

November 2019

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devotional

Jesus, the Teacher

Jesus is the ultimate teacher. We are familiar with his parables and often we clearly see the lessons he is teaching to us. Also, we know that he boiled down the ten commandments to two things as we read in Mark 12:29-31: Jesus answered, 'The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'" Jesus really simplified the teaching of the Law. Love God and love your neighbor. This "simplification" does not immediately change our hearts, nor does it make the Law easier for us. But it does make it easier to understand what God is telling us.

Jesus is the greatest teacher in the world. He took a small group of men under his tutelage and used them to change the world. No doubt Jesus is the master educator. But the disciples, including us, are not always the best students. Think of all the things Jesus told his inner circle that they didn't understand. For example, Jesus warned them to beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The disciples thought he was admonishing them for not bringing bread to eat when he was discussing the teaching of some of the Pharisee and Sadducees. (See Matthew 16:5-12) Likewise, he informed them that he would die and be raised, (See Matthew 20:17-19). but they did not understand this with either. After the resurrection, though, when they were filled the Holy Spirit, they really began to understand who Jesus is, what he taught and what he wanted from them.

And what does Jesus want from us? When we boil it down, it seems quite simple: Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. If we were not sinners, this would be simple. Our sinful nature is always tempted to love ourselves more than God, and to prefer our selfishness over loving our neighbor. So, Jesus taught and exemplified what love is. He still teaches us. The same sinful nature continues to plague us with selfishness deeming Jesus's teachings essential and

life altering. Like the first disciples, we often misunderstand Jesus until the Holy Spirit fills us and guides us into love.

Education is important. We are taught at home, at school, on the playground, on the job, and, sometimes, in higher education. We are taught in church, in Sunday school and in Bible study. Jesus teaches us, the Holy Spirit teaches us. At times, however, like the first disciples we are slow to learn. We need to be reminded and re-taught.

Thank the Lord that he still teaches us through the Holy Spirit. He still teaches us to love God and to love our neighbor. Despite our selfish natures, Jesus continues to teach us to love the very God who is love.

We get both lost and found in God's love for us. In our sin, we seek ourselves instead of God, and we attempt to rely on the flawed idea that we can keep the Law. In God's love,

we lose ourselves and our ill-fated attempts to save ourselves from our sin. We can be overwhelmed by God's love and become lost in him; our self-centered desire evolves to favor his will instead. In this place, we are found. Here is where Jesus' words ring in our spirits and we begin to understand his teaching. The Spirit leads us into the very heart of God where we see his immense love for us and his desire to love through us. In this we become lost to ourselves, our selfish desires, and our hearts become found in him.

We are students still in need of the greatest teacher. Thanks be to God that he continues to teach us, to love us and teach us to love.



Pastor Becky Hand
Life in Grace Ministries
Odessa, TX



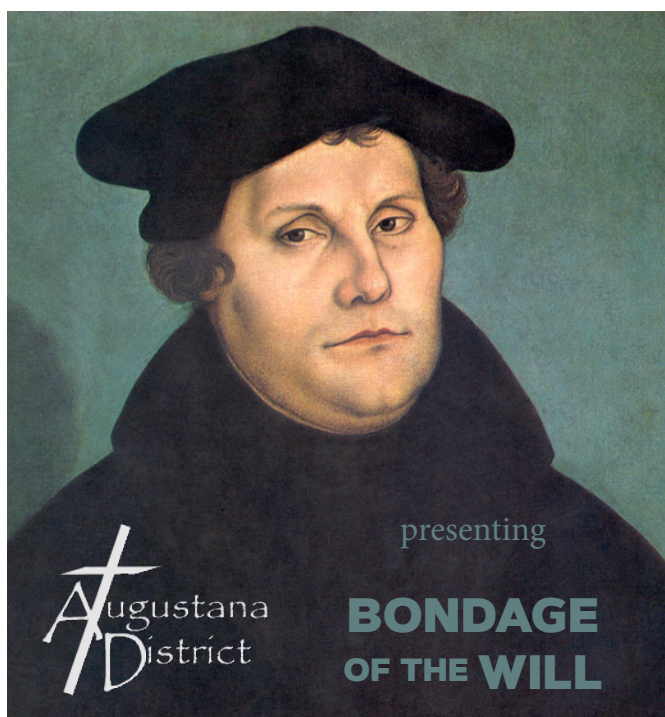
Pause



Play



Refresh



presenting

Augustana
District

**BONDAGE
OF THE WILL**

2020 Confirmation Retreat

Registration is now open. Please make sure to register early as space is limited.

Brochure and emergency contact form is also available at the site.

Learn More

See full details and registration at
augustanadistrict.org/2020-confirmation-retreat/

† *Flood victims in northern India and the workers trying to alleviate the suffering caused by the waters.*

† *The Christians in Estonia working to share God's love.*

† *Refugees from South Sudan and the 15,000 orphans in Sudan due to anarchy there, and the Lutheran Church S. Sudan.*

† *Holy Lord, we lift up our brothers and sisters in Ethiopia. We ask you to protect them, to guide them and to fill their hearts with peace. Watch over the pastors there who work to bring your Good News. Bless the hearts that have not yet turned to you in repentance. Strengthen your presence in the Church in Ethiopia and on our continent as well. In Jesus' holy name, Amen.*



NEEDS

**Looking for a Thank Offering outlet or an Advent offering recipient?
Look no further.**

MISSION

Here are some options:

AIMJ: As a district we are supporting 4 pastors at \$125/month. These pastors are preaching the Gospel to Muslims in northern India and the harvest is great!

Would you, or your congregation like to sponsor a pastor at \$125/mo., or \$375/quarter? The District sends quarterly payments of \$1,500 to AIMJ, All India Masihi Jamat.

Tabor Project in Ethiopia -- Tabor is a vibrant congregation within EECMY.

A partnership was formed when Senior Pastor Dawit y Wario spoke to an AD gathering in Fall 2012. AD is called to support evangelists, to provide EECMY Seminarian support, and purchase bicycles and motorcycles for evangelists to travel to communities to spread the Gospel.

YAMI (Young Adult Missionary Internship) -- for more information see www.alwm.young-adult-missionary-internship or email Pr. Matt Shields at pastormatt@alwm.org

His Light Ministries -- Ministerio Su Luz -- for more information see the [September Augustana Witness](#) or email Pr. Eddy Perez at pastoreddyperez@gmail.com.

Mission Minute from the Board of World Missions

A Testimony by Seikh Sarabuddin, West Champaran, Bihar, India

'I am Seikh Sarabuddin. I was born and brought up in an orthodox Muslim family. Since childhood, I was taught about Islam and therefore was a very strong believer from the start. After completing my studies from madarasa, I joined a college for getting a degree in secular studies. After few months of joining my college, I made a friend who introduced me to SIMI (Student Islamic Movement of India) and told me that only the true followers of Allah are allowed in this group. SIMI is a terrorist group which recruits young college students by brainwashing them in the name of Allah and train them so that they could become future terrorists and perform jihad. As I was a strong believer, they brain washed me easily and made me join the group. I completed their 6 months terrorist training and was just waiting to finish my college so that I could start working as a terrorist.

One of my class mate Asgar Ali also joined with me but left the group. As he not only left the group but also began reading Christian literatures, we young members who just completed our training were given the task to torture and harass Asgar Ali so that he could come back to our group. All of us tortured and harassed him but he never came back and so we just left him. Some months later he came to me and told me the reason of leaving the group. He told me that he was given Call of

Hope literature that taught about the teachings of Jesus and told me about Bro Zafir Alam who like us was a former Muslim. So, I listened to him and went to meet Bro Zafir Alam not because I wanted to learn about Jesus but because I wanted to know about the man who has been distributing Christian literatures to Muslims. I also wanted to learn about his house

so that, if needed we could attack him and chase him out of the village. But after talking and listening about the teachings of Jesus, I felt that the teachings that have been given to us about killing others is not true. I was very confused to I took some literatures to read namely- What do you think about Jesus Christ?, Did God appear in the flesh and Life

of Christ?. I began reading these books for the next 7-8 months and during that time I reduced the time I used to spend in SIMI group. I would also go to Bro Zafir's house so that I could clear my doubts. After reading these literatures I really felt that the teachings that were given to us were completely wrong.

So, I too left the group and heard that Bor. Asgar had already accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior & Lord. I wished to learn more about Christ so I took a Bible from Bro. Zafir. I began reading the Bible daily also attended Sunday fellowship. Some months later, I too accepted Christ as my personal Savior by October 2018. After learning about my faith my parents and relatives started hating me.



They also told me that if I continue to follow Jesus they will never ever see my face and also the members of SIMI group started torturing me. But, I never gave up my faith and on 28th June 2019 I took baptism and started my new life. Please pray so that I could bring my family and relatives to Christ and bring other members of SIMI group to Christ! people, in the "real world." One sows and another reaps (John 4:37); and we cannot even begin to imagine what the impact will be for the kingdom.



New Clergy

- Pastor Daniel Ostercamp

New Congregations

- Kensington Lutheran in Kensington, MN
- Denny Park Lutheran in Seattle, WA

Embrace Everything...?
Judge nothing...?



CONFUSED?
SORTING IT OUT!

**2019
HIGH SCHOOL
RETREAT**

**Registration Deadline
is Nov 15th!**

New this year - a retreat weekend
for High School Students.

This retreat will be held December
6-8 at Luther Crest in Alexandria,
MN.

[Registration is open on
augustanadistrict.org](http://augustanadistrict.org)



Theological Conference

February 3 - 4, 2020

Best Western Plus
1901 Killibrew Dr.
Bloomington MN 55425

See full details and registration at
augustanadistrict.org/annual-theological-conference/



**Congratulations to AD Service Coordinator
Pastor Randy Freund for being elected by Area
3 to serve on the LCMC Board of Trustees.**

**Congratulations to AD Program Coordinator
Pastor Becky Hand on being appointed to
the LCMC Ministry Board.**

**AD Pastor Nathan Hanson continues to serve on the
LCMC Ministry Board.**

**Thank you to Pastor Julie Smith for her service of
two terms on the LCMC Board of Trustees.**

TITHING - The Double Edged Sword

When we talk about giving in the church, it is always something of a double-edged sword. One edge is that the ministry of any church entity, including the Augustana District, depends entirely on the generous offerings of its members. No other source of income is available. Given that, when pastors and other church leaders encourage generous giving, it can be heard as self-serving or concerned only with paying the bills.

The other edge of the sword, however, is that covering these expenses is not the chief reason to give. We know that the Bible urges faithful giving as a way to thank God for His steadfast providing, to remind us that God gives us everything we have, including the ability to work to earn income, and to keep our trust centered in God and not in the possessions He grants us.

That being said, the Augustana District thanks those of you that faithfully support the mission and ministry of AD through your financial support.

For those of you that do not yet support the district, do you know how you and/or your congregation can do so?

- 1) Share the monthly Augustana Witness newsletter with your congregation and friends
- 2) As a congregation and as individuals please pray for the district and the work that it is doing
- 3) Financially support the district, or if you already do, look at and re-evaluate how you are supporting the district based on how things may have changed since you began supporting the district
- 4) Some out of the box ways to support the district outside of direct financial contributions:



For instance-- did you know that Augustana District is a member

of Amazon Smile? How cool is technology when we can expand giving in everyday acts like shopping? If you do a lot of shopping on Amazon, please consider participating in [Amazon Smile](#).

IRA's -- Did you know that you can put a traditional IRA to work for you and the district or other charities? And that both you and the charity will benefit from it?

Starting at age 70 ½ people must take what is called a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from EACH traditional IRA they own. RMD's are taxable, but only if they increase your income. They are not taxed if they are donated directly to a qualified charity, like the Augustana District. (All this assumes that the donor is not depending on the income from the RMD right now.)

It is important to work with a financial planner to be fully informed about this process. For example, the RMD must go directly to the qualified charity for it to not be taxable. This is a great option for some people to support the district. Congress has made this a permanent program, so these gifts can be made in any year.

And how about THIS?



Recently, Augustana District became part of the [THRIVENT Choice Dollars](#) program. If you have any products through Thrivent Financial you are likely eligible for Choice Dollars.

By directing your Choice Dollars to AD you can help support the district. Think of the impact you - along with other eligible Thrivent members - can make by choosing to designate your Choice Dollars to go to the Augustana District or another registered organization. Give

Augustana District Financial Snapshot



As of September 30th the general ledger reflected that \$50,181.11 has been given to the Augustana District General Fund, which supports the day to day operations including the mission and ministry parts of the district. **This amount represents just 38.6% of our annual goal of \$130,000.** We are counting on an outpouring of year-end giving to meet all of our annual commitments.

We hope and pray for your continued investment in the work that God is doing in and through the District. [Please consider donating today.](#)



Address Service Requested

AUGUSTANA DISTRICT
335 Main Street S.
Hutchinson MN 55350



Save the Dates 2020

Confirmation
Retreat
March 6-8
Luther Crest
Alexandria, MN

Theological
Conference
February 3-4
Best Western
Bloomington, MN

District Convention
Anniversary Banquet
Friday, May 1
Christ the King, Hutchinson MN
Convention
Saturday, May 2
Faith Lutheran,
Hutchinson, MN

**High School Retreat Registration
Deadline is Nov 15th!**