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## THE SWEET SPOT OF LIFE

*"It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again." -Philippians 1:20-26*

Do you envy the Apostle Paul's position in these verses? He wants to stay on earth, though imprisoned for Christ (Phil. 1:13), to be of help to believers but, at the same time, he wants to go home to be with Jesus. Sometimes when people who have lived a long, full life are facing death they are in this same place of the heart. Perhaps this is the "sweet spot" in life: I'm willing to stay to work for the Lord but am looking forward to going home.

It's not necessary to be at the end of one's earthly life to live in this sweet spot. God's promise of forgiveness and eternal life lets us rest assured of our journey home. And Jesus' promise to be with us always (both pre- and post-death) reminds us of whose we are and why we are here. "Isn't life delicious" is an oft-used line. When we live in the Sweet Spot of knowing that Jesus is always with us while we are here and knowing that when we are called home, Jesus will continue to be with us, makes life pretty delicious.

In this time of uncertainty, we are all out of routines that are normal. Questions of purpose and meaning emerge. But this much is true. Before Covid and during Covid and after Covid, one thing remains constant: we now "live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor." Whether we go out to work everyday or work from home staring out the same window, whether we are masked and gloved for shopping, or are playing in the backyard, we belong to the Lord. He is with us. His will be done, today and always. Enjoy the Sweet Spot, it's all Jesus!  
 Pastor Becky Hand

## A WORD FROM THE BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Pastor Julie Smith, Chair

*"I lift my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." - Psalm 121:1-2*

In the run up to Holy Week, most of our churches had their hands full working out all the kinks of streaming worship. That, in and of itself, required a great deal of creativity, trial and error, patience, and quick learning of new skills. With a month or so to get things figured out, we did our best to have some semblance of normalcy to our worship services.

Now that the frenzy of Easter has passed, our minds are turning to bigger questions. As we imagine what our "new normal" may be, for an, as yet, indefinite amount of time, a number of new challenges arise. Are we prepared for extended home-schooling or distance learning for Sunday School and Confirmation?

How can we better equip parents for faith formation, while also recognizing that many are already stretched almost to breaking? What are the most effective tools for Bible study at a distance? How will the skills and practices we are developing now continue to be useful when things are "back to normal"?

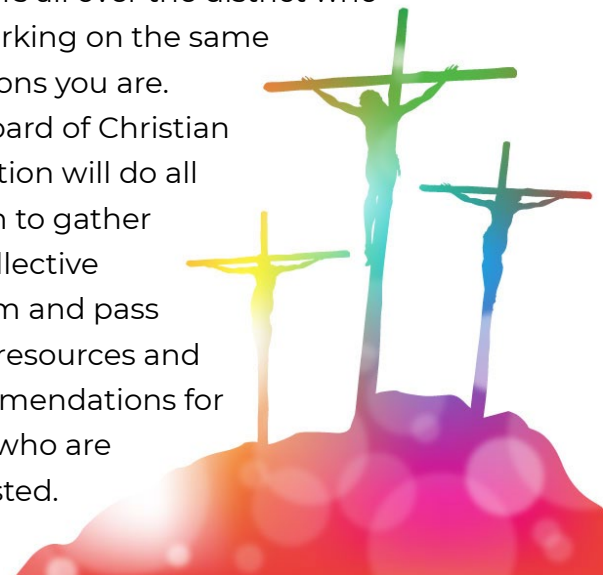
This time has also forced us to articulate more clearly our understanding of the sufficiency of the Word, faithful administration of the sacraments, the two kingdoms, stewardship, and countless other matters. A variety of practices have arisen as the churches of our district seek to carry out their missions under the current restrictions. Sometimes those practices have arisen out of careful reflection,

and sometimes decisions are made on the fly as the situation demands.

The Board for Christian Education seeks to be useful to congregations by sharing best practices, tools, and resources. In the coming weeks and months, through the District website and newsletter we will share materials related to Sunday School, Confirmation, Bible study, Stewardship, Worship, Holy Communion, the Two Kingdoms, and other matters that arise. One of our first planned offerings is a webinar discussing communion practices. Watch for more information.

In these times of disruption it is all too easy to become overwhelmed with the sheer number of questions and concerns that come our way. It is also all too easy to feel all alone in sorting everything out. Part of our commitment in the Augustana District is that we never want churches to feel alone or adrift. You have partners all over the district who are working on the same questions you are.

The Board of Christian Education will do all we can to gather our collective wisdom and pass along resources and recommendations for those who are interested.



## MISSION MOMENT – ETHIOPIA

Augustana District Board of World Missions

Pastor Tom Christenson, Hope Lutheran – Huron, SD

*“<sup>11</sup> So Christ gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers,<sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” - Ephesians 4:11-12*

Your Augustana District has been in an official partnership with the Tabor Congregation of Hawassa, Ethiopia since 2014.

Tabor, a member congregation of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), is among the largest congregations of the EECMY, with over 8,000 members. Our partnership, however, is not in direct support of Tabor as a worshipping community. Rather, we are partners in the outreach ministry of the congregation.

Their strong passion for evangelism would be the envy of any of our congregations. The outreach of Tabor is in both city and rural areas,



all strategically planned for predominantly Muslim areas. Our partnership is primarily in helping with the modest salaries (average of \$150 per month) of the lay evangelists that are sent out from Tabor to establish preaching points to bring the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ to lost souls. These evangelists try to work themselves out of their call! That is, once the Gospel takes root in an area and a local believer can be raised up to further the ministry, the original evangelist

is called back to Tabor for more training and redeployment. The newly appointed evangelist is also equipped with training in order to preach and teach to his/her fellow tribe or home area.

### Two Immediate Ways to Partner with Tabor's Outreach:

**First, be an Outreach Champion!** As their outreach ministry is ever growing, we can always use additional prayer and financial partners to enable more to come to saving faith in Jesus. So, I ask you to be an Outreach Champion in your church, that you, and your congregation would consider a designated gift through the Augustana District of \$75 per month to support one-half of the salary of one of these dedicated evangelists.

**Second, support the Motorcycle Project!** In this calendar year of 2020, we are championing the Motorcycle Project to raise an additional \$8,000 to purchase four motorcycles to aid in the



deployment of Tabor's evangelists, and for visitation and training by the Evangelist Coordinators. When we are able to be out from the Covid-19 restrictions, all of us will want to reconnect with others. Then, you could consider using a Thrivent Action Team grant to purchase materials and promote a fund-raising event within your congregation or community. The

\$250 grant provided as a benefit to Thrivent members will in most cases cover all of the event expenses, so that all the proceeds can be dedicated to support the Motorcycle Project.

I thank you in advance for considering these projects as part of your Gospel Outreach into the world! God Bless you and yours!!



## Save the 2021 Dates

- Theological Conference February 8-9 in Bloomington, MN
- Confirmation Retreat March 5-6 in Alexandria, MN

## PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Holy Lord, we are reminded in this season of Easter that you alone have the power of life and death, and we know that life with you is life in you and that this life is eternal. We ask for your presence, your healing, your peace, and that your will is done. Use us as you see fit to share your love and your word with our hurting world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## PRAYER NEEDS

- ✠ We pray God's peace for all affected by Covid-19, those who are ill, their caregivers and those suffering economic impact.
- ✠ We pray for people who lack the peace of God. May their hearts turn toward him. The harvest is great but the workers are few, so equip and send us into the fields of this world as Christ's harvesters.
- ✠ India has been in a state of lock-down from March 19 through April 30. During this time, AIMJ, the church group Augustana supports in northern India, is assisting people with medicine and sanitary products.



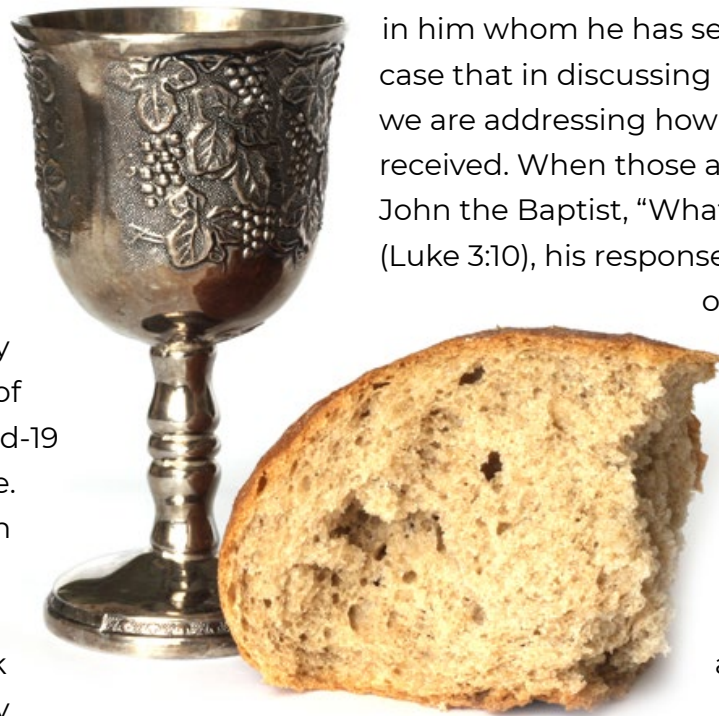
## QUESTIONS DURING THIS PANDEMIC

### WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

This seems to be the question most pastors and parishioners are asking. The Covid-19 crisis has altered our lives in profound ways, not the least of which involves church life and practice. “What are we to do?” It is not that we are seeking some “right” answer for an unprecedented time. However, some mutual conversation

and theological discernment would be helpful. As a district dedicated to such matters, it seems appropriate that we help provide leadership and guidance in this way and for this time. Some of this began with the Covid-19 resources on our website. We wish to extend this in this newsletter and through continuing communications. Thank you to Board of Theology and Ministry Chair, Pastor Culynn Curtis, and Board of Christian Education Chair, Pastor Julie Smith, for their contributions to this and upcoming newsletters.

One “What are we to do?” question centers around communion practices in a time of state “shelter in place” orders and CDC guidelines. Along with this, the profound economic impact of the Covid-19 crisis has caused churches to grapple with the CARES Act. What are the merits and cautions of accessing government money for church workers’/pastors’ salaries?



These are conversations we need to have.

“What are we to do?” is also a Biblical question. It is interesting and perhaps instructive that Jesus was asked exactly that question in John 6:28. It followed the feeding of the 5000 and led up to his promise that “I am the Bread of Life.” His simple answer to the question, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” was, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” It is certainly the case that in discussing communion practices, we are addressing how saving faith is given and received. When those at the Jordan River asked John the Baptist, “What then shall we do?” (Luke 3:10), his response was all about giving to

others. It is certainly the case that in a time of economic crisis and government aid packages, the people of God must ask what giving means as it relates to our neighbors and mission partners.

Other “What are we to do?” questions are sure to arise. What will it mean for corporate worship if the CDC group recommendations rise to 50 or 100? Will some churches need to add multiple worship services in order maintain safe social distancing? Will some members still be uncomfortable coming to church and want a livestream option to continue? How can this be addressed pastorally and theologically? When it comes to pastoral care, what kind of support and counseling may be necessary to address the latent anxieties and fears that still lurk as a result of this ordeal? The

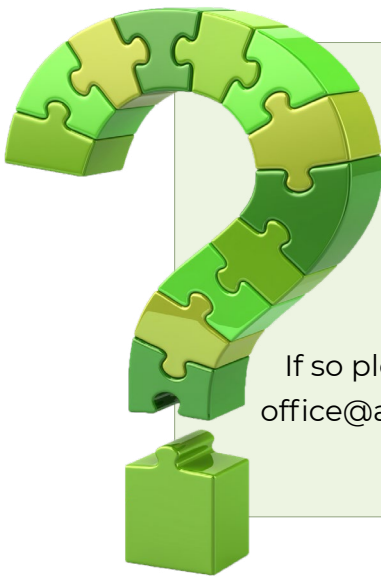
emotional, spiritual and psychological effects of the Covid-19 crisis differ from those that come from a single tragic event like a 9/11.

Augustana District.

As people whose confidence and faith lies only in Christ Jesus, there is no fear. Yet, there is a need to break through the isolation and confusion by conversation and consolation together. This is one of the very purposes of our

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Randy Freund  
Augustana District Service Coordinator

For more information on the COVID-19 document, please visit our website at [www.augustanadistrict.org](http://www.augustanadistrict.org)



## Is your congregation interested in hosting the 2021 Convention?

If so please contact the office at 320-234-8403 or by emailing [office@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:office@augustanadistrict.org)

### TREASURERS REPORT

I'm excited to report that despite the difficult and uncertain times, Augustana District ended its fiscal year very strong. Income for the period from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 exceeded expenses by \$5,217.12. We thank you and your congregations for your strong support. In an effort to be fiscally responsible going forward, the District Council has decided to freeze our budget for the foreseeable future. It is very difficult to make plans for this coming year given the uncertainty and hardships this pandemic has created. I'm reminded of Psalm 56:3 which states "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you." This organization is going to put our faith and trust in God that he will carry us through!

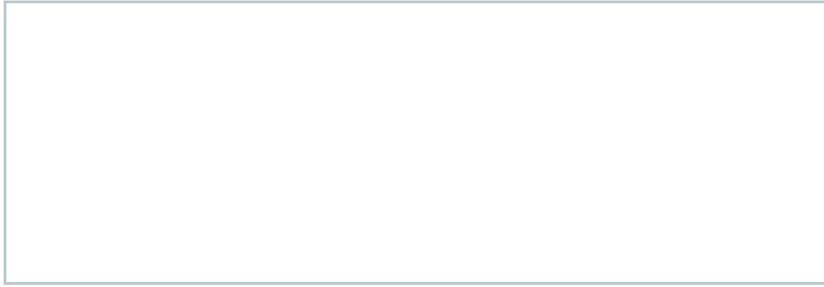
Eric Knutson, AD Treasurer




# Books of the Bible

LYRMMXNIC TXKR SOMAHFKM WYGM ICAHTR  
 VLRRJRTKAOXIHCALAMTKT1KHEMDTKTS  
 L XKRTKDZYGLDMNNJQRQTZRSDTNYKZGE  
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 SBREVORPCJWNHSSNHOJ1R1NFTUFIITA  
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 TYHCTRCTMKLNLRLATTTRTBHWDCFHLL2S  
 MPVAHEBREWMAKEHNZPKNEBPASTNLRE  
 HHRWNNHXVHSSHETVSRLJSVNTNK1PRL  
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 ZFZRTFN SHBHDHNMDLZTMNN2LSZSHLNI  
 RRBQRUTHWJONNTZASMVKMMC NJEREDOC  
 YBYESTHERLSLKENBUFLT TIAKGNIWBSL  
 SREBMUNDKPEKPNZOTM HFNINDRKQEKQE  
 SGNIK2YMTVAHOJMJINRO SXUHEWTHXJS  
 KLA KPFTCIDAM1RODTLRENJRZORKTXXR  
 GNUVRKTTMNEKKECFRHHKHNEXTJNTPLD  
 JRHPBBIRILIGLLTKCPPVOCJHJR2AMFM  
 KVSJMCTAINXMMLX2EKMBJLWONONMLVV  
 VROYUNHHGVYHTOMIT1BK3TQNB DHRVHL  
 MBJSQK PSTLAMENTATIIONSWBTL LXNZXR

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|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1 Chronicles    | 2 Thessalonians | Galatians | Jude         | Philippians     |
| 1 Corinthians   | 2 Timothy       | Genesis   | Judges       | Proverbs        |
| 1 John          | 3 John          | Habakkuk  | Lamentations | Psalms          |
| 1 Kings         | Acts            | Haggai    | Leviticus    | Revelation      |
| 1 Peter         | Amos            | Hebrews   | Luke         | Romans          |
| 1 Samuel        | Colossians      | Hosea     | Malachi      | Ruth            |
| 1 Thessalonians | Daniel          | Isaiah    | Mark         | Song of Solomon |
| 1 Timothy       | Deuteronomy     | James     | Matthew      | Titus           |
| 2 Chronicles    | Ecclesiastes    | Jeremiah  | Micah        | Zechariah       |
| 2 Corinthians   | Ephesians       | Job       | Nahum        | Zephaniah       |
| 2 John          | Esther          | Joel      | Nehemiah     |                 |
| 2 Kings         | Exodus          | John      | Numbers      |                 |
| 2 Peter         | Ezekiel         | Jonah     | Obadiah      |                 |
| 2 Samuel        | Ezra            | Joshua    | Philemon     |                 |



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AUGUSTANA DISTRICT 



## 10<sup>th</sup> Annual District Convention Anniversary Banquet

Friday, Sept. 25  
Christ the King, Hutchinson MN

District Convention  
Saturday, Sept. 26  
Faith Lutheran, Hutchinson, MN

Featured Guest Speaker  
Minnesota Supreme Court Justice

The Honorable  
G. Barry Anderson

*“What Comes Next?”*

Visit [augustanadistrict.org/2020-district-convention](http://augustanadistrict.org/2020-district-convention) for more information

