



# News

of the Iowa Mission District  
of the North American Lutheran Church

[www.iowamissiondistrict.com](http://www.iowamissiondistrict.com)

December 2018

## *A Word from the Dean*

### **SEASON OF LIGHT**

*"The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it."~John 1:5*

Christmas is a season of light. With the extra candles at church, the lights on the Christmas tree, and all the decorative lights on our homes and streets, it is a season filled with light and color. If visitors from another planet were to visit our world in the middle of December, who know nothing of Christmas, they would instantly know they had arrived in the midst of a remarkable celebration just from the profusion of lights and decorations. Coming as it does in the darkest time of the year, it is as if we are declaring our refusal to let the darkness take over our world.

And indeed, in a small way, all those lights are a reflection of what Jesus' coming means for us. Jesus Himself has declared Himself to be the "Light of the World." John the Evangelist proclaims that this Light will defeat all the darkness of the world—the darkness of sin, death, and evil. And we are told to let our lights shine as a reflection of Jesus' love for us. Because of the light we are given through Jesus, we do not need to fear any of the darkness in our lives. There is no evil or sorrow or sin that can extinguish the light of His love and forgiveness, but it will shine through it all.

One of my favorite moments during the Christmas season comes at the end of the candlelight service. The candles are lit, the overhead lights are turned off, and together we sing "Silent Night" with only the light of the Christmas tree and the candles we are holding. My favorite moment is when I stand and face the congregation to pronounce the Benediction—and I see all those faces lit by the candles they are holding. It is a beautiful sight, and a reminder that we are called to be the light to the world as followers of Christ. May we let His light shine in our world and in our lives this Christmas—and all through the year!

*Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC*



## Sola Scriptura—Scripture Alone

Pr. Solveig Zamzow  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church  
Grafton, Iowa

From our German parish, where we served in the mid-seventies, we could see Wartburg Castle where Martin Luther translated Scripture into the language of the people. Luther ended up at the castle after having spoken his famous words at the Diet of Worm in 1521: *Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason .... my conscience is captive to the Word of God.*

Christians of all stripes have always been committed to ‘the Book’. The question of how the authority of God’s Word is to be understood, of course, is a different matter. For Lutherans, “Sola Scriptura” is part of our DNA. Luther’s own sense of the holiness and transcendent nature of Scripture was profound. In his lectures on the Psalms, Luther regards the expressions, “God speaks,” and “the Scriptures speak,” as interchangeable.

We often deem our opinions, thoughts and feelings to be perfectly capable of setting our standards, our individual norms, for living. If we, however, seek God’s will for our lives, we accept that the standard has been set by God in His Word. Lutherans declare Scripture to be the ultimate authority for faith and life. Scripture sets the standard, the norm, for all doctrines, confessions, liturgies, actions and all of life. Scripture is God’s clear Word to us rather than merely a story about divine musings. That declaration also eliminates the search for God in bizarre, faraway places. Scripture will do! Scripture, according to St. Paul, “is God-breathed”; always a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

Sola Scriptura shall not be confused with Solo Scriptura. We speak of “Scripture Alone” not “Scripture Only”. There is no evidence that Luther rejected wholesale everything he saw and heard in the church of his day. While Scripture alone serves as our final and ultimate compass, that did not, in Luther’s mind, eliminate or diminish the role of the creeds, the wisdom of the church fathers, etc. For Lutheran Christians, reading the Bible also does not mean setting aside critical thinking skills. Careful students of the Reformation know that Luther broke with friends and supporters when he feared their zeal went too far.

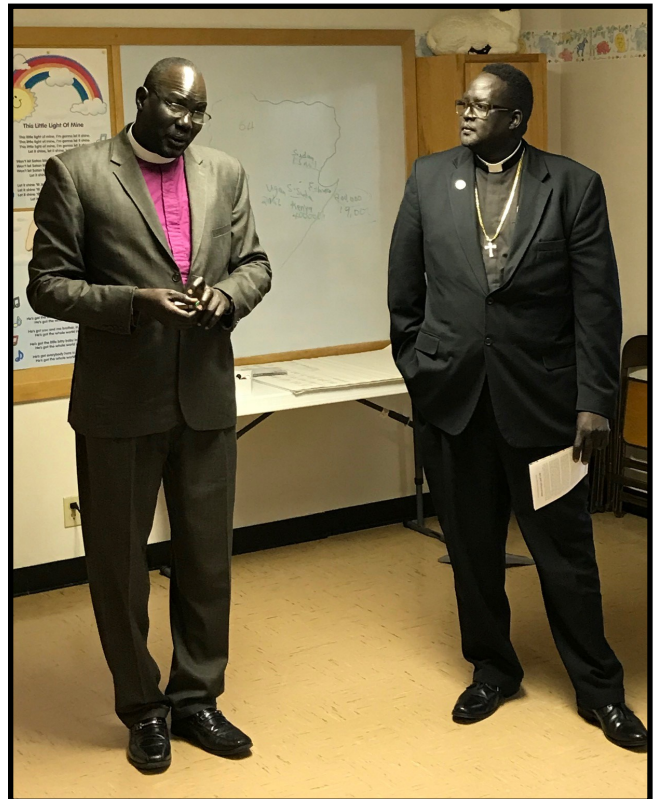
Much can be discussed, and we Lutherans love to discuss everything, as long as our consciences are not captive to any other authority than the Word of God. For it is exactly in His Word that God reveals Christ to us. All of Scripture points to Jesus! While we do not worship Scripture, yet apart from Scripture we will not know that God loves us so much that He gave His very Son to live, die and rise for us. Scripture shows us why we worship the author and giver of life and lays out the very promise of the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of eternal life won by Christ’s blood. Therefore, Scripture is right-ly used when read from the perspective of justification by faith with the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. Indeed, God could “zap” faith into us any way He wanted. But God has chosen to work through His holy and eternal Word. Through the Gospel message, the Holy Spirit creates and strengthens our faith in our Lord Jesus.

This is the last Mission District newsletter of 2018, and as you are reading this your congregation is making preparations for Advent and Christmas. Soon we will again stand at the manger, look at the gift of Jesus and hear the old yet always new story of the Incarnation. We will be reminded that in Jesus, Emmanuel, God is indeed with us for “in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God”. Just a few days after Christmas we then will leave behind a year that in many and various ways was marked by pain and difficulties and yet bountiful blessings.

In his sermon to the German-speaking congregation in Havana, Cuba on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1930, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, pastor, teacher and leader of the Confessing Church during the Third Reich, recognized the mixed emotions and various circumstances with which God’s people approach Christmas and said this: “...and despite it all, Christmas comes. Whether we wish it or not, whether we are sure or not, we must hear the words once again: Christ the Savior is here! The world that Christ comes to save is our fallen and lost world. None other.” Indeed, Christ the Savior is here. The Bible tells us so. Sola Scriptura!

## *This and That from around the Iowa Mission District*

Emmanuel Lutheran in Grafton holds an annual Mission Fest Sunday in November. This year Chaplain Leslie Haines from Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries, Inc. was the presenter. She shared, via stories and pictures, about the ministry she started in 2007 and which has grown exponentially since then. The services they provide to all who have served – whether one day or many decades – are free and include pastoral counseling, practical help like securing transportation to veterans and training sessions for civilian groups who want to reach out to men and women who have served their country. Chaplain Leslie discussed and answered questions regarding the rising concern of suicides, substance abuse, divorce and homelessness among veterans. Of interest was also the unique adjustments soldiers who serve in combat have to make when they re-integrate into their families as spouses and parents. The picture shows some members of Emmanuel's youth group, Logos Legos, who were particularly taken with the service dog, Lilly-Bell.



St. John's Lutheran Church-Vilmar, rural Greene, had an All Saints' Day to remember on November 4th. Pastor James Puotyual, our newest NALC Global Worker, and Pastor Jordan Long, President of the Lutheran Church of South Sudan, joined us to share about James' upcoming ministry to Sudanese refugees in Gambella, Ethiopia. Both pastors addressed the Sunday School, and spoke and took part in worship. Also during the service, the congregation celebrated 4 baptisms and Holy Communion.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## 2018 Upcoming Events

**August 5-9, 2019**—Luther Week, Indianapolis, IN. (Note: **Election of Bishop!**)

**April 29-30**—Mission District Pastor's/Lay Ministers' Retreat.

**September 14, 2019**—Iowa Mission District convocation, First Lutheran, Manchester, IA.

## IOWA MISSION DISTRICT 2019 Youth Mission Trip

*The 2019 mission trip for youth in our mission district is in the planning stage.*

*Tentative dates: **July 22-29, 2019.***

*Destination: **North or South Carolina.***

*Personal cost for each person going: **\$250.***

*Contact person: **Pastor Jason Cooper,**  
[cooper\\_jd@yahoo.com](mailto:cooper_jd@yahoo.com).*

## 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](mailto:barbaramwills@gmail.com).

*The Iowa Mission District website may be found at: [www.iowamissiondistrict.com](http://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](mailto:barbaramwills@gmail.com).*



## ***Following Jesus—Luther Style***

### ***Waiting for Christ***

During these past eleven months we have been exploring our discipleship from a Lutheran perspective: “Following Jesus – Luther Style.” Even as we prepare to end the secular year we have already begun a new “Church Year,” preparing our hearts for the birth of our Lord Jesus. The season we are entering is Advent – and the word itself means “waiting.” In light of our faithful following of our Lord, how are we to observe this season, and how does our observance reflect our faith in Christ and honor our Lord?

The season of Advent has its roots as far back as the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, but has not been uniformly practiced through the centuries. In some times and places fasting was part of the observance. In the Lutheran tradition it has become a major season, and with the increasing secularization of Christmas (Christmas without Christ) many pastors of my acquaintance struggle in their congregations to keep Christ at the center of our waiting. It is increasingly difficult to resist the tide of consumerism, commercialism and Claus (Santa, that is) and turn people’s attention to repentance, reflection and redemption (brought to us in the person of Christ Jesus whose birth we’re preparing to celebrate).

Despite the increasing emphasis on secular merry-making during a Christian season of reflective waiting, the problem of appropriately recognizing the great Gift of love sent to us by the Lord God is apparently not a new one. In Luther’s table talk of December 25, 1538, Anthony Lauterbach records these words from the great reformer: “*This evening he (Martin Luther) was very joyful. His conversation, his singing, and his thoughts were about the incarnation of Christ our Savior. Amid his sighs he said, ‘Ah, what wretched people we are! To think that we are so cold and slothful in our attitude toward this great joy, which, after all, happened for us....’*” (pp. 326-27, Luther Works, Vol 54).

As we prepare to welcome our Lord in His birth, may we prayerfully seek ways to reflect His love through our faithful journey through Advent. Some suggestions:

- ◇ In our daily prayers and devotional practices reflect on God’s great love for us poor sinners. There are numerous seasonal devotional materials available that are helpful.
- ◇ Advent wreaths or calendars can be helpful tools for teaching children the importance of faithful waiting.
- ◇ Make midweek Advent services an important part of preparing for Christmas. By attending services we set an example, find moments of calm in the midst of an often chaotic season, and witness to friends and neighbors about the importance Christ has in our lives.
- ◇ And finally, be patient, kind and helpful while doing your Christmas shopping. Let the love of Christ spill over to others so that all your words and actions give honor and glory to our Lord, and reflect the peace and joy He came to give.

*Pastor Barbara M. Wills*



## *Congregations of the Iowa Mission District*

Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Dan Buhs, 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. David Schafer, Interim  
Gilmore City: **First**, Tracy Nerem, Lay Minister  
Grafton: **Emmanuel**, Pr. Solveig Zamzow  
Greene: **St. John (Vilmar)**, Pr. Christopher Martin  
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**, Call Process  
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 37 congregations!*

### **The following pastors are available for pulpit supply:**

Pastor Paul Breddin—515--528-2284  
Pastor James Glesne—563-380-8110  
Pastor David Steffenson—253-302-9845 (Sundays)  
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675



### **Iowa Mission District Leadership**

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean—[stolafparish@neitel.net](mailto:stolafparish@neitel.net)  
Craig Lease, Secretary—[pdlease@gmail.com](mailto:pdlease@gmail.com)  
Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—[pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com](mailto:pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com)

#### **Mission District Council Members:**

Pastor Jason Cooper—[cooper\\_jd@yahoo.com](mailto:cooper_jd@yahoo.com)  
Pastor Mark Lund—[pastormarklund@gmail.com](mailto:pastormarklund@gmail.com)  
Pastor Christopher Martin—[pastorcwmartin@gmail.com](mailto:pastorcwmartin@gmail.com)  
Gregory Olson—[golson@ruthventel.com](mailto:golson@ruthventel.com)  
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Kathy Scharnhorst—[gaf@butler-bremer.com](mailto:gaf@butler-bremer.com)

Mission District Communicator (newsletter editor/web master):  
Pastor Barbara Wills—[barbaramwills@gmail.com](mailto:barbaramwills@gmail.com)