

The Inevitable, Unseen Kingdom of God

July is that month we relax and catch our breath. This may especially be true this year. We have endured a pandemic, yet Fall planning is before us. No matter how strong our denial might be or how much we may want to delay the inevitable, it comes. So whether you are a pastor or congregational leader thinking about congregational life in a post-pandemic world or a leader in the Augustana District with major opportunities and challenges before us, I have some good news about what is inevitable!

Many of us recently preached sermons on Mark 4:26-34. "The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed," Jesus says. Throughout the gospels, we are given many ways to imagine what the Kingdom of God looks like and how it comes. In these few verses from Mark 4, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is big, catastrophic, and life-altering. There is no stopping it. You can't speed it up and you can't slow it down. The timing is set. The Kingdom of God comes in its own way. It grows quietly. It is beyond human understanding and control. It comes in a small and undetectable way. Its beginnings are humble. In fact, it is so small and humble that it looks like nothing (a mustard seed). You will be tempted to force its growth. But despite all this, it is clear, that when the right time comes, you cannot miss it. It is unmistakable and inevitable, despite what we see or sense.

What a great summer word as we all anticipate Fall planning! Who but Jesus would bring us to our senses? Friends in Christ, hear these truths that speak his promise.

- ◆ ALL things must take place in God's own time.
- ◆ We are tempted to force God's growth, but it cannot be coerced.
- ◆ Humble beginnings will lead to magnificent conclusions.
- ◆ Faithful patience arises from hope that is real.

So, relax and enjoy your July, knowing full well that Fall will come. Faith is a way of waiting for what and who we cannot see. It is hope that is tied not to something we see or some emotion we feel. Hope is tied to a person, Jesus Christ, the one in whom all things hold together. As surely as the sun rises before we see it, and as surely as a plant is quietly growing in the ground before those first green sprouts appear, so it is with God's kingdom. It is glorious, inevitable, real, and unmistakable in the end. But for now, it is planted as an unseen seed, who is Christ himself, in us.

In Christ,
Pastor Randy Freund
Augustana District Service Coordinator



**AUGUSTANA
WITNESS**

newsletter



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Tabor Evangelist Project – Hawassa, Ethiopia

In the most recent report from Pastor Meseret of Tabor Congregation he quoted the people's response when the Prophet Nehemiah challenged them to rebuild the walls around the holy city of Jerusalem:

"Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, 'Yes, let's rebuild!' So, they began the good work." ~Nehemiah 2:18

2020 and now into 2021 has been a difficult time for all of us, but especially difficult for those countries such as Ethiopia, with vast areas subject to the Covid virus, coupled with political unrest. Our Key Mission Partner in the Tabor Evangelist Project has also faced these trials. But, emboldened by the Spirit of God, they are "rebuilding" their missions into areas that have been adversely affected by these set-backs.

Tabor is a congregation of over 8,000 members, located in Hawassa, Ethiopia. Augustana District's

partnership with them began officially in 2014, when we signed a Covenant of Agreement to support half of the cost of the training and sending of lay evangelists out from Tabor to reach the lost for Christ. When we began that partnership, they were sending out 30 evangelists, which has now been built to 91 that are deployed for Gospel Work. Although gifts from our congregations and individuals have not been able to keep pace with their expanding ministry areas, we should still challenge ourselves to join in their good work.

So, we invite congregations, individuals and church ministry teams to consider partnering with Augustana in support of the Christian witness in Ethiopia. The monthly salary for those deployed by Tabor into their mission fields does vary by level of education and by position from Lay Evangelist to Area Coordinators, but the average is currently \$225 per month. 100% of your gift through Augustana is wired to Tabor, with the wire transfer fees being paid through the General Budget.

Submitted by the Board for World Missions.



Ali Woyo Region Coordinator Visitation



Arsi Region Evangelist Training



Members:



- ★ Pastor Jennifer Needham-Bennet – Trinity, Jeffers, MN and Bethany, Storden, MN
- ★ Pastor Greg Pavek – Living Word Lutheran, Marshall, MN
- ★ Pastor Renae Behrends – St. John's Lutheran Church, LeMars, IA

Associate Member:

- ★ Pastor Connor Longaphie – Luther House of Studies

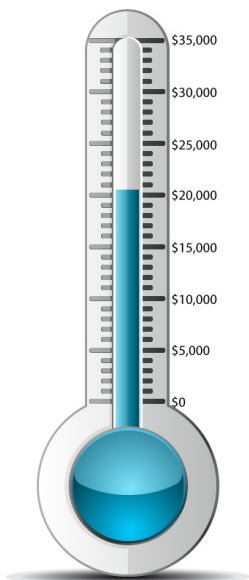
Prayer Requests

- ◆ Your Kingdom ... All praise to You for the wondrous freedoms your love provides. May we generously sow Your Word and rest assured that You will bring forth the harvest. As mustard seeds grow and spread -- they will take over the areas -- so shall Your Kingdom come and spread in the world.
- ◆ Summer ... Lord of all seasons, this summer: grant us enjoyment, rest, renewal and peace in our place and situations. May we repent of the discontentment and desires that are not in your intentions for us. May this time prepare us for the next season.
- ◆ Our neighbors ... Healing Savior: Sustain us in the seasons of our lives when we walk with those who are fighting cancer, other diseases, and emotional struggles. Guide us in encouraging and comforting them. Shine your light through us so we are your hands and feet. May our encouragement remind them to cling to God's promises. Keep our focus on your healing graces and guide us in helping others.
- ◆ Women of the Word ... Gather AD Women of Your Word in September at Crossroads Church in Dawson. Speak Your Word to them through the speakers and fellowship. Provide new officers to continue their mission of study, support, and action. Grant all fellowship in your name.
- ◆ Rain ... Heavenly Father, we depend on you to nourish our earth. With your help we plant crops and by your grace, they give forth a harvest. Our crops, our livestock, wildlife and all of us depend upon you. You are our sole source of growth and abundance. We are in dire need of moisture to help sustain all creatures, our land and to help the plants grow. We humbly ask that you replenish this land with much needed moisture. Continue to sustain us in all ways.

In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

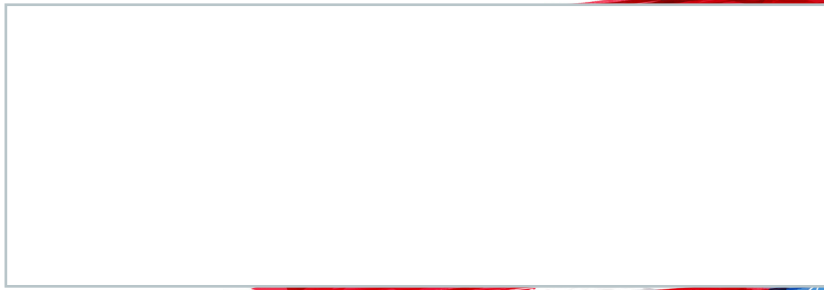
Augustana District Financial Update




We are happy to report that over \$20,000 has been raised to support the AD 2020 Initiative. One of the inspiring success stories of this initiative is the new "Table Ministry" in Sioux Falls, South Dakota led by Pastor Erica Varcoe. While we are thankful for this special giving, we can't forget to support our AD General Fund as well. Heading into these summer months our giving is currently lagging behind our expenses.

I'd like to personally thank you for your prayers and continued financial support!

Warm Regards,
Eric Knutson
AD Treasurer




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

**Did you see the WOW
information that came
via email a couple of
weeks ago?**

If not, you can find all of the information for the
September 2021 event on the website at
<https://augustanadistrict.org/women-of-the-word/>