



**GOD THE FATHER
CREATES**
Lutheran Week 2021

2021 Nominee Biographical Information

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2021 Mission Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church Interim Report of the Nominating Committee

The 2021 Nominating Committee presents the candidates named below for positions to be elected at the August mission convocation. We believe that all the individuals named are qualified and would do well in their service if elected.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

During the interim between convocations, the Executive Council shall implement the work and policies of the NALC and shall act for the NALC, subject in all matters to review of its actions by subsequent convocations.

Each year the convocation elects one pastor and one layperson to the Executive Council for four-year terms. The 2021 clergy candidates are as follow (name, current congregation and nominating congregation):

- [The Rev. Dr. Jess Abbott](#), Faith Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, Ohio; nominated by Faith Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, Ohio
- [The Rev. Mark A. Werner](#), Emanuel Lutheran Church, Elmer, New Jersey; nominated by Emanuel Lutheran Church, Elmer, New Jersey

The 2021 lay candidate is (name, current congregation and first congregation to nominate):

- [Mr. Joel B. Williams](#), Badger Lutheran Church, Badger, South Dakota; nominated by First English Lutheran Church, Lennox, South Dakota

COURT OF ADJUDICATION

The Court of Adjudication has jurisdiction to decide appeals from disciplinary decision, questions regarding interpretation of the NALC's governing documents, and claims that any person, body or entity has violated the governing documents of the NALC.

This year two individuals, clergy or lay, will be elected to a four-year term on the Court of Adjudication. The 2021 candidates are as follows (name, current congregation and nominating congregation):

- [The Rev. Miguel A. Acosta](#), Stone Lutheran Church, Ashland, Ohio; nominated by Stone Lutheran Church, Ashland, Ohio
- [The Rev. Dr. Jeffray S. Greene](#), Prince of Peace, Fayetteville, Georgia; nominated by Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran, Manistee, Michigan

- [Mr. Lyle Hollander](#), St. John Lutheran, Boyden, Iowa; nominated by St. John Lutheran, Boyden, Iowa
- [Mr. Matthew A. Lind](#), Port Madison Lutheran, Bainbridge Island, Washington; nominated by Port Madison Lutheran, Bainbridge Island, Washington

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Hugh W. Brewer, chair

The Rev. Dona Johnson

The Rev. Kevin Scott

NOMINEES FOR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (CLERGY)

THE REV. DR. JESS ABBOTT
Loveland, Ohio



Congregational Membership: Faith Lutheran Church
(Cincinnati, Ohio)

Occupation: Pastor

Basic Biographical Information: I have been married to Cindy for 38 years. We have three adult sons and two granddaughters (ages 7 and 17 years-old). In addition to my D.Min., I'm a graduate of the U.S. Army War College (Master of Strategic Studies). My biggest hobby

is stained glass.

Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position. During my 32 years as an ordained pastor, I have served six congregations; as a mission pastor, associate pastor, senior pastor, vice pastor, and interim pastor. Concurrent with serving congregations, I served as an Army Reserve chaplain, functioning as a special staff advisor for commanders (ranks from lieutenant colonels to four-star generals). I am a certified Stephen Leader and led a team of 26 Stephen Ministers to provide one-to-one caregiving for 16 years.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry? Of the five-fold gifts provided by Paul in Ephesians 4:11, I score highest on apostle and teacher. I have a passion for coming up with innovative ways to do the Kingdom's work and teach others to cherish Scripture. I've worked with family systems theory since 1996 as a tool for coaching leaders in organizations /congregations. I have a bachelors of business administration and have used my business knowledge for the work of the Church over the years.

What challenges do you see facing the NALC over the next few years? Stimulating congregations toward faithful growth in disciple-making and numerical growth. This will be a challenge given the need for changing congregational lifestyles given the increasing congregational age. Associated with this challenge will be providing capable clergy and lay-ministers to simultaneously provide care and leadership to shepherd congregations in the pursuit of passionate visions.

What hopes do you have for the mission of the NALC over the next few years? That the NALC will continue to be Congregationally Focused. I hope it will continue to keep denominational overhead small while providing resources and encouragement that promote congregational health and mission. I hope that the NALC will continue and expand

upon “academy” type training to equip lay ministers in outlying areas of the continent in practical ministry skills. I hope the current *2020 Vision* takes on an enduring form so that each of its 10 elements can fully mature.

What should be the NALC’s most important ministry priorities over the next few years?

The *2020 Vision* sets some great priorities. I think the most important of them are those that strive for organic, grassroots and discipleship. There is a risk in programatizing discipleship instead of developing mechanisms for disciple-making. The NALC should continue to facilitate established congregations shifting into disciple-making culture and plant new congregations/ministries that launch with a disciple-making culture. Planting new-starts will likely also require a strategy to prioritize locations of greatest potential and people with best suited capabilities.

What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Christ-Centered and Mission-Driven church?

It seems to me that “staying” Christ Centered and being “driven” in mission doesn’t happen in a people-vacuum (isolated congregations). Congregations need outside eyes to challenge their ruts and status quo. Congregation partnerships would help; every congregation could have a relatively local sister congregation (or support a new-start). The NALC would provide the framework and mission districts could provide the venue for dialog and mutually supporting relationships.

Describe how you experience God active in your daily life. I experience the Lord as a listener to my prayers, and prayer gives me joy and solace. But Scripture is where I hear God the loudest and where I put my trust (my prayerful intuition is not so trustworthy). By far, however, I have experienced God’s guidance and wisdom through God’s people. I have been amazed over 32 years of pastoral ministry, how people reflect God’s Word back to me after a sermon, or just plain say something that is chit-chat to them, but prophetic for me. I experience God through the body of Christ.

List a favorite scripture verse and tell us why it has meaning for you. Romans 12:1-2 has always had a special meaning for me. Once I was not a Christian, now I am; and indeed, it required a “renewing” of my mind and an earnest effort to no longer conform to this world. The key to understanding the making of disciples is that our mission is to go after those who are not disciples. These non-disciples are conformed to the world and our bold mission is to do something to get their minds renewed.

THE REV. MARK A. WERNER
Pittsgrove, New Jersey



Congregational Membership: Emanuel Lutheran Church
(Elmer, New Jersey)

Occupation: Pastor

Basic Biographical Information: I am married to Amy Werner. We have one son – Jordan. I have an M.Div. from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and a Masters of Sacred Theology from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. My hobbies include reading and cooking.

Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position. I have served as secretary of the Mid-Northeast Mission District. I currently serve on the NALC Disaster Response Task Force, Great Commission Society and Sola Publishing Board. In the ELCA, I served as a conference dean and chair of the Lower Susquehanna Synod Committee of Deans and Secretaries.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry? My spiritual gifts include the ability to compassionately listen to individuals – which leads to prayer with and/or for the person with whom I'm speaking. I have guided congregations in the development of their mission statements and mission plans.

What challenges do you see facing the NALC over the next few years? Our biggest challenge will be to reach the growing population of persons who do not know Jesus. Another challenge will be to help people see attending to Word and Sacrament and active life in a congregation's mission and ministry as valuable to their relationship with Jesus.

What hopes do you have for the mission of the NALC over the next few years? My hope and prayer is that in obedience to the Great Commission and the commandments, God will use congregations of the NALC to meet the challenges I've noted in the previous question.

What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years? Our biggest priority continues to be the joyful work of making disciples of Jesus. As we equip and build up the body of Christ by making disciples, we will also assist congregations in raising up faithful lay leaders and individuals who may hear God calling them to ordained ministry.

What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Christ-Centered and Mission-Driven church? NALC congregations can build on their use of technology from the pandemic to teach

basics of Christian faith. Congregations can also look to public gatherings such as festivals or community days to hand out Bibles, children's Bible story books and engage in conversations.

Describe how you experience God active in your daily life. I value my time in the Word and in prayer on a daily basis. I have taken to heart the line from the Baptismal rite, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16 ESV). In my relationships, I seek to let the light of Christ shine through me.

List a favorite scripture verse and tell us why it has meaning for you. Ephesians 2:8-10. I rejoice in the free gift of God's amazing grace. It is in Christ alone that I have been saved. I see the reference to walking in a life of good works as a life of discipleship.

NOMINEES FOR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (LAY)

MR. JOEL B. WILLIAMS
Erwin, South Dakota



Congregational Membership: Badger Lutheran Church
(Badger, South Dakota)

Occupation: Director of Recruitment and Donor Services

Basic Biographical Information: Married and very much in love with my wife of 44 years. Three children, all married and they brought eight grandchildren into the group. All of that is the center of my life. I attended North Dakota State University for a business degree. I played some football for the Bison (NDSTU), like to sail, build things and do anything my wife or kids would like help with. I also like to fix things!

Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position. When I retired, I felt marooned and looking for something. I was offered a job and challenge to recruit students to a school. With God's help, I have doubled the student numbers in 12 months.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry? I like to fix things!

What challenges do you see facing the NALC over the next few years? Drifting from the mission of the NALC. Drifting from the mission of the church as established. We need to pray for and assist leadership in making sure that direction is maintained and completed.

What hopes do you have for the mission of the NALC over the next few years? Growth and dedication to the reasons that created the NALC. Growth in pastors and churches, support to the church base and growth in education.

What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years? Pastors, preachers and more pastors. Training, educating and raising up new church leaders everyday. If we fail at that – nothing else will matter.

What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Christ-Centered and Mission-Driven church? Believe and live into the mission statement of the NALC. As long as we don't leave that mission on the shelf and make decisions outside those thoughts, the NALC will be fine.

Describe how you experience God active in your daily life. What I do in recruiting students and donors is only doable with God's help and guidance.

List a favorite scripture verse and tell us why it has meaning for you. Hebrews 11:1 — faith in the unknown and unseen is essential in my belief.

NOMINEES FOR COURT OF ADJUDICATION

THE REV. MIGUEL A. ACOSTA

Lorain, Ohio



Congregational Membership: Stone Lutheran Church (Ashland, Ohio)

Occupation: Pastor

Basic Biographical Information: Pastor Miguel Acosta, is a native of Cuba, but has lived in America since 2005. He is the senior pastor at Stone Lutheran Church. He is married to Kelly Acosta, who is a music teacher and choir director for a middle school. They have one daughter – Jacqueline Acosta. Miguel has a Masters Degree in Theology and Philosophy, and a diploma in pastoral care. Since 2008 he has served as a mission developer for hispanic ministries – planting churches in different states. He is an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament (August, 2013), has served as an interim and senior pastor in bilingual settings (English-Spanish), a chaplain, a Board of Education certified spanish teacher and has a Christian counseling diploma.

Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position: The best experience that has qualified me for this position is the congregational life in a wide variety of settings over the years. Where with the help of the Holy Spirit and discernment, I have had the opportunity to resolve conflicts and find answers for the order, functioning and well being of the church body. Among other settings.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry? Of the five gifts provided by Paul in Ephesians 4:11, I scored highest on pastor and teacher. I have a passion for coming up with creative and relevant ways to do the Kingdom's work and teach others to approach Scripture on a personal level. I've worked in different settings of Christian ministry (as a chaplain and as a teacher) that gave me an extended understanding of human behavior to resolve conflicts with compassionate and correct ways, continuously seeking to improve my education in areas related.

What challenges do you see facing the NALC over the next few years? Actively design programs and formation for discipleship of youth groups and young adults at the congregational level to develop their full energy and capacity within the Church body, maximizing their potential as members of the Church and ministers of the body of Christ.

What hopes do you have for the mission of the NALC over the next few years? I have faith and hope that the presence of the NALC in each neighborhood, city and state, will become

a beacon to people's lives. That we can make a difference knowing and trusting that in the Word of God given to us through the Scriptures we can change the environment and the secular culture where every day God's real presence is challenged. Be the mark for many, that can't see a transformation in a uniquely revealing way. With love and Christian compassion.

What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?

1. Emphasize personal evangelism and prayer;
2. Teach and promote the power of an invitation;
3. Catalyze action and decisions through worship and teaching;
4. View the weekend services as a total experience;
5. Monitor spiritual movement and growth at all levels;
6. Focus on connecting with people as quickly as possible;
7. Become known in the community;
8. Communicate continuously in different ways the vision;
9. Limit non-strategic ministries; and
10. Increase and promote the use of technology in congregational settings.

What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Christ-Centered and Mission-Driven church?

My humble opinion is that staying Christ Centered and Mission Driven doesn't happen if there is no good fellowship and communication. Congregations needs to be outside the traditional setting, able to explore new ways to do evangelism. Where tradition becomes a stumbling block, turn it down by the "flowing" power of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Scriptures and evangelism. The NALC could provide the framework and mission districts could steer projects to promote dialog training and mutual support.

Describe how you experience God active in your daily life. He is just as real and present in particular struggles and in times of specific pain — when we feel a peace that “transcends all understanding” in the midst of circumstances. I experience the presence of God in my life, and I have learned that God “shows up even when we’re not on a retreat or having quiet time. He invades grocery lines and football stadiums, cry rooms and cafeterias. He speaks in ways we expect, and in ways we do not.

List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you. Galatians 6:4-5 MSG. "Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of us must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life."

THE REV. DR. JEFFRAY S. GREENE
Brooks, Georgia



Congregational Membership: Prince of Peace (Fayetteville, Georgia)

Occupation: Pastor

Basic Biographical Information: A pastor for 32 years, married for 36, with three children and two grandchildren, it has been and is a privilege to serve our Lord and His Church. I have a Ph.D., specializing in church governance and have used the passion and experience gained for the church over the years. I have many hobbies which include: remodeling, electrical and technical work, as well as learning (which keeps me constantly in books and, more recently, watching how-to YouTube videos).

Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position: As an incumbent on the board, I offer to serve again with the experience and understanding of the working of the court. I have sensed the call to continue serving our church in this way and offer years of practical experience in the congregation and with the greater church which has provided what is needed for the court. I was a part of the formation of the governing documents of our church and currently serve on the Constitution Committee. What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry? I have been blessed with a sense of humor and the love to share Jesus with anyone I meet, anywhere and anytime. I have a passion to reach out to help anyone in need in our local mission field and neighborhood.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry? I am not a lawyer, but I sometimes think like one (so I've been told). Not that this is necessary for the court, but it is helpful. What are the necessary procedures and how do we do what needs to be done within the authority which has been entrusted to us? That is sometimes difficult, but as a member of the court, we are here to help the church be the church as faithfully as the Holy Spirit enables us to be.

What challenges do you see facing the NALC over the next few years? Hopefully, the challenges that face the NALC will not include anything that the court needs to deal with! The greatest challenge before us is the need for more pastors to serve in congregations. Our bishop has spoken of this in his vision and I pray the Lord will meet the need we see before us. It is the Lord's Church and perhaps the greatest challenge for us all is to continue to trust that our Lord knows all that is needed.

What hopes do you have for the mission of the NALC over the next few years? I pray that we see growth in additional congregations and growth within congregations through a

heightened sense of call to the Great Commission. To the above, we will need more pastors to take the place of our aging pastors and to serve an increased number of congregations.

What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?

Our bishop has given us the vision for the NALC. We should live out what this mission encourages, for it lays out the ministry priorities. The Lord has granted us forward-looking leaders, so let us follow their lead as the Holy Spirit guides us in the years to come.

What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Christ-Centered and Mission-Driven church?

Increasing our passion and compassion through the Holy Spirit's guidance, being disciples in every sense of the word, seeking to be the church in Word and deed, we can fulfill the call of our Lord to us. Keeping our eyes upon Christ and knowing that He is sending us out into a world that needs the Good News of the Gospel, is at the heart of living out our faith. Yes, it takes commitment. What can I say that I do not say each Sunday? Let us actually go in peace and serve our Lord in the world each and every day.

Describe how you experience God active in your daily life. Each day begins with devotion, the reading of Scripture and prayer. As the day unfolds, I seek to hear as the Holy Spirit leads, doing what the Lord would have me do in each moment. Each day has its opportunities and challenges. These are not mere words, but the reality of the relationship that our Lord is growing in me.

List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you. Today (I have many favorites), my favorite verse (I am preparing for Holy Week), is Hebrews 1:1-2, "in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (RSV).

MR. LYLE HOLLANDER
Boyden, Iowa



Congregational Membership: St. John Lutheran (Boyden, Iowa)

Occupation: Pastor

Basic Biographical Information: I'm retired but still an active co-owner of a manufacturing facility, since 1976. I have been married to Lorna for 55 years and we have four children and 10 grandchildren. I attended Northwestern College at Orange City, Iowa, plus various commercial trade courses. I serve on various local boards. I enjoy music and flying.

Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:

I have served our church as treasurer, deacon, and trustee numerous times, as well as a choir member, and taught Sunday school for over 20 years. My wife and I were members of Word Alone almost since its beginning. I have attended most of our NALC Convocations – as a delegate and also a visitor. I currently serve on the Iowa Mission District Council. I have just completed a 4 year term as a member of the Court of Adjudication.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry? I'm hopeful that my experiences through the years as an employer, with approximately 250 employees and my service in various church responsibilities, as well as serving on various community boards have given me an increased sense of compassion and responsibility to the people I come in contact within my daily life. While I recognize my failures and shortcomings, with His help, I hope I can use these skills and experiences to assist God's people.

What challenges do you see facing the NALC over the next few years? I think that the greatest challenge the NALC, and most mainline denominations are facing, is how to make God, the Word and the fellowship of Christian community important and relevant in these times. We have become so reliant on science and new-age thinking, that the concept of God is no longer relevant. The second challenge I see is bringing more pastors into the ministry to help us reach the younger generations in a way they can relate to.

What hopes do you have for the mission of the NALC over the next few years? My hope for the NALC for the future is that we are able to grow and continue to be a vital and dynamic resource for all of our member congregations. When we were chartered, domestic and foreign outreach was stressed, with each congregation supporting both mission fields. I hope that the emphasis on mission continues and grows.

What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few

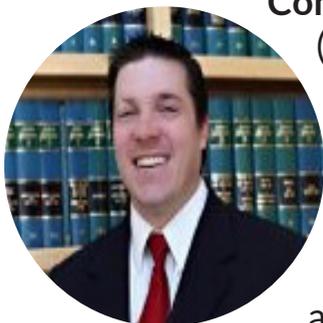
years? The most important ministry priority must be continued emphasis on the Word and the growth of our faith life. Continued and increased participation in Bible study by our members and the understanding of how relevant God and His Word are in our daily lives is primary to our ministry. Mission outreach and all other support efforts begin here. Raising up faithful pastors who will not succumb to the pressures of the secular world and compromise their task is critical.

What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Christ-Centered and Mission-Driven church? Continuing and increased emphasis on the study of the Word and our mission. Continuing our analysis of our mission districts to prevent excessive travel time and expense for the deans and for members attending meetings and convocations. This could encourage participation by small congregations and mission starts. This may require regional districts rather than by state lines. Increasing our relationships and support of neighboring NALC congregations could be assisted if not separated by a state border.

Describe how you experience God active in your daily life. Looking back at my life, through health, wealth, and lack thereof, I can see where God has been directing events in my life for my ultimate good, though it was difficult to ascertain at times. As I approach advancing age, and when sleep avoids me, I fall back to His promises of eternal life and salvation to find comfort and strength. The words of John 11:25-26 have become extremely important to me.

List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you. Psalm 23. My wife and I have had some serious health and other issues in our lives. This psalm reminds me daily of His care for us, especially in times of stress. I find verses 1 and 3: "I shall not want" and "He restoreth my soul" particularly comforting. I read "My cup runneth over" and realize with gratitude, that "Surely His goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" has been true and continues to be so each day.

MR. MATTHEW A. LIND
Bainbridge Island, Washington



Congregational Membership: Port Madison Lutheran Church
(Bainbridge Island, Washington)

Occupation: Attorney

Basic Biographical Information: I am married (17 years) and have two daughters (Clara is 13 and Annie is 11). I went to the University of Washington for college and Seattle University for law school. I am a partner at a busy small town law firm located in Poulsbo, WA. Sailing and skiing are our main family hobbies. I also enjoy reading (particularly religious writings), philosophy, apologetics and physics.

Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position: I have been on multiple church committees and church councils, including roles as president, vice-president and treasurer (current). As an attorney, I have represented churches in various legal and corporate matters, both contested and transactional, including advising several congregations, boards, a school and a local diocese. I have helped form nonprofit organizations such as churches, charities, foundations and endowments — including drafting and auditing charter/incorporation documents, bylaws, mission statements, statements of faith, and other legal documents. I have also participated in civil and ecclesiastical adjudicative processes, hearings and appeals, as well as alternative dispute resolution processes (civil and faith based).

What challenges do you see facing the NALC over the next few years? Increasing secularization of American culture, spiritual battles within churches and against the church, and standing firm in its commitment to scripture and tradition.

What hopes do you have for the mission of the NALC over the next few years? That the NALC can attract new membership, can utilize new technologies as a tool to reach new people and that it will distinguish itself within the mainline Lutheran denominations to preserve truth and tradition.

What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years? Young people and youth education, disenfranchised Lutherans and other mainline Christians and Catholics, training and educating pastors, single-parent families.

What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Christ-Centered and Mission-Driven church? Support and encourage local congregations, create lectures or podcasts/videos for people

to view online and engage in ecumenical dialogue with other denominations and faith-based organizations.

Describe how you experience God active in your daily life. I give thanks multiple times throughout the day, I use a prayer bracelet/mini rosary daily, I pray for and with some of my clients, I love and care for my family, I read something to try and better understand truth and spirituality.

List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you. Matthew 6:25-27 – I have often felt anxious about things in life and in faith. These verses have always helped me to understand that God is in control, and I am the beneficiary of God's unconditional gift of grace.