

Spring 2013

# AUGUSTANA DISTRICT

Tell others about Jesus!

# What?

They were stars of the youth group. They maybe even sang in the praise band or led worship. And then... they graduate from high school and they leave church. What happened?"

The author goes on to list the "Top 10 Reasons We're Losing our Youth." This is a matter on which I have reflected for quite some time. While each of his top ten had merit, one of them really caught my attention: "You sent them out unarmed." He explains it this way: "Let's just be honest, most of our churches are sending youth into the world embarrassingly ignorant of our faith. How could we not? We've jettisoned catechesis, sold them on 'deeds not creeds' and encouraged them to start the quest to find 'God's plan for their life.'" We've made Jesus work on their terms, in a way that will fit in to and help their lives. He goes on to mention how agnostics and atheists, rather than dumbing down the message, treat young people as intelligent and challenge their intellect with deep thoughts of question and doubt.

All of us who have attended conventions or conferences or rallies have heard the keynote speaker make that urgent plea that we need to "tell others about Jesus!" Absolutely! But what comes out of our mouths when we try? What have we really said about Jesus, and how is that actually heard? Some reflections are listed in the right column. The words we say make a difference. Still, it remains true; we need to tell about Jesus. There is nothing truer or more urgent.

If I have your attention, then I encourage you to read the rest of this newsletter to learn about the current focus of the Augustana District. The hard work of theology is a good and necessary part of the Great Commission work before us. Our 2013 Theological Conference in February helped us focus on what a Lutheran voice has to offer Christian witness (see article on p. 2). We will further this discussion at our 2013 Augustana District Convention (see p. 3). In all we do, a key mission of the Augustana District is to equip each other to "tell others about Jesus" in honest, faithful, intelligent and simple words of our faith. I can assure you that you will be hearing more about this facet of our work!

In Christ,

Pastor [Randy Freund](#), Chair of the Augustana District Council

A colleague recently gave me an article he knew would catch my attention. He was right. It begins like this: "We all know them, the kids who were raised in church.

## Telling Others about Jesus...

**Our best intentions can go badly for any number of reasons:**

- Do we water Jesus down to make him acceptable?
- Have we built him up to make him scary?
- Are we assuming that people both know the story of Jesus and have a positive perception of it?
- Have we tried to make him sound cool, relevant, sophisticated, edgy and even a bit cagey?
- Are we tempted to spew out all we know?
- Might we open our lips and realize we don't know what words to say?
- Do we lift him up as a great prophet and guru beyond our wisdom?
- Have we brought him down to earth and talked about, say, how we are his hands and feet?
- Do we limit him to the feeling of love you get?
- Are we promising him as a ticket to a better (and eternal) life?

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Join the conversation.  
Attend the Augustana District Convention.  
Info on p. 3.



**SPREAD**  
the Word

# Proclaiming the Word WITH A LUTHERAN VOICE

Over 90 participants from around the country gathered at the Augustana District/Institute of Lutheran Theology Theological Conference on February 3-5, 2013 in Bloomington, Minnesota. The theme, “Proclaiming the Word with a Lutheran Voice,” challenged participants to wonder whether a uniquely “Lutheran Voice” did indeed have anything to contribute to Christianity’s urgent need to “go and make disciples” in a post-Christendom age. While Christianity faces the challenge of an age in which it seems less and less important, and more importantly where fewer and fewer people confess faith in Christ, many different voices vie to be heard (as, for example, evangelicalism and liberalism). Is there a need for a uniquely Lutheran Voice to be heard? Participants came away from the conference with a resounding, “Yes!”



Dr. Mark Granquist

Dr. Mark Granquist, professor of Church History at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, began the conference with an excellent presentation that tracked Lutheran witness in North

America. It was followed by a guided discussion led by Pastor Scott Grorud (Faith Lutheran in Hutchinson, MN), which resulted in a lively and fruitful discussion. While much of Lutheranism in America began as ethnic enclaves, there was a time when the Lutheran witness made an impact on the Christian landscape beyond its ethnic identities. Granquist reminded participants of the numerous Lutheran synods that have existed in America’s history. Through especially the last century, merger and consolidation brought many, if not most, of these synods into much larger bodies. This,

claimed Granquist, actually accomplished the opposite of what merger proponents predicted. Instead of making the Lutheran witness stronger, it watered down differences between Lutherans, resulting in a loss of vitality and rigor. Instead of being mandated to conform to the organizational and theological constraints of a larger body, Lutherans were most healthy – and the strongest in their witness – when synods or districts were free to function as “the Church” in their own unique ways, gathering around their own common interests, goals, and theology. [Editor’s note: this is precisely what the Augustana District is seeking to accomplish.]

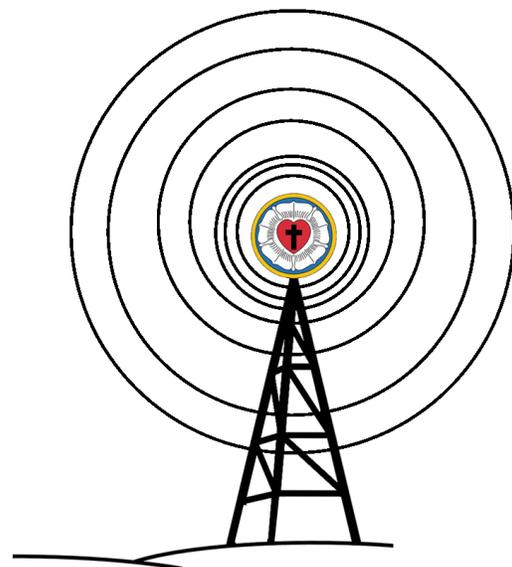
Presentations and updates were given by our partners in ministry. Pastor Tim Swenson spoke about the Institute of Lutheran Theology’s commitment to a Theology of the Cross and in instilling these beliefs in its students; Pastor Steven King gave an update about Sola Publishing’s swift growth in producing curricula and Bible studies that are grounded in the Lutheran witness; and Pastor Mark Vander Tuig spoke about the spectrum of theology within LCMC, and expressed gratitude for Augustana’s witness within LCMC.

For many, as indicated on evaluation forms, the highlight of the event was Dr. Steven Paulson’s presentation on Monday afternoon. A professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Paulson



Dr. Steven Paulson

conveyed that there is indeed a “Lutheran Voice,” and that it is essential because it represents the heart of the Christian witness. Paulson identified



election, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, the law-gospel distinction, and the bondage of the will as the key components of the Lutheran voice. What follows are some “quotable quotations” from Paulson’s presentation:

“That little parable about the light and bushel was written especially by the Holy Spirit just for you Lutherans—and just for a time like this in which the church has been reduced to what Luther called in his own day, “just a fistful of dough, hardly one little biscuit in a whole bakery.’ ... I’m speaking here of the great offense of election—and it never ceases being a hard attack on faith, though preachers of every religious stripe have attempted to soften the blow with their dainty ‘theologies’ of why bad things happen to good people—and their platitudes: ‘chin up, tomorrow is another day.’”

“But here [God] comes, toiling with your sins, putting them on his back and carrying them to death. He forgives you in particular—when the preacher announces it to you—so that this promise is the apostolic faith against the offense of God giving a preacher to one and not another, and against the hatred of an electing God.”

“We say the Lutheran voice distinguishes the outward word, from the inner spark. Or we can say that one is made righteous not by deeds of the law, but of faith alone, apart from works. Indeed, we will say that there

are two kinds of justice or justification, one that belongs to this old world and concerns the law as justice to the neighbor, and the other is simply the forgiveness of sins.”

“But the one note I want to concentrate on with you as the defining mark of the Lutheran Voice—our shibboleth—is the distinction between the law and the gospel.”

“Even old Luther commonly confessed to his students when lecturing, ‘Satan has often scolded me for believing the Christian faith to be contained in such few words, ‘The warfare is ended and iniquity is forgiven.’” The Gospel is an amazingly short word—and it leaves nothing to your will.”

“So, this is the Voice of the Lutheran. It is new, because the world is offended by it, since it takes away their free will and the law in one fell swoop, giving everything to Christ, who chooses whom he wants.”

On Tuesday morning, a panel discussion consisting of Swenson (ILT), Freund (established church pastor), Vander Tuig (LCMC), and Pastor Janine Rew-Werling (mission start, Hosanna Lutheran in Watertown, SD), continued the discussion. Each spoke about the importance of the witness in each of their own ministry settings. The “Law-Gospel” dialectic, election, and the simul iustus et peccator were identified as crucial contributions that Lutherans make to the broader Church. And again, evaluation forms indicated a strong appreciation for the value of this section.

It should also be noted that excellent preaching was provided by Steve King and by Tim Swenson.

A generous \$1000 grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans provided for the video-taping of this event, and for turning it into an adult education curriculum for churches. The Institute of Lutheran Theology is developing this curriculum, and it will be available soon.

The Augustana District is



Pictured are Thrivent Financial Associates Diane Knorr and Roland Ebent, Community Engagement Leader for Thrivent Jeff Meacham, President of McLeod County Chapter for Thrivent Cindy Eggersgluess, Pr Mark Richardson of Augustana District

committed to promoting and proclaiming a vigorous confessional witness within LCMC and to the broader church. It is committed, in its bylaws, to providing an annual, high quality theological conference not only for pastors of the Augustana District, but for all pastors within LCMC and beyond.

# Spread the Word

2013 Augustana District Convention

Saturday, April 27

Christ the King Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, MN

[Learn more here!](#)

All member churches are encouraged to send delegates, and all interested people are warmly invited to attend.

The convention will begin with an 8:00 a.m. registration and an 8:30 a.m. opening worship, and it will conclude with a closing devotion at 4:30 p.m. [A registration form is available here.](#)

Further details and information will soon be available on the District’s website and will come in the mail to member churches. Deadline for registrations is April 19, 2013.



# Introducing Pastor Tom Christenson

## South Dakota Service Coordinator for Augustana District

The Augustana District Council is pleased to announce the appointment of Pastor Tom Christenson as the South Dakota Service Coordinator for the Augustana District. He will support the ministries of Lutheran congregations in South Dakota, and promote the Augustana District. South Dakota has 36 LCMC congregations, 17 NALC congregations (of which 6 are also LCMC), and 8 of these congregations have formally affiliated with the Augustana District.

Pastor Christenson has spent his entire ministry in South Dakota – in

Hecla, then as Senior Pastor of Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer in Watertown, and now as pastor of the new Augustana District/LCMC congregation in Huron, Hope Lutheran Church. Ordained in 1990, he is a graduate of the University of South Dakota, Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, and the U.S. Army Chaplain School. He is a 20 year veteran of the Minnesota Army National Guard, serving ten of those years as a chaplain. Tom and his wife Janet have three children.



Pastor Tom Christenson

## The Ordination of Benjamin Hollingstead

A gathering of colleagues, family and friends celebrated the ordination to the ministry of Word & Sacrament of Pastor Benjamin Hollingstead. Ben has been called to serve as Associate Pastor at Christus Lutheran Church, an Augustana District congregation in Clintonville, WI.

The ordination took place on February 9 at St John's Lutheran Church in Stacy, MN, where Ben did his internship and where his wife, Amber, grew up in the area. The worship was led by Pastor Emeritus Al Valerius of St John's. The sermon



Pastor Benjamin Hollingstead

was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Steve Paulson, Ben's academic advisor. Pr. Tony Stoutenburg of Grace Lutheran Church in Hayward, WI, served as the ordainer on behalf of LCMC.

Sr. Pastor Brian Crocker and several other members made the trip from Clintonville to be part of the ordination. Christus' Vice-President Jean Hundertmark read the Letter of Call under which Ben was ordained.



Rev. Dr. Gene Sipprell (CCCC USA) Ben's CPE Supervisor, Pr. Tony Stoutenburg (Grace Lutheran, Hayward, WI), Rev. Dr. Mark Granquist (Luther Seminary) Pastor Emeritus Al Valerius (St John's / Stacy, MN), Rev. Jacob Kanoke (United Methodist Church of Kenya), Rev. Dr. Steve Paulson (Luther Seminary), Pr. Wolfgang Laudert (West Union, Cologne, MN) and Pr. Brian Crocker (Christus Lutheran, Clintonville, WI.)

Pastor Crocker commented, "The whole congregation is looking forward eagerly to receiving Ben, Amber and their newborn into our life and ministry here in Clintonville."

Ben, Amber and their newborn daughter, Addison Lynn (born Feb 17), will relocate to Clintonville in March.

# Timely Support on Two Fronts

The Augustana District is working with Building Leaders for a Global Harvest to build up Ethiopia's next generation of leaders.

We in the Augustana District are vital partners in giving birth to a huge vision for developing leaders for the Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, other evangelical churches, and even for the fragile democracy which is Ethiopia. At present our support is needed on two fronts.

- 1:** Gifts from congregations and individuals to complete our \$23,000 goal would be especially helpful if given in the next few months. We are closing in on this goal but still need to gather in approximately \$10,000. Gifts can be sent to the Augustana District and designated for BLGH.
- 2:** Books are needed, both theologically oriented and on leadership issues. Pastors may want to trim their own libraries of good Biblical studies, other theological works, and on leading parishes. Members may have books that address key elements of leadership and even business and accounting matters. Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minnesota, is a depository for them. Faith Lutheran in Hutchinson, Minnesota, will also receive them. The intent is to fill an entire sea container with needed books.

## **A Call for Completing Support for Four Seminarians of the Central Synod, EECMY**

With thanksgiving for great generosity we have in hand \$2,900 for the second and final year of support for three men and one woman preparing to be pastors in this huge and largely rural synod of some 750,000 members. The hope is that we can receive \$1,100 by early August so that we can send one payment of the \$4,000 needed for these four students. Please clearly designate your gift for the "Seminarians."



### **Augustana District Council**

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For more information about the Augustana District, please feel free to contact either of the following:

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or visit:

[www.AugustanaDistrict.org](http://www.AugustanaDistrict.org)

for more information, including a Roster of Augustana District Churches.