



News

of the Iowa Mission District
of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

December 2016

A Word from the Dean

GOD WITH US

**“...and His name shall be called Emmanuel
(which means, ‘God with us’).”
- Matthew 1:23**

Christmas has always been my favorite time of the year. I love the music, the decorations, the food, the exchange of gifts, gathering with family and friends. The Christmas Eve Service is just so wonderful with the candles and music and gathering in a warm, cozy church on a cold winter night. The whole season is a joy for me.

And I am not alone. Many people look forward to Christmas as their favorite time of the year. Many people see it as a time to escape from the troubles and controversies and sorrows of the world. It is a chance to shut out the rest of the world for a time and enjoy a time of peace with family and friends.

Yet the meaning of Christmas is quite the opposite. The message of Christmas is not that God has made some safe place for us to escape from the world, but that God has come into our world. With the birth of Jesus, God has chosen to come right into the midst of this troubled, sorrowful, confusing world of ours to be with us.

The Gospel of Matthew makes this quite clear when we are told that this is Emmanuel who has come – “God with us.” More than the story of angels singing in the night sky or shepherds coming to see a child in a manger or wise men traveling from distant lands to honor this new-born babe, this is the real wonder of the season – that God has chosen to be with us, to dwell among us.

The peace He brings is not to remove us from all the messiness of this world, but to be right here beside us, through it all. The real wonder of Christmas is that God, the Lord of heaven and earth, the creator of all that is, has chosen to enter our world, not in power and majesty and might, but in weakness, lowliness, even humiliation.

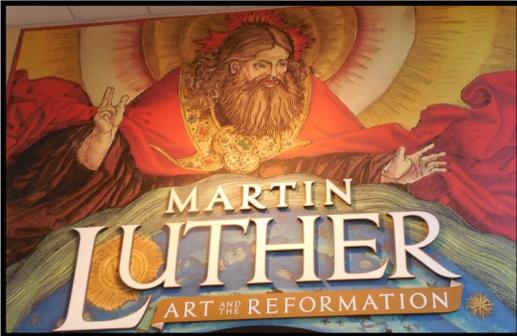
Why? Why would God do such a thing? Only one reason – **“for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”**

It is not just on Christmas Eve that God is with us, but each and every day. This is really what makes Christmas such a wonderful season. It is a reminder of God’s presence with us throughout our life.

This is Jesus’ final promise to His disciples at the close of Matthew’s Gospel, when He says, **“...lo, I am with you always to the close of the age.”** Emmanuel – God with us!

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

*This and That
from around the Iowa Mission District*



**Martin Luther
Art and the Reformation**

On November 12th, a group of Lutherans from Grafton, St. Ansgar, Emmons and Northwood journeyed to Minneapolis to visit the Martin Luther exhibit at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Pastor Solveig Zamzow (Emmanuel, Grafton) arranged the trip and invited several neighboring congregations to go along. Pastors Christopher Martin (Emmons Lutheran, Emmons, MN), Christopher Staley (First, St. Ansgar) and Barbara Wills (Peace, Northwood) joined members and friends of their congregations and members of Immanuel Lutheran (St. Ansgar) on a journey into the past to revisit the beginnings of the Reformation that started when an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther posted 95 theses on the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517.



To God Be the Glory

*Pastor David Andrea
Waukon, Iowa*

The NALC Congregationally-Focused

***Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
– Hebrews 10:23-25***

One of the things I like about the NALC is its biblical emphasis, and especially its congregational emphasis. Its official name is "Congregationally Focused." I suppose my strong congregational leanings, in part, come from my background. I was baptized, confirmed, and ordained at St. Sebald Lutheran Church, the founding congregation of the old Iowa Synod. Our pastors wore the black preaching robe with necktie. Some wore the white Law-Gospel tabs. The congregational leadership was Lay – if I'm not mistaken. (When you reach 73, you sometimes remember things that really didn't, happen!) Anyway, we had strong Lay leadership over the years.

When I was considering what I should write about, the Hebrews text came to mind. That text reminds us of several important aspects of the Congregation. First off, it reminds us that as a Congregation, we are to make confession of our faith. We sometimes need help to do that. That's where the second aspect comes in. We support one another in living our faith. A part of that is public worship, -- fellowship and encouragement around the Word and Sacraments. To be congregationally focused means that we are blessed to have fellow believers to help us live the faith.

I am reminded of a story that seems appropriate. There was a man who was a good

member of his church. Then his wife died and in his sorrow he started drifting away. His pastor noticed that this formerly faithful man was often missing worship. And so, he made a visit. It was a cold winter day, so there was a fire blazing warmly in the fire-place. The two men just sat there quietly. Finally, the pastor got up, slowly walked to the fire place, and moved one of the burning sticks away from the rest. The pile of sticks continued to burn brightly. The one stick that had been moved to the corner by itself cooled down and soon the flames died out. The men studied the fireplace for a little while. Then the man said, "I get your point. I'll be in church next Sunday."

There are times when we need help keeping the fires of faith glowing. We have the Holy Spirit, of course. But remember, the Spirit most often uses people. There is a motto that goes something like this: "God's Work; Our Hands." One of the things that is good about the congregation is that it encourages us to "love and good works." We can do things as a congregation that we cannot do as individuals.

It is December, the time of Advent and Christmas, -- the time when services bring more people to worship. Martin Luther once said that the Church is where God's Grace is revealed. What better place to be among the congregations of believers when worshipping in spirit at the Christ Child's manger with the angels, shepherds, and Wise Men, -- And a congregation of fellow believers.

***Come Jesus, glorious, Heavenly Guest,
And keep Your Christmas I our breast;
Then David's harp strings, hushed so long,
Shall swell our jubilee of song. Amen.***

"The Bells of Christmas", LBW 62/6

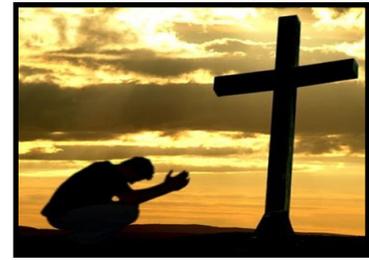


Why We Do What We Do ***Elements of Liturgy***

In Volume 53 of *Luther's Works*, there are several "orders of worship" written by Martin Luther in response to requests from pastors who wanted a guide to proper liturgical practice. However, he never published "a blueprint of the ideal Lutheran rite." (p. 3) The introduction to "The Basic Liturgical Writings" in this volume goes on to say that Luther's writings are more concerned "with the purpose and meaning of worship than with its forms." This may explain why there is such variety among individual Lutheran congregations in regard to worship.

Recognizing this, however, is not to say that Luther had no concern for appropriate forms of worship. He placed the strongest emphasis on preaching the Word of God, a practice that had apparently fallen into disuse in the Church. Without this, Luther said, you shouldn't even come together to worship. Prayer was also very necessary, and, of course, singing! He said that the chants should be retained and Psalms included. Perhaps because knowledge of the Christian faith was lacking, even among the clergy, Luther put a particularly strong emphasis on this aspect of worship.

Among his published writings in regard to forms of worship, Luther wrote "Concerning the Order of Public Worship" and "An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg" in 1523, and "A Christian Exhortation to the Livonians Concerning Public worship and Concord" in 1525. The next year he wrote "The German Mass and Order of Service." In his preface to this service he wrote: "Do not make it a



rigid law to bind or entangle anyone's conscience, but use it in Christian liberty as long, when, where, and how you find it to be practical and useful." (p. 60 of Volume 53)

In this new Church year that begins with Advent, we will be looking at some of the things we do in worship and talk about why we do what we do. While there are things that make worship "worship" for Lutherans, there is much variety in the way these elements are put together and practiced in our various congregations. What is always the same, however, is the Lord we worship—Christ Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, who came to give us life and salvation through His death and resurrection.

Upcoming Events

December 29-31, 2016—Youth Event at Riverside Bible Camp. Contact Pr. Jason Cooper for details (Cell: 515-293-0342)

August 9-11, 2017—NALC Convocation in Nashville, Tennessee.

September 16, 2017—Iowa Mission District Convocation. Location to be determined.

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
Bode: **St. Olaf Lutheran**, Call Process
Boyden: **St. John**, Pr. Mark Lund
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**, Pr. Allen Hermeier
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
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**, Call Process
Readlyn: **Zion**, Call Process
+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 Jean Rabary—563-608-2044
Pastor David Steffenson—253-302-9845 (Sundays)
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675



Iowa Mission District Leadership

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean—stolafparish@netel.net
Craig Lease, Secretary—pdlease@gmail.com
Pastor Christopher Staley, Treasurer—cbstaley@netins.net

Mission District Council Members:

Pastor Allen Hermeier—handahermeier@mchsi.com
Pastor Barbara Wills—barbarawills@gmail.com
Pastor Gary Burkhalter—pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com
Brent Bruns—bvbruns@netel.net
Gregory Olson—golson@ruthventel.com
Chris Schlee—schleemasonry@hotmail.com
Newsletter Editor: Pastor Barbara Wills—barbarawills@mchsi.com