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## DEVOTIONAL

# My Sacrifice or God's Promise?

*"God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."*

-- Genesis 22:8

This September has been pretty exciting for our family. My six-year-old son went off to all day, everyday kindergarten and my three-year-old daughter started preschool two days a week. It's an exciting time! My son is so ready, and my daughter is excited that she gets to call it "my school" too. We are grateful for the privilege to see our kids off to school; an opportunity many have not experienced for a multiplicity of reasons!

As exciting as it is, my wife and I were discussing how vulnerable our son seems. "What kinds of conversations will he hear at lunch? What kind of behavior will he exhibit on the recess ground?" We have done our best to raise a courteous, respectful, fun-loving, manner-minded young man, in spite of the fact that he is—like us—a dirty, rotten sinner. He knows Jesus and how to talk to God, but we won't be there to shepherd and protect him for seven hours each day!

In Genesis 22, God commands Abraham to "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love...and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will show you." This is the long-awaited offspring who would carry the covenant promises of God forward. Abraham and Sarah waited for decades, hoping against hope to welcome this child before they welcomed death. When they heard he was coming, they laughed. When he arrived, they marveled. It was God who got the last laugh. They, too, gave their son an awareness of Almighty God. They had done everything they could to raise a son to survive the secularism/paganism all around them. And now, it seemed that God would like to throw all that away.

While this demand seems outrageous to us, it wasn't a far-fetched concept. The story is offensive to our modern senses, especially because it stands alone in Genesis. Honestly though, everybody around was doing it. This was a regular practice among the Ammonites, Moabites, and Canaanites.<sup>2</sup> They offered their children to Molech through the flames of fire. What made Abraham's God any different? So, off they went; the two of them together.<sup>3</sup>

I wonder if tears streamed down Abraham's face as he strolled up the mountain? It must've been the picture of total disappointment and despair. Or, is this the posture of unwavering trust in God? What seemed like an impossible demand was an opportunity to watch God intervene for the sake of God's own reputation to preserve life and keep his promises. God halts the sacrifice, keeps Abraham from following the crowd, and keeps good on his commitment to the covenant.

The same is true for our congregants and ministries. If we think we're responsible to protect and keep them in God's promises, then we don't trust the Holy Spirit to do what we never could do in the first place. Abraham didn't impress God by doing what he was commanded. How much less will you impress God if you're the solution to every problem. You were called to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments; call on the sick, marry and bury. It doesn't work to run the church like a business; neither will church growth models, small groups, missional movements, etc. breathe new life into a pandemic-tired church. I know it is hard to believe, but the promises of God—forgiveness, life, and salvation—are surprisingly sufficient for faith and the church. The confessors are quick to remind us: God will see to it that "One holy church will persist throughout the ages."<sup>4</sup>

With regard to my kid, I have to remember that he already belongs to God. Sure, his peers will try and lure him down a different path. Media will offer a different message. But, my son died with the Son of God, the Lamb who was provided for the sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> My son died with Christ in the waters of Holy Baptism. There's nothing left to do but for him—you and me--"to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

*Pastor Culynn Curtis*

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 22:2.

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 20:1-9; 2 Kings 3:27.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 22:6.

<sup>4</sup> AC VII, The Book of Concord.

<sup>5</sup> John 1:29.



## Mission Minute

### For Such a time As This

The headlines are all too familiar in this time and place. There is an insurrection, this time in Ethiopia. People are fleeing their homes, farms, and fields; towns are being destroyed, women are being raped, and whole families murdered. Once again, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are stalking the land. The ancient lament of the Psalmist goes up again from the people, "How long, O Lord, how long?" We've heard it all so many times, so many times.

This time there is a difference. The people crying out are our brothers and sisters in the faith, people we have partnered with in their ministries. The fastest growing Lutheran church in the world, the EECMY, is in the midst of the suffering in Dessie and the surrounding region of NE Ethiopia. We have visited Bishop Wagnew and his people and have seen the churches and the seminary he leads. We have prayed with his people and broken bread with them. We have been amazed at their efforts, and how they do so much with so little. Now they are the ones in dire need. Refugees and victims need our help -- many of whom are people of faith in the risen Lord Jesus.

It can seem like a very small drop in a very big bucket. What can a few paltry dollars from me do in a tragedy of this magnitude? But we remember the Lord's answer in Isaiah so long ago, "Is my hand too short?" When given five loaves and two fish, Jesus was asked "what is that among so many?" but he promptly fed five thousand men, and their women and children, on a hillside in Galilee. We follow Jesus. He said "Truly I say to you, as you did it to the least of these my brothers, you did it to me," (Matthew 25:40), and "For truly I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward," (Mark 9:41). With promises such as these, it is time, as the Spirit moves us, to be counted.

Please listen to the promptings of the Spirit and give to these brothers and sisters in need.

If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to call me.

Rev. Lou Hesse

Living Word Lutheran Church, Moses Lake, WA  
509-765-0321 (home), 509-760-0274 (cell)

## From the AD Board of World Missions, Paul Knudson:

What Pastor Hesse has not said here is that the congregation in Moses Lake is hoping and praying that their lead donation of \$10,000 to the NCES Crisis Fund will call forth a multitude of generosity from other congregations and individuals who are able to respond at this time.

You can find links for online donations on the Missions page of the AD website; donation by check may be sent to Augustana District, 335 Main Street, Hutchinson, MN, 55350, with "NCES Crisis Fund" on the check memo line.

Leaders of NCES are profoundly thankful for these wonderful signs of caring for them in their distress.



## URGENT CALL FOR AID

FROM A KEY DISTRICT MISSION PARTNER OF THE AUGUSTANA DISTRICT NORTH CENTRAL ETHIOPIAN SYNOD



There is a life and death crisis that our brothers and sisters in Christ are facing at the hands of a military force that is raping and killing

Christians of this Amharic area of Ethiopia. Pastors and their members are fleeing their villages, coming to the central city of that region (Dessie), seeking safety.

The North Central Ethiopia Synod has been a mission partner of the AD since 2018, when we began funding a vitally important training program of their pastors and evangelists. This effort has been funded primarily through one of our AD congregations, Living Word Lutheran Church in Moses Lake, WA.

Our District sent a delegation to this area in 2018 and we were very impressed with the leadership of the synod and the eagerness of their pastors to grow in faith and as leaders in their local areas. We never expected that these same leaders would be driven from their homes and with desperate needs simply for survival.

Their brothers and sisters in Dessie, also very poor, are seeking to house and care for them as best they can. The

synod simply does not have resources to help them in face of these very dark times.

Your Board of World Missions and District Council is urging congregations and its members to respond generously and quickly to this call from our partners of NCES. These leadership groups of the AD are setting a goal of \$10,000 for this effort. By the grace of God and your responses we may well exceed this number. What we give to NCES will be allocated by their leaders for direct support to their people who have been persecuted and displaced, being the light of Christ to them in this time of great darkness.

Gifts can be sent to the "Augustana District", 335 Main St. South, Hutchinson, MN, 55350. Please mark your gift on the memo line for: "NCES Crisis Fund." Individuals may want to send gifts through their local congregation for forwarding to the AD.

Pastor Lou Hesse of Living Word Lutheran is most willing to respond to questions you may have. His contact information is: phone: 509-760-0274 or email [louanddebhesse@gmail.com](mailto:louanddebhesse@gmail.com).

Questions may also be directed to Pr Paul Knudson: [paulk@faithlc.com](mailto:paulk@faithlc.com) or Pastor Tom Christenson: [pastortlc@gmail.com](mailto:pastortlc@gmail.com).



## Congregational Services



There have been a number of new Staff Openings put on the AD website recently. Make sure to check them out. Don't forget that if your congregation has a job opening you can easily post it directly to the AD website on the Church Staff Openings page (under the Church tab) by filling out a simple form.

### CURRENT OPENINGS:

- Pastor | New Creation Lutheran Church | Perham MN
- Part-time Pastor | Our Redeemer Lutheran, Church, Badger MN
- Full-time Pastor | St. John's Lutheran Church | Springfield MN
- Pastor | Hope Lutheran Church | Huron SD



Watch for a special edition of the AD newsletter to come out in the next week or two with all of the information needed for your congregation to host an Augustana District Sunday in October.

## Women of the Word 2021 Gathering Recap

Wow! The day has come and gone. The WOW gathering that was scheduled for 2020 and then postponed, and was finally celebrated in Dawson, MN on Saturday, September 18, 2021! This was the 10th WOW annual gathering, since women of the AD LCMC held their first ever gathering at Faith Lutheran Church on October 2, 2010!



Pastor Julie Smith installing the 2021-2022 Women of the Word (WOW) board members at Crossroads Lutheran Church in Dawson, MN on Saturday, September 18, 2021. Pictured left to right: Diane, Jodi, Mia, Marcia, Pastor Julie, Marian, Jane and Jan

I was new to running a business meeting, and in hindsight, I should have asked someone to teach me ahead of time! (Past coordinators have made the job look easy!) The board understood that not everything was quite stated properly and for that I do apologize! I am working with the current coordinator to ensure that we pass on that teaching/training to the future coordinators!

This year, ladies gathered from 13+ congregations and 3 churches joined online! Focusing on scripture and what it means to be a woman of the WORD in the WORLD, not OF the WORLD. We had a wonderful worship, speakers, food, and so much more! A new policy was implemented and according to that ALL roles are filled on the board for 2022! This is a first in many years. Each woman that attended and/or served us that day was such a joy to have! You can find the new board, business documents and more at the website, [www.augustanadistrict.org/women-of-the-word/](http://www.augustanadistrict.org/women-of-the-word/). We hope to have the website updated by November with new officer information and other details! Our Coordinator can now always be reached at [wowco@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:wowco@augustanadistrict.org).

Thanks again to each and every participant. Thank you to Pr. Carlstrom and her husband as well as the congregation of Crossroads for all of their extra work in hosting this event. Together everyone made this day a success! The Lord bless you and keep you, until we gather next year!

*Mia Mills*



### Save the Date!

September 17, 2022 at New Hope Lutheran in Comfrey, MN



# Hidden Treasure

## 2022 Convocation & Convention Combined Meetings

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."  
-2 Corinthians 4:7

May 5 - 7, 2022 at Mt. Carmel in Alexandria, MN.

### **THE WORD ALONE**

Thursday, May 5, 2022

**"Where's the Truth"**

Retreat/conversation with Dr. Steven Paulson (Supper on your own)  
6:00PM Registration\*/Check-In  
7:00PM Reception  
7:30PM Presentation by Dr. Paulson

\*While the emphasis for this event focuses on raising up the next generation of ministry leaders, all pastors are encouraged to invite ANYONE interested in parish ministry.

### **THE PREACHED WORD**

Friday, May 6, 2022

**"Luther's Outlaw God"**

Annual Convocation of the Cross  
Dr. Steve Paulson  
Schedule TBD

### **THE SENT WORD**

Saturday, May 7, 2022

**"Jesus' Life/Our Bodies"**

Annual District Convention  
Schedule TBD



**REGISTRATION**  
*Opening soon!*

Watch Your Inbox for more information!

## NEEDED!! YOUNG ADULTS!

~ Pastors & Congregations ~

If you know young adults with a passion for ministry, please contact

Randy Freund at

[director@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:director@augustanadistrict.org)

- or -

(320)583.3648

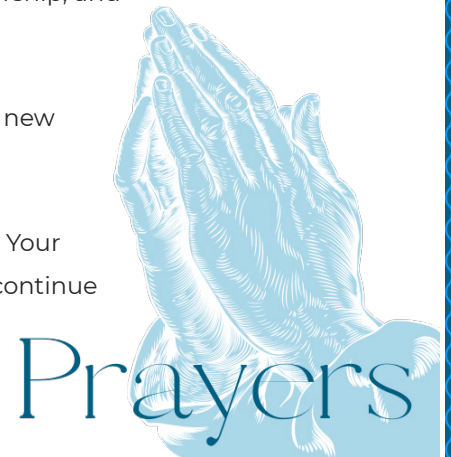


## Please Keep in Your Prayers...

- ✝ Thanks that You gave the ultimate sacrifice through Your Son. May our sacrifices rise like incense to You.
- ✝ Protect our brothers and sisters in Dessie, Ethiopia under the hand of a vicious military force ... grant them knowledge that Christ stands with them in their fear and uncertainty. Give us ears to hear their plight and hearts of mercy to help them to survive. May God's Word continue to be proclaimed and sink deep into the hearts of all who hear.
- ✝ As nature cycles into the next season, may we prepare for different times and needs in our mission work. May our relationship and commitment to Christ renew and change as the Spirit leads.

We give you thanks:

- ✝ For the WOW gathering at Crossroads Lutheran Church in Dawson; for the message that was shared by the speakers – we are WOMEN of the WORD first, and women living in the world and living in the Word; for the warming fellowship; for the update from Pastor Freund about the Augustana District focus; for those women who are new to WOW; and for new officers to continue on the path You lead us.
- ✝ May Your Spirit continue moving through the fellowship and tasks at the LCMC gathering in Hilliard, OH. Bless and guide the business – use it to further your kingdom here on earth. Enrich and energize those who hear the spoken Word to boldly preach Your Good News and bring the focus back to our congregations.
- ✝ Grant the LCMC and, specifically our Augustana District, the prayer, leadership, and financial support to do Your will!
- ✝ Give vision and leadership to efforts that will help develop and encourage new pastors and leaders for Your church.
- ✝ Provide the ways and means for Your Church to stand firm in proclaiming Your Word during this Covid pandemic. Guide us through the landmines that continue to stifle Christian fellowship. Thank you for the medicines and caregivers who assist in living with Covid. Heal our fears and help us boldly to proclaim Your salvation.



### ENDORSED CLERGY



If you are rostered on the Augustana District website, we are requesting all Endorsed Clergy to please check your credentials and send any changes to [office@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:office@augustanadistrict.org). Thank you!

Please visit <https://augustanadistrict.org/endorsed-clergy/>

# 2022 Confirmation Retreat



Pause



Play



Refresh

- Is your congregation getting your confirmation schedule in place? Would you like to bring your students to the district confirmation retreat along with other students from the district?

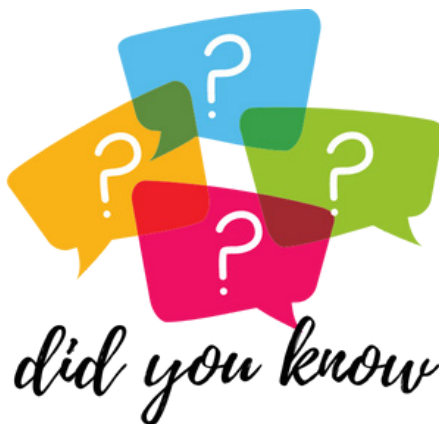
- This year the retreat will be March 4 - 6, 2022, at Luther Crest camp in Alexandria, MN. The retreat is led by Augustana District pastors, but each congregation is

asked to send their own chaperone's to stay for the entire weekend.

The planning team is still working out all of the details but they wanted you to get the dates to your staff members that do the confirmation planning so you can get it on your schedule.

## Financial Statement

The district council expresses deep gratitude to all who support the district through prayer, volunteering, and financial donations. Your contributions are vital to the operation of the AD's mission and ministry. Not yet involved? You can contact the service coordinator, Pastor Randy Freund, to find out where your talents and prayers are needed.



Did you know that AD operates off a fiscal year, not a calendar year that goes from April 1 - March 31?



From 4/1/2020 - 3/31/2021 there were 58 congregations and 18 individuals that regularly supported AD's general fund. (There are currently 84 congregations in the Augustana District)



From 4/1/2021 - 8/31/2021 we have had 31 congregations and 6 individuals give to AD's general fund.



Income 4/1/2021 - 8/31/2021 is \$46,767.54 and expenses are \$46,913.89.

We invite and encourage each of you to be a part of this growing ministry. If your congregation does not support the Augustana District please talk with your church leadership about how you can support the mission and ministry through your congregation. If you would like to financially support the district:

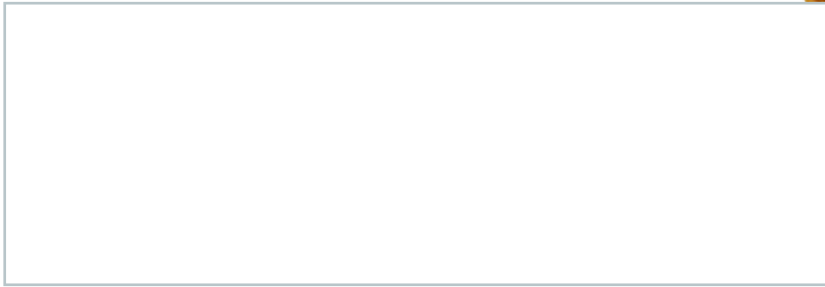
### DONATE ONLINE

Please visit the website at  
[www.augustanadistrict.org/about-us/help-support-us/](http://www.augustanadistrict.org/about-us/help-support-us/)

### DONATE VIA SNAIL-MAIL

Or you can mail a check made payable to:  
 Augustana District  
 335 Main St. S.  
 Hutchinson, MN 55350

Please note any special giving in the memo line of the check.



**AUGUSTANA DISTRICT**  
335 Main Street S.  
Hutchinson MN 55350  
Address Service Requested



Augustana District Sunday .. ... October 2021 (any Sunday)

LCMC Annual Meeting.. ... ..October 3 - 6, 2021

Confirmation Retreat... ..March 4 - 6, 2022

2022 Convocation/ AD Convention . ... May 5 - 7, 2022

2022 WoW Gathering .. ... .. September 17, 2022