



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

October 2025



Dean's Epistle

"I'm not as young as I used to be"

A truer word has never been spoken for any one of us, although it doesn't usually make its way into our everyday conversations until we reach an age at which our body and or mind send us persistent and painful messages.

But as true as it is for you, it is especially true for you pastor. Although pastors are largely spared from the physical toil that other vocations require, the strains are still very taxing and even sometimes debilitating. And when such a one reaches into the 60's or 70's or beyond, the allure of stepping away from the daily grind of the office is very appropriate, if not absolutely necessary.

Which brings me to an issue that we face as a denomination and also as a Mission District. In just the past two years, five pastors within our Mission District have retired. While at that same time, we have had one new seminary graduate join our ranks. And to make matters worse, I have heard rumblings from at least three more of our pastors that they are leaning toward retirement within the next year or two.

While the NALC has been working very hard to identify potential students and has significantly increased the number of seminarians and potential seminarians, the fact is that the number of retirements across our denomination will far outpace the number of those graduating from seminary for the foreseeable future.

And so, our Mission District Council has decided to enter into a program that we hope will raise our profile for those who will be graduating in the coming few years. Introduced at the most recent NALC Convocation, an "Adopt a Seminarian" program connects North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS) students with individuals, congregations, and mission districts who want to walk alongside them during their seminary journey.

When we held our Convocation in LeMars just a few days ago, the offering taken that day, as well as the funds in our Mission District' budget for "Education Scholarships" were both dedicated to this program. The offering that day was the largest in recent memory, no doubt owing to the enthusiasm of those who attended for the future of our denomination. Because of this generosity, the Mission District Council has allocated \$5,000 for this program, with which we will be adopting two seminarians.

When we adopt a seminarian, we commit to pray for their studies, spiritual growth, and calling. We commit to connect through notes of encouragement or personal outreach. And we commit to contribute to the NALS Financial Assistance Fund in their honor. This support reminds seminarians they are not alone. Together, we are forming resilient, well-supported leaders for the Church.

Once we have completed the application process, we will be sharing with everyone the names of our adoptees, and encouraging everyone to pray for them, and to send notes to encourage them in their pastoral formation.

*Pastor Christopher Staley
Co-Dean, East, Iowa Mission District*

Editor's Note: At the Iowa Mission District Convocation on September 20, 2025, the following amendment to the Mission District Constitution was adopted:

*"5.01.01 The Mission District may elect one or more persons to share the responsibilities of the Dean's office. In the case of such an election, all references to 'Dean' in this Constitution should be understood to be 'Co-Dean' or 'Co-Deans' as the context would dictate.
5.01.02 For the sake of logistics, each Co-Dean should be elected so as to have primary responsibility for the area of the Mission District in which that Co-Dean resides."*

The Mission District Council has made the decision that all congregations located to the west of I-35 will be the primary responsibility of the Co-Dean, West; all congregations located east of I-35 will be the primary responsibility of the Co-Dean, East. Since Pastor Christopher Staley was elected as Dean prior to this change in the constitution and resides in the eastern part of the Mission District, his will continue in office as Co-Dean, East. Pastor Matthew Bahnfleth was elected at the Convocation on September 20th and lives in the western part of the Mission District. His title will be Co-Dean, West. The two Co-Deans have made the decision to take turns in writing the Dean's message each month with Pastor Staley writing them for the even numbered months and Pastor Bahnfleth writing for the odd numbered months. The contact information for both Deans is on the last page of this newsletter and will also be in the next updated Mission District Directory. For the sake of good order, their names will be listed alphabetically by last name.



Running with Perseverance: *I Am Still with You*

Pastor Khrystle Sullivan
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Rochester, Minnesota

“You hem me in, behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.” (Psalm 139:5)

When the Minneapolis congregation of Annunciation Catholic gathered for worship before the first day of school in August, the final Scripture read before the tragedy unfolded was Psalm 139. No one in that sanctuary could have known what was about to happen, so it is striking that these words were the last to be spoken aloud before chaos broke in. Psalm 139 assures us of a God who knows us completely. He knows our fears, our frailty, and our failures. He is closer than our very breath. Yet though He knows our every darkness, He still surrounds us in His unfailing and steadfast care.

Psalm 139 does not speak to us in platitudes. Rather, it gives us the language of anguish and hope, judgment and mercy, despair and faith. It reminds us that God’s knowledge of us is not abstract but profoundly relational. He is not some distant, removed Creator who treats us like pieces on a chessboard. He knows us intimately, as the Lord who not only knit us together in the womb, but who foresaw every moment of our lives long before the world began. He is the Father who hems us in and keeps us safe, even and especially in our tragedies and in our deaths.

These words matter deeply whenever we face grief and violence. When the world feels senseless and out of control, Psalm

139 reminds us that our lives are not tossed about like grains of sand in a meaningless and chaotic sea. We are known and held by the One who created us and who will not let us go.

Even as our hearts cry out in anguish over this violence, Psalm 139 meets us with a cry for justice and an acknowledgement of the evil we face, while pointing us to entrust vengeance to the One whose hand is both perfectly merciful and just.

Finally, Psalm 139 leads us to surrender: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (vv. 23–24)*

This is what perseverance looks like in the face of tragedy. Perseverance is not grim endurance; it is trust. It is running the race not with our own strength but with our eyes fixed on Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” who endured the violence of the cross, scorned its shame, and through it all, opened for us the way of everlasting life (Hebrews 12:2). Because Christ Jesus persevered, we are not forsaken to mere endurance. Because He overcame death and grave, we can now run with hope, bearing one another’s burdens and bearing witness that the darkness does not win. For when we awake, we will hear “I am still with you” (Psalm 139:18).

This and That from Around the Iowa Mission District



Left: *Pastor Dan Hart celebrated 50 years of ordained ministry in June. He was unable to attend the August NALC Convocation so Pastor Jim Steen, Pastor of Spirit of Truth Lutheran Church in Brandon, SD, picked up his certificate of recognition and presented it to Pastor Dan during worship on August 31st. Pastor Dan and Bev often worship with the congregation at Spirit of Truth.*

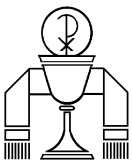
Right: *Pastor Jason Cooper was installed as Pastor at First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Manchester, IA, on Saturday, September 13th. Iowa Mission District Pastors on hand to help Pastor Jason and the congregation celebrate were (back row) Iowa Mission District Dean, Pastor Christopher Staley, Pastor Jean Rabary, and (front row) on either side of Pastor Cooper, Pastor Solveig Zamzow (L) and Pastor Marshall Hahn (R).*



Above: *Third grade students, Braycn Trappe and Maverick Miller and, each received an ESV "Faith Alive Student Bible" on September 7th at Faith Lutheran, Monona, IA. Those who celebrated with them were (L to R) Nathan and Missy Trappe with Braycn, Pastor Ted Ager, and Joan and Jud Francis with Maverick.*



Above: *Faith Lutheran, Monona, IA, hosted Stacy Besch from Team Iowa on August 28th, who presented the film, "Gridshock", a movie about sex trafficking in Iowa. Team Iowa is committed to bringing awareness to every community in our state, to help combat and bring clarity on the misconceptions of human trafficking by educating people on the dangers of human trafficking in Iowa.*



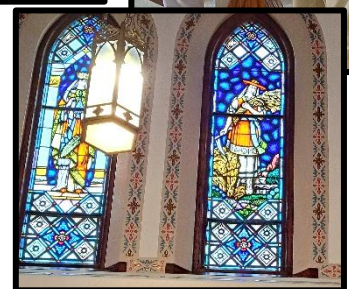
Right: *Pastor Jason and Julie Cooper.*

Far Right: *Pastor Jason and Julie with their family.*



Iowa Mission District Convocation St. John's Lutheran Church LeMars, Iowa 2025

The Iowa Mission District convocation was held at St. John's Lutheran Church on September 20, 2025. Bishop Daniel Selbo (right) was the keynote speaker and preached at the opening worship service. During the keynote address, Bishop Dan touched on our history as a church body—noting that we celebrated our 15th anniversary this year—and he brought us information about the unexpected growth of the church during those years, some of the struggles and concerns that have arisen, and the strategic plans and hopes for the future. One of the important developments during those years was the formation of the North American Lutheran Seminary. Bishop Dan shared with us the ways in which the church is addressing the importance of theological education and noted how the number of students has increased (and needs to continue to grow) to provide pastors for the future. He also stressed that the Pastor is not the church—the church is the people of God in Christ (the body of Christ). And he went on to emphasize the importance of faithful discipleship in the lives of all God's people. As we live out our calling to "go and make disciples" through our relationships—**doing** as well as **telling**—we *all* live in obedience to our Lord Jesus' final words to His disciples recorded in Matthew 28.





***Iowa Mission District
Disaster Relief Tool Trailer
– “inside and out”***



Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Your donations to Disaster Response at the Convocation was amazing! Gary and I came home with 173 quilts, 83 elementary school kits, 42 high school kits, 27 health kits, 11 kitchen kits, 50 Bibles and two flood/cleaning buckets. In this newsletter you will find a picture of some of your donations stacked by the tool trailer. These supplies will be divided between our two warehouses. Any extra supplies will be taken to another warehouse to help them get stocked.

We took 39 empty flood buckets with us to convocation and they were quickly snatched up! We still have 50 buckets with lids in our garage that are waiting to be adopted. Let me know if you want some.

In this newsletter you will also see three pictures of the inside of the Tool Trailer. Before we take the trailer on a Mission Trip, we need to finish getting it stocked. You'll find a list of the items still needed on the Iowa Mission District website. The list will be updated as tools are received. Please contact me before you purchase an item for the tool trailer - we want to be certain we aren't doubling up on tools. You can certainly make a financial donation; donations can be mailed to Belinda with a note designating it for the tool trailer.

Would you and your congregation like to learn more about disaster response? I am more than happy to visit your congregation. I can speak to the entire congregation during your message time at worship. I can also chat with your folks during your adult education hour.

Maybe you would like to host disaster response training for your congregation and other congregations in your area. Maybe you would like to host disaster response training for the entire Iowa Mission District! This training is generally 2 hours on a Friday night plus 6 hours on Saturday. Let me know what you would like!

As always, please contact me my email, phone or text if you have questions.

***Betty Burkhalter, Coordinator
Iowa Mission District Disaster Relief***



Names for Jesus: Great High Priest

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

When the Lord God initiated the First Covenant with the people of Israel through Moses, He gave them commandments and promised to be their God as long as they were faithful—having no other gods and following the Law: Keeping the Lord’s name holy, honoring the Sabbath, respecting parents, and showing mercy and kindness to their neighbors as outlined in the Ten Commandments. The Lord also instituted the priesthood—offspring of Aaron’s lineage who were to offer the required sacrifices at appointed times for sins, and cleansing from assorted illnesses and other bodily conditions. Only men from Aaron’s line could be priests—only they were authorized to offer the appropriate sacrifices for sin. The rituals were often complicated, and it was necessary for the people who wanted to offer sacrifices to go to the appointed place—usually the Tabernacle (Tent of Meeting) when the people were still traveling thorough the wilderness, the temple at Shiloh after the people came into the land of Canaan, and the Temple in Jerusalem after it was built by King Solomon.

Throughout their history, the people of Israel struggled to be faithful to God’s covenant. Even before Moses had presented the Commandments to the people, while he was enshrouded by the cloud on the mountain with the Lord, the people were demanding another god—coercing Aaron the priest to make a golden calf from all their jewelry, and when Moses came down with the two tablets of stone he found them carousing and engaging in the forbidden pagan worship of Baal. When they entered the land of Canaan forty years later, they promised fidelity to the Lord, but repeatedly reneged on their promises and

resorted to pagan practices. Their faithfulness to the Lord was hit and miss at best, and after the time of the Judges, when the kingdom of Israel was under the rule of kings, even the kings and priests repeatedly went astray and were unfaithful. Time after time the Lord sent prophets to call them back to faithfulness, and the message was not just warnings and condemnations, but there was also a promise—the promise of a Savior—the promise of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53) who would bear the sins of the people; of God himself coming to shepherd His people (Ezekiel 34:11, 15), of forgiveness and healing (Hosea 14:4).

In the fullness of time, the Lord fulfilled all the ancient promises—the promise made for an offspring of Eve who would crush the head of the ancient serpent (Genesis 3:14-15); the promise to aged Abraham that through his and Sarah’s descendants would come a blessing for all people; the promise to David of one from his descendants who would rule forever, the many promises made by the prophets—too many to enumerate in this short meditation, but which all pointed to the Promised One who would restore all things. And one of those promises is found in Psalm 110: The Lord says to my lord: “*Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.... The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.’*” (vv. 1 & 4)

When the time was fulfilled, Jesus was born of Mary in the City of David, Bethlehem of Judea. Every prophecy about the promised Messiah was fulfilled in His life—in His ministry, His death, and His resurrection. The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD as Jesus had prophesied to His disciples during His time on earth, and has never been rebuilt. It is no longer needed because as the Scriptures make clear, Jesus fulfills all the sacrificial requirements for the forgiveness of His people. He is the temple (John 2:19), the sacrificial lamb (John 1:29; Hebrews 10:8-10)—and our eternal Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16). He is not from the line of Aaron, but predates Aaron and continues through eternity—a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.!

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.

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 Tamara Keen
Iowa Mission District Secretary
16073 Keystone Avenue
Greene, IA 50636**

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 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

April 25, 2026 – 9:00 am - Iowa Mission District Council at Cabin Coffee, Mason City, IA

June 1-2, 2026 – Iowa Mission District Pastors’ Retreat at Best Western, Waterloo, IA

August 29, 2026 – Iowa Mission District Convocation at Nazareth Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls, IA (Keynote Speaker: Pastor Shelly Shultz, NALC Call Coordinator)

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**, Pr. 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**, Pr. Jason Cooper
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**,
Bill Wendorf, Lay Minister
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 Martin
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

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*The Iowa Mission District
has 42 congregations.*

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