



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

May 2020

A Word from the Dean

HOW LONG, O LORD?

“He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority. 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.’” - Acts 1:7-8

Waiting. Isolated. Alone. Waiting is hard.

When the disciples first saw their risen Lord they were overwhelmed with joy. The women rushed from the empty tomb to tell the rest. Peter and John ran back to see for themselves. The travelers to Emmaus hurried back to Jerusalem to spread the news. For the next 40 days we are told that Jesus appeared to them, convincing them of the reality of the resurrection, teaching them “in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself,” and telling them – to wait. Finally, they could take it no more. “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” they asked. But Jesus response was – wait some more.

Waiting is hard.

It has been over 40 days since we were told to begin practicing “social distancing.” It has been over 40 days that we have separated ourselves from one another in many ways. Many businesses have remained shuttered. Our churches have been empty week after week. Our schools have closed for the year. And we have waited. And waiting is hard. People have told me that, even though they are not going anywhere, even though they are not doing much of anything, they just feel tired and weary. Worn out by waiting. Now that some of the restrictions have been lifted for most of Iowa, many of our churches have decided they should – wait some more.

And waiting is hard.

But we wait with a purpose and a hope. The disciples asked for the kingdom, but Jesus had told them at the very beginning of His ministry that the kingdom is here! We wait to have the church come back together, but we are already united in Christ wherever we are! To be sure, as with the disciples, we long for the day when our faith will be sight, and we can meet face to face, but in the Spirit, we are joined as one right now. And in the meantime, we, too, are called to bear witness to that hope. We are called to care for one another by the very act of remaining apart to protect the vulnerable among us. We are called to show our trust in our Lord’s care even in the midst of a trying and difficult time.

Waiting is hard, but with the hope we have in Christ, we wait with patience.

May God guide us through this time of waiting and uncertainty. May those who have suffered hardship and sorrow find comfort and assurance in the sure and certain hope that is ours in Christ Jesus. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC



Sola Fide—Will the Son of Man Find Faith?

*Pr. Kim Thacker
St. John Lutheran Church
Plainfield, Iowa*

“When the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on the earth?”
(Luke 18:8)

There were actually only a few who truly believed in Jesus before the Resurrection, who believed before they had experienced a miracle, who believed without seeing, and they were all alike in one respect -- they were all desperate for some reason, and being desperate they were willing to put all of their faith in Jesus. They all wanted Jesus to be God. Jesus did find faith when He came to this earth the first time, and the faithful were a motley crew. He found faith in a Roman centurion whose servant was tormented by palsy. He found faith in a Canaanite woman whose daughter was possessed. He found faith in a blind beggar who was known only as the son of Timaeus, Bar-Timaeus, and then last of all Jesus found faith in a thief dying on a cross next to Him.

Jesus met up with the blind beggar not long after He wondered if He would find faith on the earth when He returned. Shortly after that, continuing down the road to Jerusalem, Jesus entered Jericho and met another man who had faith, but in this case the circumstances were quite different. Zaccheus, the wee little man, the cheating tax-collector, wasn't looking for a miracle like Bartimaeus. Zaccheus didn't have any infirmity like blindness. He wasn't possessed either. Zaccheus was a rich man. Shouldn't that have been enough to have made him happy? But Zaccheus climbed that tree. There must have been a reason why he climbed that tree. His treasure was not good enough to keep him on the ground. Something was not right with Zaccheus. Since he was a man, he had a conscience.

Was his conscience troubling him? Since he was a man, he had a soul. Was his soul empty? Was his soul crying out, "What gain has a cheating tax-collector from all of his toil?" Zaccheus had riches, but he must have lacked something, otherwise why did he climb that tree? Zaccheus didn't need a miracle, but he was ready to believe in Jesus, and so in Zaccheus Jesus found faith on the earth.

The Devil and the world are determined to eradicate faith on this earth. They won't give up. If one way doesn't work, they will try another. Their current operations appear to be succeeding. They may appear to be unstoppable. But they can't stop the Zaccheuses of this world from climbing trees. Men have consciences and men have souls, and consciences and souls cannot be controlled by tyrants. Consciences and souls cannot always be made to toe the line. Men of faith appeared in the Soviet Union, such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and the same is happening in China today.

There's no stopping men from climbing trees in order to see Jesus, and there's no stopping Jesus from coming down the road, as He did on that day in Jericho. Saul, on the road to Damascus, couldn't stop Jesus from coming down the road. Jesus will continue to create faith in the hearts of men and those men will not be coerced. The Romans learned that coercion didn't work when they persecuted Christians; the current tyrants are learning the same thing again today.

This and That

From Around the Iowa Mission District

We are in an unprecedented time in our world—at least in the memories of most of us. With the current COVID-19 pandemic has come much fear, quarantining of healthy people as well as the vulnerable and those who are ill with the virus. These protective measures have resulted in a moratorium on worship services and many other activities that most of us have taken for granted. In the midst of this atmosphere of “social distancing”, pastors and congregations have worked hard and been creative in finding ways to stay connected, provide worship opportunities, and continue to be our Lord’s hands and feet in the world in caring for one another and living out His command to love as we are loved. Here are a few ways in which folks in our Mission District are doing these things.



Right: Pastor Tony D. Ede, First Lutheran in Manchester, IA, conducts confirmation classes online.

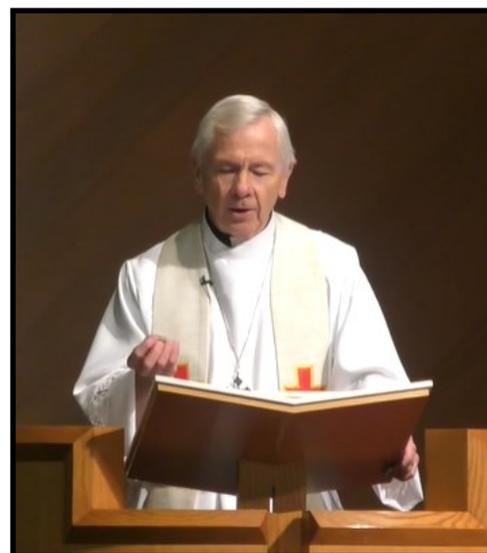


Left: Trinity Lutheran (St. Charles, MN) held a Drive-In Worship service on April 19, 2020. Pastor David Steffenson from Emmanuel in Rochester MN, led the service. Trinity is hosting Drive-In Worship throughout the summer at the Whitewater Travel Plaza off I-90.

Emmanuel Lutheran in Rochester, MN, annually holds a public reading of the entire Bible on Easter Monday. This sixth year was different than the past five, since they were not able to gather in one place, but their 38+ readers collectively read the entire New Testament. Pastor Dave and wife Julie began at 5 am, and she posted everyone’s progress on Facebook throughout the day. Some folks shared a Zoom experience, while others live-streamed on Facebook. And some read to friends via speaker



phone. ✠



Bishop Dan Selbo preached an Easter Sunday message that was available online for individuals and congregations.

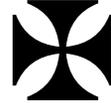
Resources

There are numerous resources for pastors, congregations and families on the NALC website: thenalc.org. If you haven’t yet had the opportunity to listen to Bishop Dan’s sermons for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday, you will find them there as well. SOLA Publishing also has some resources to help families and congregations. During this time.

This and That continued....



Left: Pastor Jason Cooper shared a picture of what they are doing at Evangelical Lutheran in Eagle Grove to try and smoothly bring worship into people's homes. He also got a children's bulletin resource from Concordia Publishing House to post on Facebook for parents to print and do with their children. He has also utilized Lutheran Hour ministry videos for adult Sunday School for those who choose to view them.



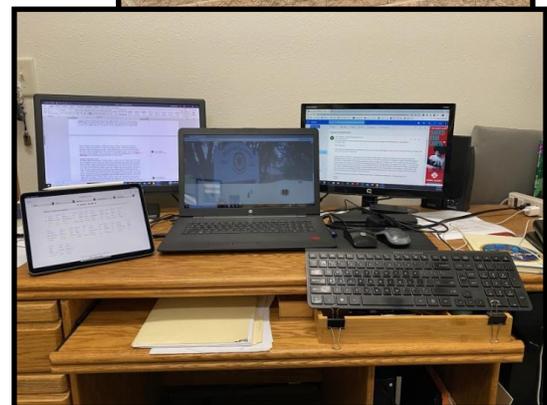
Right: Some pastors in our Mission District gather weekly via Zoom to study the lectionary texts for the upcoming Sunday.



Pastor Ken Kimball on Good Friday, and pictures of members of the congregation in the pews.



Left: Leaders at First Lutheran in Manchester conduct their meetings with the help of modern technology.



Above right: Mission in Christ Lutheran in Strawberry Point includes an invitation to join their online worship service on their church sign. Right: Pastor Burkhalter's "On-line Pastor's Desktop" at Mission in Christ.

Announcements

Upcoming Events

May 11-12—Pastors' Retreat at Riverside Camp cancelled.

July 12-17, 2020—NEXUS week at Grandview College. For more information contact Director Kate Faas (kfaas@grandview.edu). (Please check to see if this is still in the works.)

July 20-27, 2020—Youth Mission Trip to Nebraska has been cancelled. (We have had a wonderful time on our last two Youth trips and hate to have to cancel for this summer, but we have decided it would be the most prudent thing to do. We are committed to continuing this event next summer. If individual youth groups plan any short term events this summer or fall, be sure to let us know so we can acknowledge your activities—send us pictures!)

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

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

Please Pray for:

Amy Cooper (wife of Pastor Jason Cooper) who continues to battle cancer and is continuing treatments.

Pastor David Steffenson who has just been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and will begin chemo treatments.

All who are at risk for getting COVID-19, those who suffer from it, all who are caring for the sick, researching treatments and preventive measures and trying to make wise decisions for the public good.

Nominations for Iowa Mission District Convocation September 19, 2020

The nominations form is on the last page of this newsletter. We will be electing people for the following positions: Dean of the Iowa Mission District (3 year term—clergy), Clergy Council Member (3 year term); Lay Council member (3 year term). Please prayerfully consider nominees for these positions. **Be sure to talk to nominees to be sure they are willing to serve.** Nomination form must be filled out by the nominee and returned to Secretary Craig Lease (his address is on the form). You may send the nominee's name to Craig directly, but he will also need to have the completed form from the nominee.

We are pleased to welcome the following pastors into the Iowa Mission District:

Pastor Keith Menter, serving Elk Horn Lutheran Church (LCMC), Elk Horn, Iowa

Pastor Nathaniel Hedin-Schmidt, serving Bethlehem Lutheran Church (LCMC), Buffalo Center, Iowa

(soon to be) **Pastor Ryan Henkel**, who has accepted a call to serve Emmons Lutheran Church, Emmons, Iowa; and is to be ordained on May 17 at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Thomasboro, Illinois

Pastors William & Diane Odermann, who have accepted a call to serve Waterloo Ridge Lutheran Church, Dorchester, Iowa

Pastor Dan Hart, serving an interim position at St. John Lutheran Church, Boyden, Iowa

Pastor Brad Miller, (awaiting confirmation of acceptance into the NALC by the Executive Council), currently serving as interim pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Salisbury, North Carolina, permanent residence in Ankeny, Iowa

We are pleased to welcome these new colleagues into the Iowa Mission District – and our present colleagues into new ministries!

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.



Sharing the Faith Grace-fully

Philip Invites Nathanael

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

(John 1:43-51)

Last month, Andrew brought his brother, Simon, to meet Jesus. This month we're continuing the reading from the first chapter of John and discover Philip bringing his friend, Nathanael to meet Jesus. I love this story! The invitation to "Come and see" is compelling; the way Jesus deals with the skeptic, Nathanael, is intriguing; Nathanael's response to Jesus is nothing short of miraculous.

Like Simon Peter, who seems to readily accept his brother's word that Jesus is the Messiah and follows without objection when Andrew takes him to meet Jesus, Philip responds to Jesus' invitation and recognizes Him as the Messiah without reservation. His friend, Nathanael is another story altogether. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael's response reveals some prejudice, and perhaps a distorted understanding of the prophetic writings in regard to the Messiah. The bottom line is that Jesus doesn't fit Nathanael's perception of who the Messiah should be. Rather than argue with him or quote Scripture, Philip simply invites him to "Come and see." In a way, Philip is telling his friend, "Don't take my word for it, come see for yourself." This is an excellent witnessing strategy, and in our era when Jesus is no longer physically present, we can make this invitation by bringing folks to worship with us where they can experience the presence of Christ in the community gathered in His name. At times when

the gathering may not be physically possible, as in the current pandemic restrictions, we can still point people to the reading of the Gospels and online worship resources. Arguing a point of faith sets up an adversarial situation and is counter productive in bringing people to the Lord.

When Nathanael approaches Jesus, he is surprised by this Man from Nazareth. Immediately, Jesus comments on Nathanael's inner heart, revealing a knowledge and insight that no mere mortal could know about him. Nathanael's objections evaporate, and he proclaims that Jesus is the Lord. In our own experience we rarely see such a swift and dramatic change in a person's faith. However, we should never doubt the work of the Holy Spirit once we bring another person into contact with the Word of God. Notice that Philip is silent and leaves the convincing to the Lord. No doubt he is still there, providing a faithful presence, but having planted the seed in bringing Nathanael to Jesus, he lets the Lord open Nathanael's heart. Our responsibility as witnesses to Christ is to tell what we know from our own relationship with Him—to plant the seed, and gently encourage with the sunshine of our love and the watering of setting an example of following Christ—but the growth is stimulated by the work of the Holy Spirit who knows the other person's inner heart and mind. It is imperative that we trust the Holy Spirit to do His work of building faith in others and to guide us in our "tending" the growing plant of faith.

And then comes the miracle! Sometimes we're discouraged in our faith-sharing; feeling like a failure; thinking there was something more we *should have done*. Faith building is not our prerogative—it belongs to the Lord alone. We cannot save anyone—only Jesus can do that. Our job is to share the faith that is in us as a gift from the Lord God; to faithfully live under the Lord's authority; and to listen to the Holy Spirit's guidance through daily prayer and immersing ourselves in Holy Scripture. If we think we've done the work, we need to think again. God is the source and initiator of all things, including faith. All we say and do is a witness to Him, and witnessing is what He calls us to do. To follow a path of trusting ourselves and our efforts is to put ourselves in God's place. But when we trust the Lord, He will open eyes and hearts!

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**, Pr. Dan Hart
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**, Call extended
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

Iowa Mission District Leadership

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean—
stolafparish@netel.net
Craig Lease, Secretary—
pdlease@gmail.com
Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—
pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com

Mission District Council Members:

Pastor Christopher Martin—
pastorcwmartin@gmail.com
Pastor Ronald Rasmussen—
bigras73@fmctc.com
Chris Schlee—
schleemasonry@hotmail.com
Kathy Scharnhorst—
gaf@butler-bremer.com

Mission District Communicator
(newsletter editor/web master):

Pastor Barbara Wills—
barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 37 congregations.*



Pastors available for pulpit supply:

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



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

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.

Biographical Information of Nominee

Name: _____ Date: _____

Position for which you are being nominated: _____

Congregational Member at: _____

City: _____

Occupation: _____

Tell us something about yourself (*family, hobbies, etc.*)

How do you understand your faith?

How have you been active in the church?

Please list one of your favorite Bible verses and tell why it has meaning for you.

Please sign below to indicate you are willing to serve if elected and mail this completed form to:

*Mr. Craig Lease, Secretary
Iowa Mission District, NALC
405 7th Street N.
Northwood, IA 50459*

Signature