



SLIDE 1

# **ELCA Information Presentation**

Thank you all for coming. We are glad you are here. As a Church Council, we are called to review and evaluate all of Nazareth's relationships with outside organizations to make sure they are still a proper fit for our church body. That includes our affiliation with the ELCA. Over the course of our review, our council has become increasingly concerned that the policies and Biblical views of the ELCA do not align with our views here at Nazareth. We as a council felt it time to bring this information before you as a congregation, so that the Church body could consider if Nazareth should remain a part of the ELCA.

**SLIDE 2**

# Prayer



SLIDE 3



# Hymn: “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less”

Sing: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less



SLIDE 4

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;

No merit of my own I claim,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Slides 4 - 11 are words to the hymn.

SLIDE 5

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.



SLIDE 6

When darkness veils his lovely face,  
I rest on his unchanging grace;

In ev'ry high and stormy gale  
My anchor holds within the veil.

SLIDE 7

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.



SLIDE 8

His oath, his covenant, his blood  
Sustain me in the raging flood;

When all supports are washed away,  
He then is all my hope and stay.



SLIDE 9

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.



SLIDE 10

When he shall come with trumpet  
sound,  
Oh, may I then in him be found.

Clothed in his righteousness alone,  
Redeemed to stand before the throne!

SLIDE 11

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.

SLIDE 12

## **This Session Is for Information Only**

- Two identical information sharing sessions
  - Sunday, January 8 and Sunday, January 15 - both at 3:00
- Same presentation will be shared at each session
- Hold questions and comments for future Q&A/Comment meetings
- Entire ELCA Informational presentation (including links and speaker notes) will be available on the [naz.org](http://naz.org) website following the second information session

Welcome to the first (or second) ELCA Informational Session. We are holding two identical information sessions. The same presentation will be shared at each session, and Church Council members will be in attendance at both sessions. In the interest of time, and to give people time to digest the information that is presented, no questions or comments will be accepted today. This entire presentation, including links to sources and speaker notes, will be available on the [naz.org](http://naz.org) website following the second information session.

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## Q&A/Comment Sessions to Follow

- **At least TWO** Q&A/Comment sessions – more will be scheduled if necessary, **up to FOUR**
  - Thursday, January 19, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
  - Sunday, January 22, 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
- Sessions are strictly for questions and comments
- Questions may be emailed to [council@naz.org](mailto:council@naz.org) in advance or turned in on paper after the information sessions, however this is not required – you may simply come and listen/ask/comment

We have currently scheduled two Q&A/Comments sessions on the dates shown. In order to be certain everyone has a chance to have their questions answered, and to share their comments, more sessions will be scheduled as needed, up to four total sessions. There will not be a presentation at these sessions. The sessions will be strictly for questions, answers, and comments. You may turn your questions in on paper after today's meeting, email your questions to [council@naz.org](mailto:council@naz.org) in advance, or just bring your questions to one of the Q&A sessions. There will be a moderator at these sessions to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to participate. Everyone is encouraged to attend these sessions.

# Agenda

- **History of Nazareth and the ELCA** - Julie Creeden
- **ELCA Review** - Chris Hansen
- **Is Nazareth Aligned with the ELCA?** - Lisa Arenholz
- **ELCA Concerns** - Wayne Jacobson
- **What Happens Next?** - Wayne Jacobson
- **Questions about the Unknown** - Chris Hansen

Our goal this afternoon is to share information. Here are the main points we will be sharing.

SLIDE 15

**Prior to the formation of the ELCA, Nazareth was affiliated with The American Lutheran Church (ALC)**

- Nazareth could be autonomous
- Nazareth held title to its own property
- Nazareth made its own decisions on who to call as a pastor

**In order to maintain its autonomy after the ELCA merger, Nazareth found it necessary to make significant provisions in our Bylaws.**

I wonder how many of you were here prior to the formation of the ELCA?  
Do any of you go back that far?

Prior to the formation of the ELCA, Nazareth was affiliated with The American Lutheran Church (ALC)

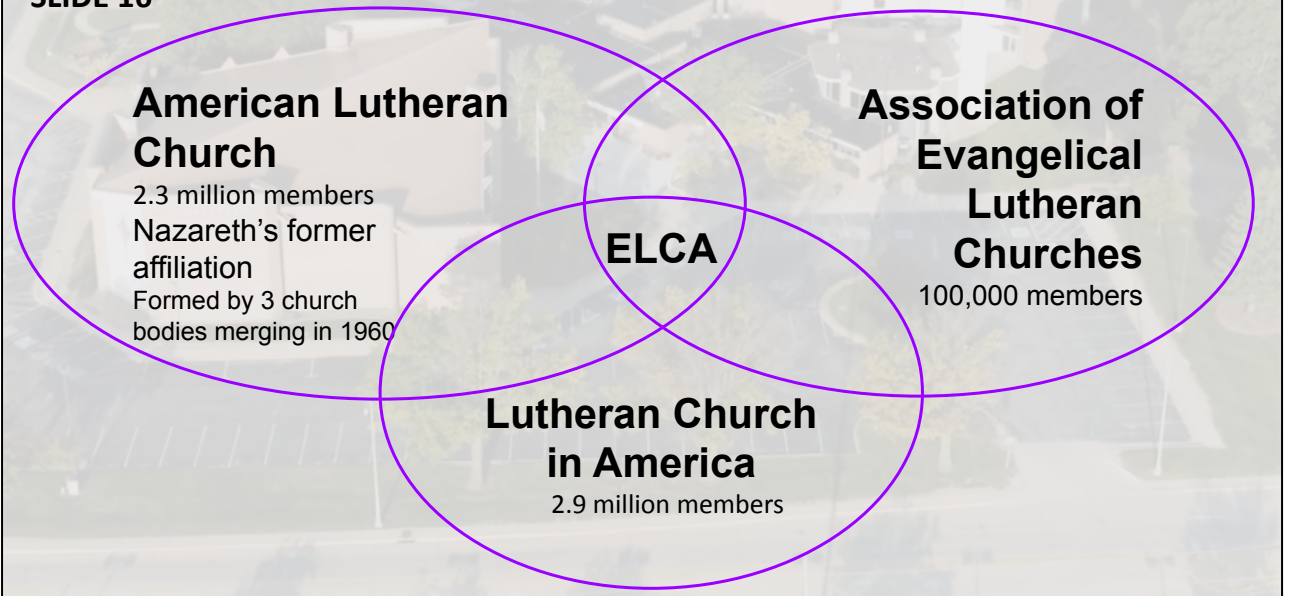
Under the American Lutheran Church:

- Nazareth could be autonomous
- Nazareth held title to its own property
- Nazareth made its own decisions on who to call as a pastor

**In order to maintain its autonomy after the ELCA merger, Nazareth found it necessary to make significant provisions in our Bylaws, which we did.**

## A merger of three Lutheran church bodies formed the ELCA in 1988

SLIDE 16



The ELCA was formed on January 1, 1988 by the merger of three existing Lutheran Church bodies: The American Lutheran Church (Nazareth's former affiliation), The Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and The Lutheran Church in America.

ELCA, by the way, stands for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

Source: <https://www.elca.org/about/history>



**SLIDE 17**

## **Structure and Current Numbers within the ELCA:**

**1 Churchwide Organization**

**65 Synods**

**In 1988: 11,133 Congregations**

**In 2020: 8,894 Congregations**

**In 2021: 8,724 Congregations**

Let's take a quick look into the structure and the current numbers within the ELCA.

As opposed to Nazareth's congregational governance structure, the hierarchical structure of the ELCA consists of 3 entities: 1 Churchwide organization, which oversees 65 synods, and these 65 synods oversee 8,724 congregations as of Dec 31, 2021. As you can see, the number of ELCA congregations has decreased greatly since the merger. (These statistics come directly from the ELCA.org website)

In a hierarchical form of governance, decisions made at the Churchwide Assemblies affect individual congregations like Nazareth, however congregations have little say in those decisions.

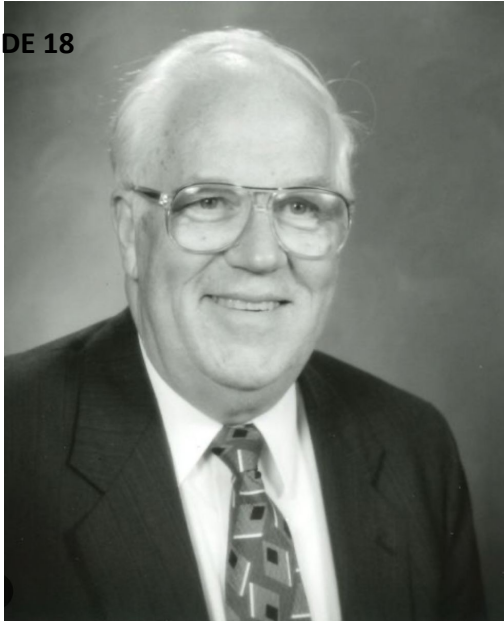
The result of this type of hierarchical governance is that we as a church have been forced into uncomfortable conversations due to statements, actions, and positions that the ELCA leadership has made. For some of us, it's been so many years now, that we forget how often this has happened! The Church Council would like to point out a few examples of

those times where Nazareth has had face these inflection points, or crossroads if you will, and take time and effort away from our ministry in order to respond to some official ELCA positions.

**Sources:** ELCA.org:

- [Summary of Congregational Statistics, 1988](#)
- [CD170 Report, Form A, Summary of Congregation Statistics as of 12/31/21](#) (You must scroll to the end of this very long PDF in order to find ELCA congregation totals.)

SLIDE 18



**The Reverend Dr. Homer Larsen  
Senior Pastor  
Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Announcements – October 24, 1993**

One of the first examples that we would like to share with you, started as early as 1993.

At that time, there was a 17 member study committee in place within the ELCA that was studying the Church and human sexuality. After four years of study, the draft statement that went before the ELCA for review declared that the core of human sexuality should be loving, committed relationships, and not limited to heterosexual marriages, among other concerning positions.

Pastor Homer Larsen was the Senior Pastor at Nazareth at that time. He believed these study findings were contrary to the Word of God. This prompted Pastor Larsen to give a very stern and passionate rebuke of the study findings in his announcements on the morning of Sunday, October 24, 1993 before the entire congregation in attendance. Pastor Larsen firmly believed that the study committee position was a small minority, held only by the 17 members of the study committee, and maybe a few

others. During his rebuke, he stated, and I quote, “According to the Holy Word of God, this is sin. We cannot depart from that. And the day that we do, we will have become unfaithful to the Word of God.” He urged the members of the congregation to contact the ELCA promptly to voice their concerns.

Pastor Larsen’s full audio clip is available linked in the speaker’s notes of this presentation, if you would like to hear it.

**Audio clip of [Announcements from October 24, 1993](#)**

Note - At the end of this clip, Pastor Larsen refers to “Higgins Road” in Chicago. This is the where the headquarters of the ELCA is located.

SLIDE 19

## 1999 ELCA Churchwide assembly

### CALLED TO COMMON MISSION (CCM)

#### Problem #1:

Local  
congregations  
have little voice  
in churchwide  
decisions



#### Problem #2:

Compromising  
the authority of  
Scripture

Another example when an ELCA action got Nazareth's attention, involved a resolution passed at the ELCA Churchwide assembly in 1999. The resolution was known as "Called to Common Mission," or CCM. You'll notice this happened a long time ago, however it clearly illustrates two main problems that continue to occur.

**Problem number 1: Local congregations have little voice in churchwide decisions** – CCM is an agreement that was made between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church. In adopting CCM, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly agreed to adopt the concept of the Historic Episcopate, giving Bishops the **sole authority** to ordain new pastors. The Episcopalians would not agree to share clergy or be in "full communion" with the ELCA unless they agreed to this, which they did, allowing very little input from their congregations if any at all.

**Problem number 2: Compromising the authority of Scripture** – Article VII of the Augsburg Confession declares that what is necessary for the unity of the church is the Gospel. Article VII says nothing about ordination or ministry. Nazareth professes the Augsburg Confession to be

true in our Bylaws. CCM says that something else is necessary for unity, namely, ordaining clergy in the “historic episcopate.” CCM reflects a misunderstanding of unity in the church. It adds a requirement that goes beyond being unified in Christ alone. By advancing such a policy, the leadership of the ELCA had gone down the very slippery slope of compromising the authority of Scripture; and congregations like Nazareth could do nothing to stop it.

**Source:** ELCA.org - [Called to Common Mission: A Relationship of Full Communion between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church](#)

**Source:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITHoqiQac\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITHoqiQac_4)

**Source:** Augsburg Confession, Article VII – can be found here in PDF format:

[https://www.faiithdc.org/uploads/1/4/3/0/14306368/the\\_augsburg\\_confession.pdf](https://www.faiithdc.org/uploads/1/4/3/0/14306368/the_augsburg_confession.pdf)

SLIDE 20

**2002**

Adopted a resolution at the 2002 Annual Meeting to join the 'WordAlone Network.'

**2005**

Formed ELCA Task Force to study concerns and report to congregation

But that doesn't mean we didn't try. Because of our concerns regarding Called to Common Mission (CCM), Nazareth adopted a resolution at the 2002 Annual Meeting to join the 'WordAlone Network.'

The last line of that resolution read, "Nazareth Church does hereby join the company of like-minded brothers and sisters in Christ in the WordAlone Network for the purpose of carrying forth mission, ministry, worship, and service free of a required historic episcopate." You will be able to read the full resolution in the speaker notes of this presentation.

**Do not read full Resolution for the sake of time – It is listed here for later congregational information only:**

Whereas, in adopting CCM, we believe that the ELCA has left its theological and confessional heritage behind for the sake of culture and ecumenism, and has required Nazareth's congregation to participate in practices which we, in good conscience, cannot believe and hereby refuse to accept.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cedar Falls, Black Hawk County, Iowa, does

hereby join the company of like-minded brothers and sisters in Christ in the WordAlone Network for the purpose of carrying forth mission, ministry, worship, and service free of a required historic episcopate.

**Read next:**

Additionally, in 2005, growing concern regarding the ELCA forced Nazareth leaders to take action yet again. An ELCA task Force was formed and charged by the Church Council to study all ELCA concerns and bring a report back to the congregation regarding Nazareth's ELCA affiliation. After the course of one year of study, the 6-member task force submitted their report to the Church Council on May 9, 2006. The report stated that there were, indeed, major growing concerns within the ELCA regarding governance as well as the authority of scripture, but the task force was split 3 to 3 on how Nazareth should respond to these concerns. The congregation voted in 2007 to remain in the ELCA to try and affect change and reform from within.

**Source:** Nazareth Lutheran Church 2002 Annual Report

**Source:** [A Report to the Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church Council from the Affiliation Task Force, May 9, 2006](#)



**SLIDE 21**

**2010: Nazareth's response to the 2009 Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift & Trust**

1. Changes in funding to the ELCA
2. Affiliate with Called to Faithfulness
3. Released the document "Speaking the Truth in Love"
4. Hosted both pre- and post- Synod Assembly gatherings
5. Called for the ELCA to rescind the recommendations made at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

**The record shows that Nazareth has always been wary of the ELCA's actions and decisions.**

More concerns stemmed from decisions coming from the 2009 Churchwide Assembly regarding the ELCA's Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust. Unfortunately, what had started as the position of 17 people on a study committee, as Pastor Larsen spoke so passionately about back in 1993, had grown into the official position of the church by 2009. Another departure by the ELCA from being faithful to the Word of God. In response to this, Nazareth did the following:

1. The Church Council recommended to the congregation at the 2010 Annual Meeting that funds normally forwarded to ELCA Churchwide ministries be designated only for ELCA disaster response, world hunger, and world missions. This recommendation was passed by the congregation.
2. The congregation voted to affiliate with Called to Faithfulness, a reform group working within the ELCA.
3. Pastor Brian King and the Church Council released the document "Speaking the Truth in Love," which gives in-depth responses to questions related to the authority and interpretation of Scripture from a conservative/orthodox, Lutheran perspective.
4. Nazareth hosted both pre- and post- Synod Assembly gatherings

1. for members of Called to Faithfulness for the purpose of educating voting delegates about pending resolutions before the Synod Assembly, and to reflect upon Assembly decisions and discern next steps following the Assembly itself.
2. Nazareth delegates to the NE Iowa Synod Assembly voted in favor of measures that called for the ELCA to rescind the recommendations made at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

**Source:** ELCA.org – [Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust](#)

**Source:** Naz.org – [Speaking the Truth in Love](#)



SLIDE 22

**2010**

**Nazareth's Church Council made three recommendations:**

1. Adoption by the congregation of "Speaking the Truth in Love" as the position statement for Nazareth Church (Eph. 4:15-16)
2. Adoption of a new bylaw
3. Recommended a vote at the 2011 Nazareth Congregational Meeting on ELCA disaffiliation

Additionally, following its October meeting in 2010, the Nazareth Church Council made three recommendations:

1. They unanimously recommended the adoption of "Speaking the Truth in Love" as the position statement for Nazareth Church.
2. They unanimously recommended the adoption of a new bylaw that would preclude the possibility of a pastor "recognizing or supporting" any sexual relationship outside the boundaries of a marriage between one man and one woman and also preclude Nazareth from calling an ordained pastor who is in an "accountable, life-long, monogamous, same-gender relationship."
3. And by a vote of 9-1, the Church Council recommended a vote at the 2011 Nazareth Congregational Meeting to determine whether or not there was sufficient desire to vote on whether to remain in the ELCA. At that time, the congregation voted not to hold a vote on ELCA disaffiliation.

**Source:** Naz.org – [Speaking the Truth in Love](#)

SLIDE 23

2022

1

The most recent 2022 Churchwide Assembly: authorized revisions to the current Social Statement on Human Sexuality; and approved exploration positions of **'bound conscience'**

2

When asked, **"Is there a hell?"** the Bishop responded: **"There may be, but I think it is empty."**

3



**Bishop Eaton @ELCAB...** · 5/17/22 · ...

While the leaked court draft does not represent the Supreme Court's ruling in its final form; nevertheless, it contradicts this church's teaching. This church teaches that abortion and reproductive health care, including contraception, must be legal and accessible.



330



342



612



This brings us to the most recent concerns.

1. In box #1, the 2022 Churchwide Assembly authorized revisions to the current Social Statement on Human Sexuality; and approved exploration positions of 'bound conscience.' Depending on which position the ELCA lands, congregations could no longer be allowed to state their objections to many ELCA stances based on their "bound conscience" to the Word of God. Congregations could be open to disciplinary action and other negative consequences from the ELCA. This has the potential to affect Nazareth greatly.
2. In box #2, Nazareth Church Council became aware of a well-documented audio and print interview with the Chicago Sun Times, where Bishop Eaton was directly asked: "Is there a hell?" To which our presiding Bishop responded: "There may be, but I think it is empty." The presiding Bishop of the ELCA espouses a form of universalism for which she never recanted, nor did the ELCA respond otherwise.
3. And in box #3, after the leaking of the Roe v. Wade ruling last summer, the Bishop tweeted the official position of the ELCA on abortion: that it must remain legal and accessible.

**The priority that the Bishop seems to place on issuing social statements seems to outweigh the primary mission of the church which is the proclamation of the Gospel.**

**Box #1:**

**Source:**

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2018/3/7/18372814/top-lutheran-bishop-if-hell-exists-i-think-it-s-empty>

**Box #2:**

**Source:** ELCA.org – [ELCA Assembly actions CA22.01.07 and CA22.03.23](#)

**Box #3:**

**Source:** ELCA.org – [“A Pastoral Message on Abortion”](#)

**Source:** Twitter account of Bishop Eaton (@ELCABishopEaton) [Link to Bishop Eaton’s Tweet](#) which is screenshotted and inserted into box #3 on this slide

2022

**“Letter of Dissent” was sent by the current Church Council to the following entities calling for full and public repentance:**

- Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA
- Church Council of the ELCA
- Bishop Kevin Jones, presiding bishop of the NE Iowa Synod
- Synod Council of the Northeast Iowa Synod

Due to these most recent concerns as well as others, Nazareth has found itself once more being drawn away from ministry and forced into responding to actions that the ELCA leadership has made. This time, the Church Council assigned a task force to write a letter of dissent, which carefully explains Nazareth’s concerns. Pastor Brian King drafted it with the help of the task force. The current Church Council recommends that you carefully read this letter if you have not yet done so. It is linked in this slide and at Naz.org. This letter was sent by the current Church Council to these four entities calling for their full and public repentance:

- Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA
- Church Council of the ELCA
- Bishop Kevin Jones, presiding bishop of the NE Iowa Synod
- Synod Council of the Northeast Iowa Synod

The Nazareth church council has not received a response from any of the above people or entities except for Bishop Kevin Jones, who has offered to come and listen to our concerns in more detail and answer our questions. The Council met with Bishop Jones on January 10, 2023. There was no mention of repentance on behalf of Bishop Jones during this

meeting.

Source: Naz.org – [Letter of Dissent](#)



SLIDE 25

**Why has Nazareth stayed  
with the ELCA?  
Why didn't we leave a long  
time ago?**

This is the question you may be asking yourself.





SLIDE 26

## **ELCA Review – as shared by Pastor Brian King at the council's request**

One of the main reasons we remained in the ELCA is because Pastor Brian King believed that was the best thing to do. He believed that we should try to reform the ELCA from within. He reviewed some of his thoughts about the ELCA with the council at their October 2022 Church Council meeting. The council requested that he share this information, and we are going to share his thoughts with you now. We will also share some of our comments about some of these thoughts. Information shown on the slides is from the ELCA Review provided by Pastor Brian. All additional information is from the council unless otherwise stated.

SLIDE 27

## ELCA Review

- Size of ELCA in terms of resources
  - Largest Lutheran denomination in the U.S.
  - Larger group of pastors compared to other Lutheran denominations

The ELCA is the largest Lutheran denomination in the U.S. As the largest denomination, it also has a larger group of pastors compared to other Lutheran denominations.

The council would like to add that it is important to note, that even though the ELCA has a larger group of pastors compared to other Lutheran denominations, there are not enough for all of the ELCA congregations. Some other Lutheran denominations have more pastoral availability even though their group of pastors is smaller.

Note for those reading this presentation online - red font indicates information the council added to what Pastor Brian shared.

Source: <https://www.elca.org/news-and-events/elca-facts>

SLIDE 28

## ELCA Review

- 7 ELCA seminaries – all accredited
- 26 ELCA colleges and universities
  - Luther College, Wartburg College, and Grand View University in Iowa
  - Note: Waldorf was bought out by an online university – no longer an ELCA college

The ELCA has 7 accredited seminaries. It also has 26 colleges and universities. In Iowa, there are three ELCA colleges and universities. **The council would like to note that a student does not have to be a member of the ELCA to attend any of these colleges or universities.**

### Sources:

ELCA Seminaries: <https://elcaseminaries.org>

ELCA Universities: <https://www.elca.org/colleges>



SLIDE 29

## ELCA Review

- Strong camping network around the U.S.
  - Change agents – many people come to faith during a camping experience
  - 100 – 200 camps in the US
  - Iowa: Riverside, Ingham-Okoboji, Lutheran Lakeside, Ewalu

The ELCA has a strong camping network around the United States. Many people come to faith during a camping experience. In Iowa, the ELCA is affiliated with four camps.

Please note that other Lutheran denominations are also affiliated with many of these same camps, and anyone from any denomination - Lutheran, non-Lutheran, or none-churched - can attend. Riverside has an LCMC-certified pastor as their executive director.

**Source:**

<https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Related-Ministries/Outdoor-Ministry>

SLIDE 30

## ELCA Review

- Social service network – Lutheran Services of America
  - Most states have a version – Lutheran Services of Iowa
  - Residential care for troubled adolescents
  - Counseling services in/out of school
  - Refugee resettlement
  - Largest social service organization in the country in terms of assets
- Matthew 25:31-46 - Serving people in need in the name of Jesus

The ELCA has the largest social service organization in the country in terms of assets. They provide many types of care, including: residential care for troubled adolescents, counseling services, and refugee resettlement.

Lutheran Services of America partners with both the ELCA and the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. It is important to understand that neither ELCA nor Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod membership is required to contribute to or benefit from Lutheran Services of America.

### Sources:

Lutheran Services in Iowa: <https://lsiowa.org>

Lutheran Services in America: <https://lutheranservices.org>

SLIDE 31

## ELCA Review

- Over 240 missionaries around the world (in over 40 countries)
  - Nazareth sponsors the Fribergs in Tanzania
  - Model: accompaniment (most missionaries have a life skill that they can offer to the community they are in) – work as mission (not converter)

The ELCA has over 240 missionaries around the world, in over 40 countries. Nazareth sponsors one family that is sent through the ELCA - the Fribergs in Tanzania.

The council would like to note that Nazareth can continue to sponsor the Fribergs whether we belong to the ELCA or not. Nazareth currently financially sponsors 12 different missionary families. Eleven of the families are working with sending agencies other than the ELCA.

Source: <https://elca.org/missionaries>

SLIDE 32

## ELCA Review

- Portico – insurance and pension provider for the ELCA
  - Exceptional
  - Competitive rates
  - Good services
  - Easy to work with
  - Large, historic good management – makes them very competitive

Insurance and pensions for our staff are currently offered through Portico. Pastor Brian believes Portico provides exceptional products at competitive rates. Nazareth has found that they are easy to work with.

It is the understanding of the council that we could continue to use Portico whether we belong to the ELCA or not. Our understanding is that ELCA churches that offer insurance are required to use Portico. However, if we disaffiliate with the ELCA, we will no longer be required to use Portico to provide insurance. We would be able to find the insurance company that offered the best insurance and price, and we could invest in whichever pension funds we believe best.

Source: <https://porticobenefits.org/>

SLIDE 33

## ELCA Review

- History
  - Lutheran churches dating 150-200 years old (the ELCA dates back to 1988)
  - Longevity and trust that relationships will not come and go overnight

As Pastor Brian shared, Lutheran churches have a long history in the U.S. Lutheran churches have merged and disaffiliated frequently over that history. According to a Pew Research study, the combined Lutheran churches were the fifth largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. in 2014, and included about 3.5% of the U.S. population. Nazareth celebrated our 150th anniversary in 2021.

### Some sources for ELCA and Lutheran history:

- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Evangelical-Lutheran-Church-in-America>
- <https://www.elca.org/About/History> (very brief history here)
- <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/evangelical-lutheran-church-america>



SLIDE 34

## ELCA Review

- Academic rigor and accountability
- Highest level of academic attainment of any mainline denomination  
(Roman Catholic, Missouri Synod Lutheran would be similar)
  - 4 year degree
  - 4 years minimum seminary education
- 3 month chaplaincy during seminary time – supervised, evaluated

The ELCA ordination process is very thorough and includes checks and balances. Academic rigor and accountability are high. A three-month supervised and evaluated chaplaincy is required. In addition to the items listed, the ELCA process for pastors includes a battery of psychological exams, a candidacy process that is independent of the academic route, and a candidacy committee that is constantly evaluating the candidates. **However, please note that many people have concerns with the theology that is being taught. A great process will not make up for distorted theology.**

**Source:**

[https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Candidacy Manual 2021.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/CandidacyManual%202021.pdf)

SLIDE 35

## ELCA Review

- Original ELCA governing documents are still largely in place
- Own the rights to “Davey and Goliath”
  - Can find it on YouTube
  - Produced by the Lutheran Church in America in the 50s and 60s, prior to formation of the ELCA
  - ELCA inherited this claymation

The original ELCA governing documents are still largely in place. The ELCA inherited the rights to the “Davey and Goliath” claymation that was produced by the Lutheran Church in America prior to the formation of the ELCA. While some of you may have fond memories of “Davey and Goliath,” and would enjoy the time to stop and view some episodes, in the interest of time, we’ll continue on.

### **Link to Davey and Goliath, Episode 1:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXastlhuaY>

There are many, many episodes available on YouTube.

SLIDE 36

## ELCA Review

- Lutheran Disaster Services
  - Second to Red Cross in terms of responsiveness, on the ground
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services
  - ELCA and Missouri Synod work together in this organization

Lutheran Disaster Services and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services provide help to many people each year.

The council notes that you do not have to be a member of the ELCA to contribute to or benefit from either of these services. As you can see on the slide, the ELCA and the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod work together as part of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services organization, so the organization is based on more than just the ELCA.

### Sources:

<https://www.elca.org/our-work/relief-and-development/lutheran-disaster-response>

<https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Immigration-and-Refugee-Services>

SLIDE 37

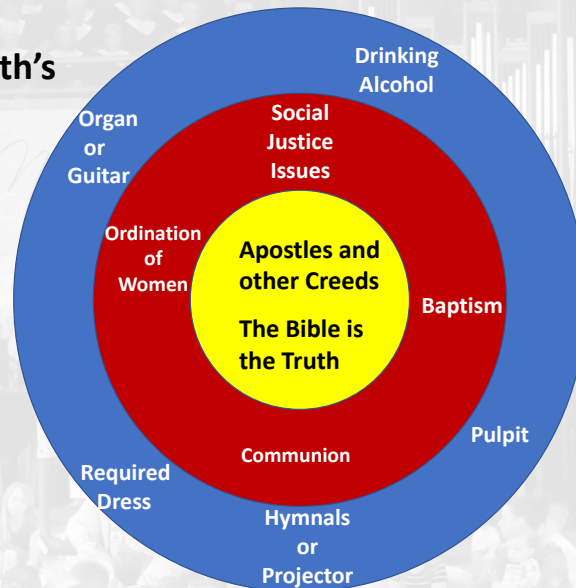


## **Is Nazareth Aligned with the ELCA?**

We don't believe that Nazareth has changed. However, the ELCA has changed.

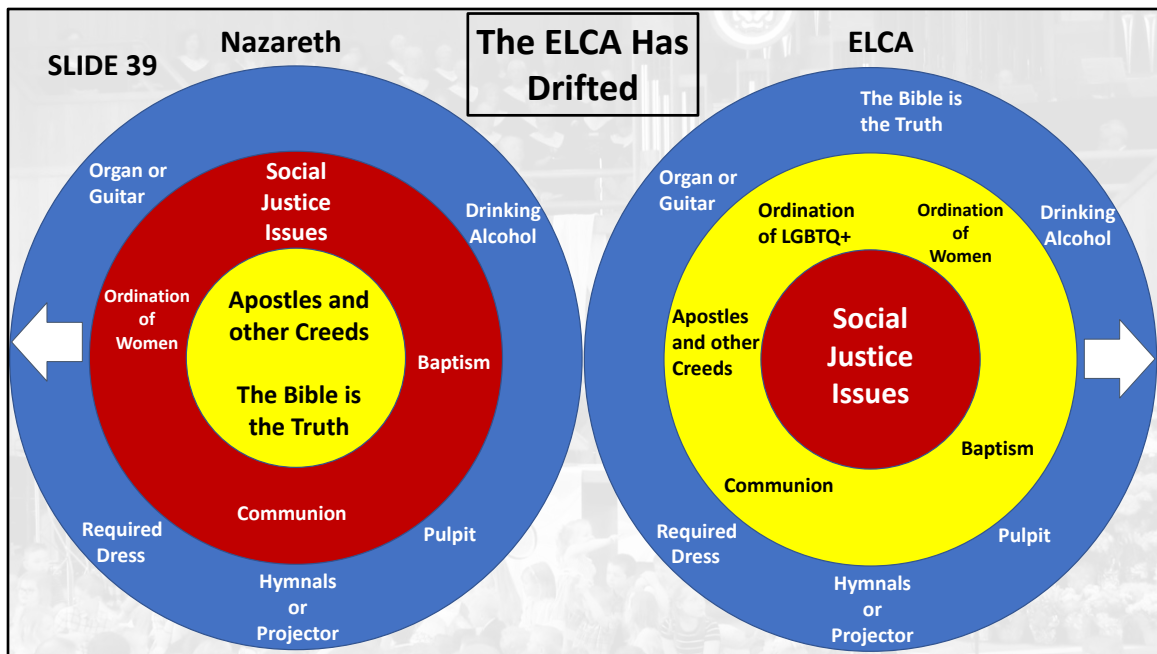
SLIDE 38

## What is Nazareth's Foundation?



Here is a target that gives a picture of the beliefs on which Nazareth was founded. We are aiming for the bullseye. We must be unified in our Core Beliefs.

We can agree to disagree about beliefs and practices in the inner and outer rings, even though some of those things are very important. Disagreement about beliefs and practices in the inner ring is one reason there are many different denominations, but as long as churches agree on the bullseye, we are unified in Christ.



The ELCA has made what should be in the inner ring, into the bullseye. In other words, they have added to what scripture clearly states is the ONLY thing that unifies the Church: The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The ELCA has shifted this Core Belief out of the bullseye, and into the outer ring. This makes it something that can be debated, which scripture clearly states that it cannot. The ELCA has replaced Christ's atoning work with the idol of social justice and made the centrality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ optional. Naz didn't walk away from the ELCA. The ELCA walked away from Naz.

It appears that the ELCA is becoming a non-profit service organization that helps many people. It is good to help others, but Nazareth is more than a service organization. We are a part of Christ's church that is charged to go out and make disciples of all nations. We cannot change the bullseye.

SLIDE 40

## **Article II – Confession of Faith**

**“This congregation accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.”**

**Nazareth Lutheran Church Bylaws**

I was called this week to help out with giving this presentation and then was given the section to speak on the authority of scripture – and I said, Who Me?!? I'd rather be singing together with you hymns and spiritual songs. Look, I'm not a pastor, I'm just one of us. But as I spend time in prayer and wrestle through the scriptures, I'd like to share some thoughts with you today.

When I'm asked about what our position here at Nazareth is on the authority of the Word of God, I go to our by-laws. In Article II – Our Confession of Faith says:

“This congregation accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.”

This congregation has affirmed that statement 11 times since the bylaws

were approved in 1993. Each time there is a revision to the by-laws, the by-laws then have to be approved in their totality once again. As a congregation, we have endeavored faithfully to follow the Word of God. Let's let the Word of God speak for itself.

**Source:** Nazareth Lutheran Church Bylaws



SLIDE 41

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**"All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."**

**Jesus' prayer for his disciples**

**John 17:17**

**"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."**

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

"All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

God breathed, the breath of God, everything that comes forth from God is perfect.

In Jesus' prayer for his disciples from **John 17:17**: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

The Bible alone is our authority for faith and life.

Really, that should be enough said.

The Bible doesn't just contain truth, the Bible IS God's truth. Therefore, it is absolute truth. That's a hard concept to fathom in a time of relativism. When all truth is what we want it to be and everything is up for grabs. You have your truth and I have mine, right? Wrong! There is one truth, God's truth, the absolute truth!

SLIDE 42

**When the church organization we are affiliated with says...**

There might be a hell, but if there is it's probably empty

**The Word of God says...**

**Matthew 10:28** – Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Our by-law states that we should “submit to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.” So, let’s apply our by-law guidance here at Nazareth and the authority of Scripture when evaluating recent positions and public statements by Bishops, seminary professors, and leaders from the ELCA. Some of you may have heard these statements by the ELCA and some may be hearing them now for the first time.

When the church organization we are affiliated with from the ELCA says...

“There might be a hell, but if there is it’s probably empty”  
You consult the absolute truth:

**Matthew 10:28** – Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

**Source:**

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2018/3/7/18372814/top-lutheran-bishop-if-hell-exists-i-think-it-s-empty>

SLIDE 43

When the church organization we are affiliated with says...

There are many paths to God

The Word of God says...

**John 14:6** – Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

When the church organization we are affiliated with says...

“There are many paths to God” - the absolute truth says:

**John 14:6** – Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

**Source:**

[https://www.elca.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations?\\_ga=2.182471462.1809514834.1673727153-1236580785.1672770341](https://www.elca.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations?_ga=2.182471462.1809514834.1673727153-1236580785.1672770341)

SLIDE 44

**When the church organization we are affiliated with...**

follows culture and accepts as truth that men can become women, women can become men

**The Word of God says...**

**Genesis 5:1** – When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them.

When the church organization we are affiliated with follows culture and accepts as truth that men can become women, women can become men – the absolute truth says:

**Genesis 5:1** – When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them.

**Source:**

<https://www.npr.org/2021/09/11/1036371531/evangelical-lutheran-church-first-transgender-bishop-megan-rohrer>

**Source:**

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2018/06/beyond-the-rainbow-flag/>

SLIDE 45

**When the church organization we are affiliated with...**

begins to teach **universalism**, the belief that all humankind will eventually be “saved,” regardless of whether or not we ever accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord

**The Word of God says...**

**John 3:36** – Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.

When the Church organization we are affiliated with begins to teach universalism, the belief that all humankind will eventually be “saved”, regardless of whether or not we ever accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord - the absolute truth says:

**John 3:36** – Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.

**Source:**

<https://www.elcatoday.com/does-the-elca-teach-another-gospel.html>

(Article by the Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, Presiding Pastor of the American Association of Lutheran Churches [AALC])

**Source:** Living Lutheran, ELCA magazine, March 2014:

<https://www.qgdigitalpublishing.com/publication/?m=55089&i=621226&p=1&ver=html5>

SLIDE 46

**When the church organization we are affiliated with...**

sanctions and celebrates the ordination of practicing homosexuals and same sex marriages

**The Word of God says...**

**Romans 1: 26-27** – Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

**Matthew 19:4-6** – “Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

When the Church organization we are affiliated with sanctions and celebrates the ordination of practicing homosexuals and same sex marriages - the absolute truth says:

**Romans 1: 26-27** – Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

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one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

**Source:**

[https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Human-Sexuality?\\_ga=2.123298315.1809514834.1673727153-1236580785.1672770341](https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Human-Sexuality?_ga=2.123298315.1809514834.1673727153-1236580785.1672770341)



SLIDE 47

**When the church organization we are affiliated with...**

tells that the account of the prophet Jonah in the whale is just hyperbole and can be interpreted as a symbol, proverb, fiction, or tale

**The Word of God says...**

**Matthew 12:38-40** – Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.” He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

When the Church organization we are affiliated with tells that the account of the prophet Jonah in the whale is just hyperbole and can be interpreted as a symbol, proverb, fiction, or tale - the absolute truth says:

**Matthew 12:38-40** – Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.” He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

I don't know about you, but I find those statements made by ELCA leadership hard to defend when I apply the authority of Scripture.

**Source:** [https://learn.elca.org/jle/article\\_author/niveen-sarras/](https://learn.elca.org/jle/article_author/niveen-sarras/)

SLIDE 48

## Attendance Trends within Nazareth:



Credit for data gathering: Terri Packard and Julia Voss

YEAR	Avg. Weekly F2F Attendance
1990	1,837
1995	1,905
1997	2,112 (Peak)
2000	1,827
2005	1,471
2010	1,145
2015	1,097
2019	919
2020	453 (Covid)
2021	517 (Covid)

- 56%

Over the last 30 years, the leadership in our church has done a poor job, in my opinion, of regularly keeping you as a congregation informed on how far away from scripture the ELCA has moved, and that includes me.

You've been told time and again that we should remain affiliated to be an "agent of change" or a "reformer" of sorts within this affiliation. That strategy has not worked. In fact, to Nazareth's detriment, it has experienced a decline in membership that correlates with the decline in ELCA membership as a whole. We used to have an average attendance of 1,900 people each Sunday in the 1990's, but we are now down to between 500 and 600.

You may be asking yourself, where have all the people gone? You know as well as I do that Nazareth has populated many churches in our area with former members and staff. You will find many of them at Orchard Hill, Prairie Lakes, Trinity Bible, Heartland Vineyard, Candeo, Ascension Lutheran, and Hope City in Waterloo - all of which seem to be growing congregations by the way, and all of which openly write on their websites their similar view of the absolute truth of God's word. It seems logical to

me, that if the membership at Nazareth is so on-board with the direction and views of the ELCA then most of those who have left for other churches would be at Bethlehem or St. John's. Those two congregations should be bursting at the seams, but they're not and neither is the ELCA.

There are many reasons we should disaffiliate with the ELCA. Chief among them though is the calling of our pastors, specifically our next senior pastor. If I were to cast a vision for Nazareth, it would be to find a senior pastor with the spiritual gift of an evangelist and surround them with associate pastors with the spiritual gift of pastor and teacher to equip the saints here for ministry and service.

Now you might say, Wayne, what's the difference between those two? An Evangelist is open to communicating with different kinds of people to lead them to salvation with the help of the Holy Spirit. They have the special grace of preaching the word of God clearly and effectively to unbelievers. They continually seek out relationships with people who do not know Christ or those who come to church but have not given their lives to Jesus Christ to the point of salvation. A pastor, on the other hand, has the special responsibility for the education and spiritual growth of those already in the flock.

Consider this, the last time we had measurable attendance growth, we had a senior pastor who had the spiritual gift of an evangelist. It wasn't Pastor Larsen's only spiritual gift, but it was the dominant gift that attracted people to walk through these doors and be open to hearing the gospel proclaimed on a Sunday morning. Many of you sitting here today were drawn here by that gift.

**Source:** Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church Annual Reports – on file in the church office

SLIDE 49

**Ephesians 4:11 - 12**

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ, may be built up until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

In **Ephesians 4:11-12** Paul writes – “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ, may be built up until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” I believe Nazareth is in need once again of a pastor who has the spiritual gift of an evangelist and who will challenge this church each Sunday morning. Can we find someone like that from the ELCA pool of candidates with everything we know and have experienced in the past three decades? In my view, I think not. I believe we need to disaffiliate with the ELCA then open up a wide search for the senior pastor we need, who has the spiritual giftedness, from God, for a time such as this.

SLIDE 50

## Questions about the Unknown

People have asked us several questions about what would happen if we disaffiliate with the ELCA. We answered some of the questions earlier in this presentation. Here are two additional questions and answers.



SLIDE 51

## **What will we do for pastors?**

- We will be able to look for pastors within other Lutheran denominations
- We believe some of these denominations have pastors that are available right now

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SLIDE 52

## **With whom will we affiliate?**

- We will have to evaluate our options - there are several
- Nazareth could become an independent Lutheran church for a while
- One possibility is that we could remain an independent Lutheran church on a long-term basis
- Another possibility is that we could choose to affiliate with a different Lutheran denomination

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- Nazareth could become an independent Lutheran church for a while
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- Another possibility is that we could choose to affiliate with a different Lutheran denomination

Our intention is that we will remain Lutheran.

SLIDE 53

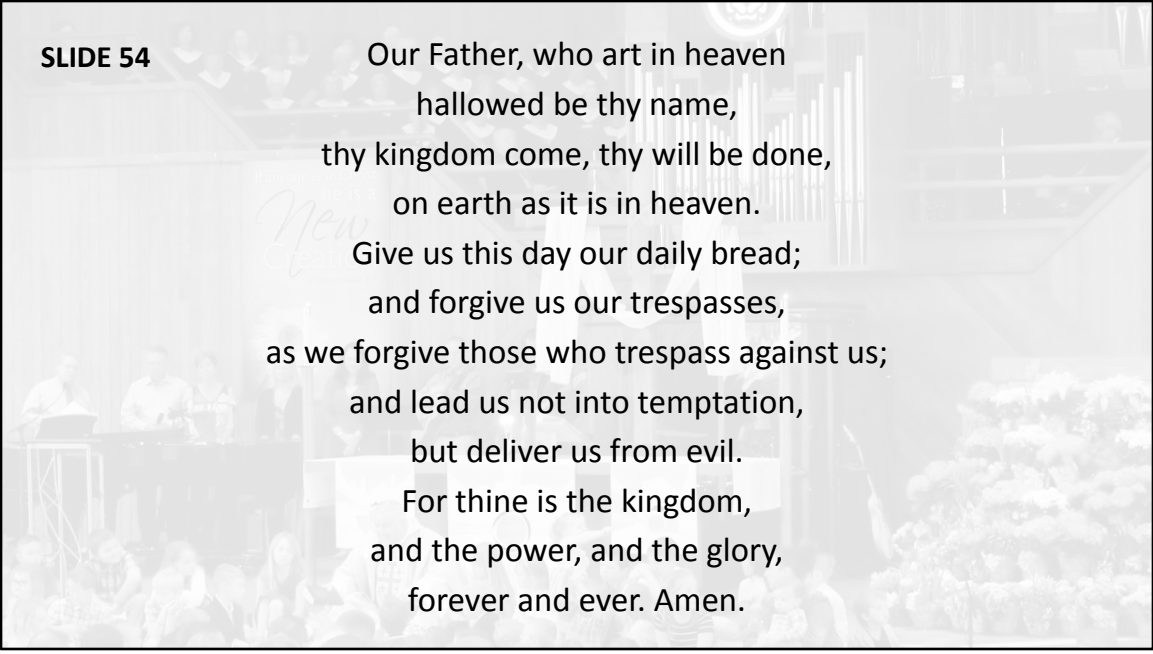
## Reminder: Q&A/Comment Sessions to Follow

- At least two Q&A/Comment sessions – more will be scheduled if necessary, up to four
  - Thursday, January 19, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
  - Sunday, January 22, 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
- Sessions are strictly for questions and comments
- Questions may be emailed to [council@naz.org](mailto:council@naz.org) in advance or turned in on paper after the information sessions, however this is not required – you may simply come and listen/ask/comment

We have currently scheduled two Q&A/Comments sessions on the dates shown. In order to be certain everyone has a chance to have their questions answered, and to share their comments, more sessions will be scheduled as needed, up to four total sessions. There will not be a presentation at these sessions. The sessions will be strictly for questions, answers, and comments. You may turn your questions in on paper after tonight's meeting, mail your questions to [council@naz.org](mailto:council@naz.org) in advance, or just bring your questions to one of the Q&A sessions. There will be a moderator at these sessions to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to participate. Everyone is encouraged to attend these sessions. We foresee a vote on our ELCA affiliation later this spring. The ultimate decision on ELCA affiliation is up to the congregation. This entire presentation, including links to sources and speaker notes, will be available on the naz.org website following the second information session.



**SLIDE 54**

The background of the slide is a faded photograph of a church interior. In the foreground, the backs of several people's heads are visible as they sit in pews. In the background, a church sanctuary is visible with a large organ on the right and a sign that says 'New' in a cursive font on the left. The text of the prayer is overlaid on this image.

Our Father, who art in heaven  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.

SLIDE 55



# Thank you for coming!

Thank you again for coming. Let us all go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**SLIDE 56**

## **Lutheran Reform Sources**

- Lutheran CORE: <https://www.lutherancore.website>
- WordAlone Ministries: <https://wordalone.org>

**This slide was not included in the actual presentation. The Council is adding it here to provide additional resources to the congregation for those who are interested.**