



AUGUSTANA DISTRICT

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A Church in Transition: Shepherd of the Hills, Hubertus, Wisconsin

An interview with Pastor Jay Thorson



Q: Tell us a little about your church – where it is, how old it is, and the exciting things about Shepherd of the Hills.

Pr. Thorson: We are an outer suburban congregation, located about 35 minutes northwest of downtown Milwaukee. Our community recently incorporated as the Village of Richfield, although we still have a “Hubertus” mailing address. The congregation was founded 44 years ago, when the first farms were being turned into subdivisions. We struggled for many years to break the “200 attendance” barrier. Finally, about 8 years ago, we turned the corner and began to get serious about discipleship and reaching people for Christ. God has blessed us with growth, as we’ve nearly doubled in attendance, and enjoyed an even greater increase in outreach and mercy ministries. Last year we built a brand new building, which has been a wonderful tool for ministry.

Q: You have held a first congregational vote to leave the ELCA, and your second vote is scheduled for June 5. How long has your church been in transition, and can you describe some of the important aspects of the process used at Shepherd of the Hills?

Pr. Thorson: Since the Greater Milwaukee Synod has been a forerunner in changing confessional Lutheran teaching and practice, this has been a front burner issue for many years. We began by redirecting some benevolence, and issuing our own teaching statements, to distinguish ourselves from the local synod. In 2003, we began an emphasis on getting the congregation biblically literate, especially coming to see that “all of the Bible is the Word of God,” (and not just the parts we like). As this was reinforced in preaching, in small groups, and in adult ed., our members became more and more aware that the ELCA was teaching a different gospel. Eventually, a fairly large group of lay leaders began to research and document what was happening in the ELCA, and consider how we should respond. This process was truly lay-driven. I repeatedly told folks, “The congregation needs to own this!” We also took a lot of time, had many open meetings, and shared a wealth of educational materials, much of it written by our members. We didn’t act until we had almost complete consensus among our active members. Once we had that first vote, we were blessed with a 94% in favor of leaving the ELCA for LCMC.

Q: What have been both the blessings and challenges of your transition, and how has it affected your church?

Pr. Thorson: The biggest blessing has been to see so many people get out of the bleachers, and on to the playing field of ministry. In the last five years, we’ve had an explosion of interest in studying Scripture, discussing theology, which has led to enthusiasm for mission. God is at the center of far more lives at our church. People are taking their faith seriously. The biggest challenge has been counseling patience. Some of our folks wanted a vote two years ago. Others wanted these synod issues to be front and center in worship. Some of our leaders, in their eagerness, were frightening our more moderate members, and had the potential to split the church. We had several very tense months as we worked through this.

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Q: How did your congregation come to propose joining LCMC and the Augustana District?

Pr. Thorson: In 2008, I was so upset by the messages being promoted at the Milwaukee Synod Assembly, that I began to seriously look to see if there were any viable alternatives. That fall, I attended the LCMC annual convention, which was in Albuquerque that year. It was a delightful experience – I found real fellowship among those Bible-believing, soul-winning pastors and laity. I knew that the flat structure and freedom would be very attractive to our congregation. But I was concerned about a lack of Lutheran identity in LCMC. Once the Augustana District was proposed, it sounded perfect: the freedom and mission commitment of LCMC, combined with a passion for the kind of church described in our Lutheran Confessions. Two of our leaders, Don & Sandy Kriefall, began attending meetings, and others kept in touch as well. We are eager to work together with other Augustana congregations, to be a genuine Lutheran witness in this new century in America.

Q: Are there fears about the future?

Pr. Thorson: We had plenty of fears about the process of discerning what to do and how to respond to the ELCA. We were worried about the congregation dividing (praise God, it hasn't!). We were worried about being harassed by the Synod office and local ELCA congregations (that has gone fairly well too). But I'm not a bit worried about the future. We have a strong, united congregation that is excited about God's Word, about the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. God has given us everything we need to meet the future.

Q: What excites you and Shepherd of the Hills about the future?

Pr. Thorson: We believe we have a chance to be a uniquely "independent" Lutheran church: a church which shares the concern for Lutheran doctrine of our WELS and LCMS neighbors; which has the concern for reaching the lost of our non-denominational neighbors; and which has the welcoming, serving, and forgiving heart of our ELCA neighbors. This, in our mind, is truly confessional Lutheranism, and we hope to show how this can be an enduring model for effective ministry in our changing world.

See Shepherd of the Hills' website at:

<http://www.shepherd-hills.com/Home/>



Shepherd of the Hills completed its voting to leave the ELCA and join the Augustana District and LCMC on June 5, 2011, with a vote of 158-3.

LCMC / Augustana District in College and University Settings

Do you have a son or daughter going off to college? A number of LCMC/Augustana churches are located in college and university towns and cities – and their doors and arms are open to college students. You and your son or daughter are invited to contact these churches for further information, or simply to join them for worship! Here are some in the upper Midwest:

Minnesota State University - Mankato

Resurrection Lutheran Church

1735 E. Main Street, Mankato, MN 56001
507-345-4455

Sunday Worship 9:00 a.m.; Fellowship 10:00 a.m.; Education 10:30 a.m.

Pastor Greg Lenz gregoryplenz@msn.com

St. Cloud State University – St. Cloud

Abounding Joy Lutheran Church

Services held each week at:

The Boy Scout Headquarters, 1191 Scout Drive, Sartell, MN 56377

Located 1/2 mile north of Gold's Gym, across Pine Cone Road from Super Coborn's. 7 miles (13 min) from campus

Office: 320-217-8784

Pastor Tom Wright: 320-291-2287 teedub8588@gmail.com
(Summer Schedule) Sunday Worship 9:30 am; Fellowship 10:30 am; Education 8:30 am

Website: www.aboundingjoylcmc.org

Southwest Minnesota State University – Marshall

Living Word Lutheran Church

408 E. Main St., Bldg. 2 Suite 8, Marshall MN 56258
Office: 507-337-9673

Pastor Dave Christensen: 507-583-3647

Pastor Kelly Wasberg: 507-828-3434

<http://livingwordmarshall.org/>

University of Minnesota – Morris

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

20490 480th Ave (1 mile north of McDonald's on C-Rd 5)
Morris, MN

320-287-3218

Sunday Worship 9:00 AM; Bible Study 10:30 A.M.

Pastor Michael Hanson pastormikehanson@gmail.com

University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Faith Lutheran Mission Church

1704 Hogeboom St., Eau Claire WI 54701

9 a.m. worship, with food and fellowship following

Dean Kallenbach, Mission Committee Chair, 715-214-8498
deankallenbach@aol.com www.faithlutheranmc.org

Thinking Outside the Box

“The wind blows where it will.” Creative thinking and a desire for faithfulness has brought together an exciting arrangement between an established church in Maple Lake, Minnesota and a new mission start-up church in St. Cloud, Minnesota – some 30 miles apart.

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Maple Lake, has long been associated with WordAlone and was deeply committed to reforming the ELCA. Specifically, one of its pastors, Steven King, has worked hard and endlessly leading the development of Sola Publishing, which has produced curricula for Sunday School, Confirmation, Bible Studies, and more. Led by pastors Peter Martinson and Steven King, Holy Cross decided it was time to leave its former affiliation in the ELCA and join both LCMC and the Augustana District. At the same time, the demands of an ever-growing Sola Publishing were increasing mightily, taking more and more time away from King’s duties in the parish.

Not far away in St. Cloud, a new congregation was forming – Abounding Joy Lutheran Church. Like many new start-up congregations, Abounding Joy has the deep blessing of highly committed people dedicated to establishing a confessional Lutheran witness in St. Cloud, as well as all of the challenges that such an endeavor means. Among them, Abounding Joy needed a pastor, but lacked the financial resources to fund one fully.

And here’s where the creativity took over. Holy Cross offered to partner with Abounding Joy and work out a plan to share pastoral staff. Pastor Tom Wright (formerly the Lead Pastor of ELCA’s Celebration Lutheran Church in nearby Sartell, MN) was added to the mix, being called to 30% time at Abounding Joy and 50% time to Holy Cross. Both Holy Cross pastors were reduced to 80% time as well – Pastor Martinson to Holy Cross and Pastor King to Sola Publishing. All three would serve as pastors at both Holy Cross and Abounding Joy, with Pastor Wright taking the main role at Abounding Joy. This arrangement has worked so well that both churches hope to move all three pastors back to full time in July of 2011. This faithful creativity has provided the stability, energy, and pastoral identity that Abounding Joy needed; the addition of another pastor to enhance the ministry at Holy Cross; and the increased staff time required by an ever-expanding Sola Publishing.

And the people love it! Abounding Joy is benefitting from having its own pastor – yet also experiencing the blessing of Pastors Martinson and King occasionally preaching among them. Holy Cross benefits from the skill set of yet another pastor, but also enjoys the satisfaction of housing and hosting Sola Publishing on behalf of the larger Church. Both churches have experienced revitalization from the new arrangement.

When asked if he had advice for other churches, Pastor Wright answered, “Be creative. Think outside the box. There are many ways to make ministry happen in faithfulness. We don’t have to do it the way we always have.”

Yes indeed, the Spirit blows where it will!

Websites: <http://www.aboundingjoylcmc.org/> and <http://www.holycrossmaplelake.com>



Pastor Thomas Wright



Pastors Peter Martinson and Steven King

Convention Report

The Augustana District met in convention on Saturday, April 30, at Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, Minnesota, under the theme “How Firm a Foundation.” One hundred-forty one registered participants from 40 churches participated in the event. While 26 churches were from Minnesota, 7 other states and British Columbia were represented as well.

Highlights of the event included:

- ✚ John Beem, representing the Board of Theology and Ministry, presented proposed Ministry Standards, which were unanimously adopted by the convention. The booklet will be available in print form to pastors and churches of the Augustana District, as well as posted on this website. The Ministry Standards celebrate and uphold the classic functions of the Office of Public Ministry in three parts: “The Duties and Responsibilities of the Public Office of Ministry,” “The Pastor As an Example to Others,” and “We Hold One Another Accountable.”
- ✚ Pastor Ed Skutshek, President of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Churches (CALC) gave a greeting and helped us celebrate Augustana’s “Memorandum of Agreement” with CALC.
- ✚ Pastor Jaynan Clark (President of WordAlone Ministries), Professor Dennis Bielfeldt (President of the Institute of Lutheran Theology), and Pastor Paul Spaulding (Pastoral Certification Coordinator for LCMC) all brought greetings.
- ✚ Two new District Council members were elected: Mr. Ben Luense from St. John’s, Springfield, MN, and Mr. Mike Peterson from Gloria Dei, Redwood Falls, MN.
- ✚ Pastor John Beem (retired, Living Word, Alexandria, MN) and Pastor Mark Jamison (St. John, Sterling, NE) were re-elected to the Board of Theology and Ministry.
- ✚ Pastor Norm Olsen (retired, St. John’s, Starbuck, MN), a member of the Board of Congregational Services, reported on the District’s “Simplified Outline of the Call Process” that will soon become available in booklet form.
- ✚ Board reports were heard from Pr Steve King (Board of Publications), Pr Scott Grorud (Board of Theological Education), Pr Mark Richardson (Board of Domestic Missions).
- ✚ Pastor Paul Knudson (Faith, Hutchinson, MN) provided the Board of World Missions report. BWM has provided a procedure for vetting missions organizations that congregational missions committees may use. Additionally, BWM vetted and invited some 14 missions organizations who were present with displays.

Break Out sessions were held for Congregational Services, Institute of Lutheran Theology, Mission Start-Up Churches, ReClaim Resources, Sola Publishing, WordAlone Chapters, World Missions, Augustana’s Women of the Word and Youth Ministry.

Regional Communications Council

The Augustana District has established an opportunity for churches to get together and share updates, ideas, and resources about their churches.

Some eight different churches in the Marshall area of SW Minnesota and eastern South Dakota have participated.

Some are established congregations, many are new mission start-ups, and some are ELCA congregations in transition.

Living Word Lutheran Church of Marshall has hosted the “Council,” which has met twice.

Program needs, pastoral needs, and material needs are shared, as are updates on each church’s progress. Churches discover ways to help one another, and share ideas. Participants appreciate knowing that the challenges they face are not unique, and they find camaraderie, fellowship and renewed strength in meeting together.

If you’d like more information, please contact Pastor Kelly Wasberg of Living Word

PastorKelly@LivingWordMarshall.org

or Pastor Mark Richardson

mjrichardson@AugustanaDistrict.org

Richardson Available As Resource

The District’s Interim Service Coordinator, Mark Richardson, is available to provide support and resources to you in a number of ways:

Preach in your church, and/or lead a congregational forum on a Sunday morning.

Meet with Church Councils or transition task forces for information about LCMC and the Augustana District.

Meet one-on-one with pastors who have questions regarding transitional process or future affiliations.

These services are available free of charge.

Richardson can be reached by phone at (715) 417-1317 or e-mail mjrichardson@AugustanaDistrict.org

In Texas, There's Life in Grace

An Interview with Pastor Becky Hand, Life in Grace Lutheran Church, Odessa TX



Q: Tell us about Life in Grace Lutheran Church – Where are you located? How long have you been in existence?

LGLC is located in West Texas, in Odessa (approximately an hour's drive from the SE corner of New Mexico.) We are renting a lodge building that was no longer in use. The church chartered in October of 2007 and moved into this temporary location in May of '08.

Q: Tell us about the circumstances that led to the formation of Life in Grace.

For the most part, the Christians that started Life in Grace Lutheran Church had drifted away from an ELCA church over a period of months. Eventually, the group decided that they did not want to lose contact with each other so they started a Sunday morning Bible Study that met in various homes. As a Parish Lay Minister, I was asked to lead the Bible Studies. The first Sunday Bible Study was held in a back yard under a stand of trees on July 1, 2007. The group decided that they no longer wished to continue their relationship with the ELCA church but wanted to stay together as a church family and to begin worshipping together. I didn't want to cause problems in the ELCA so asked that I be removed from the church roll and from the synod Parish Lay Minister's list and began leading worship services for about 30 people.

Q: How did you become their pastor?

I led worship each Sunday for the group. In October of '07 we chartered as an independent Lutheran Church and I was asked to pastor the church. I was still teaching full time at the community college until May. In June of '08 I became a full-time pastor for LGLC.

Q: Even while you are Life in Grace's pastor, you are also an M.Div. student at the Institute of Lutheran Theology. Tell us about that – How you chose it, and how it is going.

I value education. I'm very thankful to have gone through the Parish Lay Academy but the program isn't designed to create pastors. I began looking for on-line classes so that I could continue to serve my congregation while getting appropriately educated. The search was not fruitful until I heard through a LCMC pastor about the Institute of Lutheran Theology. The program fit the bill perfectly. After teaching college classes for 15 years, including some on-line class, I had a few trepidations about a program taught completely on-line but ILT has surpassed my expectations. The faculty have been outstanding, including some who would no longer be teaching if they were confined to brick and mortar classrooms. Strong student relationships have been built and there is a good support system in place. The courses are challenging but there is great communication with the professors and staff. The classes are small so each student gets attention and any needed help. I can take as many classes as I can handle each semester and, though it's a struggle at times, it is do-able.

Q: Why did Life in Grace decide to become LCMC, and then also to join the Augustana District?

Once the church formed and wrote a constitution, we began researching potential affiliations. We narrowed the field but further investigation revealed some concerns and we decided to remain independent for the time being. After attending an ILT Theological Conference and learning about Augustana District we decided to re-open discussion of affiliation. The NALC had formed by this time as well so the congregation studied, prayed and spoke with representative of each. In January of this year we voted to join LCMC and Augustana District. AD offered the structure and support we desired; it's been a perfect fit.

Q: What are the joys and challenges you face, both as a pastor and as a congregation?

It's interesting to me, since I *never* wanted to be a pastor, that serving this congregation is the most wonderful delight! LGLC is filled with incredible people that continually teach me and help me. Finishing ILT seminary is my biggest personal challenge. Managing time during the semester can get tricky. I have already learned a great deal and love sharing new-found information with the congregation.

The congregation is very involved in the community (helping with the Crisis Center, Family Promise, Hospice, Walk to Emmaus, Ronald McDonald House, etc.) The little group stays busy and remains outwardly focused. I'm very impressed with the community work this congregation accomplishes.

As a church we experienced growth the first couple of years but that has stagnated so we continue to look for growth opportunities.

Like many other congregations, reaching the 'unchurched' is a constant trial. Raising building funds while keeping the bills paid, though secondary, is also a consistent obligation. Our most looming physical challenge is a permanent building. Our building fund continues to grow but grows more slowly than it did at one time. Our current small abode has even smaller closets. We have truly been blessed beyond measure to this point and know that God is faithful. He has pulled this church together, has cared for us. and move will us in his time as we continue to grow in conformity to him.

Visit Life in Grace's website: <http://www.lifeingracelutheranchurch.com/>

Roster of Augustana District Churches

<u>State</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Name of Congregation</u>
IA	Bode	St. Olaf Lutheran Church
IL	Moline	Faith Lutheran Church
MN	Alexandria	Living Word Lutheran Church
MN	Canby	Word of God Lutheran Church
MN	Comfrey	New Hope Lutheran Church
MN	Gonvick	Samhold Lutheran Church*
MN	Howard Lake	St. John's Lutheran Church
MN	Hutchinson	Faith Lutheran Church
MN	Hutchinson	Christ the King Lutheran Church
MN	Maple Lake	Holy Cross Lutheran Church
MN	Marshall	Living Word Lutheran Church
MN	Maynard	Wang Lutheran Church
MN	Morris	Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
MN	North Branch	Salem Lutheran Church
MN	Rushford	Rushford Lutheran Church
MN	Sebeka	Friends in Christ Lutheran Church
MN	Springfield	St. John's Lutheran Church
MN	St. Cloud	Abounding Joy Lutheran Church
MN	St. James	Albion Lutheran Church
MN	Starbuck	St. John's Lutheran Church
MN	Stewart	St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
NE	Blair	Christ Lutheran Church
NE	Smithfield	Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church
SD	Hayes	Deep Creek Lutheran Church
SD	Milbank	Living Word Lutheran Church
SD	White	Pioneer Lutheran Church
TX	Gardendale	Life in Grace Lutheran Church
WI	Caroline	Zion Lutheran Church*
WI	Clear Lake	First Lutheran Church
WI	Clintonville	Christus Lutheran Church
WI	Dresser	Bethesda Lutheran Church
WI	Hubertus	Shepherd of the Hills
WI	Tigerton	Peace Lutheran Church*

* Associate Member Congregation

Missions Contact Person

The Board of World Missions for the Augustana District would like to compile a list of "Missions Contact People" from congregations. This list will help enhance all sorts of communications between this board and congregations – "emergency" needs, missions projects to consider, reporting the Board's work, and more. Please email the name, address, telephone number, and email address of your contact person to:

mjrichardson@AugustanaDistrict.org

Funds Are Needed

Your support of the Augustana District is very much appreciated! We welcome contributions from both churches and individuals. Your generous donations help us forge a new Lutheran future together. We request that your church include the Augustana District as a line-item on your church's budget. If this isn't possible for this current year, please consider making a special donation outside your budget. Checks should be made out to "Augustana District" and mailed to: 335 Main St. S, Hutchinson, MN 55350. Individual donations are fully tax deductible under LCMC's 501(c)3 umbrella.

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

Mark Richardson ~ mjrichardson@AugustanaDistrict.org ~ Phone: 715-417-1317

Randy Freund ~ rfreund@hutchtel.net ~ Phone: 320-234-8411

WOMEN OF THE WORD

"COMING TOGETHER"

OCTOBER 1, 2011



June 2011



A District of Lutheran Congregations
in Mission for Christ (LCMC)

Dear Sisters in Christ:

We are pleased to invite you to attend the Second Annual Gathering of Women of the Word– Augustana District. Our gathering will be held at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, Minnesota, on October 1, 2011. We are excited about the future of Women of the Word - Augustana District, and we hope that you are too! Please share this information with anyone you think may be interested. Participation is not limited to church members who have joined the Augustana District.

Our theme, "**Coming Together**" is based on Ephesians 4:1-6: *"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."*

The tentative agenda for the Second Annual Gathering On October 1 is as follows:

9:30 am	<u>Registration and Coffee/Muffins</u>
10:00 am	<u>Worship</u>
10:45 am	<u>Welcome</u>
11:00 am	<u>Keynote Speaker – Stephanie Freund of Hutchinson, speaking on our theme of "Coming Together"</u>
11:55 am	<u>Lunch</u>
1:00 pm	<u>Breakout Session</u>
1:45 pm	<u>Breakout Session</u>
2:30	<u>Business Session and Closing</u>

- ✘ Adoption of Women of the Word – Augustana District Policy Statement
- ✘ Site for Third Annual Gathering – Fall 2012
- ✘ New members for WOW Steering Committee

Tentative Breakout sessions include: Lutheran Social Services, New Hope Mission, Vision Honduras, Biblical quilting blocks and banners, tips for starting up a new WOW group.

The mission projects Women of the Word have chosen for this year are with Global Health Ministries and are Hospice Kits and Newborn kits. You can see what is included in these kits by clicking on the Women of the Word link on the Augustana District website: www.augustanadistrict.org The lists are included in the newsletter and completed kits should be brought to the Gathering on October 1. A bible study on Ephesians, the Policy Statement for our WOW group and a registration blank to register for the second gathering can also be found on the WOW link. We hope we will hear from you.

We are looking for a church to host the third annual gathering in 2012. All that needs to be done to do this is: arrange snacks and noon lunch (registration fee covers the cost of the lunch); and arrange rooms for the breakout sessions. We are also looking for more members to serve on the Steering Committee. Please contact any of the members of this committee. We hope to hear from you and see you at the Second Annual Gathering on October 1. Help be a part of planning your new women's group! Board members include:

Carreen Pierson – chuckpierson@mchsi.com 320-587-5602
Diane Anderson – andersdj@hutchtel.net 320-587-9352
Emilie Wildey – emandale@hutchtel.net 320-562-0180
Mary Ebent – mebent@hutchtel.net 320-587-5442
Dorothy Desens – d-desens@hutchtel.net 320-587-8777
Heidi Froemming – hkfroem@hutchtel.net 320-587-8607

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