



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

September 2022

A Word from the Dean **THE NALC IS IN TROUBLE!!!**

There's nothing like a bold headline to pique the interest of a reader to keep reading to see what's what. And as most headlines do, this one is a slight exaggeration. But what this headline expresses is also, at the same time, true. Being a native Iowan, and having once played in the pit band for our high school's production of "The Music Man", I can't help but be reminded of one of its songs.

"Trouble, oh we got trouble, Right here in NALC! With a capital "T", that rhymes with "P", and that stands for Pastors!" Now don't misunderstand me, I have no complaints about the pastors of the NALC, I'm one of those after all. But there is a problem with pastors. This problem is that, like everyone else, we grow old and our zeal lags and our health deteriorates, and even our skills can diminish. There are even some of us who imagine a life beyond the pulpit when we could be freer to visit grandchildren in far-flung places throughout the world, to enjoy one's twilight years without dreaded Council meetings, and even to have time to read the mountain of books that one had purchased over the years but never had time to consume. And even if one would want to keep 'pastoring' until one sleeps the sleep that ends in Christ's triumphant return, the day will come for all of us to preach our final sermon, to baptize the final child of God, and so on.

I'm hoping and praying that this day is far off from me. We are so very grateful that our family isn't terribly far scattered that seeing grandchildren won't need to be only an occasional treat. And, excepting for a few minor health issues and moments of mental stumbling, I don't perceive that my abilities are on a quick decline.

But this isn't about me nearly as much as it is about the entire NALC. A couple years ago, nearly 80% of NALC pastors were older than 60 years

old. In my two years as Dean, we've had six pastors in our Mission District retire and another die. In that same time period, we've had one newly ordained pastor accept a call. The sad truth is that this trend looks like it will persist for some time. Are you beginning to see the TROUBLE?

I hope so, but I hope even more that you would have a willing spirit to do something to help us in our trouble. Many of us are willing to send dollars to our seminary to help in its work of training and forming the next generation of pastors. This is certainly a good and needed thing. But, more than those dollars, the seminary needs us to send our kids onto the path that will lead to their pursuing this calling. This is the sort of thing that should be on the mind of all of us as those children grow up among us, offering words of encouragement, praying that the Holy Spirit would work on the minds and hearts of these, and seeking the help of pastors and Sunday School teachers and other adult leaders to mentor them for the work that needs so desperately to be done. In my own setting, I know of two youth who are exhibiting a heart and gifts for that very thing. I am actively praying for them, and receiving support from others to water the seeds that have been planted, praying all along that God will provide the growth.

As Jesus said to His disciples, "*The fields are ripe for harvest.*" What is needed are more laborers. Those laborers are in our midst. And maybe, just maybe, you could be one of those who can labor in God's vineyards for the sake of the upbuilding of the body of Christ.

God's not done with me yet, and God may be calling you to work as well.

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



Hope in Christ

*Pr. Solveig Zamzow
Story City, Iowa*

“...So discipline yourself in life and teaching that you preserve the truth, giving no occasion to false security or illusory hope...”

This month marks the 30th anniversary of my Ordination. While I have forgotten many details of that day, the above quoted words have always stuck in my heart and mind. Traditionally they are spoken after hands are laid upon the (now) newly ordained, a stole has been placed upon his/her shoulder and other biblical admonitions have been spoken.

Illusory hope is all around us, is it not? We trust in our own abilities, strength, and knowledge or those of others. A common result: disappointment. When we speak of “hope” in careless ways it tends to lose its meaning altogether. From the weather to the economy, we “hope” for whatever seems to fit our desires, ideas, ideologies and relationships. Doing so we deceive ourselves into thinking our “hopefulness” can will into existence what is on our minds. Illusions at best! Nevertheless, it is of course true that a sense of hope is crucial to human life. We can and shall hope for successful medical treatment, safety on trips, contentment in our families...

Yet, for followers of Christ, hope is still more powerful. It is not some ill-defined wish for the future but first and foremost a gift from our gracious God. It is based on God’s Word to us and finds culmination in the very person of Christ himself. This hope is not only for today but for all times. It does not eliminate the troubles of this world (that would indeed be illusory!) but assures us that in the very midst of life and death we are in the strong hands of our God who gave His only begotten Son for us. Our hope is grounded in the pathetic appearance of a man hanging from a rough-hewn cross with people mocking him as he dies in front of their eyes. In that humiliation lives and thrives the hope of and for the world. To that person, Jesus, we are bound in our own Baptism. Through His life our lives find meaning. In Jesus’ Resurrection, which took away the power of death, we have a hope that goes beyond all of our personal and communal troubles.

Days after I promised never to offer hope that is not based on Christ Jesus crucified and Risen, I visited a parishioner whose eldest daughter and three beautiful grandchildren had been murdered by her son-in-law. In her home she had created a shrine to her loved ones with pictures, candles, flowers, and mementos. The sight of such was as heart-breaking as it was disconcerting. This unimaginable tragedy had not only taken the joy out of her days but had left her bereft of all hope for her own life and her family. What was there to look forward to? How could such grief ever be reconciled or stilled? Why would God allow this evil? Where could she turn for any comfort?

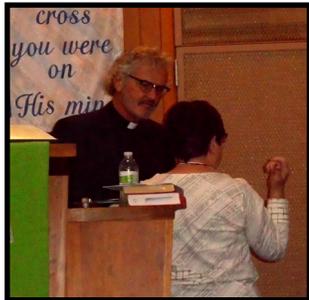
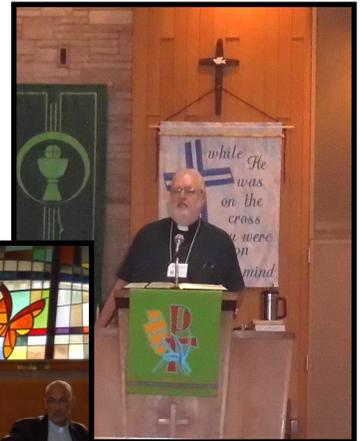
The church, the household of God, really has only one core answer: *“If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”* 1 Corinthians 15:19. And again in Romans, chapter 5: *“...more than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us.”* These words are profound confessions of faith. We know by faith that there is another chapter to life than what we experience here and now, and Jesus is our living proof. We know, while Jesus does not desire our suffering, he is in the midst of the muck of our lives.

We must not be deceived into thinking that these words of hope in the Christ of God are merely emotional pacifiers. No, this is what we, the Body of Christ, are all about. This is indeed our hope among the hopelessness of this world. We have the privilege to declare it and shout it into the darkest abyss we encounter.

It is precisely everything else that is illusory. It is everything else we say and do that needs to be vetted against these words of hope eternal. It is the most and the best and the only comfort we can offer: Christ died so we may live, and all of our joys and troubles today will not disappear but be lifted up at the foot of the cross of Christ where He will turn all of our mourning into dancing. All else is illusory.

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District

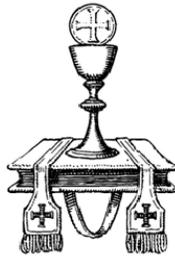
The Iowa Mission District met for the annual convocation on August 27, 2022, at Zion Lutheran Church, Ruthven Iowa. The day began with a worship service. Mission District Dean, Pastor Christopher Staley convened the convocation, and served as Assisting Minister for worship. The Reverend Doctor Eric Riesen, President of the North American Lutheran Seminary was the preacher for the day, Pastor Gary Burkhalter was Presider, and Lay Minister Eric Patten was lector. Pastor Riesen gave the keynote address and shared his hopes for the NALS, stressing the current shortage of pastors across all denominations. In the midst of changes in the culture, technology and the way education is made accessible, the NALS seeks to provide a sound theological education while meeting the needs of students and providing pastors for future generations. During one of the break-out sessions, he provided further information and answered numerous questions about the seminary and theological education. Other break-out groups included a report on the recent Youth Ministry trip to Louisiana and a moving report from SON—Spiritual Orphans Network. During the business sessions Pastor Solveig Zamzow was elected to the position of Mission District Secretary, Pastor Ryan Henkel to the position of Clergy Council Member, and Elise Patzke to the position of Lay Council Member. Thanks were offered to Craig Lease, Pastor Ron Rasmussen and Chris Schlee for their service to the Mission District during the past several years. There were 23 congregations represented. Those registered who attended were 20 clergy delegates, 25 lay delegates, and 34 visitors—a total of 79, in addition to the members of Zion who hosted us and provided for our needs throughout the day.



Trinity Lutheran Church Avoca, Iowa



On Sunday, August 28, Pastor Matthew Bahnfleth was installed as pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church by Iowa Mission District Dean, Pastor Christopher Staley.



Top right:
Pastors Bahnfleth and Staley pose with members of Trinity's call committee.



Bottom right:
Pastor Bahnfleth and his wife, Becky, with their family.



NALC Disaster Response

Thank you so much for the great response to the donation request for the warehouse! Your generosity is greatly appreciated! By the time you read this, I will have taken to our warehouse 215 elementary school kits, 8 high school kits, 74 health kits, 13 Bibles and 130 blankets/quilts. WOW!

Any excess in our warehouse (flood buckets and quilts) will be taken to the newly built warehouse in Nebraska to help them get stocked.

The kit list was updated in June of this year, so be certain to take a look at that as you are putting your donations together. For example, bleach in the flood buckets. What size should be included? The new list lets you know ½ gallon or smaller. We hope this helps with your questions.

During the convocation this past weekend several of you gave me names/contact information for a Disaster Response person for your congregation. I am still looking for a contact for several congregations in the Iowa Mission District. Let me know if you can serve in this role.

Once again, thank you for your continued support!
Betty Burkhalter

Packing list for the kits is available on the newsletter page of the Iowa Mission District web site: <https://www.iowamissiondistrict.com/newsletter>



Here I Stand Confession and Conviction: *Delight in God's Law*

In their early years both Luther, and centuries earlier the Apostle Paul, adhered strictly to the Law of the Lord. As Lutherans, we're probably all familiar with Luther's struggles to attain righteousness by his attention to the smallest details of the Laws of God—and his sense of utter failure to reach that goal. The Apostle Paul had been a strict Pharisee in his early years, and he was so dedicated to obedience to the Law that he persecuted the early church until his encounter with our risen Lord on the road to Damascus. From that point on, Paul preached Christ, and emphasized the point that our righteousness before God does not depend on strict obedience to the Law, but on our faith and trust in Christ. In his letter to the church at Galatia, Paul wrote: *"Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for 'He who through faith is righteous shall live....'"* (Galatians 3:11) Nevertheless, Paul also made it clear that the Law was not abolished. In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul makes the distinction clear: *"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, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith.... Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law."* (Romans 3:21-25a;31)

The early Church struggled with this teaching that seems like a contradiction. Paul wrote at great length about how one is saved by God's gift of righteousness that redeems us, while emphasizing the importance of living a new life in Christ and leaving behind self-will and sinful behavior. Being saved by the Lord's unconditional love is not a license to continue to live in sin. *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too*

might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:1-4) Paul encouraged people who were saved by God's grace in Christ to take delight in living this new life that was obedient to God's Law.

Luther also apparently understood this tension between grace and obedience. The first section in the Small Catechism is on the Ten Commandments, and the explanation of each one begins with the words, *"We are to fear and love God so that...."* Many of Luther's writings address one's behavior as a child of God who is saved by grace. One very interesting teaching comes from Luther's "First Lectures on the Psalms" regarding the first Psalm. This Psalm praises the Law of the Lord: *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."* (verses 1-2) As we consider Luther's early struggles with trying to obey every detail of the Commandments and laws of God, we might wonder how he can praise the first Psalm. Yet here is some of what Luther says about Psalm 1: *"The first root of all good is to have delight in the Law of the Lord. For nothing forced is permanent.... Therefore Christ does not want His rule to rest on force and violence ... but He wants to be served willingly and with the heart and the affections."* (Martin Luther, Psalm by Psalm, 2017, Concordia Publishing House; January 3)

When the Lord God is the greatest love of our lives, He becomes our greatest delight, and it is a joy to do His will. When we are embraced by the overwhelming love of our Lord, and return that love with all our hearts, we long to live in harmony with Him. In Christ the *Law* of God and the *love* of God merge—to love Him is to obey Him. A legalistic obedience to the Law comes from fear and resentment. Such obedience is not only useless, it sets one in opposition to the love and will of the Lord. But to love and trust the Holy One is to delight in all His ways and to seek His will in all things. When we love the Lord God in this way, we can say with the psalmist: *"Blessed be thou, O LORD; teach me thy statutes! ... Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day."* (Psalm 119:12, 97)

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Announcements

Upcoming Events

October 8, 2022—9 am—Iowa Mission District Council meeting.

Please Pray for:

Pastor James Puotyual who is awaiting a kidney transplant.

Pastor James Glesne who is undergoing treatments for Multiple Myeloma.

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

The **people in South Sudan and Ethiopia** who have lost their homes to severe flooding. For those who wish to help with relief efforts, there are several agencies through which you can give. UNICEF and the U.S. State Department were listed as two that have been offering help. You can also check the Internet for others.

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 Pastor Solveig Zamzow, Mission District Secretary, should be sent to **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.



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. Mark Jamison
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**, 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
LeMars: **St. John**, Pr. Chris Meier
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**, Call Process
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Pr. Ronald Voss
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**—Call Process
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**, Pr. Renae Behrends
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



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Pastor Solveig Zamzow Secretary—
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Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—
pqburkhalter52@hotmail.com

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Mission District Communicator

(newsletter editor/web master):
Pastor Barbara Wills—
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*The Iowa Mission District
has 38 congregations.*

Pastors available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Natacha Brum—(507) 358-7741
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

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.

