



News

of the Iowa Mission District
of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

February 2018

A Word from the Dean

TURNING TO THE LORD

*"Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."
~Joel 2:13*

The weeks leading up to Easter - the season of Lent - are a time for turning back, a time to "return to the Lord." Lent begins with a call to "remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." This is not some morbid obsession with our mortality, but it is a call for reflection, repentance, and renewal.

REFLECTION -- Lent is a time to take a good, hard look at ourselves and the world around us. It is a time to acknowledge our own human limitations and our need for God's mercy and strength. As we consider our own shortcomings and failings in the light of God's will for us, we are moved to a time of --

REPENTANCE -- Lent is a time to acknowledge where and how we have turned away from God in our lives. It is a time to acknowledge the times we have gone in the wrong direction, shutting out God's Word in our life, ignoring the needs of others, and closing our hearts and minds to God's grace. It is a time to turn back to the Lord so that we may be healed and receive His gift of --

RENEWAL -- Lent is a time to hear once again that promise of new life Jesus sets before us - a life of faithfulness to God and service to our neighbor. It is a time to make a renewed commitment to Christ and His church.

The season of Lent provides opportunities on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening to put this commitment into practice through worship and prayer. It is also a good time to strengthen - or begin - your own personal time of devotion and prayer and reading God's Word.

As we engage in Reflection, Repentance, and Renewal this Lenten season may we return, once again, to our gracious and merciful Lord, who has called us to be His own, and has given His very life for us on the cross.

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC



Sola Scriptura—Scripture Alone

Pastor Gary Burkhalter

Mission In Christ, Strawberry Point, Iowa

In the early years of the reformation, as Luther taught, preached and wrote about his growing understanding of a merciful God who desired that all men would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, he found himself increasingly at odds with the leaders of the church of Rome and the pope himself. Summoned before the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, on December 10, 1520, Luther was presented with piles of his writings and, facing excommunication and being branded an outlaw, was asked if he was willing to recant, or retract, what he had written. Luther responded, *“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. May God help me. Amen.*

Luther held that the Bible is the Word of God and that it does not mislead or deceive us. But unlike his opponents, Luther rejected the notion that an infallible magisterium of the church is necessary for the right interpretation of the Bible. Scripture alone, said Luther, is infallible. The institutional church and its councils, as well as its teachers, including the Pope, can and do err. But Scripture, says Luther, *“will not lie to you”* (Large Catechism V, 76).

The premise of “Scripture Alone” cannot be divorced from the other solas: Grace alone and Faith alone. Together, all three comprise the over-arching confession:

Christ Alone. Christ is the object of faith, not the Bible. When this order is inverted, truth is actually compromised, and the result can be rationalistic fundamentalism. The story is told of a man who believed that God was telling him to date a young woman in his community named Joy. When asked upon what he based his belief, he cited the King James translation of Isaiah 55:12: *“For ye shall go out with joy...”*! The Bible remains a dark book apart from faith in Christ, for He is its true content.

But when sinners are brought to faith in Him, Christ points them back to the writings of the prophets and apostles as the sole authoritative source for all the church believes, teaches and confesses. (Jesus said) *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me”* (John 5:39). When in conversation with the two men on the road to Emmaus, Jesus did not ask or expect them to come to some faithful conclusion regarding his resurrection based on what they thought, or worse, how they felt. *“Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”*! (Luke 24:27)

We continue to believe and confess that the heart of the Lutheran understanding of *sola scriptura* is the confidence that God actually creates faith by means of his Word. Through Law and Gospel, God does more than just impart information. He lays hold of our hearts and gives us something outside of ourselves in which we can trust and believe. *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.”* (Romans 10:17)

This and That from around the Iowa Mission District

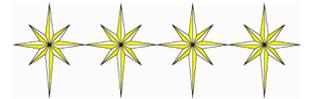


Above: Pastor Gary Burkhalter, Mission in Christ Lutheran in Strawberry Point, loads supplies destined for the disaster relief effort in Texas.



Left: Marilyn Ehlers (treasurer) and Shirley Pedersen (financial secretary) were recognized for their 25 years of service to Bethany Lutheran, Laurens, during the annual meeting on January 21st.. We give thanks to God for His faithful servants who use their gifts for the up-building of the Body of Christ!

Right and below: Volunteers from First Lutheran in St. Ansgar organized a free Community Christmas Dinner, and served 87 guests. Plans are already underway to hold the dinner again in 2018.



2018 Upcoming Events

April 9-10—Annual Pastors' Retreat at American Martyrs Retreat House, Cedar Falls, Iowa. The Reverend Doctor Amy Schiffrin, President of the NALS, will present a "Liturgical Boot Camp".

August 15-17—NALC Convocation, Crowne Plaza Convention Center, Denver, CO.

September 15—Mission District Convocation, First Lutheran, St. Ansgar. Keynote speaker will be Pr. David Wendel.

Right: Pastor Tim Nappe and his wife, Bev (Faith Lutheran in Sibley), are mission directors with "Reaching the Unreached" in West Africa. These bicycles were able to be purchased this past year to be used by the mission workers to help extend the outreach in sharing the Gospel. For more information about this mission you may contact Pastor Nappe at pastortim.milford@gmail.com. Or check out the web site at www.reachingtheunreached.org.



2018 YOUTH MISSION TRIP

At the October Iowa Mission District Council Meeting the District Council voted to look into the possibility of supporting a Youth Mission Trip to Texas or Florida in the summer of 2018 to help with the recovery efforts from the hurricanes this summer. We are looking at a date at the end of July and would coordinate with the NALC Disaster Response Coordinator, Mary Bates. The Mission District would cover the transportation costs and arrange the details of the trip.

Youth groups in the Iowa Mission District that are interested in such a trip can contact Pastor Mark Lund or Pastor Marshall Hahn to indicate your interest – and put it on your calendar for 2018. More information on the trip will be sent out to the congregations of the Mission District as they become available. Anyone who would be willing to help in coordinating the trip may also contact Pastors Lund or Hahn (e-mail addresses are on last page of this newsletter).



Following Jesus—Luther Style Holy Baptism

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:1-2) It all begins with water. In the beginning there was water. But as Luther says concerning Baptism in the Small Catechism, *“water by itself is only water, but with the Word of God it is a life-giving water which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit.”* In the beginning, God brought forth life on planet earth by water and the Word through the Holy Spirit. In Baptism God brings forth new life—water poured by the command of the Word made flesh—Christ Jesus—in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Just as water was present and necessary for the creation of life in the beginning, so water is necessary for the re-creation of Life in Christ.

When sin entered the creation through Adam and Eve’s rebellion against the Lord, death came with it. Only the death and resurrection of God’s only begotten Son could overcome it. And we connect to that death and resurrection through our Baptism into Christ. The Apostle Paul puts it this way: *“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, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death life his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”* (Romans 6:3-5) In Holy Baptism we are given new life—“born again” as Jesus tells Nicodemus in John 3:3ff. The water and the Word together bring new life: the word of promise—*“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved....”* (Mark 16:16a)—and the word of command—*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father*

and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

In Baptism we become new—new people with a new beginning and a new way of living. Too often we forget the “new way of living”. But this is what Paul is talking about when he speaks of walking in “newness of life”. It’s what Luther means when he explains what Baptism means for daily living in the Small Catechism: *“It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.”* Unlike our first parents who trusted in their own desires and insisted on following their own wills, we seek to follow the will of the Holy One who redeemed us and brought us into a new relationship with Himself. By the grace of God we are restored through the death and resurrection of Christ. By the grace of God we are given the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Luther once said of his Baptism: *“Indeed, if the matter were in my hands I would want—and this is my daily prayer—that I might duly honor and truly esteem the gift of my Baptism and thank God for it; that I might see and hear the brethren, who have grace and the Holy Spirit and who by the Word can console, strengthen, exhort, admonish, and teach me.”* (Weimar edition of LW, Vol. 42; 666) Indeed. In this new life we have received from the Lord, we seek to hear and do His will through the word read and preached in worship, learned in Bible study and prayed in daily devotions. We seek to follow in the footsteps of our crucified and risen Lord, daily repenting of our sins and seeking the guidance and transformation of the Holy Spirit. Walking in newness of life, we become the light Christ calls us to be in a world shrouded in the shadows of sin and death.

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

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 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
Allison: **New Life**, Galen Eiben, Lay Minister
+Atlantic: Holy Trinity—Call Process
Avoca: **Trinity**, Pr. Eric Meissner
Badger: **Badger Lutheran**, Pr. Scott Meier
Boyden: **St. John**, Pr. Mark Lund
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**, Call Process
Eagle Grove: **Evangelical Lutheran**, Pr. Jason Cooper
Eagle Grove: **Samuel Lutheran**, Pr. Rich Taylor
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Pastor Jon Rollefson
Emmons, MN: **Emmons**, Pr. Christopher Martin
Gilmore City: **First**, Call Process
Grafton: **Emmanuel**, Pr. Solveig Zamzow
Green: **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. Scott Baker
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**, 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 38 congregations!*

The following pastors are available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Paul Breddin—615-528-2284
Pastor David Schafer—563-568-6199
Pastor David Steffenson—253-302-9845 (Sundays)
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675



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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.