



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

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December 2017

A Word from the Dean

THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”
- John 1:14

Christmas is a time of wonder and joy. Mary marvels at the message she is given that she is to be the mother of our Savior. The shepherds are amazed at the sight that greets them in the night sky. All who heard their account “wondered at what the shepherds told them.” We sing of the “star of wonder” that guided the Magi to the infant Jesus. All of these accounts of Jesus’ birth are filled with wonder and amazement. So, too, are our celebrations on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and with the Sunday School children in their children’s services filled with our own sense of wonder and awe.

Yet the greatest wonder of all is described in the first chapter of John’s Gospel, where he writes, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John the evangelist does not tell us anything about Jesus’ birth. Instead, he goes back to the very beginning and tells us of the Word who was “in the beginning with God”, who “was with God”, who “was God.” In the Nicene Creed we confess this One as:

...eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from God,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.”

The real wonder of Christmas is that this One has come to dwell among us. The utterly amazing thing is that God Himself, in His eternal Word, has chosen to take on our human existence in this child of Mary. And as if that were not wonderful enough, He has chosen to do this in order that He might suffer and die for our sake, not only taking upon Himself our mortal flesh, but taking upon Himself the full weight of our sin. All of this is done for our sake, so that we might be clothed with His righteousness and share in His eternal glory. In the light of these most glorious wonders, these accounts—of the angels singing in the night sky, of a star leading foreigners to a drafty stable, even of a virgin giving birth to a child—simply pale in comparison. They seem commonplace and ordinary events compared to the wonder of the “Word become flesh.”

This is the real wonder we celebrate at Christmas – the wonder of God’s love. As we proclaim the Christmas Gospel once again this year in word and pageantry and song, may we sense the supreme wonder of that love that has come down to us in Christ Jesus. May our hearts and our minds be filled with the same joy that filled the night sky with music and song. May this Word come to dwell in our hearts to bring us the blessings of His love.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”
- John 3:16

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC



500 YEARS! NOW WHAT?

*Pastor Paul F. Breddin
West Des Moines, Iowa*

In 1998 my wife and I enjoyed a personal tour of Luther sites in Thuringia, Germany, with two former Leipzig Mission colleagues in Papua New Guinea. At the time I was lecturing on the Augsburg Confession and Systematic Theology at a vernacular seminary of the Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea. Suddenly Luther and the Reformation became real. All the places I had read about were longer merely photos or descriptions in books: Moehra, Mansfeld, Erfurt, Stotternheim/Schwerborn, Eisleben, Eisenach, Wittenberg, and the significant locations in each. We saw them! That experience is still very real.

2017 is the 500th anniversary of Luther's posting of his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. When this year finishes, what will people remember? We recently received a letter from another former colleague living in Fuerth, mentioning all the Reformation-related events currently occurring in Germany. What will be remembered of the actual Reformation and Luther? Some will probably remember only the non-religious side, such as his influence on the standardization of modern German, or his emphasis on the importance of education for all, or his condemnation of the peasant uprising, or his occasional outbursts of Anti-Semitism, or that he liked beer.

So I pose the question again: Now what? Where do we go from here?

Let us remember that the Reformation is primarily about Jesus Christ and not about Luther. It is about the reclamation of the Gospel truth that "*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16). It is about "*Since*

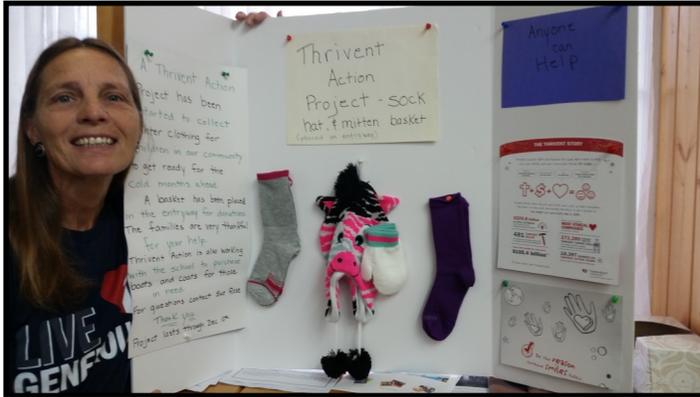
we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). It is about "*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast*" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Small Catechism says this about Jesus Christ: "*I believe that Jesus Christ – true God, Son of the Father from eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary – is my Lord. At great cost He has saved and redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil – not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. All this He has done that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally*".

To those who rejoice in the world-wide proclamation of Gospel truth, the Reformation will continue beyond 2017. We will joyfully participate in divine services, hear the Gospel being preached in its truth and purity, partake in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and witness baptisms in the Name of the Triune God. That's where we will go, and should go, from this 500th anniversary year.

To quote the Rev. Dr. Oswald Hoffmann, former Lutheran Hour preacher: "*What more is there to say but amen.*"

This and That from around the Iowa Mission District



Left: Faith Lutheran Church, Monona, has started a Thrivent Action Project to collect winter clothing for needy children in our community to get ready for the cold months ahead. A basket has been placed in the entryway of the church for donations of hats, mittens and gloves. The families are very thankful for your help. Sue Rose (pictured in the photo) is also coordinating the Thrivent Action grant with MFL MarMac School to purchase boots and coats to ensure the correct sizing. The project collection time ends December 10th.



Right: Anita Schlitter from Faith Lutheran Church in Monona, sent pictures of aprons made by Wendy Bentien for the ladies who make and tie quilts. The inset shows one of the aprons with the Bible verse Wendy put on each of them: "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)



News from Waterloo Ridge Lutheran Church – Dorchester, IA

A Litany of Remembrance was offered for the Waterloo Ridge Family on All Saints' Sunday by Rev. Allen Vik who prepared and presided over this heartwarming moment during our Worship on this Festival Day. When invited to come forward during the Prayers of the Church, a family member [in one case, a representative for an absent family member] carried with a Votive that had been picked up from a small table at the entrance to the Nave on entering. Each decedent was acknowledged with a Blessing followed by the Congregation's response "Thanks Be To God."

	James H. Casterton DOB: 6-Mar-1931 † 11-Jan-2017 Votive born by Shirley Casterton
	Owen Parnell Myhre DOB: 18-Apr-1930 † 04-Feb-2017 Votive born by Arden Auna for Mildred Myhre
	Rev. Allen E. Hermeier DOB: 07-Sep-1936 † 04-Apr-2017 Votive born by John Hermeier
	Barbara Mae Haugen DOB: 30-Dec-1942 † 02-May-2017 Votive born by Jim Stoen
	Dennis Ricky Dean Rud DOB: 27-May-1951 † 24-May-2017 Votive born by Jan Rud
	Clayton Wangsness DOB: 22-Nov-1940 † 28-Aug-2016 Interred 27-Aug-2017 Votive born by Harriet Wangsness

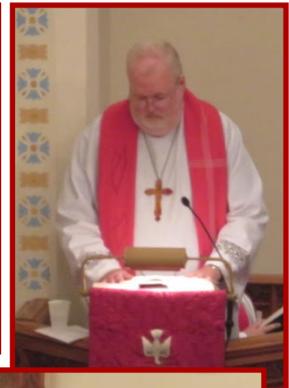


Reformation Celebration



Hosting pastor, the Reverend Solveig Zamzow, led us in worship.

On the afternoon of October 29th, pastors and laity from seven parishes (representing three different Lutheran Church bodies), gathered at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Grafton to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. The worship service was filled with majestic music and thoughtful insights on the four SOLAs (Scripture Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone), the life of Martin Luther and Music. Following the service a meal of real German food (sans the beer) was enjoyed by all.



Upcoming Events

April 9-10, 2018—Annual Pastors' Retreat at American Martyrs Retreat House, Cedar Falls, Iowa. The Reverend Doctor Amy Schifrin, President of the NALS, will present a "Liturgical Boot Camp".

August 15-17, 2018—NALC Convocation at Crown Plaza Convention Center, Denver, Colorado.

September 15, 2018—Mission District Convocation at First Lutheran Church, St. Ansgar, Iowa. Theme: - Sola Scriptura. Keynote speaker: Rev. David Wendel

REFORMATION THROUGH THE AGES:

Popes John XXIII and Paul VI

In this final look at some of the many periods of reformation that have occurred among God's people over the centuries, we will examine the effects of the work of two Roman Catholic Pontiffs, John XXIII and Paul VI, with particular attention to their leadership of the Second Vatican Council of 1962 – 1965. It may seem a bit of a surprise to end our commemoration of the 500th year of the Lutheran Reformation by turning to the work of two Roman Catholic Popes, but it could be reasonably argued that Vatican II has brought about the most significant reforms within the Christian Church in the last 100 years. The decisions coming from that council have had a profound effect on the Church liturgically, ecumenically, and theologically far beyond the confines of the Roman Catholic Church.

Pope John XXIII was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli on November 25, 1881, one of 13 children born to a tenant farmer in Sotto il Monte, Italy. At age 11 he began to study for the priesthood, and was ordained in 1904. He served in a number of capacities in the church, eventually being named Archbishop to Bulgaria and then elevated to the position of cardinal in 1953. Upon the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958, he was elected by the College of Cardinals as pope on the 12th ballot, most likely as a compromise candidate who was expected to be more of a caretaker pope given his advanced age of 76. To the surprise of many, however, one of his first pronouncements was to call for an ecumenical council calling together the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church for a general meeting for the first time in almost a century.

What was even more surprising was that he invited other Christian churches to send observers to the council, as well. He explained that it was time to "open the windows [of the Church] and let in some fresh air." This ecumenical openness was one of the most significant aspects of the council. By the time the council concluded the number of observers had grown to almost 100. After 2 years of preparatory work, the first session of the council was called to order in October of 1962. Unfortunately, Pope John XXIII died the next year before the second session was to begin and never saw the conclusion of his vision.

One of the cardinals in attendance at the council, Giovanni Battista Enrico Antonio Maria Montini, was elected as pope to succeed John XXIII. He took the name Paul VI and immediately announced the continuation of Vatican II as his predecessor had planned. Pope Paul VI successfully guided the council through the next 3 sessions until its conclusion in 1965. He proved to be an able successor to John XXIII, implementing many of the ecumenical, liturgical, and theological reforms that were the result of the council.

In the Roman Catholic Church, the matter that had the most immediate effect was the revision of the liturgy. Permission was given to celebrate most of the Mass in the common language of the people, rather than Latin. There

was also the introduction of lay participation as readers and cantors. In addition, there was a significant increase in the amount and emphasis on the reading of Scripture with the introduction of a 3-year lectionary. In relation to other Christian bodies, the reforms of Vatican II were far reaching and profound. In one of the official documents, *Lumen Gentium*, while still maintaining that the Christian Church "subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him", it was nevertheless stated that "many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines" within those communities which were referred to as "separated brethren."

The significance of Vatican II for the whole Christian Church is difficult to overemphasize. It ushered in a new era of cooperation and dialogue between Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox churches. A whole series of dialogues between Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians was begun which produced some of the best theological work of the last 60 years. There was great hope that perhaps the debate and dialogue that Luther initially hoped would take place when he posted his 95 theses could finally begin. Liturgically, the introduction of a common 3-year lectionary was developed in cooperation between Protestant and Roman Catholic churches such that on most Sundays of the year we are reading and proclaiming the very same Scripture texts. Likewise, many of the liturgical reforms our Lutheran churches introduced in the 60's and 70's were done while in conversation with our Roman Catholic brethren. Indeed, most of the ecumenical advances in the last 50 years can be traced back to the vision John XXIII had to "open the windows of the church."

Yet, after the initial excitement coming from Vatican II, and the hopes that it would finally lead us to fulfill Jesus' prayer that "they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me", a period of disillusion set in when it became clear that all of our divisions and disagreements would not simply melt away. Indeed, our more recent experience has been that a new kind of division has overtaken the church. Nevertheless, the reforms of Vatican II have produced a real sense of communion even despite our "separated" state. And the vision expressed by John XXIII and Paul VI continues to inform and inspire the church to pray for the day when God will bring about the unity for which our Lord prays. And it is once again a reminder that the church in this world is always in need of reformation – *semper reformanda*.

*Pastor Marshall Hahn
Norway Lutheran Church, St. Olaf, Iowa
Marion Lutheran Church, Gunder, Iowa*



Why We Do What We Do Elements of Liturgy

At the end of our worship service—following the benediction or the closing hymn, we hear the words, “*Go in peace, serve the Lord!*” To which we respond, “*Thanks be to God.*” What does this mean? It means that our worship life is not separate from our daily life of faith.

In this year of 2017, we have looked fairly closely at what we do as Lutheran Christians in worship. In the coming year, we will look at where that worship leads us as followers of Christ (aka disciples). It’s easy to fall into the misconception that what we do in the sanctuary on Sunday morning (or Saturday evening—or whenever your congregation gathers for its major weekly worship service) is somehow set apart from the rest of the week. But this is not the life our Lord calls us to when He invites us into faith in Him. Several passages of Scripture will make this clear.

In Matthew 22:37-40, we find this answer Jesus gives to a man who asked him about the greatest commandment: “*And [Jesus] said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.’*” When we gather for worship our focus is on the Lord. Our invocation calls us together in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our prayers are to the Lord (even when they are petitions for ourselves and others), and the Scripture readings and sermon point us to Christ. But this is only half of the equation. As Jesus points out in Matthew 25:40, whatever we do for others, we are actually doing for Him. Thus, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves—and as Christ. When we leave the sacred space of worship, we do not leave the Lord behind. We go out in His name to love and serve other people.

But how do we do this? There are six days in which most of us do not have communal worship. We live in a sinful world. There are stresses and temptations. We don’t feel all that peaceful much of the time. Nerves fray, tempers flare, we think, say and do things we later regret, but which all too often feel sinfully satisfying when we lash out at others.

Our Lord knows us so well, and He calls us day by day to spend time with Him—to share our burdens and recharge our “faith batteries”. Matthew 11:28-29: “*Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*” And in John 15:4-5: “*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*” Day by day, we are called to walk with our Lord. That’s what the first disciples did, but they were able to hear the words of Christ from His own lips. We hear them from Holy Scripture as we spend time in prayer and meditation on the words of the Lord given to us in the Bible.

As Lutheran Christians we have received a particular way of understanding Scripture through the struggles and courageous witness of God’s servant, Martin Luther. Luther had much to say about our daily walk with the Lord. In 2018, we will spend some time with Luther in discerning how we might serve the Lord in our daily following of Christ. Some folks call this discipleship. We will call it “Following Jesus—Luther Style”.

Pastor Barbara Wills, Editor

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
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 37 congregations!*

The following pastors are available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Paul Breddin—515-782-1341
Pastor David Steffenson—253-302-9845 (Sundays)
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675



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