



# News

of the Iowa Mission District  
of the North American Lutheran Church

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

August 2017

## *A Word from the Dean*

### THE WAY OF LIFE

*“From that time on, many of His disciples  
withdrew and no longer went about with Him.  
So Jesus asked the Twelve, ‘Do you also  
want to leave me?’”  
~ John 6:66-67*

The popular picture of Jesus is often one of a kind, friendly person, soft and gentle, who would never offend anyone. Yet the Gospels portray Jesus as someone who provoked intense reactions from the people around Him – both positive and negative. There were those who heard Him speak and immediately left everything to follow Him. There were those whose lives were transformed by just a brief encounter with Him. And then there were others who tried everything in their power to get rid of Him – who saw Him as a danger and a threat to their very way of life.

There was no middle ground. **“Whoever is not with me is against me,”** Jesus said. This was a simple statement of fact. The things Jesus said and did would not permit any middle ground. When the sick and troubled were brought to Him, not only did He heal them, He pronounced forgiveness to them of their sins. When He fed those who were hungry, He also proclaimed Himself to be the “bread of life from heaven.” When He taught the people, He dared to speak with an authority greater than Moses himself.

In all that He did, He presented people with a stark choice – either accept His word as true, and acknowledge Him as Lord and God – or reject His Word and condemn Him as a liar and blasphemer. There was no middle way.

And then He did what was totally unexpected. When He was reviled and rejected by His own people, when even many of His followers became frightened and turned away from Him, He did not reject them in turn. He simply endured the abuse and scorn heaped upon Him and, once again pronounced forgiveness for our sins, but took all of our sin upon Himself on the cross. He did not just speak forgiveness, but did forgiveness. It was so unexpected and incomprehensible, that even now it is difficult to put into words what He has done. Even now He is rejected by a world which proclaims a different gospel – a gospel of success or pleasure or self-promotion. Even now, we are tempted to turn aside from following Him. But...to what? Every other path that we might follow leads to a dead end – leads to a life that is no life. In the end, what can we do, but proclaim with Peter:

***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have  
the words of eternal life.”***

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

# It's Summer Time

*Pastor Ron Rasmussen  
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Harlan, Iowa  
Bethany Lutheran Church, Irwin, Iowa*

Dear Friends in Christ,

It's summer time, and there's so much to do during the summer. There's swimming and boating, camping and cook-outs. There's golf and tennis, vacations and trips, gardening and picnics. There's time for family and friends, and time for just relaxing after the busy winter.

Is there time for church? In the church year, the summer is the time of Pentecost; the time of the Holy Spirit and Life. It is the time when Jesus sent us out into the world to proclaim His Good News. The summer is the time when the church should be its most active. In stead, during the summer the church seems to shut down. There is no Sunday School, no Confirmation, no Bible Studies; and attendance falls to a bare minimum. Is this a reflection of our times, or our faith, or both?

It seems to me that we're missing the boat. Church is not an obligation, it's a privilege. Think about it. God is inviting you to His house, with the hope of giving you the gifts of forgiveness and life. God is giving you a chance to hear His precious Word every Sunday. The people should be flocking at the doors.

In Matthew, the Lord told us, "where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I am". The presence of the Lord is here, in church. It's not at the

lake, or on the golf course, or on vacation; but at church. Luther tells us that the "Holy Spirit gathers us together with other believers, in order to strengthen our faith". Not only does our faith suffer when we neglect the Word of God on a regular basis, we also weaken the faith of others who depend on our presence.

One of my favorite hymns is: "I Love to Tell the Story". I particularly like the 3<sup>rd</sup> Verse:

*I love to tell the story,  
for those who know it best.  
Seems hungering and thirsting,  
to hear it like the rest.*

Are we hungering to hear God's story? Are we thirsting to hear its message of salvation? The church is where the story is told; where the hunger is satisfied and the thirst is quenched. Don't deprive yourself this summer. Come to church.

I hope all of you have a great summer. I hope you swim and boat and travel and rest. I hope you get a chance to do all the things you want to do. But I also hope that you "want" to come to church. God invites you every Sunday. Don't neglect the invitation.

Your friend in Christ,

*Pastor Ron Rasmussen.*

*This and That  
from around the Iowa Mission District*



Pastor Jerry Wittmus (Bethany in Laurens) retired July 30th. Right: Pastor Jerry and Nancy Wittmus. Above: Pastor Jerry with his last confirmation class at Bethany in the spring of this year.



Our church, Trinity in Avoca, has been VERY blessed with offerings, and we recently gave away \$23,000 at one time--to various organizations, agencies, and ministries. Each group within the church (i.e., Bible Study groups, choirs, youth, etc.) was "given" \$1,000 and assigned the task of deciding what organization/s to give it to. In the end, 40 different organizations received funds from the 23 different groups. Afterwards, we had a "reveal party" to let the congregation know which organizations we would be donating to, along with a meal together, fellowship, prayer, and the releasing of 100 balloons. *Shari Munyon*

# Reformation Commemorations

*What Iowa Mission District Congregations are doing to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation*



Bethany Lutheran, Laurens, had a float in the Laurens Day Parade on July 9th, celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Martin Luther can be seen with Pastor Jerry Wittmus and other members of Bethany on the float.



*Left:* Pastor Nijhar Ekka, our NALC missionary to India, with her husband, Pastor Neeraj Ekka and their four children, on a family camping trip to Wisconsin during their home leave this past year. Some of the congregations visited by Ekkas during the past year were congregations in the Iowa Mission District. Please keep them in prayer as they travel and make the transition back to India and their work there. One of the exciting projects they will be working on is the establishment of a boarding school, and they would appreciate our prayers for that as well.

## Upcoming Events

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

**September 2-3**—150th anniversary celebration at Waterloo Ridge Lutheran Church, rural Dorchester, Iowa.

**September 16**—Iowa Mission District Convocation at Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church, rural Waterville, Iowa. Please note that the nomination form is at the end of the newsletter. There are two pages—one is to be filled out by the person making the nomination. The second page is biographical information to be filled out by the nominee. Both pages are to be sent to Mr. Craig Lease, Mission District Secretary.

## REFORMATION THROUGH THE AGES: *Gregory the Great*

In the entire history of the church, there have only been two Bishops of Rome with “great” attached to their name. The first was Leo, Bishop from 440-461 A.D. The second was Gregory, Bishop from 590-604 A.D. Gregory is also known as one of the four great Latin Doctors of the Church (the other three being Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine).

Gregory was born in the year 540 A.D. to devout Christian parents. His father Gordianus was a Senator and at one time the Prefect of Rome. His mother, Silvia, because of her piety, was eventually honored as a saint. Before Gregory entered the ministry, he showed himself to be a gifted administrator like his father. By the age of 33, he was appointed Prefect of Rome, a position which required administration of the city’s provisions, finances, and security. He eventually left this position, however, to enter the monastery. But, even though he had no personal aspirations, the people acclaimed him Bishop after Pelagius II died of the plague in 590. At the time, Rome was facing a number of serious problems. Barbarians to the north were a constant threat, as was famine and plague. And, Constantinople, the capital of the Empire since Constantine, was often indifferent to Rome’s plight. So, the people looked to Gregory to take care of them. This led him to expand the church’s influence in temporal and civil matters. He negotiated terms with the barbarians, paid the soldiers from the church treasury, and fed the people from the church granary. And yet, Gregory would not have been pleased with the extravagant levels of power that accompanied the papacy in the later Middle Ages and especially in Luther’s day.

Gregory was also very dedicated to Christ’s command to “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Under Gregory’s leadership, much of northern Europe was converted to the faith. Before he became Bishop, Gregory saw some Anglo-Saxon slaves for sale in a Roman marketplace. He was astounded at their blond hair and fair complexion and asked them what race they were. The slaves replied, “We are Anglos.” Gregory said, “Not Anglos, but angels.” It’s believed that this encounter had a tremendous impact on Gregory and inspired him, as Bishop, to send Augustine of Canterbury to England to preach the Gospel. Largely from his efforts, the people of England were converted. And, because of this, missionaries were sent from England to Germany and Holland so that they too heard the Good News and believed.

Gregory often referred to himself as “a servant of the servants of God.” He was deeply concerned that God’s people were being cared for by their pastors. And, to that end, he gave this advice: “Act in such a way that your humility may not be weakness, nor your authority be severity. Justice must be accompanied by humility, that humility may render justice lovable.” Indeed, Gregory was great. It’s hard to comprehend the tremendous impact he had both on the church and western civilization as a whole.

Let us give our heavenly Father thanks and praise for the service that Gregory faithfully provided the church and find in his life the inspiration to live ours for the sake of Christ. The day the church has set aside to remember him is September 3, the day he was consecrated Bishop of Rome.

*Pastor Mark Lund, St. John Lutheran Church, Boyden, IA*



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

In the “dialogic” movements of hearing and speaking in the liturgy, we noted last month that after hearing God’s word in the sermon we respond by speaking—confessing our faith using one of the traditional creeds of the Church. From that confession, we move into another form of response with the “Prayer of the Church.” This prayer is longer than the Collect (or “Prayer of the Day”) that gathered us into worship early in the service of worship. Now the focus is on intercessions: praying for the whole Church, the nations of the world, the creation, special needs, and if the order for confession and forgiveness was not used before the beginning of the service, these petitions may also be included at this time.

In our Lutheran tradition, this prayer is usually a dialog, with the pastor or lay assistant offering petitions and the congregation responding. However, in some congregations, or on certain occasions, the leader may offer a full prayer without pausing for a congregational response until the end when the congregation says, “Amen”. There are examples of both kinds of prayer in the Lutheran Book of Worship: the dialogic version on pages 52-53, and the shorter single prayer following the offering when there is no Communion (page 75 in the first setting).

Although the Lutheran Book of Worship offers these prayers for use in the liturgy, there are also many other resources available in print and online with suggested prayers, and often pastors will choose to write the

prayers themselves, making them specific to the congregation and ministry setting they serve. Suggestions for preparing the prayers are printed in red print at that point in the liturgy, and suggested responses for the end of each petition are also offered. It is worth noting that if one chooses to use pre-printed resources or write original prayers it’s important to keep in mind that the Prayer of the Church is to be a prayer to which all the people of God can give assent. While it’s important to pray for the leaders of our nation, it is not acceptable to pray with a political slant—for one party or another or one’s pet piece of legislation, for example. It’s also inappropriate to pray for anything that would be opposed to God’s will or that slanders one group of people or another.

Another part of these prayers that may be included is an opportunity for members of the congregation to offer petitions, either verbally or silently. When this offer is made, there needs to be enough time allowed for them to do so. Even if no one speaks up right away, a time of silence gives people time to formulate a response and gather courage to speak, or to offer a soundless petition to the Lord. While such a silence may feel uncomfortable, it shows respect and consideration for those who wish to respond to the offer.

At the end of the list of petitions, the Lutheran Book of Worship suggests a conclusion: “*Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*” To which we offer a hearty, **Amen!**

### **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  
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**, 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 37 congregations!*

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

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](mailto:stolafparish@netel.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—[barbarawills@gmail.com](mailto:barbarawills@gmail.com)  
Pastor Gary Burkhalter—[pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com](mailto:pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com)  
Brent Bruns—[bvbruns@netel.net](mailto:bvbruns@netel.net)  
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*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 [barbarawills@gmail.com](mailto:barbarawills@gmail.com).*

## 2017 Iowa Mission District Convocation Nominee Submission Form

The Iowa Mission District Convocation will be held September 16, 2017, at Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church, 1799 Elon Drive, Waterville, Iowa. This year we have three positions to be filled: Mission District Dean (*The Dean must be an NALC pastor. Pastor Hahn is eligible for re-election*); Clergy Member and Lay Member for Mission District Council.

*Please fill out all sections on the first page and have the nominee fill out the biographical section on the second page. Both pages must be sent to:*

*Mr. Craig Lease, Secretary  
Iowa Mission District, NALC  
405 7<sup>th</sup> Street N.  
Northwood, IA 50459*

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Name of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Position this person is being nominated for:

Dean  Clergy member at large  Lay member at large

*Please verify that this person knows of the nomination and is willing to serve if elected:*

Yes  No

## Biographical Information of Nominee

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position for which you are being nominated: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregational Member at: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Tell us something about yourself (*family, hobbies, etc.*)

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How do you understand your faith?

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How have you been active in the church?

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Please list one of your favorite Bible verses and tell why it has meaning for you.

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Please sign below to indicate you are willing to serve if elected and mail this completed form to:

*Mr. Craig Lease, Secretary  
Iowa Mission District, NALC  
405 7<sup>th</sup> Street N.  
Northwood, IA 50459*

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Signature