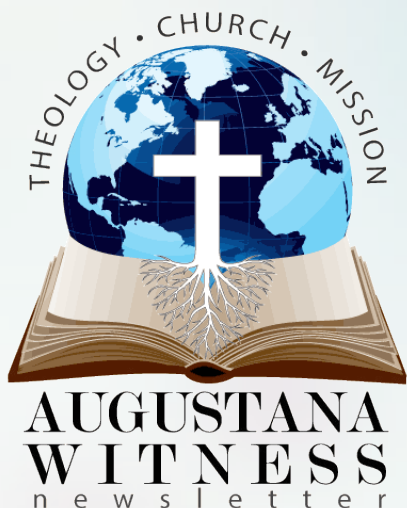


DEVOTIONAL



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*“When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. “ - Psalm 126:1-3*

It seems so long ago when we last gathered together to worship the Living God as His people. Now that states are re-opening and houses of worship have been given the ‘green light’... Wow! It is like waking up from a long dream, as we anticipate hearing one another laugh once again and sing songs of joy to our Lord.

How we gather together, though, may be a bit different than we remember. In many congregations, there will be no signing and the laughter that accompanies a coffee hour will be silent. Across the country, congregational leaders and pastors have been working on reopening plans and implementing safety guidelines. For all of us, whatever our re-opening plan, patience and perseverance, with a full measure of God’s grace, will finally lead us to the time when we find the “new normal” and can say to one another in person: “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”



Looking forward to seeing you soon!

*Pastor TODD*

Anne Mathison and  
 Pastor Todd

One thing to remember as we consider how “new normal” will look is that God is still God. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow (see Hebrews 13:8). Our behaviors may change, his does not. Our concerns are now different, his are not. Our fellowship is distanced, his is not.

The Lord had done great things for you. Let your mouth be filled with laughter and your tongue with songs of joy! Let the non-believers see your faith in action and say, “The Lord has done great things for them!” Amen.

Peace be with you!

*Pastor Becky Hand*

## MISSION MINUTE

Sourav Ansari  
Wife- Kakila Begum  
Nachinda, East Midnapore,  
West Bengal.



‘I am Sourav Ansari. Since my childhood, I was taught to only believe in Islam and that no other religion tells the truth but Islam.

Although I was an orthodox Muslim, I did not hate people from other religion. One day Pastor S.K. Jana, who is from our village gave me a calendar on occasion of new year. He told me that the calendar that I have received is special as it contained many good teachings and I should read those teachings and try to understand them. I read those words and immediately felt that these words are very beautiful. My wife Kakila Begum also read them and she too felt the same. I contacted Pastor S.K. Jana and asked for the source of these teachings. He told me that all those were Bible verses. After hearing this we both lost our interest in those teachings. He tried to contact

us again and again but we never replied back. One day he finally came to our house. He told us that reading Bible is not a sin and then told us that we should read it like a book that contained many good teachings. We began reading the Bible and as we read more and more, we got more and more attracted to the teachings. Our favorite Bible verse is- John 3:36- Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.

We read the Bible for about an year. Reading the Bible changed our thoughts as we started to believe in Jesus Christ. We also started to attend the church. Our faith grew more and more and by May 2018, me and my wife accepted Christ as our personal savior. The word spread across our village that we are now Christians. People began to torture us and say all types of things. Our families also tried to talk us out by saying that all of this is not the truth. At the end they left us and told us to never come to their house or contact them. But our faith was strong in the Lord and nothing happened to us. So, on 19th March 2020 me and my wife were baptized and started our new life. Please pray for us so that we could become the living testament of our Lord’s work.’



Augustana District warmly welcomes  
Rev. Richard Blue from Chiefland, Florida

## PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Holy Lord, you both give and sustain life. You understand better than we can about the state of the world at this time. We pray for your guidance and wisdom as we navigate new paths. We ask for your healing power and peace in this country and around the world. You alone are our refuge and you alone are our hope. All glory to the name of Jesus! Amen.

## PRAYER NEEDS

- ✝ India: : Almost 70% of India's 1.4 billion residents live on less than \$2.00/day. Amid the national lockdown and inability to work starvation is threatening millions. New Hope Mission Society is providing nutritious meals and sanitation items where they can. Please ask our Father to bless this ministry and the people served by it. (If you'd like to contribute financially contact [paulk@faithlc.com](mailto:paulk@faithlc.com) or for more information: [newhopemission.org](http://newhopemission.org).)
- ✝ Ethiopia: : Almost 70% of India's 1.4 billion residents live on less than \$2.00/day. Amid the national lockdown and inability to work starvation is threatening millions. New Hope Mission Society is providing nutritious meals and sanitation items where they can. Please ask our Father to bless this ministry and the people served by it. (If you'd like to contribute financially contact [paulk@faithlc.com](mailto:paulk@faithlc.com) or for more information: [newhopemission.org](http://newhopemission.org).)
- ✝ Lord of all, Our nation is divided.  
Our hearts are heavy with grief, fear, righteous anger and confusion.  
We pray for justice where inequities persist.  
We pray for a peace that passes our understanding and our emotions.  
We pray for all who are affected by the recent and current violence and the senseless loss of life.  
We lift up the leaders who are trying to bring peace and calm.  
We pray for those sent to protect, and for business owners who work to rebuild their lives.  
Call the body of Christ forth, as your salt and light.  
Lord, heal this hurting nation. Make us instruments of your peace.  
In Jesus' Name We Pray!





## 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?”*



No one can project what September 25-26 may look like and what CDC and MN guidelines will be. We do know that the Augustana District will still celebrate 10 years of ministry at an annual convention! In order to accommodate participation, we anticipate more online delegates and visitors. In addition to this reality, we are proposing a plan for...

### **ONE CONVENTION – THREE SITES**

1. The main site for the convention will still be Faith Lutheran in Hutchinson, MN
2. Our two Bible Study Leaders will “Zoom in” from their locations
  - Pastor Julie Smith, St. John’s, Springfield, MN
  - Pastor Nate Hanson, Living Word Lutheran, Alexandria, MN
3. Springfield and Alexandria will function as ADDITIONAL SITES for people to gather.

STAY TUNED FOR MORE REGISTRATION INFORMATION,  
THE BANQUET AND ANY ADDITIONAL ADJUSTMENTS

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

# UNDERNEATH THE SURFACE

## Pastoring through Covid

With warming temperatures and light rain the night before, I wished I had thought to bring a coffee can on our morning walk. They were everywhere! Big, long, thick, wonderful, juicy nightcrawlers were all over the surface of the dirt road. There was a plan for some evening fishing. I could have saved a trip to the bait shop. Strangely enough, this got me to thinking about more important matters, as I returned to my laptop. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PASTOR IN A COVID CRISIS? Based on calls, e-mails and conversations I am having with colleagues, this is a burning question.

At first it seemed that the Covid crisis was hard on pastors because we were all out of rhythm. Everything was off balance. We are called to minister to people, and we can't do this in the way to which we are accustomed. But I have come to think it is more than this. Pastor Don Suiter addresses this through the eyes of a pastor who is also a counselor (the following article). I see it through the eyes of a pastor who also likes to fish.

Congregations are at all times a most amazing mix of people. As a social entity, few organizations have more diversity. However, much of it is underneath the surface and we don't see it. But with the right conditions, like nightcrawlers who rise to the surface with some warmth and rain, all our diverse views and assumptions have come to the surface in this Covid crisis. If you find the "nightcrawler analogy" too crude or offensive, try to see the

bigger point. We all regularly see the diversity of our congregations. We are old and young, male and female, rich, poor and middle class and on and on. But underneath the surface, we often don't see or know our political party affiliation, our fears, our opinions about the role of government, our confidence in science and technology, our assumptions about how the economy works, etc. Now, the conditions are ripe for all of this deep and hidden diversity to come to the surface and they appear (like nightcrawlers) on the surface of our congregations.

Pastors are called to navigate this in ways we haven't before. We find ourselves fielding various opinions on everything from government stimulus checks, to the Lord's Supper in a time of isolation, to when and how to open our buildings again, to whether or not to sing in worship! If your pastor seems a bit "crispy," this may explain why.

It is my hope that through the support of one another (both members and pastor), this newsletter resource and the strength of our district, God will use this moment in powerful ways. In fact, we can be confident that the Risen Jesus is indeed working out his will and his way for a time such as this!

Pastor Randy Freund  
Augustana District Service Coordinator

## WHAT WILL THE CHURCH LOOK LIKE AFTER COVID-19?

Covid, though basically unknown four months ago, is now a household word. Our world truly is not the same as it was a few months ago. We are not the same people either. Some anthropologists believe the Covid-19 pandemic will likely be seen as a “pivotal event” in history. A “pivotal event” is one that fundamentally changes the course of human history. The greatest “pivotal event,” of course, was the Cross.

Struggles with isolation, concern for financial security, fear and anxiety are common feelings in our world today. People are afraid, they feel alone, and they are becoming increasingly angry and increasingly desperate. The dialogue in the news, politics, social media, and the streets is becoming saturated with anger, divisiveness, distrust, and contempt for differing viewpoints and for those who hold them. The good news is the Church has an opportunity, maybe like never before, to be a different voice, both in content and in tone.

Over the last few months I have had several conversations with pastors, regarding their congregations. These conversations have centered on what the pastors are seeing now and what they perceive for the future. The very good news is the Church is responding to the pandemic in amazing ways. People are thinking of their neighbors, offering a helping hand and a listening ear. Individuals are reaching out to other members of their church fellowships as well as to people in their communities. Members of churches are expressing their love and concern spontaneously and in ways that are both simple as well as profoundly meaningful.

I hear people saying things like, “When things get back to normal” or “When this is over.” If this truly is a pivotal event, then we are going to find ourselves in a “new normal”, both in our world and in the Church. Recently I heard someone say, “If we all don’t come out of this with a heightened level of empathy, then I really don’t have any idea what it will take.” This should be especially true in the Church. The Apostle Paul put it this way, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in his death.” (Phil 3:10) Have you ever wondered what Paul meant by “share His sufferings?” This Covid-19 experience has caused me to consider the question in a new light. We know that Jesus did not suffer anything for His own sake. Everything He suffered was for the sake of others. In light of the present sufferings that surround us, I think we may be able to discover an answer to our question as well as a practical application of Paul’s desire.

As a counselor, I have come to believe that one of the greatest human needs is to know that someone cares (about us). Conversely, our greatest fear is to discover that no one cares. Through the cross, God declared, “**I Care**” to each and every person on this planet. God embraced our sufferings by becoming man. Our sufferings became His sufferings. His great and merciful plan is, through His Church, to continue declaring the message, “**I CARE.**” Will we, His Church, come out of the Covid experience with a new and heightened empathy for those who suffer? Could it be that we will come through this more connected to Christ’s sufferings than ever before? If Jesus were here, what would He be doing? Great question! Truth is, He already showed us

what He would be doing. He would be doing what He was always doing, looking for lost and hurting people. He would be focused on loving and helping the hurting, the needy, the alone, the fearful, the anxious, the downtrodden. He would be making the sufferings of others to be His own sufferings. He would be looking for ways to continue saying, "I care."

If only Jesus were here!

But wait, Jesus is here! He is here in His body, the Church. Col 1:18 declares that Jesus is the Head and the Church is His body. When Jesus walked this earth, very few people went looking for Him. Instead, example after example show Jesus going out looking for people. Ultimately, His very presence on earth was the definitive example of God looking for, and reaching out to, us.

Will the Church be different, post Covid-19? I sincerely hope so!

I hope that as a result of this pandemic, Jesus's

Church will experience a new and profound connection with His sufferings. I hope and pray that empathy, compassion, mercy, and active love for all mankind (those in the Body of Christ and those outside the Body) will continue to grow exponentially. Throughout Scripture true love – God's love – always expressed itself in self-sacrifice. Sacrifice for the sake of others. (Jn 15:13) "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."

For God so **loved** the world that He **GAVE!**

God is a radical giver and He calls us to be radical givers. Going forward, "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." (Heb 10:24)

What will the Church look like post Covid-19? I don't know, but I can't wait to find out. The Church is His body. Whatever He does with it is bound to be great!

Rev Donald Suiter

Re-Missioned



## FREE WEBINAR

LCMC 3.0 - Missional Accountability Think Tank  
Tuesday, June 16, 2020 • 1:00- 3:00PM (CST)

Are you interested in the thinking behind the transition underway within Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ? Have you heard about a new emphasis on Missional Accountability and wondered what it is all about?

Join us for an insightful conversation around these topics in a FREE Webinar on Tuesday, June 16 from 1 to 3 pm Central. We've put together a diverse panel of LCMC leaders to share their thoughts and ideas and answer your questions.

**Date Time:** Jun 16, 2020 01:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

**Topic:** LCMC 3.0 - Missional Accountability Think Tank

**Join us via Zoom**

# REMINDERS FROM AN ORDINATION SERVICE

Pastoring in Pandemic by Pastor Culynn Curtis

Sitting on my desk in the pastor's study is a copy of the bulletin from my Ordination service, June 7, 2014. It has been there since the day it was printed. Sometimes it is buried underneath piles of council agendas, pre-marriage counseling notes, and funeral plans. Sometimes it's clearly visible, open to page 5, the Charges, Laying on of Hands, and the Admonitions. At my ordination, members of the assembly charged me with expectations of the whole church: To proclaim the good news of God in Christ. To announce the forgiveness of sins. To baptize and to teach. To administer Holy Communion. To confess in accordance with the creeds and confessions of the Church. To be diligent in my study of the Word and to pray for my people.

When I started seminary, the dean of students announced: "Seminaries used to be schools of best practices. In our changing culture, we no longer know what are the best practices." Although I was trained to think biblically and theologically about pragmatic issues, nothing could have prepared me (or your pastor) for this pandemic. Seven years since ordination, ministry looks vastly different. Leading worship and preaching now includes an empty sanctuary and gazing deep into the circular camera on the back of my cellphone, so that we can livestream a pared down Service of the Word. The manuscript of my sermon, complete with typos and usually for my eyes only, is now delivered to our elderly and those with no technological hotspot. While we are firm in what we believe about the body and blood of Christ, we've had to get creative, waffling back and forth on how to administer the Sacraments. Not to mention, my two small

children have interrupted my quiet hours for the study of God's Word. Our fellowship hall, void of coffee and conversation, has been converted to a second worship space for the day when we can safely gather again. In the last two months, my weaknesses for ministry have been exposed; the strengths of my ministry have been stripped away. The uncertainty of it all is agonizing. Your pastor and congregational leadership are also navigating these and other issues as well. And yet, the charges above remain the same.

In 1528-1529, Luther preached through the Sermon on the Mount (AE 21:7-10). Reflecting on Matthew 5:1-3 and Jesus' own actions, he charged preachers of the Word with three tasks: 1) Take your place; 2) Say something; 3) Know when to stop.

1. Pastors are appointed and commissioned for the sake of the Word of God, that it "may shine forth like the sun." While your pastor didn't plan on becoming a televangelist, the unforeseen blessing is that God's Word is getting a hearing in the world in the most peculiar way. The fourth wall of our sanctuaries has been demolished and people are able to peer in and hear what we teach, believe, and confess.
2. "Pastors should open their mouths vigorously and confidently, to preach the truth that has been entrusted to him." Social media is full of opinions and experts and a constant barrage of information and misinformation. Your pastor has been entrusted with the truth. It is not just something to consider or a matter of opinion: She preaches for "the advantage, health, and salvation of souls." Inspired by



the Holy Spirit, she pulls you back to center so that you will be “rooted and grounded in the love and strength of Christ and the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19).

3. Your pastor has been going gang-busters for two months. As Randy alludes to in his article, there are countless things to navigate in these unprecedented times. They include implications for your congregation’s ministry, public health, and their own safety and well-being and that of their family (see Luther’s explanation to the first through the fifth commandments). The reactions to videos are encouraging, but it isn’t the same as the fellowship and feedback of in-person ministry. They need to

rest, but because they care about you, they may need permission to stop.

When I see and read the charges from my ordination bulletin, I see and hear the voices of beloved parishioners who had expectations of me as their pastor; in God’s strength and power, I hope I’ve carried them out with diligence and conviction. But also, I remember that the congregation vowed to regard me as a servant of Christ, to pray for me, and to help me in this work among them. May you do the same for your pastor: Drop them a note of encouragement. Remember them in your prayers; honor them for their work’s sake.

## AMBASSADORS

Ambassadors are meeting via zoom on June 10th and June 24th at 10:00 a.m. CST. These discussions lend toward moving forward in these unprecedented times. If you’d like to join in the conversation, please contact your ambassador or Becky Hand, AD program Coordinator at [becky@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:becky@augustanadistrict.org)

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A panel discussion on communion during this pandemic can be found on YouTube.

Search St Johns Lutheran Church – Springfield MN Communion Practices

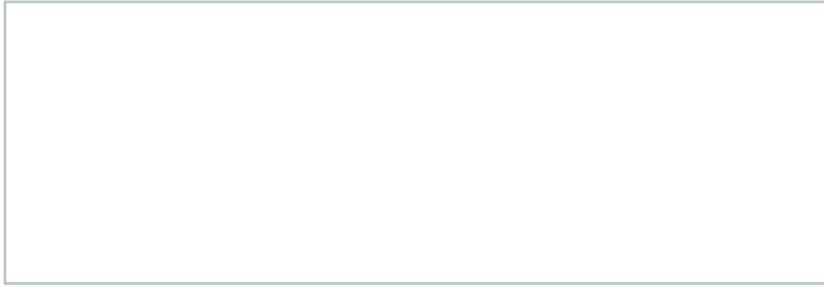



## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Please send all contributions for the Augustana District, Tabor or AIMJ to:  
Augustana District  
335 Main St. S.  
Hutchinson, MN 55350

## IS YOUR CONGREGATION INTERESTED IN HOSTING THE 2021 CONVENTION?

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



Address Service Requested  
335 Main Street S.  
Hutchinson MN 55350  
**AUGUSTANA DISTRICT** 



## Save the 2021 Dates

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

## 2020 WoW Gathering Postponed

September 18, 2021

Will still be hosted by Crossroads Lutheran Congregation

Location: 2948 180th St. Dawson, MN 56232

Theme: "We walk by faith and not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:7

