



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

April 2022

A Word from the Dean

By the time you receive this, we will be beyond the halfway point of Lent. The “Alleluias” that we ‘buried’ or otherwise put away, will re-emerge in just a matter of days. And yet, the Lenten season persists for a bit longer.

While the word “Lent” appears to have come from a term that describes the lengthening of the daylight that we’ve all been noticing (and likely enjoying), the season of Lent has a more introspective and solemn feel.

In the ancient church, and in some present-day congregations, the season of Lent was a time of preparation for those who were readying for Baptism which would occur during the Easter Vigil, the time between sundown on Holy Saturday and the sunrise on Easter Day. More recently, and in most settings, Lent has been observed as a penitential season.

It is on this ‘penitential’ nature that I focus my thoughts today. Penitence is a word that we use but may not quite fully understand. ‘True repentance’ classically has included three parts. The first part is the acknowledgment or acceptance that a person has sinned. And for us confessional Lutherans, that which is a sin is a matter of God’s definition and not our own.

The second part of Penitence is that a person has a true sense of regret or remorse for the infraction. While we often regret ‘being caught’ in a sin, or the penalty for that sin, the regret that is indicative of repentance is more a matter of our knowing that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. This regret can be the sort of realization that we have ‘let God down’. King David, in the classic 51st Psalm described this as a “*broken and contrite heart*” in which the sinner expresses a true regret for the act (or the failure rightly to act).

The third part of Penitence is that a person accepts personal responsibility for the sin. In the form of a classic confession service that we can find in the LBW, this is expressed in the language of “I have sinned by my fault; by my own fault’ by my own most grievous fault.” This is in contrast to the human proclivity to shift blame to someone else, as Adam did in the Garden, “*The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate*” (Genesis 3:12).

While there may be ‘heaviness’ to the Lenten season with its emphasis on our taking a long, honest look at our failings, it is only through such an honest appraisal that we can be prepared to hear what God has to say to us. Again, King David is right on the point in **Psalm 32**. He begins by describing what happened to him when he tried to ignore or deny his sin “*When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.*” (vv. 3-4) But when he stopped trying to hide his sin, he experienced a wonderful transformation: “*I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.*” (v. 5)

We may dread looking into the mirror that is God’s Law because it shows all too clearly our imperfections and failings. And yet, it is truly amazing that, when we come to Him with true repentance, the true light of the Gospel shines on these so that we can receive His amazing forgiveness.

*Pastor Christopher Staley, Dean,
Iowa Mission District, NALC*

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District

Since no one has sent pictures or news for the April newsletter, I thought this might be a good time to reflect on our journey together since the formation of the Iowa Mission District. In some ways it seems like we've been together for decades, but in others there's a sense of amazement that we're already into our second decade. When we began, Pastor Kenneth Kimball was our Dean. He was followed by Pastor Marshall Hahn. And as of this writing, Pastor Christopher Staley has been our Dean for over two years. Each of these pastors have been a gift to our Mission District, and their congregations have willingly shared their pastor for the good of Christ's Church. We have been blessed by Deans who are deeply committed to our Lord Jesus and the faithful teaching and preaching of the Word as passed down to us through Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Each has an abiding love for Christ and His Church. And each has served sacrificially—above and beyond the “call of duty”. Thanks be to God for their service—and thank you Pastor Ken, Pastor Marshall and Pastor Chris for shepherding us through these first years of our existence.



2014 Iowa Mission District Convocation. Then Secretary of the Mission District, Pastor Solveig Zamzow, makes a presentation to Pastor Ken.



Pastor Chris at the 2015 Mission District Pastors' Retreat.



Pastor Ken and Pastor Marshall preparing breakfast at the Pastors' Retreat in 2013.



The Reverend Doctor Amy Schifrin with confirmands and Council President at Faith Lutheran, Monona, circa 2012.

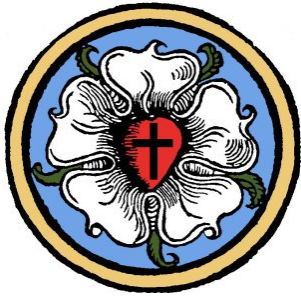


Bishop John Bradosky officiates at Pastor Al Hock's renewal of ordination vows for his 70th anniversary at the 2015 Iowa Mission District Convocation.



Pastor Chris with Dr. Gracia Grindal at the 2021 Mission District Pastors' retreat.

Pastors'/Lay Ministers' Retreat for 2022 will be Monday-Tuesday, June 6-7. at Starlight Best Western Village in Fort Dodge, Iowa. We begin at noon on Monday and end at noon on Tuesday. Supper and breakfast are provided; lunches are on your own. There is no cost unless you request a private room or will be sharing a room with your spouse. In that case, there is a \$40 charge payable to the Iowa Mission District. Our speaker on Monday evening will be Chris Croghan, Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the Luther House of Study in Sioux Falls SD.



Hope for Today and Tomorrow

Pr. David Klappenbach
Bethany Lutheran Church, Laurens, Iowa

This reading was part of the Scripture text for my Evening Prayer last night, The Fourth Sunday in Lent.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Roman 8:22-25

This Scripture gives us hope with the bad news coming from the airwaves. Crime up, politics, the Russian Ukraine war, inflation woes, and this too: post-Covid challenges we are experiencing in our local congregations. As St. Paul writes, creation is certainly groaning for its redemption, and personally, I find myself groaning too.

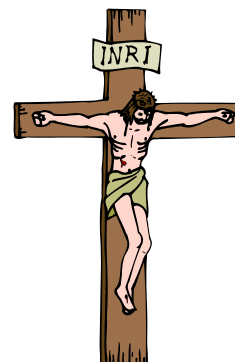
Many people out there hope for better days when life will improve with lower prices, a peace treaty that sticks, political conflicts turn to cooperation, and crime goes down. This certainly sounds like the hope of an optimist, or even wishful thinking. We all would love to see this too.

The hope that Paul is speaking about has nothing to do with optimistic thinking, or wishful thinking, of that better day. The Hope Paul writes about is much deeper. It is sure and certain. It is hope based on God's Word and His promises. When all seems to be falling apart, this hope clings to God's promises in Christ. Hope is a living faith given by the Holy Spirit. In spite of what is going on around us, this hope of a living faith walks

confidently without sight through the darkness of this world, assured of God's presence.

During this Lenten time we once again journey to the cross where get a glimpse of this hope that is not apparent except with eyes of faith. Here is our hope on the cross. A perfect demonstration of hope comes from, of all places, a criminal crucified to our Lord's the right. He realizes he is receiving what he deserves. What makes this hope so amazing is that he puts his hope in a dying man on a cross to save him. Who asks a dying man to save them? While the crowds mock, laugh and see only shame, he sees, in Jesus, salvation. And Jesus promises, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Friends in Christ, our Lord Jesus rose from the dead. The cross was not defeat, but victory. The Easter resurrection assures our forgiveness and our resurrection on the last day. God has joined us in baptism where we were born again to this living hope. This is the hope that clings to God's promises. It gives us strength and joy living in this groaning world. This sure and certain hope gives us the foundation to wait patiently until the day when God will fulfill all things in Christ and the redemption of our bodies. It is our hope today, tomorrow, and forever.





Here I Stand **Confession and Conviction: Fear, Love and Trust**

Jesus was once asked which Commandment is the greatest. His answer: “*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.*” (Matthew 22:36-40) In answering the question, Jesus condensed the Ten Commandments into two. Love for the Lord God is always first, but it is tied irrevocably to our love for others—all whom God loves and for whom Christ died. Love for God **undergirds our love for others**. We are only able to love other people appropriately if our love for them is grounded in—or grows out of—our love for the Lord. Our love for others also **reflects our love for God**. The Apostle John wrote: “*If any one says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.*” (1 John 4:19-21) John’s admonition reflects Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 25 (verses 40 and 45) where He tells the parable of the final judgment, when the Son of Man will separate the sheep from the goats. In each case Jesus makes it clear that whatever we do—or don’t do—for others means that we have done—or not done—for Him.

Sometimes we think of the Commandments as a “to do list” designed for earning favor with God. It’s an easy trap to fall into. On the other hand, some folks say that “Laws are meant to be broken.” It’s more likely that laws are often viewed as setting limits that we feel challenged to “bend”, or at least come as close to transgressing as possible without stepping all the way over the line. In teaching the two great Commandments in the way that He does, our Lord Jesus makes it hard to draw lines in the sand and play games with them. **He sets the commands firmly in the context of love**. Rather than viewing them as a list of rules, we must understand them in the context of our relationship with the Lord and our daily interactions with others. They are part of our response to the God Who loved us so much that He sent His only Son—“*that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” (John 3:16)

This understanding is reflected in Luther’s explanations of the Ten Commandments in the Small Catechism. His explanation for each of the Commandments begins with the words, “*We are to fear, love, and trust God....*” Love and trust are words we feel pretty comfortable with in our relationship with the Lord, and these are the responses reflected in our understanding of God’s grace in Christ and His call to faith. This was Luther’s understanding from the letters written by the

Apostle Paul: We are saved by grace through faith. But fear is not a comforting word or concept. God’s people in the Bible are repeatedly admonished **not** to be afraid: Mary when Gabriel appeared to announce the birth of Jesus, the disciples in the storm-tossed ships with Jesus, and those to whom our risen Lord appeared following His resurrection. In 1 John 4:18, the Apostle John writes that “*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.*” So how are we to understand Luther’s admonition in the Small Catechism to “fear, love and trust God”?

One explanation I’ve heard from other pastors through the years is that this means we are to respect the Lord. I wouldn’t argue with the understanding that respect is due to God, but I have deep respect for many people whom I do not fear in any way. Various other ways of describing the fear Luther calls us to are “holy fear”, reverence, awe, and an awareness of God’s holiness and absolute power. All these are important aspects to this relationship with the Lord. One additional factor that would seem to be necessary in our relationship—and which is rooted in our faith and love—is the fear of damaging our relationship with God. In the book, Martin Luther (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1943), Church historian and Professor of theology, Barend Klaas Kuiper, says that Luther’s childhood fear of his father grew out of his love for him (pp. 63-64), and that his fear of God was also based on his deep love for the Lord: “*There was nothing more unbearable to [Luther] than the thought that God did not love him, but was angry with him. Unquestionably Luther dreaded hell, trembled at the thought of death, was in dead earnest about the salvation of his soul... But there was still another, a far more profound and passionate desire that consumed him, the desire ‘to win a gracious God’, and to attain to the absolute assurance that God loved him.*” (p. 64) Since Luther included fear with love and trust in his explanation of the commandments—and this was after he had come to the understanding that we are saved by God’s undeserved love for us in Christ—it makes sense that this “fear” is grounded, not only in an awareness of the Lord’s sovereignty, majesty and power, but also in a deep desire to return that love “*with all [our] heart, and with all [our] soul, and with all [our] mind.*”

Obedying the commandments will not save us if our hearts are set on using them simply as a means of avoiding hell. But as we prayerfully read the commandments and explanations in the Small Catechism—in the context of our Lord’s love for us and our love for Him—it becomes clear that we are to “fear, love and trust God, so that....” So that we seek to deepen our relationship with Him in willing obedience to His will and in love for our neighbor.

Pastor Barbara M. Willis

Announcements

Upcoming Events

April 23, 2022—9:00 a.m.—Iowa Mission District Council meeting—Cabin Coffee, Mason City, IA

June 6-7, 2022—Pastors/Lay Minister's Retreat, Best Western Starlite Village in Ft Dodge, IA. We begin at noon on Monday and ending at noon on Tuesday. There is no cost unless you want a private room or will be sharing a room with your spouse. The cost for that is \$40, payable to the Iowa Mission District. Supper on Monday and breakfast on Tuesday are provided. Noon meals are on your own.

July 25—August 1, 2022—Youth Mission Trip to southern Louisiana for hurricane relief. Youth who have finished one year of confirmation through grade 12 are eligible to go. Cost is \$400 per youth with non-refundable deposit of \$150 to reserve a seat on the bus due by April 1. Every congregation sending youth must send an adult—one adult per five youth. More information is in the article on the second page of this newsletter. Trip organizer, Pastor Tony D. Ede—tonyede@gmail.com.

August 27, 2022—Iowa Mission District Convocation at Zion Lutheran, Ruthven, IA.

Please Pray for:

Pastor James Puotyuual who is awaiting a kidney transplant.

Pastor James Glesne who is undergoing treatments for Multiple Myeloma.

Amy Cooper and her family as she recovers from surgery and continues to deal with cancer.

Pastor David Steffenson who is undergoing treatments for pancreatic cancer.

When sending **correspondence** to the NALC please use the following address:

NALC Office
2655 Innsbruck Drive, Suite A
New Brighton, MN 55112-9304

Please send **donations** to this address:

North American Lutheran Church
PO Box 860565
Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565

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.

Congregations of the Iowa Mission District



Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Dan Buhs, Lay Minister
Avoca: **Trinity**, Call Process
Badger: **Badger Lutheran**, Pr. Scott Meier
Boyden: **St. John**, Pr. Mark Jamison
Des Moines: **Unity Evangelical Lutheran**,
Pr. Donna Joseph; Pr. Diane Joseph
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**,
Pr. Bill Odermann; Pr. Diane Odermann
Eagle Grove: **Evangelical Lutheran**, Pr. Jason Cooper
Eagle Grove: **Samuel Lutheran**, Call Process
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Pastor Jon Rollefson
Emmons, MN: **Emmons**, Pastor Ryan Henkel
Gilmore City: **First**, Tracy Nerem, Lay Minister
Grafton: **Emmanuel**, Call Process
(Pr. David Schafer, Interim)
Greene: **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. David Klappenbach
Manchester: **First**, Pr. Tony D. Ede
+Monona, **Faith**: Pr. Mel Harris
Northwood: **Peace**, Pr. Barbara Wills
Palmer: **St. John's Lizard Township**,
Marlene Nimke, Lay Minister
Plainfield: **St. John**, Pr. Kim Thacker
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Call Process
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**, Pr. David Steffenson
Ruthven: **Zion**, Eric Patten, Lay Minister
St. Ansgar: **First**, Pr. Christopher Staley
+St. Charles, MN: **Trinity**, Pr. Douglas Hedman
St. Olaf: **Norway**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Sheldon: **St. Paul**, Pr. Dan Baker
Spencer: **Trinity**, Call Process
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

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Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—
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(newsletter editor/web master):
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*The Iowa Mission District
has 37 congregations.*

Pastors available for pulpit supply:

Pastor James Glesne—563-380-8110
Pastor Jack Miller—507-798-2408
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675
Pastor Mike Wikstrom—480-203-1556 (LCMC)
Pastor Solveig Zamzow—641-903-9416

Pastor Tim Nappe is also available for pulpit supply. His primary focus is his ministry with "Reaching the Unreached", and he will share information about this mission work whenever he does pulpit supply for a congregation. Contact information: 712-331-4245. Or email at pastortim.milford@gmail.com

The Iowa Mission District website may be found at: 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.

