

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Theological Conference	1 - 2
Devotional	2 - 3
Year End Letter	3 - 4
Prayers	4
Welcome	4
Ambassadors	4
Mission Focus - Tabor	5
AIMJ Update	6
Financial Report	6
Thrivent	6
Amazon Smile	6

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FEBRUARY 8, 2021



If you have not yet heard, 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.

This year's theological conference will be 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 at their churches where the speaker will be broadcast via zoom. This will allow for less travel for some of you along with smaller gathered groups. But, 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.

You will note that the registration fee for the Hutchinson location is more as that fee includes lunch. The other location hosts will be in contact with those who register at their site with the cost/options for lunch at their sites. So be aware that there may be an additional fee for the off-site locations.

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

Please see the attached/enclosed event registration brochure and link for more information.

Schedule of Events: (Subject to change)

Gathering and Worship at each site

9:00 – Presentation 1 - Dr. Ken Jones, Grand View University

10:00 – Q and A

10:30 – Break

10:45 – Presentation 2 – Dr. Ken Jones

11:45 – Q and A

12:15 – Lunch break

1:00 – Augustana District and BTM Update/Report

1:45 – Panel Discussion and Dr. Ken Jones

2:45 – Break

3:00 – Q and A

3:30 – Closing Worship

“Subject to change based on current Covid restrictions”

Please watch our website and Facebook page for the most up to date information.

DEVOTIONAL

What do you want for Christmas?

“...To all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become the children of God.” [John 1:12]

An old Christmas carol begins, “In the bleak midwinter, frosty winds made moan; “Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone. Snow had fallen, “Snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long, long ago.” (Christina Georgina Rosetti)

Bleak, frosty, moaning winds all seem the more prevalent this season. Loneliness stalks households as fellowship we had all taken for granted is granted no longer. Festivals of food and frantic Black Friday forays were whittled troupes, if not solo events. The earth may not yet be hard as iron, but the winter that approaches indeed seems heavy.

What brings a spark to such a gloomy forecast, where we hear our medical resources will fail? The mortality rate is stable at about one percent, but a sense of dread pervades all meetings. We wonder what sustains “the Market” when there are so many businesses closed forever. Political promises of

protection can't possibly deliver hope, when isolation is the only policy.

Yet, this Word still comes to our ears: Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus has seen the darkness of every age... stop a moment and think of that! Then, consider the very great darkness He entered on our behalf, walking alone into death. “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” Is not Jesus being mistaken in despair. God is truly holy and can have nothing to do with the taint of our sin. Jesus’ embrace of our sorry, hollow rebellion put Him out of reach from His Father’s mercy. He took the long road of our salvation through hell itself, to bring us clean and pure to God. He alone saves us and redeems us and calls us His own, forgiving us all our sins.

When we look together at our traditions of Christmas, many things have been adjusted. Gatherings of people for songs and food, of classic desserts and savory drinks were canceled.

Perhaps you looked forward to caroling... but not this year. Maybe there was an office party, or a classroom celebration... but different this year. Trips to exotic

locales, with free time to explore... limited to local parks, or the family den.

My hope for you, what I hope to get for Christmas myself, is a family that loves Jesus. That my children would more than get along with each other, they would cherish one another. That my children's mother would relish their fellowship, and the forgiveness Jesus brings us. What I want for Christmas is the faith that sustains my own mom

and gives her peace now. That the faithful people in God's world would revere and pursue any chance to help others. That any unfaithful people would know Christ Jesus daily forgives their sins... And you would know the illumination of God's genuine care for us all, this bleak midwinter.

Peace,

Pastor Nathan Hanson

A LETTER FROM COUNCIL PRESIDENT YEAR END LETTER TO AUGUSTANA DISTRICT CONGREGATIONS FROM AUGUSTANA DISTRICT COUNCIL

As I sit at my computer contemplating the proper tone of this message, I realize that I have much good news to share from your District Council despite all the challenges our Lord has put in front of us in 2020. I wish to share some of that good news, hoping that a listing of positive accomplishments lifts everyone's spirits, at least a little.

In early February, the District Theological Conference was again highly attended and well received. At this time, the 2021 Conference is still planned to be held. It is anticipated that many will attend via live stream as well as in person. Our district sponsored confirmation retreat in early 2020 had record attendance. New congregations continue to seek district membership, adding nine during 2020. The endorsed list of pastors grew by seven and more will soon be added. Our Annual Convention, moved from May to September, was successful in spite of the obstacles Covid created. Forty plus attended in person in Hutchinson, MN and over sixty live streamed. At the convention, the first district scholarships were awarded. One to a PHD candidate and one to an M. DIV. candidate. These represent the district's commitment to supporting pastoral growth in LCMC and Augustana District. The financial status of the district remains strong, but giving is starting to slip slightly, so continued support from congregations and individuals is encouraged.

The list of positive actions by the district would not be complete without mention of the 2020 Initiative that was proposed by council and given support by the District Delegates at the Convention. This Initiative seeks to create interest from and pathways for young individuals to seek careers in theological endeavors. The programs that will be designed to accomplish this are still in discussion phase and sadly may be delayed by Covid issues but do involve the need for our congregations and pastors to help identify individuals showing interest in that direction.

The second part of the Initiative seeks to begin work on planting a new LCMC/AD church in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. Initially this is under the direction of a special initiative task force.

The cost projection for funding the Initiative has been developed. It is anticipated that close to \$35,000 will need to be gathered to complete the initial desired results. Some seed money is available within the district's Special Initiatives Fund. However, if your congregation is philosophically in agreement with the district's goal

of intentionally creating pathways for young folks to pursue pastoral work as a career, financial support is most welcome.

I wish to end this message by encouraging all members of our congregations to support your pastors in as many ways as possible during these trying times. A pat on the back for something special that they have done for you, a thank you for a great sermon, a word of encouragement when they appear down due to attendance issues and support as they suffer from not being able to pastor to the shut-ins and the sick are all greatly needed. Their job has been made so much more difficult and restricted by the new "rules of the road". Please pray for them!

Thank you for your support of the Augustana District. It has been an extreme privilege to serve on Council and lead for the past few years as Chair. Being surrounded by so many gifted, faithful servants of the Lord has inspired me beyond all measure.

In Christ,

Dr. Mike Fuchs

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 you are the Light in our darkness guide our way to the only truth and source of salvation. Embolden us to share your love and truth with those who remain in darkness. In the name of our Holy and Precious Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Welcome

New Congregation

- ✝ St. Paul's Lutheran Church in West Falls, New York



Ambassador Highlights

The next Ambassador Meeting will be at 10:00 a.m. on Wed. Jan 13 via zoom. Email me if you need a link to the meeting at b.hand@augustanadistrict.org.

MISSION FOCUS – TABOR EVANGELISTS PROJECT

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” ~ James 1:2-4

Dear fellow Augustana Members and Friends:

Christmas letters, sermons and New Year greetings have all included how we have met the trials of the virus of which we were afflicted in 2020. Although our trials may have tested our faith, we do have the promise from God, spoken through His servant, James, that such testing produces steadfastness as God perfects us for His Kingdom work!

One of Augustana's key mission partners is the Evangelist Project that we support through Tabor Congregation of Awassa, Ethiopia. Like us, they too experienced trying times in 2020 when their faith was tested with the virus, which closed most of their churches for seven months. They were also tested by political unrest which is largely tied to religious factions of Muslims opposing current Christian leaders. This unrest was the cause of one of Tabor's Evangelists having his house burned to the ground, as well as the same for a brother of another Evangelist. Tabor was able to take care of both families, and according to their senior pastor, Pastor Meseret, Tabor and its evangelists have been proven steadfast.

Augustana has been in partnership with Tabor ever since the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, severed its partnership ties with the ELCA.

Our roll has been to help support the evangelical outreach into regions undeserved by Christians. We had sought to support half of a lay evangelist's yearly salary, but that was when they had under 30 deployed evangelists. This year, they have 68 evangelists two of which are female. Depending on their level of training Evangelists make an average of \$120 per month. Every dollar that you send through Augustana ear-marked for this key mission partner, or any other, is sent directly to the mission field.

As of mid-December, congregations and individuals have made contributions of \$43,000, which is down by \$8,000 from the total giving to Tabor in 2019. Yet we are prayerfully confident that we will end 2020 with offerings to at least meet last years' partnership dollars. However, we certainly would like to increase what we can send to Tabor as they minister in eight regions of their country which are predominantly rural and traditionally highly Muslim.

If you wish to have more information about the Tabor Evangelist Project, I happen to know some folk that you can talk to or invite to come to your congregation and share.

Pastor Tom Christenson, on the behalf of the Board for World Missions



New Church Building at Goljota



Regional Evangelist Training



New Church Building at Beseko Ilala

AIMJ – UPDATE FROM OCTOBER 2020



All India Masihi Jamat (AIMJ) conducted eight baptism camps, in which 154 candidates were baptized. In the month of October, there were eight seekers meetings held, attended by 183 seekers. In the past month, AIMJ had organized six women meetings, attended by 81 women. AIMJ also organized five youth meeting and 79 youths came and were blessed. All India Masihi Jamat then conducted two children program, attended by 38 children. It is amazing to see how many people God is reaching through AIMJ and your support!

THE AUGUSTANA DISTRICT FINANCIAL REPORT

Thanks to your faithful prayers and generous support, Augustana District had a strong finish to this calendar year. We completed the year with our income exceeding our expenses by \$7,156.83. That is more than \$2,500 better than we finished last year. Given all that has transpired this year, that is very encouraging. This good news allows us to continue the AD Mission of supporting pastors, congregations, and missions throughout our country and the world. I pray that God continues to bless this organization and all of those who support it.



HOW TO DIRECT THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS®

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.

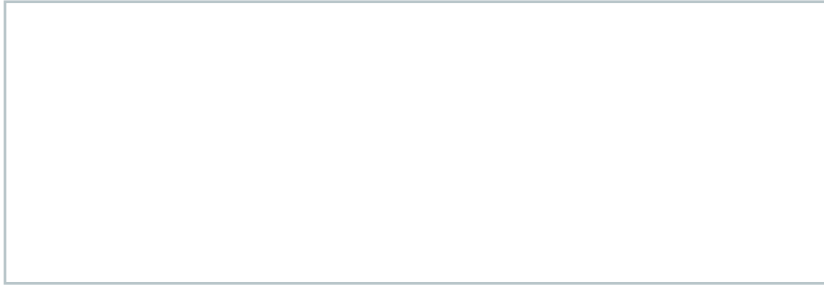


As you are doing your online shopping this year please remember two things:

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.

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!

