



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

March 2025



A Word from the Dean

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you will return."

These are words that many of you will hear spoken to you as you come forward at Ash Wednesday worship on March 5th. These words along with a cross-shaped smudge of ashes have been a part of practices in many churches.

Although Lent begins later this year than in most, the weight of it hit me especially this week when I learned of the death of our dear friend and colleague, Pastor James Puotyual. As many of you know, James has been in our prayers for years because of his need for a kidney transplant. When he was at First Lutheran in St Ansgar for the Mission District Convocation in 2018, he was a healthy, impassioned young man, eager for the work he was about to do in Africa, ministering to refugees fleeing violent regimes. But while there he became sick and had to return to the U.S. for treatment.

As a result, for the past several years he has had to endure kidney dialysis three days each week. When a donor was identified somewhat recently, it seemed that prayers had been answered for the needed transplant. And in addition to that, many individuals and congregations chipped in to provide the money needed for the transplant to proceed. But there were other health trials in the ensuing months that kept delaying that transplant.

But even through this, James continued to be a great support to the various Sudanese communities in the Midwest. In the August 2022 edition of this newsletter, Pastors Diane & Donna Joseph wrote an

article in which the sort of work he was continuing to perform in the U.S. in spite of his compromised health. And as recently as few weeks ago, he had conducted a funeral for a young woman who had taken her own life. His passion for ministry and the Gospel were inspiring.

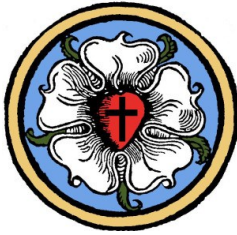
And so when I learned that James was hospitalized Monday morning, I remained hopeful that he could be strengthened for his ministry and so that he could get back on track for his needed transplant. But just minutes later I received word that he had died. My heart sank.

James leaves behind his wife, Nyandit, their two adult children, Nyalat and Jwal, and three grandchildren who live in Kenya.

Having discussed the situation with the Mission District Council, we have decided it is appropriate that the donations we had been holding in reserve for his transplant be given to the family to help cover his funeral expenses. We pray that, if you were among the donors, you would approve of this.

While we grieve this loss, we "*do not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14). We thank God for the ways in which James impacted our lives, and we thank God for the resurrection life promised to James all because of his Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

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



Run with Perseverance

Pastor Tamara Keen
St. John, Vilmar, Lutheran Church
Greene, Iowa

As one who is familiar with and has always loved running, this verse, Hebrews 12:1-2, has spoken to me in many and various ways throughout life. As I pause to reflect on it for the purpose of this newsletter, it is the phrase, “let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us” that grips me.

Every avid runner knows the necessity of perseverance. Pressing on to reach the goal no matter what the odds. The finish line is visible in your mind. The focus keeps the challenges in perspective. One step keeps moving in front of the other even when tired, hot/cold, bucking wind, slopping in rain puddles, dodging wild critters, escaping into ditches with reckless vehicles in your space. The motivation to endure is to reach the goal.

Crossing the finish line is an incredible accomplishment. Why? Because the path to get there has been marked with easy, sometimes even logical, excuses to quit. It is long and hard on the best of days. It takes time and commitment. Some people think you are ‘crazy’. The path may have hills, potholes, loose gravel, hard pavement, uneven ground, . . . To arrive at the destination is incredibly exhilarating, because it can seem absolutely impossible to achieve. And yet, you make it!

I am quite sure you can make the parallels with running a race with a pair of running shoes, to that of running the race of faith with perseverance. We can be so challenged in life with every hardship crashing us down – broken relationships, betrayals, deceptions and lies, illness, death, financial issues, lost dreams, . . . We may wonder, why do prayers seem to be unheard? Why does this sin haunt me so? Why is this particular situation always a challenge for me? Why do people think I’m crazy for being a Christian?

It can be easy to quit, to be overwhelmed, to slack off in our spiritual disciplines, to lose motivation to serve, love and honor God, to follow His commands, to help others in need,

Yet, this verse calls us to “look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith”. Learn from Him. Keep him in your mind’s eye in the living of life. Let Him set the pace and the path of His will for your life. He has already gone before you to blaze the trail. He is working in you through all things to bring His glory. He endured the cross, despised the shame, that we would share in the glory of his presence always and into eternity, Jesus’ cross makes this race of faith possible.

This is our motivation, Jesus. He is our “finish line”, He is our path. He is our inspiration. He is our redeemer that lifts the load of sin. He carries us through some pretty rough spiritual terrain. Knowing that He has already won the victory on our behalf helps us run with perseverance.

Lent is upon us. In this season of the church year, we are reminded that Jesus has blazed the trail of salvation for us. He endured the cross, despised the shame, that the sin and weight that we carry in life would be no more. He desired that we would share in the glory of his presence always and into eternity. And so, we press on – we persevere – knowing that in repentance, there is forgiveness; in sorrow, there is joy; in hardship, there is comfort; in death, there is life.

We run the race in perseverance, because Jesus has already finished it for us and is with us as we move forward into his glory.

II Timothy 4:7-8 *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but to all who crave His appearing.”*

James 1:12 *“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.”*

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District



Picture of former seminary president, Dr. Bruk Ayele and evangelist, Zum Zum who grew up in heavily Muslim area with Imans. Meeting in house church, but hoping to build a church in Koram.

ETHIOPIA MISSION TRIP NOTES

God indeed blessed our party of eight on a mission trip to visit Ethiopia and the dynamic, growing Lutheran church, the Mekane Yesus Church (EECMY). We were there for 10 days, and we packed as much experience in as we could, at one time visiting 13 churches in four days!

We started our journey in the capitol city Addis Ababa touring the Mekane Yesus seminary and worshipping with the seminary community twice. The seminary boasts 600 students. The NALC did much to fund the new building which not only houses the seminary, but Lutheran Bible Translators and small businesses.

Obviously, the need for financial support is great for a church experiencing poverty, persecution and the aftermath of civil war. Our purpose in our trip was to encourage many church communities with our support and deepen our relationship with the largest Lutheran body in the world, of 12 million members. We heard their stories of overcoming great odds and the dire needs of many. We prayed at each site and

Mission Trip to Ethiopia



Debby Saethre enjoying Ethiopian children in Koram, Ethiopia.



Mekane Yesus new seminary building, supported by many in the NALC.

Mission Trip Participants

*Rev. John Conrad
Rev. Marshall Hahn
Gregg Hostetler
Rev. Orrey McFarland
Lisa Pfeil
Debby Saethre
Rev. John Saethre
Rev. Eric Waters*



came away in awe of what God is doing in places that are heavily Muslim and Ethiopian Orthodox.

We concluded our intense trip by visiting Lalibela, Ethiopia and the Rock Churches – the eighth wonder of the world. We must have taken off our shoes at least 10 different times while entering holy places!

Our hearts are filled with praise to the Lord for giving us this tremendous opportunity to having our eyes opened to what He is doing in Ethiopia to spread the Gospel. We are grateful for the great financial support (including the Iowa Missions District!) and prayer support that allowed my wife, Debby and me to attend.

Pastor John Saethre



Names for Jesus: *Savior*

We're all familiar with Luke's Gospel account of the visit of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary when he told her she had been chosen to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah. Her betrothed husband, Joseph, also received this information, after he learned that Mary was pregnant. "*Being a just man*", he planned to divorce her "*quietly*". But while he was considering this, "*an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'*" (Matthew 1:20b-21) One of the most comforting names by which we address our Lord Jesus is that of "Savior". In fact, the name, Savior, is used so often with the name of "Jesus", that we may have come to think that it was only after the birth of Jesus that God became our Savior. However, if we read through the Old Testament, we find the Lord God referred to frequently as the Savior of His people.

The Lord watched over His people Israel throughout their history, and we see the mighty, saving acts of God recorded in the Exodus from Egypt and throughout the people's sojourn in the wilderness. He saved them from their enemies when they entered the Promised Land, giving them victory after victory over nations that were more powerful than they were. King David frequently referred to the Lord as the Savior of Israel. And the writings of the prophets are filled with references to God's saving acts. Although the people also understood their need to be forgiven for their sins, this was usually understood in the context of making sacrifices in order to appease God--to gain His forgiveness by some action on their part. The references to the Lord as their Savior seems to have been understood in the context of rescue from physical dangers. This may be one of the reasons that Jesus' disciples had trouble accepting Jesus' refusal to call up an army and plan a strategy to overthrow the Romans. But in the Matthew text, the angel specifically refers to the coming Messiah as One who will "*save his people from their sins.*"

When John the Baptist came into the Judean wilderness, his preaching was a call to repentance, and the sign of that repentance was baptism. (This was

not the Baptism we receive as Christians. Jesus had not yet been crucified and risen. He had not yet instructed the disciples to baptize believers in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.) John may have understood his call to repentance as a call to return to the Lord so that God would forgive them and save them from their "bondage" to the Roman Emperor. After John was imprisoned, he heard that Jesus was healing and teaching (rather than assembling an army), and he sent his disciples to Jesus to question whether He was truly the Messiah. This may also be why Jesus told His own disciples that although John was the greatest of the prophets, those who were least in the Kingdom of Heaven were greater than he. (Matthew 1:2-11)

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He also called people to repentance. But His preaching was an invitation into the Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God. He called people to build up treasure in heaven rather than earthly treasures. He warned His followers that they would be misunderstood, hated even by members of their own families, and would face persecution and death for His sake. In spite of all that, He told them they were blessed when these things happened (Matthew 5:1-12) and that He came to give them life in abundance. (John 10:7-10) And then Jesus went willingly to the cross and died. His disciples were horrified; their hopes were crushed. It was only after Jesus' resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit that they came to understand that the salvation Jesus came to bring was not limited to time or place.

The Apostle Paul describes what it means that Jesus is our Savior: *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 6:3-4) And in the Apostle Peter's second letter, he specifically names our Lord Jesus as Savior. He closes his letter with this admonition and blessing: *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.* (2 Peter 3:18)

Pastor Barbara Wills

Announcements

Upcoming Events

April 26, 2025—9 am—Mission District Council—Cabin Coffee, Mason City, IA

May 19-20—Iowa Mission District Pastors' Retreat—Lake Okoboji Resort and Conference Center, Okoboji, IA

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

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

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

Please Pray for:

The family of Pastor James Puotyual who died on February 24th.

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 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.

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



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**, Pr. Jason Cooper
Eagle Grove: **Samuel Lutheran**, Call Process
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Pastor 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**, 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. 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. John Jensen, Interim
Spencer: **Trinity**, Pr. Renae Behrends
Strawberry Pt.: **Mission in Christ**, Call Process
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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*The Iowa Mission District
has 41 congregations.*

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