"What Must I DO? ... What Does It SAY?"

## Theology. Church. Mission.



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 keys 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 agotells 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)

Continued on page 2



AugustanaDistrict

www.AugustanaDistrict.org

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# Council Chairman's Report

Thanks to all who contributed and participated in the District convention April 25. Pr. Becky Hand from Gardendale, Texas preached on the theme "Hope for the Long Haul." Keynoter Pr. Steve Lien, LCMC Coordinator of Pastoral Ministry, discussed sobering challenges facing pastors and congregations, but also reminded the convention of the good and the hopeful. Pr. Julie Smith, LCMC Board of Trustees updated the convention on LCMC activities.

Pr. Becky Hand, Odessa, TX was elected to complete the District Council term of Pr. Randy Freund. Loren Brekke, Hanska, MN; Pr. Craig Nehring, Caroline, WI; Jane Evers, Comfrey, MN and Lou Weeks, Marshall, MN were elected to three year terms. Emilie Wildey, Stewart, MN and Gaylen Lerohl, Alexandria, MN were reelected to three year terms on the District Council.

The convention elected Pr. Brian Crocker to a three year term on the Board of Theology and Ministry., Pr. Steve Bliss, A.J. Kluver and Janine Rew-Werling were re-elected to three year terms. Thanks to Pr. Dave Christensen who completed a term on the Board of Theology and Ministry.

Our various boards and committees are staffed by volunteers who contribute their time and abilities to provide services and assistance to our congregations. Thanks to all of you who so generously share your talents to the work of the District.

The convention approved a \$220,650 budget, with nearly half dedicated to Mission Support. Thanks to the

congregations and individuals of the District who so generously contribute financial support to the District.

The Board of World Missions reported the District's remarkable collaboration with the Tabor Congregation in Ethiopia. This congregation has an active ministry to the majority Muslim community in their area. Funding made possible by your gifts have assisted Tabor congregation's supporting 39 evangelists, construction of three worship centers, purchase of three motorcycles and numerous bicycles for the use of the evangelists.

Four Luther Seminary students have requested to serve in the Augustana District. Arrangements are in progress to secure internship sites within the district to enable these students to complete their studies and prepare for ordination. It is essential that there be a mechanism in place to ensure the training of new pastors. The District is facilitating the process.

Check out the District's website for updates on District activities throughout the year, contact information for staff and board members and a useful archive of documentation

of past District activities. We begin our new fiscal year with "Hope for the Long Haul," trusting our Lord for guidance and help.

#### Gaylen Lerohl

District Council Chair



#### <u>"What Must I DO? . . . What Does It Say?"</u>

(Continued from Page 1)

We should not think we will settle this matter, but we can be a voice of clarity. The issue here is not whether the church should focus more on proclamation or focus more on acts of grace, mercy and service. The issue comes when these are separated. "Just as we cannot choose between the external means of grace and the internal work of the Spirit, we cannot choose between the church as a historical institution authorized by Christ as his embassy and the church as a people who are gathered in fellowship and scattered as salt and light in their callings (Horton)."

Christianity faces unique challenges today. By the grace of God, perhaps congregations of the Augustana District can see this time as an opportunity and calling within LCMC. Perhaps we can give voice and clarity to Lutheran witness. We certainly pray that our work is "right and acceptable in the sight of our God and Savior, who

desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (I Timothy 2:3-4)

In Christ, Pastor Randy Freund Augustana District Service Coordinator



## 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 or 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, 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.







## WOMEN OF THE WORD

We wish to invite all women of the Augustana District to the 6th Annual Gathering on September 19, 2015 at Living Word Lutheran Church in Milbank, SD.

Our theme is **"PEACE"** based on Psalm 29:11 *"The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace."* 

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Registration and coffee begin at 9:00AM. The Gathering music and worship service begin at 10:00

We have 3 informative sessions planned:

- ✤ Session #1 on Women's Shelter
  - ✤ Session #2 on Prayer
- Session #3 on Augustana District 101

There will be vendors and a boutique for shopping. Your women's group may consider donating to the boutique. Offering will be divided between Ethiopian Mission and the Milbank backpack project.

#### Registrations will be forth coming, hope to see you there!

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World Mission - (Continued from Page 3)

#### AD Web Site to Include Regular World Mission Updates

Check out frequent updates of world mission activity on the recently redesigned web site of the AD. Our thanks to Sandy Kreifall of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in suburban Milwaukee for these postings. Go to <u>www.augustanadistrict.org</u>.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:** DISTRICT COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING JUNE 6 FROM 9 A.M. – NOON

DON'T MISS THE LCMC 15TH ANNUAL GATHERING IN DALLAS, TX! OCTOBER 4-7, 2015 LOCATION: EMBASSY SUITES HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER 7600 JOHN Q HAMMONS DR. FRISCO, TX 75034 WATCH FOR UPCOMING DETAILS ABOUT THIS FIRST EVER TEXAS DISTRICT/AUGUSTANA DISTRICT THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE AS PART OF THE ANNUAL CONVENTION.

#### Augustana District Council

Julie Ashbaugh Peace Lutheran Church of the Desert, La Quinta, CA

> Loren Brekke Albion Lutheran, St. James, MN

Greg Curry Christ the King Lutheran, Hutchinson, MN

Jane Evers, Secretary New Hope Lutheran, Comfrey, MN

Pastor Becky Hand Life in Grace Lutheran Church, Odessa, TX

Gaylen Lerohl, Chair Living Word Lutheran, Alexandria, MN

Ben Luense, Vice Chair St. John's Lutheran, Springfield, MN

Pastor Craig Nehring Zion and Peace Lutheran, Caroline and Split Rock, WI

> Michael Peterson Christ's Victory Lutheran, Redwood Falls, MN

> > Lew Weeks Living Word, Marshall, MN

Emilie Wildey, Treasurer St. Matthew's Lutheran, Fernando, MN

#### Service Coordinator

Pastor Randy Freund New Creation Lutheran, Perham, MN

#### SD Service Coordinator

**Pastor Tom Christenson** Hope Lutheran Church, Huron, SD

#### **Board of Theology and Ministry**

Pastor Julie Smith, Chair St. John's Lutheran, Springfield, MN

#### **Board of Christian Education**

**Pastor Scott Grorud, Chair** Faith Lutheran, Hutchinson, MN

#### **Board of Congregational Missions**

Pastor Craig Werling, Chair Living Word Lutheran, Milbank, SD

#### **Board of World Missions**

Pastor Paul Knudson, Chair Faith Lutheran, Hutchinson, MN

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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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