



# News

## of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

[www.iowamissiondistrict.com](http://www.iowamissiondistrict.com)

December 2021

### *A Word from the Dean*

“Come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20b)

Most often, when we hear or speak these words we are about to enjoy a meal. And, in many ways, I would like nothing better than to write a meditation about just such an occasion given that many of us will be gathering around tables overflowing with food for Thanksgiving and a few weeks later for Christmas. Unfortunately, my thoughts are elsewhere.

Like many of you, my attention has been drawn to news coverage which have shown us in terrifying detail the carnage that people can inflict upon one another. Some of these events have happened in recent hours, but some of the events on display are replays of violence that has marked what seems to be especially turbulent times. For nearly two years, I assert that we have been under the spell of wall-to-wall coverage of disasters of all kinds, be they natural or manmade. Whatever sense of ‘normal’ under which we lived in the days before this series of events happened is almost hard to recall. And this heightened sense of danger is exhausting in every way: physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Part of the problem is that it is easy to become obsessed with the news. It has a way of drawing us in and completely monopolizing our thoughts, both waking and sleeping. For a time, a few months ago, I decided to take a hiatus from the news. After a few days in which I felt a little bit of withdrawal, I noticed that I was less anxious, and better able to find joy in the simple things around me. I am reminded of one little episode in particular that I recall. During a particularly hard stretch of bad news in our world, I was driving and contemplating what a mess everything appeared to be. As I was thinking this, I drove by a farm where, in a large open yard, a boy of about ten was driving a four-wheeler up and down. I slowed to a stop to watch him for a while. Because he was driving with quite a bit of caution, I’m guessing that this experience was still quite new to him. But what really struck me was

how this moment for him was pure joy, even though the world around him was in such disarray.

It is a matter of perspective to be sure. Where one focuses one’s attention, makes all the difference in a person’s life. When I consume a steady diet of horrific news, I become increasingly cynical and physically unhealthy, and look for ways to dull that pain that are even more unhealthy. In such moments, my faith is tested because an inner voice, the Old Adam you might say, suggests ever more loudly that faith in a loving and almighty God is foolish in the face of such horror. In such moments, I need to be reminded of something, and I heard that something just yesterday morning in worship. With its being the last day of a vacation, I had the opportunity to sit in the congregation during worship and was able to receive the Word in a way that’s a bit different from being the one called to proclaim that Word. As it was Christ the King Sunday, we heard God’s Word through the Revelation given to John, which included the words, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*” says the Lord God, “*Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty.*”

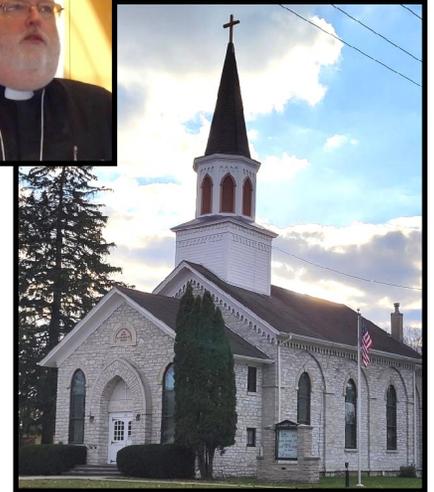
As Jesus neared the end of His public ministry, He warned the disciples about coming days of tribulation and terror, of wars and famines and earthquakes and every manner of evil, at the end of which He would come with great power and glory. Throughout human history, nearly every generation has thought it was living in these last days, and perhaps you think we are now, and perhaps we are. But as much as we might be clamoring to know *IF* this is the time, all we need really to understand is that He is coming. And when He comes all the horrors and terrors and dangers and evils will be completely vanquished and destroyed. When we can maintain our focus on Him, then we can live in such times in the peace which only He can give. *Come, Lord Jesus.*

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

# ***This and That*** ***From Around the Iowa Mission District***



Below left: *Emmons Lutheran Church, Emmons, MN, is served by Pastor Ryan Henkel.* Below right: *Iowa Mission District Dean, Pastor Christopher Staley, is the pastor at First Lutheran, St. Ansgar, IA.*



## **Iowa Mission District Convocation Registrar**

*Kathy Sharnhorst, a member of St. John Lutheran Church of Western Douglas, Plainfield, IA, is now the Iowan Mission District Convocation Registrar. Beginning with the 2022 Convocation, all registrations will be sent to Kathy, and she will also be the one taking care of your name tags. Her contact information is [gaf@butler-bremer.com](mailto:gaf@butler-bremer.com).*

## **Notes from the Mission District Council**

*What follows is a brief summary of actions when the Iowa Mission District Council met in October.*

- Reports from the Dean, the Secretary, and the Treasurer were reviewed and approved.
- The Iowa Mission District Convocation was reviewed, and a discussion was held regarding the dates and site for the 2022 Convocation. The date will be August 27, and the site is yet to be finalized. We are expecting that Eric Riesen, President of the NALS, will serve as our keynote speaker.
- Information was received regarding a possible bus trip to the March for Life on January 19. A motion to submit a deposit to the bus company was approved. This will be publicized in the November newsletter and via email to the congregations. If insufficient interest is achieved, the deposit is fully refundable as late as 30 days prior to the trip.
- A youth mission trip will be looked into for this coming summer.
- Dean Staley will begin working to plan the Pastor & Lay Minister retreat for June 6 & 7 in Ft. Dodge. Pastor Ede is arranging a keynote speaker.
- Following some questions that been raised at the Mission District Convocation, a discussion was held regarding how our Mission District is organized. The Council decided that nothing needs to be changed at this time, but reiterated its hope that Dean Staley could make more use of the Council members and other Mission District pastors to carry out the Dean's duties.
- The next meeting of the Council will be Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 9:00am at Cabin Coffee in Mason City.



*Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church is replacing their white and green paraments and are offering the pictured items above to any congregation that can use them. No charge. Please contact Cindy Gibbs at [mcgibbs@acegroup.cc](mailto:mcgibbs@acegroup.cc), if interested.*

## Report of Iowa Mission District Convocation

The Iowa Mission District Convocation was held at Emmons Lutheran on Saturday, September 11th. A total of 47 delegates registered (29 lay and 18 clergy), representing 22 of our 37 congregations. There were also 26 visitors. The day began with Worship with Holy Communion with Bishop Dan Selbo presiding and Dean Christopher Staley preaching. Following worship, the meeting was called to order at 10:15, with a welcome by our host Pastor Ryan Henkel. The agenda and rules of procedure were adopted, as were the minutes from the 2021 Convocation.

The ballot for elections was announced and nominations were opened. For the remainder of the morning, each congregation present was invited to share a little bit about what is going on its own context. This was followed by lunch.

The afternoon was highlighted by a Keynote Address from Bishop Dan Selbo. This was followed by an opportunity for attendees to visit one of three forum areas. During this time, the remaining items brought for NALC Disaster Relief were loaded onto the trailer that Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response Coordinator, had brought for the occasion. She offered words of appreciation and encouragement to those gathered before they departed for Rochester where the supplies will be warehoused until they are needed.

The afternoon business session consisted of the Dean's Report, Elections, Treasurer's Report (approved), and Mission District Budget. Those elected were Treasurer: Gary Burkhalter (2nd term), Clergy (Pastor David Klappenbach), Lay (Dean Armstrong), and Lay (Lyle Hollander, 2-year term).

The budget was passed as follows:

Dean's Expenses: \$7,000  
NALS (Seminary): \$3,000  
NALC (Bishop's travel): \$1,000  
Seminarian Scholarships: \$3,000  
Education & Ministry: \$4,500  
Seminary Debt Reduction: \$1,000  
Communications: \$650  
Youth Ministry: \$4,000  
Contingency Fund: \$1,000  
Ethiopian Seminary: \$5,000  
March For Life Bus: \$3,000



In order to fund this budget, each congregation would need to offer \$650. The offering collected at the Convocation, \$970, will be offset the cost of items that were purchased to complete the Flood Buckets, with the remainder being sent directly to NALC Disaster Response.

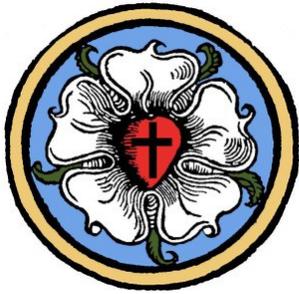
The Convocation closed at 3:30 with the installation of those elected.

*Pastor Christopher Staley  
Dean, Iowa Mission District*



*Workers from Emmanuel Lutheran in Rochester deliver buckets to the Disaster Response Warehouse in Rochester.*





## Christ Alone

### Our Hope In This Season of Joy Is In Christ Alone

*Pr. David Klappenback  
Bethany Lutheran Church  
Laurens, Iowa*

The NALC has at the top of our Core Values is Christ-centered church. Everything that happens whether it be in worship, fellowship, outreach, teaching, and even meetings, our focus is on Christ, our crucified and risen savior. His presence is affirmed in all the above-mentioned activities. Christ has promised to be with us where two or three are gathered (Matthew 18:20) and also "to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20).

We are now in the Advent season, that season of hope, anticipation, and preparation. We especially focus on Christ's promised second coming to bring fulfillment to God's plan for His creation. When this occurs will be the end of disease, tears, and death. Our preparations also center on the celebration of Christ's birth on Christmas to accomplish God's plan.

Christmas will come like it does every year on December 25th. Already Christmas music is played over the speakers with the song, "It's The Most Wonderful Time of The Year." It may be the most wonderful time of the year for many as they gather with family, friends, and co-workers to celebrate. Many experience the joy as they go about their preparations.

Then my thoughts turn to those who feel it is not the most wonderful time of the year. They are the ones who feel the pressure of trying to get everything done by December 25th in this over commercialized culture along with the financial stress. Then I think of those going through grief because the of the loss of loved ones during the past

year. Many are battling depression or battling certain illnesses in their lives during this time of the year. With all this it easy to lose joy and become hopeless.

No matter these life situations the Church proclaims the reason for the season. It all has to do with Jesus and why God sent Him into this world; that was to reconcile the world back to God. It is about God giving us the gift of salvation and eternal life. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16, ESV). The manger where the Christ Child lays is always in the shadow of the cross. This is Jesus' goal as He gives His life so that we might be reconciled to God, have forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life. This is the foundation of all our gift giving during this time of the year.

Finally, I encourage you to stay connected with your church family. Share in the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ. It is here at worship that the cross of Christ will be front and center, and Christ alone will be proclaimed and lifted up. Whether life is filled with joy or challenges remember you are the reason for Jesus' birth and His life-giving sacrifice. Now that should move everyone to celebration and praise to God, singing all the Advent and Christmas carols, and to share the Christmas Story with wonder.

May this Advent and Christmastide be transformed into a most Holy season for you and your family.

# *A Few of My Favorite Psalms*

## *Psalm 32*

Most of us know the discomfort of a guilty conscience. In a world that would tell us that feelings of guilt are unhealthy, and which tries to explain away such feelings, we may try to shrug them off. While it's true that people can often be manipulative and try to make others feel guilty in order to get their own way, or to convince those around them to give in to a particular point of view or action, guilt for wrongdoing is not only healthy, but it is a gift from God. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve experienced guilt when they disobeyed the Lord and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Apostle Paul tells us that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" (Romans 3:23) John the Baptist, and our Lord Jesus Himself, began their ministries with a call to repent of our sins. And who can forget the struggles of Martin Luther whose heavy burden of guilt was a source of torture for years until he found the Good News of forgiveness and reconciliation with the Lord in Paul's letter of Romans: "*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus....*" (Romans 3:21-24a)

One of my favorite Psalms speaks of the joy and blessedness of God's forgiveness:

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

*Blessed is the man to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

As people of Christ, we know that we are in need of this forgiveness from our Lord, and that it is through the righteousness of our Lord Jesus that the Lord "imputes no iniquity" to us when we put our trust in Him in faithfulness and truth. We also know, with Luther and the psalmist, the futility of our own efforts to "cover up" our sins.

*When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.*

*For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.*

When we feel guilty, it's hard to concentrate on our work or the things that ordinarily give us pleasure or joy. One way of describing such a feeling is that we have a "heavy heart". Like Adam and Eve, we may feel exposed and vulnerable. Our appetite may be affected, and long-term guilt may lead to heartburn, ulcers, high blood pressure and a host of other stress-related health issues.

We've all heard that "confession is good for the soul." And it's good for the body as well. Luther reminds us in the Small Catechism that our sins are drowned in our Baptism into Christ through daily repentance. Repentance means being sorry for our sins and humbly bringing them to the Lord each day. Luther's evening prayer includes this petition: "*We beg you to forgive us all our sins and the wrong which we have done.*" Our Lord Jesus emphasized the importance of repentance and confession in the Lord's Prayer: "*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" And the psalmist recognized this necessity as well:

*I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my iniquity;*

*I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.*

One of the great blessings in our Lutheran liturgies is the Confession and Absolution. Having been raised in a Christian tradition that did not include public confession of sins, I often felt much of the angst that Luther described in his early years of trying to atone for his own sins. The first time I experienced public confession in a Lutheran worship service, it was like a breath of fresh air washing over me. Sin wasn't something to hide away and try to absolve on my own, it was something to openly repent of and confess. Together we struggle with seeking to live according to the will of our heavenly Father, and together we acknowledge our need for our Savior, Jesus Christ, who carried all these sins to the cross for us—and destroyed the power of sin, death and the devil forever in His resurrection. And when we acknowledge our sins we experience the joy and blessedness expressed by the psalmist:

*Therefore let every one who is godly offer prayer to thee;*

*at a time of distress, in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.*

*Thou art a hiding place for me, thou preservest me from trouble; thou dost encompass me with deliverance....*

*Many are the pangs of the wicked; but steadfast love surrounds him who trusts in the LORD.*

*Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*

# Announcements

## Upcoming Events

**January 19-22**—March for Life trip to Washington DC.

**April 23, 2022**—9:00 a.m.—Iowa Mission District Council meeting—Cabin Coffee, Mason City, IA

**June 6-7, 2022**—Pastors/Lay Minister's Retreat, Fort Dodge.

**July 25—August 1, 2022**—Youth Mission Trip to southern Louisiana for hurricane relief. Youth who have finished one year of confirmation through grade 12 are eligible to go. Cost is \$300 per youth with non-refundable deposit to reserve a seat on the bus due by April 1. Every congregation sending youth must send an adult—one adult per five youth. For more information, contact trip organizer, Pastor Tony D. Ede, at 319-290-2401 or [tonyede@gmail.com](mailto:tonyede@gmail.com).

**August 27, 2022**—Iowa Mission District Convocation.

## Please Pray for:

**Pastor James Puotyual** who is awaiting a kidney transplant.

**Pastor David Schafer** who is awaiting hip surgery.

**Pastor James Glesne** who is undergoing treatments for Multiple Myeloma.

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

**Pastor David Steffenson** who is undergoing treatments for pancreatic cancer.

**Greg Olson** who continues to recover from neck surgery.

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 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](mailto:barbaramwills@gmail.com).

## Congregations of the Iowa Mission District



Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Dan Buhs, Lay Minister  
Avoca: **Trinity**, Call Process  
Badger: **Badger Lutheran**, Pr. Scott Meier  
Boyden: **St. John**, Pr. Mark Jamison  
Des Moines: **Unity Evangelical Lutheran**,  
Pr. Donna Joseph; Pr. Diane Joseph  
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**,  
Pr. Bill Odermann; Pr. Diane Odermann  
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  
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**, Pr. Kim Thacker  
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary  
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary  
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Call Process  
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**, Pr. David Steffenson  
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**, 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 Christopher Staley Dean—  
[cbstaley@netins.net](mailto:cbstaley@netins.net)  
Craig Lease, Secretary—  
[pdllease@gmail.com](mailto:pdllease@gmail.com)  
Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—  
[pqburkhalter52@hotmail.com](mailto:pqburkhalter52@hotmail.com)

### Mission District Council Members:

Pastor Ronald Rasmussen—  
[bigras73@fmctc.com](mailto:bigras73@fmctc.com)  
Pastor Tony D. Ede—  
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Lyle Hollander  
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Dean Armstrong—  
[jdedarmy@laurens-ia.com](mailto:jdedarmy@laurens-ia.com)

### Disaster Response Coordinator:

Betty Burkhalter  
[bettyburkhalter@hotmail.com](mailto:bettyburkhalter@hotmail.com)

### Mission District Communicator

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

*The Iowa Mission District  
has 37 congregations.*

### Pastors available for pulpit supply:

Pastor James Glesne—563-380-8110  
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



*The Iowa Mission District website may be found at: [www.iowamissiondistrict.com](http://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](mailto:barbaramwills@gmail.com).*

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](mailto:pastortim.milford@gmail.com)