



There's Nothing More Practical than Theology



The annual theological conference this year represents a concerted effort within the Augustana District to show why the key words, *Theology, Church, Mission*, are in a dynamic relationship. One feeds and depends on the other. Each word is distinctive, but is connected to the others.

Pr. Randy Freund In the brief time I have served as Service Coordinator, I am often asked this question: "What are the benefits of joining the Augustana District?" The answer to this good question lies in the answer to another one: "Does your congregation wish to partner with other congregations to serve the gospel at a critical time in church history?" To answer "yes" to this would be a good reason to partner with the Augustana District. By joining, we then hold each other accountable and make sure that *Theology, Church, Mission* are held in a dynamic relationship.

The beginning of a new calendar year is a natural time to look back and look forward. Where have we been and where might God be leading us?

Why We Formed

In order to see where we might be headed in 2015, it might be good to remember why the Augustana District was formed. Leaders who were interested in forming a district asked questions like:

*How do keep each other accountable to Lutheran theology?

*How do we support and serve congregations who request assistance with such things as the call process, conflict resolution, starting a mission church, congregation and youth retreats, etc.?

*How can we efficiently do mission work together to carry out the Great Commission?

The Year in Review

During this past year the Augustana District stayed focused on its objective and those three key words: *Theology, Church, Mission*. Here are a few examples:

- *Theological conference
- *Confirmation retreat
- *Conflict resolution seminar
- *Annual Convention
- *Long range planning retreat
- *Women of the Word convention

This, of course, does not account for the relationships that have developed among leaders, clergy and congregations. Pastor Tom Christenson (S.D. Service Coordinator) has fostered key relationships in South Dakota.

I think it is fair to say and important to note that our most active and vital work in this past year has come through the Board of World Missions. For good reasons, this is not likely to change. You will certainly be hearing more about the continued partnership with the Tabor Congregation in Hawassa, Ethiopia.

It is also important to say a word of thanks to Pastor Mark Richardson for the dedicated service he provided the district as our first Service Coordinator. God's blessings to Mark as he now focuses on his new call at Christ the King Lutheran in Hutchinson, MN. Thanks also to Faith Lutheran Church for their support and the Augustana staff of Wendy, Diane and Karen!

What's Ahead in 2015?

Your District Council has met four times since September. They are focused and ready to do what they can to move the district forward in new ways. Here are some of the areas of particular focus:

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AugustanaDistrict

www.AugustanaDistrict.org

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Council Chairman's Report

As we begin 2015, we look back with gratitude to our members and congregations who have generously provided support to enable the District to continue and indeed to expand its mission. Much of our program is overseen by our various boards whose function is to assist members and congregations. The Board of Ministry and Theology administers the LCMC's Pastoral Certification process and the Augustana District's Pastoral Endorsement process. The Board provides theological and professional oversight and accountability to our clergy.

We note the District's growing involvement with the Tabor Congregation in Ethiopia. The Board of World Missions has developed a partnership with these remarkable Christians who dedicate the majority of their annual budget to train and support evangelists who are spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a Muslim majority.

The District is intent on broadening its services to congregations and expanding its reach to become a truly non-geographical district of the LCMC. The Board of Congregational Missions exists to help, support, guide and partner with congregations that want to join LCMC and/or associate with the Augustana District. The District is developing a system of volunteer coordinators to assist congregations on a local or regional level.

Many LCMC congregations are challenged to offer programs in Christian Education and other activities due to cost. The District Council is promoting inter-congregational cooperation to share the financial burden of organizing youth or adult activities. Limited funding, think of it as "seed" money, is available from the District to encourage and assist this collaboration. The District can help congregations researching salary guidelines, locating

pastors for interim positions and pulpit supply, and providing guidance in conflict resolution.

A couple of exciting events are scheduled in February. The annual Theological Conference begins on February 1 in Bloomington, Minnesota. District pastors are expected to attend but lay people also are encouraged to participate. The second annual Confirmation Retreat begins February 13 in Alexandria, Minnesota. Register your students for a fun-filled, inspirational and educational weekend. Details on both events are elsewhere in this newsletter.

Mark your calendars for the Augustana District Convention, April 25, 2015 in Hutchinson, Minnesota. As noted above, the District is intent on living up to its "non-geographical" billing. As is often pointed out, the majority of our congregations are in the upper Midwest. We invite congregations from around the country who share our theology and philosophy to join us. Our by-laws authorize a council of up to 15 members so there is room for more! The District wants you! We strongly encourage congregations to nominate individuals to serve on the council. The terms are three years and the election is held at the convention. The council meets several times annually, but physical attendance is not required. Some members participate via Skype. It works well and enables communication without the travel.

These are exciting times for the District. Thank you for your support. Your District Council and Service Coordinator look forward to working with you in 2015.

Gaylen Lerohl
District Council Chair



AD, Spreading its Wings

As a non-geographical district, AD is intentionally encompassing areas outside of the Midwest. The district is developing regions within AD that will have regional coordinators that work closely with the district's service coordinator to serve 'new' areas. Currently the focus is on South Dakota, Texas and Wisconsin. In a planning session, AD considered what needs in these areas the district could address. Of course, the spread is a process requiring time and will have its share of learning curves. Our updated and interactive website will reflect new areas with information relative to specific regions.

It is an exciting time for AD as we consider growth options that reflect our sincere desire to serve churches across the nation. The service that AD offers congregations is unique within LCMC, and the ability to serve more congregations is a blessing to the district as well as to new churches that will be served.

Pastor Becky Hand
Grace Lutheran Church, Odessa, TX



World Missions - Tabor / Ethiopia

Pastor Paul Knudson

“You Will Receive Power...You Will Be My Witnesses... to the Ends of the Earth.”

Our Lord simply declares we will receive power, will witness, and that this witness will move out all around the world (Acts 1:8). This is who we are. This is where our witness will extend.

We in the Augustana District have experienced a marvelous year of coming together for such witness. We are privileged to partner with the Tabor Congregation of EECMY, which takes our Lord's call and promises seriously.

We share a common faith, we are committed to mutual accountability, and we go with them all across Ethiopia and soon into Djibouti and South Sudan.

In one year through the generosity of District congregations and individuals/families we are:

- ✦ Supporting half of the needs of 39 evangelists.
- ✦ Assisting in the construction of multiple worship facilities (see top photo).
- ✦ Helping their agricultural missionary work with farmers connected to their outreach centers in a heavily Muslim region (see middle photo).
- ✦ Providing motorcycles and bicycles to evangelists and their coordinators (see bottom photo).
- ✦ Assisting Tabor in doing feasibility studies to add new mission centers to the 50 already gathering new believers into supportive, worshipping communities.

To this end, nearly \$105,000 was received, \$85,000 sent, and the balance committed to 2015 priorities mutually established. Thanks be to God!



The Board of World Missions Supports Extending District Leadership of World Mission Witness

A task force is in the beginning stages of seeking to create new partnerships for intentional world mission witness. Dr. Arndt Braaten, a physician, pastor, and member of the Augustana District from Duluth is chairing this effort. Representatives of our AD Board Of World Missions, World Mission Prayer League, Friends of Madagascar Missions, Eastern European Mission Network, and others are coming together to see how Confessional Lutheran Christians in our various spheres of influence can engage the present configurations of Lutherans in intentional, collective witness from the ground up.

It is too early to know how this will develop. Hopefully there can be fresh, effective ways to draw the LCMC family along with the NALC, possibly Lutheran Brethren, and the many independent mission agencies into even greater evangelical witness. The task force covets your prayers and is open to your questions and input. While we value the freedom to begin anew, we also know that often working together is essential to bring personal and financial resources to bear in extending our witness.



Look in the coming year for more from this task force. It is an *ad hoc* group, open to others wishing to assist in these beginning efforts. You can direct inquiries to me.

Pastor Paul Knudson

Chairperson, Augustana District Board of World Missions
paulk@faithlc.com

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*A rededicated effort to help the district function as a truly "non-geographic" district.

-How can we replicate programming or events regionally? Could the district be served with more regional service coordinators? How could we use the gifts of technology in better ways that could connect a district that is non-geographic?

*Assistance in fostering congregational partnerships and creative staffing solutions to help meet the demands of a changing church landscape.

-Are their ways the district could assist in modeling and encouraging new and creative ways to staff churches and pool resources? The district is setting aside funding to help foster the best (and creative) ideas.

*A revamped website to help us carry out the above objectives. Watch for the new logo also!

-We are aware of ways the website and Facebook could be an interactive tool for the district in ways that it presently is not. This is a priority of the district.

As we move into 2015, know that your ideas, prayers, suggestions are welcomed and needed!

Pastor Randy Freund,
Service Coordinator

**For more information
about the Augustana District,
please contact:**

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~ OR ~

Gaylen Lerohl
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Visit www.AugustanaDistrict.org for more information,
including a roster of Augustana District Churches.

Interim Service Coordinator

Pr Randy Freund
New Creation Lutheran, Perham, MN

SD Service Coordinator

Pr Tom Christenson
Hope Lutheran Church, Huron, SD

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