning-to-Church/Dig-Deeper/Salvation.aspx>

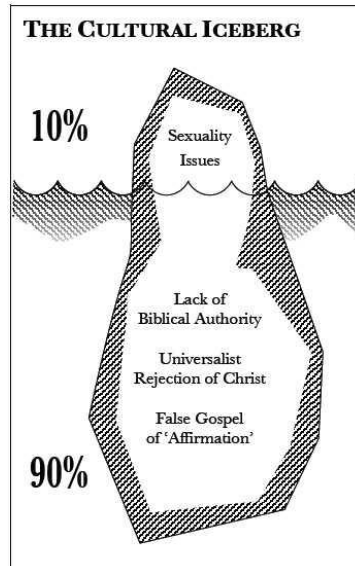


Figure 2: The Cultural Iceberg<sup>5</sup>

### ***What are potential implications of either electing to stay a member congregation of the ELCA or leaving the ELCA?***

Having been charged by the congregation in making a recommendation, it is in the best interest of everyone concerned that potential implications are considered as part of the decision-making framework. Herein are some of the implications foreseen by the Affiliation Team. We urge the reader to make your own assessment as to the likelihood and impact of these possibilities.

#### **Should St. Timothy's elect to remain a member congregation of the ELCA:**

- We would see a change in our membership.
  - We will undoubtedly lose some members who feel that the ELCA does not reflect their perspectives and/or is not aligned with the positions St. Timothy's has adopted.
  - We will continue to be a destination for church seekers who are specifically looking to join an ELCA congregation.
- Over the past several years, our congregation has adopted a number of resolutions<sup>6</sup> that highlight that we are not in step with the ELCA. To elect to remain with the ELCA would suggest strongly that we are staying to be a voice of reform and/or opposition; we would therefore live with continued tension.

<sup>5</sup> [http://wordalone.org/docs/why\\_leaving.shtml](http://wordalone.org/docs/why_leaving.shtml)

<sup>6</sup> <http://stlcsj.org/Church/documents/LutheranCOREProposalBooklet.doc>

- It is likely true that the larger concerns of those who feel that the ELCA is not the right home for St. Timothy's but who stay within our family might result in the issue of affiliation coming up again.
- History suggests that divisive social issues will continue to come to the fore of the ELCA and be distracting to the congregation (*see below, What Social Statements have been issued?*).
- St. Timothy's relies in significant part on the synod offices of the ELCA to support us in the process of calling pastors.
  - History suggests that the pool of pastoral candidates might be larger as we consider calls, but the subset that might *prima facie* be considered "good fits" would be a relatively small subset of that pool.
  - It is possible that the theological focus of St. Timothy's would shift as current pastors retire and new pastors are called.
  - There might be difficulties of working with the synod in making a call. This is further discussed in the section of this document relating to pastoral calls.
- There is the potential that a decision by St. Timothy's as a church to elect not to take paths now opened by the ELCA (for instance, to bless same-sex unions) would open us to litigation.

**Should St. Timothy's elect to leave the ELCA:**

- We would see a change in our membership.
  - We will undoubtedly lose some members who prefer to be a part of an ELCA congregation.
  - We will become a destination for church seekers who are looking to join Lutheran congregations other than the ELCA.
- It would allow us to embrace more fully our national affiliation.
  - It would permit more full camaraderie with our colleague congregations at the congregational and pastoral levels.
  - To leave the ELCA would clarify our identity within the Lutheran community in the Santa Clara Valley.
- It would provide closure to the issue of alignment and allow the congregation a path to move forward; the decision would likely not be revisited.
- The pool of pastoral candidates would likely be smaller but perhaps more theologically aligned with St. Timothy's.

There are complex procedural issues around a decision to leave the ELCA; a guide to the steps can be found on the WordAlone website.<sup>7</sup> Though these steps were documented for the Northwestern Minnesota Synod, they provide a good synopsis for our use.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://wordalone.org/series/pdf/PA\\_AdministrationOfVotingProcess.pdf](http://wordalone.org/series/pdf/PA_AdministrationOfVotingProcess.pdf)

### **Things not impacted by St. Timothy's affiliation**

- The teachings of our current pastors, the format of our worship and the day-to-day life of our church would remain the same within or outside of the ELCA.
- None of our current ministries are restricted to ELCA congregations, and therefore we would be free to carry on with them as determined best by our Council and congregation.
- St. Timothy's Lutheran School's membership in its national supporting organization will not be affected. The school is a founding member of the North American Lutheran Education Association (NALEA). That membership will continue, regardless of the congregation's affiliation decision. The school is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, a national body that accredits public and private schools, colleges, and universities in the United States. Accreditation is completely independent of membership in the NALEA.
- St. Timothy's property will not be affected provided St. Timothy's immediately joins another Lutheran Church body.

### ***If we leave the ELCA, what are the implications for joining another Lutheran Church body?***

The Affiliation Team, in consultation with the Church Council, considered a number of primary filters to reduce the nineteen *English-speaking Lutheran church bodies of North America* (the initial boundaries defining candidate church bodies) to a manageable number. The selected filters, below,

- the ordination of women,
- the open practice of such rites as communion, and
- the existence of a process for accepting our current pastors to the clergy roster

resulted in narrowing the selections to three:

- the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA, our current national church body),
- the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC, founded in 2001) and
- the North American Lutheran Church (NALC, founded in August 2010).

### **Should St. Timothy's elect to join the LCMC:**

- The eight years of history provide good definition of the teachings and practices of the church body, and assurance that congregations can thrive as LCMC congregations.
- The concerns raised by the hierarchy of the ELCA would be almost entirely ameliorated by joining the very "flat" LCMC, which has at the national level a Board of Trustees, Ministry Board,



an Administrative Coordinator and a Pastoral Certification Coordinator).<sup>8</sup> Organizational support provided by the LCMC is intentionally scaled toward the focus of empowering individual congregations.

- As of September 1, 2010, there were 462 LCMC congregations in the United States. As the fourth largest American Lutheran denomination, it has established itself as a significant voice in the Lutheran community.

**Should St. Timothy's elect to join the NALC:**

- To be part of a new church body would allow St. Timothy's both the opportunity and the responsibility to help shape the national church. This responsibility might divert attention from the workings of the congregation and might also present exciting opportunities.
- The NALC strikes a balance between the hierarchy of the ELCA and the flatness of the LCMC.
- We don't know how large the NALC will become, and therefore the voice it will have in the Lutheran community.

Both the LCMC and the NALC permit dual membership. To elect to join both may mean that we would face a question of affiliating ourselves exclusively with one or the other in the future.

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<sup>8</sup> These positions are occupied as of July 5, 2010 by the following: Larry Lindstrom (Board Chair), Tom White (Ministry Board Chair), Sharon MacFayden (Administrative Coordinator), and Paul Spaulding (Pastoral Certification Coordinator).

# Questions Regarding Three National Lutheran Church Bodies

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The Affiliation Team defined a series of questions, the answers to which we believe will be illuminating to one degree or another as Council considers its recommendations. The questions are broadly (and somewhat arbitrarily) grouped into those relating to fundamental beliefs, the clergy, congregations, relationship to the larger world, and demographics. For the sake of ready comparison, the research pertaining to each of the church bodies under consideration is provided together in the order ELCA, LCMC and NALC (the oldest church body to the newest).<sup>9</sup>

## Question Relating to Fundamental Issues of Belief

### *What are the Confessions of the church body?*

A confession is a formal statement of religious beliefs, similar to a creed, which outlines the most important theological doctrines of a church body's faith. The language of this section is that specifically of each church body.

#### **ELCA<sup>10</sup>**

*This church confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

*This church confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe:*

*Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.*

*The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.*

*The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation*

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<sup>9</sup> Most of the information was taken from the websites of each of the three churches: <http://www.elca.org/>, <http://www.lcmc.net/>, and [http://www.lutherancore.org/papers/new\\_vision.shtml](http://www.lutherancore.org/papers/new_vision.shtml) (for the NALC research). Additional information was found at the WordAlone Network site (<http://wordalone.org/>). Throughout this document, directly quoted text is indicated by *italics*.

<sup>10</sup> The Confession of Faith is published in the Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (<http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Secretary/ELCA-Governance/Constitutions-of-the-Evangelical-Lutheran-Church-in-America.aspx>).

*centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.*

*This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.*

*This church accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this church.*

*This church accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it In faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.*

*This church accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.*

*This church confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.*

## **LCMC**

*We believe, teach, and confess the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

*We believe, teach, and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe in him.*

*a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.*

*b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both law and gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy in the person and work of Jesus Christ through whom God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself.*

*c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.*

*We believe, teach, and accept the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the sole authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith, and life.*

*We accept the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the scriptural faith we believe, teach, and confess.*

*We believe, teach, and accept the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism as true witnesses to the Word of God, normative for our teaching and practice. We acknowledge that we are one in faith and doctrine with all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.*

*We believe, teach, and confess the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid expositions of the Holy Scriptures.*

*We believe, teach, and confess the gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the priesthood of all believers for God's mission in the world.*

There is a further statement by the LCMC, as follows:

*We are free in Christ.*

*Lutherans always have celebrated the freedom we have in Christ. Our freedom is based in the Biblical notion of freedom that Paul set forth in Romans 6. It is a wonderful paradox that Christians find their freedom by being bound to Christ. As we submit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ we discover the joy of real freedom.*

*We are accountable to one another.*

*LCMC is an association of congregations. We have a great respect for the reality that the church is where the people of God are gathered together around Word and Sacrament. The local congregation is where the church becomes a concrete reality for God's people. At the same time we are joyously aware that each congregation is a part of the greater body of Christ. The actions of each congregation within our association reflect on our association as a whole. And the actions of our association reflect on the whole body of Christ. For this reason we have committed ourselves to a common set of ministry standards. Congregations have significant latitude in ordering and shaping ministry in their local setting, and we intentionally have made joining and leaving the association simple. We also have a disciplinary process for addressing congregations whose actions violate our agreed-upon statements of faith and practice.*

*We are rooted and grounded In the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.*

*Our association is firmly committed to accepting the normative authority of the Bible. We reject the notion that science, personal experience, tradition, or other human endeavors have equal footing with the Bible. We are certainly aware that these endeavors contribute to our conversations and deliberations, but the Bible must be our final authority in matters of faith and practice. We also believe that the Lutheran Confessions offer us accurate interpretations of the*

*Biblical witness and we commit ourselves to being guided by them in our life together as an association.*

*We are working together to fulfill Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations.*

*LCMC has one primary mission: that of sharing the lifegiving Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are focused on starting congregations in this country, supporting missionaries around the world, and raising up and training leaders to serve Christ and His church. LCMC is committed to knowing Jesus and making Jesus known. The association is dedicated to helping member congregations live out this mission.*

## **NALC**

*The Confession of Faith for the NALC is as follows.*

*NALC confesses:*

*2.01. The Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

*2.02. Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.*

*a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.*

*b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.*

*c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.*

*2.03. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life, "according to which all doctrines should and must be judged" (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Part I).*

*2.04. The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of the Church.*

*2.05. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.*

2.06. *The other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.*

2.07. *The Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.*

2.08. *NALC honors and accepts The Common Confession (2005), attached in an appendix hereto, as a summary of teachings otherwise affirmed in the Lutheran Confessions.*

The Common Confession<sup>11</sup> referred to above follows:

#### *The Lord Jesus Christ*

*We are people who believe and confess our faith in the Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We trust and believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.*

#### *The Gospel of Salvation*

*We believe and confess that all human beings are sinners, and that sinners are redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God alone justifies human beings by faith in Christ – a faith that God creates through the message of the Gospel. As ambassadors for Christ, God uses us to speak his Word and build his kingdom*

#### *The Authority of Scripture*

*We believe and confess that the Bible is God's revealed Word to us, spoken in Law and Gospel. The Bible is the final authority for us in all matters of our faith and life.*

#### *A Common Confession of Faith*

*We accept and uphold that the Lutheran Confessions reliably guide us as faithful interpretations of Scripture, and that we share a unity and fellowship in faith with others among whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and the sacraments are administered in accordance with the Gospel.*

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<sup>11</sup> The Rev. Stephen E. King, one of the authors of the Common Confession, provides an Introduction to the Common Confession at <http://www.lutherancore.org/pdf/Introduction-to-CC.pdf>.

### *The Priesthood of All Believers*

*We believe and confess that the Holy Spirit makes all who believe in Jesus Christ to be priests for service to others in Jesus' name, and that God desires to make use of the spiritual gifts he has given through the priesthood of all believers.*

### *Marriage and Family*

*We believe and confess that the marriage of male and female is an institution created and blessed by God. From marriage, God forms families to serve as the building blocks of all human civilization and community. We teach and practice that sexual activity belongs exclusively within the biblical boundaries of a faithful marriage between one man and one woman.*

### *The Mission and Ministry of the Congregation*

*We believe and confess that the church is the assembly of believers called and gathered by God around Word and Sacrament, and that the mission and ministry of the church is carried out within the context of individual congregations, which are able to work together locally and globally.*

## **Questions Relating to Clergy**

### ***What are the requirements for acceptance onto the clergy roster and ordination?***

For all three church bodies, acceptance onto the clergy roster requires compliance with some set of standards, which vary from body to body. Ordination occurs the first time a call is issued to and accepted by a pastor on the roster. For the ELCA and NALC, only rostered clergy can serve as pastors to congregations, while the LCMC allows for a “contract call” wherein a congregation can call a pastor outside of the roster (*see below, How are Pastors Called?*).

#### **ELCA**

Seminarians, who have completed a bachelor’s degree and who must be members of an ELCA congregation, follow the process outlined here.

The first step is one’s *entrance* into the candidacy process, discerning a call. This involves prayer, meeting with the pastor, registration and acceptance in an approved seminary. The home congregation is part of this process. The synod has a candidacy committee that interviews the candidate, arranges for psychological/career evaluation, and does a background check.

The second step is *endorsement*. The candidate writes an essay, there is an interview with a panel, and the seminary endorses the candidate's gifts and qualities for ministry. At the end of this stage the candidate is approved for internship and assigned an internship site. In the post-endorsement

process there are more reports, involvement with an internship committee as well as internship supervisor, and further involvement with the synod candidacy committee. The candidate finishes his/her seminary training, which includes 400 hours of Clinical Pastor Education.

The third step is *approval*. The candidate writes an essay, the seminary reports on their impressions, and there is an approval interview with the candidacy committee. If approved, the candidate is then assigned a synod and is available for a letter of call from a congregation in that synod.

The next step is the first *call*, which comes through a coordinated effort of congregation and synodical bishop's office. This step involves a self-assessment on the part of the congregation and mobility papers from the candidate, and interviews with the synod office and the congregation. When a congregation issues that first call, then the candidate can be ordained. If no call is issued in the first three years, the candidate has to re-visit part of this process.

The final step in this process is *ordination*, officiated by the synodical bishop.<sup>12</sup>

## LCMC

The Ministry Board of LCMC is responsible for certifying clergy and adding to the roster. The steps are described below:

### ***Ministry Standards and Procedures for Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ Clergy***

*This association affirms the priesthood of all believers. It commits itself in function and structure to equip and support all members of its congregations for their ministries within and outside of the household of faith. It is within and from this context of ministry that we declare that some are called by God to the public ministry of Word and Sacrament and other specific ministries. At the same time, all baptized members of our congregations are priests called by God to ministries in their daily lives. (LCMC Constitution - Article 3 - Ministry 3.01)*

*These ministry standards and procedures identify qualities of and qualifications for LCMC clergy.*

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<sup>12</sup> According to Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historic\\_episcopate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historic_episcopate)), “[Only a person in the historic episcopate, also known as] Apostolic Succession, a line of succession of bishops dating back to the Apostles, can be a bishop, and only such a person can validly ordain Christian clergy. The succession must be transmitted from each bishop to a successor by the rite of Holy Orders. Bishops in valid Apostolic Succession compose the **historical episcopate**. Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America also claim to be ordained through the laying on of hands of bishops in the apostolic succession.” The ELCA adopted this criterion for ordination with the passing of the CCM. Up to this time pastors were commonly ordained by another pastor with the synod’s approval. There remains the possibility of an “exceptional ordination” (one without the laying on of hands of the bishops in the apostolic succession), but such requests are being refused unilaterally by most bishops.



### ***Standards for a Certified Call in LCMC***

*Candidates will subscribe to the LCMC Statement of Faith, if related to a district the district's ministry standards, state and federal laws and expectations of their endorsing agent.*

### ***Procedures for a Certified Call in LCMC***

- 1. Candidates will have a bachelor's degree or its equivalent and a master of divinity degree from an accredited theological school or its equivalent.*
- 2. If possible, a mentoring pastor assigned by a ministry committee will develop a relationship with the student while that student is in seminary.*
- 3. When appropriate, psychological testing may be administered.*
- 4. For students or graduates of non-Lutheran seminaries, the ministry committee will decide what additional education should be assigned.*
- 5. Candidates will have a year of internship/residency or its equivalent. This can be a regular seminary internship, an internship/residency arranged by a ministry committee, or an equivalent experience, such as previous supervised work in a congregation.*
- 6. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) may be selectively required.*
- 7. Candidates will participate in a certification interview with a ministry committee. Upon completion of the certification interview and approval for a certified call, the LCMC office will be informed of the candidate's availability for call.*
- 8. Clergy on the roster of another denomination, who wish to become listed as LCMC clergy, can apply to the colloquy process in LCMC.*
- 9. To have a certified call, a candidate must have a letter of call from a congregation.*
- 10. Upon Completion of the above, the candidate can be ordained/installed.*

The LCMC also allows for congregations to call a pastor not on the roster and therefore not “certified”; this is a “contract” call.

### ***Standards for a Contract Call in LCMC***

*Candidates will subscribe to the LCMC Statement of Faith, if related to a district the district's ministry standards, state and federal laws and expectations of their endorsing agent.*

### **Procedures for an LCMC Contract Call**

*In an effort to provide for maximum flexibility to congregations to meet a variety of ministry needs, congregations and/or a ministry committee will establish the procedures for a contract call.*

*People in a contract call may be authorized for Word and Sacrament ministry.<sup>13</sup> The congregation will give such authorization and will notify an appropriate district and the LCMC association office. This notification will be made so that persons in a contract call will be invited to appropriate pastors' meetings and continuing education opportunities.*

### **Inclusion on the List of LCMC Clergy**

*LCMC and its districts will maintain a list of those serving in congregational and specialized ministry settings who have subscribed to the LCMC Statement of Faith. The list will include those with a certified call, a contract call, retired (emeritus) and those currently without call.*

*After three years of not having a call (except retired pastors), a candidate's status will be evaluated by the LCMC Ministry Board or its designates.*

*The LCMC Service Coordinator will maintain the list in a timely manner.*

*An updated list will be made available to all LCMC congregations upon request.*

*A congregation, district and/or LCMC Ministry Board will notify the LCMC Service Coordinator of any additions or changes to the list.*

*Knowledge of or disclosure of criminal convictions may warrant removal from this list. Moral and criminal issues, which would affect a current call, are dealt with by the congregation and may change a pastor's status on the list.*

### **NALC**

Working with the bishop, regional pastors/deans, and WordAlone's Clergy Connect service, the NALC will provide a roster of eligible clergy, assist in the calling process, and provide for ordination and installation of pastors. The following guidelines are from the NALC Constitution, Article 4 - Ordained Ministry.

*4.01 Ordination, and reception of ordained clergy, shall be a function of the NALC. The NALC shall ordain both men and women to the office of Word and Sacrament. The Executive Council shall define the standards of acceptance into and continuance in the ordained ministry of the NALC.*

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<sup>13</sup> 12The Lutheran church traditionally confesses two Sacraments: Communion and Holy Baptism. The basic function of a pastor is to preach the Word and administer Sacraments, hence the term "Word and Sacrament ministry".

*4.02 Ordained clergy shall preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, and carry out other forms of ministry according to their call. Ordained ministers shall be the chief evangelists in their ministries.*

*4.03 Ordained clergy shall preach and teach in accordance with the confession of faith of the NALC, shall lead lives befitting their holy office, and shall honor the standards established by the NALC for the office of Word and Sacrament.*

*4.04 Ordained clergy of the NALC may be members of congregations of other Lutheran church bodies, provided that the confession of faith and practice of such congregations are compatible with the NALC, as determined by the Executive Council.*

*4.05 No person who belongs to any organization which claims to possess in its teachings and ceremonies that which the Lord has given solely to His Church shall be ordained or otherwise received into the ministry of the NALC, nor shall any person so ordained be retained in its ministry if such person subsequently joins such an organization. Violation of this rule shall make such minister subject to discipline.*

*4.06 The NALC will establish a standing task force on theological education. It shall be the prayerful goal of the NALC that seminary education for prospective ordinands, as much as possible, be made available through funds provided by members of the NALC.*

## ***How are pastors called?***

### **ELCA**

The call process is initiated by the congregation and requires the active oversight of the synod. It usually begins with a meeting between the bishop and the Church Council and/or Call Committee. The Call Committee prepares a Congregational Profile, which is then used for the identification of candidates by the Office of the Bishop. The Office generally identifies three candidates that in its determination are a good fit for the congregation and all initial contacts are made through the Office. (If a congregation identifies a qualified candidate by some other means, for example the WordAlone web site, they can only be approached through the synodical process, starting with an initial contact by the Office). Initial interviews are typically completed within 30 days of the first interview. In the event that none of the candidates is considered suitable, additional candidate names can be requested from the Office of the Bishop.

This process is repeated until a suitable candidate is identified. A call is then recommended to the congregation at a special Call Meeting, attended by the Bishop or his/her representative. If the recommendation to make the call is affirmed by a 2/3 majority of the voting members present, then a simple majority is required to affirm a compensation package. The call is extended through the Bishop, and the candidate has thirty days to accept or decline the call. If the call is accepted, the new pastor is installed; if not, the process begins anew.

## LCMC

The LCMC places responsibility for identifying and calling pastors on the congregation; they may use the Certified Call for pastors that have been placed on the clergy roster (*see above, What are the requirements for acceptance onto the clergy roster and ordination?*), or they may call a pastor from outside of the roster through a Contract Call. No third party controls or assists the process.

### ***Certified Call***

*Congregations may call an individual to serve in their congregation with a certified call. This means they are calling an individual who is on the LCMC clergy list. Congregations are encouraged to support continuing education for those they call. The congregation will determine the title for the position held by a person with a certified call. Standards and terminology may vary by district or congregation.*

### ***Contract Call***

*Congregations may call an individual to serve in their congregation with a contract call. This means they are calling an individual who is not recognized by the association as a certified candidate. Persons called on a contract basis may provide ministry according to their gifts and as negotiated with the congregation. Further training is recommended. Some candidates may seek to acquire training which leads to certification, while they serve in a contract call capacity. The congregation will determine the title for the position held by a person with a contract call. Standards and terminology may vary by district or congregation.*

***Reminder from the Ministry Board:*** *It is the congregation's responsibility for due diligence when vetting a candidate for your position of pastor. The hiring congregation (not LCMC or the Ministry Board) is responsible for assuring that any criminal background, work history, and reference checks are completed. Congregations are encouraged to ask many theological and pastoral-practical questions of a pastoral candidate. More guidance for a congregation through the call process can be found in the Call Packet.*

*The Ministry Board recognizes the authority and responsibility of congregations of LCMC to call their pastors. A call from a congregation may be either a Certified or a Contract call. Congregations are welcome to contact any clergy regarding a possible call. LCMC Certified clergy are listed on three rosters:*

*Clergy Seeking Call*

*Active Clergy*

*Emeritus Clergy*

Congregations can post opportunities on LCMC website. There are currently fourteen active postings for Senior, Full-Time, Interim, or Supply Pastors across twelve states.

## **NALC**

*The NALC certifies and maintains a clergy roster and has established procedures for the reception of clergy from other Lutheran church bodies. Congregations may call any pastor who is on the roster of the NALC. The bishop and local deans are available to provide assistance and counsel on these matters, using resources such as WordAlone's Clergy Connect service.*

*The NALC certifies and maintains lists of chaplains and interim pastors, and will seek qualification as an endorsing agent for military chaplains. The church welcomes the ministries of those currently serving as Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses and Diaconal Ministers, and will consider the development of a single structure of commissioned lay ministry.*

The procedures referenced above have not yet been finalized.

### ***How many clergy are associated with each church body?***

#### **ELCA**

As of June 30, 2009, the latest date for which specific numbers are available, there are:

- 17,652 ordained clergy
- 1,068 associates in ministry
- 65 deaconesses
- 153 diaconal ministers

There is no way to assess the average time a call is open, or how long a pastor awaits a call. Certainly, there is a wide range of experience for both congregations and pastors.

#### **LCMC**

As of September 1, 2010, there were four hundred seventy-six active clergy listed on the roster and seventy-three pastors on the clergy roster seeking a call.

#### **NALC**

Since this denominational body came into existence in August 2010, no statistics yet exist regarding ordainment, attrition, and calls.

### ***What are the discipline process and accountability to the national church body by clergy?***

## **ELCA**

The disciplinary process is set forth in Chapter 20 of the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws,<sup>14</sup> and in “Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings Against an Ordained Minister, a Rostered Layperson, or a Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America”. The booklet “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” sets forth the types of conduct that may lead to discipline.

## **LCMC**

*LCMC Bylaws-2.02: All ordained ministers of this association shall approve of and subscribe to the statement of faith of this association and ministry standards as established by member churches or districts. Ordained ministers shall be subject to discipline as provided for in a discipline plan adopted by a member church or district. Any discipline plan will contain appropriate rights of appeal.*

*Knowledge of or disclosure of criminal convictions may warrant removal from clergy roster. Moral and criminal issues, which would affect a current call, are dealt with by the congregation and may change a pastor's status on the clergy roster.*

## **NALC**

*The NALC has the capacity and authority to train, certify, ordain, call, encourage, care for and discipline pastors, ensure faithful preaching and teaching by its clergy, and support and, as necessary, discipline congregations. The NALC also provides a process, defined in its Constitution, for discipline of its pastors and congregations, working through the bishop, regional pastors/deans, and in conjunction with a Court of Adjudication. The Court of Adjudication, elected by the convocation, decides appeals, interprets the Constitution, and follows procedures to ensure fairness to all interested parties. Further details of the disciplinary and appeals processes are outlined in the Constitution.*

## ***What benefits are offered to roster clergy?***

### **ELCA**

The ELCA Board of Pensions manages four benefits for the churchwide organization:

- **Retirement Plan:** The pastor is vested on the first day of employment. The employing unit contributes an amount based on 10% of employee's annual salary.
- **Health and Wellness:** This includes medical, dental and chiropractic benefits. An Employee Assistance Program (confidential counseling) and discounted vision care is also included. Premiums for the health plan are paid by the employing unit for the employee and eligible dependents.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Secretary/ELCA-Governance/Constitutions-of-the-Evangelical-Lutheran-Church-in-America.aspx>

- Disability Plan: This allows qualified employees to continue to receive salary and health benefits.
- Survivor Benefits Plan: This serves as a form of life insurance for employees.

In addition to the benefits provided by the Board of Pensions, the churchwide organization provides a number of benefits to its employees. These are vacation, sick leave and family illness personal days, holiday, family medical leave, worker's compensation, housing allowance and other benefits.

## **LCMC**

LCMC has worked with Johnson-McCann Benefits to provide a benefits package available to all member congregations of the association. The benefits offered include health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance and long term disability insurance.

LCMC/WordAlone offers cooperative purchasing for Lutheran churches. Products include:

- Medical
- Life
- Voluntary life
- Dental
- Long-term disability

LCMC has established a 403B Plan with American Funds.

## **NALC**

NALC allows congregations to avail themselves of either the ELCA or LCMC benefit providers. At this time, St. Timothy's clergy and staff are covered under the ELCA Board of Pensions (ELCA BOP) for their benefits packages. Per the ELCA BOP website, former ELCA congregations that sponsored at least one eligible employee on or after Jan. 1, 2005 may sponsor any or all eligible employees.

## **Questions Relating to Congregations**

***What is the role of the leadership of the national church body (bishops and/or other leaders)?***

## ELCA<sup>15</sup>

### *Office of the Bishop*

*The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is elected to a six-year term by the Churchwide Assembly. In addition to fulfilling such roles as preacher, teacher and administrator of the sacraments, which traditionally belong to the office of bishop, the presiding bishop of this church serves as president and chief executive officer of the corporation and oversees the staff, budget, and overall administration of the church.*

*The presiding bishop chairs the biennial Churchwide Assembly and provides for the preparation of agendas for the assembly, the Church Council and its executive committee, the Conference of Bishops, and the Cabinet of Executives. The presiding bishop is also the chief ecumenical officer of this church, and provides leadership and care for the bishops of the synods.*

### *Office of the Secretary*

*The Office of the Secretary provides administrative services and tools for the leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who are serving this church in their congregations, synods, schools, agencies, the churchwide organization, and those who have been given responsibility for the governance of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*

### *Office of the Treasurer*

*The Office of the Treasurer manages business affairs, proposes financial policy for review and action by the Church Council, provides for implementation of those financial, accounting, investment and money management policies, and provides information-technology and property-management services for the churchwide organization. The treasurer also serves as president of the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA.*

### Church Council

The ELCA has a national Church Council that acts as the interim legislative authority between meetings of the Churchwide Assembly. Its duties are much the same, on a larger scale, as those of the Church Council of a congregation, primarily having to do with operational oversight, including:

- reviewing programs and procedures,
- preparing budgets and authorizing expenditures,
- establishing personnel compensation and policies,

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<sup>15</sup> From the [Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#).



- arranging elections to churchwide bodies and installation of officers,
- acting on resolutions from synod councils, and
- complying with legal responsibilities of the corporation.

## **LCMC**

LCMC congregations are structured in a network of like-minded congregations through districts. Districts may be formed around geography, theology, values, shared interests, worship styles, etc. Congregations may belong to as many districts as they please, or none at all. Districts govern themselves within guidelines set by the association, but have no national legislative authority. There are currently ten districts in the association.

Nationally, there is a Board of Trustees, Ministry Board, and four staff members. Their function is to manage the assimilation of new member congregations, set and maintain ministry standards, develop agendas for the Annual Gathering and Leadership Conference, and consider matters affecting all of the Districts. An Annual Gathering and a Leadership Conference convene once a year to conduct business and encourage the ministry of member congregations.

## **NALC**

*Summary: The primary authority of the NALC is an annual convocation, which makes decisions on behalf of the church, including election of leaders by a process of direct representation, who are accountable to the church. There is also a process of ratification by congregations of certain specified actions of the convocation. Between convocations, an Executive Council has authority to act on behalf of the NALC.*

*Details: The NALC meets in convocation annually. All the clergy on the roster and approximately an equal number of lay delegates, including at least one from every congregation, convene in a single representative decision-making body. Parishes of more than one congregation are represented by their clergy and one lay delegate per congregation. Larger congregations are represented by more than one lay delegate. The constitution indicates the formula of representation. Similar principles apply to regional convocations, should such structures develop.*

*Whenever possible, actions of the convocation speak for the church in an advisory fashion, expressing the mind of the convocation without binding individual congregations. Proposals that bind congregations in non-essentials must be accompanied by a statement of why such binding is necessary. In addition, such binding actions, as well as changes to specified sections of the NALC constitution and the adoption of teaching statements, must be approved both by the convocation and two-thirds of all congregations. The bishop with the regional pastors/deans and in consultation with the church's theologians is responsible for submitting teaching statements and policies on church practice to the convocation.*

*The convocation elects the bishop, secretary, and treasurer to serve for prescribed terms. All officers are eligible for re-election. The constitution outlines a nominating process. The offices of secretary and treasurer are open to both clergy and laity.*

*An executive council is empowered to make decisions for the NALC between convocations. The convocation elects the members of the council. Committees will be formed as needed to do the work of the church. A Court of Adjudication, elected by the convocation, decides cases regarding the constitution and discipline of pastors and congregations. The church is governed in a collegial spirit with the participation of clergy and laity.*

## ***What are the discipline process and accountability to the national church body by congregations?***

### **ELCA**

#### *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Congregations*

*A. Departing from the faith confessed by this church is grounds for discipline of a congregation of this church. A summary of the faith confessed by this church is found in Chapters 2 and 3 of this church's constitution.*

*B. Willfully disregarding or violating any of the criteria for recognition as congregations of this church is grounds for discipline of a congregation of this church. These criteria are set forth in 9.21. and 9.22. of this church's constitution.*

*C. Willfully disregarding or violating the provisions of the constitution or bylaws of this church is grounds for discipline of a congregation of this church.*

### **LCMC**

A discipline process has been in place since 2006. If a complaint is lodged against a congregation or person, a Committee of Investigation is appointed by the Board of Trustees. For a period of sixty days it receives written testimony from all sides. At that point, the Committee writes a letter to the Executive Chair of the Board of Trustees. Then the entire Board decides on a resolution of the matter. Refer to 2006 Annual Gathering minutes for more information.

### **NALC**

The NALC, working through a Court of Adjudication, elected by the convocation, decides cases regarding the constitution and discipline of pastors and congregations. The following is taken from the Constitution, Article 14 – Discipline.

*14.03 A congregation shall be subject to discipline for:*

*a. Departing from the faith confessed by the North American Lutheran Church.*

*b. Willfully disregarding or violating the criteria for recognition as congregations of the North American Lutheran Church.*

c. Willfully disregarding or violating the provisions of the constitution of the North American Lutheran Church.

14.04 The disciplinary actions that may be imposed upon a congregation are:

a. Censure and admonition by the Bishop.

b. Suspension from the North American Lutheran Church for a designated period of time.

c. Removal from the membership and ministry of the North American Lutheran Church.

## ***What is the relationship between congregations and the national church body?***

### **ELCA**

*According to the ELCA constitution, we are one church body organized in three expressions -- each expression has its particular functions but all three together share a common mission. Together, they ensure a strong foundation of leadership that enables faithful gathering and gospel proclamation, community involvement, open dialogue and a culture of support for our 4.8 million members.*

#### *Congregations*

*Nearly 10,500 congregations across the United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are local communities of faith-filled people celebrating, learning and connecting through weekly worship and various ways to serve others.*

#### *Synods*

*Sixty-five synods throughout the country unite the work of congregations within their areas, serving as regional support and guiding pastoral and other staff candidates through the call process.*

#### *Churchwide Organization*

*The churchwide expression includes the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, Church Council, officers, offices and churchwide units. Churchwide staff work from the Lutheran Center in Chicago, Ill., and from locations around the globe.*

### **LCMC**

LCMC is an “association” of congregations organized by Districts. At present, there are five geographical districts covering areas in the United States and abroad. As previously mentioned, there are additional districts with other organizing criteria. Congregations may join one, more or even no districts.

A congregational polity<sup>16</sup> is in place with a very interesting maxim attached: *In LCMC, we have intentionally chosen to live on the freedom side of the organizational continuum rather than the control side.*

## **NALC**

*Membership in the NALC includes congregations that vote to associate with it and adhere to the provisions of its constitution, as well as ordained ministers who are accepted onto the NALC clergy roster. Congregations of the NALC may also be members of other Lutheran church bodies. Individuals who remain members of an ELCA or Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) congregation may also join a NALC congregation.*

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*The national organization serves the ministry of the entire church with the understanding that the congregation is the primary locus of ministry and mission. The structure of the national church follows the rule that form follows function.*

## ***What is the role of women in the church?***

### **ELCA**

The ELCA ordains women as pastors, a practice that all three of its antecedent churches adopted in the 1970s. Some have become synod bishops. The most recent ELCA hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, has alternate gender-neutral invocations and benedictions in all settings.<sup>17</sup> In this hymnal, all of the psalms and many of the hymns and parts of the liturgy have been altered to remove masculine pronouns referring to God.

### **LCMC**

Women pastors are on the active Ordained and Certified Clergy List on the LCMC website. Other information about women's roles is not readily apparent, but it probably safe to say that involvement and leadership are being actively pursued by female members and clergy.

### **NALC**

The NALC recognizes both women and men in the office of ordained clergy. The NALC intends to adopt the standards of the ELCA Statement of Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in its pre-August 2009 form.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> A polity is defined as the form of government of a religious denomination.

<sup>17</sup> We currently use the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (the green hymnal) and *With One Voice* (the blue hymnal).

<sup>18</sup> <http://www2.elca.org/assembly/05/VotingMatters/VisionandExpectations--Ordained.pdf>

## Questions Relating to the Relationship with the World

### ***What is at the heart of the denomination (outreach, social ministry, global mission, etc.)?***

#### **ELCA<sup>19</sup>**

The ELCA is a community of faith that shares a passion for making positive changes in the world. Our faith is built around a strong belief in God as made known to us in Jesus Christ. Through worship, service, and education, we practice our faith, grow our relationship with God and experience God's grace in our lives. ... We also work hard to put our faith into action. In today's complex world, we strive to make a difference in practical, realistic ways.

#### **LCMC**

Fulfilling the Great Commission and demonstrating lives that are patterned after its founding principles are at the heart of LCMC. The principles referred to are: Free in Christ, Accountable to One Another, and Rooted and Grounded in the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions (*see above, What are the Confessions of the Church Body?*). One outreach effort is starting mission churches. There is a Mission Church Fund overseen by the LCMC Lutheran Men Ministry. Other giving is directed to the Seminarian Fund to help pay off seminary graduate student loans and to international congregations.

#### **NALC**

The NALC is centered on four key attributes: Christ-Centered, Mission-Driven, Traditionally-Grounded and Congregationally-Focused.

- *Christ-Centered: We confess the apostolic faith in Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. We affirm the authority of the canonical Holy Scriptures as the only source and norm of our faith and life. We accept the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses to the Word of God.*
- *Mission-Driven: We believe that making disciples for Christ is the core priority of the Church, that congregation planting is often best done through local congregations, and that both external and internal evangelization must be a priority of the Church in the present age.*
- *Traditionally-Grounded: We affirm the ecumenical creeds and the faithful witness of the Church across time and space. We endorse the form and practices of the universal Church that are consistent with Scripture, particularly the office of the ministry and the tradition of worship under Word and Sacrament. We seek dialogue and fellowship with other Lutheran churches and with faithful Christians of other confessions.*

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are.aspx>

• *Congregationally-Focused: We support a new church body and confessing community that are organized to facilitate the ministries of local congregations in a posture of servanthood and a spirit of partnership, through the provision of resources, connections and information.*

## ***What supporting ministries are there at the national level (publishing houses, mission support, youth programs, etc.)?***

### **ELCA**

The ELCA has a significant array of supporting ministries, as would be expected for the largest Lutheran denomination in the United States. They include:

- Augsburg Fortress, a publishing house,
- nineteen unit programs in Evangelical Outreach & Congregational Mission Program Ministries,
- ELCA Youth Ministry,
- eight seminaries and two seminary extension centers,
- twenty-eight colleges and universities,
- more than fifty lifelong learning programs,
- fourteen high schools,
- two hundred ninety-six elementary schools,
- fifteen hundred seventy-three early childhood programs, and
- one hundred forty-five camp and retreat centers, serving 450,000 Lutherans yearly.<sup>20</sup>

### **LCMC**

LCMC does not have a publishing house at the present time. They are using Sola Publishing<sup>21</sup> (a WordAlone ministry outreach) as a reliable source of Confessional Lutheran teaching. There is a men's ministry, Lutheran Men, which has a national outreach. Youth ministry is also represented with a national event, E.P.I.C. in Roanoke, VA in June. Mission support is carried out by individual congregations in the association of churches.

### **NALC**

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<sup>20</sup> Most of these ministries are available to Lutherans of any denomination.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.solapublishing.org>

*The organizational strategy for ministry and mission for the NALC<sup>22</sup> is to equip congregations in their own local context; to encourage, inspire and challenge them in their work; and to provide support as they work together with other congregations and individuals throughout the world. To this end, the NALC connects congregations with the best available ministry knowledge and practices, and encourages development and dissemination of new resources that support faithful ministry in congregations.*

*Working closely with WordAlone, LCMC, and other Lutheran and parachurch organizations, the NALC supports the efforts of congregations and the larger church. In particular, through Sola Publishing and the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, and in partnership with others that share in the Common Confession, provides resources for ministry and mission to congregations and individuals that can be used in their own setting:*

- *evangelization and new ministry development*
- *educational resources for persons at all ages and stages of faith formation and life*
- *programmatically aids for children's ministry, youth ministry, men's and women's ministries and other specialized ministries*
- *connection to existing congregational ministry resources that are biblically and confessionally sound.*

*This structure facilitates links between congregations and ministry and mission agencies throughout North America and beyond, to enable congregations and movements of the NALC and Lutheran CORE to work together in efforts beyond their local context. Through the shared resources of WordAlone, World Mission Prayer League, Youth Encounter, East European Missions Network, Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, other parachurch organizations, and faithful resources from other Lutheran church bodies, the NALC supports the identification of new ministry opportunities for proclaiming the Gospel through outreach with God's Word and in the serving of human need.*

*As congregations work individually and together, irrespective of organizational boundaries, the work of Christ's Church throughout the world is carried out faithfully and a united witness is given. And as individual members are encouraged, inspired, and challenged to take personal responsibility for faithful living, the work of the congregation and the larger church, in serving Jesus, is accomplished.*

*The structures for ministry and mission for the NALC are built upon a shared relationship with and common goals of a number of evangelical ministries and mission agencies and bodies. Recognizing that unnecessary duplication of resources is poor stewardship, the NALC relies primarily on resources and ministry and mission agencies already in place. The NALC has the competence to initiate new ministries,*

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<sup>22</sup> Throughout this section, the phrase "NALC and Lutheran CORE" has been reduced to simply "NALC" to mitigate potential confusion between the national church body and the reform movement.

*but only does so in areas where there is no existing and effective support organization already in place that operates compatibly with their confession of faith.*

*The NALC structures are built in such a way as to provide resources and ministry and mission links to congregations. In particular, resources to support Christian education, ministry to children and youth, theological education, men's and women's ministries, and the serving of human need are available, along with support for global mission. The congregations then take those resources and links, adapt them to their local context, and support and carry out the work as they are able.*

*Also, the NALC coordinates efforts with LCMC in order to work together more effectively and efficiently in shared ministry and mission efforts. High priority is given to shared efforts with LCMC ranging from helping ministries designed to serve the poor, to outreach efforts such as mission starts and global mission support.*

## ***What is the purpose of Social Statements within the church body? What Social Statements have been issued?***

### **ELCA**

Social Statements are social policy documents, adopted by an ELCA Churchwide Assembly, addressing significant social issues. They provide an analysis and interpretation of an issue, set forth basic theological and ethical perspectives related to it, and offer guidance for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, its individual members, and its affiliated agencies and institutions. They are the product of extensive and inclusive deliberation within this church. Since 1991, the ELCA has adopted ten social statements.

1. Abortion (1991)
2. Church in Society (1991)
3. Death Penalty (1991)
4. Economic Life (1999)
5. Education (2007)
6. Environment (1993)
7. Health and Healthcare (2003)
8. Peace (1995)
9. Race, Ethnicity, and Culture (1993)
10. Sexuality (2009)



## **LCMC**

No Social Statements have been issued by LCMC. A Pastoral Admonition on the Sanctity of Marriage is the only statement made at the national level. It reads:

*We affirm that God created us male and female, and that it is God's will and intention that human sexual expression and fulfillment take place only within the boundaries of marriage between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-6; and Mark 10:2-9). And, we confess as individuals and as congregations that we have not fulfilled God's will in our decisions, modeling, and teaching.*

## **NALC**

Because the NALC has just recently formed, no Social Statements have been issued. The bishop with the regional pastors/deans and in consultation with the church's theologians is responsible for submitting teaching statements and policies on church practice to the convocation.

## ***Are Social Statements binding upon congregations?***

### **ELCA**

Social Statements of the ELCA are not binding on the individual consciences of ELCA members, but rather serve as guide for policies and practices of the church and foundation for addressing the stated issues in the public square.

### **LCMC**

As there are no social statements at the national level, individual churches are not bound to any statements except the Pastoral Admonition on the Sanctity of Marriage (*see above*).

### **NALC**

The NALC Vision and Plan<sup>23</sup> does not specifically address the topic of social statements. The following, however, comes from the Constitution, Article 12- Theological and Doctrinal Commission.

*12.01 A Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine will be formed with representation from the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE. The Bishop will appoint the members from the NALC, with the consent of the Executive Council, and shall be an ex officio member of the commission.*

*12.02 The Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine shall consider topics of a theological nature, implement theological conferences as may be appropriate, draft statements of a theological nature, and may recommend the adoption of statements by the appropriate bodies of the NALC and Lutheran CORE. Additionally, the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine will provide guidance to the NALC and*

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<sup>23</sup> [http://www.lutherancore.org/papers/new\\_vision.shtml](http://www.lutherancore.org/papers/new_vision.shtml)

*Lutheran CORE on ecumenical matters and will provide educational and other resources that will interpret the ministries of the NALC and Lutheran CORE.*

Regarding statements generally, it states: *Whenever possible, actions of the convocation will speak for the church in an advisory fashion, expressing the mind of the convocation without binding individual congregations. Proposals that bind congregations in non-essentials must be accompanied by a statement of why such binding is necessary. In addition, such binding actions, as well as changes to specified sections of the NALC constitution and the adoption of teaching statements, must be approved both by the convocation and two-thirds of all congregations. The bishop with the regional pastors/deans and in consultation with the church's theologians will be responsible for submitting teaching statements and policies on church practice to the convocation.*

***Are there national and regional gatherings for Youth? How long do they last and where are they held? How many Youth generally attend? What are typical agendas?***

**ELCA**

The ELCA Youth Gathering is a national convention held every three years in a different American city attended by high-school-age youth of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The gathering is usually held in July. Beginning in 2000, the gathering was divided between two different weeks in order to accommodate the growing number of youth attending each time.

The 2009 Gathering returned to one week only, July 22-26, with 38,000 youth and adults attending. The 2009 Gathering included a strong focus on Christian service in post-Katrina New Orleans. The theme was "Jesus, Justice, Jazz".

**LCMC**

LCMC does have an annual national gathering for youth. This event took place in Roanoke, VA, June 20-25, 2010, and was hosted by St. John's Lutheran Church. This event was titled E.P.I.C. (Experiencing Passion in Christ). The theme was engaging culture with the gospel through art, sports, and film. Christ-centered worship, passionate biblical teaching and good food were also features of the gathering. Activities included mission projects, adventure hikes and sports, and breakout sessions on biblical topics relevant to youth.

## **NALC**

Because the NALC was recently formed in August 2010, it has not had any youth gatherings. The affiliated Lutheran CORE web site offers a link to Youth Encounter,<sup>24</sup> which holds many youth events across the nation. It is the intent of the NALC to work closely with Youth Encounter to provide national gatherings for youth.

### ***Is dual membership permitted for congregations?***

#### **ELCA**

No.

#### **LCMC**

Yes.

#### **NALC**

Yes.

### ***Is the president of the congregational church council a pastor or laity?***

#### **ELCA**

Because of the histories of the antecedent church bodies (ALC, LCA and AELC), the ELCA allows for either.

#### **LCMC**

Because the LCMC is congregationally driven, there is no policy regarding the president of the congregational church council.

#### **NALC**

There are no adopted guidelines to address this question. It is assumed that most congregations joining the NALC will continue with their current congregational organizational structure.

### ***How frequently are there national and regional gatherings? Where do these gatherings take place? How long do they last? What are typical agendas?***

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.youthencounter.org/>

## **ELCA**

The Churchwide Assembly meets in odd-numbered years. It is attended by voting members, both laity and clergy, who have been selected to attend by their synods. There is a formula for defining the representation, which numbers approximately 1000 voting members across the more than 10,000 congregations. The Assembly meets for six full (12+ hour) days.

The Sierra Pacific Synod meets annually for 2.5 days. It is attended by voting members, both laity and clergy, who have been selected to attend by their congregations. There are efforts to ensure that both genders are roughly equally represented amongst the lay voting members.

## **LCMC**

The annual LCMC Leadership Conference convened at the Lutheran Church of the Master in Omaha, NE on April 25-27, 2010. The agenda reflected upon the Mission Statement “Free in Christ, Accountable to One Another, Rooted in the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions”.

The 2010 LCMC Annual Gathering takes place in Golden Valley, MN on October 3-6 at Calvary Lutheran Church. The theme is: “Celebrate! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”. This is based on Hebrews 13:8. The agenda is not published on the website except to say that discussion will center on the biblical passage which is cited.

## **NALC**

The NALC meets in convocation annually at a location to be determined.

The responsibilities of the annual convocation include: election of the Bishop, the Executive Council and any other position requiring election; adoption of a budget for the subsequent calendar year; consideration of teaching statements; reception of reports; and other items of business as may be determined by the Executive Council or by the Convocation. It is expected that the annual convocation will be no more than 2-3 days in length.

## **Questions Relating to Demographics and Statistics**

### ***What are the statistical trends for membership of congregations and individuals?***

#### **ELCA**

The ELCA is the largest North American Lutheran denomination, with more than 10,000 congregations and 4.6 million individuals. Both numbers are decreasing, with the individual membership down approximately 1.6% from 2008 to 2009.

The March 2010 issue of *The Lutheran* contains a sidebar entitled “Congregations vote to leave” with these statistics: 28 of ELCA’s 10,200 congregations passed a second and final vote to leave the denomination as of February 4. An additional 128 passed a first vote, 64 failed a first vote, and 4 congregation votes are being disputed. 19 of ELCA’s 65 synods had no congregations taking votes.

**LCMC**

There were 462 LCMC congregations in the United States as of September 1, 2010. On February 4, there were 266 and there were 179 on September 5, 2009. (Worldwide, there were 453 congregations as of June 15, up from 308 in early February). Rapid growth is expected to continue in the next year or two. Individual statistical trends are not readily available.

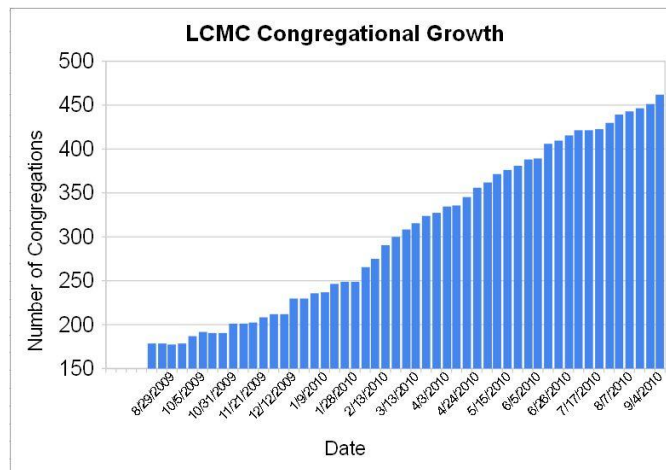


Figure 3: LCMC Growth

**NALC**

As this is a newly formed denominational body, no statistics yet exist for membership trending. Twenty congregations joined at the time of the Constituting Convention in August 2010.

***What are the demographics of the membership?***

**ELCA**

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson said in an interview. "We have been becoming a smaller church body in membership, increasingly older than the U.S. population, and a predominantly white denomination in an increasingly multiethnic and multicultural world. So in the larger context, what does it mean to be faithful, evangelical Lutherans in this changing context? Those questions will continue to be foremost."

**LCMC**

No data is given on the website for this question.

From the congregational directories, we can estimate that 47% of the LCMC congregations reside in the Midwest while about 22% reside in Western region. Of the congregations listing membership statistics, roughly 41% have baptized membership of less than 200, while 32% have baptized membership of more than 500. 73% of LCMC congregations listing membership statistics have an average weekly attendance of less than 200, while 9.4% have an average weekly attendance of more than 500.

## **NALC**

As this is a newly formed denominational body, no statistics yet exist for membership demographics. However, it is expected that much of the membership will be comprised of those who expressed a preference for completely withdrawing from ELCA or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and therefore it is reasonable to speculate that there will be some similarities between the demographics of the two denominational bodies.

## ***What is the annual budget of the national church body?***

### **ELCA**

The 2010 budget of \$69 million represented a 10% reduction from the 2009 budget.

### **LCMC**

In January 2010, income was \$53,500 and expenses were \$37,500. Annualized, income would be \$642,000 with expenses at \$450,000. Travel expenses to visit congregations comprise the largest expense item at this time. Income may grow as new churches join and include LCMC in their giving, while expenses will increase with the recent hiring of two part-time staff, the need for future staff and ongoing technological upgrade requirements.

### **NALC**

A 2011 budget of \$467,000 was adopted at the NALC Constituting Convention in August 2010. Since this is a recently formed church body, the budget has no prior history upon which to be based. A portion of the support for the 2011 year will come from Lutheran Core.

## **Version History**

Version 1.0 submitted by the Affiliation Team to the Church Council on July 6, 2010

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Version 2.1 amended by the Church Council on September 14, 2010