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## FEBRUARY 8, 2021



The guest speaker for the 2021 Convocation for the Theology of the Cross will be Ken Sundet Jones. Dr. Jones is a professor of Theology and Philosophy at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa, and he loves teaching undergrads. He was born in Heidelberg, which must be why he likes Luther so much. He was shaped by the

Sturgis motorcycle rally in his hometown and by summers at his grandparents' cattle ranch. His doctoral dissertation covered 16th-century German evangelical funeral preaching. And he knows how to do knitting and Scandinavian flat-plane woodcarving.

At this year's theological conference Dr. Jones will take us on an exciting exploration of the Augsburg Confession which provides a toolkit for navigating our changing world and continues to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in clear and articulate ways.

Due to the continued pandemic and its limits on how we gather this year we have made a number of changes in how the conference will look.

First of all, the event will just be a one-day event on Monday, February 8, from approximately 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. Secondly, this year's event will be held in various locations similar to the 2020 Convention in September.

The speaker will be at Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson. There are approximately eight churches that are willing to host participants where the speaker will be broadcast via zoom. This will allow for less travel for some of you as well as smaller gathered groups. It will still allow you to gather in fellowship with one another, which the Board of Theology and Ministry feels is so very important for all of us at this time of isolation.

(If your congregation would like to host an event at your church please contact the office at 320-234-8403 as soon as possible.)

There will also be an opportunity to participate in the event via your own online zoom registration.

***“Subject to change based on current Covid restrictions.” Please watch our website and Facebook page for the most up to date information.***

## DEVOTIONAL

### Highway Anxiety

*[Jesus, in Matthew 7, verse 5, from the sermon on the Mount, said] “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

“Travel safe, and keep the shiny side up,” said a friend the other day. It’s a pleasure to have people concerned about you when you are heading for new horizons. The fact is most people encounter travel trouble within 25 miles of their home. The usual “best wishes” for a safe trip would get old if you heard them all the time.

Have you had the privilege of driving when accompanied by someone as a safety coach? Their intent may be the very best for you, whether to save time or to “help” watch. Such intentions can burn through a lot of good will and shorten the journey quickly. Pride’s a hard thing to swallow when that “coach” saves the life of everyone with a shout.

How about the distraction offered by a sly and subtle “burn” of sarcasm by a passenger? Then, there’s the “fight for the window”, or the call for the privilege of riding shotgun. Have I mentioned the confusion with maps once you’re underway? Not everyone is capable of reading a map... fewer know how to use a compass. “Directionally impaired” is not an attribute people take lightly, even if it’s true. Time was, GPS was unavailable; now different phones can give you different directions.

Then there’s bathroom breaks, gas stops, hungry passengers and folks who suffer gas pains. There are issues with the temperature, the way the seats fit, and the very make of the car. Once everyone is

loaded up, each and every time, there’s something wrong for someone. It’s often a marvel anyone goes anywhere, and we have yet to consider road hazards!

Enough already... but the fact is this: to get anywhere, there’s going to be trouble. Where there are people involved, there are a LOT of possibilities for things to go wrong. Jesus, the Son of God, has long known what makes people do what they do. His questions hit with more punch than any life (or driving) coach can muster. These queries point us to consider the needs of others as vital as our own. But we weary of others’ needs, we tire of their complaints and their pointed restraints.

These days everyone has had all the backseat driving they can handle, just sitting at home!

- Masks: wearing them rightly, when to wear them, where to wear them, IF you CAN wear them.
- Distancing: 6 feet for sitting, 26 for singing and zero for rioting.
- “Watch out! You’re rushing that person... Watch out! You’re a hazard moving too slowly!”

Practice what Christ tells you. Serve God with all your heart, forgive your fellow travelers, masked and unmasked. Do your best, brothers and sisters, and keep moving... we’re not Home yet!

Peace,

*Pastor Nathan Hanson*

## ANNUAL REPORT FROM PR. RANDY FREUND, SERVICE COORDINATOR

Like everything else in our lives, Covid continues to dominate the ministry and mission of the Augustana District.

There are many **positives** that have come from this.

- Pastors and leaders have connected more often through Zoom meetings. This has helped increase communication and support.
- We had a successful and helpful webinar on communion practices during Covid. We hope to offer more webinars like this.
- Because of restrictions, we have become more creative in meetings and ways to accomplish ministry goals. Our Annual Convention was a prime example of a successful, creative, virtual and in-person experience.

There have been **negatives**, as well.

- While Zoom meetings have been helpful, they have also made us painfully aware of our isolation.
- We have seen increased pastoral and congregational stress as in-person worship services, visitations and programmatic ministries are navigated.
- Congregations are relational organizations by nature and by design. The inability to gather in usual ways has had an adverse effect on our congregations. In joys and sorrows, we move forward in faith and hope.

Looking ahead:

One of the exciting and important outcomes for the Annual Convention is something called the **2020 Initiative**. At the convention, we looked back on our first ten years. We now look forward to the next phases of the Augustana District. Here are some goals and challenges the Convention laid before us.

### **AD 2020 Initiative Plan**

Highlights and Goals.

- 1.) At the Theological Conference we discussed promoting a senior high youth event at the 2021 AD Convention. It is important to share the need for pastors to identify youth who may be candidates for ministry work. When considering a convention theme we want to consider topics that will also be of interest to high schoolers.
- 2.) We hope to publicize and host a youth event in conjunction with the AD Convention. This may be a modification of the previously mentioned senior high event.
- 3.) From this group and from pastor's suggestions we want to develop a Youth Task Force.
- 4.) This, hopefully, extends into some summer intern/creative staffing situations.
- 5.) As these youth enter college; we want to follow them to campuses to begin campus ministry sites. Meeting with current campus ministers to learn what is successful for them will be beneficial.

6.) Hopefully this develops into summer camp ministries as well.

7.) Develop a Mission Start in Minneapolis area (West-Metro)

Initial Goal: \$35,000

**Transition Ministry** – This plan is under development. The basic concept is to provide a pastor or pastoral team to serve for a 4-6-week time of transition when a pastor leaves. This would be a service provided before the congregation starts the search for pulpit supply, interim, or begins the call process.

**New Health Insurance option for AD congregations** – The Hahn Financial Group has been meeting with Augustana Leaders about a group health insurance option for pastors and staff of Augustana District congregations. The prospects for and benefits of this plan look promising.

**Giving** – While we are currently experiencing a slight decrease in giving, throughout this time of Covid, congregational and individual support for the District has been consistent and strong. THANK YOU!

**Thanks** – The leadership of the District Council and the staff (Becky, Wendy, Niki and Karen) is a gift to all of us. God is faithful!

In Christ,

Pastor Randy Freund

Augustana District Service Coordinator

## PRAYER REQUEST

- ✝ Please pray for our Christian family around the world as they suffer along with us the economic, health concerns, and losses of loved ones due to the viral pandemic.
- ✝ Pray for our nation.

## PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Holy Lord, as we enter this season of expectation remind us that what we await is good. You are still the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Nothing happens on earth without your foreknowledge. During transition and unknown outcomes your love for us is a constant. All we need comes from you. Quiet our fears and calm our souls. O come, O come, Emmanuel. Amen.

Welcome

### Endorsed Clergy:

- ✝ Endorsed Pastor  
Jesse Carson from  
South Dakota
- ✝ Associate Individual  
Member H. Mark  
Neumann

## Ambassador Highlights

The Ambassador's are not meeting during Advent. We will resume gathering via zoom on Wed., January 13, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. CST. Contact Becky at [b.hand@augustantndistrict.org](mailto:b.hand@augustantndistrict.org). if you'd like to join in the meetings.



## ETHIOPIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH MEKANE YESUS (EEMCY) UPDATE



Just a brief update to share with you that the president of the North Central Ethiopia Synod (NCES) of EECMY, Wagnew Andagre, has been hit by a serious illness. Your prayers are requested for healing.

An Augustana District congregation, Living Word

in Moses Lake, gives quarterly support for a training program for pastors and evangelists of NCES. The signs in this graduation picture say "Thank you Paul" to Pastor Paul Knudson, "Thank you Augustana District" and "Thank you Moses Lake Congregation."



## LOOKING FOR LEADERS

### TRANSITION MINISTRY

#### **A four - six week program offered by the Augustana District**

Once your pastor leaves and before the congregation starts the search for pulpit supply, Interim, or begins the call process, your congregation may benefit from a pastor or pastoral team to serve for a 4-6 week time of transition.

For more information or to become a Transition Ministry team member, contact the Augustana District Service Coordinator, Pastor Randy Freund, by phone 320-583-3648 or by email [director@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:director@augustanadistrict.org).

## YOUNG ADULT MISSIONARY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Back in January, a time that I like to call B.C. (Before Covid), we were in the process of sending our first young adult to participate in what is called the “Young Adult Missionary Internship” program through the ministry of Awakening Lives to World Missions (ALWM - an Augustana District vetted Mission Partner). We had no choice but to cancel that trip. We were sending her to the country of South Africa, which completely shut its borders and only recently reopened them on October 1. Now, faced with the continued uncertainty of international travel in 2021, we have put the program on hold until 2022.

Despite the current hiatus, Bill Moberly, the director of ALWM, and I are still hopeful about the future and the value of this ministry for several reasons:

1) Many young adults, whether Christian or not, have a desire to see the world. This program gives them the opportunity to do that with faith as a central component. Study abroad programs are great, but why not grow in faith abroad, as well?

2) Some young adults have a sense that God might be calling them into cross-cultural missions full-time. Why not give them an opportunity to “dip their toe in the water” of cross-cultural missions before diving into the “deep end” of a long-term commitment?

3) The United States is growing more diverse and less Christian every day. Experiences and skills gained

in a cross-cultural mission environment are more valuable than ever. Why not give the next generation of Christian leaders a chance to gain those experiences and skills early on in their lives?

I want to be clear; I do not think that a program like this is a silver bullet. Many people are concerned with the fact that young people are leaving the church

in greater numbers than ever before and not coming back. Our only hope is Christ, not more programs. I believe that a program like this can help our young adults who do stay in the church learn valuable skills and insights so that they can be missionaries to their own non-Christian peers!

That means that this program is for any young adult who believes in Jesus. Every young

adult who has been baptized is an ambassador of Christ's reconciliation. Notice in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians how universal the claims are.



*Serving at a Daycare Center in South Africa*



*Serving at a South Africa Soup Kitchen*

“[New life in Christ] is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. (2 Cor. 5:18-20a)

All of us baptized Christians have been given the ministry of reconciliation. That message is for all the

world. God is making his appeal through all of us.

So, as we hit “reset” we plan to send our first group of young adults overseas in 2022. In the meantime, please consider sharing this opportunity with the young people in your congregation. They might be in college right now or still in high school. You can send them to the program website <https://www.alwm.org/>

young-adult-missionary-internship or they can email me, Pastor Matt Shields, at [pastormatt@alwm.org](mailto:pastormatt@alwm.org).

In Christ,

*Pastor Matt Shields*

## THE AUGUSTANA DISTRICT FINANCIAL REPORT

As this year draws to close we are very thankful for your continued support of Augustana District. It certainly has been an unprecedented year with the pandemic having a big impact on how we operate. While how we do business may have changed, our mission hasn't. We continue to see strong financial support from our member churches and from individuals in the district. Currently our expenses exceed our income by over \$9,500 but you can help us make that up with a strong finish this month. I wish you all a healthy, happy, Christ-Centered Christmas!!!

Eric Knutson, AD Treasurer



Did you know that Thrivent policy holders can support the Augustana District through the Thrivent Choice Dollars Program? People with qualifying policies are eligible to direct their Choice Dollars to the non-profit of their choice. You can direct yours to the Augustana District by calling 800-847-4836 and speaking with an agent or by going to [Thrivent.com/Thriventchoice](https://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice) and direct your Choice Dollars to the Augustana District.

You can contact your Thrivent Agent or the Augustana District office for more information on how to support the district through this program.

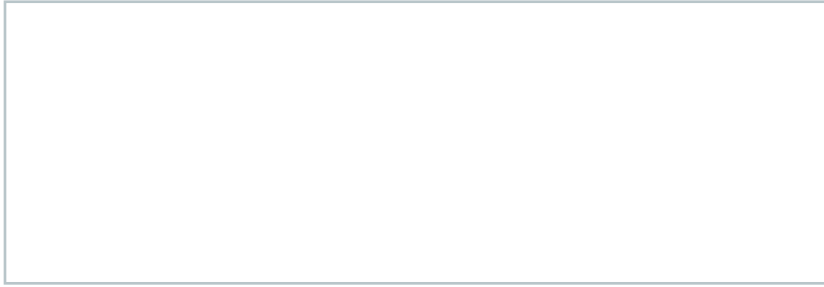


As you are doing your Christmas Shopping this year please remember two things:

1) Shopping local supports your neighbor's business in these exceptionally difficult times.

2) IF you are going to shop online, please remember that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the Augustana District when you select the AD as the organization you want to support when you place an order at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com).

If you have any questions about this program feel free to call the district office at 320-234-8403 for more information.



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Address Service Requested



## SAVE THE 2021 DATES

- ☒ Theological Conference February 8, 2021 (Register Now)
- ☒ Confirmation Retreat March 5-6, 2021, **CANCELED!!**
- ☒ Augustana District Convention on Saturday, May 1, 2021, in Springfield, MN.

Subject to change based on current Covid restrictions.  
Please watch our website and Facebook page for the  
most up to date information!

