



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

<http://www.lutheransonline.com/iowamissiondistrict>

June 2014

News and Notes

From Around the Mission District



Mission District Pastors' Retreat

Eleven of the pastors from the Iowa Mission District gathered at Ingham Okoboji Camp in Milford, Iowa, on April 28-29 for our annual retreat. It was a time of worship, discussion, learning and mutual support. Although the weather was cold and rainy, the retreat setting was warm and cozy with a fire in the fireplace and hot coffee in the pot.



REPORT ON THE TRIP TO ETHIOPIA



Serving girl pouring coffee .

beans are then ground and cooked over the same charcoal fire in the dining area, while the hosts visit with their guests. Finally it is served in tiny china cups. The whole procedure takes about an hour. We may think coffee is important in our Midwestern culture, but we barely hold a candle to the Ethiopian practice!

During our time in Addis Ababa we stayed in the Bethel Synod Guest House, a modest but very comfortable lodging run by the Bethel Synods Coordination Office of the EECMY. The Director of the Coordination Office, Rev. Teferi Berkessa, had made many of the arrangements for our trip and was very accommodating. The only drawback was the unreliable electricity and poor internet connection at the guest house, problems which are endemic to the city, apparently.

In the two weeks we were in Addis Ababa, and Nekemte, we were asked to preach or speak at 10 different gatherings. I preached 8 times in those two weeks – sometimes with a short message followed by a full sermon by Challa, sometimes with Challa translating for me, and, when I spoke to the university or seminary students, in English without the need of an interpreter. I came to appreciate Peter’s admonition to “always be prepared to give an account of the hope that is in you!”

Early on, as I witnessed the response Challa received from the churches and people

we met, I came to the conclusion that this was the main purpose of our visit – to

bring Challa to Ethiopia to speak with and visit the people there. This was confirmed by Challa himself who told me after we had been there a few days that he had been praying about the trip and asking God what was His purpose in sending us to Ethiopia? The answer he received was that he was sent to bring a message to the people there. The message he brought was a warning. It was a warning against the theological drift of the Western church which was moving away from reliance on the authority of God’s Word. It was a warning against the liberal theology of the Western church that has been dividing the churches of the west and undermining their trust in the truth of the Gospel. Everywhere he went, this was the message he preached. He said he had never done this before, preaching the same message again and again, but this is what he felt called to do. From what I could see, it



Pastors Hahn & Baro preach to the FOCUS group in Addis Ababa.



Pastor Baro visits with the Reverend Belay Olam, President of the Mekane Yesus Seminary.



President of the Central Synod, Rev. Asefa Woyessa and his staff, pose with Pastors Hahn and Baro during their visit.

was a message that was received quite positively everywhere we went.

In addition to preaching at several churches and visiting various ministries, we had an opportunity to meet with the President of the Central Synod of the EECMY, the Rev. Asefa Woyessa and his staff, and with the President of the Mekane Yesus Seminary, the Rev. Belay Olam. At both meetings we were told of the many challenges facing the church, particularly since the EECMY has broken off relations with the ELCA and the Lutheran Church of Sweden due to their changes in teaching and practice regarding marriage and sexuality. This has meant a loss of funding for many of the ministries of the church. In the Central Synod it has meant the reduction or closure of two health clinics, an HIV/AIDS project, an eye clinic, a school for the deaf, and various development projects in the synod. Some of these

projects may be handed over to the government, but it is complicated by the fact that several of these ministries are located within the compounds of the local church. I told them that we in the NALC wished to help as we can, but that our resources are limited. However, I promised that I would bring these needs to the attention of our churches. At both meetings, we were told of the commitment of the Mekane Yesus church to stand by the decisions they had made and their faith that God would provide the resources to do the work they are called to do.

One of the most encouraging parts of our visit was the time we spent with the FOCUS groups, the Fellowship of Oromo Christian University Students. We met with their board and also had an opportunity to worship with 3 different groups while we were there. There are over 200 FOCUS groups across the country, and they are some of the most active and enthusiastic members of the church. We were told that these students are some of their best witnesses for the



Church elders in Nekemte, standing next to the health clinic they sponsor, which includes an HIV/AIDS project for orphaned children.



Pastor Hahn with directors of the Gudina Tumsa Foundation.

going into places that no one else will go – into Muslim villages and places where witchcraft is still practiced, often in the face of opposition and threats. But they are fearless in their witness to the Gospel. At Nekemte, we worshipped with the FOCUS group there, which numbers about 5,000 students out of a total student population of about 20,000. It was inspiring to worship among them and see their enthusiasm and commitment. There, too, they have seen their funding cut off. But it has not dampened their spirit and their commitment.

We also visited with the Gudina Tumsa Foundation and traveled to two of their development project sites near Addis Ababa.



The choir at the church in Nekemte .

There is much more I could say about our trip and I would be willing to speak to any of the churches in our Mission District about what we experienced there and the needs that the people have.

When we were at the seminary, I was invited to speak and at the conclusion of my sermon, I told them that I was reminded of Jesus' words to the church at Smyrna given to the seer John:

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that

you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.’”

There is great poverty and many challenges facing the church in Mekane Yesus, yet they are rich in many ways. It was a privilege to meet the people there and I hope to be able to see them again.

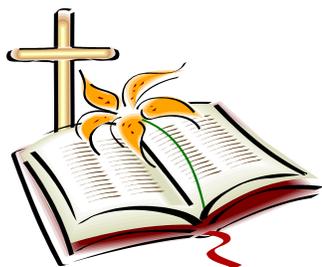
Yours in Christ,

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



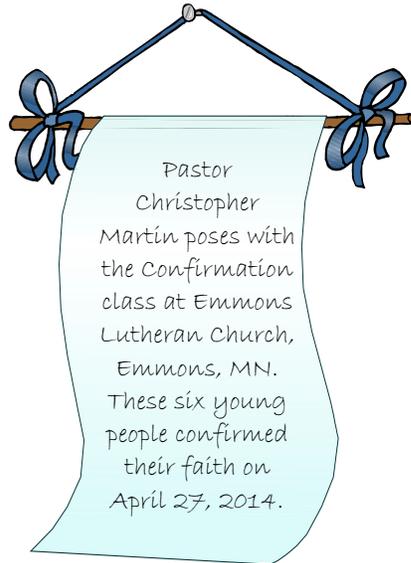
Left: Pastors Baro and Hahn with children in one of the school projects.

Below: An example of the poverty many face in Ethiopia. This is a family home where people live under the makeshift “tent”.



This and That

From Around the Mission District



Peace Lutheran Council Retreat

The Council of Peace Lutheran in Northwood held their annual retreat at American Martyrs in Cedar Falls on Saturday, May 17th. The retreat is a time of worship, prayer and meditation. The day begins with a service of Corporate Confession and Forgiveness and Affirmation of Baptism. Throughout the day we share sessions of directed prayer based on Biblical texts, “lectio divina” (sacred reading) of Bible passages with time for meditation and journaling, a midday prayer service and a service of Holy Communion before departing for home. The retreat has become a highlight of the year for the PLC Council—a time for growing in faith and growing in our relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ.



Thank You!

I wish to thank the pastors and congregations of the Iowa Mission District for your prayers and words of encouragement during my recovery from gallbladder surgery on May 14th. A special thank you goes out to Pastors Barbara Wills and Kris Snyder for working with our staff and lay leadership at Emmons Lutheran Church to see that ministry was taken care of so I could rest and recover. I am blessed to be a part of such a supportive congregation and Mission District. God’s blessings be with you all!

In Christ’s love,
Pastor Chris Martin,

Congregations of the Iowa Mission District

Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Pr. Kris Snyder
+Atlantic: Holy Trinity—Pr. Paul Breddin, Interim
Avoca: **Trinity**, Pr. Eric Meissner
Badger: **Badger Lutheran**, Pr. Darryl Landsverk
Bode: **St. Olaf Lutheran**, Pr. Steve Bliss
Boyden: **St. John**, Pr. Dan Hart
Clarksville: **New Life**, Call process
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**, Pr. Allen Hermeier
Eagle Grove: **Evangelical Lutheran**, Pr. Jason Cooper
Eagle Grove: **Samuel Lutheran**, Pr. Rich Taylor
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Pr. Christopher Staley
Emmons, MN: **Emmons**, Pr. Christopher Martin
Gilmore City: **First**, Dan Buhs, Pastoral Associate
Grafton: **Emmanuel**, Pr. Solveig Zamzow
Gunder: **Marion**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
+Huxley: **Shepherd of the Prairie**, Scott Licht, Pr. Assoc.
Laurens: **Bethany**, Pr. Jerry Wittmus
Manchester: **First**, Pr. Tony Ede; Pr. Jean Rabary
+Monona, **Faith**: Call process
+Northwood: **Peace**, Pr. Barbara Wills
Palmer: **St. John's**,
Plainfield: **St. John**, Pr. Kim Thacker
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Mark Lund
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Mark Lund
Ruthven: **Zion**, Pr. Thomas Summerfield
St. Ansgar: **First**, Pr. Paul Weeg
St. Olaf: **Norway**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Sheldon: **St. Paul**, Pr. Craig Nissen
+Sibley: **Faith**, Pr. Tim Nappe
Spencer: **Trinity**
+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

Mission District News

The Mission District newsletter is an important way for the congregations of the Iowa Mission District to stay connected. We hope you will make use of this publication to share news from your congregation. **Please e-mail pictures and information** you would like to share to Pastor Barbara Wills at barbarawills@mchsi.com.

The newsletter may be printed by each congregation and distributed to members, copied directly into your congregational newsletter, and/or forwarded to those who have e-mail addresses. We hope the newsletter will be helpful in providing mutual support and exchange of information among the congregations in our mission district.

Mission District Support

Checks sent to the Mission District for support should be made out to the **Iowa Mission District, NALC**, and mailed to Pastor Christopher Staley, PO Box 32, Ellsworth, IA 50075-0032. Correspondence for Pastor Marshall Hahn, Mission District Secretary, should be sent to **PO Box 56**, St. Olaf, IA 52072-0057.

Please note this change in Pastor Hahn's address.

Congregations Relating to the Iowa Mission District

+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**, Pr. David Steffenson



Iowa Mission District Leadership

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*The Iowa Mission District
now has 34 congregations!*



NALC
North American Lutheran Church