



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

January 2016

A Word from the Dean

WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM

*“For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”
- Matthew 2:2*

January 6 is celebrated as the Epiphany of Our Lord, commemorating the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus. In many parts of the world Epiphany is the primary celebration of Jesus nativity. It is the day when presents are exchanged and re-enactments of the visit of the Wise Men are performed. The focus of the celebration is not only on Jesus’ birth but also upon His epiphany – the revealing of His presence in the world. Throughout the next several weeks that is the focus for us in our Gospel readings. In our Christmas readings we see how He was revealed first to the shepherds on the Judean hillside, then to Simeon and Anna in the temple, and then to the rabbis in the temple as Jesus grew. Following the Day of Epiphany we see Jesus revealed in His baptism and then through His public ministry of preaching and teaching. In all these ways, Jesus reveals Himself to be Emmanuel – “God with us.”

In our own lives, we often have our own “epiphany moments.” These are times when we sense God’s presence with us in simple, yet profound ways. It may be in times of crisis when a word of Scripture or an act of comfort or encouragement brings hope and healing to your spirit. It may be a sudden moment of insight when you sense God has opened your mind to understand some important truth. Or it may be in a quiet moment of contemplation when the beauty of the world or the wonder of life itself fills you with the comforting sense of God’s presence and care.

It is difficult to say exactly how or why the Magi came to see the significance of the birth of this child in Bethlehem. The brevity of the passage in Matthew 2 allows for only a few tantalizing glimpses into the details of their journey. Somehow it was revealed to them, through the appearance a star in the heavens – whether a comet or an alignment of several planets, we do not know. But somehow they came to believe that a new king had been born. How exactly they determined this and why it led them to Jerusalem we can only speculate. But we do know that they acted on what they saw – they journeyed hundreds of miles to find this new king. And somehow they knew this was no ordinary king. For when they found Him, they bowed down and worshipped Him. \

When we are given these “epiphany moments” in our lives we can choose to ignore them, chalk them up to the excitement of the moment, or to an overactive imagination. Or we can seek to follow where these “epiphany moments” lead us. We can explore that new truth God has revealed to us, we can turn to God in praise and thanksgiving for the wonder our spirit has sensed in His creation, we can find strength in the renewed sense of hope we are given – and we can seek out the One who has brought all this to us, so that we, too, may worship Him. As the song says, “Wise men (and women) still seek Him!”

Rev. Marshall E. Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC

This and That from around the Iowa Mission District



Servants of Christ Lutheran Church held it's first worship service on November 29th at Emery Place(an assisted living & memory care facility} in the Village of Robins Iowa. The congregation meets at 8:30am and Sunday School and Bible study begin at 9:45am.

The congregation seeks to reach out to people on the north side of Cedar Rapids, Marion, Hiawatha and Robins as well as rural areas in the northern part of Linn county. Outreach visitation continues on a weekly basis to persons living in the listed areas.

The congregation seeks to welcome persons presently living at Emery Place into it's worship and study opportunities. In addition to Sunday morning services Pastor Voss conducts two to three midweek worship services at Emery place for the residents.

The congregation has established a website, <http://servantsofchristnalc.org>. If you are in the Cedar Rapids area visiting friends or relatives you are invited to join us for worship and study. Continue to pray for our congregation, that we might reach many with the Good News of Jesus Christ.



On December 13th, Emmanuel Lutheran in Grafton once again hosted their "Live Nativity". Through narration and song, the old, old story of Christ's birth was told as those gathered watched the scenes of the Biblical story unfold: The angel's visits to Mary and Joseph, the search for an inn in Bethlehem, the visit of the shepherds to "see this thing" which the angels had made known to them, the worship of the wise men from the East, and the flight into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. Those who came to see this reenactment of the miraculous Gift of God's love also enjoyed walking through an ancient market scene and being registered for the census that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.

Congregationally-Focused: A Core Value of the NALC

Pastor Ken Kimball
Old East Paint Creek and Old West Paint Creek Lutheran Churches
Waterville & Waukon, Iowa

Why is “Congregationally-Focused” a core value for the NALC?

First, it is important to note that “Congregationally-Focused” is the 4th core value, not the 1st core value for the NALC. It is intentionally preceded and informed by the first three of the NALC’s four core values: Christ-Centered, Mission-Driven, and Traditionally-Grounded. This reflects the process that led to the formation of the NALC—before making decisions about church organization and structure, there were three critical confessional questions to ask and answer first: (1) “Who’s in charge?” *The Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in His Word*; (2) “What’s the mission?” *The one He gave us, the Great Commission, to make disciples of all nations*; and (3) “What are the resources upon which we draw to carry out this mission?” *That which Christ and the Holy Spirit have handed on to us through the witness of the Church across the centuries, especially the Creeds and the Lutheran Confessions, the forms and practices of the universal Church that are consistent with Scripture, particularly the office of the ministry and the tradition of worship under Word and Sacrament*. Once we were clear on these, then and only then, could we start to make decisions on organization and structure that were in accord in with the first three values.

“So why ‘Congregationally-Focused?’” Because that’s where our Lord Jesus begins, where the church is created as the assembly of those the Holy Spirit gathers around Word and Sacrament, where Christ Jesus encounters and confronts sinners, slaying and forgiving and raising them to new life, in and through the preaching of His Word as Law and Gospel, in and through the Confession and Absolution and the Scripture echoing words of the liturgy, in and through the once for all baptismal flood that calls us to daily repentance of drowning and rising, and in and through His Body and Blood. Yes, there is much else that congregations and a church body must attend to—seminary training, call process, vetting of pastors, staff work, communications, ecumenical dialogues, Bible study, finances, outreach, evangelism, ministries of charity and care for those in need, etc.—but the living and

renewing center of the church is found in congregations gathered by the Holy Spirit around Word and Sacrament.

So what does the core value “Congregationally-Focused” mean for the NALC?

It means that the NALC recognizes that the foundational mission and ministry of the church takes place in and through its congregations: Word and Sacrament, teaching, outreach, evangelizing, discipling, support for North American and global missions and ministries, etc. It means that the NALC’s organizational structures and leadership—Office of Bishop, General Secretary, staff, Executive Council, Convocation, NALS, committees, commissions, boards, mission districts, deans, etc.—exist for the sake of its member congregations. The congregations do not exist for the sake of the NALC’s leadership structures.

However “Congregationally-focused” does not mean ultra-congregationalism. The congregations of the NALC are part of a confessional Lutheran church body in which the highest authority belongs to neither the individual congregations nor to some hierarchical church organization or ministerial office: “All authority in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ and is manifested through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. The structures and assemblies of the NALC exist and exercise their ministry in the service of Christ and His authority” (NALC Constitution 3.05). Furthermore, the guiding organizational principle of the NALC and its congregations is the Great Commission: “It is also the mission of the Church to obey the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20); to preach the Gospel to all people, to do the ministry of evangelism, and to witness to others the mighty acts of God... (3.03). To everyone who has read this, and especially those who follow me in reflecting upon this core value of the NALC, I commend the following two sources: Article Three from the NALC Constitution “The Nature of the Church and The Ministry” and *A Vision and Plan For the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE* (Feb 2010).

Notices and Announcements

A Message from our Mission District Treasurer

At the most recent Mission District convocation, the budget passed was based on our 35 congregations giving an average of \$400 per congregation. Please remember that these are not "dues," but merely a suggested level of giving for our working together to improve and sustain the ministry within our mission district with a very lean budget. Some congregations may be unable to give up to this level, while others are able to give beyond the suggested level. All gifts are appreciated and help us to work together toward our common mission.

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 Christopher Staley at **PO Box 141, St. Ansgar, IA 50472-0141**.

Correspondence for Pastor Solveig Zamzow, Mission District Secretary, should be sent to **PO Box 282, Grafton, IA 50440**

Items for the Mission District newsletter (pictures, news, etc.) are best sent via e-mail to Pastor Barbara Wills at barbarawills@mchsi.com.

Upcoming Events

February 2-4, NALC Pastors' Conference in Orlando, Florida.

April 4-5, 2016—Mission District pastors' retreat.

August 9-12, 2016—Lutheran Week & NALC Convocation in Anaheim, California.

September 17, 2016—Iowa Mission District Convocation at Bethany Lutheran Church, Laurens, Iowa. 8 am—Coffee; 9 am—Opening worship.
Keynote speaker: The Reverend Doctor Amy Schifrin, President of the North American Lutheran Seminary.

Iowa Mission District, North American Lutheran Church

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November 20, 2015

Dear friends,

God's blessings to you as we prepare to celebrate the culmination of the church year with the festival of Christ the King!

A week from Sunday will be the 1st Sunday of Advent, as we enter into a new church year. That Sunday will also mark the beginning of a new ministry within the Iowa Mission District as the Servants of Christ Lutheran Church will hold their first worship service. Servants of Christ Lutheran will be worshipping at 8:30 a.m. at Emery Place Retirement Community at 901 S. Mentzer Rd., Robbins, Iowa, in their community room. Pastor Ron Voss has been making outreach calls in the Robbins, Marion and Cedar Rapids neighborhood surrounding Emery Place for the past 3 months. Five members of Norway Lutheran and I joined him for a Saturday morning in October to help canvas the neighborhood to introduce this new ministry and invite people to "come and see." It is exciting to see the possibilities God has placed before us in this place!

Pastor Voss' plans for this ministry in the ensuing months include:

- * Adult Bible Study beginning December 6
- * Christmas Eve worship on December 24 at 5:30 p.m. with the residents of Emery Place
- * Sunday School beginning January 3

We are excited about this new ministry as we seek to establish an NALC presence in the Cedar Rapids area and we wish to support them in this effort. On January 10, 2016, the Iowa Mission District Council is encouraging every congregation in the Iowa Mission District to join together in prayer for Servants of Christ Lutheran and to take a special offering to support their mission "to know Christ and to make Christ known."

Gifts for this ministry may be sent to;

Servants of Christ Lutheran Church
c/o Pastor Ron Voss
49703 106th St.
Miles, Iowa 52064

For more information about the Servants of Christ ministry, or if you or a group from your congregation are able to join them for worship or wish to help in the outreach to the Cedar Rapids area, you may contact him at: servantsofchristnalc@gmail.com or 312-513-3567.

May God bless you in this exciting time to be a part of God's church!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean



Make a Joyful Noise! ***The Hymns We Sing***



With the first Sunday of Advent we began a new church year. Our second season of the year is the season of Christmas. We celebrate Jesus' birth on December 25th, and then the short Christmas season follows—twelve days—until the Baptism of our Lord on January 6th, which begins the season of Epiphany. This month we will look briefly at two hymns—a Christmas hymn (usually referred to as a carol—from the French word for “dance” and now defined as a song, particularly a joyful song), and an Epiphany hymn.

Although “Away In A Manger” is often called “Luther’s Cradle Hymn”, there is no evidence of it in any of Luther’s writings. The earliest source found for this hymn, thus far, is Little Children’s Book for Schools and Families, with two stanzas, published in Philadelphia in 1885, under the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America—an anonymously authored song. However, two years later it appeared in J.R. Murray’s Dainty Songs for Little Lads and Lasses, published in Cincinnati. The third stanza, also anonymously written, appears for the first time in 1892 in Charles H. Gabriel’s songbook, Vineyard Songs.

Away In A Manger

*Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing; the poor baby wakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle ‘til morning is nigh.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care
And fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.*

One of the prominent themes in Epiphany hymns is the visit of the three sages who came to visit the young child Jesus. However, the Matthew text that shares this event only comes up in our lectionaries every three years. The season of Epiphany begins with Jesus’ baptism and ends with His transfiguration, events that reveal Jesus’ true identity as the voice of God

the Father thunders from heaven, “This is my beloved Son....” The Epiphany season is a season of revelation—the tiny infant born at Christmas is the true God/true man Messiah promised through the ages.

“Hail to the Lord’s Anointed” was written by James Montgomery, a Moravian Christian whose parents had hoped he would enter the Moravian ministry. However, he was fascinated with poetry from an early age and made a strong Christian witness with his many hymns and poems. This hymn was written to be sung at the Moravian Settlement in 1821 as a Christmas ode. The next spring Montgomery read it at a missionary meeting in the Pitt Street Wesleyan Chapel in Liverpool. Later that year it was printed in Dr. Adam Clarke’s “Commentary on the Bible”, and in the May issue of the “Evangelical Magazine”.

Hail to the Lord’s Anointed

*Hail to the Lord’s anointed,
Great David’s greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression
And rule in equity.*

*He comes with rescue speedy
To those who suffer wrong,
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for singing,
Their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying,
Were precious in his sight.*

*He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth;
And love, joy, hope, like flowers,
Spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains
Shall peace, the herald, go;
And righteousness in fountains
From hill to valley flow.*

*Kings shall fall down before him,
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore him,
His praise all people sing.
To him shall prayer unceasing
And daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing,
A kingdom without end.*

Congregations of the Iowa Mission District

Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Dan Buhs, Lay Minister
+Atlantic: Holy Trinity—Pr. Paul Breddin, Interim
Avoca: **Trinity**, Pr. Eric Meissner
Badger: **Badger Lutheran**, Don Bell, Lay Minister
Bode: **St. Olaf Lutheran**, Call Process
Boyden: **St. John**, Pr. Dan Hart
Clarksville: **New Life**, Galen Eiben, Lay Minister
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**, Pr. Allen Hermeier
Eagle Grove: **Evangelical Lutheran**, Pr. Jason Cooper
Eagle Grove: **Samuel Lutheran**, Pr. Rich Taylor
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Call Process
Emmons, MN: **Emmons**, Pr. Christopher Martin
Gilmore City: **First**, Call Process
Grafton: **Emmanuel**, Pr. Solveig Zamzow
Gunder: **Marion**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
+Huxley: **Shepherd of the Prairie**, Scott Licht, Lay Minister
Laurens: **Bethany**, Pr. Jerry Wittmus
Manchester: **First**, Pr. Tony D. Ede
+Monona, **Faith**: Pr. Melvin Harris
+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
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Pr. Ron Voss
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**, Pr. David Steffenson
Ruthven: **Zion**, Pr. Thomas Summerfield
St. Ansgar: **First**, Pr. Christopher Staley
St. Olaf: **Norway**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Sheldon: **St. Paul**, Pr. Craig Nissen
+Sibley: **Faith**, Pr. Tim Nappe
Spencer: **Trinity**
+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

*The Iowa Mission District
has 36 congregations!*

The following pastors are available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Gary Burkhalter—815-394-9309 (Sundays)
Pastor Duane Marburger—563-506-3191
Pastor Jean Rabary—563-608-2044
Pastor David Steffenson—253-302-9845 (Sundays)
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675
Pastor Ian Wolfe—402-960-3882



Iowa Mission District Leadership

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Pastor Christopher Staley, Treasurer—cbstaley@netins.net

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