



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

June 2022

A Word from the Dean

As I write this month's article, it is Ascension Day. In some congregations, special worship services are held, while in other congregations, the day passes with little or no notice. In my first call, I served a church with German heritage. The organist, Helmuth, spoke to me lovingly of his memories of that day from his youth. On the way to the church to celebrate Himmelfahrt (the German name for the day) his father would lambast the farmers who refused to take a break from working to attend the worship service at the church. Upon hearing the German word for the day, I was reminded of a trip my family made several years earlier to visit my brother who was stationed in Germany. As we traveled on the Autobahn my eyes were drawn to signs that occurred with great frequency: *einfahrt* and *ausfahrt*. The first was what we call the entrance ramp and the second what we call the exit ramp. And so Himmelfahrt is something like a heaven ramp.

Celebrated on the 40th day of Easter, it marks the end of the earthly appearances of the risen Jesus. The last glimpse the disciples had of Him was as he was taken up, or ascended, into the clouds. The celebration of the day predates any recorded history, and its occurrence makes its way into all our Creeds.

During my first call, our conference held a joint Ascension Service each year at the Pioneer Rock Church in rural Garnavillo. Besides the age and condition of the primitive church, built in 1858 from local limestone, the most remarkable feature was the pulpit. The preacher had to climb what seemed to be a dozen creaky steps so that one would tower over the congregants below. One of the area pastors at that time stool a full 6 feet 8 inches and he barely fit under the pulpit's canopy. If

one would have to endure a half-hour sermon from the benches below, a neck rub would be in order afterward.

In the reading from Acts that is read for the day, after Jesus had been lifted up and disappeared into a cloud they continued to gaze up into heaven. Just then, two men in white robes appeared next to them and said, "*Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.*"

Thinking about what the sight must have been like, that the disciples continued to gaze heavenward makes all the sense in the world. They had just witnessed something they'd never seen, and may well have just been searing the sight into their memories. But the message from these robed men signaled that such a posture of wonder needed to be left behind. There was much work to be done.

I have heard quite a bit recently from people who keep asking me if the things going on in the world could be signs that the time for Jesus' return could be just moments away. If one were convinced that this was true, one might stop doing anything and stare into the sky to catch the first glimpse of that glorious return. But much like the disciples, what we need to be doing is the same work that Jesus gave to the disciples before ascending to the right hand of the Father. We've got disciples to make, baptizing them and teaching them everything that he had told them. And, in case you forgot, He's with us always to the end of the age.

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

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District



Fifteen pastors gathered to honor our colleague and friend, Pastor David Steffenson, at his funeral on May 7th. Fourteen of us vested and processed. Our Dean, Pastor Christopher Staley, presided at the service. Pastor Tim Duesenberg, gave the sermon, and former deans, Pastor Ken Kimball and Pastor Marshall Hahn, read the lessons. Pastor Steffenson's faith and witness will continue to live on in those whose lives he touched with his courage and faithfulness to our Lord Jesus.



Iowa Mission District Council

The Iowa Mission District Council met Saturday, April 23rd. Reports from the Secretary, Communicator, Treasurer, and Dean were approved. The Council commended Pastor Barbara for having faithfully compiled and edited the Mission District newsletter since its inception eleven years ago. It is highly regarded throughout the NALC.

Betty Burkhalter provided a report on NALC Disaster Relief as she is the MD Disaster Coordinator. She will be attending a meeting in Texas of Disaster Coordinators throughout the NALC. Included in her report was that our warehouse is fully stocked with Flood Buckets and Quilts but that there is a need for "health kits" and "school kits". It is requested that 500 of each kit be gathered into the warehouse as soon as possible. If each congregation of the MD would contribute 15 of each kit, we'd be fully stocked. If a congregation would like to donate money toward the kits instead of filling them, contributions can be sent to our treasurer, Pastor Gary Burkhalter at 312 E Mission St, Strawberry Point, IA 52076. Please write Disaster Response Kits in the memo line.

https://thenalc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NALC-DR-Kits_rev_Feb2021.pdf

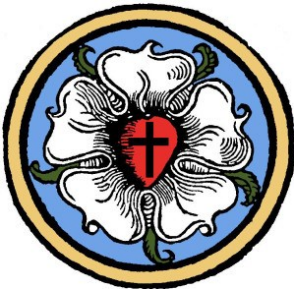
Dean Staley provided information regarding the upcoming Mission District Pastors' Retreat which will be held on June 6th & 7th at the Best Western, Starlite Village in Fort Dodge. Professor Chris Croghan, of Luther House of Studies, Sioux Falls Seminary, will be attending as a keynote speaker. The cost of the retreat will be covered by Education and Ministry line of the Mission District budget.

Dean Staley has been working primarily with congregations that are in the Call Process. In addition, he traveled to LeMars to provide information about the NALC at an ELCA congregation that is considering withdrawing from the ELCA.

Plans are underway for our IMD Convocation, to be held at Zion, Ruthven, on Saturday, August 27th. Pastor Eric Riesen, President of the NALS will be the keynote speaker. It was suggested that local youth be encouraged to participate in the opening worship. Pastor Gary Burkhalter will be coordinating this. A proposed budget was set, in which it is hoped that the MD Council can have more latitude to use surplus funds that have accumulated over the years as needs arise following the convocation. A motion to this effect would need to be made

The next meeting of the IMD Council will be on Saturday, October 8th, at the Cabin Coffee in Mason City.

*Pastor Christopher Staley
Dean, Iowa Mission District*



Raise Your Heads

*Pr. Barbara Wills
Peace Lutheran Church
Northwood, Iowa*

Then [Jesus] said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.... And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Luke 21:10; 25-28)

The signs Jesus spoke of in this passage from Luke sound a lot like current events: changing weather patterns, natural disasters, and anxiety on a global scale relating to the forces of nature over which we have no control. People frequently make the comment that this must be the end times and that Jesus will undoubtedly return soon. However, whenever the question of the coming of God’s kingdom arose, Jesus told His disciples that it was not for them to know the times. He said, *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.”* (Matthew 24:36) And in Acts: *“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”* (vss. 7-8) His many Kingdom parables indicate that we wait faithfully for His return, not by trying to figure out when He will return, but by living faithfully in the here and now. This is what it means to live in hope—to trust the Lord, day by day, and continue walking in obedience to His commands to love God and our neighbor.

Yet we live in a world that seems out of control. Political tensions, the continuing threat of COVID and other diseases, the breakdown of family life, cultural divisions, and other forms of polarization within our society, threaten the very fabric of daily life. In the midst of so much daily “bad news”, and the uncertainty about how to even conduct ourselves in an ever-changing social landscape, people are often filled with fear and anxiety. Depression is prevalent, and the temptation to despair is often difficult to resist. Many people lose hope. Even the people of God turn inward and feel lost and forsaken. But we are not alone in this world—our Lord is always with us. Before Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion, He spent much time warning His disciples of the things that were to happen in order to assure them that He would always be with those who put their trust in Him. In John 14 Jesus told them He was going away but that He would return and take His followers to Himself. In John 15 He spoke at great length about abiding in Him; that apart from Him we are helpless. Toward the end of His long discourse, He told the disciples, *“I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33) And then the whole chapter of John 17 records Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer” in which He prays for all who believe in Him—all of us: *“I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word....”* (verse 20) Called to be the salt and light that reveal the love of Christ to the world (Matthew 5:13-14), we are assured of our Lord’s continuing presence with us—even in the midst of things we cannot understand or control. But because we know that Jesus has overcome all the forces of sin, death and the devil in His death and resurrection, we can raise our heads and continue to walk faithfully through the turmoil around us—not by our own power but by the power of the Holy Spirit Who guides and comforts us as we follow Christ.

And now, *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”* (Romans 15:13)



Here I Stand Confession and Conviction: *Our Father in Heaven*

As we read through the Gospels, we find that our Lord Jesus prayed—often and earnestly. He taught the disciples to pray and encouraged them to pray frequently and persistently, trusting that the Lord hears our prayers. In the sermon on the Mount, Matthew recorded one of my favorite sections of our Lord’s teaching on prayer (chapter 6, verses 5-14). Included in these verses is the Lord’s Prayer, but I think we often forget what Jesus says before and after. In verses 7-8 He introduces the prayer: *“And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”* And after giving us the simple words that cover all our needs, He says in verses 14-15, *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* This prayer, and the way our Lord speaks of it in these introductory and closing verses, remind us that the Lord knows our hearts and calls us to lives of humility and honesty before Him. Putting God first in our lives, submitting to His will, trusting Him for our daily needs, seeking His forgiveness, forgiving others, and placing ourselves into His care and keeping are not easy things to do. But recognizing our weakness and need, and humbling ourselves before Him, allows Him entry into our hearts and lives. The parable Jesus told of the prayers of the Pharisee and tax collector give us the models of prayer: the proud and self-confident Pharisee thanks God that he’s such a good person; the broken and helpless tax collector beats his breast and begs, *“God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”* It is the tax collector who is justified before the Lord. (Luke 18:9-14)

Martin Luther was also a man of prayer. He prayed earnestly and often. Many are familiar with his answer to the question someone once asked about how he had time for prayer when he was so busy. He is quoted as replying that the busier he was the more time he needed to spend in prayer. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, writing about Luther’s prayer life, quoted Theodorus: *“I overheard him in prayer, but, good God, with what life and spirit did he pray! It was*

with so much reverence, as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence as if he were speaking to his friend.” (*For All the Saints*, Vol. III, pp. 1147-1148) Luther spoke often about prayer, once saying that *“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”* (Concordia University, Texas, website) But his teaching on the Lord’s Prayer in the “Small Catechism” is particularly helpful.

When our Lord taught the disciples to begin this prayer with *“Our Father who art in heaven”*, He invited them into the family and introduced a whole new way of thinking about our relationship with God. Only Isaiah had used this term for the Lord in the Old Testament--*Yet, O LORD, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter; we are all the work of thy hand.* (Isaiah 64:8) Yet even here, there is more a sense of procreation than intimacy. But when our Lord Jesus spoke of God as His Father, it was in a relationship of love and trust, as one would speak to someone well known and beloved. Luther’s explanation of the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer in the Catechism evokes this same sense: *“Here God encourages us to believe that he is truly our Father and we are his children. We therefore are to pray to him with complete confidence just as children speak to their loving father.”* This sense of love and trust sets the stage for each petition, reminding us that we are not praying to a remote being who has no concern for us, but rather, to the God Who loves us so much that He was willing to send His only begotten Son to pay the ultimate price to bring us back into the family.

So let us pray—and pray often—and pray earnestly—with complete confidence and trust in our heavenly Father.

Let us pray with humility and honesty and heartfelt devotion—rather than rattling off the words with no more thought than we would give to reading the menu board in a fast-food restaurant.

Let us pray: Our Father; **our** Father; our **Father**.
Our Father who art in heaven....

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Announcements

Upcoming Events

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 5-6—NALC online convocation. Register at <https://thenalc.org/event/2022-online-mission-convocation/?preview=true>. The cost is \$25, and the meetings will be from 5-8 pm on Friday the 5th and noon-3 pm on Saturday the 6th.

August 27, 2022—Iowa Mission District Convocation at Zion Lutheran, Ruthven, IA. The registration form can be found near the end of this newsletter. Nominations are also needed for Mission District Secretary, lay Council member and Clergy council member. That form is also found near the end of the newsletter.

October 8, 2022—9 am—Iowa Mission District Council meeting.

Please Pray for:

Pastor James Puotyual who is awaiting a kidney transplant.

Pastor James Glesne who is undergoing treatments for Multiple Myeloma.

Amy Cooper and her family as she continues to deal with 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.

Iowa Mission District Convocation Registration

Saturday, August 27, 2022
Zion Lutheran Church, Ruthven, Iowa

The 2022 annual Convocation of the Iowa Mission District will take place at Zion Lutheran Church, Ruthven, Iowa, on Saturday, August 27, 2022. Our theme is “Hope”, and we are pleased to have Eric Riesen, North American Lutheran Seminary President as our keynote speaker. The Convocation is our opportunity to gather as brothers and sisters in Christ for the purpose of fellowship, worship, learning and sharing of ideas and to hear up-dates on the work and mission of the NALC. We also will have a business session to conduct the necessary business of the Mission District. As you prepare for the convocation, please be thinking of nominations for *Secretary (either Clergy or Lay), Lay representative and Clergy representative*. Each is for a three year term. A nomination form will be included in this month’s Iowa Mission District News. Please get permission from the nominees before submitting their names. The nominees will need to complete the nomination form and mail it to Mission District Secretary, Craig Lease (405 7th Street N., Northwood, IA).

Please Note:

According to Article 4.01 of the IA- MD Constitution: “***Delegates with voting privileges at a Convocation shall be the ordained ministers of the NALC within the territory of this Mission District and [two] lay delegates from the member congregations***”. In addition, we strongly encourage congregational participation beyond the delegates—visitors are welcome! There is no cost for the event other than a free-will offering for lunch. A worship offering will also be taken and designated to a worthy domestic or international cause. The day will begin at 8:00 am with registration and a time for fellowship with coffee and refreshments. A service of Holy Communion will begin at 9:00, and the closing of the convocation will be at 3:45 pm.

Junior High and High School youth are also encouraged to attend the convocation. It is hoped that we can have youth attendees on a regular basis to promote their interest and involvement in the Church beyond their home congregations.

To help with planning, and so that we may have appropriate name tags for **delegates and visitors**, we ask that you fill out the registration form below and mail to **Kathy Scharnhorst, Registrar, at 1594 Garden Avenue, Waverly, IA 50677**. It is most helpful in keeping track of registrations if each person being registered is listed on a separate sheet. If you wish to submit your registrations via email, please fill out the form and send the information as an attachment to **kscharnhorst51@gmail.com**.

(Please fill out a separate form for each person.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone and/or email: _____ / _____

Congregation & Town: _____

Clergy _____ Lay Delegate _____ Visitor _____ Youth _____

Biographical Information of Nominee

Name: _____ Date: _____

Position for which you are being nominated: _____

Congregational Member at: _____

City: _____

Occupation: _____

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

How do you understand your faith?

How have you been active in the church?

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

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 7th Street N.
Northwood, IA 50459*

Signature

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**—Call Process
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**, Pr. Renae Behrends
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



Iowa Mission District Leadership

Pastor Christopher Staley Dean—
cbstaley@netins.net
Craig Lease, Secretary—
pdlease@gmail.com
Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—
pqburkhalter52@hotmail.com

Mission District Council Members:

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Pastor Tony D. Ede—
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Pastor David Klappenbach—
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Lyle Hollander
hollander@frontiernet.net
Dean Armstrong—
jdedarmy@laurens-ia.com

Disaster Response Coordinator:

Betty Burkhalter
bettyburkhalter@hotmail.com

Mission District Registrar

Kathy Scharnhorst
kscharnhorst51@gmail.com

Mission District Communicator

(newsletter editor/web master):
Pastor Barbara Wills—
barbaramwills@gmail.com

*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.

