



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

January 2024



A Word from the Dean

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king,
behold, wise men from the

East came to Jerusalem, saying,

“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?
For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled,
and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief

Priests and scribes of the people, he
inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.
They told him,

“In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the

Prophet: “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.” Then

Herod summoned the wise men secretly
and ascertained from them what time the star
had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,
“Go and search diligently for the child,
and when you have found him, bring me word,
that I too may come and worship him.”

After listening to the king, they went on their way.
And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose
went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.
When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.
And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother,
and they fell down and worshiped him.
Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts,
gold and frankincense and myrrh.
And being warned in a dream

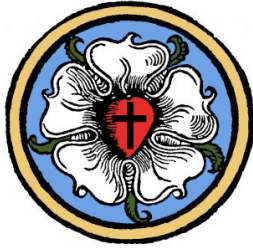
Not to return to Herod,

they departed to their own country by another way.

Matthew 2:1-12

May the light of Christ Jesus scatter your darkness in this Epiphany Season.

Pastor Staley



The Greatest is Love

Pastor Ken Kimball

Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church, Waterville, Iowa

Old West Paint Creek Lutheran Church, Waukon, Iowa

“Now these three abide—faith, hope, love—these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

(1 Corinthians 13:13)

When St. Paul writes these words in what we know as his First Letter to them, the church at Corinth—less than a decade old—is messed up. In the course of his letter, Paul successively highlights the sad state into which they have descended.

Chapters 1-4: Spiritually immature and prideful, they are fractured into four groups competing for control of the congregation.

Chapters 5-6: They are perverting the good news of forgiveness and salvation in Christ into an “everything goes.” religious veneer for their old sinful selves. One member has taken up sexual relations with his step-mother. Members are suing each other in court. Many are at the point of falling back into behaviors of their life before Christ—sexual immorality including adultery and homosexuality, drunkenness, greed and swindling, etc. Men in the congregation regularly pursue sexual intercourse with prostitutes.

Chapters 7-10: While tolerating immorality, they denigrate God’s gift of marriage and sexual intercourse between husbands and wives. Others use their freedom in Christ to do what they want in ways that are damaging to new Christians who are still in the process of disentangling themselves from pagan idolatry.

Chapter 11: They have turned Holy Communion into a pagan feast with the well off, stuffing themselves and even getting drunk while snubbing the poor among them.

This corruption of the sacrament has consequences: illness and death.

Chapters 12 & 14: Their use of charismatic gifts like speaking in tongues and engaging in loud and ecstatic worship where each focuses on his or her own emotional experience above the well being of others is more like the frenzy and chaos of a mob at a pagan festival than it is the church being the people of God gathered to hear and receive God’s Word.

1 Corinthians 15: Instead of grounding their faith and hope in the reality of Jesus’ historical, bodily resurrection and the promise of their future bodily resurrection in Him, they are falling back into a pagan way of thinking that reduces human beings to immortal souls trapped in physical bodies, turning the Christian faith into a form of their old pagan “every man for himself” religion. The result is sin-ruled chaos that cuts them off from the faith and hope they have in Christ Jesus.

Christian faith and hope have to be lived out in love for God and neighbor, including fellow believers. Our own faith and hope come out of God’s love for us in Christ. Biblically, love is not a feeling but action. God doesn’t sit around feeling love for us. God’s love is His action for us, saving us by His grace, creating faith and trust and hope in Him that calls and drives us to love others by doing and saying what serves the well-being of others in accordance with God’s truth. The call to love is the call to a life of daily repentance, the putting to death of the old sinful self, and living within the boundaries and pattern set for us by God’s love for us in Christ Jesus.



This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District

First Lutheran Church St. Ansgar, Iowa

During the Christmas morning worship service at First Lutheran, Pastor Christopher Staley (pastor of First Lutheran) and Pastor Barbara Wills sang a duet, “*Will You Come to the Manger?*”. At noon, the congregation hosted a community Christmas dinner in their fellowship hall. Food for the meal was donated by various local businesses, and donations of food were collected to share with the local food pantry. Following the meal, those who had shared in the meal also enjoyed singing Christmas carols together.



GRAND VIEW UNIVERSITY

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life

**Apply to The
NEXUS Institute!**

The NALC is sponsoring NEXUS again this year. This is for high school students who might be considering a call to ministry—or who might be encouraged to consider such a call.

A week-long, on-campus experience that will change your life. Come live in the res halls, explore Des Moines, & make friends who are passionate about Jesus, just like you! We give preference to those interested in working in ministry.

NALC Dates: July 21-27, 2024

JESUS VERBS



www.grandview.edu/NEXUS





Pondering the Parables: Mustard Seeds

“Another parable [Jesus] put before them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’” (Matthew 13:31-32)

I love the word “ponder”. It means to think about something carefully, to reflect on it—to mull it over and meditate on it. When we’re speaking of the parables of our Lord, it is even more important that we take the time to consider them carefully. Jesus’ parables are stories from daily life that are used to teach abstract spiritual truths. They often start in a way that leads people to think they already know where the story is going, but then our Lord adds an unexpected twist that leaves folks either scratching their heads or seeing themselves reflected in a not-so-complimentary way.

The parable of the mustard seed is shared by the first three Gospels—it’s in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Jesus introduces it as a Kingdom parable—“The kingdom of heaven is like....” Most of us have read or heard this parable numerous times, and we have perhaps read commentaries explaining it or listened to sermons based on it. For the purposes of pondering the parable as part of one’s devotions and prayers—or as a spiritual exercise—I suggest trying to read and consider it as if you had never heard it before. This is not easy, but I will share with you my attempt....

The kingdom of heaven is like.... The kingdom of heaven? What is a kingdom? A kingdom is a nation or place that is ruled by a king. A king in old times had supreme authority. He was answerable to no one, and had the power to kill, forgive, exile, arrest, or otherwise help or harm the citizens of his country. He could demand taxes, confiscate property, or require unpaid service from his people. He was the “supreme commander”—the final authority. So, the kingdom of heaven has a king—or rather *the King*. Jesus is telling a parable about what it’s like to live under the rulership of God. And God is the Creator of all things. Even kings are subject to Him.

This kingdom is like a grain of mustard seed. Mustard seeds are pretty small. Jesus says they’re the smallest of all seeds. We may have encountered

smaller seeds, but our variety of mustard may be different from the kind grown in Palestine—or they may not have encountered plants with smaller seeds. Don’t get hung up on this. The point is—the Kingdom of the Lord God is like a tiny seed. Hmm. Is this God’s eternal Kingdom described in the Revelation of John, the one of which we will be a part when our Lord returns? If so, maybe the small beginning was when the Lord announced to the evil serpent that He would send a savior who would crush the serpent’s head. We can see that Jesus’ coming began in this way and was later announced as a promise to Abram and Sarai in their old age—that through their descendants all nations would be blessed. And after many centuries—a promise given to David that a King from his line would reign forever, promises made through the prophets that God Himself would shepherd His people, and finally the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God—this was fulfilled. And since His resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, we await His return as King of kings, and Lord of lords. He will reign forever—over all creation. A huge Kingdom!

Or maybe Jesus means something that might be considered a “hidden” kingdom. A kingdom in which people with faith in Christ recognize His sovereignty in the here and now—in the creation itself, and in the Word made flesh in Jesus. In other parables, Jesus speaks of God sowing seeds that take root in people’s hearts—the words of Holy Scripture; the call to repent of sin and put our trust in the Lord; the invitation to love the Lord God with all our hearts and to love others as we love ourselves; the Good News that the ancient promises have been fulfilled and that the Kingdom is now in our midst in Christ. In the Lord’s prayer we pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done.” Maybe God’s kingdom grow in our hearts as we seek to do His will. And surely it grows as we live out our heavenly citizenship in our earthly lives—bringing God’s love and cleansing into our daily interactions as we forgive those who hurt or offend us, as we share the bounty we have received with those who lack the necessities of this life, and as we walk humbly with our God. Such sharing of our Lord’s grace and mercy surely spreads out to those around us and provides a safe place of light, rest and peace in the midst of the world’s darkness, frenzy and turmoil.

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Announcements

Upcoming Events

July 21-27, 2024—NEXUS Institute—at Grand View University, Des Moines. The week is being sponsored by the NALC. For more information: <http://www.grandview.edu/NEXUS>

August 9, 2024—NALC online Convocation—all day meeting online

September 21, 2024—Iowa Mission District Convocation—at St. John, Western Douglas

Please Pray for:

Pastor James Puotyual who is awaiting a kidney transplant.

When sending **correspondence** to the NALC please use the following address:

NALC Office
2655 Innsbruck Drive, Suite A
New Brighton, MN 55112-9304

Please send **donations** to this address:

North American Lutheran Church
PO Box 860565
Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565

Donations to NALS, Disaster Relief, Great Commission Society, etc. are to be made out to the NALC with the specific fund written on the memo line of your check.

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 Pastor Solveig Zamzow, Mission District Secretary, should be sent to **619 Elm Avenue, #309, Story City, IA 50248**

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

Pastors available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Natacha Kemp—507-785-0412
Pastor Jack Miller—507-798-2408
Pastor Mike Wikstrom—480-203-1556
Pastor Solveig Zamzow—641-903-9416



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

Mission District Pulpit-Supply Guidelines

A year ago, the Mission District Council voted to recommend that congregations pay a visiting pastor \$200 for a worship service in addition to the current IRS mileage rate. Following our recent meeting, we also recommend that congregations do the same for a visiting pastor who performs a wedding or a funeral. Any honorarium that the family might want to give to the pastor would not be deducted from this, as the pastor is providing a service to the congregation. We also recommend that a congregation which has more than one worship service in a day, pay an additional \$50 to the pastor for each additional service. (The current rate is \$0.655 per mile, but changes nearly every year.)



Congregations of the Iowa Mission District

Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Dan Buhs, Lay Minister
Avoca: **Trinity**, Pastor Matthew Bahnfleth
Badger: **Badger Lutheran**, Pr. Scott Meier
Boyden: **St. John**, Pr. Jeremy Winter
Des Moines: **Unity Evangelical Lutheran**,
Pr. Donna Joseph; Pr. Diane Joseph
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**, Pr. James Glesne
Eagle Grove: **Evangelical Lutheran**, Pr. Jason Cooper
Eagle Grove: **Samuel Lutheran**, Call Process
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Pastor Jon Rollefson
Emmons, MN: **Emmons**, Pastor Ryan Henkel
Gilmore City: **First**, Tracy Nerem, Lay Minister
Grafton: **Emmanuel**, Call Process
Greene: **St. John (Vilmar)**, Pr. Tamara Keen
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
LeMars: **St. John**, Pr. Chris Meier
Manchester: **First**, Call Process
+ Monona, **Faith**: Pr. Mel Harris
Northwood: **Peace**, Pr. Barbara Wills
+ Osage: **First Grace Lutheran Church**
Palmer: **St. John's Lizard Township**,
Marlene Nimke, Lay Minister
Plainfield: **St. John**, Call Process
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Pr. Ronald Voss
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**—Call Process
Ruthven: **Zion**, Eric Patten, Lay Minister
St. Ansgar: **First**, Pr. Christopher Staley
+ St. Charles, MN: **Trinity**, Pr. Douglas Hedman
St. Olaf: **Norway**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Sheldon: **St. Paul**, Pr. Dan Baker
Spencer: **Trinity**, Pr. Renae Behrends
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

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*The Iowa Mission District
has 39 congregations.*

***The Iowa Mission District website may be found
at: www.iowamissiondistrict.com.***