



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

December 2023

A Word from the Dean

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Acts 20:35

Jesus Himself said so. At least, that's what Paul said Jesus said. Paul, when he was speaking with the elders of the Ephesian congregation, attributed these words to Jesus, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" A search of Jesus' words in the Gospels, however, don't find Jesus actually saying those words. Even so, I have no reason to doubt the truth of Paul's words. After all, Paul was visited by the risen Christ Who gave him much of the knowledge that we find throughout his letter. I just wanted to head that little issue off at the pass.

This saying is especially prevalent around the approaching Christmas holiday. Especially with young children, Christmas is largely about the gifts one receives for Christmas. Those dazzlingly wrapped packages invite the recipient to shake and imagine what each gift might be, and brothers and sisters alike count to make sure they don't have fewer presents than the other. But as children grow toward adulthood, they begin to be not only the recipients of gifts but also givers. Perhaps it begins a little less than honestly, when mom or dad marks a present to be from one child to another even though the child is the giver in name only. Later on the child will become more a part of the selecting of gifts, and may even use his or her own money to purchase

them. Depending on the recipient of the intended gift, this may bring joy to the giver or even resentment. If the gift is for a special friend or potential love interest, giving can bring great joy, but if it is for a less beloved sister or brother the act of giving may be less than heartwarming.

There are some people who seem to never mature beyond this stage. They enjoy giving to those whom they love, but they find no pleasure at all in giving to those less beloved. But for the Christian, even this last barrier to the true blessedness of giving is removed. This starts when one comes to understand how much we receive from our Heavenly Father that comes purely out of His Fatherly and Divine goodness and mercy, without any worthiness on our part. Such a realization should lead us to the sort of giving that cares not about whether the recipient is beloved to oneself, because we have come to know that the recipient is beloved by God. So, in some ways, I would suggest that the saying is somewhat incomplete. Instead, we might say: It is more blessed to give than to receive, when we learn that what we have has been received from the true Giver. Such blessedness can be yours through Christ. May the good news of His being made flesh for us on that holy night work such faith in you through the Holy Spirit.

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



Our Faith—God’s Faithfulness

*Pastor Daniel Baker
St. Paul Lutheran Church
Sheldon, Iowa*

Did the recent headlines of “Israel Is at War” get your attention? It’s been almost 50 years to the day since Israel was officially at war. Back in 1973 Israel was attacked by Egypt, Syria, and others in what is known as the Yom Kippur War. This is now the fifth war between Arabs and Israel in our time. But what are the beginnings of these heartbreaking events?

On May 14, 1948, Israel became a nation again. The Jewish people, who had been scattered since 70 A.D., now had a place to call their own. Unfortunately, the land they received had people living in it – the Palestinians, which is Greek for Philistia. Do you remember how David slew the Philistine giant, Goliath? Yes, Israel and the Philistines were enemies way back then!

The feud goes back even farther as we read in Genesis 12:25, when the Lord called Abram (Abraham). God promised Abram and his wife Sarai land and an heir. God told him that he would be the father of many nations, seemingly impossible for this elderly couple. It would take a miracle! Surprisingly, we are told that *“Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”* (NIV) Abram embraced God’s promise, despite the fact that circumstances all pointed in the opposite direction!

Unfortunately, they started to doubt God’s promise and decided to take their childless situation into their own hands. Abram slept with Sarai’s servant, Hagar, and she conceived and gave birth to a son, Ishmael. Not surprisingly, Sarai became jealous, despised and mistreated Hagar, and finally sent Hagar and Ishmael away.

Fourteen long years later, God finally delivered on his promise to Abram and Sarai that they would have a child. Sarai was pregnant! She gave birth to Isaac (meaning laughter). Later, Isaac’s own son Jacob would wrestle with God (Genesis 32) and the Lord changed his name from Jacob to Israel. The rest of the Old Testament follows Abraham’s family, and how God used Israel to bring salvation to the whole world through a descendant of his, Jesus Christ.

Despite Abraham and Sarah’s doubt, repeated

disobedience and sin, God chose them to bear the gift of eternal life for all of us. St. Paul restates that clearly for us by saying: *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). We are all heirs of the promise through faith in Christ Jesus.

But what about Ishmael? Genesis 16 tells us that the Lord remembered Hagar and Ishmael (meaning “God hears”) and promised him numerous descendants, too. Tradition tells us that Ishmael settled in Mecca and had twelve sons of his own, which would become many of the Arabian people we think of today. In 610 A.D, the Prophet Muhammed founded the religion of Islam (Muslims) in Mecca, which has spread through the Arabian countries and around the world.

Much of the antagonism we see between Israel and the Palestinians and Arabs today can be traced back to Abraham, and between his sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Abraham’s doubt and subsequent actions with Hagar had consequences – the descendants of the stepbrothers Isaac and Ishmael are still fighting today.

What then do we make of this war? Will this lead us to the prophesied battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16? Will this lead to the Second Coming of Christ? Some think it will, but we don’t know. Should Christians be afraid? I don’t think so. Scripture tells us that we will not know until that day comes. But like the First Coming, which we celebrate at Christmas, we can look forward to Jesus’ return. For now, we are simply called to believe, to put our trust in God – knowing that God is faithful.

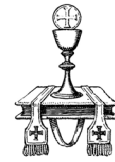
How can we believe? God strengthened Abraham’s faith in an interesting way. He took him outside and said, *“Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.”* Then he said to him, *“So shall your offspring be.”* God directs our eyes, not to the stars, but to His Son, Jesus Christ. This Advent and Christmas, let us keep our eyes on Jesus, who gives us the gift of faith and credits us with righteousness and the hope we have for a promised land of our own in heaven. Thanks be to God!

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District



St. John Vilmar Lutheran Church

On Sunday, November 5th, Pastor Tamara Keen was installed as Pastor at St. John Vilmar Lutheran Church, rural Greene, by Iowa Mission District Dean, Pastor Christopher Staley. On hand to help celebrate the event were (front row from left) Pastors Marshall Hahn, Solveig Zamzow Ryan Henkel, and Gary Burkhalter; (Pastor Tamara Keen is left in the center, Pastor Barbara Wills right in center); and (back row), Pastors Jean Rabary, Christopher Staley, and David Klappenbach.



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First Lutheran Twins Celebrate Birthday

Audrey McKinley and Lila Staley, both members of First Lutheran, St. Ansgar, celebrated their shared birthday on November 21st. Although they share a birthday, their birth years are a full ninety-nine years apart. While Lila was celebrating her 1st birthday, Audrey was celebrating her 100th birthday. A great time was had by both!

Disaster Response Volunteer Training Program

An on line training program has been developed by Pastor George Zornow and is now available for anyone to take. This program can be accessed by either a cell phone or laptop. This program is for anyone who is new to volunteering, already a volunteer or is contemplating returning to volunteering.

There are four basic divisions:

- Division One--Regular Volunteer
- Division Two--Trained Volunteer, if you desire to get a better understanding of what a disaster victim is going through so that you may better relate with them.
- Division Three - Become a trained Prayer Minister
- Division Four - How to become a Spiritual Care Provider

After the beginning of the year we will look into providing audio and visual recording options for all the present training presentations.

On the next page of this newsletter you will find the step by step instructions on how to access the training.

Let me know what questions you have!
Betty Burkhalter



How to View the Disaster Response Training Courses

1. Visit *thenalc.org* on your phone or computer.
2. Scroll until you see *Disaster Response Volunteer Trainings*. Click on the image (image may occasionally change but look for the *Disaster Response Volunteer Trainings* title).



DISASTER RESPONSE VOLUNTEER TRAININGS

We offer a range of training divisions designed to equip and enhance the skills...

3. Once you click on the training post, you will see an option to read more about each course or go directly to a course. Pick the course you would like to enroll in.

[Read More Here](#)

If you already know what course you would like to enroll in, please select from the trainings below:

- [Regular Volunteer](#)
- [Trained Volunteer](#)
- [Prayer Minister](#)
- [Spiritual Care Provider](#)



The Iowa Mission District (MD) Council met Saturday, October 30th. Reports from the Secretary, Treasurer, Communicator, and Dean were approved.

Our Disaster Relief Coordinator, Betty Burkhalter, reported that St. John, Boyden, now has a NALC Disaster Response Warehouse. This will be especially helpful for congregations closer to them, including congregations in the Dakotas. The trailer that we have been using to collect and deliver Disaster supplies will no longer be available. The Council asked Gary to look into finding an inexpensive replacement that could also be used for mission trips.

Following up on a previous recommendation that congregations pay supply pastors \$200 for Sunday services plus the current IRS Mileage Guidelines, it was noted that where a congregation has more than one worship service, that an additional \$50 be paid for each additional service. The MD Council further suggests that \$200 plus mileage be paid by congregations to supply pastors for funerals and weddings.

Dean Staley will enlist the help of the other clergy on the MD Council to reach out to MD pastors on a more frequent basis.

The Council voted to make a deposit on a charter bus for the upcoming NALC Continental Youth Gathering. If there is insufficient interest to fill the bus, the deposit is fully refundable until May. The Council voted to subsidize each registrant \$100 toward the cost of registration.

Dean Staley updated the MD Council on the plans for the MD Pastors' Retreat on June 10/11.

The 2024 MD Convocation will be held Saturday, September 21st, at St. John, Plainfield. Pastor Brad Hales will be our keynote speaker. Adjustments to the day's schedule were discussed.

The next meeting of the MD Council will be 9AM on Saturday, April 27th, at Cabin Coffee in Mason City.

*Pastor Christopher Staley
Dean, Iowa Mission District*



Abiding in Christ: Come, Lord Jesus!

“And when it was evening [Jesus] came with the twelve....And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.’” (Mark 14:17, 22-24)

Eucharistic prayer #31 in the Lutheran Book of Worship includes the following dialog after the “Words of Institution:

Pastor: *“For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death, until he comes.”*

Congregation: *“Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.”*

Pastor: *“Therefore, gracious Father, with this bread and cup we remember the life our Lord offered for us. And, believing the witness of his resurrection, we await his coming in power to share with us the great and promised feast.”*

Congregation: *“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”*

As we begin the season of Advent, we enter a time of waiting. On the one hand, we’re waiting to celebrate, once again, the birth of our Lord Jesus so many years ago in Bethlehem. Hundreds of years before Jesus’ birth the prophet Isaiah had announced the coming of One who would fulfill the ancient promises of an offspring from Eve who would crush the head of our ancient enemy; the One through whom all nations would be blessed; the king from David’s line who would reign forever. Isaiah wrote, *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called ‘Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’”* (Isaiah 9:6) But from the time of His birth, Jesus didn’t fit the expectations of those who had waited through the ages for this king. Born in a stable, raised in Nazareth, dying the humiliating death of a criminal—this was not the king people were waiting for! As an infant at His purification ceremony, the devout and righteous Simeon took the baby Jesus into his arms, blessed His parents, and announced to His mother, Mary, *“Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of*

many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:34-35) What could this prophecy mean?

As we anticipate the celebration of Jesus’ birth, these words of prophecy carry a sense of something more profound than the birth of an ordinary person. The waiting and expectation of the birth of a Savior has implications that extend beyond Jesus’ earthly life, death, and resurrection. The prophecies anticipate eternity—an offspring who could crush Satan; a blessing extending to all nations; a King who would rule forever. There is “something more”: Jesus warned His disciples to be ready for His return. He said, *“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 21:25-28) It is to this promised return of Christ that we respond in the Communion liturgy, *“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”*

During the last weeks of the Church year, our Gospel readings have been from the parables Jesus told about His return, warning and encouraging His disciples to be ready: Stay awake! Watch! Because we do not know the time of His return.... This is a call to abide—to stay close to the Lord, and to be faithful. For it is only by abiding in Christ that we can bear the fruits of faithfulness, repentance, love for the Lord, love for neighbor—the only way we can faithfully watch and wait for Christ’s return in glory: *“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.* (John 15:4-5)

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Announcements

Upcoming Events

July 21-27, 2024—NEXUS Institute—at Grand View University, Des Moines. The week is being sponsored by the NALC. For more information: <http://www.grandview.edu/NEXUS>

August 9, 2024—NALC online Convocation—all day meeting online

September 21, 2024—Iowa Mission District Convocation—at St. John, Western Douglas

Please Pray for:

Pastor James Puotyual who is awaiting a kidney transplant.

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 to NALS, Disaster Relief, Great Commission Society, etc. are to be made out to the NALC with the specific fund written on the memo line of your check.

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 Pastor Solveig Zamzow, Mission District Secretary, should be sent to **619 Elm Avenue, #309, Story City, IA 50248**

Items for the Mission District newsletter (pictures, news, etc.) are best sent via e-mail to Pastor Barbara Wills at barbaramwills@gmail.com.

Pastors available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Natacha Kemp—507-785-0412
Pastor Jack Miller—507-798-2408
Pastor Mike Wikstrom—480-203-1556
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

Mission District Pulpit-Supply Guidelines

A year ago, the Mission District Council voted to recommend that congregations pay a visiting pastor \$200 for a worship service in addition to the current IRS mileage rate. Following our recent meeting, we also recommend that congregations do the same for a visiting pastor who performs a wedding or a funeral. Any honorarium that the family might want to give to the pastor would not be deducted from this, as the pastor is providing a service to the congregation. We also recommend that a congregation which has more than one worship service in a day, pay an additional \$50 to the pastor for each additional service. (The current rate is \$0.655 per mile, but changes nearly every year.)



Congregations of the Iowa Mission District

Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Dan Buhs, Lay Minister
Avoca: **Trinity**, Pastor Matthew Bahnfleth
Badger: **Badger Lutheran**, Pr. Scott Meier
Boyden: **St. John**, Pr. Jeremy Winter
Des Moines: **Unity Evangelical Lutheran**,
Pr. Donna Joseph; Pr. Diane Joseph
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**, Pr. James Glesne
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
Greene: **St. John (Vilmar)**, Pr. Tamara Keen
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
LeMars: **St. John**, Pr. Chris Meier
Manchester: **First**, Call Process
+ Monona, **Faith**: Pr. Mel Harris
Northwood: **Peace**, Pr. Barbara Wills
+ Osage: **First Grace Lutheran Church**
Palmer: **St. John's Lizard Township**,
Marlene Nimke, Lay Minister
Plainfield: **St. John**, Call Process
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Pr. Ronald Voss
+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

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*The Iowa Mission District
has 39 congregations.*

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