

Something, yet

“While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” ~Romans 5:6 & 8

A word can generate anything of the divine, good things people truly yearn for. The word of hope is an unusual expression, as hope moves in spite of circumstances. Earthly hopes fail consistently, falling and rising on the whims of human fancies. “Stocks are up!” may be pleasing just to hear in a news report. “Stocks are down!” can be palpable, when the same reporter brings that news later in the day. The “hope of heaven!” however, is a hope to raise up even the dead.

There is no down from that kind of hope.

Paul writes in the verses preceding these, telling you where you find hope thrives. “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance...” Wait a minute... hope is produced, created by endurance? Further, “Endurance produces character, and character produces hope...” These are two more terms expressing reality that we don’t really want much to develop. What are the themes that are delivered to your media platforms that encourage these things? Christmas advertising warmed your heart with wondrous depictions... for selling stuff.

These themes that were derided as puffy kid stuff are really the source of grit for the grind.

Paul isn’t finished: “... and hope does not disappoint us” Why? “...because God’s love has been poured into our hearts(!)” How? “...through the Holy Spirit, God’s gift to us.” When? “While we were still weak,” “while we were YET sinners,” writes Paul.

My rounds took me visiting someone whose time on earth was waning, and rather rapidly. During his musing about heaven and its’ splendor, I asked if he was looking forward to it. “Not yet!” he said, with a smile. Despite his yearnings, his hope was that he would have another day here. Pain and sorrow, death of loved ones, disappointments in failures were all a part of his life.

When you yet see the hope in life, you know real hope is in Jesus’ forgiveness of all your sins.



AUGUSTANA WITNESS

newsletter

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Devotional.....	1 - 2
Lenten Offering Dilemmas?.....	2
Future Is Present	2-3
Prayer Requests	4
Health Insurance Update	4
The Called Life	5
Ambassadors	5

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Teach that Word this coming day, and (God willing) the coming year! That word sparks faith in the One Who delivers on His promises to all believers in Him.

Give me a faithful heart, likeness to Thee, that each departing day henceforth may see some work of love begun, some deed of kindness done, some wand'rer sought and won, something for Thee. [Savior, Thy Dying Love by Sylvanus D. Phelps, 1862]

The “wand’rer” you know is closer than you think!

Your word of Jesus’ forgiveness is just the beginning of what God is doing for the both of you.

Pastor Nathan Hanson

LENTEN OFFERING DILEMMAS?

Perhaps your congregation would like to support global missions with your Lenten Offerings. Consider AIMJ, Tabor Congregation, New Hope Mission Society or other vetted options you can find on our website at <https://augustanadistrict.org/mission-partners/>

Other options could include, supporting the Augustana District Scholarship Fund and the 2020

Initiative.

Below you will find an article from one of our vetted ministries. This article was taken from the newsletter of the Tartu Academy of Theology in Tartu, Estonia from December 2020. Reprinted with permission from Siimmon!

FUTURE IS PRESENT – THE FOURTH GENERATION

As you read this, you are also sharing a very special moment in the history of Tartu Academy of Theology and Estonia. I’m giving a testimony about God’s distinguished and continued blessing that we

are chosen to experience.

Three generations of Lutheran pastors have been raised up from our family despite persecution and



Siimon & Mattias



Two generations of Lutheran pastors; brothers Markus, Naatan and Siimon and their father Eenok Haamer

the very challenging history of living through the 50 years following WWII, when Estonia was under aggressive atheistic Soviet occupation. My grandfather, Harri Haamer, was a pastor and my father, at 85 years old, is still serving three Lutheran congregations. My two older brothers and I are pastors.

When Estonia regained independence in 1992, my father, Eenok, established the Christian college, Tartu Academy of Theology. In 28 years, we have trained hundreds of Christian leaders for Estonia. For 27 of those years we had no permanent home and we worked in very limited renting spaces. But under God's guidance, and with the help of very many donors, a year ago we were able to establish a Christian outreach center, Home of Hope.

The opening of Home of Hope was a major development for us. During the last year we have made preparations to organize and start many new ministries: a Bible School, the pastoral care center, a 24/7 pastoral care telephone line and Christian youth work events. Today all of that is already up and running. The Bible School is totally sold out with over 90 participants registered (we were hoping to have at least 20). We have about 50 young people attending our various youth events. The 24/7 pastoral care telephone line that started in June this year will continue through 2021 with 100% financing from the Estonian government.

We, of course, are continuing to offer bachelor and master's degree studies. The joint student body of Tartu Academy of Theology and the Lutheran Church Seminary is 130. This autumn 32 students were admitted. We are hosting a number of seminars and trainings regularly at Home of Hope and are capable and hopeful of hosting many more. This provides extra income. For that we need to advertise Home of Hope renting opportunities.

It's obvious I need some help to take care of all of that.

I worked 15 years side-by-side with my father until seven years ago when he turned leadership over to me. **Today I share with you that this amazing family story is continuing. The fourth generation has grown up. Mattias, son of my older brother Markus, has joined our team and is working with me as my assistant.** I'm very thankful for the energy and new ideas that he brings.

Mattias is 23 years old and is currently studying marketing. He is a very devoted Christian and Christian youth work is his passion. His skills fit exactly with our needs! We are happy that Mattias is eager to help build up the Christian community in Estonia. We don't know God's future plan for him and I ask you to pray for Mattias. God has called him but he needs God's guidance for his life. We want to be His servants and I call you to be our partner on this journey. We are very thankful if you will help us to finance fully the so-called **Fourth Generation** Fund which is meant to cover the salary of Mattias. Currently Mattias is working part time and the monthly need is \$1,000. The one-year budget is \$12,000. If you want to give a donation you may use our regular giving options which are presented on our website tatest.org/give

1 Timothy chapter 4:10 is written: For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

With our life and work we proclaim the living God who is our only hope.

Siimon Haamer
President of TAT



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ✝ Help us strive to be responsible citizens, to give witness to God as the source of all human authority, and to live as little Christs to our neighbors.
- ✝ As we walk during this season of Epiphany, we hear how Jesus was revealed in the Gospels -- may our hearts be open and responsive to the epiphanies He is providing in our lives.
- ✝ As we take time to examine the Augsburg Confession at the "Theology of the Cross" theological gathering: may Dr. Jones present the insights that God knows we need to hear at this time; may the Spirit work in us as God wills; and may our tool kits be equipped with defensive and offensive weapons.
- ✝ We are thankful for Tartu Academy of Theology; for the Christian witness and Bible teaching that they offer to an area of the world that purged Christ from all areas of life; keep the staff exemplifying Christ; prepare students to take their witness into the world; may the Spirit use all of Tartu to be a light in the dark places of eastern Europe; and may God open the hearts and wallets of many to build the physical "Home of Hope".
- ✝ Grant us boldness while adhering to governmentally mandated health standards to bring back in-person gatherings and worship.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Heavenly Father, you are holy and good and wise beyond our comprehension. Thank for bringing us into this season and guide us to be your servants during this time. Help us not be consumed with acts of the evil one but to remain focused on your goodness and your will. All praise to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.



You may have heard that the Augustana District has been working the past couple of years to set up a non-geographic medical insurance policy for all AD church staff. The district is excited to announce that a medical insurance plan has been put in place for all AD church staff who are employed more than 20 hours per week. A number of churches are already on the plan and your church is eligible to join them. The best news is that you do not have to wait until the end of the year to switch to this plan. You can get more information on the plan, its 2021 premium costs, and find out how to participate by reaching out to Luke Hahn at 800-516-4246 or via e-mail at lukehahn@hahnfinancialgroup.com. This is a very exciting opportunity and the option for rates to go DOWN as more churches join is another great reason to participate.

THE CALLED LIFE

Helpful reflections on purpose and meaning for this “winter of our discontent” and beyond

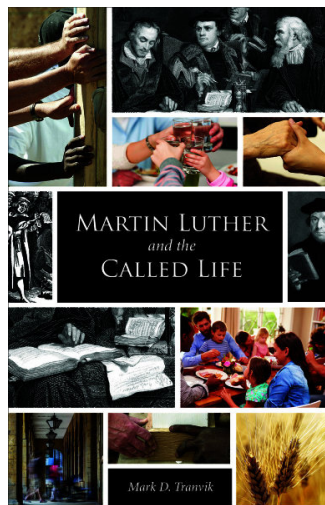
A Lenten Educational Opportunity Offered on ZOOM
through New Life Lutheran Church
Duluth, Minnesota * Phone: 218-464-4584

Dates & Times:

Tuesdays during Lent from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. 2/23, 3/2, 3/9, 3/16, 3/23, and 3/30

Instructors: Rev. David Norland, New Life Lutheran Church, Rev. Arndt Braaten, M.D., Essentia Health System, Stephanie Johnson, Ph.D., College of St. Scholastica , Rev. Brad Jenson, CFP®, Lake Superior Financial Services, Inc.

About this 6-week course: As we are still moving through the pandemic, this dark winter of discontent is a perfect opportunity to stop and reflect on one’s purpose and meaning in terms of “the called life.” This course will be inclusive from an inter-generational perspective—involving young people of college age up to those in their 80s and beyond. Because vocations are more than “occupations” the called life evolves and stays with us into retirement; indeed, throughout our earthly pilgrimage. It is through involvement in our vocations where we find significant purpose and meaning in our daily lives.



Text: We took the course name from the text we will be using: *Martin Luther and the Called Life* by Mark D. Tranvik, professor of religion at Augsburg University in Minneapolis where he has taught since 1995. Tranvik demonstrates how Luther’s rethinking of Christian vocation in the 16th century has implications for how the called life is perceived in our time.

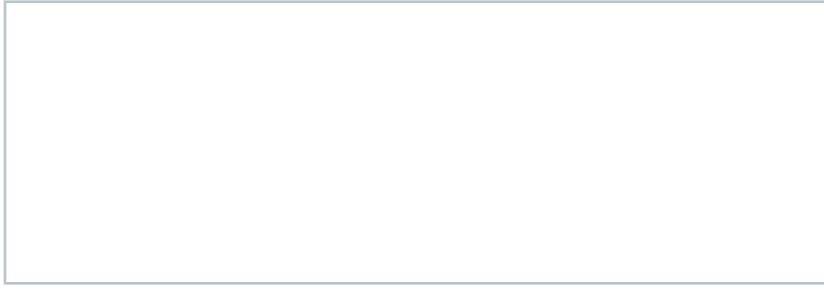
To register: Send an email to bcjenson@charter.net or call the church office (see above). There is no other cost involved for participants other than buying a copy of the book *Martin Luther and the Called Life*. (Approximately \$15)

Dear AD Ambassadors and Pastors,
Our latest discussion revolved primarily around the Imposition of Ashes in a Covid world. If you haven’t thought about that, you might want to consider discussing it with your councils.

During Lent we have decided to meet only one time per month instead of the usual twice. All meetings are on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. CST. The upcoming meeting schedule is as follows:

- Feb. 24th
- March 17th (St Patrick’s Day)
- April 14th.

Then we begin meeting every other week again: April 28th, May 12th, May 26th...etc. Please contact Pastor Becky Hand at becky@augustanadistrict.org for a Zoom link to join these discussions.



Address Service Requested

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AUGUSTANA DISTRICT



SAVE THE 2021 DATES

- Augustana District Convention on Saturday, May 1, 2021. **NOTE: The convention has been moved to Faith Lutheran in Hutchinson, MN.**
- Women of the Word (WoW) Conference Saturday, September 18, 2021 in Dawson, MN.



Dates subject to change based on current Covid restrictions.

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