

DEVOTIONAL

Freedom

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:13-14

"Freedom" is an interesting concept. Everybody wants freedom: Children, teens, adults, the elderly. No one wants to be controlled, everyone wants to be free. But, what does it mean to be 'free?' What are the freed free to do? What are they freed to not do?

When we are young we yearn to grow up to be free. What we don't realize, in our youth, is that adult responsibility prevents running free with unbridled abandon. We make choices to trade our "freedom" for responsibility. We accept a job, we give up some freedom. We marry, we give up some freedom. We have children, we give up a lot of freedom. We willingly trade in our freedom.

But what is "freedom?" The Oxford dictionary defines it as, "the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint." Do you ever have that? Can you ever act however or say whatever you want without restraint? In public, at least, the answer is "no." In the church, the answer is "no." So what freedoms do you have? The entire concept begins to seem illusive.

Adam and Eve were free, well... except for that one little rule, that one fruit to not eat. They did the one thing they were not free to do. Luther, in 1520, wrote, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." This is a great statement. At first glance it seems simple enough. When you start to ponder it, however, the simplicity gives way to waves of complexity. Finally, is a Christian free or not? The answer is "YES!" The Christian is free, at long last, free indeed. Your debt has been paid. You are free. Sin and death no longer determine a grim fate. You are free. Everything is freedom. Luther's point is this: Now that you are free from sin, death and the devil (though they still haunt you in this life, they cannot take you away from God or his love for all eternity), you no longer are enslaved to the task of saving yourself. Jesus has already saved you, period. And he left no part of your salvation for you to do. You are freed from all that struggling and failing, and struggling and failing. You are free.

What are you to do? With all this freedom, what are you to do? Go to



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the second sentence of Luther's statement. You are free to serve your neighbor. You are free to serve the man down the street and the woman struggling to get her groceries in the car. You are free to humble yourself before the person who accuses you of wrongdoing. You are free to worry about the people that are overlooked or underfed. You don't have to worry about getting your life right, or about saving yourself, or even about what anyone else thinks of you. You are freed from yourself, to serve someone else. You are freed from worrying about yourself, so

you can help a friend or a stranger. You no longer have to establish your position before others, or dress to make a desired impression, or play silly games to fit into someone else's mold. You are free in Christ and He lives in you. You are not whole because you made yourself whole. You are whole because HE lives in you and HE makes you whole and HE makes you free. Go, in your freedom, and serve the Risen Lord.

In Christ,
Pastor Becky Hand

Mission Minute

In 2008, a year after I graduated college and got married, my new wife and I participated in a year-long program for young adults to live and serve cross-culturally. We went to the Republic of South Africa where we lived in the city of Port Elizabeth, one of the largest cities in the country (1.3 million in the metro area).

While in Port Elizabeth we met incredible people and participated in several different ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Southern Africa (ELCSA). There were five ELCSA congregations spread throughout the metro area of Port Elizabeth and we helped at each in different ways. In Gelvandale four women ran a soup kitchen and each week we would help them prepare the soup and the social hall for over a hundred people who came to receive the meal. Then we would stay and help clean up.

The Lutheran churches in PE also ran a daycare center, called a "creche" in South Africa. The "creche" had over 100 children and only four staff! We would play with the kids, teach, read books, lead crafts, help serve lunch, help clean up, or do whatever the four staff people needed us to do.

Our time in South Africa flew by. We made incredible friendships and learned a lot about the world, ourselves, and God's church. However, there is nothing like this for young adults in LCMC or NALC churches.



Playing with the kids was my regular workout!

missions (6-8 weeks). One day we might offer a full year-long internship, as well.

However, our hope is

I am now a pastor in central Illinois and serve on the Augustana District Board of World Missions. But I have also been working with one of our vetted Augustana District Missions organizations and LCMC mission partner organization called Awakening Lives to World Missions (ALWM.org). Together we have been developing a Young Adult Missionary Internship (YAMI) to give young people an in-depth experience of cross-cultural



The ELCSA church in Gelvandale, PE. The soup kitchen was in the social hall behind the tower on the right.

much larger than just a one-time experience. We hope that young people grow in their faith through the challenging experiences of living in another culture. We hope that young adults will grow in their sense of calling. That might be a calling into long-term missions or, like me, it might be a calling to full-time ministry back here in the United States. When I returned from South Africa, I went straight to seminary and into ministry as an LCMC pastor. Maybe other young people will do the same! Who knows?! The greatest desire is to invest in young adults to grow into Christian leaders, whether they go on to participate in full-time ministry or not.

We were about to send our first young adult to

South Africa in 2020, but then a global pandemic hit. Maybe you have heard of COVID-19. We suspended the program until 2022, but we will soon be taking applications. If you know of any young adult ages 19-26 that might be interested in serving in South Africa for 6-8 weeks in June and July of 2022 you can then to our website for more information: <https://www.alwm.org/young-adult-missionary-internship> or they can email me personally at pastormatt@alwm.org.

In Christ,

Pastor Matt Shields

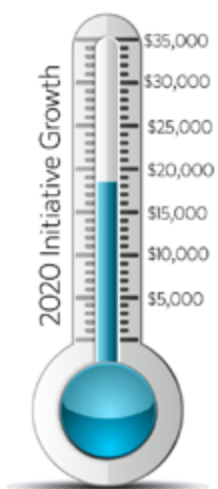
(LCMC, Augustana District)

St. John's Lutheran Church, Flanagan, IL (LCMC, NALC)

2020 INITIATIVE UPDATE

We're happy to report that \$18,115 has been raised so far to fund the various projects that are part of the 2020 Initiative.

Thank you, as always, for your prayers and financial support!



Endorsed Clergy Pr. Renae Behrends from St. John's Lutheran Church in LeMars, Iowa.

Associate Members Pr. Mark Nassen from First English Lutheran Church in Lennox, SD and Pr. Horacio Castillo from Creator Lutheran in Bonney Lake, WA.

They are
NOT of the
WORLD,
just as I am
NOT of the
WORLD
- John 17:16

WOW GATHERING 2021

All women welcome! The registration form is now available on the A.D. website under Women of the Word. We look forward to serving you with fellowship, worship, sacraments, food and more!

For more details, please visit www.augustanadistrict.org/women-of-the-word/

PRAYERS

May God continue to prepare faithful and dedicated leaders for the AD council, boards, committees, and WOW: may they have servant hearts, be led by your guidance, and be emboldened with the Holy Spirit. May we give all who support and assist with administrative tasks our support and gratitude.

Prayer focus and requests:

- ✠ May God prepare Tom & Eunice Olson (World Mission Prayer League) for work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Grant them safety in travel and in work, and may the name of Jesus Christ be lifted high and many hearts turned to Him for salvation.
- ✠ Mount Carmel and all Bible Camps – may You send them staff to share and live Your Word this summer and fill the camps with campers.
- ✠ Transition Ministry – guide those congregations in transition to this support.
- ✠ Prayers for our nation's leaders – protect our leaders from selfish and prideful intentions, use them to turn us to repentance, and help us to elect those who will serve Your will.
- ✠ Table Ministry at Shenanigans in Sioux Falls, SD; may Your Word engage all who participate in this ministry.
- ✠ Our brothers and sisters in Christ in India – may God keep them healthy and safe, and may they be able to share Christ's love in all ways as they survive the pandemic and other hardships.
- ✠ All nations and governments as they respond to COVID: may they react as best they can with the resources You have provided them; may we share vaccines and equipment; and may the well-being, health and safety of all their citizens be the focus of their efforts.

Prayer for the month: Master Creator and Designer – we are in awe of the seasons! Send rains to draw the seeds planted into growth. As the crops burst with new life, may the new life you've given us in baptism continue to generate fruit. Guide smooth transitions for our churches' program year. Your Word continues in all seasons! Amen.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION OPENING

Love INC is a “neighbors helping neighbors” ministry serving rural communities west of the Twin Cities metro for over 18 years. With offices in Delano and Howard Lake, MN, we partner with 30 local churches to serve those in need. Its mission: To mobilize local churches to transform lives and communities in the name of Christ.

The Executive Director role will provide leadership and management to the organization; effectively communicate and advance the vision, mission, and values of Love INC ; develop and implement policies/

strategies in collaboration and approval of the Board of Directors; manage the daily operations and represent the partner churches and Love INC in the community.

This full-time position is multi-faceted. It requires a person committed to learning, willing and able to delegate effectively, and humble enough to admit they need support and assistance to perform all aspects of the position.

Please visit <https://bit.ly/2QaNim9> for more info.

CONVENTION 2020



District Convention in person and via Zoom. Led by service coordinator, Pastor Randy Freund.



2020 Initiative updates from Pastors Isaiah Bai, Erica Varcoc and Dave Wollan

It has been a few years now that I have been attending the Augustana District's Theological Gatherings. I was introduced to the AD through good friends and was warmly welcomed from the get go. I was privileged to attend in person when I lived in Minnesota. I even made the trip to South Dakota when the Super Bowl was held in Minneapolis!

However, this was my first AD Convention. I have now moved to the Pacific Northwest and could not make it to the Theological Gathering and when I saw that the Convention was available via Zoom and on a day I was able to attend, I jumped to the opportunity right away. It was so refreshing to see and hear that the focus of the Convention was Christ centered, which was not surprising at all for me. All the business discussed at the meeting was about proclaiming the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was exciting to hear the dreams, the plans, the work, and the reach that churches and pastors have been doing and continue to do both locally and internationally. I am glad to be a new individual associate member of the AD and look forward to continuing to participate alongside you in any way I am able.

Yours in Christ,
Horacio Castillo

Faculty at St. Paul Lutheran Seminary (with international students)



Dr. Michael Fuchs (outgoing District Council Chair) presenting the Distinguished Service Award to Gaylen Lerohl, standing next to his wife Cynthia.

Elected to the District Council

- Russell Goeseke, a member of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Sanborn, New York
- After the convention ended the District Council elected Pastor Steve Olcott of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, MN to fill the remaining open spot on the council.

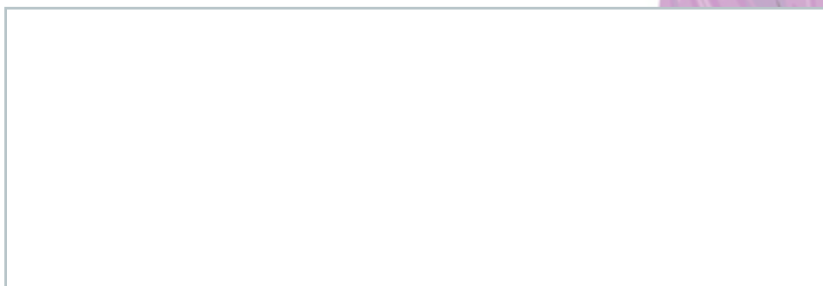
Elected to the Board of Theology and Ministry

- Pastor Isaiah Bai from North Immanuel Lutheran in Pelican Rapids and Fergus Falls, MN
- Pastor Lou Hesse from Living Word Lutheran Church in Moses Lake, WA
- Pastor Todd Mathison serving at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lamberton, MN

The 2021-2022 District Council Officers

- Pastor Craig Werling – Chairman
- Pastor Thomas Thorstad – Vice-Chairman
- Eric Knutson – Treasurer
- Jan Ferguson – Secretary

Visit augustanadistrict.org to see the council and board members, and to view the convention videos (augustanadistrict.org/video-channel/) as well as on our Facebook page.



AUGUSTANA DISTRICT
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Germany 2022

Luther Sites - Passion Play

Sept. 25 - Oct. 6, 2022

Join us on a journey through the land of Martin Luther, along with other historic sites, including the Oberammergau Passion Play!

Your Tour Guides:

Rev. Kurtis & Cyndi Bueltmann

Email: kurtis@bueltmann.org

Ph. 920.299.6912

Rev. Tim & Grace Balfanz

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Bueltmann Tours has been leading trips to Germany since 2000 and makes arrangements directly with people in Germany, which allows us to keep our prices extremely low while also providing an authentic experience. We eat wonderful German meals in and amongst the local people and stay at clean and comfortable hotels. Don't miss this exciting opportunity!

For more information download the brochure here:
<https://bit.ly/2RJILGy>

