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**New church body to be formed for Lutherans in North America**  
*North American Lutheran Church to be constituted;*  
*Lutheran CORE to continue as unity movement for all confessing Lutherans*

COLUMBUS, Ohio — More than 1,000 Lutherans from throughout North America will gather Aug. 26-27 in suburban Columbus, Ohio, to form a new church body for confessional Lutherans in North America. The annual Convocation of Lutheran CORE will adopt a constitution and proposals that will give birth to the North American Lutheran Church (NALC).

“The NALC will embody the center of Lutheranism in America. The NALC will uphold confessional principles dear to Lutherans including a commitment to the authority of the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions. Members and congregations of the NALC will have direct involvement in the decisions and life of the NALC,” said the Rev. Mark Chavez of Landisville, Pa., director of Lutheran CORE.

Provisional leaders for the NALC, including a bishop, will be elected at the Convocation. The provisional leaders will be elected for one-year terms to allow those who join the NALC to elect their own leaders at its first annual meeting.

The Convocation will take place at Grove City Church of the Nazarene in Grove City, Ohio. This church was chosen because its very large facility will enable as many Lutherans as possible to be a part of this historic event.

A theological conference featuring some of the most significant Lutheran scholars in America will precede the Convocation. “Seeking New Directions for Lutheranism” is the theme of the Aug. 24-26 conference at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church’s Mill Run campus in Hilliard, Ohio. More than 800 people have registered for the conference.

**Changes in ELCA have caused divisions**

Lutherans throughout the United States have been reacting to recent actions by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reversing the ELCA’s policy on pastors in same-sex sexual relationships. ELCA pastors are now allowed to be in same-sex relationships and to officiate at same-sex union ceremonies. The ELCA Churchwide Assembly approved a social statement in August 2009 that changed ELCA teaching on sexuality and authorized a reversal in policy regarding pastors in same-sex relationships.

Lutheran CORE leaders note that the problems in the ELCA are really not about sexual behavior but rather about an ongoing movement away from the authority and teaching of the Bible throughout the ELCA, on issues far broader than simply human sexuality.

“It was not our choice to leave the ELCA, but the ELCA has chosen to reject ‘the faith once delivered to the saints,’ so now we are acting to maintain our position within the consensus of the Church catholic,” said Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C., chair of Lutheran CORE’s Vision and Planning Working Group.

The ELCA decisions have created a crisis in many ELCA congregations and resulted in many congregations choosing to reduce financial support for the ELCA. Some ELCA congregations have already voted to join the NALC even though the church body does not yet officially exist. Many more congregations are expected to join as the NALC takes shape.

### **International Lutheran leaders to attend Convocation**

Two of the largest Lutheran churches in the world are among the church bodies that are sending official representatives to the Convocation. Representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus will address the Convocation. These two church bodies from Africa are the second and third largest Lutheran churches in the world, each with 5.3 million members.

Both African Lutheran churches have been supportive of Lutheran CORE and have taken stands against the actions of the ELCA in changing its teaching and policy on same-sex sexual relationships in spite of the clear teaching of the Bible.

“The presence at our convocation of so many ecumenical and international guests is very significant,” said the Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of Lutheran CORE. “Their presence among us is a reminder that we are not alone in our ministry and that we intend to forge strong ties and relationships with other Christian communities as we go forward in the North American Lutheran Church.”

### **A way to move forward together**

The proposals to be considered by the Convocation have been designed to provide a way for Lutherans who uphold Biblical teaching to move forward together. In addition to creating the NALC, Lutheran CORE’s 2010 Convocation will also consider proposals for the continuation of Lutheran CORE as “a confessional and confessing unity movement for all Lutherans regardless of church body.”

“These proposals are a way for those who uphold traditional Christian teaching — both those who are leaving the ELCA or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and those who will remain in those bodies — to remain in fellowship and to work together,” said Chavez. “We are committed to helping all traditional Lutherans in North America to remain united in faith and mission.”

“The future that we envision for confessing Lutherans in North America is one that is centered on the absolute truth of Christ Jesus and committed to making disciples for Him,” said Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C., chair of Lutheran CORE’s Vision and Planning Working Group. “Both

Lutheran CORE and the NALC will stand in continuity with the tradition of the Christian Church over the past 2,000 years and will orient their activities primarily for the support of congregations in their ministries.”

“Lutheran CORE and the new NALC are two pathways for faithful, confessing Lutherans in North America to remain connected to each other and to the vast majority of Lutherans and Christians globally who reject the theological innovations of the ELCA and ELCIC,” he added.

The NALC will be a member of Lutheran CORE and will do much of its mission and ministry in conjunction with Lutheran CORE to help maintain unity among confessing Lutherans and to carry out mission and ministry efficiently.

Both Lutheran CORE and the NALC will be centered on four key attributes: Christ-Centered; Mission-Driven; Traditionally-Grounded; and Congregationally-Focused.

Lutheran CORE’s 2009 Convocation Sept. 25-26, 2009, in Fishers, Ind., asked that a proposal for the “reconfiguration of North American Lutheranism” be prepared and brought to the 2010 Convocation. In response, “A Vision and Plan for The North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE, a Community of Confessing Lutherans” was released in February.

Spring noted that Lutheran CORE and the NALC are committed to faithfully teaching the historic Christian faith as it has been confessed by Lutherans and also to moving forward in faith and mission.

“We have a great opportunity before us. We not only want to look back toward the past, but to look ahead to the mission God has given us — to confess Christ faithfully, to witness to others, and to grow in God’s mission. This is our opportunity now in Lutheran CORE and in the North American Lutheran Church,” said Spring, who is nominated for election as the NALC’s provisional bishop for one year.

“The North American Lutheran Church places great emphasis on congregational ministry and congregational renewal.” Spring said. “We know that the congregation is not the sole form of ministry in the church. But the congregation is surely the chief community of faith for ministry and renewal. We are hoping that our congregational focus will be evident in the way we carry out our ministry.”

“We are inspired by the groundswell of congregations interested in joining the NALC, as well as the other Lutheran and Christian church bodies interested in discussing fellowship and shared ministry opportunities with the NALC,” Schwarz said.

“Our common commitment to Christ’s Great Commission — making disciples of all nations — is a firm foundation for continued growth of the NALC, broader unity through Lutheran CORE, and building of church-to-church relationships in coming years.”

For more information go to [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org).

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