

## “What Must I DO? . . . What Does It SAY?”

As Augustana District churches of LCMC, it is my hope and prayer that our “Freedom in Christ” keeps us “Accountable to One Another.” How might this happen? By saying, and also doing, the hard and joyful work of “Theology, Church and Mission.”

One goal of the recent Augustana District Convention was to take an honest look at the direction and purpose of the district. We identify our focus by three words: *Theology. Church. Mission.* In order to prepare for “the long haul” (the convention theme), we need to interpret how these key words shape us.

An author I quote extensively in this article, Michael Horton, puts it this way, “If you want to know *who* you are in history, it helps to know *where* you are in history.” At this point in the history of the Augustana District, how are we tending to *Theology, Church and Mission*? How can we best serve within the association at *this* particular time in LCMC’s history? When you put these questions in the broader context of Christian witness in American culture (with religious pluralism and cultural relativism all around), what might Lutheran theology offer to this ongoing challenge and opportunity?

We know the outcome is sure. We are grounded in the conviction of Isaiah 55: “My word will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish that for which I purpose and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” The Word of God will cut its own course in the world. That is not in question. The question has more to do with how the Word is heard and functions within our particular context.

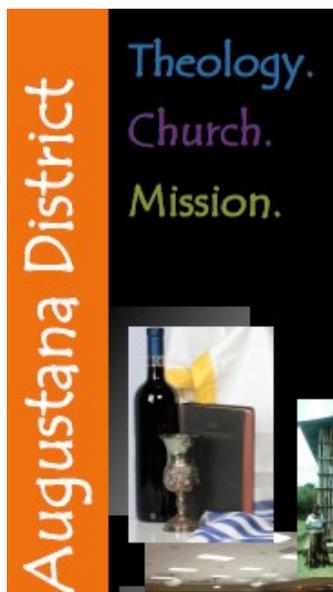
In the face of the challenges before us, many times we ask, “What shall we *do*?” This is not new. The rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked, “What shall I *do*...?” In such situations, Jesus would often come back with “What does it *say*?” Part of tending to *Theology, Church and Mission* is certainly related to the dialectic between hearing and doing, faith and works, law and gospel. Let’s consider this dialectic by looking at some familiar themes.

“**Great Commission**” Jesus’ words in Matthew 28 often get treated as everything we *do*, after the Word is proclaimed. But the truth is that the “Great Commission” could be called the “Great Announcement.” Before there can be a mission, there has to be a message. In fact, the message *is* the mission. Horton is helpful here: “It is easy to subordinate the message to the mission, the evangel to evangelism, as if being busy with outreach could trump the content of what we have to communicate. Of course it can go the other way too. We can be preoccupied with getting the message right without actually getting it out.” Further he writes, “There is no reason for us to go into all the world as Christ’s ambassadors apart from the work he has already accomplished.” This is a key to understanding the unique calling Christ Jesus has given only to his church.

“**Living the Gospel**” Horton writes, “There is a lot of loose talk these days about our ‘living the gospel’ or even ‘being the gospel,’ as if our lives were the Good News. But in truth, people who invoke St. Francis about wordless preaching and how the example of our lives will preach better than anything we say are simply wrong because nothing you or I or all of us together do can add one task to Christ’s completed mission.” Here again, the saying and the doing are tied together. The “gospel” is a particular word proclaimed that accomplishes/does the thing for which it is sent. When we separate the saying and the doing, we confuse law and gospel. This is “the biggest mistake believers make when interpreting scripture.” (Horton)

“**Faith and Works**” Connected to the whole matter of saying and doing is the related matter of faith and works. Even a casual reading of Paul and James tells us that the debate and confusion between faith and works has been there from the beginning of Christianity. The work of the Lutheran Reformers was largely about this matter. The following quote from Harvey Cox—some 50 years ago—tells us how little has changed: “The insistence of the Reformers that the church was ‘where the gospel was preached and the sacraments rightly administered’ will simply not do today. Rather, the church appears whenever a new inclusive human community emerges through social action.” (*The Secular City*, 1965)

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# World Missions - Tabor / Ethiopia

By: Pastor Paul Knudson



## Nepal Earthquake Cries Out for Our Responses

The recent 7.8 magnitude earthquake has taken thousands of lives, left millions homeless, and created a crisis of horrendous proportions. Christians are on the scene through agencies such as Lutheran World Relief, Samaritan's Purse, and World Vision.

You are invited to go to [lwr.org](http://lwr.org) or [samaritanspurse.org](http://samaritanspurse.org) as excellent sources of information. The first word from LWR is that they have project areas in the midst of the devastation. Gifts are needed to transport 1,000 personal care kits, 100 community water filtration units, and more than 9,000 quilts. Checks can be mailed to Lutheran World Relief, 700 Light Street, Baltimore, MD, 21230, online at [lwr.org](http://lwr.org), or by phone, 800-597-5972. You are certainly free to give through whatever charity you choose.

## 2015 Funds Sent to the Tabor Congregation to Date and Their Use

\$15,000 was sent in the first quarter. These gifts have enabled the following:

- \$2,100 was given to evangelist support to bring the total to 46
- \$2,500 was given to make it possible for the agriculturalist to work with five farmers
- \$8,000 for land purchase for two outreach centers
- \$2,400 for opening a new mission site

Their board of elders extends their "very great blessings" for this support.

### Evangelists' Support and Worship Centers

#### Construction Top Priorities Now

\$5,000 of the challenge gift of \$12,500 has been received and will be sent to begin worship center construction.

When we meet this challenge, and Tabor meets the total, \$50,000 will be available for constructing three worship centers.

In June \$17,100 will be sent for the second half of the year's support of 46 evangelists.

\$800 will be sent from a designated gift for working with an additional farmer

\$200 has been given for a bicycle



## Priorities for Giving to Help Tabor Congregation

### Meet its Outreach Goals

Renewing Evangelist Sponsorships for a second year (\$600 each)

20 plus congregations or individuals stepping up to cover evangelists not yet sponsored (\$600 each)

\$12,500 to meet challenge gift for worship centers construction

15 to 20 bicycles for evangelists (good project for VBS or Sunday School offerings)

Undesignated funds to provide training for evangelists, \$4,000 needed

All of the above can be given as we go through 2015.

### Board of World Missions Invites Your Prayers

The experience of the AD with the Tabor Partnership has been and continues to be a blessing beyond anyone's imagination. The Board wishes first to extend its profound gratitude for all the generosity. With this experience we as a board have been challenged by other world mission leaders to answer our Lord's call to invite others within LCMC to catch the vision of what coming together from the ground up can do in partnering with others around the world who share our commitment to the Great Commission. We are meeting frequently now to consider what directions that may take. One opportunity the AD has been given is to lead a breakout session at this fall's LCMC national gathering in the Dallas, TX, area. Pray that the Spirit will lead us to action pleasing to our Lord.

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New Life of Duluth, MN has requested membership into the Augustana District and the council will take action on this request at their June 6th virtual meeting.

## Welcome to New Congregations

We would also like to recognize and welcome the churches most recently added to the AD roster: Hawley Lutheran Church in Hawley, MN, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Badger, MN, Peace Lutheran Church in Watertown, MN and Faith Lutheran Church in Pendleton, OR.

## Welcome to New Council and Board Members

District Council, Loren Brekke, Hanska, MN  
District Council, Pr. Craig Nehring, Caroline, WI  
Secretary, Jane Evers, Comfrey, MN  
District Council, Lou Weeks, Marshall, MN  
Board of Theology and Ministry, Pr. Brian Crocker

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