



AUGUSTANA DISTRICT

Mark Your Calendars: Important Dates!

Saturday, April 30, 2011

Augustana District Convention at
Faith Lutheran Church,
Hutchinson, MN

August 7-10, 2011

Augustana District's Theological
Conference (with ILT) at Mt.
Carmel Bible Camp, Alexandria,
MN.

Wanted: Pulpit Supply & Interim Pastors

The Augustana District is beginning to build lists of pastors available for Interim Ministry and/or Pulpit Supply. If you are available to provide such ministries, please complete and submit the applications at our website: AugustanaDistrict.org.

Important District Updates

The Board of Theology and Ministry has created two very important documents for our district: Ministry Standards and the Endorsement Process. These proposed documents will be considered at the January 22, 2011, District Council meeting and, shortly thereafter, sent to member congregations for study and input. These documents will be presented to the District Convention for adoption on April 30, 2011.

The Board of Congregational Services continues to meet regularly to develop processes for call committee assistance and for conflict mediation. These, too, will be presented to the District Council for its consideration.

Interview with Bishop Emeritus John Beem Chair of Board of Congregational Services



Tell us a little bit about who you are, John

I am the son of a J. C. Penney manager and a registered nurse, and grew up in Waterloo, Iowa. I learned how to fly fish for trout. Together with my sister, I was active in church and Luther League on the local level as well as in the Iowa District, ALC. Not able to leave the Hawkeye state, I graduated from both Wartburg College in Waverly and Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque. Ordained in 1961, I served as pastor in Humboldt and Rutland, Iowa; Muskegon Heights, Michigan; Dubuque, Iowa; Oskosh, Wisconsin; Clear lake, Iowa (a short stint as assistant to the Iowa District President/bishop). I learned that the best name for a bishop or synod staff was "have car, will travel."

About the time I planned to retire, I was elected to be a pastor serving as bishop of the NE Synod of Wisconsin for 6 years. I felt the two most important tasks of a bishop were quality assistance to congregations in the call process and care for needs of pastors. I retired to Minnesota, and have covered sabbatical leave for pastors in small congregations and have done 6 interims.

During the time in the synod office (1994-2000), the process leading to the Social Statements on Human Sexuality began. In the Conference of Bishops (67 counting George Anderson and Lowell Almen), only three were favorable toward what was decided in August of 2009. How quickly culture trumps both society and church!

What can you tell us about the new mission start in Alexandria, MN?

After the August, 2009 decision of the ELCA, several of us in the area asked our congregations to consider serious study of the issues confronting the ELCA. We especially wanted to address the authority of Scripture issues that were being compromised on many levels, beginning with the ecumenical agreements. None of the congregations would give room for such discussion! This seemed to us a strange kind of "tolerance." So a number of us began to meet and worship together. We officially formed Living Word Lutheran Church on November 1, 2009. By our first anniversary, we had a membership of over 150 believers with many more in the process of joining. We are likely one of the few Lutheran congregations in the USA that has a Sunday worship attendance that exceeds membership! It was a joy to serve as the interim pastor during those formative months. I am grateful that A. J. Kluver is now our pastor. We are soon to decide on what will become our permanent home. Pray for us!

Why did you join LCMC and Augustana District?

After several years of struggle with what I believed to be a serious drift to the left of center by the ELCA, being a part of several efforts to effect reform in the ELCA and in faithfulness to a bound conscience to the Word, I took leave on Reformation Day, 2009. The lean national structure of LCMC provided a better "bang for the buck" in terms of missions and the congregational focus created a freedom to count on and lift up the creative skills of all members. Living Word joined the Augustana District in mid-2010. We did so for several reasons, among them:

1. The Augustana District offered a gathering place for services and events beyond the congregational level.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

2. It intends to provide services that, when requested by a congregation, could be very helpful to them. Such efforts include a listing of district-endorsed clergy, a listing of possible interim pastors, and assistance in the call process and with conflict when requested. The District will provide such services in partnership with the national efforts and philosophy of the association of congregations known as LCMC.

You chair the Board of Congregational Services for the Augustana District, and are an elected member of the Board of Theology and Ministry. Tell us about those Boards.

The duties and responsibilities of the Board of Congregational Services have been noted (above under #2). The Board of Theology and Ministry, in my judgment, is to take care that all clergy, as well as congregations, are faithful to the orthodox interpretation and proclamation of God's Word in its teaching, preaching, and pastoral care. It will facilitate the expectation for continuing theological education by all clergy. Importantly, it will seek to give prayer and financial support to the Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT), which will be a place for orthodox and confessional training for those entering the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Going forward, what are your biggest concerns?

When an individual or a congregation determines to be faithful the Word and to expectations of Almighty God, then the devil goes into serious opposition. What starts well will be assaulted. We must struggle together to avoid such things as arrogance, failure to care for each other in the association, compromise with culture and individualism. We must always be aware that the devil will tempt us to neglect the first "C" in LCMC – so we need to make sure that as congregations we care for each other; we need to be mindful of the "M" – in that we must never neglect mission and evangelical outreach, letting our local needs take precedence; and always aware of the second "C" – that we live by Christ, are obedient to Christ and serve only Jesus.

What are your joys and anticipations?

It is a joy to be with people of God with a like mind in terms of the authority of the Word! I anticipate a continued effort to link our efforts in all of North America for the many who are deeply committed to a confessional understanding and resulting expression of the Word.

I hope that God will use the years ahead so that LCMC and NALC – both of whom take leave of the ELCA for the same basic concerns regarding the authority of the Word – will find evangelical ways of constructively working together.

Why should churches join LCMC and the Augustana District?

Because, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be biblically confessional, a safe place for families as they face the issues of culture, and be committed to mission that cares for those in need and invites the world to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

**Why Augustana District?
By Pastor Scott Grorud**



Over the last 18 months, I have addressed a variety of groups about the current turmoil in Lutheranism. In those presentations, I often emphasized two key convictions.

One is that the *content* of what we preach and teach has to be our primary concern. Theology matters and if it begins not to matter, nothing else a church or denomination does will compensate for that.

The other is that individuals and churches moving to different Lutheran denominations are not doing so in order to change who they are or what they believe. They feel compelled to move in order *not* to change. To preserve the faith as it was handed down to them, they dare not risk getting swept along with the profound theological drift afflicting the mainline churches today.

I believe those are also the two best reasons for being part of the Augustana District. This non-geographical group within LCMC is devoted first of all to maintaining a solid, Lutheran confessional theology. It is committed to preserving the content of the faith with the highest integrity possible.

Augustana's other goal is to provide the best of services which Christian denominations have provided through the years, while avoiding the excesses and diversions that have plagued mainline church bodies in the last generation. Those services include a reliable, effective call process, connections to mission organizations, opportunities for theological reflection, consultation for pastors or churches and other services.

If you are also concerned for the theological integrity of the faith and believe that lean, but effective church structure is helpful, consider joining the Augustana District as an individual and/or encourage your church to join. Together, we can work to preserve the heritage in the faith that we received from our forebears and pass it on to our children, grandchildren and a world in desperate need of the good news of Jesus Christ.

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.

**An Interview with Mr. Bill Swope
Vice Chair, Augustana District Council**



Tell us a little bit about who you are, Bill.

I am a retired elementary school principal whose career in education spanned 39 years, 27 of them as elementary principal in Marshall, MN.

I have been a Missouri Synod Lutheran, an LCA Lutheran, an ELCA Lutheran, and am now an LCMC Lutheran. I love my Lutheran heritage, which was so boldly formed by the spirit-filled work of Dr. Martin Luther. His theological foundation from God's Word of "Justification by God's grace through our faith in Christ Jesus" serves as my guide for my faith walk. I have been blessed to serve our Lord in many capacities: Sunday School teacher, Sunday School superintendent, confirmation teacher, and church council member.

My bride, Carol, succumbed to cancer and went home to our Lord two years ago. My two married children and their families work and live in Marshall, for which I am most thankful. What a blessing it is to see my grandchildren so regularly.

Regarding your own personal faith and witness, what is most important to you?

I know and believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. He died for me so that I might live – in spite of my sinfulness and wretchedness! It just doesn't get any better than that!!

You are a member of the new Living Word Lutheran Church in Marshall. Tell us what makes that a special place.

Come and see! The Holy Spirit is actively present at Living Word. Come and you'll feel it, experience it, taste it, delight in it! We are a Bible church – we are in God's Word. We rejoice and proclaim the purity of scripture and the sacraments. We lift each other up in prayer. We are a "can do with the help of Jesus" church. We are led by Pastor Dave Christensen and Pastor Kelly Wasberg, who are a superb team.

Why did you join LCMC and the Augustana District?

I joined LCMC and am a founding member of Living Word because of LCMC's theological stance in upholding the purity and truth of scripture. Augustana District has been formed and constituted by LCMC congregations to help serve LCMC congregations in their development, educational materials through Sola Publishing, support for ILT (Institute of Lutheran Theology), and assistance with the pastoral call process. Living Word Lutheran Church has joined Augustana District and financially supports it.

You are Vice Chair of the Augustana District Council. Tell us about that.

The Augustana District Council was elected at the constituting convention in May of 2010. We meet monthly to address the ministry and service needs of Augustana District and LCMC congregations, as well as those ELCA churches still struggling with the decisions and positions of the ELCA national assembly.

There have been many inquiries and needs for service from several congregations. In response, the District Council called Pastor Mark Richardson to serve as Interim Service Coordinator

for the District. To continue and expand this work of providing help to congregations, we need to raise funds. We pray that congregations will place the Augustana District in their annual budget in January of 2011. We have many brothers and sisters in Christ who are grievously aching and hurting and in need of our support.

What are your greatest joys as the future unfolds for Lutheranism in North America?

The indescribable joy in observing and experiencing the Holy Spirit at work in our midst! It is breathtaking to hold high the cross with our brothers and sisters, and proclaim: *Sola Scriptura! Sola Gratia! Sola Fide!*

Why do you believe churches should join the Augustana District?

That's an easy one. We need to belong to both LCMC and the Augustana District as a fellowship and communion of believers who adhere to the purity of God's Word and the sacraments. This is an assurance and commitment we owe to our God, to each other, to our children and to our grandchildren.

Conflict Mediators Sought

The Board of Congregational Services is seeking qualified people to assist with congregations that are in conflict. If you have training or experience in congregational conflict resolution, and are open to volunteering your services, please contact the Service Coordinator, Mark Richardson at mjrichardson@augustanadistrict.org.

CHURCHTALK Connects People

Geographical distance need not – any longer! – limit peoples' ability to meet face-to-face to share in conversation and mutual support.

Because of our relationship with the Institute of Lutheran Theology, the Augustana District is able to offer a program called ChurchTalk, allowing people to meet face-to-face, in real time, online. Three groups have been started:

PastorTalk is a group for pastors who have led (or are leading) churches out of the ELCA and have received their "fair share" of bruises doing so. Host is Pr. Brian Crocker of Clintonville, WI.

LeadershipTalk is primarily for lay leaders strategizing about their church's future. Host is Pr. Scott Grotud of Hutchinson, MN.

MissionStartTalk is for pastors starting new mission start-up congregations and is hosted by Pr. Kelly Wasberg of Marshall, MN.

For details of how to get "hooked in" to one of these groups, go to the ChurchTalk page at the district's website: AugustanaDistrict.org.



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

www.AugustanaDistrict.org

For Your Church's Consideration

The Augustana District is a unique, non-geographic district within LCMC. Avoiding the trappings of bureaucracy and hierarchy (where congregational authority is diminished and the “priesthood of all believers” is confused), the Augustana District provides resources helpful to congregations, and collegiality and accountability for pastors.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS. The Augustana District is committed to classic and traditional Lutheran beliefs, seeking the best of all confessional theology and effective church structure. We are deeply committed to the authority of the Word of God, and to the writings of the Reformation known as “the Lutheran Confessions.”

BENEFITS TO CONGREGATIONS AND PASTORS

- Assistance in the call process, as desired.
- Assistance in conflict mediation, as desired.
- Fellowship for congregations and pastors connected by a strong confessional heritage.
- Collegial support for pastors – and the accountability most pastors seek to have.
- Assistance with background checks, as desired.
- Assistance with salary and compensation guidelines, as desired.
- Long term commitment to the success of “our” seminary – The Institute of Lutheran Theology.
- Long term commitment to publishing faithful and reliable curricula; supporting Sola Publishing.
- Support to new mission start-up congregations and their pastors.
- Long term commitment to world missions and evangelism.
- Augmentation of LCMC’s “certification” of pastors with a district “endorsement” process that examines pastors’ theological positions, moral commitments and professional competencies.

EASY TO JOIN

Churches become **Member Congregations** by subscribing to Augustana’s Constitution, Bylaws and Statement of Faith. This may be done at a congregational meeting by simply adding it to your resolution to join LCMC or by entertaining a separate motion. It is also possible, by District rules, to join the Augustana District by the vote of your Church Council – again by subscribing to the Constitution, Bylaws and Statement of Faith. Mail your resolution, signed by the president or pastor, to the Augustana District at 335 Main Street South, Hutchinson, MN 55350. All requests for membership are acted upon by the District Council.

Churches may also become **Associate Member Congregations** by action of their Church Council. This category of membership is provided to churches that want to associate with us but are not [or not yet] LCMC churches. Like joining a mission society or a Bible camp association, “Associate Member Congregations” can participate in the benefits and mission of the Augustana District by circumventing the ELCA’s arbitrary prohibition against so-called “dual rostering.” Again, mail your adopted resolution to the Augustana District for District Council action.

As we come together to carve out a new future for centrist Lutheranism in North America, we welcome your partnership, your financial support, and your active participation in the on-going development of the Augustana District.