



THE SERVANT

The monthly newsletter of Servants of Christ Lutheran Church, a congregation of The North American Lutheran Church serving the Cedar Rapids area

Meeting at Robins City Hall Community Room, 265 South Second St., Robins, Iowa 52328
Worship: 9:00 am; Fellowship & Coffee: 10:00;
Bible Class and Sunday School: 10:15
Ronald Voss, Pastor cell: 563-206-4611; land: 563-682-7359

*******January 2021**

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE!

(regular type: narrative; italics: Lucado speaking; bold: Candles speaking)

A few nights ago an electrical storm caused a neighborhood blackout. Needing illumination, I felt my way through the darkness into the storage closet where we keep the candles. The candles were already in their stands, melted to various degrees by previous use. I lit four of them and a veil of darkness suddenly radiated with soft light.

How great it is to have light! I said aloud, then spoke to the candles. *If you do such a good job here in the closet, just wait till I get you out where you are really needed!* I grabbed the largest candle to take into the living room then a voice said, **Now, hold it right there!** I jumped, then smiled, assuming my wife was trying to “spook” me. I took another step towards the door when the voice, a little louder this time, said, **Hold it, I said!!!!**

Who said that? I did. The voice was near my hand. *Who are you? What are you? I’m a candle.* The candle I was holding burned brightly, standing tall in its wooden holder. I looked around, convinced the voice was coming from a hidden source. **There’s no one here but you, me, and the rest of the candles,** the voice informed me. I lifted the candle to take a closer look, and you won’t believe what I saw. There was a tiny face in the wax. (Told you you wouldn’t believe me.) The face said, **Don’t take me out of here. What? Don’t take me out of this room!!!!**

What to you mean? I have to take you out. You’re a candle; your job is to give light. It’s dark in our house. You have to come out and light up the place. But you can’t take me out; I’m not ready; I need more preparation. I’ve decided I need to re-search this job of light-giving so I won’t go out and make a bunch of mistakes. You’d be surprised how distorted the glow of an untrained candle can be. So I’m doing some studying. I just finished a book on wind resistance, and I’m in the middle of great series of tapes on wick build-up. Oh, and I’m reading the new bestseller on flame display. You might like it; it’s called Waxing Eloquent-ly.
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All right then, I'll blow you out and take one of the others. We aren't going either. You are candles and your job is to light dark places! Well, that's what you think, but I'm busy. I'm meditating on the importance of light. It's really enlightening. Deciding to try and reason with them, I said, Listen, I'm all for study and meditating but you guys have been in here for weeks! That's surely enough time.

With that, a short, fat candle spoke up. **I'm waiting to get my life together. I'm not stable enough. I lose my temper. You might say I'm a hothead.** The final candle chimed in, **Lighting the darkness is not my gift.** Why was all this sounding too familiar?

The last candle continued, **I'm a singer. I sing to other candles to encourage them to burn more brightly.** And with that, the candle broke into an admittedly delighted rendition of This Little Light of Mine. The other three joined in.

Come on, guys, I have a crisis on my hand. I need your light NOW. But the candles kept right on singing. Four perfectly healthy candles singing about light but refusing to come out of the closet and do the job. Shaking my head, I left the closet. My wife saw me exit and wondered where the candles were. I shook my head, having no good explanation, and asked, *Where did you get those candles?* She announced she had bought them from a church that was closing down. I understood.



This is a delightful parable from Max Lucado's book, "God Came Near." Perhaps it made you smile. But hopefully it also gave you pause. We enter the season of Epiphany when we focus on Jesus, the newborn King, being the Light of the world. "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.: (John 1:5) "Arise, shine, for your Light has come." (Isaiah 60:1) That Light commands us, His followers, to be light. "You are the light of the world . . . Nobody lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel." (John 5:14-16)

The church candles in the closet did not want to come out and share their light. Pray that in this Epiphany season, the Holy Spirit will nudge us out of our worship services and warm homes to share the light of Christ with a world living in darkness.

Yours in Christ,
Ron

The NALC 2020 Vision: a 10-Point Plan

The NALC is a mission-minded, mission committed church.

The following represents a 2020 Vision for the North American Lutheran Church. The development of this Vision has included input from NALC Staff, Executive Council, Mission District Deans, the NALS President and Board of Regents, and other appropriate parties. This was approved by the NALC Convocation this past August.

This plan supports the Four Core Values of the NALC. It also represents the commitments we are striving to accomplish withing the nest four years. By the year 2023, we see . . .

1. Church body committed to developing Disciple-Making Congregations & Cultures. *Immediate Goal:* More than 200 congregations intentionally developing Disciple-making cultures by 2023.

Next month point #2 of the plan will be shared.

Mission Giving for January

NALC General Fund: \$667 (2021 support for this outreach is \$8,000)

Friends of Madagascar Mission: \$1,750 (support for two evangelists, Tsarmania Daniel and Realy Daniel)

Our 2021 Mission Spending Plan has been expanded to \$24,550, a \$10,000 increase from 2020.

The Gospel of Mark

Study begins January 3

Topics include:

The Messiah Arrives
Who Speaks for God?
Fruitful and Unfruitful Soil
Fear and Faith
The Training of the Twelve
Unclean?
The Unexpected Mission
The Right Question
The Fruitless Tree
What Matters Now
Betrayal
End and Beginning



Join us following worship each Sunday.