



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

February 2023

A Word from the Dean

Epiphany: The Great Reveal

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1, 14)

It has become more and more common in recent years that babies are born into a world with no mystery regarding whether she will be a girl or he will be a boy. Scientific advances have made this information available to any mother and father who want to know. And in many cases, this information is something that is shouted to the world through some sort of gender reveal celebration. In the Epiphany season, Jesus is the object of an even greater “reveal”.

Before even the world was created, there were Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And it was the Son Who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Now, leading up to His birth, only she and Joseph and Elizabeth and Zechariah knew that He was more than just a son. But after His birth, His identity was made known to a band of shepherds, and then also to a group of magi who came from afar to bring this King gifts. But for most of the rest His life, Jesus lived in anonymity. It wasn't until He was baptized by John in the Jordan that He was revealed to be God's Son, full of grace and truth.

It is for this reason that our Epiphany season begins each year as it does, with the magi bringing their gifts at some time after Jesus' birth, and then on the following Sunday we read of Jesus's Great Reveal at the Jordan River, where He is accompanied by the Father and the Holy Spirit. And then in the readings for the next several Sundays leading up to the Transfiguration, Jesus'

identity becomes more and more widespread. And yet, in spite of all the signs and wonders and teachings, people still remain uncertain of His true identity. He was like the great prophets from of old, Moses and Elijah and Elisha, indeed. But He was more than a prophet.

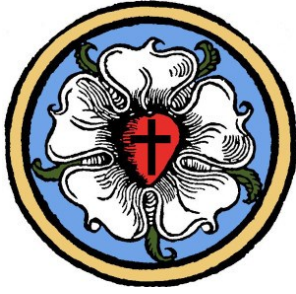
And this truth is revealed with great clarity to three of His disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, which we read on the last Sunday of the Epiphany season. In case Peter and James and John had any doubt, the sights and the sounds of that event galvanized for them His true identity. Peter says as much in a letter he wrote years later: *“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.”* (2 Peter 1:16–18)

Epiphany, as it were, means to “shine forth”. What had been a mystery or hidden is revealed in all its glory. And we, as the people of God are those who are called to let the light of Christ shine forth in and through us. May we, as children of God, walk in the newness of life won for us through the waters of our own baptism that His light might shine among others that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Have a Blessed Epiphany,

*Pastor Christopher Staley, Dean,
Iowa Mission District, NALC*

NOTE: Pastor Gary Burkhalter is working on a sermon library for our website. This is in response to the shortage of pastors and meant to assist small congregations that frequently hold lay-led services. He has sent out a request to our Mission District pastors, asking for message manuscripts that could be downloaded and used by congregations when they need to have lay-led services. If you are willing to share, he needs them submitted in PDF format with the season and lectionary year (A, B, or C) noted. It might also be helpful to include the Scripture text being used. If you have questions please contact Pastor Burkhalter at pqburkhalter52@hotmail.com.



THE GIFT OF FAITH

*Pr. Marshall Hahn
Norway Lutheran, St. Olaf IA
Marion Lutheran, Gunder, IA*

*"I believe that I cannot, by my own understanding or effort,
believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him."*

I often ask my confirmation students if they know how to diagram sentences. Apparently, this is no longer taught in middle school English classes, at least not in the communities in which I have served. So I show them, using the sentence above. You may recognize this as the opening statement in Martin Luther's explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed from the Small Catechism. It is the most profound statement in the catechism.

The value of diagramming a sentence is that it separates out the descriptive words and phrases so that you can see the basic thought that is being expressed. In this case, once the prepositional phrases are bracketed away, what remains is:

"I believe that I cannot believe."

On its face, it sounds absurd. But here is why it is the most profound statement in the catechism. For it provides the final nail in the coffin to Satan's attempts to turn our focus away from Christ and what He has done for us, and turn our gaze to how wonderful we are for believing in Him. By this statement we are acknowledging that faith, itself, is a gift and not our own doing. For here is where those prepositional phrases come back in:

*"I believe that I cannot by my own
understanding or effort believe
in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to
Him."*

In Ephesians 2:8 Paul writes, "For by grace you have been saved through faith..."

and too often we want to stop there and say, "Of course, it is by grace that we are saved - that is God's part - and then we have to believe!" as if we are partners with God in our salvation. But that is to leave out the rest of what Paul says: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. *And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast*"

The grace of our Lord Jesus *and* the faith to trust in His grace are *both* gifts we receive from God. We have no reason to boast whatsoever. As Luther makes clear in his explanation of the creed, it is not our work, but the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to faith. He is the One who "calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps us united with Christ Jesus in the one true faith."

Taking credit for coming to faith would be like a child taking credit for being born. So it is with being reborn in Christ Jesus. By His grace, we are not simply given a little something extra to make us acceptable to God. Our old self is put to death. In baptism we are "buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

In this new life we are given - like newborn babes - what can we do but trust in the One who has provided all things for us and promises never to leave us or abandon us!

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District



What do pastors DO all week? Is youth directing just leading silly games? What kinds of classes do theology professors teach? How does a person get a calling to ministry?

Discerning your path is a lot easier when you can ask questions within an encouraging community of people who are living it. If you know (or are) a high school student who may just have a call to vocational ministry, NEXUS is where it's at. Apply today for this NALC-sponsored week! www.grandview.edu/NEXUS

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NALC Disaster Response

It seems like everyday on the news we learn of more flooding, tornados ripping across the United States and other natural disasters. Please keep the NALC Disaster Response in mind when you hear this news. While you may not be experiencing these disasters in your area, other congregations of the NALC are being impacted. As disasters hit, supplies are taken to the disaster areas and supplies are then moved between warehouses to replenish as needed. We need to do whatever we can to keep all of the regional warehouses full of supplies.

Currently the Iowa Mission District Disaster Response Warehouse (located outside of Chatfield MN) is low on school kits and health kits. Please consider an-in house project to put together some kits for the warehouse.

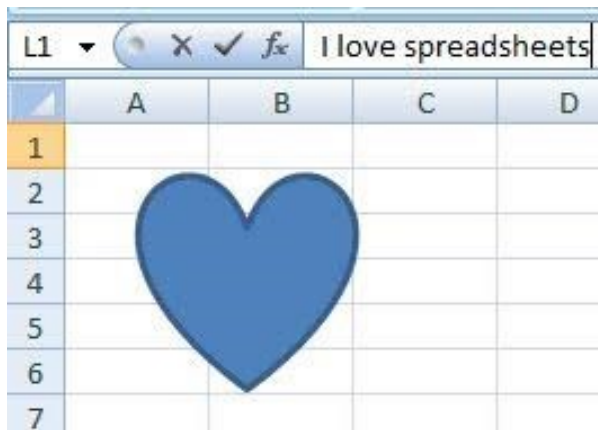
A new kit has been added to the list – **Kitchen Kit**. Items for the Kitchen Kit are to be put in a 2 gallon zip top bag or drawstring backpack. Items to include: dish cloths, dish towel(s), hot pad(s), spatula (pancake turner style), measuring cups, measuring spoons, storage container (two cup or more with a lid – I've found some collapsible bowls that work great), garbage bags (a few assorted sizes) and another helpful kitchen item of your choice. Does your church have a cookbook you've put together? This might be a great item to include!

If you have questions or items ready to go to the warehouse, let me know.

Betty Burkhalter

IMD Disaster Response Coordinator

Is this you???



1. You baptized your first child Deduction 214.
2. You characterize friends as assets and liabilities.
3. You place your left socks in the left drawer, your right socks in the right drawer.
4. You keep all of your receipts for seven years or more.
5. You ask for change from the Church offering on Sunday.
6. You bring your laptop to bed.
7. Your heart skips a beat when columns add up.
8. You feel light-headed when the check register balances with the bank statement.
9. The phrase 'year-end statement' gives you goose bumps.

If this describes you, you might be the next treasurer for the Iowa Mission District! Pr. Gary Burkhalter's second term as Treasurer expires at the end of August, and he must hand over the red and black pens!

The job is neither especially difficult nor particularly time consuming but does require a certain love of numbers and attention to detail. A typical user's level knowledge of Microsoft's spreadsheet program, Excel, would be a plus.

Contact Pr. Gary Burkhalter or Pr. Christopher Staley if you are interested or have questions!



In Memory of the Reverend Doctor James A. Nestingen



The Reverend Doctor James Arne Nestingen was a well-known theologian, professor to a number of pastors in our Mission District who graduated from Luther Seminary, and a faithful servant of our Lord Jesus. He died suddenly on New Year's Eve. A Professor of Church history at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, Pastor Nestingen was a well-known presenter at numerous theological conferences and other gatherings of pastors and lay people through the years. His obituary shared this insightful comment on Pastor Nestingen's faith and life: *"The central story of his life was his belief in Christ's promise that through the grace of God we, though by nature sinful, confess, are forgiven and welcomed into new and eternal life. It is this story that inspired a life of study, teaching, scholarship, and service, following his father Joyce Nestingen and father-in-law Olaf K Storaasli. In this vocation, he took great joy in the colleagues, friends, trouble-makers, and sinners that he met, and with whom he shared a common faith."*

Bishop Dan Selbo sent out a message in memory of Pastor Nestingen in which he said that he *"was one of those pillars of the faith that had been so instrumental in the establishment and continued development and strength of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). He was also, for those who knew him, a model of the faith to which many of us aspired."*





Abiding in Christ Be Still and Know that I Am God

When I was a young woman, I learned an important lesson about being a good hostess from an older woman. We were at a party hosted by my husband's boss and his wife. She was an excellent cook, very concerned about being sure everyone had what they needed, and flitted around checking coffee cups, dessert plates and being sure no one's needs were unmet. At one point in the evening, she sat down beside me, and we started talking. I was in the middle of a sentence, when she suddenly jumped up and said, "I'd better see if anyone needs more coffee!" I just sat there with my mouth open as she bustled away. At that moment I learned a little something about hospitality: It's not just about meeting people's physical needs, but also about making them feel that they are worth hearing and being recognized as worthy of one's time. As I've pondered that moment in the many years since it happened, I think I know a little of what Jesus was feeling when He visited the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany (Luke 10:38-42). People knew where the coffee pot was and were quite capable, and willing, to help themselves to the buffet-style desserts on the dining room table. But my hostess's sudden departure made me feel that I was somehow not as important as her need to be seen as a "good hostess". Like Martha, this dear lady seemed to think that her worthiness was completely tied to what she did for other people rather than to who she was and the importance of people's need to be in relationship with her.

On that long-ago day in Bethany, Martha was overcome with the burden of her responsibilities, and her focus was on herself and how much she had to do. Mary, on the other hand, was focused on Jesus; and sitting at His feet as a disciple would do, she gave Him her undivided attention. She was literally "abiding" with Jesus. Throughout the Psalms and the prophetic books of the Old Testament, the writers call people to return to the Lord, trust in the Lord, turn away from false gods and their own assessment of what was important. The Lord God was to be the focus of their lives and their faith. In Psalm 46, the psalmist begins by

speaking of God's love and care: "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.*" (verses 1-3) The Psalm ends with the admonition to "**Be still, and know . . .**" Whether we're flitting around like Martha and my friend, or letting our minds dart from one half formed thought to another, we cannot be settled and calm. Abiding in Christ is not the same as "being busy for Christ". Unless we spend that quiet time with the Lord our busy-ness and bustle may be fruitless activity. Even though being still is a challenge for many of us, it's an important part of abiding in Christ and learning to "know God".

*Knowing God and knowing about God are not synonymous. There are many atheists in the world who know a lot about God. But to know God is to be His faithful friend, servant and child. To know any person, we must spend time with them—listening as well as sharing our thoughts and feelings. Abiding in Christ—staying attached to the Vine of Christ—requires some times of stillness. In that stillness we might ponder a Psalm or other Scripture passage. We might thoughtfully pray the Lord's Prayer. We might take time to tell the Lord how much we love Him and how grateful we are for Him and His love for us. We might read slowly through the Small Catechism and scratch the surface of Luther's explanations of the meanings of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments. We might pray that the Lord would get us out of the way of His will and guide us—*bend us to His will and fulfill His purpose* for our lives. Jesus said, "*He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:5) As we become still and prayerfully ponder our Lord's words, He will open our hearts and minds and reveal Himself to us. And out of that knowing and being known, the fruit of Christ will grow. And only then can our busy-ness become fruitful.*

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Announcements

Upcoming Events

June 12-13, 2023—Pastors'/Lay Ministers' Retreat - Best Western, Waterloo, Iowa

July 16-22, 2023—NEXUS Institute - Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa (for high school aged young people)

August 7-11, 2023—NALC Luther Week (convocation) - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

September 16, 2023 Iowa Mission District Convocation—Faith Lutheran Church, Monona, Iowa

Please Pray for:

Pastor James Puotyual who is awaiting a kidney transplant.

Pastor James Glesne who is undergoing treatments for Multiple Myeloma.

Amy Cooper and her family as she continues to deal with cancer.

Pastor Andrew Loomis who has been diagnosed with an autoimmune system illness. Please pray that he will be healed from his chronic pain.

The family of the Rev. Dr. James Nestingen—his wife, Carolyn, and their children. He died suddenly on December 31, 2022.

Pastor Ron Rasmussen who is recovering from serious health issues.

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) 358-7741
Pastor James Glesne—563-380-8110
Pastor Andrew Loomis—712-298-6587
Pastor Jack Miller—507-798-2408
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675
Pastor Mike Wikstrom—480-203-1556 (LCMC)
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

Suggested guidelines for supply pastors in the Iowa Mission District is \$200 plus IRS recommended mileage reimbursement.





Congregations of the Iowa Mission District

Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Pastor David Craig
Avoca: **Trinity**, Pastor Matthew Bahnfleth
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**, Pastor Ryan Henkel
Gilmore City: **First**, Tracy Nerem, Lay Minister
Grafton: **Emmanuel**, Call Process
Greene: **St. John (Vilmar)**, Call Process
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**, Pr. Tony D. Ede
+Monona, **Faith**: Pr. Mel Harris
Northwood: **Peace**, Pr. Barbara Wills
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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cbstaley@netins.net
Pastor Solveig Zamzow Secretary—
solveigzamzow@gmail.com
Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—
pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com

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(newsletter editor/web master):
Pastor Barbara Wills—
barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 38 congregations.*

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.