



OUR SHARED CALLING TO INVEST IN THE NEXT GENERATION

The Rev. Dr. Daniel W. Selbo

Bishop, North American Lutheran Church

As we move into the fall, the school year is well underway. Students are back in classrooms, families are settling into new routines, and teachers and school staff are already several weeks into another year of important work.

In light of that, it's a good time for us as the Church to think about our calling to the next generation.

At the heart of our vision for the NALC is a desire to be a disciple-making church body—renewing congregations, equipping people, and transforming communities as we respond in love to the calling and commission we have in Christ Jesus. An important part of making disciples is helping the next generation come to know Jesus

Christ, grow in their faith, and learn what it means to follow Him throughout their lives.

We saw a wonderful example of that this past summer at our Continental Youth Gathering in Roanoke, Virginia. More than 300 young people and leaders from across the NALC came together for worship, learning, fellowship, and service. It was an encouraging reminder that our young people are not simply the future of the Church; they are an important part of the Church today.

But our ministry to young people extends far beyond gatherings like the one this past summer. Throughout the year, our Youth and Family Ministry works to equip congregations, parents, and leaders with resources they can use in their



own communities. This fall, that includes resources for congregations and families to pray for and bless students and to help young people connect their faith in Jesus with their everyday lives.

I would encourage you to take advantage of those resources and to think about how your congregation can intentionally walk alongside the young people and families God has placed in your care.

I also recognize that this can look very different from one congregation to another. Some of our congregations have thriving youth groups and many children in worship each week. Others may have only a handful of young people on a given Sunday. Still others may have very few children or young families connected to the congregation at all.

If that describes your congregation, it would be easy to assume that youth and family ministry is simply not an area in which you can have much of an impact. But I would encourage you to think about it differently.

Youth and family ministry is not ultimately about having a particular program or a certain number of children in the pews. It's about the calling we all share to pass on the faith to the next generation.

So instead of asking, "How many children do we have in our congregation?" perhaps the better question is, "Who are the young people and families God has placed in our lives and in our community?"

They may be our children and grandchildren. They may be our neighbors. They may be students in a nearby school or young families living down the street. Every congregation has opportunities to pray for young people, encourage parents and families, build relationships across generations, support teachers in their work, and share the love of Christ with those God has placed around them.

Our Youth and Family Ministry has resources available even for congregations with only one or two young people, or none at all, because this is a

ministry that belongs to the entire Church. Visit thenalc.org/youthfamily to learn more.

The psalmist writes, "We will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done" (Ps. 78:4, ESV).

That is our calling. It's at the heart of why we exist and what we are to be about as the Church.

And so, as we settle into the rhythms of another school year, I want to leave you with a simple question: How is God calling you and your congregation to invest in the next generation? How is God leading you to introduce our children and our students to Christ?

Maybe it will be through prayer for a student or a family by name. Maybe it means looking beyond the walls of your church. Maybe it means reaching out to the community and the schools and praying for those who are there.

Whatever it means, whatever it looks like in your context, I encourage you to take that next step. And in so doing, don't ever underestimate what God might be doing through the Holy Spirit as you speak and share the name of Jesus.

Thank you for your continued partnership in the Gospel and for the many ways in which you are serving Christ in your congregations and communities. May God bless our students, families, teachers, and congregations in the year ahead, and may He use each of us to tell the coming generation of all that He has done.

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REGISTRATION NOW OPEN: CLERGY RETREAT 2027

Registration is now open for the 2027 Clergy Retreat, which will feature a refreshed schedule designed to better serve pastors, deans, and their spouses while bringing key gatherings together in one week.

As part of this new format, the Deans' Meeting will be incorporated into the retreat schedule as a pre-retreat gathering. This change replaces the separate November Deans' Meeting, helping reduce costs and creating greater opportunity for deans to participate fully in the annual retreat.

2027 Schedule

- **Pastoral Development Days:** January 18–19, 2027
- **New Deans' Bootcamp:** January 18, 2027
- **Deans' Meeting:** January 19, 2027
- **Clergy Spouse & Couples Gathering:** January 19, 2027
- **Clergy Retreat:** January 20–22, 2027

For more information and to register, visit thenalc.org/clergy-retreat.



“ALL RIGHT, LORD. I’LL BE A PASTOR”: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE REV. ETHAN ZIMMERMAN, NEWLY ORDAINED

Emily Clark

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After two years without a pastor, Christ the King Lutheran Church in Newcastle, Wyoming, has one again.

And for the Rev. Ethan Zimmerman, that still takes some getting used to.

“In all the times I’ve served in churches, I’ve always been the apprentice in ministry. The intern, any title that wasn’t the person in charge,” he said. “Now I’m the pastor, and people [look to me].”

When we spoke on August 31, Pastor Zimmerman was just 11 days into his first call. In that short time, he had already preached two Sundays, been installed as pastor, spent a few days in the church office, and begun getting to know the wider Christian community in Newcastle.

The congregation was ready to welcome him.

Between 77 and 95 people attended his first two Sundays, including members who had been away from the church. Pastors from other Newcastle-area congregations came to his installation, and on the fifth Sunday of the month, Pastor Zimmerman joined the Newcastle Ministerium for a community hymn sing.

For a newly ordained pastor stepping into his first call, it has been an encouraging beginning.

But the path to Newcastle began years earlier—and with some reluctance.

Pastor Zimmerman first sensed a call to ministry near the end of high school. For about nine months, he resisted it. Then, during his first week of college, he attended a worship night where the speaker preached about vocation and calling.

He still remembers the date: September 9, 2018.

“I was like, ‘All right, Lord. I’ll be a pastor.’”

He changed his major from criminal justice and pre-law to religion and eventually attended the North American Lutheran Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. After graduation, he spent a year as an intern at St. John Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas, before entering the call process earlier this year.

He was ordained July 18. A little more than a month later, he was no longer the student, intern, or apprentice. He was Pastor Zimmerman, serving a congregation of his own.

As he begins that ministry, his prayer is simple: that the Holy Spirit would “work through me and in spite of me” to energize a congregation eager to be present and active in the Newcastle community.

He also asks the wider church to pray—for protection, for Christ the King, and for the Spirit to continue making the way clear, “from the small things to the big things.”

For Pastor Zimmerman, the call that began years ago with a reluctant “All right, Lord” is now taking shape in a congregation, a community, and a new title he is still learning to wear: pastor.

You can watch the full interview at thenalc.org/en-us/ethan-zimmerman-story



YOUR CHURCH WANTS TO HIRE A YOUTH MINISTER—NOW WHAT?

The Rev. Teresa Peters

*Director of Youth & Family Ministry
North American Lutheran Church*

Hiring a youth minister can be one of the most exciting and most misunderstood decisions a congregation makes. The right person can strengthen discipleship, deepen relationships, and help a youth ministry grow. A poor fit can create frustration, turnover, and setbacks that take years to repair. A youth minister is more than a babysitter or event planner. The role often includes pastoral care, program leadership, teaching, administration, relationship building, and equipping others for ministry.

Start with the Ministry, Not the Job Description

Before writing a job description or beginning a search, congregations should first spend time in prayer and ask these questions: **What does our congregation actually need?** What's driving the desire to hire someone? What should this person's primary responsibility be? Youth ministry can take many forms, and understanding the kind of ministry you hope to build will help you figure out the kind of person you should seek.

I want to stress that hiring a youth leader does not mean you will suddenly have dozens of young people filling the pews. Building a healthy youth ministry takes time, just as building a healthy congregation takes time. It requires prayer, relationships, consistency, faithful teaching, and patience. The right youth minister can help create

the conditions for growth, but there is no shortcut to forming young people in faith and connecting them to the life of the congregation.

What Kind of Youth Ministry Are You Building?

There are many different models for youth ministry, and most healthy ministries will probably borrow from several of these. The important thing is to understand which approaches fit your congregation, your young people, and your ministry goals.

Team-Based Ministry places responsibility for youth ministry in the hands of a team rather than one person. Adult leaders divide responsibilities such as teaching, relationships, events, communication, administration, and service according to their gifts. Its strength is sustainability: the ministry doesn't rise or fall with one leader, and young people remain connected to trusted adults even when someone moves on. It also gives more adults opportunities to serve. Its challenge is the need for clear communication, defined roles, and coordination; without them, tasks can be missed, and leaders may work against one another.

Student Leadership intentionally trains young people to serve and lead through worship, small groups, service projects, and youth events. Its strength is helping students see themselves not simply as consumers of ministry, but as members of the Body of Christ with gifts and vocations of their own. It can build confidence, responsibility, and leadership skills. Its challenge is making sure leadership is more than symbolic. Giving a teenager a job is not the same as discipling a young leader. Students need adults who will mentor them, walk alongside them, and help them grow in faith and leadership.

The Discipleship Model focuses on forming mature followers of Jesus by connecting Scripture, prayer, worship, catechesis, service, and daily life. Success is measured less by attendance and more by whether young people are growing in Christ. Its strength is keeping spiritual formation central; its challenge is becoming too

inward-focused if mission, relationships, and the wider church are neglected.

The Mentoring Model connects young people with mature Lutheran Christians who encourage them in prayer, Scripture, worship, and life in Christ. Its strength is building deep, intergenerational relationships that reinforce the faith. Its challenge is finding trustworthy, well-trained adults who understand Lutheran teaching, appropriate boundaries, and the need for consistent investment over time.

Events and Experiences Ministry centers ministry around mission trips, camps, youth gatherings, and weekend rallies. These experiences can help young people step outside their routines, build relationships, serve others, worship with a larger Christian community, and experience their faith in memorable ways. Its strength is creating moments young people may remember for years. Its challenge comes when events become the ministry rather than serve it, leading young people to associate faith mainly with mountaintop experiences, emotional highs, or the next big trip.

The Family-Based Ministry recognizes parents and households as important partners in the faith formation of young people. The congregation equips families and connects youth ministry with faith at home and the wider life of the church. Its strength is helping faith formation continue beyond a weekly youth gathering. Its challenge is ensuring that young people from less-involved or difficult family situations are still surrounded by caring adults in the congregation.

The Relational Model emphasizes that ministry grows through trusted relationships. Leaders spend time with young people, attend their activities, ask about their lives, follow up after difficult moments, and make space for conversation. Its strength is helping young people know they are seen, known, and cared for, creating trust for deeper conversations about faith, doubt, sin, forgiveness, and vocation. Its challenge is becoming too dependent on one leader. Without a discipleship plan and broader congregational involvement, the ministry may struggle when that leader leaves.

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The Outreach or Evangelistic

Model intentionally looks beyond young people already connected to the congregation. This may include accessible events, inviting friends, service projects, and connections with schools and community organizations. Its strength is keeping youth ministry outward-focused and creating opportunities to clearly share the good news of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness He gives. Its challenge is making sure outreach doesn't stop with an event but leads young people into deeper relationships, worship, Scripture, catechesis, and the ongoing life of the congregation.

Turn the Ministry Vision into a Realistic Position

Remember, there is no single model that fits every congregation. What matters is knowing what your congregation is trying to accomplish before deciding who should lead it.

Once the ministry's direction is clear, practical questions become easier to answer. How many hours will this person work? Who will they be accountable to? Will there be a ministry team supporting them? Will the youth minister be responsible for recruiting and supervising volunteers? What is a fair compensation package, and what can the congregation realistically afford? The answers to these questions should grow out of the kind of ministry the congregation has decided it actually needs. Too often congregations begin by deciding what they can afford and then build a job around that number. It is better to identify the ministry you need first and then determine whether you can realistically staff it.

Where Do We Find the Right Person?

Then comes the question I am often asked: **Where do we find the right person?**

The NALC doesn't currently have a ready-made list of youth ministers looking for positions, although I certainly wish we did. One of the best places to begin is within your own congregation and ministry network. You may already have

someone in your congregation with the gifts, maturity, and passion for this ministry who simply needs encouragement, training, and support. In fact, this is where I have seen the most effective youth ministers come from. They are already familiar with the ethos of the congregation and already love the people.

Whether the person comes from within the congregation or from outside it, I would encourage churches to look for three things.

Three Things to Look for in a Youth Minister

First, look for someone who is **spiritually healthy**. By that, I mean someone whose Christian faith is not simply something they can explain, but something they are actively living. They are rooted in Christ, regularly receiving God's Word and Sacraments, growing in prayer, willing to repent when they are wrong, and seeking to live out their faith in love and service to others. If the candidate is already part of your congregation, you may already have a good sense of this. If they come from outside the congregation, ask questions that go beyond whether they can give the right theological answers. Ask how God has been at work in their life, what they have been learning from Scripture, where they have experienced growth, and how they are being challenged in their faith. A spiritually healthy leader should also be teachable, accountable, humble, and self-aware. They don't need to have everything figured out, but they should be able to point to ways God is shaping them and, most importantly, seek to lead young people not to themselves, but to Jesus Christ.

Second, look for someone who is **confessionally Lutheran**. Lutheran youth ministry is not primarily about producing enthusiastic teenagers, well-behaved kids, or young people who have made a one-time decision for Jesus. Its central task is to bring young people again and again to Christ and His promises. That means teaching Scripture, helping young people understand and remember their Baptism, and proclaiming the forgiveness they have in Christ. It also means bringing them into the worshiping life of the congregation,

where they receive God's gifts in Word and Sacrament, and helping them live out their faith in service to their neighbor. Theology matters because what a youth minister believes will shape what they teach and ultimately what young people are taught.

Finally, look for someone who is **passionate about young people and youth ministry**. I cannot say this enough: this person doesn't need to fit the stereotype of the young, hip, guitar-playing 20-something. Age, style, and personality are far less important than whether the person genuinely loves young people and wants to invest in them. Young people are looking for adults who are genuine, trustworthy, and willing to be present in their lives. Youth ministry requires someone who will remain faithful even when the results are not immediately visible.

Faithful Youth Ministry Takes Time

That last point is especially important because youth ministry takes time. We teach, pray, build relationships, bring young people into worship, and keep placing God's Word before them, but God is the One who creates and strengthens faith through His Word and Sacraments. Much of youth ministry is faithful planting and watering, trusting the Holy Spirit to give the growth in His time. Young people need adults who will keep showing up, speaking the Gospel, reminding them of their Baptism, and walking with them in the life of the Church. Programs may change, but the center remains the same: Christ crucified and risen for sinners.

The goal, then, is not simply to fill a vacant position or find someone willing to keep the teenagers busy. The goal is to call and support someone who can faithfully help your congregation make disciples of Jesus Christ among the young people God has entrusted to your care.

Before you begin your search, spend time praying, listening, and asking what ministry your congregation truly needs. When that is clear, you will be in a much better position to recognize the

person God may already be preparing to serve alongside you.

If your congregation is considering hiring a youth minister and you would like help thinking through your needs, ministry model, or next steps, please reach out. I would be glad to listen, brainstorm, and help you develop a realistic direction for your congregation.

For more information, contact Pastor Teresa Peters, director of Youth & Family Ministry, at tpeters@thenalc.org.



LEADING WELL WHEN THERE IS NO PASTOR

The Rev. Tom Brashears

*Director of Leadership Development
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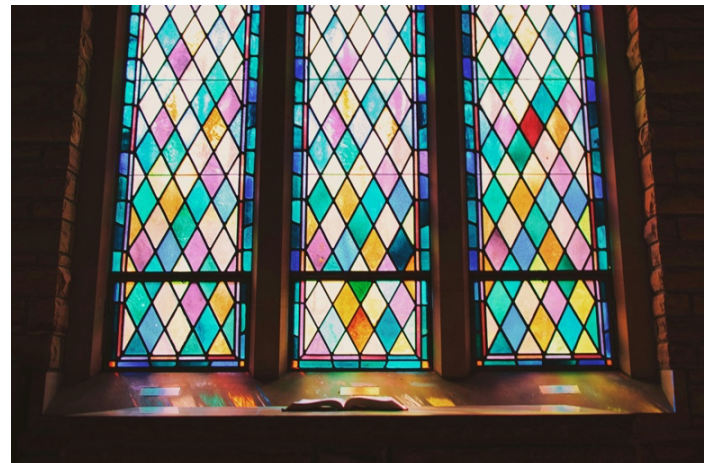
Seasons without a pastor can feel unsettling for a congregation. Questions surface quickly: *Who is really in charge? How do we make decisions? Are we allowed to move forward, or should we just wait?* Even faithful leaders can feel hesitant, unsure whether taking initiative is wise or risky. In these seasons, uncertainty can quietly drain confidence and stall momentum.

Yet Scripture reminds us that the church's life does not depend on one role alone. God continues to work through councils, lay leaders, interim pastors, and shared responsibility. Transitions, while challenging, can become seasons of deep listening and renewed clarity—if leaders resist the temptation to freeze. Faithful leadership during transition is not about rushing

ahead or holding everything together by force; it is about steadiness, trust, and attentiveness.

This is where the **Renew process** can be especially helpful. Renew offers congregations a calm, structured way to reflect, discern, and clarify direction—even when pastoral leadership is in flux. By focusing on shared purpose, strengths, health, and priorities, leaders are reminded that God's call to the congregation remains. Rather than putting everything on hold, churches can use transition time to deepen clarity and prepare the ground for what comes next. When leaders choose steadiness over fear, transitions can become a gift rather than a setback.

Learn more at thenalc.org/renew.



ALL PRAISE AND THANKS TO GOD: THE EUCHARISTIC MEAL, PART 2: THE PROPER PREFACE

The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin

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The proper preface, most often simply called the preface, brings the Scriptures to us in such a way that it is integral to how the liturgical year forms us. It is one of the clearest elements of the liturgy as a doxological catechism. It is sung by the presider as it calls the whole assembly to sing the *sanctus*, a song through which our voices are joined to the courts of heaven.

Between the *sursum corda*, in which even the voices of Boaz and Ruth are remembered (Ruth

2:4), and the *sanctus*, the preface directly relates to a liturgical season or festival day, explicitly giving us a biblical text that helps us receive and understand the appointed texts that have been proclaimed.

Each preface opens with an expansion of the last versicle of the dialogue/*sursum corda*, "It is right to give him thanks and praise," in such a way that the assembly is led to give thanks and praise when its voices are joined to earth and sea and all their creatures, saints and angels, seraphim and cherubim, and all the hosts of heaven in the *sanctus*. The preface will echo and expand the congregation's response, "It is indeed right and salutary," before we hear the words of a particular witness to a foundational event recorded in the Scriptures. Through the prefaces, we are again and again grafted into the salvific events that are witnessed to in the written Scriptures. If we examine the prefaces, we see a unified thread that carries us from conception to ascension, and then to the Holy Spirit alive in the whole earth. For every preface also ties us to our confession of faith voiced in the historic creeds.

Most of our prefaces date back to the Gregorian and/or Gelasian Sacramentaries that were codified in the sixth and seventh centuries. They come to us through the English reformer Thomas Cranmer's translation (with a bit of editing). Each preface is addressed to the Father, then is centered by showing forth by the Son, and, while not named explicitly, is emboldened to be sung in the power of the Spirit. Each one opens in the same manner, "It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord..."

Advent

...You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes again to judge the world in righteousness...

Christmas

...In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory; that, beholding
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the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see...

Easter

...But chiefly we are bound to praise you for the glorious resurrection of our Lord; for he is the true Passover Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin, who by his death has destroyed death, and by his rising has brought us to eternal life. And so with Mary Magdalene...

Ascension

...who, after his resurrection, appeared openly to his disciples and, in their sight, was taken up into heaven, that he might make us partners in his divine nature...

Pentecost

...who rose beyond the bounds of death and [on this day] as he had promised, poured out your Spirit of life and power upon the chosen disciples. At this the whole earth exults in boundless joy...

Then, depending on the season, we are led to join in song, with simplicity or elaboration, in the *sanctus* to praise God's name and join the unending song of the Church on earth and in heaven.

Prefaces work to bring us to a life of praise in conjunction with the appointed lectionary texts and the hymns of each season. They are a means through which we celebrate a whole season, such as Easter, not only on the day of the festival but on the following Sundays.

To look more closely at one preface, take a moment to reflect on the preface for Advent, through which we hear the promise of comfort, the hope of new life, and judgment of this world through God's righteousness. The preface sings the biblical witness as the texts sound ever deeper in our hearts. Like a mother who carries a child yet in the womb, in Advent we live in the hope that spans from the prophecies of Isaiah to the faith of Mary. "Comfort, comfort now my people..." (Isa. 40:1-2). In Advent, we remember and live the hope of the coming of God's presence among us (Emmanuel) for the sake of the whole world.

In the prefaces, these doxological proclamations of the biblical text are a key to experiencing the unity of Scripture and liturgy. "And so with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise his name and join their unending hymn."



CELEBRATING RECENT ORDINATIONS

Over the past several weeks, the North American Lutheran Church has celebrated the ordination of four new pastors who have been called to serve congregations across the United States and Canada.

The Rev. Paul Frederickson was ordained on August 19 and has been called to serve Valhalla Lutheran Church in Valhalla Centre, Alberta.

The Rev. Maureen "Molly" King was ordained on August 30 and has been called to serve Zion (Obetz) Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio.

The Rev. Charles "Chuck" Scharadin was ordained on September 12 and has been called to serve Friedens Lutheran Church of Stony Run in Kempton, Pennsylvania. Pastor Scharadin completed his preparation for ordained ministry through the Ordination Under Special Circumstances (OUSC) process.

The Rev. Lucas Safrit was ordained on September 19 and has been called to serve Christiana Lutheran Church in Salisbury, North Carolina.

We give thanks to God for these newly ordained pastors, the congregations that have called them, and all those who have supported and

encouraged them throughout their preparation for ministry. Please join us in praying for Pastor Frederickson, Pastor King, Pastor Scharadin, and Pastor Safrit as they begin this new season of service in Christ's Church.



ANNUAL INTERNS' RETREAT

The Rev. Dr. Amy Little

General Secretary

North American Lutheran Church

In August, a group of nine students and their supervisors joined together in Laurelville, Pennsylvania, for three days to learn more about Bowen Family Systems Theory. Led by Pastor Jess Abbott, we discussed the eight main concepts of the theory and the importance of pastors being able to handle their own reactivity in the parish. As pastors, we need to be cognizant of our own emotional functioning in our family and in the congregation.

Murray Bowen, a psychiatrist, noticed in his work with schizophrenic patients in the hospital that, under certain conditions, the patients had greater stability in life. Those conditions were the emotional health of their family, especially their mothers. What he consistently observed was a deterioration of the patients' mental state when a reactive family member was visiting. When a parent was calm and "thought-full," the patient was able to be less reactive.

Rabbi Edwin Friedman was a student of Bowen and applied the theory to the synagogue and church, noting that those entities function like a

family. The pastor has a privileged position in the “family,” which we explored together on retreat. Like the father or mother of a family, the pastor’s emotional health, differentiation of self, and ability to self-regulate all directly affect the church family. If the leader is reactive, reactivity will be seen in the parish, as it is like an electrical current moving from one member to another. So, we want to teach future pastors how to be “down transformers” of the anxiety in the system. This is incredibly important because a congregation cannot grow deeper in mission and discipleship when there is an atmosphere of conflict and reactivity.

For more on this topic, check out our *Navigating Conflict* course at thenalc.org/en-us/navigating-conflict



SPIRITUAL FORMATION: THE HEART OF STEWARDSHIP

The Rev. Tom Brashears

Director of Leadership Development

The Rev. Dona Johnson

*Chair, Living & Giving Stewardship Team
North American Lutheran Church*

Stewardship is at the heart of spiritual formation. We often think of stewardship as something we do: filling out a pledge card, signing up to serve, balancing a budget. But faithful stewardship begins deeper, in what God does for and in us. God always moves first. Before we give anything, He has already given everything: our lives and all we have, the forgiveness of sins won by Christ,

and the new life poured out on us in Baptism. As Luther teaches in the *Small Catechism*, "For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him." Faith, gratitude, and generosity are not achievements we produce. They are the fruit of God's prior gift. This is why spiritual formation lies at the heart of stewardship. Spiritual formation is the Holy Spirit's lifelong work of conforming us to Christ through the Word and the Sacraments, so that the new life given in Baptism bears fruit in love for our neighbor.

As we continue to receive God's love through the preaching of the Word, at the font, and at the Table, our grip loosens. The things we once clutched tightly, such as our schedules, abilities, and money, begin to look less like possessions to guard and more like gifts entrusted to us for others. We give our time more freely. We offer the talents God has woven into us. We begin to hold our financial resources with open hands and find the courage to share our faith with others. That kind of sharing deepens our bonds as the Body of Christ because generosity is never merely transactional. It is relational, drawing us closer to God and to one another.

However, spiritual formation expressed through the lens of stewardship is not only transactional but, more importantly, a transformational act of faith. It's transformational because God initiates through Word and Sacrament, and the Holy Spirit then inwardly changes our character, our personality, and how we relate to money and earthly possessions. We discover a powerful truth that we manage, not own, what God has already given us (Deut. 8:18; 1 Chron. 29:14)! Luke reiterates these same truths in Acts 17:25: "And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else."

When Jesus' sacrificial love for us penetrates our souls, it sparks a spiritual shift in our hearts, rebounds to God, the source of all love, and prompts us to share our experience of His love generously and genuinely with our neighbor. We must always remember that spiritual formation is not an overnight process; it takes time. As Eugene Peterson says, spiritual formation, or call it

discipleship, is “a long obedience in the same direction” in the faithful and daily use of our time, talents, treasures, and testimony.

Luther also understood this transformation well. He stated that there are three conversions: the conversion of the mind, the conversion of the heart, and the conversion of the purse. The born-again experiences God initiates through the means of grace must penetrate both our minds and our hearts, transforming how each of us, individually and corporately, relates to money and worldly possessions in a culture overwhelmed with excessive consumerism.

Faithful stewardship is heart work. And each of us comes to this heart work as a beginner. The beauty of this inward transformation is that those whom God loves and the Holy Spirit transforms live a *new* life in Christ, a life of freedom, a generous life overflowing with the unforced rhythms of God’s grace.

Spiritual formation, seen through the lens of stewardship, will always begin and end in love. For God is love (both passive and active) and is generous with that love, not holding back. It is a love so profound that, for many, it remains hard to grasp today. For it is a love forged in the crucible of Christ’s sacrifice, His suffering, and His miraculous resurrection. And Jesus generously extends His love to the whole human family, revealed throughout His marvelous creation.



BYLD—BUILDING YOUTH AS LEADERS WHO ARE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

The Rev. Teresa Peters

Director of Youth & Family Ministry

Are you a high school student who wants to grow in faith and leadership? Or is there a young person in your congregation whose gifts for leadership you would like to encourage and develop?

BYLD—Building Youth as Leaders Who Are Disciples of Christ is a weeklong experience designed to equip high school students to serve faithfully as leaders in the Church. Through theological learning, practical leadership development, hands-on mission experiences, and time in Christian community, participants will learn from NALC pastors, professors, and young adult leaders while building friendships with other students from across the NALC.

BYLD is not only for students considering full-time ministry. It is for young people who love the Church and want to grow in their ability to serve. Participants may one day serve as youth leaders, council members, volunteers, teachers, mentors, or in countless other vocations within their congregations and communities.

BYLD will take place July 12–17, 2026, at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, near the North American Lutheran Seminary Center in Ambridge.

Space is limited to just 24 students, and registration is now open. Congregations are encouraged to identify young people with leadership potential and personally invite them to take part in this unique opportunity to grow as disciples and leaders in Christ's Church.

The cost is only \$100, plus transportation to Pennsylvania. For more information, reach out to Pastor Teresa Peters at tpeters@thenalc.org.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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