



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

November 2025



Dean's Epistle

And so, we begin – with thanksgiving.

As I now have come into the position of Co-Dean for the Iowa Mission District, it is not lost on me what this means for me, my ministry, and our shared ministry together as we proceed with the work of the Mission District. The work of the Church has always been important to me, growing up in the Lutheran Church and looking back on life and ministry, I tell people that I have been part of the Lutheran alphabet soup. Growing up in the LCMS, moving to a small town with only an ELCA congregation when finally answering the call to ministry and moving there, I was in that body.

I served for eight years until the Church Wide Assembly cast their vote in 2009 and knew that my walk with the church had to remain faithful to scripture and traditional understanding. I took a call to do youth ministry in the LCMC but always knew that structure, though never perfect, had to be part of the church and finally moved to the NALC where I have been for eight years.

Why do I tell you all this? I think it is important to know that having such a wide walk in theologies, I have a broad understanding and appreciation of the Lutheran faith as a part of the Body of Christ. I value and understand what is to be our shared work of taking the Gospel into our lives and into the world daily. To achieve this, Christ has formed His Body, the Church, to gather and be strengthened to

go out to be the way He still walks, talks, and serves in this world.

For the three years I have been in Iowa, I have been working to grow the congregation I serve to come into the larger body and connect and strengthen the shared work of the body. Gathering, serving, and learning together we strengthen and lovingly challenge one another to grow in faith and service. I give thanks for the Body of Christ housed in each congregational gathering space, for the congregations called together in the IMD, and the collective body of the NALC.

In giving thanks for the faith housed in these places, I also encourage us to seek to be together and understand the power of the body as it grows all the more. My personal goal is to physically visit five congregations in the Western side each year, and to communicate with pastors or leaders annually. I look forward to walking together with you all as we seek to build the kingdom of God in Iowa and beyond.

Pastor Matt Bahnfleth
Co-Dean, West, Iowa Mission District

*Give thanks to the Lord for
He is good; for His steadfast
love endures forever.*

Psalms 106:1



Running with Perseverance: *Strip off Your 'Weight'* Hebrews 12:1-2

Pastor Doug Hedman
Trinity Lutheran Church
St. Charles, Minnesota

I retired from the Army after 24 years of service. Maintaining physical fitness and taking the annual Army Physical Fitness Test were key parts of being a soldier. Both personally and professionally, I have long enjoyed the following verse:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. Hebrews 12:1

God's desire is for you and me to be as free as possible from ANYTHING that weighs us down from living the Christian life that best serves others and glorifies him. This scripture reminds us that we are to 'strip off' anything that might get in our way or 'tangle us up.'

Any competitor in an endurance event will tell you: be as light as possible. A marathon runner would not wear a sweatshirt. A bicyclist would pick the lightest bike. A mountain climber on a multi-day climb would carry only essential gear.

In the same token, Paul encourages us to strip away anything that might prevent us from an abundant life (John 10:10)— including and especially our sin. But it could be other things or habits — an addiction, emotional eating, wrong thinking habits, lies of Satan, false guilt or shame, worry, bitterness, insecurity. These and other 'weights' can affect our testimony, hinder our spiritual growth, and can also adversely impact our relationship with God, ourselves, and others.

In verse two, Paul tells us how we do this:

We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the

cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Hebrews 12:2

God does not want us to try this 'stripping off' in our own strength. Instead, He wants us to focus on His Son and live by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. This focus underpins running and finishing life's race well, as well as breaking free from the sin that entangles us.

When we keep our eyes on Jesus and live by the power of the Holy Spirit, we won't grow weary or become discouraged. We will persevere. We become, *with Jesus*, more than we can be on our own!

And this is not for our own sake. Later in this 12th chapter, Paul encourages us to '*strengthen our feeble arms and weak knees*' (vs 12) so that '*the lame may not be disabled but healed*' (vs 13). As we grow healthier in mind, body, and spirit, we are better equipped to impact others. This growth strengthens our witness and creates more chances to live lives that attract. As a result, we're more likely to give our time and talents to those in need— especially those who are spiritually sick and longing for the love, grace, and mercy of a powerful, personal God.

You see, God wants to use you in the most powerful way possible. He knows that if you're carrying around extra 'junk' or 'stuff,' it will hinder you from being as useful as possible in your service to others and to Him.

So, if you're serious about your relationship with God and want to be used by Him in an even greater way, I encourage you to get on your knees, open your heart, and humbly ask Him, "God, what 'weight' do you want to strip from me?"

If you truly want to be light, God will show you your extra 'weight,' and His Son will remove it!.

This and That from Around the Iowa Mission District



Peace Lutheran Church Northwood, IA

Daniel and Hannah (Anderson) Horning were united in Holy Matrimony at Peace Lutheran on October 18, 2025. Henry and Mable Horning performed their duties as ring bearer and flower girl to perfectuib, Pastor Barbara Wills was privileged to serve as officiant.

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Editor's Note: Some time ago I received an email from Nancy Kohagen at Zion Lutheran Church in Readlyn with a question about disposing of old paraments. On September 4th of this year, their Ruth Circle had the ceremony they decided on for doing this. The following note is from their church bulletin following their decommissioning ceremony:

DECOMMISSIONING OF PARAMENTS

On Thursday, September 4, members of the Zion Ruth Circle gathered for a special ceremony to decommission (retire) some of the older paraments that have beautified Zion's sanctuary. (These paraments were replaced through the years, so will no longer be used.) This ceremony allowed us to express gratitude for their service and acknowledge the hands that cared for them. These sacred cloths were symbols of tradition, devotion and beauty, that have accompanied our congregation through countless seasons of worship.

The ceremony began with a prayer of Thanksgiving acknowledging the beauty and symbolism the paraments brought to our sanctuary. As each of the 16 sacred cloths were gently placed into an open fire by the circle members, we gave affirmation that 'God is good, God is good all the time'. After a time of reflection, ashes were blessed and then buried behind the church as a final act of gratitude and release. We invite you to view the photos and video of the ceremony on the Zion Facebook page.

A very special 'THANK YOU' to Rick and Lisa Meier who helped prepare and maintain the fire, provided the container used to respectfully burn the paraments, and provided other 'behind the scenes' help.

We were blessed with a beautiful day: *The sun shone gently on us as we gathered, a soft breeze was moving through the trees, as if the earth itself embraced the return of these faithful cloths-each having served its purpose.*



Zion Ruth Circle
Zion Lutheran Church
Readlyn, IA



Names for Jesus: King of kings, Lord or lords

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:11-16)

In a few weeks we'll celebrate the last Sunday of the Church year—Christ the King Sunday. The new Church year will begin, as it has for the last 2,000 years, with the ancient prophecies—God's promise of a Messiah—the Anointed One—who would come from the line of King David to save His people and to reign forever. The promise was made to David through the prophet, Nathan—"your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever." (2 Samuel 7:16)—and was reaffirmed through the centuries that followed. (Psalm 89:3-4; Jeremiah 33:14-16; Ezekiel 34:20-24)

This promise is rooted in the Garden of Eden, and was the fulfillment of the Lord's judgment against the ancient serpent who enticed Eve and Adam to disobey the Lord's command to not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15) Later in time, the promise of a Savior was renewed when the Lord said to Abraham, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." (Genesis 12:1-3) Centuries later, after the Lord had made the covenant with David, the time was fulfilled and the angel Gabriel announced to a young virgin named Mary that she had been chosen by the Lord to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah: "And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.'" (Luke 1:30-33)

Throughout the Church year, the identity and purpose of Jesus' life is revealed to us. The events of our Lord's life fulfill ancient prophecies and reveal His identity. Through the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany we read of His circumcision and the prophetic words of Simeon and Anna, and His escape to Egypt after the visit of the sages; His wisdom was revealed at the age of twelve when He visited the temple in Jerusalem with His parents. We transition into the season of Lent with Jesus' Baptism and temptations in the wilderness, and in the weeks that follow we see the resentment against Him growing in those who either want no Messiah, or who want a different sort of messiah than He came to be. As the time of His arrest draws near, our Lord tells His disciples that He has a Baptism to be baptized with and is constrained until it is accomplished. (Luke 12:50) During Holy Week we participate in the final Supper He shares with His disciples, when He established the New Covenant in His blood; and on Good Friday we witness His parody of a trial and see the ultimate injustice as the Lord of all creation goes willingly to the cross to bear our sins. Pilate has the words, "The King of the Jews", inscribed on the cross above His head, little knowing the truth of the words. We listen to Jesus' prayer, asking His Father to forgive those who put Him there, and we hear His final words of triumph gasped out as He breathes His last: **"It is finished!"**

And then.... Then on the third day, the first day of the week, Christ Jesus rose from the dead. It is finished! The promise has been fulfilled. This offspring of Eve, descendant of Abraham, eternal King from the line of David, has crushed the head of Satan. And in the forty days that followed Jesus' resurrection, His disciples kept asking: *Is now the time?* When will You bring in the kingdom? His answer: *"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."* And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'" (Acts 1:7-11)

Jesus will come again. Just as He came in fulfillment of the promise to destroy the power of our ancient enemy, He will come again to bring the Kingdom of God in its fullness. In the meantime, we wait, as our ancient forebears in the faith waited. And we wait faithfully when we follow in His footsteps, loving the Lord above all else, sharing His love and forgiveness with others, and being faithful witnesses to His love and mercy. Jesus is King! He *will* return

Announcements

Upcoming Events

November 14-16 – Weekend Mission Trip (For more information contact Betty Burkhalter at 815-323-9999, or bettyburkhalter@hotmail.com.)

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 7, 2026 – NALC virtual (ZOOM) convocation

July 7-10, 2026 - NALC Continental Youth Gathering, [St. John Lutheran Church](#) in Roanoke, VA

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

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

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.**

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.***