



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

June 2020

A Word from the Dean

THE BOND OF PEACE

“I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

- Ephesians 4:1-3

For 3 months we have been separated from others in many ways due to the corona virus. We have avoided public gatherings, schools have been closed, many businesses have shuttered, people have been working from home, and our churches have forgone public worship. Through it all, however, we have found ways to stay connected with the use of modern technology and communication. Teachers have stayed in touch with their students through Zoom, businesses have held video conferences and meetings, families have visited via Skype and other means, and worship has taken place on Zoom, Facebook, websites and other “virtual” gatherings.

Now, as many of the restrictions on gatherings have been lifted, we have begun to come together again, cautiously and carefully. Many of our congregations have begun to take baby steps in offering opportunities for face-to-face worship. To be sure, this process will take longer some places than others depending on the local circumstances and demographics of each congregation. Yet all of us are committed to doing this in the most safe and responsible manner possible. Throughout this pandemic we have sought to “maintain the unity of the Spirit” through whatever means are available to us. And congregations have found some creative ways to do so.

Just as God is able to use even the most trying situations for good, perhaps this experience can help us to treasure our life together even more. Perhaps, when we are once again able to join together fully for worship, without restrictions, as the gathered community of God’s people, perhaps we will not take such a precious gift for granted. There are many places in the world where the Christian community must live under much more stringent restrictions under penalty of law. And some places where it is dangerous to come together at all. Yet, those who live under such conditions often bear witness to their faith by the very joy they express when they do gather.

When Peter wrote to the churches of Asia Minor, he was writing to people who were beginning to face persecution for their faith – the “fiery ordeal” as Peter termed it. But his advice was to continue to bear witness to the “living hope” that is ours in Christ Jesus, rejoicing even in the midst of the troubles they faced. As much as anything, it was this witness of joy that brought many others to faith in Christ. When even their persecutors saw the confidence and courage and joy the Christians displayed even through their suffering, it made a tremendous impact on them – as it still does today. We are thankful not to be facing the same kind of persecution, but even how we respond to the crises in our culture today can be a powerful witness to the hope that is in us.

I wrote “crises” on purpose. For as I write this, we are facing another crisis in our land, as the horrific video of the strangling of George Floyd has set off protests around the country – protests which some are hijacking for their own violent ends in an attempt to divide us from one another even more. As we pray for unity and peace as followers of Christ, may we also pray for God to heal the divisions and bring peace to our country and communities, as well. And may we seek to show that peace and unity and love of Christ to all our neighbors.

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC



Sola Fide—Faith

*Pr. James Glesne
Decorah, Iowa*

Years ago when our children were small they would ask us “Mommy, Daddy help us!” Then later on we began to hear “I want to do it myself!” It is rather interesting to see that growth in our children, that growth we often interpret as self-sufficiency and independence.

It seems that even in our “faith life” many of us want to do it all ourselves. And yet Scripture seems to speak to that issue in quite a different manner. If my math is correct “faith” or “faithfully” occurs approximately 558 times. Obviously this word(s) is important in Scripture. Many times in Scripture faith is linked with God. Faith more often than not seems to be an action word that is linked to something or someone. It could be a person or it could be God.

We use the word “faith” in our culture in so many different ways, so maybe is good for us to go back to Scripture and to see exactly what Scripture means by the word faith.

One of my favorite passages about faith in action comes from the book of Hebrews – ***“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.”***

Martin Luther writes at length on the subject of faith. In particular, Luther writes and establishes the means by which a person becomes justified, free, and a true Christian, in other words justified by faith in Christ alone. He writes these things; *one thing, and one alone, is necessary for life, justification, and Christian liberty; and that is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ. (He takes this from John 11:25; 8:36 and*

Matthew 4:4.) It is easy to understand why faith has such great power, and why no good works, nor even all good works put together, can compare with it, since no work can cleave to the Word of God or be in the soul... It is clear then that to a Christian man his faith suffices for everything, and that he has no need of works for justification. But if he has no need of works, neither has he need of the law... This is that Christian liberty, our faith, the effect of which is, not that we should be careless or lead a bad life, but that no one should need the law or works for justification and salvation (1Tim 1:9).

We hear over and over again as we read Scripture that faith is based upon God’s Word and given to us and nurtured by the Holy Spirit of God. It is a gift!

How important it is that we are in the Word, because it is that very Word of God that, guided by the Holy Spirit, speaks to us!

Luther reminds us that it is faith alone by God’s grace and mercy alone, by means of His Word that sufficiently saves a person. He goes on to remind us that out of faith and love for our Lord, we should be willing to serve one another without regard for human gratitude, praise or rewards.

So *much* more could be said about the word faith and how the Bible uses it but, thinking about our opening illustration, it is good for us to close with this thought from Ephesians chapter 2 verse eight: ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God.”***

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District



Above: Migrant workers in India are traveling thousands of miles by foot and bicycle to return to their homes after being laid off from work during the strict lockdown in India due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pastor Nijhar Minz-Ekka and her husband, Pastor Neeraj Ekka, serve with World Mission Prayer League in Ranchi, Jharkhand, North India, in the North Western Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church. Pastor Nijhar is a called pastor of the NALC; her husband is a called pastor of the NWGELC. Currently in the U.S., both pastors teach and serve in administrative positions for Navin Doman Theological College, which trains pastors, missionaries, evangelists and community leaders as well as doing community service ministries. A group of Christians there, including two seminary students, have formed a group to assist the migrant workers, serving as many as 1500 people a day. Volunteers are providing rice, vegetables, money and other needed items, as well as cooking, packing, serving and distributing the food. Please pray for the travelers and those seeking to help them as the lockdown continues.

2019 Iowa Mission District Youth Trip



2019 Annual Pastors' Retreat



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.

Announcements

Upcoming Events

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.)

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.

Pastor James Puotyual who has recovered from COVID-19, but is suffering some kidney problems.

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 next-to-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.

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

The Witness of Waiting

*By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.*

*On the willows there we hung up our lyres.
For there our captors required of us songs,
and our tormentors, mirth, saying,
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”*

How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?
(Psalm 137:1-4)

How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? This phrase always captures my imagination. I see in my mind the exiled Israelites in mourning, sitting in the shade of the willows beside the Euphrates River, too depressed to sing, believing that when they left their homeland in Canaan they left the Lord God behind as well. Part of me laments their situation. It’s hard to sing when we’re depressed. It’s hard to feel at peace when we feel that God is absent or when we’re enduring the consequences of our own wrongdoing. The people of Israel were in Babylon because they had abandoned the Lord’s commandments and ignored the Lord’s warnings to repent and return to faithfulness. How can we sing the Lord’s song in this strange and foreign land of sorrow, remorse, discomfort, and humiliation?

Many of us are currently feeling like we’re in a foreign land—the land of COVID-19. It’s a land where danger lurks behind every corner—hidden in the breath of singing voices, in the hugs of friends, in the laughter of family gatherings, and inside the doors of churches, schools and restaurants. It’s a land in which fear stalks and uncertainty reigns. It’s a land in which many have trouble feeling like singing the Lord’s songs—in which to gather to sing liturgy and hymns could be a death sentence for the most vulnerable. How is it possible to sing the Lord’s song in this land of exile, separated from family members, friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ?

Like many of the ancient psalmists we may be in mourning and depression, hearts filled with fear, anger, anxiety, impatience, disbelief, and distrust. Being exiled in a foreign land confronts us with the reality of our vulnerability—we are unable to fix the situation that confronts us. It is a time of waiting for deliverance. For those who do not know the Lord, it is a time of despair and hopelessness. But for the people of God, it is a time for prayer and patience. In Psalm

37 (verses 1-3) the psalmist expresses his trust in the Lord:

*I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.
He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.
He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.*

When we wait patiently for the Lord to act, He puts a “new song” in our hearts. Even in the midst of social distancing, we remain in God’s care. We remain the body of Christ, joined to all the saints of all the ages, many of whom were imprisoned for their faith, separated from their worshiping communities, but prayerful and filled with the songs of faith. We are apart for a time, but it is a pregnant time, a time of waiting for the Lord to act. It is a time for singing the Lord’s songs—in the shower, while walking in the yard, while looking out the window. It is a time for waiting patiently—and in doing so, showing gratitude to the person putting groceries into the car trunk at curbside, for delivering groceries to those confined in their homes, for making face masks to donate to the local hospital or clinic, for phoning a friend who may think no one cares, for being patient with the clerk behind the plexiglass “window” at the local pharmacy, for continuing to send our offerings to missions and our congregations.... The way we wait will be a witness to what we believe and who we trust. If it’s the Lord Jesus, then it will be a fruitful waiting that tells people we trust the Lord and are willing to be with Him and His people in the present foreign wilderness, knowing that He is still in charge, and that His power is made perfect in our weakness, as the Lord revealed to the Apostle Paul: “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

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**, Pastor Ryan Henkel
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

Iowa Mission District Convocation Registration

Saturday, September 19, 2020
at St. John Lutheran Church (Vilmar), Greene, IA

The 2020 annual Convocation of the Iowa Mission District will take place at St. John Lutheran Church (Vilmar), rural Greene, Iowa, on Saturday, September 19. Our theme is “Sola Fide” and we are pleased to have the Reverend Jonathan Swenson as our keynote speaker. The Convocation is our opportunity to gather as brothers and sisters in Christ for the purpose of fellowship, worship, learning and sharing of ideas and to hear up-dates on the work and mission of the NALC. We also will have a business session to conduct the necessary business of the District. As you prepare for the convocation please be thinking of nominations for Dean of the Mission District and the following Council positions: Lay member (3 year) and Clergy (3 year). A nomination form will be included in the Iowa Mission District News.

According to Article 4.01 of the IA- MD Constitution **all clergy persons within the territory of the District and two lay delegates of each congregation are eligible to vote at the Convocation.** In addition, we strongly encourage congregational participation beyond the delegates and clergy—visitors welcome! There is no cost to the event other than a free-will offering for lunch. A worship offering will also be taken and designated to a worthy domestic or international cause. The day will begin at 8:00 am with registration and a time for fellowship with coffee and refreshments. A service of Holy Communion will begin at 9:00, and the closing of the convocation will be at 3:00 pm.

To help with planning, and so that we may have appropriate name tags for **delegates and visitors**, we ask that you fill out the registration form below and return it via the postal service **no later than Wednesday, September 16**, and mail to **Pastor Barbara Wills, PO Box 202, Northwood, IA 50459**. You may also send the registration by e-mail (barbaramwills@gmail.com), **but please be sure to include all the information on the form.**

(Please fill out a separate form for each person.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone/email: _____ / _____

Congregation & Town: _____

Clergy _____ Lay Delegate _____ Visitor _____