



# News

## of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

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

January 2018

### *A Word from the Dean*

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

Each year it seems it takes so long for Christmas to come, and then, suddenly, it is all over. The presents are opened, the parties are over, the guests go home, and it is time to take out the tree and put away the decorations. But in some parts of the world, the main celebration of Jesus' birth is yet to come. For some cultures, it is not Christmas Day, on December 25, but Epiphany, which falls on January 6, which is the primary day of celebration.

Epiphany is the commemoration of the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus. And for many people that is the day when presents are exchanged, parties are held, and re-enactments of the visit of the Wise Men are performed. In our eyes, it seems like a kind of “second Christmas” – Christmas 2.0, you might say. But, of course, the real meaning of Christmas is never meant to be tied just to one day – or even to just the “12 days of Christmas.”

Jesus' coming to us at Christmas signifies God's intention to be with us each and every day. As John puts it in his gospel: in Christ, the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Or, as Matthew tells us, Jesus comes to us as Emmanuel – “God with us.” When the Wise Men from the east came to visit the infant Jesus, it was a sign that He has come to be the Savior of the whole world. Indeed, tradition pictures these Wise Men as originally coming from Africa, Asia, and Europe, as representatives of all the nations.

Throughout the next several weeks our Scripture readings focus on how Jesus is revealed to the world. First to the shepherds – then to the Wise Men – then in the Temple as a boy – at His baptism – and then through His ministry and teachings. And He continues to reveal Himself to us.

At times it may be through some dramatic moment of insight or revelation or in a time of crisis or difficulty when His presence is made known to you. Or, more often, it may be in more simple and ordinary circumstances, in the regular use and reading of His Word, in the common sharing of our Christian fellowship and care, or in the quiet moments of comfort and peace, or the familiar patterns of worship and prayer.

However it may be, He still comes to us in many ways. Christmas Day may come and go, but Christ remains “God with us”, to dwell within and beside us each and every day of the year.

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



## Sola Scriptura

Pastor Ken Kimball

Old East Paint Creek, Waterville, Iowa

Old West Paint Creek, Waukon, Iowa

For Luther and his fellow reformers the slogan “Scripture Alone” (*Sola Scriptura*) meant that the Scriptures (the Bible) as the written Word of God are the highest and final source and authority in what is to be believed, preached, taught, and practiced by the Church. Luther’s refusal to recant at Worms reflects this: “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason—for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves—I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God.”

However, with Luther and his fellow reformers, we also recognize that as the written Word of God, the Bible draws its authority from the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son Incarnate. “Scripture Alone” stands with and under “Christ Alone.” Jesus is *the Word*, Who was “in the beginning” and Who “was with God” and Who “was God,” and through Whom “all things were made” (John 1:1-2). To those who opposed Him Jesus declared “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:39-40). To His disciples after His resurrection Jesus declared and taught that the Scriptures are all about Him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-48).

From this it follows for Luther, as for us, that the authority of the Scriptures is inextricably connected to the purpose and use for which God intended: to create and sustain faith in Jesus Christ. The words of John 20:31 aptly apply to all of Scripture: “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” The Scriptures are meant to be read and understood as a coherent whole, with Jesus at the center.

We do not worship the Bible. The Bible did not become a human being and die on the cross or rise from the dead for us. However, without or apart from the Bible we cannot and do not know Jesus. The Bible is Jesus’ Word to us, both as the Law which shows our sin and our need for Him, and as the Gospel which shows Him as our Savior. The Bible tells us Who did become a human being and die on the cross and rise from the dead for us. The Bible points us to One Whom we should worship, the One in Whom we place our faith and trust for life now and life to come: Jesus, God the eternal Son Who became Incarnate (in the flesh) to be our Messiah and Savior and Lord.

“Scripture Alone” reveals “Christ Alone” as the One Who saves us by “Grace Alone” through “Faith Alone” “to the glory of God alone”!

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



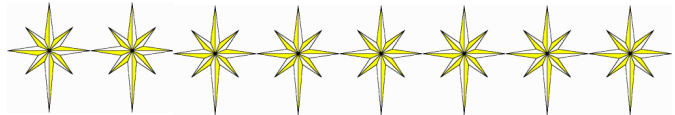
*Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Grafton hosted its annual "Live Nativity" program on Sunday, December 10th. Each year members of the congregation welcome guests with a first century market and the "Old, Old Story" of the birth of our Lord Jesus.*

### **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.



### **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*** ***Grace Alone***

What is grace? The dictionary defines it as “mercy or pardon”. We often define it in the Church as God’s undeserved kindness, or “unmerited favor”. Grace is God’s loving forgiveness and salvation given to those who trust in Christ Jesus—made available through His death and resurrection—even though we are unworthy sinners.

The Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, struggled throughout his early years to do the impossible—to be worthy of God’s love by his own efforts. We’ve read about, or seen in videos, the extremes he went to in his efforts to become righteous—confessing every sin he could think of, fasting until his health failed, and even beating himself (self flagellation) with a small whip designed for that purpose. Nothing relieved his sense of guilt and unworthiness, and instead of feeling better about himself and his relationship with the Lord, Luther fell into the pits of despair.

It was Luther’s wise and compassionate confessor, Johann von Staupitz, who finally was able to re-direct Luther onto a path that eventually led to one of the greatest breakthroughs in the Church, and changed the course of human history. Assigning Luther to the post of professor at the university at Wittenberg, where he would study the Scriptures in order to teach them, Luther came to the realization that righteousness was a gift, not a goal—Christ was his Savior, not the one who condemned him. In Paul’s letter to the Romans Luther discovered the grace of God that comes through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus and restores the relationship with God that was broken by sin. The righteousness Luther sought cannot be earned, but is a gift from the Lord that comes by God’s gift of grace through the faith in Christ we are given by the Holy Spirit. Righteousness is not a goal to be achieved, but a gift of love to be received.

Having taken possession of this gift through

our Baptism into the Christ’s death and resurrection and our faith in Him, what do we do with it? A gift is not really received as long as it is unopened or sits in the back of the closet unused. Thus, being forgiven and loved is not a “free pass” to continue living in sin. On the other hand, a gift cannot be earned or bought. Too often God’s fervent children try to do this by piling up “good works” or spiritual disciplines, as Luther did in his early years. Such efforts are futile.

The Gift has been given. It is meant to be received with gratitude, not ignored or paid for out of a sense of guilt. Living faithfully in the righteousness of Christ is a daily walk. Our love compels us to seek the Lord daily through prayer and delving into Scripture, following Luther’s example. It also constrains us to share the wonder and delight of our love for Christ with others. Luther quotes the Apostle Paul’s words from Roman 6:4: “*We were buried therefore with [Christ Jesus] by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*” Living in love with Christ is a whole new way of living in relationship with the God who created and redeems us.

Luther did the disciplines of faith in his early life in order to try to earn this righteousness that was impossible for human beings to earn. After he discovered this truth, he understood that the “works” and disciplines were not payments to God, but rather “fruits” that grew out of the restored relationship given by the Lord. In the Small Catechism Luther offers guidance for our daily walk in this “newness of life”. Living in God’s kingdom (explanation of the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer) includes believing God’s holy Word through grace and living a godly life here on earth. Our Baptism means being renewed through daily repentance and being raised daily to live with God in righteousness (explanation of Holy Baptism). God’s grace invites us into a deeper love for the Lord and a willingness to follow our Christ each day.

*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](mailto: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



### 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 Christopher Staley, Treasurer—[cbstaley@netins.net](mailto:cbstaley@netins.net)

#### Mission District Council Members:

Pastor Barbara Wills—[barbaramwills@gmail.com](mailto:barbaramwills@gmail.com)  
 Pastor Gary Burkhalter—[pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com](mailto:pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com)  
 Pastor Mark Lund—[pastormarklund@gmail.com](mailto:pastormarklund@gmail.com)  
 Gregory Olson—[golson@ruthventel.com](mailto:golson@ruthventel.com)  
 Chris Schlee—[schleemasonry@hotmail.com](mailto:schleemasonry@hotmail.com)  
 Roger Mohning—[julceram@neitel.net](mailto:julceram@neitel.net)

Newsletter Editor: Pastor Barbara Wills—[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).*