

**THE PRESIDENT OF LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA
TO THE BISHOP, PASTORS AND LAY REPRESENTATIVES TO THE ANNUAL CONVOCATION
OF THE NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Dear Bishop John, dear treasured sisters and brothers:

It is a matter of considerable regret that I could not accept the invitation to attend your convocation this August, since I received such a heartwarming welcome at last year's gathering in Golden Valley. As the Vice-Chairman of the International Lutheran Council, I am committed to attending the Council's Executive Committee meeting, which is being held this week in Palanga, Lithuania. I'm grateful to be ably represented at your convocation by the First Vice-President of our Synod, Pastor Nolan Astley. I thank God for the chance he will now have to get to know you better.

As a participant in the semi-annual dialogues which involve your NALC, the Missouri Synod and our Lutheran Church-Canada, I've been able to develop deepening friendships and trust with leaders of your church, whom I have come to respect and love in the Lord Christ. They include your Bishop John Bradosky, Dr. David Wendel, Pastor Mark Chavez, Dr. James Nestingen, and Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring. In the past year we have discovered a profound level of consensus in our understanding of Holy Scripture as the source and norm for Christian teaching and life. More recently we spent time focusing on the Law/Gospel approach to Biblical interpretation, and its radical importance for preaching.

We are certainly not of one mind on every question. However, under God, we've come to the point where we can say what we have to say in the confidence that we will be respectfully and lovingly heard on every side. The Lord has His way of bringing good out of the bad. He knows you dear people endured more than your share of pain in controversies that were not just about disagreements over human sexuality, but which ultimately touch on the nature of the Gospel itself and the basic mission of the Christian Church in the world. The bad that you had to experience, however, ended up creating a real door of opportunity for Lutherans who had been

distant from one another to find their way to genuine talking and listening again. How grateful I am to President Harrison of the Missouri Synod for getting our dialogues off the ground with his invitation in late 2011! How grateful I am to your NALC leaders for displaying a truly confessional Lutheran ecumenical spirit every time we are together!

Since your last convocation, our Synod re-wrote the governing by-laws of the Lutheran Church-Canada Worker Benefit Plans to formally enable the enrollment of NALC pastors and parishes who needed this sort of coverage in Canada. We were so glad to welcome young people and counselors from Canadian NALC congregations at our National Youth Gathering in early July in Winnipeg. As you have now launched a mission district to serve the needs of your congregations in our country, we look forward to a strong relationship with Provisional Dean Rev. Philip Gagnon and other leaders you may put in place.

On behalf of our church, I take this moment also to extend our sincerest condolences to Pastor Mark and Jocelyn Chavez on the tragic death of their son this past spring. We have named them in our prayers time and again. We praise God for giving them faith to trust the Crucified and Risen Christ in all their sorrows. Their strong witness in the midst of this pain is, in my view, the embodiment of the Gospel heart that moved you to establish the NALC in recent years.

For the congregations, pastors and deacons of Lutheran Church-Canada I wish you every blessing for this annual convocation. And I greet you with the words of the holy writer to the Hebrews (13:20-21): *“May the God of peace, Who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

In Christ our dear Lord,



Rev. Robert Bugbee, President
Lutheran Church-Canada

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