



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

October 2020

A Word from the Dean

Greetings to all in the Iowa Mission District. I am humbled to have been elected Dean of the Iowa Mission District (IMD), although the election lacked much drama with my name being the only one listed on the ballot. I follow two excellent servants of Christ in this role. Pastor Ken Kimball's tireless efforts was a huge benefit to many congregations even before the formation of the NALC back in 2010. He and Pastor Marshall Hahn played significant roles in "Call to Faithfulness", a coalition of congregations of the Northeastern Iowa Synod which strove to assist congregations of the Synod to remain soundly confessional and theological in the face of a rising tide of scriptural revisionism.

When Pastor Kimball's term expired, it was natural that Pastor Hahn should follow him. He, too, was very helpful in helping many former ELCA congregations how best to proceed in their time of discernment. He played a large role in the congregation that I was serving at the time, which led to its affiliating with the NALC. His six years as Dean has seen the IMD continue to grow each year, and has played a large part in trying to help the congregations of the IMD work together in our common mission that have strengthened the bonds between those congregations.

It is into this legacy that I enter the scene. I have been part of the Mission District since 2011, when the congregation I was serving and I joined. I have also served six years on the IMD Council as the Treasurer. My own journey as a pastor began in small-town ministry, which was where I grew up, in Atalissa, in southeastern Iowa. Having attended Wartburg Seminary, I was ordained at my home congregation in 1996. Each of my three calls has been within the environs of the Northeastern Iowa Synod, St. John in Luana for 13 years, Trinity in Ellsworth for 6 years, and now First in St. Ansgar for 5 years and counting.

To have the mantle of Dean given to me is nothing that I had ever aspired to, but I was convinced by the pastor who reached out to me to give it serious and prayerful consideration. Having done that, I agreed to serve if would be called so to do. My hope is that I can build upon the strong foundations laid by my predecessors, and to further assist the congregation of the IMD to strive to become stronger individually so that we can thrive as a Mission District. I pray that the IMD leadership, including myself, will be supported by your prayers in the coming years, and in your efforts to press on toward the goal of being the sorts of congregations that are places where one can find "encouragement in Christ, comfort from love, a participation in the Spirit, and affection and sympathy" Philippians 2:1.

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



Sola Fide—Faith at Harvest Time

*Pr. Solveig Zamzow
Emmanuel Lutheran
Grafton, Iowa*

“Faith is a living, bold trust in God’s grace, so certain of God’s favor that it would risk death a thousand times trusting in it. Such confidence and knowledge of God’s grace makes you happy, joyful and bold in your relationship to God and all creatures.” *Martin Luther, “An Introduction to St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” Luther’s German Bible of 1522*

A relative of mine raised a family of four children. Money was tight no matter how hard both spouses labored. Lissy grew wonderful vegetables in her large garden and canned the produce during many nightly sessions. They raised small animals to help put meat on the table and Lissy sewed most of the children’s clothes. Sitting at the kitchen table, counting money and deciding that it just wasn’t enough no matter how she assigned the bills and coins, she somehow always came up with the funds her children needed for their many activities.

After her children had left home, I once asked her: “How did you do all that?” She confided that, thanks to her mother-in-law, the greatest struggles were manageable. Whenever the need was about to overwhelm her, there would be a letter with money from her mother-in-law. It never failed, it seemed. Nobody asked, nobody talked about it, Yet, the gifts came year after year, decade after decade. “God always provided,” Lissy said, “and He did it through my mother-in-law’s generosity.”

I have lived most of my married life somehow connected to farming communities. With parishioners we suffered through the farm crisis in Central Wisconsin and later rejoiced in Iowa during years when everyone could stand at the edge of fields admiring the bountiful crops. Likewise, I have seen those dark evening clouds that brought thunder, rain, and hail that flattened those beautiful crops to level ground. Farming and ranching, no matter where and what, certainly entails a willingness to gamble with our luck. There are no guarantees. What brings in a good living today can be wiped out tomorrow. Iowans have just seen that all too clearly once again.

In former East Germany farmers lived under the ridiculous adage of their government that said: *Ohne Gott und Sonnenschein bringen wir die Ernte ein. Without God and sunshine we will bring in the harvest.* Just about everything is wrong-headed about this saying! We are not doing anything without God. While our work, sweat and efforts most certainly contribute in very large and significant ways to any harvest success – in the end it is God who provides.

One of the most humbling words I heard came from a farmer who looked at his washed out field (where he literally caught the fish that had found their way from the Mississippi River onto his land!!) and said: “God has provided for us in the past. God will provide for us now.”

And God did! God finds a way to meet His children’s needs. Whether it is through the generosity of a mother-in-law, the powers that be, neighborly help and continued hard work or however God chooses to take care of us. Of course, nobody makes light of the troubles we meet. There is no place for pie-in-the-sky thinking. Being able to make ends meet is a critical aspect of life! We don’t just wish our concerns away! Yet, unfortunately, we often erroneously think we alone can handle those troubles or that we are the ones who, without God and sunshine, can bring in the harvest.

Farmer Roger, sitting in his fishing boat on his corn field, was very correct: God has provided for us in the past. God will provide for us now. It is God who waters the land and who nourishes our thirsty souls with Christ, the living water. It is God who gives us the Bread of Life through our Lord Jesus and lets us share bread with a needy world. As we walk into another harvest season, may our faith be a living, bold and certain trust in this amazing Triune God who provides for His children. Amen

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District

Dear friends,

God's blessings to you all as we navigate these strange and trying times!

It was with great disappointment that I had to inform you some weeks ago that we would not be able to meet in person for our Iowa Mission District Convocation. This was particularly disappointing for me as this would have been my last convocation as Dean. The cancellation meant that I have been unable to personally thank everyone for your support and prayers over the last six years. It has been a great privilege to have shared so many important ministry events with the congregations of the Iowa Mission District and to meet so many dedicated ministry partners throughout the district. In particular, I want to thank the members of the Iowa Mission District Council who have been just wonderful to work with throughout my time as Dean. And I know that the work of the Mission District is in good hands with them - and with the newly elected Dean and Council! "Who are those new members?" you may ask. Well, the results of our email elections are in and I am happy to say that we will not have to wait months - or even weeks - to find out the results! As reported to me by Secretary Craig Lease, the results of the balloting are as follows:

2020 - 2021 Budget - **39 yes 0 no**

Dean, Iowa Mission District - **38 votes for the Reverend Christopher Staley, 1 abstention**

Clergy Member, Iowa Mission District Council - **37 votes for the Reverend Tony Ede, 2 abstentions**

Lay Member, Iowa Mission District Council - **NO election**

There were 39 ballots cast (16 clergy, 23 lay delegates)

Therefore I declare that **the 2020 - 2021 Budget is adopted as presented;**
the Rev. Christopher Staley is elected as Dean of the Iowa Mission District; and
the Rev. Tony Ede is elected as a Clergy Member to the Iowa Mission District Council.

In the absence of a Lay Member election, the 2020 - 2021 Iowa Mission District Council shall have the authority to appoint a Lay Member to the Council for the 2020-2021 year.

Thank you for your participation in this unusual balloting process so that, despite the disruptions of this year, the ministry of the Iowa Mission District can proceed as we continue to serve our Lord!

Yours in Christ,

Marshall Hahn, (Lame Duck) Dean
Iowa Mission District, NALC

NALC Disaster Response Stuff The Truck

First and foremost, a huge thank you to the Iowa Mission District's response to the Stuff The Truck drive. Not everything went as planned, but it's all good!

Mary Bates was scheduled to come to Strawberry Point with a trailer to pick up our donations. She received a call and request to go to Pensacola FL with disaster response items. She loaded up the trailer and headed south. Arrangements have been made for Pr Gary and me to take your donations to the warehouse in Rantoul IL. We will be doing that on October 1.

At this time, all donations are being stored at Mission In Christ in Strawberry Point until we load them and head to Rantoul. We received the following donations from 10 congregations:

Health Kits - 202	Baby Kits - 37	Baby Afghans - 5	Gift Cards - valued
Flood Buckets - 33	Quilts - 353	Bibles - 49	at \$790
School Kits - 318	Blankets - 35	Cash - \$396	

I have learned that some of the disaster response items will be changing for 2021. You will want to keep an eye on the NALC website and this newsletter for updates.

Thank you again for sharing God's blessing with others and your generosity to this mission.

Betty Burkhalter

Announcements

Upcoming Events

August 2-6, 2021—NALC Luther Week, Corpus Christi, TX

Please Pray for:

Amy Cooper (wife of Pastor Jason Cooper) who has recently completed her cancer treatments.

Pastor David Steffenson who is undergoing treatments for pancreatic cancer.

Bishop Emeritus John Bradosky—recovering from surgery.

Kelly Staley (wife of Pastor Christopher Staley) - recovering from surgery.

All who have suffered from derechos, hurricanes and other natural disasters in recent months as they grieve the loss of lives and property and seek to rebuild their lives.

All who are at risk for getting COVID-19, those who suffer from it, all who are caring for the sick, researching treatments and preventive measures and trying to make wise decisions for the public good.

Resources

There are numerous resources for pastors, congregations and families on the NALC website: thenalc.org. If you haven't yet had the opportunity to listen to Bishop Dan's sermons for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday, you will find them there as well. SOLA Publishing also has some resources to help families and congregations. During this time.

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.



Sharing the Faith Grace-fully

A Samaritan Woman Shares Her Story

So the [Samaritan] woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the city and were coming to him. (John 4:28-30)

Sharing our faith can often seem so daunting. Some of our anxiety may have to do with fear: *"What will people think of me?"* Sometimes we have a sense of inadequacy: *"How do I start? What should I say? I don't know enough!"* And I have a strong suspicion that we often have a distorted understanding of what it means to witness to our faith—too many evangelism programs outline steps to take and verses to memorize, as if witnessing is our work and something we have to "map out" ahead of time and strategize instead of trusting the Holy Spirit—recognizing that it's His work, and that He will open the doors He wants us to go through and give us the words He wants us to say. Our Lord Jesus was very clear about this before His death when He was instructing the disciples: *"And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."* (Luke 12:11-12) In John 15 Jesus emphasizes the necessity of abiding in Him—which we do through Word and Sacrament; daily prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures. This intimate relationship with Him is foundational to witnessing—telling in word and deed who Jesus is and what we know about Him from our own faithful relationship with Him.

The story of the Samaritan woman is a beautiful example of faithful and Spirit-led witnessing. An outcast, the lowest of the low—a pariah to her own people (because of her many marriages and adulterous reputation) as well as to Jews (as all Samaritans were)—this woman was treated with respect by this Jewish rabbi who spoke to her as an equal and showed compassion even as He displayed a deeper knowledge of her personal life than any stranger could have known. As their conversation progressed, this lonely woman gradually came to see Jesus, not just as a Jewish man who did the unthinkable in asking her for a drink of water, and not simply as a prophet, but as the long-awaited Messiah. This was news she couldn't keep to herself! Despite her tarnished reputation and a possible skeptical reception from her neighbors, she rushed off to tell them what she had experienced and to invite them to come and see for themselves.

As I read this story, three important aspects of sharing the Good News emerge. The first is the relationship that develops between Jesus and this woman of Samaria. Our Lord gives us an example in the way He approaches her and the way He interacts with her. There is respect. Even though He is God Himself, He listens to what she says, and doesn't talk down to her. I have observed, all too often, a condescending approach by Christian people who want to witness to others. Sometimes this approach seems to convey a message of judgment and self-righteousness. Sometimes it seems as if the person doing the witnessing isn't really interested in the other person except as a sort-of "trophy", an object of one's "good work", and another mark to be added to the number of "contacts" one has made in the advertising campaign of the Kingdom of God. Real witnessing is ongoing, it takes time, and it requires patience and compassion—and sometimes a gradual revealing of one's faith in the Lord. The quickest way to turn a person off to your message is to come on too strong and too quickly.

The other two things I noticed in regard to faith-sharing have to do with the way the woman shares her news about this man she met at the well. She speaks of the relationship she has with Jesus—*"He told me all that I ever did."* She's not trying to convince anyone of anything, but simply telling what she knows and has experienced. If we're too busy to spend time with the Lord each day and to worship together with others in the name of Christ, we really have nothing to witness to. A witness is, by definition, one who tells what he or she has seen, heard and experienced. No experience—nothing to tell. The woman's relationship with Jesus is new, but real. And then, she invites her neighbors by asking a question: *"Can this be the Christ?"* She opens the door for them, but she doesn't try to shove them through it. As Luther tells us in the Small Catechism, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to "call, gather, enlighten and sanctify". Our love for our neighbors in helping to bear each other's burdens; helping to invite our neighbors into the faith and to build up their faith by sharing the ways in which we ourselves have been invited and strengthened; and our willingness to be instructed and led by the Holy Spirit through God's word and prayer, are foundational to faithfully sharing our faith in 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 Jamison
Des Moines: **Unity Evangelical Lutheran**,
Pr. Donna Joseph; Pr. Diane Joseph
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**,
Prs. Bill and Diane Odermann
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**, 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**, Call Process
St. Ansgar: **First**, Pr. Christopher Staley
St. Olaf: **Norway**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Sheldon: **St. Paul**, Pr. Dan Baker
+Sibley: **Faith**, Pr. Tim Nappe
Spencer: **Trinity**, Call Process
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

Iowa Mission District Leadership

Pastor Christopher Staley, Dean—
cbstaley@netins.net
Craig Lease, Secretary—
pdlease@gmail.com
Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—
pjburkhalter52@hotmail.com

Mission District Council Members:

Pastor Christopher Martin—
pastorcwmartin@gmail.com
Pastor Ronald Rasmussen—
bigras73@fmctc.com
Pastor Tony D. Ede
tonyede@gmail.com
Chris Schlee—
schleemasonry@hotmail.com
Kathy Scharnhorst—
gaf@butler-bremer.com
Disaster Response Coordinator: Betty Burkhalter
bettyburkhalter@hotmail.com

Mission District Communicator
(newsletter editor/web master):

Pastor Barbara Wills—
barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 37 congregations.*



Pastors available for pulpit supply:

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



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.