



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church



www.iowamissiondistrict.com

December 2024

A Word from the Dean

Do you remember when you were very young? If you were like I was then, impatience would have been part of your makeup. Everything had to be done immediately, if not sooner. 'Later' was far too long a time to wait, and 'tomorrow' was beyond eternity. Did we learn anything as children about patience or is it something that grows on you with each passing year?

There is a little story about a child who found a flask-shaped cocoon of an emperor moth and kept it in a little box for a year, waiting fairly patiently for something to happen. The cocoon of the emperor moth is peculiar in its shape and construction. A narrow opening is left at the neck of the structure through which the perfect moth forces its way out. You would wonder, as this child did, how such a large moth could pass through such a small opening.

Eventually, the time arrived for the moth to escape from its long confinement. The child watched its efforts for hours as it struggled to get out, but it just couldn't seem to make it. Finally, the child's patience was exhausted. Perhaps, she thought, because it had been kept in a box rather than in its natural environment, it had been weakened in some way. The child's compassion overtook her and with the point of some scissors, carefully she snipped the opening to make it larger. And then with perfect ease the moth appeared, dragging a huge swollen body and small shriveled wings. The child watched breathlessly, waiting to see a marvelous transformation take place. But the wait was in vain. It didn't change into a creature of great beauty with exquisitely marked wings, but remained stunted, crawling painfully through its brief life instead of flying through the air on powerful wings.

What the child had failed to understand is that the moth can emerge from its cocoon fully developed only if it has to struggle its way through

the narrow opening of the cocoon. Although the child had thought she was helping, she had unfortunately circumvented God's perfect design.

A great deal is said in the Bible about waiting for God, or on God. We so easily grow impatient with God's delays. Much of our trouble in life comes from our restlessness and sometimes reckless haste. We cannot wait for the fruit to ripen, we pick it green. We cannot wait for the answers to our prayers, although the things we may ask for may require many years in their preparation for us. We are urged to walk with God, but at times He walks oh so slowly. It's indeed fortunate that our God is faithful as well as patient because so many times He has to wait for us.

Advent is a time of waiting; a time of waiting for Jesus' return. And it may seem as if he will never come. It is hard, too, to be patient when it seems that the world has been preparing for Christmas for so long: I am pretty sure that I first began seeing Christmas merchandise on display in stores back in August. But our waiting is for a date that is not on any calendar. Our waiting is for Christ's return. The church has been waiting for nearly two thousand years, and we take time during Advent to especially think about what it means to wait, what it means to be patient. Like the child in the story, we think we know what is best, and we want so desperately to help Christ's return happen now, because we know how wonderful it will be. But we wait, not with worry, but with eager longing, knowing that God knows what is best, and that God will care for us and for all creation.

"Be still and know that I am God." (**Psalm 46:10**)

Have a blessed Advent,

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



Love Has Come

Pastor Solveig Zamzow
Story City, Iowa



The picture you see here, “The Stalingrad Madonna”, was drawn by Kurt Reuber during Christmas of 1942, while the famous Battle of Stalingrad was raging. The inscriptions around the margins read: “Christmas at the Siege 1942. Fortress Stalingrad. Light, Life, Love.”

The Battle of Stalingrad was one of the fiercest and bloodiest of World War II. Christmas is probably the last thing that comes to mind in association with Stalingrad. And yet, Christmas was bright in the darkness of that battle which lasted for 200 days.

Kurt Reuber was born in 1906, in Kassel, Germany, a city about 120 miles north of Frankfurt which, coincidentally, is the city where our sons were born. He was a Lutheran pastor, medical doctor, and artist. Reuber was called to serve the Lutheran church in the small village of Wichmannshausen in the State of Hesse. Again, coincidentally, only a few miles from the German parish where we served almost 50 years ago.

Outspoken against the Nazis and driven by questions on the unity of body and soul, Reuber studied medicine while serving his congregation. Eventually he was drafted into the army as a field surgeon. In the summer of 1942, the 6th Army launched its attack against Stalingrad. Reuber joined the troops in November. In February of 1943 the Germans surrendered and Kurt Reuber and some 90,000 soldiers were taken prisoner. Only about 6,000 captives survived and Reuber was not among them.

As the circumstances of the German Army in Stalingrad became dire in December of 1942, Kurt Reuber wanted to create a visual aid to help the soldiers “celebrate” Christmas.

He drew the “Stalingrad Madonna” with the very primitive materials available to him - a charcoal sketch on the back of a Russian map. You can actually see the creases of the map on the image in front of you!

In the letters that Reuber wrote to his wife, he described the mood of the soldiers: they prepared for Christmas “in a soldier-like fashion with stirring love and devotion.” Yet, he noted that the attacks by the Russians continued throughout their celebration. “How it booms through the Holy Night!” he wrote. He continued to describe how he was reminded of St. John’s Gospel: Light, Life and Love, and told how his fellow soldiers stood spellbound and silent before the picture that hung on the clay wall.

What might have been the memories and the longings of these soldiers? Those three words around the picture still evoke specific emotions and speak clearly to the Christmas story.

Jesus, the light that was to come and eliminate all darkness, has finally arrived. Into a night that was probably anything but silent or calm, yet surely dark, the bright light of the angels brought the even brighter message of Jesus’ arrival.

Today we find ourselves so often reflecting on the darkness around us that it can be difficult to notice light at all. We realize with pains that the glow of LED lights on our Christmas tree can do only so much. And we are not even sitting in a clay cave, surrounded by artillery fire. We do not have to draw on the back of a Russian map.

Maybe we need to be reminded with words from Scripture: *Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.*

And life? Life often seems so cheap. We continue to speak of a culture of death. If you do not have any value to me any longer, don’t stick around. As long as my life is not impacted by whatever tragedy the day brings, well, then... God meets us at Christmas with real, honest life. A crying, needy child. Life that comes from his mother’s womb.

And this child brings us life, yes, abundant life. Life that matters and counts and is treasured by God regardless of what the world tells us. Christmas is a statement of life. All lives matter to God – and not merely in the way we hear slogans on the street but in the way we hear it in Scripture and know it through Christ himself. And indeed, the child in the manger already is our Redeemer and eventually shouts out to us: *I am the Resurrection and the Life.*

And Love, indeed, love! “Love has Come” we sing in the carol. Love explodes in the Bethlehem stall. Love is born! Love is God now asleep on the hay. Love is what Mary whispers. Love makes us vulnerable and Mary becomes vulnerable. Love never leaves us, love is Jesus within and among us.

Love is so often diminished to “falling in love”, or frankly, when you follow social media, we “love” everything we hear or read whether it is important or not. Do we know that love means to stick around when you know your life would be easier if you left? Mary stuck around. We find her not only at Bethlehem but also at Calvary on that hill with three crosses. Madonna with Child even at death’s door. And the child? He gives his life because of love. Love of us sinners, love of the Father in heaven who sent him because He loved us first; love of people who rejected the Love that came down. Light. Life. Love.

*Love has come - a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.*

*See, all the heaven has come to proclaim it;
hear how their song of joy arises:*

Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior! Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District

Lutheran Lay Renewal Workshop Emmanuel Lutheran Rochester, Minnesota

Here is an excerpt from "The Voice of Renewal" newsletter of the Lutheran Lay Renewal of America:

On Saturday, September 28, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rochester, MN hosted our retreat on Spiritual Transformation, as well as our Sharing Your Faith workshop, both led by our Executive Director. In addition, Fred Magezi, Head of the College of Laity of the Lutheran Church of Uganda, gave a presentation on the work of the LCU....

Our retreat was a real blessing for Emmanuel Lutheran. Fervent prayer leading up to the event brought much spiritual fruit. God showed up in a big way.... – Rev. John Saethre, Pastor



The St. Olaf Parish/Faith Lutheran Luther League invited the youth from First Lutheran in Manchester to a Halloween Pumpkin Carving Party on Sunday, October 26.



On November 15 the St. Olaf Parish confirmation students had a service project at the Clayton County Food Shelf to help pack bags for their Thanksgiving food give-away.



The St. Olaf Parish/Faith Lutheran Luther League met on Saturday, November 23 to put together 95 Christmas wreaths they sold as a fund-raiser for next summer's youth mission trip

*This and That From Around
the Iowa Mission District, continued*

The Iowa Mission District (MD) Council met Saturday, September 28th, with Pastor Solveig Zamzow leading us in devotions. Reports from the Secretary, Communicator, and Dean were approved.

The most recent Convocation was reviewed, with some suggestions for next year's Convocation, which will be September 20th at St. John, LeMars. Bishop Dan Selbo will be the keynote speaker.

Plans are underway for the upcoming Pastors' Retreat on May 19/20. Pastor Zamzow will be seeking a speaker, and Pastor Staley will be securing a venue.

The Council approved \$1,000 scholarships each for Pastors Marshall Hahn and John Saethre for their Mission trip to Ethiopia. This will be charged to the Discretionary Fund. They will make a presentation on their trip at the next Convocation.

Our next meeting will be at 9:00 am at Cabin Coffee, Mason City, on Saturday, April 26th.

*Pastor Christopher Staley
Dean, Iowa Mission District*



NALC Disaster Response
Is
**Collecting New Unwrapped
Toys**
For Christmas
For children in
North Carolina
Impacted by Hurricane Helene
Please ship to
NALC Disaster Warehouse
16500 Noble Avenue
Caldwell, Ohio 43724
For More Information, contact
Dan Richardson
317-4356-2768
dr7521@comcast.net
Or Mary Bates at
740-509-1132
DEADLINE IS Dec. 10

SAVE THE DATE

**IOWA
MISSION
DISTRICT
YOUTH MISSION
TRIP**

We don't know where we are going but, we know we are going.

JULY 27TH - AUG 3RD

These dates are approximate depending on where we go and how we travel.





Pondering the Parables: Doing the Father's Will

And [Jesus] said, "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'" (Luke 15:11-32)

Most of us know this parable by the name most Bible editors give it—the “Prodigal Son”. The word “prodigal” means wasteful, reckless, and immoral. And the greater part of the parable focuses on the younger son who does the unthinkable in asking for his inheritance while his father is still living; then leaves home and shamefully wastes the money his father worked hard to earn. When that runs out and his “fair weather friends” desert him, he sinks even lower by hiring himself out to tend pigs. While pork is a favorite for many of us, and pig farming is a respectable occupation in our society, for a Jewish man it was a direct violation of God’s mandate about “unclean animals”. They were not to be eaten or even touched. When this young man “comes to himself”, he realizes that even the servants at home fair better than he’s doing and composes a speech that he hopes will soften his father’s heart enough to let him at least be accepted back as a servant.

What is shocking, even to many modern folks, is that the father has been watching and waiting for this sinful and unruly child to return home. When the young man comes straggling in, still smelling of pig manure, his father literally runs to meet him, embraces him despite his filth, and brings him back into the family with the finest clothes and food. This is great news for the younger son! But even in our time, we might think his father should have made him grovel a bit, or extracted promises and set down a few “house rules” before letting him return. Such love seems irresponsible somehow. But Jesus tells this story to show us how much our heavenly Father loves us. As He says in the story of the lost sheep, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. We have a hard time understanding this kind of love. We have trouble thinking the Lord should let folks off this easy—and we even have trouble believing that our heavenly Father forgives our sins in this way! But the parable seems to be more about the love of our heavenly Father than about the shocking behavior of His repentant wayward children.

And this is not the end of the story. There was not just one sinful child in this family. When I was young, I always felt sorry for the older son who stayed home and did his duty, only to have his father lavish so much loving attention on his brother who broke all the rules and was then reinstated with no questions asked. The elder son had stayed home, but it’s pretty clear that he often resented his role as “obedient son”. Did he sometimes wish his father would die so he could inherit his share? Did he resent not being in control of what remained of his father’s estate since it was going to be his inheritance? Did he sometimes want to break out of the mold of “the good son” so he could do a little partying and not have to adhere to the rules? It seems evident that he was feeling some of these emotions when he returned home in the evening after working hard in the field all day to find his younger brother being treated like royalty.

The older brother refused to come in and participate in the homecoming party. Filled with hatred and resentment, he stayed outside, rejecting the rejoicing and all those who were involved in it. What does the father do? Instead of staying inside, shrugging his shoulders, and sighing deeply at “sibling rivalry”, the father comes outside and encourages this other wayward son to come in and join the party. The evidence indicates that this son’s obedience had been self-serving, and that he had not stayed home out of love for his father. The elder son might have been present in person, but not in heart. Yet the father loved his elder son as much as the younger. The family could not be complete without them both—the repentant prodigal and the unrepentant self-righteous....

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Announcements

Upcoming Events

April 26, 2025—9 am—Mission District Council—Cabin Coffee, Mason City, IA
July 27—August 3, 2025—Iowa Mission District Youth Trip—destination TBD
August 3-8, 2025—NALC Luther Week—Omni William Penn Hotel, Pittsburg, PA
September 20, 2025—Iowa Mission District Convocation—St. John's, Le Mars, IA

Please Pray for:

Pastor James Puotyal who is awaiting a kidney donor.

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

North American Lutheran Church
2113 Harwood Road, Suite 309
PMB 409
Bedford, TX 76021-4703

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:

Mrs. Belinda Borchardt
Iowa Mission District Treasurer,
PO Box 105,
Grafton, IA 50440.

Correspondence should be sent to:

Pastor Solveig Zamzow
Iowa Mission District Secretary
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 Kristine Dohrmann—515-802-2539
Pastor Natacha Kemp—507-785-0412
Pastor Andrew Loomis—712-298-6587
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

In October of 2022, 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. At a subsequent meeting, we also decided to 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 IRS rate is \$0.67 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
Cedar Falls: **Nazareth Evangelical**, Self Study
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**, Call Process
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. Steven Broers
Manchester: **First**, Call Process
Monona, **Faith**: Call Process
Northwood: **Peace**, Pr. Barbara Wills
+ Osage: **First Grace Lutheran Church**
Palmer: **St. John's Lizard Township**,
Marlene Nimke, Lay Minister
Plainfield: **St. John, Western Douglas**, Call Process
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Pr. Ronald Voss
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**—Pr. Khrystle Sullivan
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. John Jensen, Interim
Spencer: **Trinity**, Pr. Renae Behrends
Strawberry Pt.: **Mission in Christ**, Call Process
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

Pastor Solveig Zamzow, Secretary

solveigzamzow@gmail.com

Belinda Borchardt, Treasurer

aayngl@wctatel.net

Mission District Council Members:

Pastor Ron Rasmussen

bigras73@fmctc.com

Pastor Doug Hedman

pdhedman@gmail.com

Pastor David Klappenbach

klappenbach98@rpt.coop

Lyle Hollander

lhollander@premieronline.net

Cindy Gibbs

mcgibbs@acegroup.cc

Dean Armstrong

idedarmy@gmail.com

Disaster Response Coordinator

Betty Burkhalter

bettyburkhalter@hotmail.com

Mission District Registrar

Kathy Scharnhorst

kscharnhorst51@gmail.com

Mission District Website Administrator

Pastor Gary Burkhalter

pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com

Mission District Youth Trip Coordinator

Alana DeMoss

fivekidscrazy@outlook.com

Mission District Communicator/Newsletter Editor

Pastor Barbara Wills

barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 40 congregations.*

*The Iowa Mission District website may be found
at: www.iowamissiondistrict.com.*