



August 2017

"(Jesus) put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'"
(Matthew 13:31-32)

If you were the leader of an organization or movement, faced with mounting opposition, serious doubts and outright rejection, what would you do? Change your message? Reevaluate your strategy? Call forth some new spokespeople? Hire a consultant?

Jesus did none of this as opposition to him mounted. Instead, he told a number of stories called parables. There is the parable of the reckless farmer who gets astonishing results despite scattering seed in bad soil. There is a follow-up parable of the weeds planted among the wheat that reminds us that an enemy is at work. There are the twin parables of the mustard seed and leaven. Chapter 13 proves to be a significant section of Matthew's Gospel.

Jesus' parables are simple and direct. They draw hearers in, but they also raise more questions about this Jesus. They make you wonder about his methods and what was later described as the "foolish wisdom" of the Gospel. But all the while, his parables strengthen the claims he makes about himself. They show his confidence and resolve.

Whether we focus on Christian witness in our cultural context or the struggles and challenges within our own congregations, these parables offer great comfort and hope. The parable of the mustard seed may be particularly instructive. The smallest of all seeds produces the greatest of all shrubs. If there is any doubt about how growth happens and who causes it, this parable puts it to rest. God is in control—of growth, of faith, of judgment and of salvation.

This little parable of the mustard seed is nestled in chapter 13 to tell us something quite significant for life and faith. Bad seed will only produce weeds that are burned in the oven (Mt. 13:30), but good seed, apparently insignificant and so very vulnerable, will produce a mighty harvest at last!

What can a little seed do? What can that "little word" do that Luther speaks of in his great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress"? The answer is clear: everything. It accomplishes everything *for* life and everything *in* death. That is enough to cut a course in our world, our congregations and our lives!

In Christ,
Pastor Randy Freund,
Augustana District Service Coordinator





Theology, Church, Mission



*Do you know of a church that has implemented a Creative Calling?
Please let us know about it so that we can share your ideas by contacting
Randy Freund at director@augustanadistrict.org.*

I hope you have enjoyed the “Creative Calling” pieces during these past months. Thank you to the congregations and pastors who have submitted their stories. We hope to continue this as a monthly communication. Submissions are still needed and encouraged. These ideas serve as a forum for brainstorming creative staffing solutions. They also serve as an encouragement to be bold and creative.

The statistics have not changed. Within many denominations and associations, certainly including LCMC, there is a persistent forecast of a “clergy shortage.” It is always debated as to whether that is the accurate term to use or not. There are no shortages in God’s Kingdom and work. The priesthood of believers is abundant. It is the case that the number of retiring pastors does not equal the number of new pastors. It is also true that smaller congregations find it harder to call full time pastors. Some call this a crisis. I see it as an opportunity.

In order to prepare for this reality, we would like to hear from you. The Augustana District exists to serve LCMC congregations in whatever ways God calls us and equips us to serve. All of us are a part of this calling and service. With this particular “Creative Calling” piece comes a request.

As we contemplate the realities before us that will challenge congregational life, what are the priorities on which the district should focus? Is it mentoring young or new pastors? Is it training lay leaders (in areas such as worship, preaching and/or pastoral care)? Are there educational resources or Bible study resources that would be helpful? Are there consulting services that might help steer a new ministry model in the right way?

These are just some of the questions leaders of the Augustana District wonder about. It would be helpful to hear from you. Through e-mail or the website, please take the time to let us know your thoughts and how you would be willing to serve in the great opportunity we have before us for “Creative Callings”!

Pastor Becky Hand
Augustana District Council Chair



Theology, Church, Mission

Save the Date

LCMC 17th ANNUAL GATHERING *"We Confess Our Faith"*

October 8-11, 2017

Hilton Minneapolis, 1001 S. Marquette Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55403

For more information and to register please go to lcmc.net/annual-gathering

AUGUSTANA DISTRICT WOW (Women of the Word) ANNUAL GATHERING *"Endurance"*

Saturday, September 16, 2017

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Richfield, WI

Registration information is now on the Augustana District Website at augustanadistrict.org

AUGUSTANA DISTRICT THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

Monday, February 5 - Tuesday, February 6, 2018

The event will be held at the Sioux Falls Seminary in Sioux Falls, SD.

Hotel information to follow soon.

AUGUSTANA DISTRICT CONVENTION 2018 ~ Saturday, April 28, 2018 Location TBD

Go to the Augustana District Website or Facebook page for registration information on these events. You can sign-up for regular e-mails from AD by emailing office@augustanadistrict.org and requesting to be included in e-mails.



Multiply x 2

Magnify

Acts 12:24 *"The Word of the Lord continued to grow and be multiplied"*



Standing
firm in the
faith for
500 years!

