



## From the Service Coordinator . . .

### SERVING CHRIST'S MISSION

This past July, I joined other Service Coordinators, District Leaders and LCMC Staff at the annual gathering in St. Charles, Illinois. It was a good and enlightening experience. There were many "take-aways," but I will name two. I have a new appreciation for other districts and an affirmation for what Augustana District is doing and becoming.

As I become more familiar with the challenges congregations face, so much of it has to do with "theology" and "church." These often determine the effectiveness of "mission." As you know, Augustana District is all about "*Theology. Church. Mission.*" Where theology is strong and church structure and organization is solid, congregations can faithfully and effectively carry out their mission. Conversely, when there is confusion or lack of clarity regarding

theology and when proper protocol (however minimum) is not followed, divisions and conflict can easily arise. Not only do relationships within the body of Christ suffer, but the passion for mission can diminish or get side-tracked. Augustana District will continue, therefore, to focus on these three important areas: Theology, Church and Mission

*In this Issue....*

#### **Theology**

\*The Board for Theology and Ministry will contribute a regular article for our newsletters. Thanks Pastor Nick Hopman for the article beginning on page 2!

#### **Church**

\*Pastor Don Suiter has offered his gifts and consulting service to the Augustana District, as well as to LCMC. Familiarize yourself with his ministry on page 3.

#### **Mission**

\*Amazing things are happening with the Tabor Congregation in Ethiopia. Check out the progress and new challenges on page 4.

Thank you for the privilege of serving the Augustana District!

In Christ, Pastor Randy Freund



### **Tyler Nielsen Assisting in Communications for AD World Mission Efforts**

Last April, the Augustana District in convention approved a ten hour position to move our world mission efforts forward through strengthening communications in multiple ways. This summer, Tyler Nielsen assumed this very part-time position, and has been using her sense of call and talents well.

Tyler is a recent college graduate and has spent time in places like Ukraine, Russia, Hungary, and neighboring countries while working in the past with the Eastern European Mission Network. Her full time work at present is with a mission agency, helping refugees resettle in the Twin Cities area.

In her limited hours at present, her focus is working with others to have the District website be more active by updating all things connected with our world mission witness. Check out also frequent entries on the District Facebook page.

Welcome Tyler.



AugustanaDistrict

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# THEOLOGY

By Nick Hopman, Board of Theology and Ministry

The Augustana District takes its name from the Latin name of the Augsburg Confession (hereafter A. C.). It has this to say about the freedom and limits of the human will, or as people often say, “free will.”

## Augsburg Confession, Article 18 “Free Will”

Our [Evangelical-Lutheran] churches [of the Augsburg Confession] teach that man’s will has some liberty for the attainment of civil righteousness and for the choice of things subject to reason. However, it does not have the power, without the Holy Spirit, to attain to the righteousness of God—that is, spiritual righteousness—because natural man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14); but this righteousness is created in the heart when the Holy Spirit is received through the Word. In Book III of his *Hypognosticon* Augustine said these things in so many words: “We concede that all men have a free will which enables them to make judgments according to reason. However, this does not enable them, without God, to begin or (much less) to accomplish anything in those things which pertain to God, for it is only in acts of this life that they have freedom to choose good or evil. By ‘good’ I mean those acts which spring from the good in nature, that is, to will to labor in the field, will to eat and drink, will to have a friend, will to clothe oneself, will to build a house, will to marry, will to keep cattle, will to learn various useful arts, or will to do whatever good pertains to this life. None of these exists without the providence of God; indeed, it is from and through him that all these things come into being and are. On the other hand, by ‘evil’ I mean such things as to worship an idol, will to commit murder,” etc.

Our churches condemn the Pelagians and other who teach that without the Holy Spirit, by the power of nature alone, we are able to love God above all things, and can also keep the commandments of God in so far as the substance of the acts is concerned. Although nature is able in some measure to perform the outward works (for it can keep the hands from theft and murder), yet it cannot produce the inward affections, such as fear of God, trust in God, patience, etc.

In the seventh chapter of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus explains that human beings are defiled by the evil coming out of our hearts through our mouths, rather than anything entering into us through our mouths. In my recent sermon on this reading, I preached that we should prevent inner evils from being expressed outwardly in thoughts and actions. I said that how successful we are at holding such things in has a great effect on the quality of our lives on earth and the quality of the lives of people around us. I said some people are more successful at holding their sins in than others. We try to pick our friends on the basis of who is pleasant and fun to be around. This means we try to pick friends who are good at restraining their sin and have a good deal of worldly righteousness. This is precisely what the A. C. is saying here. We have the ability to behave ourselves, despite the fact that we are all sinners.

This was a small section of my sermon, because Jesus Christ is always aiming much higher than getting us to behave ourselves 5% better than yesterday. He is aiming to raise us from the dead and give us life that never ends. To whom does Christ want to give this life? He wants to give it to sinners, namely us. Before Christ can cure us of our sin, he first has to convince us we are sick. So Christ’s apostle Paul wrote (Romans 3), “<sup>19</sup>Now we know that whatever the law [meaning God’s commandments] says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup>For ‘no human being will be justified in his sight’ by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin... For there is no distinction, <sup>23</sup>since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; <sup>24</sup>they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...”

*(Continued on page 6)*

# CHURCH

## Introducing "Remissioned"

*Hi Randy and Augustana District,*

*We wanted to let you know that we just went live with our [www.remissioned.org](http://www.remissioned.org) web site. The contact phone number for the ministry is 218-531-9921.*

*Don Suiter*

Please check out their website for services "To help equip churches for times of transition, Re-Missioned offers assistance in: Re-visioning - how we see ourselves and our world; Re-organizing - how we see church leadership; Re-missioning - how we see our community; Re-laxing - how we see each other; - - Moving from conflict into health.

## Invitation to College Students in Mankato MN

Resurrection Lutheran Church (LCMC) in Mankato has a program for college age young people called True U. Students who will be attending Minnesota State University or South Central College or Bethany Lutheran College this year are invited to participate in a group that meets regularly for topical discussion and personal fellowship. Contact us for more information, and let us know how to reach you. We look forward to seeing you at True U!

Greg Lenz, Pastor  
Resurrection Lutheran Church  
1735 E Main St  
Mankato, MN 56001  
507-345-4455  
[www.resurrectionmankato.com](http://www.resurrectionmankato.com)

## Welcome to New Congregations

We would like to recognize and welcome the churches most recently added to the AD roster:

Hawley Lutheran in Hawley, MN  
Peace Lutheran in Watertown, MN  
Faith Lutheran in Pendleton, OR  
Our Redeemer in Badger, MN  
Peace Lutheran in Deshler, NE  
Reformation Lutheran in Forston, GA  
New Life Lutheran in Duluth, MN





# Mission

## **A Relatively Small Gift Gives Birth to an Amazing Reality**

In 2013, Augustana District congregations and individuals gave \$25,000 to give birth to Lead Star University in Ethiopia. Now in August of 2015, over 1,200 have graduated in preparation for leading church and nation. Pictured are the graduates. Those in front with masters degrees, thus the red decorative garments.



This fall, over 3,000 will be enrolled. Great things are happening in this whole leadership effort. Thanks to all who helped give birth to this effort led by Dr. Gemechis Buba. Augustana District and other LCMC congregations are represented on the American board giving leadership to this endeavor.

## **Four Months to End Strong in Tabor Partnership**



We continue to depend on AD congregations and individuals to be faithful and generous in making such a huge difference in reaching out to Muslims and others with the good news of Jesus Christ. Remember the following ways to continue your support:

- Renewing evangelists' support for 2016 will be a great blessing. Funds needed before year's end: \$600 or half payment, \$300
- We still have 25 evangelists that do not have sponsors. Undesignated gifts can go for this need also.
- We still need approximately \$7,500 to meet a challenge gift of \$12,500 to help with worship center construction. Undesignated gifts can be used for this.

We are looking forward to the possibility of Pastor Dawit y Wario, senior pastor of Tabor Congregation, being with us next spring. Pray with us that his will become a reality.

### **Pastor Paul Knudson**

Chairperson, Augustana District Board of World Missions

[paulk@faithlc.com](mailto:paulk@faithlc.com)



# AD Council Chairman's Notes

Summer is about over and churches of the District are ramping up their fall programs, kids are back in school and the work of the District goes on!

We welcome two congregations to membership in the Augustana District: Reformation Lutheran Church in Forston, Georgia and New Life Lutheran in Duluth, Minnesota. We're anxious to get to know you and look forward to working with you.

To facilitate recognition and to support seminaries that are committed to the theological tenets of the District, the Council has accepted recommendations of the Seminary Task Force. The Task Force has proposed a method by which the District will evaluate an institution's theological outlook and to evaluate its ability to provide an acceptable educational outcome for its students. Seminary representatives seeking District endorsement are to be interviewed. They will submit written documentation describing the seminary's theological outlook and provide information on its financial status, student demographics and graduation data.

Ms. Tyler Neilson of Minneapolis, MN has been granted a stipend to facilitate communication with congregations to encourage global mission outreach. She will be working under the direction and guidance of the Board of World Missions, which identifies and promotes international projects that are theologically and financially worthy of member congregational support.


A \$500 grant has been approved by the Council to help fund AD College Campus tours in the coming school year. Faith Lutheran Church and Christ the King Lutheran of Hutchinson, MN will organize a night of worship, geared towards college-aged young adults. Four college towns

will be visited twice a year. The goal is to encourage, and bless students in, what has become a challenging environment for the life of faith, and then connect them to churches, clubs, and ministries that facilitate further faith growth.

A grant of \$500 has been given to Pr. Dave Wollan of Faith Lutheran and Pastoral Intern Steve Olcott of Christ the King Lutheran, both in Hutchinson, MN to assist in funding a Youth Minister Retreat on September 26, 2015. The grant helps fund a one-day retreat for those engaged in youth ministry. The retreat is geared to assist paid and volunteer, full or part-time, ordained and non-ordained youth ministers. The retreat will offer encouragement, support, networking, theological and philosophical guidance, and hands-on tools for youth ministry.

The District Council encourages members to submit proposals for events or other activities that will promote or enable the advancement of the Great Commission. Modest resources are available to assist in funding projects.

The District will be well represented at the LCMC national convention in October. We will have a booth and host breakout sessions. A District dinner for fellowship and sharing is scheduled Monday evening. Pr. Becky Hand, one of our District pastors and AD Council member, will preach the sermon at the opening service. It's time to get your registration completed! We look forward to seeing many of you in Dallas.



**Gaylen Lerohl**  
*AD Council Chairman*

### ***UPCOMING EVENTS:***

***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**

*THE FIRST EVER TEXAS DISTRICT/AUGUSTANA DISTRICT THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE*

*WILL MEET MONDAY THE 5TH AS PART OF THE ANNUAL CONVENTION.*

## **AUGUSTANA DISTRICT ANNUAL THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE**

**BLOOMINGTON, MN**

FEBRUARY 8-9, 2016

This is precisely what the A.C. is saying. We have the power to be righteous according to our outward visible acts. We can keep our hands from stealing; we can usually do good work in the field, garage, or house. This is as far as human beings and human law can judge us. However, we should also have pure hearts. We do not have pure hearts and we do not have the power to change our hearts and do what the commandments command, “so far as the substance of the acts is concerned.” What is the substance of the acts commanded by the commandments? The “substance” refers to the disposition of the heart of the person doing the acts. In other words: “it [our human nature] cannot produce the inward affections, such as fear of God, trust in God, patience, etc.”

What does God want to find in our hearts? He wants to find faith, namely faith in him, almighty God. Scripture says, (Romans 3:28) “For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.” John’s Gospel reads (6:28-29) “they said to [Jesus], ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’” Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’” God wants faith in the heart. Out of the heart’s faith come all truly good works. Conversely, (Romans 14:23) “whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.” The A.C. is, of course, speaking of faith when it says, “it [human nature and ability] cannot produce the inward affections, such as fear of God, *trust in God*, patience, etc.”

This leads to the great question: where does faith come from? How is faith made? Who makes it? What role does the human will play in faith? I have spent a good deal of time trying to convince others that faith is God’s work and choice rather than ours. Perhaps the best scripture passage to quote is Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” The Small Catechism, which we all learned in confirmation, agrees. Explaining the meaning of the Third Article of the Apostle’s Creed, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” the Catechism says, “I believe I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel...” In other words, I believe that I can’t make my own faith. I believe that true faith in Christ is a power beyond all my thoughts, decisions, works, choices, etc., but the Holy Spirit has made this faith.

However, I’ve come to think that the best way to explain how faith is made is to listen to what faith does and does not say. If faith does make us right with God, as scripture says over and over again, and faith is some sort of decision that we human beings have the power to make, then faith would be justified in saying:

“Well God, it was really nice of you to send Jesus to die on the cross, and it was really nice of you to send the preaching of this good news to me. But God you have to give me some credit too. If I, faith, hadn’t chosen to trust in Jesus instead of anything else, Jesus’ death wouldn’t be able to save me. God you created all things and placed the sin of the world on Christ on the cross, but you needed a little help from me. Without me, heaven would be empty. Actually God, I have the control. If I choose Jesus, then you have to give me eternal life. If I trust in something or someone other than Jesus, then I get to go to hell and even you and your Son’s blood and your Holy Spirit can’t do anything to stop that. So actually God, it looks like in the end it’s all up to me. My decision is more important than yours. You might have chosen to give up your Son unto death on the cross, but now my choice is more important than the death of Jesus Christ, at least when it comes to me and my eternal destiny.”

No, faith itself never speaks this way. Faith never boasts of itself and it never claims that God needs its help. Instead as Paul wrote: “by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not the result of works, *so that no one may boast.*”

Faith does boast, but it boasts in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:21) and its boasting gives all glory to God. Faith says,

“Amen. I believe. Praise be to God. I am a sinner but Christ has saved me all by himself. He has forgiven my sin and promised me resurrection and eternal life in his Holy Word and Holy Baptism. God never breaks his promises. Let all men be liars, and God be true. Soli deo gloria (to God alone be the glory).”

(Continued on page 7)



## 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**

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New Creation Lutheran, Perham, MN

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Hope Lutheran Church, Huron, SD

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### **Pastor Craig Werling, Chair**

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*(Theology - Continued from page 6)*

This is how faith actually speaks. This is what the Apostles Creed actually says. Never does the faith confessed in the creed brag about itself or recount what we sinners have done. Instead, it confesses faith in what God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has done.

The human will is not free when it comes to God. As sinners, we are bound to reject God even by nailing him to the cross. However, through Christ's forgiveness and his promises given in his word and sacraments, the Holy Spirit works faith, "where and when he pleases (A.C. Article 5)." We in the Augustana District try to uphold this original (it comes to us from Martin Luther himself) Lutheran teaching because it is truly biblical. We give God's promises away for free in word and sacrament, trusting the Holy Spirit to make faith, because God has promised that his word will not return to him empty, but like the rain he sends down to earth resulting in the growth of the harvest, God's word will accomplish his purpose (Isaiah 55:10-11). This Evangelical-Lutheran understanding of the human will and faith gives all glory to God.



## Do you have some unused or forgotten theology books?

If you would like to donate them to Pastor K.K.'s Bible School and Seminary in India, bring those books with you to the LCMC Convention in October. Dorothy Desens from New Hope Mission Society, Hutchinson, MN, will be going on a mission trip to India in January and will be willing to get those books to Pastor K.K. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Dorothy at 320-587-8777.



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