



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

April 2020

A Word from the Dean

FLYING BLIND

*“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God.”
- Isaiah 41:10*

When an airplane pilot encounters extremely poor visibility such that he must navigate solely by the plane’s instruments without the ability to go by any landmarks on the ground, he is said to be “flying blind.” This term originated in WWI by pilots forced to fly in poor conditions over enemy territory. It is an apt description for our current situation. It feels as if we are “flying blind” as we confront this pandemic that is sweeping the world, and bringing such devastation and unsettling fear to so many. As many have said, we face a hidden, silent enemy, one that seems to be all around us, yet remains invisible in many ways. There are still so many things about this enemy that are a puzzle to us – and so many dangers that we have yet to uncover.

I remember very clearly the worries and fears that followed the attacks on September 11, 2001. And I have heard from many who recall the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor. But this event seems different, somehow. Perhaps it is that unknown factor. Perhaps it is the fear that this enemy could attack from almost anywhere. Or perhaps it is the possibility that, even without knowing it, I could be the one to spread this disease to someone most vulnerable to its attack.

Because of these concerns our congregations have taken measures to lessen the risk among our people in accordance with the guidance our elected leaders have given, and in conversation with one another. I have heard from pastors and congregations throughout the Iowa Mission District who are learning to worship and pray and care for one another in new ways during this time. For many of us, it has been a rather steep learning curve. I know that I have felt like I was “flying blind” the first time I led a worship service through an online video conferencing service. For me, the service also included a baptism, with only the parents, child, grandparents, and one young brother having the run of the sanctuary! But I have appreciated the assistance and advice I received from those for whom such experiences are second nature, particularly our own tech wizard, Pastor Tony Ede.

Even more, I have been amazed at the appropriateness of the Scripture lessons appointed for these weeks. The story of Jesus’ healing of the blind man is simply a wonderful reminder that even when we cannot see what lies ahead for us, we can be assured that our Lord will be there to lift us up and give sight to our soul. The account of Jesus’ raising of Lazarus and the marvelous vision in Ezekiel of God bringing life back to a pile of dead, dry bones, are further confirmation that nothing in all the world can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. And the wonder of our Lord’s willingness to suffer all things for our sake, and His glorious resurrection from the tomb are reminders that even in our blindness and confusion we have no need to fear – but can only tremble in wonder and delight at what our Lord has promised us.

We will continue to do what is needed to protect our people. We will continue to pray for those who are hurting and alone. But we will continue to do so as the church – confident in God’s care for us and committed to caring for one another – with joy and love and with the word of peace given to us from our risen Lord.

*“Crown Him the Lord of Love - behold His hands and side;
Rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified.
No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his burning eye, at mysteries so bright.”*

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC



Sola Fide—Saved-By Faith Alone

*Pr. Gary Burkhalter
Mission in Christ Lutheran Church
Strawberry Point, Iowa*

It is always a little odd to reflect on the *Solas* because one is immediately struck by the paradox of having several things which claim to *alone* describe something, be something, or do something. (The manner in which each individual *sola* implies the inclusion of each of the others will need to be the focus of the work of someone far more gifted than this writer!)

What I'd like to do is simply reflect on each key word within this *Sola* by itself and see where it takes us: *Saved...by Faith...Alone*. Let's start with *Saved*.

The Greek word most commonly translated *saved* is the word *sozo* (*sozo*) and is also translated as meaning healed, preserved, and rescued and implies out of danger or destruction and into safety. The call for us here is to keep in mind the on-going nature of this activity, this saving. We do not need it simply because of our immediate predicament resulting from our behaviors; it necessary as an on-going counter to our ontological condition. Our problem is not that we *sin*, but that we *are sinners*. In other words, we are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners! When the depth of that condition breaks in on us, we cry out, "Most merciful God, we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves!" It is this condition from which we must be saved, healed, rescued and preserved!

The next word is *Faith*. It can help us understand what Faith *is* if we understand what it is *not*. First, faith is not simply intellectual assent. One with a higher IQ and thinking capabilities does not have more faith than one who does not! After all, Jesus commended us to have the faith of little children¹, or as little as a grain of mustard seed², not that of sophisticated philosophers

or the cedars of Lebanon.

Nor is faith grim, staunch, determination. This would make faith the result of hard work on our part, sort of like making up our own mind to believe in something with or without the benefit of the intellect, regardless of how ridiculous it seems.

But Faith is not *unreasonable*; it is supra-reasonable, it is beyond our reason, not contrary to it. Here scripture's definition serves us well: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*³. Notice that in both of these clauses faith is something that is outside of our selves. It is not self-assurance, nor do we ourselves function as that evidence. Faith is a gift that is given to us beginning in our baptism and continuing to be the spiritual medium in which we grow into the likeness of Christ Jesus.

Finally, we consider *Alone*. Here we must recognize that alone means exactly what it says: plus nothing else; without the assistance of any other one or thing. Period. And that includes you and me. I am not saved by faith plus a little bit of myself, my thoughts, my assent, my decisions, my agreeing, or my accepting. It is by faith *alone*. Either Christ Jesus has done it **all** for me or he has not. If we argue that he has not, then we make God out to be a liar. But if he has, then there is nothing left for you or me to do. At all. Period.

¹Matthew 19:13-15

²Matthew 17:20

³Hebrews 11:1

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District

Dear colleagues and friends,

I'm so grateful for your partnership. Please know that we at Nexus are eager to serve the Iowa Mission District (and all other NALC Mission Districts) by helping you raise up a new generation of pastors and church leaders.

NALC Nexus Week is July 12-17, 2020. It will include NALC teaching staff—still yet to be announced at this point.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me (mmattes@grandview.edu) or Director Kate Faas (kfaas@grandview.edu.)

God bless you this Lent,

Mark Mattes
LBI Chair of Bible and Theology



High school students who have completed 9th grade and who have an interest in exploring their faith and theology are invited to join other students for a week of study at Grandview College in Des Moines. "Through interactive learning experiences, discussion and collaboration you'll explore why Jesus matters, and how your life is intended to be a life of transformation. You'll explore how the church relates to the pressing issues of our world today and why the church matters."



The 2020 Pastors' Retreat has been scheduled for April 20 – 21 at the Riverside Bible Camp near Story City. The retreat is planned to run from Noon on Monday, April 20 until Noon on Tuesday, April 21. All of this is subject to change depending on the circumstances with respect to the coronavirus pandemic and the recommendations and directives in place in Iowa by then. This event is covered by funds from the Iowa Mission District and open to all pastors and lay ministers in our Mission District and their spouses. I will send out an email to all pastors and lay ministers with more information about this event. Registration is done by replying to the email. In the event of a postponement or cancellation, I will contact everyone accordingly.

Rev. Marshall Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC.

Resources

For those who missed the webinar with Bishop Dan on March 27th, there are numerous resources for pastors, congregations and families on the NALC website: thenalc.org. SOLA Publishing also has some resources to help families and congregations.



Announcements

Upcoming Events

April 20-21, 2020—Pastors'/Lay Ministers' Retreat, Riverside Bible Camp, Story City

April 26, 2020—9:00 a.m.—100th Year Celebration of First Lutheran Church in Manchester. All are welcome to attend and join in the celebration!

July 12-17, 2020—NEXUS week at Grandview College. For more information contact Director Kate Faas (kfaas@grandview.edu).

July 20-27, 2020—Youth Mission Trip to Nebraska

August 3-7, 2020—NALC Luther Week, Pittsburg, PA

September 19, 2020—Iowa Mission District Convocation, St. John's (Vilmar), rural Greene.

Donations and Correspondence

Checks sent to the Mission District for support should be made out to the *Iowa Mission District, NALC*, and mailed to Pastor Gary Burkhalter at **312 E Mission St, Strawberry Point, IA 52076**.

Correspondence for Mr. Craig Lease, Mission District Secretary, should be sent to **405 7th St. N., Northwood, IA 50459**

Items for the Mission District newsletter (pictures, news, etc.) are best sent via e-mail to Pastor Barbara Wills at barbaramwills@gmail.com.

The Iowa Mission District website may be found at: www.iowamissiondistrict.com. If your congregation has a web site, and you would like to have the web address linked to your church name on the Mission District web site, please send the web address to me, Pastor Barbara Wills, at barbaramwills@gmail.com.

Please Pray for:

Amy Cooper (wife of Pastor Jason Cooper) in your prayers. She continues to battle cancer and is facing some new challenges in her treatments.

All who are at risk for getting COVID-19, those who suffer from it, all who are caring for the sick, fighting it and trying to get it under control.

Note:

If you have a personal prayer concern, or have permission to share a concern, feel free to send it to me via email. (barbaramwills@gmail.com) In James 5:14, the Apostle encouraged people in this regard: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord...."



Sharing the Faith Grace-fully

Andrew Brings His Brother

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ... One of the two who heard John speak, and followed [Jesus], was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter). (John 1:35, 40-42)

We tend to think of Peter first, before his brother, Andrew. The more familiar "call story" of these two disciples of Jesus is the one we read in Matthew and Mark—Jesus walking along the beach and calling Simon and Andrew to leave their nets and follow Him. However, as we read John's account, it seems that prior to the episode on the beach, these two brothers had already met Jesus and spent some time with Him. Even more interesting—perhaps unexpected—is that Andrew was apparently one of John's disciples and brought his brother to meet Jesus.

As we consider the matter of sharing our faith with others, this is one of the biblical stories that stands out for me. We may think of handing out pamphlets and what I think of as "religious gimmicks", when we want to go out and tell others about Jesus. But if we're honest, many of these things often end up in trash baskets—if someone I don't know gives me a religious or political ad of some sort, I rarely even look at it. Too often, this is the way strangers—and strange people—want to disseminate information that may be untrue or of questionable value. Andrew's witness to his brother is a breath of fresh air—he doesn't try to convince Peter of anything. He doesn't give him preprinted information. He simply tells him what he himself believes and then invites him to come and see for himself. And, of course, they are brothers and already have a relationship of trust.

We all have people we love and care about in our lives who may not know the Lord, or have drifted from the faith. Many of us have experienced the frustration of telling our friends and family members about our faith, only to have them turn a deaf ear, or even accuse us of being judgmental or religious fanatics. To continue to nag or badger people not only doesn't make them more inclined to come to Christ, it

may also sever the relationship—leaving no further opportunity to witness to them, and possibly turning a mild disinterest in faith into a solidified aversion to it. Even if they don't cut us out of their lives completely, they may put some distance between us and "tune out" when the topic of religion comes up. On the other hand, they may pretend to agree with us, just to keep us from going on about it, but with no more faith than they had before. None of these reactions will bring people into a close and loving relationship with the Lord.

Thinking back to Acts 1:8, we are reminded of Jesus' words to His disciples before His ascension: *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."* Being a witness means more than dispensing information about Jesus. It's about our own lives of prayer and Christian discipline, being open to the guidance and promptings of the Holy Spirit, and remembering that the purpose of sharing our faith is to bring others into the Body of Christ where we hear the Word read and preached, receive the Sacraments, and are encouraged by the faith and fellowship of other believers.

Andrew sets a wonderful example for his brother, Simon—he brings him to Jesus. He doesn't argue, nag or try to convince. He simply brings him to the Lord and lets the Lord take over from there. Respecting where others are on their faith journey—even if they don't realize they are on a faith journey—is crucial to opening the door for them and letting the Holy Spirit take it from there. If they are willing to accompany you to worship, sit with them, help them find their place in the hymnal, and introduce them to others. Be ready to answer questions, but give the seed of the Word time to germinate and take root without too much prodding and "digging". Just as a new plant can be killed with too much "care", so the "seedling" faith can be damaged if we are too aggressive in our approach.

And don't forget to also bring the folks you love to Christ in your prayers.....

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Congregations of the Iowa Mission District

Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Call Process
Avoca: **Trinity**, Pr. Eric Meissner
Badger: **Badger Lutheran**, Pr. Scott Meier
Boyden: **St. John**, Call Process
Des Moines: **Unity Evangelical Lutheran**,
Pr. Donna Joseph; Pr. Diane Joseph
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**, Call Process
Eagle Grove: **Evangelical Lutheran**, Pr. Jason Cooper
Eagle Grove: **Samuel Lutheran**, Call Process
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Pastor Jon Rollefson
Emmons, MN: **Emmons**, Pr. David Schafer, Interim
Gilmore City: **First**, Tracy Nerem, Lay Minister
Grafton: **Emmanuel**, Pr. Solveig Zamzow
Greene: **St. John (Vilmar)**, Pr. Christopher Martin
Gunder: **Marion**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Harlan: **Bethlehem**, Pr. Ronald Rasmussen
+Huxley: **Shepherd of the Prairie**,
Scott Licht, Lay Minister
Irwin: **St. Paul**, Pr. Ronald Rasmussen
Laurens: **Bethany**, Pr. David Klappenbach
Manchester: **First**, Pr. Tony D. Ede
+Monona, **Faith**: Pr. Mel Harris
Northwood: **Peace**, Pr. Barbara Wills
Palmer: **St. John's**
Plainfield: **St. John**, Pr. Kim Thacker
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Pr. Ron Voss
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**, Pr. David Steffenson
Ruthven: **Zion**, Pr. Thomas Summerfield
St. Ansgar: **First**, Pr. Christopher Staley
St. Olaf: **Norway**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Sheldon: **St. Paul**, Call process
+Sibley: **Faith**, Pr. Tim Nappe
Spencer: **Trinity**, Call Process
Strawberry Pt.: **Mission in Christ**, Pr. Gary Burkhalter
Thor: **Ullensvang**, Pr. Darryl Landsverk
Waterville. **Old East Paint Creek**, Pr. Ken Kimball
Waukon: **Old West Paint Creek**, Pr. Ken Kimball

+ indicates mission congregation

The following pastors are available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Paul Breddin—515--528-2284
Pastor James Glesne—563-380-8110
Pastor Jack Miller—(507) 798-2408
Pastor David Steffenson—253-302-9845 (Sundays)
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675

Iowa Mission District Leadership

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Mission District Communicator
(newsletter editor/web master):

Pastor Barbara Wills—
barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 37 congregations.*



Pastor Tim Nappe is also available for pulpit supply. His primary focus is his ministry with "Reaching the Unreached", and he will share information about this mission work whenever he does pulpit supply for a congregation. Contact information: 712-331-4245. Or email at pastortim.milford@gmail.com

