



# Heartland Heartbeats

**Newsletter of the Heartland Mission District. NALC**

*When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:6-8)*

**April 2023**



## Dean Doug's Musings

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.” (John 20:1)

Though the details of the resurrection in each of the Gospels vary, they all begin at the same time. It was very early and still dark when the first women went to the Jesus' tomb. The world was getting ready for another sunrise. Little did anyone expect or anticipate that a “Son-Rise” had already occurred.

One of my favorite services every year is our sunrise service by the picnic pavilion on the northeast corner of the Bethel church property. It overlooks a large field and the rays of the sun get brighter and brighter as the sun breaks over the horizon. On a number of those Easter mornings, there have been a group of deer making their way across the field to their morning feeding.

The resurrection of Jesus is all about the movement from darkness to light. And we get up extra early to experience the wonder and the awe of the darkness/light contrast. In fact, we find ourselves joining the women and the disciples in the procession to the tomb. Mark 16:2 reports the story this way, “Very early on the first day of the week, just after **SUNRISE**, they were on their way to the tomb. . . .” Clement of Alexandria, one of the early church father caught the significance of Easter when he wrote: Christ has turned our sunsets into sunrises.” And the world has never been the same again.

At sunset, except for a few, it seemed that the world cared little about what had taken place on that hill outside Jerusalem, but at sunrise, the disciples knew that with the stone rolled back and Jesus not there, a power greater than anyone ever imagined had raised Jesus from the dead, and turned the world upside down with the new life that the risen Lord gave.

At sunset, the cross seemed to be a horrendous instrument of torture and painful death. At sunrise, that same cross became a powerful symbol of life and love and the way that God could turn life's worst into God's best. In fact, how many of us wear a cross today as a symbol of reverence, faith, and identity.

At sunset, the grave, sealed with an immovable stone and heavily guarded, seemed conclusive evidence that

death was the end. Very early on the first day of the week, the stone was rolled back as a living proof that God has the power to move even the greatest obstacles of life. At sunset, the Galilean rabbi named Jesus was dead, but at the dawn on that new day he was truly the risen Lord and Savior and conqueror of sin, death and the devil.

No doubt about it, the resurrection of Jesus transformed the world then and for all times. Indeed, it is a celebration of light. And Jesus is still turning sunsets into sunrises. That's why we are Easter people. We have all had any number of sunsets in our lives. John writes “The Word (Jesus) gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to all. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.” (John 1:4-5 NLV) May we reflect his light and life this Easter and always.

## Dean Doug Gast



## Lutheran Week—August 7-11, 2023

Every other year the North American Lutheran Church gathers for what has come to known as LutheranWeek. It is more than just a meeting or a conference, it is a time of being renewed and informed of the latest things going on in our Church body. It is a time of connecting with brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a time of what Christ is doing in and through all our congregations. The Braaten-Benne Lectures complete a six-year theme on the Holy Trinity entitled “God the Father Creates . . . in His Image.” And our overall theme is **Missio Dei** as we celebrate the fact that everything we do as a mission-driven Lutheran body comes from God and His mission which is one of our Core values. Our job is to seek the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Commission into the world — preaching the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. For details and registration information, go to the [NALC website](https://www.heartlandnalc.org).



**May 5, 2023**  
**NALC**  
**Faith Formation Festival**



**May 6, 2023**  
**Ohio Mission Region Convocation &**  
**Heartland Mission District Convocation**

*Speaking the truth from sincere hearts,  
 The one whose walk is blameless,  
 who does what is righteous,  
 who speaks the truth from their heart;  
 Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
 for you are God my Savior,  
 and my hope is in you all day long.*  
 Psalm 15:2b, 25:5

Last December I received a call from Bert Schultz who is the Dean of the NW Ohio District. He asked if we would like to join the 5 Ohio districts in sharing a convocation together. I brought the idea to the Heartland Council in January and they felt it would be a good idea.

So on Friday and Saturday, May 5 and 6, we will be gathering at Grace Lutheran Church in Westerville, Ohio to have a joint convocation. (Grace is on the west side of Columbus.) There will be keynote speakers and workshops as well as worship. Some of the presentations will include "Raising God's children to be disciples in a broken world;" "Suicide in the Bible;" and "How do we keep the faith in the school system." Here is a sampling of the workshop topics: "Walking with Youth, Gender Dysphoria;" "Grief in Children and Adolescence;" and "Mission and Ministry in Tanzania." You can attend either Friday or Saturday or both days. Cost is \$30 each day or \$50 for both.

We will have time as a district to take care of Heartland business. And we have the added benefit of getting to know brothers and sisters from other area churches.

We will be sending out schedules and registrations by the end of this month. We know this is different, but the more we can expand our reach the more it will benefit our ministries. All are welcome if you would like to take advantage of the educational and inspirational opportunity in our Midwestern Area of the NALC.

### NEXUS - For High School Youth



The [Nexus](#) Institute is a fun week of intensive learning for high school with a focus on "What Is God's Call On Your Life?". This NALC focused program led by the campus ministry and Prof. Mark Mattes exists to

transform the landscape of the Lutheran Church through innovative and intentional development of young adults who want to be more involved in the nexus of faith, life, and the church. The institute is a life-changing opportunity where young adults engage in theological learning, leadership development, and vocational discernment, all in the context of intentional Christian community, and are sent out to transform their local communities.

- **July 16, 2023 – July 22, 2023 Sunday-Saturday.**
- **Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa**
- **Cost is only \$100 per student**

To register contact: Kate Faas, Director of The NEXUS Institute 515-868-2810 [nexus@grandview.edu](mailto:nexus@grandview.edu)

St. John's, Fort Wayne is offering transport for up to 7 youth to go with them. Contact Melanie at [cbuscocasper@gmail.com](mailto:cbuscocasper@gmail.com) to arrange getting a spot.

### Iowa MD Developing Sermon Resource for Empty Pulpit Congregations

Pastor Gary Burkhalter is working on a sermon library for the website: [www.iowamissiondistrict.com](http://www.iowamissiondistrict.com). This is in response to the shortage of pastors and meant to assist small congregations that frequently hold lay-led services. He has sent out a request to our Mission District pastors, asking for message manuscripts that could be downloaded and used by congregations when they need to have lay-led services. If you are willing to share, he needs them submitted in PDF format with the season and lectionary year (A, B, or C) noted. It might also be helpful to include the Scripture text being used. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Gary at [pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com](mailto:pgburkhalter52@hotmail.com)

### DAILY PLUNGE



The Daily Plunge is just that. A quick plunge into a scripture reading taken from the daily lectionary. We suggest you read the passage for yourself. We hope the Daily Plunge will help you to increase your

understanding of scripture and deepen your connection with the LORD. It is available in video on Facebook and Youtube and in audio format on apple itunes, spotify and everywhere your favorite podcasts are found.

### PASTORAL VACANCIES

We continue to have 5 of our congregations in the search process for a new pastor.

Keep these brothers and sisters in prayer as they discern, the right person with the right gifts, with the right fit for their mission and ministry. Here are our churches:

- First Lutheran in Hammond In
- Antioch Lutheran in Hoagland In
- St John's in Sunman In.
- House of Prayer in Elizabethtown Ky
- Living Faith in Wabash In.

We trust the Holy Spirit is at work in each of those places and patience and faith and that even now that Spirit is stirring in the life of a faithful pastor.

### ON LINE CONFIRMATION COURSE

Some good folks in the NALC Southern Area have been working on launching an Online Confirmation program in January. This is in response to the need some congregations may have because they are currently without a pastor, have a small number of confirmation age youth, or both. If you or a congregation you know is interested, contact the Southern Area Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Mark Braaten, 903-316-1594 [mbraaten@oslctyler.org](mailto:mbraaten@oslctyler.org)



### Ideas? Contributions? Please Submit!

I invite you to submit material for inclusion in future newsletters, but please keep your information concise, to the point, and use "links" if you want to provide the reader with access to "long readings." — Doug Gast, HMD Dean, 317 727-0612, [dgast1950@gmail.com](mailto:dgast1950@gmail.com)

Blessings to each and everyone of you. If there is anyway I can serve or be of assistance, please call, text, or email.

*Dean Doug Gast*