



News

of the Iowa Mission District
of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

December 2019

A Word from the Dean

EMMANUEL

*“and His name shall be called Emmanuel
(which means, ‘God with us’).”*
(Matthew 1:23)

When you consider the times when you have felt the presence of God the most, quite likely you will think of some overwhelming emotional experience – as in the birth of a child, or the death of a loved one, or gazing over a sight of spectacular natural beauty, or experiencing a miraculous answer to a prayer. Certainly these are moments when we are reminded of the majesty of God and His power and might. At Christmas we often look to such wonderful experiences as the sign of God’s coming into our world – the angels awakening the shepherds on the hillside – the magi following God’s heavenly signs to the infant Jesus – the dreams and visions given to Mary and Joseph.

But it is just as important to look for God’s presence in the other parts of the story – in the shepherd’s fear, in Joseph’s confusion and disappointment, in Herod’s murderous rage. When Joseph was first told that Mary was expecting a child, it was a devastating blow. Even after he came to understand that this child was the One promised by God to be our Savior, he knew it would mean his whole life would be turned upside down. And when he was told to take this child and His mother and flee for their lives to escape the wrath of Herod, it was clear that this would be no easy road that he had been called to travel.

But he is told that this is the way God has chosen to enter our world. This child is “Emmanuel – God with us.” He has come to us not in power and majesty, but in weakness, lowliness, and humility. He has come to be with us in every moment of our lives – not just the joyful and exciting and fulfilling times, but in our times of sorrow and weakness and confusion, as well. As Jesus tells His followers some thirty years later, in Him even the poor, the sorrowful, the meek, and the suffering, are the blessed of the Lord. Because He is with us. Because this promise is sure. Because He is Emmanuel – God with us!

May we sense His presence with us during this time of preparation and celebration of our Lord’s coming – and in all the times of our lives.

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC

Sola Gratia—Grace Upon Grace



*Pr. Mark Lund
St. John Lutheran Church
Boyden, Iowa*

*“For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”
(John 1:16 ESV)*

These words ring out every Christmas Day in Christ’s church for good reason. John’s Gospel doesn’t begin with the story of Christ’s birth, as does Matthew and Luke. However, it does begin with the Incarnation – the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us. For John, and for the Bible as a whole, the center of history and indeed the center of all things can only be found in the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, the Word who is full of grace and truth. The Word from whom we have all received Grace upon Grace. This Word was in the beginning with God, was with God, and was God. All things were made through Him. Apart from Him, not one thing that has been made was made. Moreover, in this eternal Word, is life. For He is the life and the only way to the Father (John 14:6). In fact, He is the exact imprint of His nature (Hebrews 1:3). And, He is the perfect, complete, and final atoning sacrifice for the sin of the whole world.

Truly, this is Grace upon Grace. For this is not what we deserve. We, who by nature and by choice continually turn away from the One who gave us life, certainly do not deserve Him to take on our flesh in order to save us. This is why it is called Grace. Because, it is completely undeserved and unmerited. We had the same amount of influence on God sending His Son into our flesh to save us as we did on the creation of the universe. It was God’s will and His action. It was His Grace.

And for whom did God send His Son? “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). If you are part of the world, then Jesus died for you. Out of love for you—apart from any merit or deserving on your part—God sent Jesus to pay for your sins. That’s Grace.

John tells us that sadly, not all people believe in Jesus, and thus, not all receive eternal life. “*But,*” he writes, “*To all who did receive Him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*” (John 1:12-13 ESV) Here again, it is all Grace. For we have as little control over being born of God as we did our natural birth. It is God’s work through Jesus Christ from beginning to end that saves us—in creating us, atoning for our sins, and granting us saving faith in Him through His effective and powerful Word (Romans 1:16). Grace upon Grace.

In Christ, God poured out His love and gave everything. For you. Grace upon Grace.

Merry Christmas!

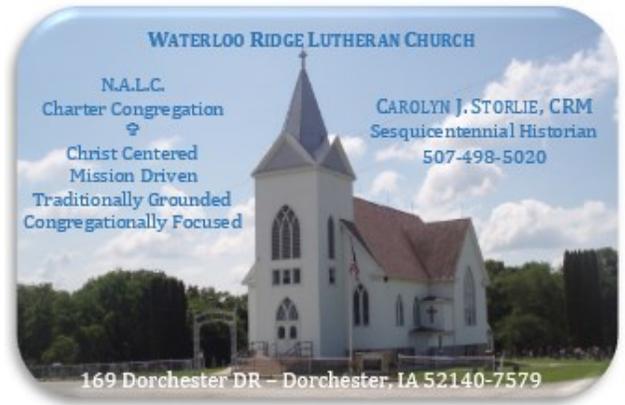


This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District

Primary site: <http://nordicamericanchurches.org/>

Specific link to Waterloo Ridge detail: <http://nordicamericanchurches.org/search-detail/?id=2048>

These 104 pages are the National Register of Historic Places Nomination [NPS Forms 10-900 and 10-900a] submitted November 20, 2014 which resulted in the “**Waterloo Ridge Menigheds Kirke og Kirkegaard Historic District**” property being listed in the National Register of Historic Places effective July 21, 2015.



Here is information sent to Carolyn Storlie, historian for Waterloo Ridge Lutheran Church from Partners for Sacred Places, regarding their new website and online information about their congregation..



Introducing the new Preserving Nordic American Churches website!

Partners for Sacred Places is pleased to announce the launch of our new website, Preserving Nordic American Churches: www.nordicamericanchurches.org. The website focuses on Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish heritage churches and is an important expression of Partners' work to lift the profile of historic sacred places.

The centerpiece of the website is a searchable database of Nordic heritage churches in the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. We are launching with over 1500 Nordic heritage churches identified during the initial three years of our project. We will update and add information during this project's second phase.

This first-of-its-kind inventory demonstrates the variety of sacred places found across the region and will make it easier for scholars, practitioners, and members of the public to find them, visit them, support them, and preserve them. Additional website links provide context to the database and draw from project research and from Partners' ongoing work to help congregations of historic sacred places better serve their communities as anchor institutions.

We encourage you to use this resource to learn more about some amazing Nordic American churches, and to share this site with others who may be interested, such as congregations and nonprofits caring for these buildings, denominations, ethnic organizations, historic preservation professionals, and individuals interested in the history, architecture, and decorative arts of Nordic heritage churches in these six Upper Midwest states.

Many thanks to our partners in State Historic Preservation Offices, archives, universities, and churches who have helped make this project possible.

For more information, contact:
Partners for Sacred Places
1700 Sansom Street, 10th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 567-3234
partners@sacredplaces.org



Announcements

Upcoming Events

December 7, 2019—9:30 a.m. to noon (or until sold out) - Cookie Walk at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Grafton, IA. Proceeds will go to benefit youth Bible camp attendance and clean water provision in East Africa. For more information call 641-748-2736.

December 14, 2019—10:00 a.m., Christmas program and luncheon at First Lutheran Church's Parish Hall, St. Ansgar, IA. Musical program, "Mary Wrapped a Present to the World" by the musical group, "Witness 4". Donations of a non-perishable food item or monetary gift will be given to the Mitchess County Food Bank. For more information or to indicate your intention to attend, please contact First Lutheran Church at 641-713-4873.

April 20-21, 2020—Pastors'/Lay Ministers' Retreat, Riverside Bible Camp, Story City

July 20-27, 2020—Youth Mission Trip to Nebraska

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

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

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.

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.



Steadfast In God's Word

Bearing the Fruit of Faith

Jesus said to His disciples: *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit...I am the vine, you are the branches. 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 15:1-2, 5)

We have been praying our way through Holy Scripture this past year—discerning how the Bible is our means of hearing God's word and how we, in turn, can use the words of Scripture to talk to the Lord. This two-way communication, based in God's written word, is one of the means by which we learn how to abide in Christ. In some sense, it is foundational to our whole life in Christ, whether we refer to this life as discipleship, following Jesus, Christian formation or serving the Lord. These are not different things, they cannot be put in some order of greater or lesser importance, and they cannot be done without the foundation of faith revealed to us by the Holy Spirit through the means of Holy Scripture. It is from this "faith walk", this "abiding in Christ", that our witness to Christ comes: Not as a work that we do for the Lord, but as the fruit that grows naturally out of this unique relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So, we are called to abide in Christ. It is essential in any healthy relationship to have communication, and as mentioned above, this comes from our knowing Scripture and allowing the Lord to speak to us through His written word by means of the Holy Spirit. To know Scripture is more than memorizing passages, learning the background and history of times and places described in the Bible, and being able to recite biblical stories and parables. It's sometimes an unfortunate side effect of some kinds of "Bible study", that people begin to stand "over" the Bible, speaking of God and themselves in the third person, and thinking they somehow "own" the Bible. I often think of faithful Job who repents of questioning the Lord when he says, *"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."* (Job 42:5-6) The purpose of Scripture is not to learn about how the earth was created, but Who the Creator is, and that He is our Lord—we belong to Him. It is not to learn about ancient history as an objective academic exercise, but to reveal to us the Lord of all, Who from the

beginning of time to its end, calls us into a proper and loving relationship with Him as our Savior and Father. And to know Scripture is not to take control of it, but to hear it as God's word to us—calling us to walk humbly with the Lord; and justly and kindly with our neighbor. (Micah 6:8)

When we hear the Scriptures in this way, we hear the call to be in community with the Lord and with others. This is where worship comes in. From the beginning, God said it was not good for us to be alone. He made us male and female so that we might beget families, and the families become communities that are called to gather for worship and to give thanks to the God who loves us. It is in worship that we hear the Holy Scriptures read and preached in the presence of others, and receive the Sacraments as a community of believers. If we only study or pray alone, we may slip into misinterpretations of Scripture. In community, we help each other discern God's will, remind each other of our callings, hold each other accountable, and encourage one another in faith. We learn compassion and generosity when we are challenged to help bear one another's burdens rather than think first of our own wants and preferences. God has no "only children", except for His only begotten Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ lived out His ministry among His disciples and others who gathered around Him to learn and worship. He told His disciples that where two or three gathered in His name, He would be present with them. (Matthew 18:20) The Holy Spirit came upon the gathered disciples on the day of Pentecost. We cannot live faithfully as God's people or truly know Scriptures or the Lord in isolation.

This immersion in the Scriptures and the community of God's faithful people is the way we abide in Christ. This is the way in which we are seen by others as those who are in the world but not of it. We who abide in Christ are called to live in the world with love, forgiveness, decency, compassion and the other gifts of grace and mercy we receive from the Lord—and which will be reflected in our relationships, and shared with those who live in the world with us. This is the fruit of faith that grows out of the vine of Christ.

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. Mark Lund
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**, Pr. Rich Taylor
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Pastor Jon Rollefson
Emmons, MN: **Emmons**, Pr. David Schafer, Interim
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**
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

The following pastors are available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Paul Breddin—515--528-2284
Pastor James Glesne—563-380-8110
Pastor Jack Miller—(507) 798-2408
Pastor David Steffenson—253-302-9845 (Sundays)
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675



Iowa Mission District Leadership

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Pastor Ronald Rasmussen—
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Chris Schlee—
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Mission District Communicator
(newsletter editor/web master):

Pastor Barbara Wills—
barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 37 congregations.*



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