



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

July 2025



A Word from the Dean

“I just want them to be happy.”

When speaking of their children, I very often hear parents say this. It seems to be such a commendable wish. In fact, our very country was founded with the principle that it is the God-given right of every person for the "pursuit of happiness." But it remains for me an unsettling statement.

The problem with happiness, as I see it, is where its pursuit might take a person. There are virtually countless things in the world which would want us to believe that happiness could be found in them. And it may be that all of these things could bring pleasure or joy to a person, at least for a moment. But some of these pursuits can lead a person toward ever greater danger, both physical and spiritual. A few years back there was a television show entitled "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" in which the host would visit the homes of the super-rich. The underlying message to the audience was that if only we could amass such wealth as to be able to live like this, then we would be truly happy and fulfilled. I am reminded of Jesus' words: "*What does it profit a man that he would gain the whole world but lose his soul*" **Mark 8:36**, and "*One's life does consist in the abundance of possessions*:" **Luke 12:15**. And then there is the warning in **1 Timothy 6:9**, "*Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge*

people into ruin and destruction." And how true it is that so many who have so much in the way of worldly goods see their lives come to ruin. Clearly, 'having it all' isn't the key to happiness.

A further problem I have with the idea of happiness is that many pursue it as a destination, rather than finding it right where they are, and even finding it where they would not expect to find it. A simple reading of the opening verses of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount shows us this: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, . . . blessed are those who mourn, . . . blessed are the meek, . . . blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.*" These conditions Jesus calls "blessed" (and note, the word translated here as blessed also means "happy"), are conditions we typically strive to avoid in our lives. And we read in **1 Timothy 6:6, 8**, "*There is great gain in godliness with contentment. If we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.*" All these verses point to the truth that the source of happiness is not to be found in the created world, but in the Creator. Perhaps the next time we would speak of our children, we may instead say something like, "I just want them to be faithful", "I just want them to find true joy in God." And may we pursue true joy and happiness in Him.

*Pastor Christopher Staley
Dean, Iowa Mission District*



Running with Perseverance:

The Trouble with Weeds

*Pastor Ben Unseth
Spencer, IA*

Once a month I share hope with with the staff at Del's Garden Center in Spencer, Iowa. In June they were surprised as I told them tongue-in-cheek that I was going to sue their business.

Last fall, I covered my front yard with cardboard to suffocate my very weedy grass over the winter. In May, Del's delivered 7 tons of topsoil, and I raked it out over the cardboard. Then I planted 17 types of wildflowers and native grasses in this lovely topsoil—50 little peat cups in which my mom had planted seeds and 30 plants that I had purchased.

Almost every plant and peat cup is growing well, but there is a terrible problem with my beautiful topsoil. It has weed seeds! Lots of weed seeds! How dare Del's Garden Center deliver topsoil with weed seeds in it! Don't they understand that I wanted clean dirt?

We live in a bent and broken, sinful world, and dirt everywhere has weed seeds in it. Weeds abound, and their seeds lie latent in soil anywhere you go—kind of like the seeds of sin in our souls.

A few years ago I reunited with a boyhood friend, and Evan asked me to pray for him. He loves Jesus and participates in church regularly, but his marriage was struggling. I have been praying for him, and I got to see him last weekend at my high school class reunion.

Evan gave me a big hug, and I kept looking for a chance to talk with him. The problem was that he is too friendly. Everybody wanted to talk with Evan. Late in the evening, I spotted him walking away from some classmates, so I intercepted him to talk one on one.

“Evan,” I said, “a few years ago you asked me to pray for you and your marriage. How are things going?”

Evan's response surprised me. “I realized I was an alcoholic.”

Evan called on Jesus and went to a lot of meetings with Alcoholics Anonymous. God has been rebuilding Evan's heart. Temptation still knocks on the door of his soul, but God gives him grace day by day.

As you might have guessed, his marriage has strengthened!

Evan has the same problem as my front yard and my heart—weed seeds. We were by nature children of wrath, according to Ephesians 2:3.

Evan thought his problem was something external, in his wife or in his relationship with her. Almost always, our problems are *inside us*—in the weeds of sin that grow in us.

My garden struggles with weeds, but I think it will look beautiful in time because I planted good seeds in this soil. I fight the weeds and wait for the good seeds to grow and bloom.

“My name is Benjamin, and I am a sinner.” This is true, but it is not the only truth about me.

“God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.” (Galatians 4:6, NIV). This is also true about me! I belong to Jesus. As a child of God, God has planted his good seed in your heart. He is fighting the weeds, and he is tending his beautiful garden in you.

Biographical Information of Nominee - 2025

Name: _____ Date: _____

Position for which you are being nominated:

*Co-Dean - West ____ (3 year term) Secretary ____ (3 year term, clergy or lay person)
Council Rep. - Clergy (3 year term) _____ Council Rep. – Lay (3 year term) _____

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:

*Pr. Solveig Zamzow, Secretary
Iowa Mission District, NALC
619 Elm Avenue, #309
Story City, IA 50248*

Signature

*Any ordained NALC pastor residing/serving a congregation west of I-35 is eligible to be nominated for the position of Co-Dean – West.

Iowa Mission District Convocation Registration

Saturday, September 20, 2025

St. John's Lutheran Church

201 1st Ave. NW, LeMars, Iowa 51031

The 2025 annual Convocation of the Iowa Mission District will take place at St. John's Lutheran Church, LeMars, Iowa, on Saturday, September 20, 2025. Our theme is "Running with Perseverance" from Hebrews 12:1-2: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* We are pleased to have the Reverend Dan Selbo, Bishop of the North American Lutheran Church, 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 will also have a business session to conduct the necessary business of the Mission District. **As you prepare for the convocation, please be thinking of nominations for Iowa Mission District Co-Dean (West), Mission District Secretary (this can be either a clergy or lay person), one Lay Representative and one Clergy Representative to the Mission District Council. Each is for a three-year term. A nomination form is included in this month's Iowa Mission District News. Please get permission from the nominees before submitting their names. The nominees will need to complete the nomination form and mail it to Mission District Secretary, Pastor Solveig Zamzow (619 Elm Avenue, #309, Story City, IA 50248).**

Please Note: According to Article 4.01 of the IA- MD Constitution: "*Delegates with voting privileges at a Convocation shall be the ordained ministers of the NALC within the territory of this Mission District and [two] lay delegates from the member congregations*". In addition, we strongly encourage congregational participation beyond the delegates—visitors are welcome! There is no cost for the event other than a free-will offering for lunch. A worship offering will also be taken and designated to the NALC Disaster Relief. 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 around 4:00 pm. Break-out sessions will include conversation with Bishop Selbo, a session with Pastor Zamzow on dealing with pastoral vacancies, a report from Pastors Hahn and Saethre, and Debbie Saethre on their trip to Ethiopia, and Pastor Hedman will lead a session to help established congregations build stronger relationships with mission starts.

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 mail to Kathy Scharnhorst, Registrar, at 1594 Garden Avenue, Waverly, IA 50677. It is most helpful in keeping track of registrations if each person being registered is listed on a separate sheet. If you wish to submit your registrations via email, please fill out the form and send the information as an attachment to kscharnhorst51@gmail.com.

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone and/or email: _____ / _____

Congregation & Town: _____

Clergy _____ Lay Delegate _____ Visitor _____ Youth _____



Names for Jesus: The Narrow Way

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

We live in a pluralistic world—and our own culture and society grow more diverse each year. As the diversity in our nation increases, we not only face multiple understandings of life, a variety of languages, and a growing assortment of clothing styles and acceptable behaviors, but also an increasing number of religions and faith traditions. Even within each religion there is not always uniformity, and the differences in teachings and traditions can cause tensions.

We who are Christians know that our Lord Jesus came into our broken world because “*God so loved the world...*” (John 3:16)—that is, the people of the world—and that He calls us to love others in the way He loves. Whether people believe the way we do or not, and whether they love us or not, we are to love them. As part of that love, we are to be salt and light, sharing God’s love in Christ with others through our attitudes, actions and words. Such love also includes respecting other people’s right to accept or reject the message of Christ, and our Lord Himself showed this respect to people who turned away from Him and rejected His message. This is often difficult to do, and sometimes we may persist in our efforts to convince others with the result that, instead of convincing them of Christ’s love, we inadvertently push them farther away from Christ and give them the impression that we are rigid and unloving.

On the other hand, sometimes we do nothing at all to share our faith, either in the way we behave or in the things we say. We may accept the overall values of the surrounding culture and believe that “all roads” lead to the same place—that is, that any religion will bring people to “heaven” (however people might choose to define it), and that our own actions and attitudes don’t really matter either since “God loves us anyway.” We may confuse loving the person with buying into their beliefs and lifestyles. We may accept the current idea that if you really love me you will believe what I believe or accept my worldview.

This is not what the Lord tells us. In the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, we find that there is only one Way. It’s the Narrow Way, and that way is not a doctrine, a set of rules, or a particular ritual that one must follow. In the Gospel

John, Jesus says to His disciples, “*Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.*” Thomas said to him, “*Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?*” Jesus said to him, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.*” (John 14:1-6) Jesus also makes a reference to His being the Way to the Father as He traveled through the countryside and taught the multitudes. In Luke we find this answer that Jesus gives to someone who may be trying to sort through the various teachings that were making the rounds in the diverse culture of first century Palestine (which was under Roman rule at the time): “[*Jesus*] *went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. And some one said to him, ‘Lord, will those who are saved be few?’ And he said to them ‘Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.’*” (Luke 13:22-24) In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told those around Him to “*Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*” (Matthew 7:13-14)

As we seek to follow Christ Jesus, rather than a set of rules or rituals, we may wonder just how we do that. We do it by loving Him, putting our faith in Him, and walking in His footsteps. In the new commandment Jesus gave His disciples, He said we are to love one another as He loves us and that if we love Him we will follow His teachings. (John 15:12-14; 14:23) This is the love that grows out of our faith in Christ. This is the faith our Lord speaks of in John 3:15—whoever believes in Him will not perish. This belief is not simply believing that He lived and was a gifted rabbi, but it is rooted in love and trust. It is the faith both Paul and Luther spoke of when they taught that we are saved by faith in Christ, not by works of the Law. It’s an active faith that is lived out in faithfulness to Christ and in compassion for others. And it leads us through the Narrow Gate of Christ into eternal life.

Announcements

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

North American Lutheran Church
2113 Harwood Road, Suite 309
PMB 409
Bedford, TX 76021-4703

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.

Pastors available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Jason Cooper – 515-293-0342
Pastor Kristine Dohrmann—515-802-2539
Pastor Natacha Kemp—507-785-0412
Pastor Andrew Loomis—712-298-6587
Pastor Jack Miller—507-798-2408
Pastor Mike Wikstrom—480-203-1556



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

Upcoming Events

July 20–28, 2025—Iowa Mission District Youth Trip—Burnsville, NC

August 3-8, 2025—NALC Luther Week—Omni William Penn Hotel, Pittsburg, PA

September 20, 2025—Iowa Mission District Convocation—St. John’s, Le Mars, IA

NOTE: Nominations are needed for several positions in the Mission District. The form is on the 4th page of this newsletter. Please prayerfully consider nominating people to serve our Mission District.

Donations and Correspondence

Checks sent to the Mission District for support should be made out to the *Iowa Mission District, NALC*, and mailed to:

Mrs. Belinda Borchardt
Iowa Mission District Treasurer,
PO Box 105,
Grafton, IA 50440.

Correspondence should be sent to:

Pastor Solveig Zamzow
Iowa Mission District Secretary
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.

Mission District Pulpit-Supply Guidelines

In October of 2022, 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. At a subsequent meeting, we also decided to 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 2025 IRS rate is \$0.70 per mile.)





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
Cedar Falls **Nazareth Evangelical**, Self Study
Des Moines: **Unity Evangelical Lutheran**,
Pr. Donna Joseph; Pr. Diane Joseph
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**, Pr. James Glesne
Eagle Grove: **Evangelical Lutheran**, Call Process
Eagle Grove: **Samuel Lutheran**, Call Process
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Pr. Jon Rollefson
Emmons, MN: **Emmons**, Call Process
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**, Call Process
+Huxley: **Shepherd of the Prairie**,
Scott Licht, Lay Minister
Irwin: **St. Paul**, Call Process
Kanawha: **Kanawha** – Call Process
Laurens: **Bethany**, Pr. David Klappenbach
LeMars: **St. John**, Pr. Steven Broers
Manchester: **First**, Call Process
Monona, **Faith**: Call Process
Northwood: **Peace**, Pr. Barbara Wills
Ottumwa: **First**, Pr. Brad Miller, Interim
+ Osage: **First Grace**, Pr. Christopher Staley, Interim
Palmer: **St. John's Lizard Township**,
Marlene Nimke, Lay Minister
Plainfield: **St. John, Western Douglas**, Call Process
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Pr. Ronald Voss
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**—Pr. Khrystle Sullivan
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. Christopher Martn
Spencer: **Trinity**, Pr. Renae Behrends
Strawberry Pt.: **Mission in Christ**, Call Process
Thor: **Ullensvang**, Call Process
Waterville. **Old East Paint Creek**, Call Process
Waukon: **Old West Paint Creek**, Call Process

+ indicates mission congregation

Iowa Mission District Leadership

Pastor Christopher Staley, Dean
cbstaley@netins.net
Pastor Solveig Zamzow, Secretary
solveigzamzow@gmail.com
Belinda Borchardt, Treasurer
aayngl@wctatel.net

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fivekidscrazy@outlook.com

Mission District Communicator/Newsletter Editor

Pastor Barbara Wills
barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 42 congregations.*

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