



News

of the Iowa Mission District
of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

March 2021

A Word from the Dean

Do Lutherans, have to give up something for Lent?

In my years as a pastor, I have heard this question many times. As a kid, having grown up in a different Christian tradition, my only acquaintance with this sort of discipline came from a grade school friend who was a Roman Catholic. All I knew was that he had to give up meat on Fridays, and that he also tried to give up his favorite drink, Pepsi. To my young mind, the practice seemed a bit odd.

Now that I have grown much, much older and a little bit more mature, the idea of giving up something for Lent makes a bit more sense to me. While not a huge sacrifice, giving up meat one day a week for six weeks does force one to stop and think a bit. And if a person gives up something that makes a big difference in the daily routine, it can make a big impression.

We, as Lutherans, don't HAVE to give up anything for Lent. On the other hand, it is a discipline that a person could choose to practice to focus one's commitment to God and a Godly life, if even for a short time. And even if a person doesn't opt for such a sacrifice, I found once a whole host of things that any Christian should rightly consider giving up, and not just for Lent.

Give up grumbling.

Instead, "In everything, give thanks."

Give up 10 to 15 minutes in bed.

Instead, use that time in prayer.

Give up your worries.

Instead, entrust them to God.

Give up hatred or dislike of anyone.

Instead, learn to love.

Give up the fear that prevents Christian witness.

Instead, seek courage to speak of your faith to others.

Give up spending time in gossip.

Instead, use that time to study your Bible.

Give up TV or screen time on your phone one evening a week.

Instead, visit someone who is lonely or new to the neighborhood.

Give up looking for and talking about other people's worst points.

Instead, concentrate on their best ones.

Give up buying nonessentials for yourself.

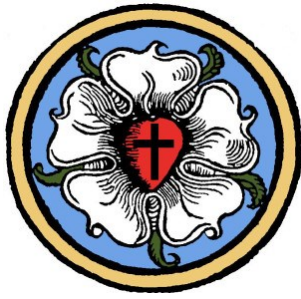
Instead, give that money to God's work or to someone in need.

Give up judging by appearance and by the standards of the world.

Instead, learn to give up yourself to God.

If a person would give up these things and adopt the suggested substitute, one will find oneself turning toward God and toward the neighbor. And isn't that sort of what Jesus had in mind?

Have a Blessed Lent,
Pastor Christopher Staley, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC



Solus Christus—Christ Alone

*Pr. Ryan Henkel
Emmons Lutheran Church
Emmons, MN*

All too often today our world is filled with mixed messages of securing our livelihoods. Our culture would have us fret with all of our wants and needs in life. But God calls us to consider not only our own needs but also the needs of others. God has called us specifically just for that purpose. God uses us to assist and take care of our neighbors that are all around us. As God's children, we bear His Gospel message that Jesus Christ is the way of salvation to a world that desperately needs to hear it.

But people are often offended once they hear the exclusivity of salvation is only through Christ and Christ alone. They demand an answer that they can work for and provide for themselves. They desire their own hope if there is to be any hope at all in that endeavor.

All of this seems to be just another display of humanity's original sinful nature. At what is often called the Fall, Satan tries to take God's place and be in control. Adam and Eve doubt God's promise and accepted Satan's instead. What they chose left them lost in sin and ultimately without hope. Humanity's natural desire since the Fall is to be in complete control of everything around us even our salvation.

Thinking of being saved through Christ alone, one of the most recent ministry opportunities that I have been privileged with is helping Emmons Lutheran Church establish a mission

statement. I posed for them, "What is the biggest identifier for Emmons Lutheran Church, and what is our purpose?" After some deliberation and a few suggestions, I asked them to consider the Altar wall in our Sanctuary which quotes Jesus, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Everyone who is a member, or past member, recalls their fond memories of the Sanctuary at Emmons Lutheran and this unique identifier is who we are as a Church of Christ. After joyful recognition of this fact, we established this mission statement: "Living in the Way, the Truth, and the Life as we love God and serve our neighbors."

As morality and faith seem to be rapidly fading for the culture around us, many are exhausted from trying to secure their salvation, but Jesus has Good News for everyone in Matthew 11, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." This verse rings true as we love God and serve our neighbors around us. Stand strong in Christ-Alone as you live in "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" of Christ as you love God and serve your neighbors. Cast off the mixed messages from our culture, which appeal to many, but ultimately lead us astray to false worship. For it is in the cross of Christ we discover forgiveness and salvation which can only be found in him alone, *Solo Christo*.

This and That From Around the Iowa Mission District

Here are more pictures of congregations and pastors of the Iowa Mission District. We began featuring the Pastors with the congregations they serve a couple of months ago—a way of introducing folks to those they don't know, and also—hopefully—a means of helping us stay connected during the pandemic when we've been unable to attend large group gatherings within the Mission District.

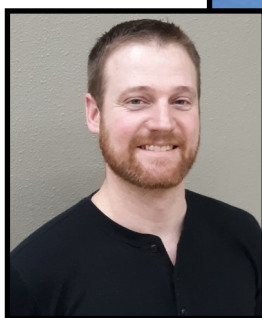
Right: *Unity Lutheran Church in Des Moines is served by sisters, Pastor Donna Joseph and Pastor Diane Joseph.*

Below: *Scott Licht is serving as a Lay Minister at Shepherd of the Prairie Lutheran Church, Huxley. Prior to the COVID pandemic the congregation had been meeting in the Middle School for worship, but are currently sharing worship space with the LCMC congregation in Kelley. A large part of Scott's ministry is his work with Lutherans for Life.*

Bottom: *Lay Minister Eric Patten is serving Zion Lutheran Church, Ruthven.*



Left: Pastor Tim Nappe has been serving Faith Lutheran in Sibley. He and his wife, Bev, are also involved in ministry with the mission, Reaching the Unreached.



Announcements

Upcoming Events

April 24, 2021—9:00 a.m.—Mission District Council meeting

June 7-8, 2021—Iowa Mission District Pastors' Retreat—Best Western Holiday Lodge, Clear Lake, Iowa. Cost is covered by the mission district, but those wanting a private room will be asked for a \$60 donation to offset the added expense.

August 2-6, 2021—NALC Luther Week, Corpus Christi, TX

September 11, 2021—Iowa Mission District Convocation—Emmons Lutheran Church, Emmons, MN.

Please Pray for:

Pastor James Glesne who is undergoing treatments for Multiple Myeloma

Pastor Mel Harris who is undergoing cancer treatments

Amy Cooper (wife of Pastor Jason Cooper)

Pastor David Steffenson who is undergoing chemo for pancreatic cancer.

All who are still at risk for getting COVID-19, those who suffer from it, all who are caring for the sick, and those making decisions for the public good.

New Addresses for the NALC

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.

A Few of My Favorite Psalms

Psalm 121

Psalm 121 lifts the heart to the Lord, and grounds us in the assurance of God's abiding love and care. As I mentioned in an earlier article, this particular Psalm became one of my favorites a number of years ago after a man in one of my congregations shared its deep meaning for him. I had always liked this one, but I like most of the Psalms. However, when a Psalm has sustained us during a difficult time, or when someone shares its special meaning for them, we begin to identify with it at a deeper level. The man who shared his love for Psalm 121 had been part of the invasion force on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He was very young, and had been wounded early in the fighting. The many wounds he sustained in his back did so much damage that he was confined to a hospital bed overseas for ten months, at first not even sure he would survive. He was in his 80s, and by then confined to a wheelchair, when he shared how the words of this Psalm had comforted him and given him hope:

*I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From whence does my help come?
My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.*

After hearing this man's story, I memorized the beautiful phrases of the Psalm and it has become one of the first ones I turn to in times of anxiety or stress. It begins with an invitation to lift our eyes. The psalmist lived at a time when there was much pagan worship, cults of idols whose worshipers would have shrines in the hills. They would go to these places of pagan worship to offer sacrifices and engage in practices that were not only foreign to those who worshiped the Lord, but which also included practices that were an abomination to the Lord. Was the Psalmist saying, "I look around at the foreign gods that others are worshiping. Can any of these things help me? No! *My help doesn't come from idols made with human hands, but from the Creator of all things—the One who made all things.*" This may have been the first understanding of this passage. If so, it still can help us in our time when so many people look to their own false "gods". Does my help come from a better job, larger income, nicer house or

car? Does it come from a more congenial spouse or better behaved children? No! Our help comes from the One who created all things and Who loves us enough that He even sent His Son to die for us and to give us eternal life.

The words of the Psalm go on to assure us of the Lord's never-failing care—that He is always present and never falls asleep. If we are having trouble sleeping, we can remember that the Lord is watching over us so that we need not fear the perils of the night. If we're afraid of "stumbling" in our daily work, we can take courage, knowing that the Lord is by our side; guiding us by His Holy Spirit. The words from the Psalm that remind us of God's ever-present care, bring to mind the words of our Lord Jesus, "*I am the Good Shepherd; I know my own, and my own know me.*" (John 10:14) The Lord who created all things is also the One who gave His life so that we might have fulness of life in Him.

*The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The LORD will keep your going out
and your coming in
from this time forth and for evermore.*

These final words from the Psalm are particularly comforting. They remind me of Jesus' words to His disciples before His ascension: "*Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.*" (Matthew 28:20b) From beginning to end, we belong to the Lord Who created and redeemed us. Christ overcame sin, death, and the devil—He has power over *everything*—in this life and in the life to come. Whether we are at home or out and about; whatever the season of the year or time of day, we are held in the care and keeping of our Lord. Even in a hospital bed far from home, frightened and hurt, lonely and depressed—God is with us. Even death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Congregations of the Iowa Mission District

Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Dan Buhs, Lay Minister
Avoca: **Trinity**, Pr. Eric Meissner
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**,
Prs. Bill and 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**, Pr. Solveig Zamzow
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**, Pr. Ron Voss
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**, Pr. David Steffenson
Ruthven: **Zion**, Lay Minister Eric Patten
St. Ansgar: **First**, Pr. Christopher Staley
+St. Charles, MN—**Trinity**, Pr. David Schafer
St. Olaf: **Norway**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Sheldon: **St. Paul**, Pr. Dan Baker
+Sibley: **Faith**, Pr. Tim Nappe
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

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.

Iowa Mission District Leadership

Pastor Christopher Staley Dean—
cbstaley@netins.net
Craig Lease, Secretary—
pdlease@gmail.com
Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—
pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com

Mission District Council Members:

Pastor Ronald Rasmussen—
bigras73@fmctc.com
Pastor Tony D. Ede—
tonyede@gmail.com
Chris Schlee—
schleemasonry@hotmail.com
Kathy Scharnhorst—
gaf@butler-bremer.com

Disaster Response Coordinator: Betty Burkhalter
bettyburkhalter@hotmail.com

Mission District Communicator
(newsletter editor/web master):

Pastor Barbara Wills—
barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 38 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 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