



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

February 2022

A Word from the Dean

How's it going? Really, how's it going. It's been a few weeks since we've hung a new calendar on the wall, and we've finally stopped writing "21" when we fill out the year on a check or some other signature line. So, how's it going?

A "New Year" brings with it the thought of turning a page. I have seen and heard many people talk about the "new year" with a certain hopefulness, especially those for whom 2021 was a difficult or painful or disappointing year (and I think that nearly all of us can find ourselves in this category). With the new year, many, looking back on the past year, make a decision to do something different in the "new year," ostensibly to make an improvement to one's life. For some that means adding something, like exercise, or a more intentional devotional life, or more time spent with a spouse, child, or parent. For others that means trying to eliminate things or activities, like smoking, or drinking, or excessive eating. All these "resolutions" stem from the realization that one is not the person one could be.

That's true for all of us, for that matter. We all fall short of the mark when it comes to perfection. We find it worded this way in 1 John 1:8 "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." When the truth of this sinks in, we might "resolve" to do better, to do more noble deeds, to read God's word more fervently. And this might work for awhile, and we may even make some measurable improvements in ourselves..

But the problem with such "resolutions" insofar as they depend on us, is that they are almost certainly doomed to fail. Why? you might ask. It comes back to the truth as God speaks it. We are sinners. And make no mistake, we are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners.

So what is the solution if our "resolutions" cannot fix us? The solution is not in us, but comes from God as we read on to verse 9 of 1 John 1, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But this is not a once-for-all thing. It is a process that begins at our baptism and continues throughout our earthly life. In his writings, Martin Luther spoke of this, encouraging Christians each day to recall their own baptism, especially when water strikes one's face in the shower or at the bathroom sink each morning. And, as we remember the truth of our own baptism, we are reminded that "the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

May we resolve daily to go to God for forgiveness and cleansing, so that by His Spirit we might live a new life.

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

This and That

From Around the Iowa Mission District

On January 21 some 100,000 people joined together in Washington, D.C. for the Annual March for Life to advocate for the sanctity of life in the womb. Thanks to the support of our Iowa Mission District, Cindy Gibbs, of Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church, and I were able to take part in the March representing our Mission District in conjunction with participants from across the NALC. On Thursday, January 20, we attended the NALC Annual Life Conference at Reformation Lutheran Church in nearby Culpepper, Virginia. Here we heard presentations from Dr. Roy Schwarz on "The Science of Life", from Rev. Dennis Di Mauro on "The Pro-Life Movement After Roe Is Overturned", and from Dr. Donna Harrison on "Over-the-Counter Abortion." All three were cautiously optimistic about the movement in our country toward greater protection for the unborn. And each one emphasized the need to care for mother and child as a whole, showing our commitment to all of life, from the womb to natural death.

We were also able to participate with the Lutherans for Life Youth 4 Life event that took place in the hotel where we stayed. There were upwards of 100 youth at this event and it was tremendously encouraging to see so many young people demonstrating their commitment to the sanctity of life. This was even more evident at the March itself, where the crowd was overwhelmingly made up of young people, of high school and college age. We tagged along with the Lutherans for Life group and met up with the other NALC participants at the start of the March. Despite the cold temperature, there was a festive and hope-filled spirit to the March. We lost sight of our banner a couple times as it fell apart (!), but after repairs were made, it was carried the length of the March, adding the witness of the NALC to the thousands of others who walked beside us. It was a privilege to be able to represent the Iowa Mission District in this way and to experience this joining together of people from all walks of life sharing this common commitment to the sanctity of life. I believe we are in a crucial time in our society with respect to issues of life and I believe it is more important now than ever before to join with others in prayer and witness. Thank you to the members of the Iowa Mission District for giving us the opportunity to take part in this life-affirming event!

Pastor Marshall Hahn,
St. Olaf Lutheran Parish,
Norway & Marion Lutheran Churches



Above: Cindy Gibbs, Bishop Dan Selbo, Pastor Marshall Hahn, and Scott Licht at the 2022 March for Life in Washington, DC. **Below:** Marchers arrive at the Supreme Court building.



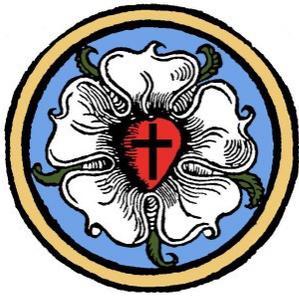
Left: Dr. Roy Schwarz speaks on "The Science of Life" at Reformation Lutheran Church.

Upper Middle: Students for Life carry Post-Roe banner at the parade.

Lower Middle: Scott and Cindy enjoy conversation with NALC General Secretary, Reverend Amy Little, and Bishop Dan Selbo over



Cindy in front of the Capitol building.



**“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in His word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord,
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.”
~Psalm 130:5-6**

As we enter into the year of our Lord 2022, there are many things that conspire to give us pause. The pandemic continues to threaten our world with new variants that react in unpredictable ways, the divisions in our culture seem as intractable as ever, the violence infecting so many of our major cities continues unabated, and all of it leads to a sense of foreboding and uncertainty about the future.

Yet, as followers of Christ, we do not live in fear, but in hope. In the service of Morning Prayer in the LBW, there is a wonderful prayer that expresses this confidence:

*“Lord God, you have called your servants
to ventures of which we cannot see
the ending, by paths as yet untrodden,
through perils unknown. Give us faith
to go out with good courage, not knowing
where we go, but only that your hand
is leading us and your love supporting us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Our hope is not that somehow all of our troubles will simply go away, but that through it all, God is with us. Our hope is not in knowing all the answers to all of life’s problems, but knowing the One who can give us the strength to endure. Our hope is not having the ability to see exactly what the future will bring, but having the confidence that the future, whatever it may entail, is in God’s hands. When we focus less on the sea of troubles out there somewhere, and more on the signs of God’s presence with us here and now, we can find many reasons to live in hope.

Waiting In Hope

*Pr. Marshall Hahn
St. Olaf Lutheran Parish,
Norway & Marion Lutheran Churches*

There are many such signs of hope all around us. After being unable to meet in person in 2020 as the NALC or as the Iowa Mission District, it was quite encouraging to come together this past year and celebrate our common life and ministry. What was even more encouraging was to see the truck at Emmons filled with materials for the NALC Disaster Response Team. The items filling that truck are visible, concrete gifts of hope which will be shared with people who are in great need of exactly that.

After cancelling our Iowa Mission Youth Mission Trip for 2 years running, we are in the midst of planning a trip this summer to Louisiana to help in the hurricane recovery efforts – bringing our hearts and hands along with the relief items that will be needed there.

This past week I had the privilege of representing the Iowa Mission District, along with Cindy Gibbs from Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church, at the March for Life event in Washington, D.C. One of the things that filled me with hope at that event was seeing the number of young people involved in this march, demonstrating their commitment to the sanctity of life. From what I could see, the march was at least 80% young people of high school, college age or younger. For me, this was a sign of hope for our nation, and especially for the fate of those most vulnerable among us – the child in the womb.

And through all of the worries and vicissitudes of these past two years, we are given the greatest Word of hope each time we gather at our Lord’s Table to receive the Body and Blood of our Savior. For here we receive the precious gift of our Lord’s love “given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” Here is the promise of our Lord, Emanuel, who has come to dwell in, with, and among us in all the messiness, all the sin and sorrow of the world. The eternal Word of God is with us. And in this Word is our hope.



Here I Stand Confession and Conviction: Love the Lord with all Your Heart

Last month, I ended the meditation on this discussion of “Confession and Conviction” with the reminder that we must keep our hearts set on our Lord Jesus. He is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” But to maintain the “head and heart” connection, we must be sure that it is Christ on whom our hearts are set, and not simply our personal interpretation of who we *want* Him to be—or Who we’re afraid He might be. It’s very troubling to hear people say things about Jesus that are just the opposite of what the Scriptures say about Him. Some of these views come from folks who rarely open their Bibles and are based on a single passage of Scripture—or portion of a passage—that they like. People who never read the Bible may have such ideas based on someone else’s interpretation of something they’ve heard about Jesus. I suspect that many times inaccurate ideas come from our personal feelings—projecting onto Jesus the way we think he is or the way we want Him to be. This is an ages-old problem. Even the first disciples had a hard time figuring out who Jesus was. Peter got His title right—“*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” Then he immediately contradicted Jesus when He told Peter and the others what that meant—that He would be betrayed, rejected and killed. (He also added that on the third day He would rise, but they had probably stopped listening by the time He got to that part of His warning!) Luther had a similar problem in his early years when he thought Jesus was a terrible judge who required people to earn their salvation and took pleasure in punishing them.

Jesus is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” (John 14:6) The only way we can love God with all our hearts is to know who He is—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the only way to know someone is to spend time with them. Luther was a monk, and we might think that he would have known the Lord very well. But most of what Luther knew was “second hand”, because even though he lived in a monastery and attended daily worship services, at that time in the history of the Church, most people did not read the Bible. What they learned about God came through interpretations from Church leaders and Papal decrees. Some Church officials were given their titles and positions because of who they were rather than because of what they knew. It was a time when people were taught that there

was purgatory, and the only way to reduce this time of afterlife punishment was through self-abasement or the purchase of indulgences. Most people believed that righteousness was something one had to achieve rather than a gift from the Lord through faith in Christ and His death and resurrection.

Thankfully, for Luther—and for us—Luther’s wise and caring confessor and spiritual guide was Johann von Staupitz, the vicar of the Augustinian order at Wittenberg, where Luther was sent to teach at the University in 1511. Luther had reached a crisis point in his faith after returning to Germany from his pilgrimage in Rome, and Staupitz sought a way to help him. He insisted that Luther study for his doctor’s degree and begin teaching courses in the Bible at the University. In order to teach, Luther had to learn, and it was in his study of the Psalms, Galatians and Romans that Luther finally encountered the “real” Christ Jesus. After months of prayerful study, trying to figure out the relationship between righteousness and faith (Galatians 3:11), and how God could be both just and merciful, Luther finally realized the truth. He later wrote: “*Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning.... This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven...*” (pp 49-50, *Here I Stand*, Roland Bainton)

As Lutherans we’re familiar with the phrase, “We are saved by grace through faith.” Grace is God’s unconditional and unmerited love and compassion for us. This is not a selfish love, or the kind of wishy-washy “love” we have for our favorite actress or sports hero. It is more an act of the will than an emotion. Emotions change with the weather, but God’s love—agape—is a solid and reliable foundation in which we can place our trust. Faith in Christ is our response to God’s love. This faith is not mere intellectual agreement, but is grounded in our trust in the Lord who loves us. To love the Lord with all one’s heart means total commitment. Christ Jesus is our Treasure beyond price. No half measures. No casual relationship. Absolute devotion—head and heart!

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Announcements

Upcoming Events

April 23, 2022—9:00 a.m.—Iowa Mission District Council meeting—Cabin Coffee, Mason City, IA

June 6-7, 2022—Pastors/Lay Minister's Retreat, Fort Dodge, IA.

July 25—August 1, 2022—Youth Mission Trip to southern Louisiana for hurricane relief. Youth who have finished one year of confirmation through grade 12 are eligible to go. Cost is \$300 per youth with non-refundable deposit to reserve a seat on the bus due by April 1. Every congregation sending youth must send an adult—one adult per five youth. For more information, contact trip organizer, Pastor Tony D. Ede, at 319-290-2401 or tonyede@gmail.com.

August 27, 2022—Iowa Mission District Convocation at Zion Lutheran, Ruthven, IA.

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.

Pastor David Steffenson who is undergoing treatments for pancreatic cancer.

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 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.

Congregations of the Iowa Mission District



Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Dan Buhs, Lay Minister
Avoca: **Trinity**, Call Process
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**,
Pr. Bill Odermann; Pr. 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**, 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
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**, Pr. Kim Thacker
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Call Process
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**, Pr. David Steffenson
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**, 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

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Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—
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barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 37 congregations.*

Pastors available for pulpit supply:

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.

