

D e v o t i o n a l

“The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” John 1:5

I suppose there is something especially fitting about Advent for those of us who live far up in the northern hemisphere. As the days grow shorter and shorter and the nights longer and longer, we become more acutely aware of the gift of light. We prepare for Christmas, the celebration of Christ's entry into the world, in the darkest time of the year. For the second year in a row, we are making those preparations with a darkness and dread hanging over us. While writing this I received word that the local production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat has been postponed due to a surge in covid cases. What we had all hoped was behind us seems determined to hang around.

Right in the middle of this season of deep darkness, we celebrate the coming of the light. We give thanks that the Word became flesh and chose to live among us. We rejoice that the true light has shone through the darkness. It is in this season of darkness that we see most clearly our need for this light. It is in this season of darkness that all the shadows cast by sin and death show us most clearly who we really are, what our situation really is.

And it is precisely because of the reality of our situation that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. It is precisely because of the darkness that surrounds and fills us that God has shown his light. God would not allow the darkness of sin to overcome the light of Christ. Even as his light sunk below the horizon at the cross, even when all seemed lost, even when there was no more reason to think something good could come, even then, the power of God was bringing light out of darkness, life out of death. The true Light went straight into the valley of death and came out the other side even brighter than before.

This is the light that shines in the darkness. It is the only true light. It is the only light that reveals our true nature and makes us new people. It is the only light that has the power to overcome darkness once and for all. This is the light whose birth we are preparing to celebrate and the work he began in taking on flesh and continued in his taking on death and completed in his rising will never be undone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. The darkness never will overcome it.

In the light of Christ,

Pastor Julie Smith

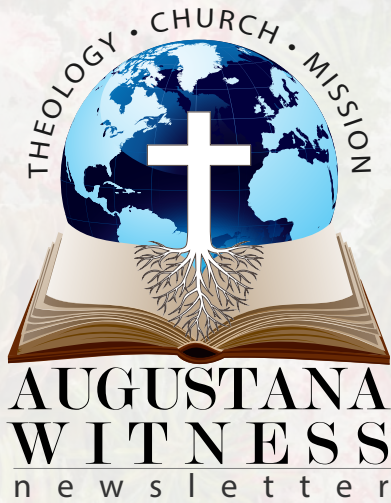


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M i s s i o n M i n u t e

Mission Minute: Young Adult Missionary Internship (YAMI)

Awakening Lives to World Missions (www.alwm.org) exists to call, mobilize, equip, and network congregations to GROW LOCALLY and to GO GLOBALLY, personally responding to Jesus' command to make disciples in your "Jerusalem" and to 'the ends of the earth.' (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8)

Over the last few years, ALWM, a mission partner of the Augustana District, and LCMC Pastor Matt Shields have been developing a program for young adults (ages 18-25) to experience life in a cross-cultural setting that would be longer than the typical 10-14 day "mission trip." The program, called Young Adult Missionary Internship (YAMI), would allow young adults to have a more in-depth experience of what life is like in another culture over the course of 6-8 weeks.

Pastor Matt Shields and ALWM have partnered with the Bible Institute of South Africa, located just outside of Cape Town, to offer young adults a safe environment to stay in while visiting South Africa, as well as excellent opportunities to learn about and experience Christian ministry in another culture. For example, during the southern hemisphere "winter" term in July, the Bible Institute holds a one-week intensive course on engaging Islam. During that week, the students not only have in-class lectures, but also take trips to local mosques and other important sites. The young adults participating in the YAMI program participate in that class and join the various trips into the community. Even though it is winter in South Africa in July, it's not that cold, light

jackets or sweatshirts are usually enough to keep warm.

COVID restrictions around the world still make international travel difficult and uncertain. For the summer of 2022, ALWM will be taking a shorter trip. This trip will have a similar focus of "cultural immersion." Pastor Matt will take a group over to South Africa for two weeks. The first week of that trip will be planned to coincide with the Bible Institute's "winter" term in July. During that week, the young adults will participate in the class on engaging Islam. When time allows, Pastor Matt will take the group around to important cultural and national sites in the Cape Town area. The second week the group will leave the Bible Institute and travel around the country and even go on a true African Safari!

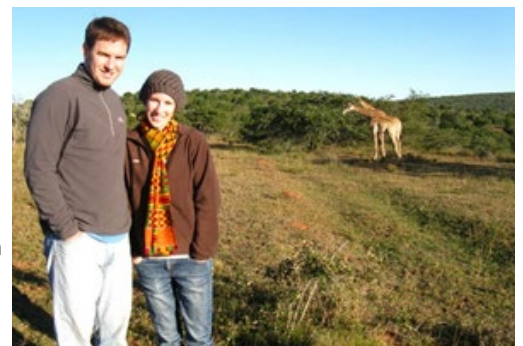
If you, or any young adults that you know might be interested in participating in this trip, please contact Pastor Matt Shields at pastormatt@alwm.org or visit the ALWM website at <https://www.alwm.org/young-adult-missionary-internship>.

In Christ,
Pastor Matt Shields
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Flanagan, IL



Left: Pastor Matt Shields serving at the Lutheran Daycare Center in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, 2009

Right: Pastor Matt Shields and his wife at Addo Elephant National Park, South Africa, 2009



Mission Start: The Table Ministry

Church in a Bar ...

pulling up a seat at The Table Ministry.

We are an 8+ month old Church Plant that bloomed during the pandemic - and God has been at work reaching people of all ages, all stages, all seasons, craving Jesus, law & gospel, and a no strings attached faith community/church home.

Meeting people where they are.

Jesus in their junk.

Light in the Darkness.

Beauty in the Brokenness.



We started gathering for worship on Thursday evenings at Shenanigans Sports Bar and Grill. Sitting around tables, sharing a meal, and doing life together. We witnessed walls coming down and relationships being formed. People show up. Gather. Carrying life's burdens and the week's stress. They are met with the freeing, filling Good Word. FOR THEM. And a community to do life with. Our Thursday tables were filling up, so in August we added a Sunday morning worship. (In the sports bar dining room before they are open for the day. Their staff make us coffee and worship with us. They have become family. It is incredible!) We are hearing story after story about the space we've created - people getting fed, people getting freed, people hearing Jesus FOR THEM. Barriers have been broken down. Meals have been eaten together. Stories and tears have been shared. Around tables. Together. A little over eight months ago a pastor walked into a bar... and although it sounds like the start of a cheesy joke...everything that has grown, is happening, that God is doing in this place, is anything but a punch line!

Meet People Where They Are ...

- ✧ Worship on Thursday nights and Sunday mornings at the bar continues to fill the tables - we are reaching people of all ages. We have added ways for people to learn across the generations, around the tables, with our children, youth, people of all ages/stages/seasons.
- ✧ Our group has had multiple opportunities to serve our community; we served a meal at our local "soup kitchen," worshiped with the clients/staff at a local treatment center, our families have had BINGO nights with the families at the local homeless shelter, the youth worshiped at the local Union Gospel Mission and collected food for the city's food pantry. The Table is walking with a local, lower income elementary school and has helped support the staff and students. The Christmas season will see Shenanigans Sports Bar team up with The Table to adopt families in our local foster care network.
- ✧ The Table popped up at parks this summer - offering education/fellowship/engagement/worship for kids-teens-families-individuals.
- ✧ People spend their summers at the lake ... so that's where we went! Worship at the Lake - we spent a Sunday worshiping through music and a message at a local "hot spot" for camping and summer vacationing at a local lake.

What a wild ride! A crazy, beautiful one!



There are endless pictures, videos, stories...we LOVE to share about The Table. Please reach out if you have any questions, wish to support The Table, want to visit Sioux Falls, SD, and/ or desire to learn more. The support and prayers from ALL OVER are felt and are amazing! God Bless YOU!

There's always a seat for YOU ... Come to The Table!

Pastor Erica Varcoe

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erica@thetableministry.org

www.thetableministry.org

[The Table Ministry | Facebook](#)



Women of the Word

Greetings --

One of the goals of our new leadership board is to help everyone get acquainted with the AD WOW.

We are attempting to be more engaging, our focus for this month is our presence on the website. Find us on the [Augustana District website](#) by rolling down the **Church tab** and selecting the option entitled **Women of the Word**.

The Women of the Word page invites you to save the date of our next gathering, Sept. 17, 2022, at New Hope Lutheran Church in Comfrey. Below that you see a listing of our newly elected officers. Below the officers you will find the "WOW Documents & Publications". That is where you will find the minutes from our gathering this fall and a copy of our newly adopted policy. All WoW publications can be found here too ... and we also have a dedicated contact form to get in touch with the WoW leaders.

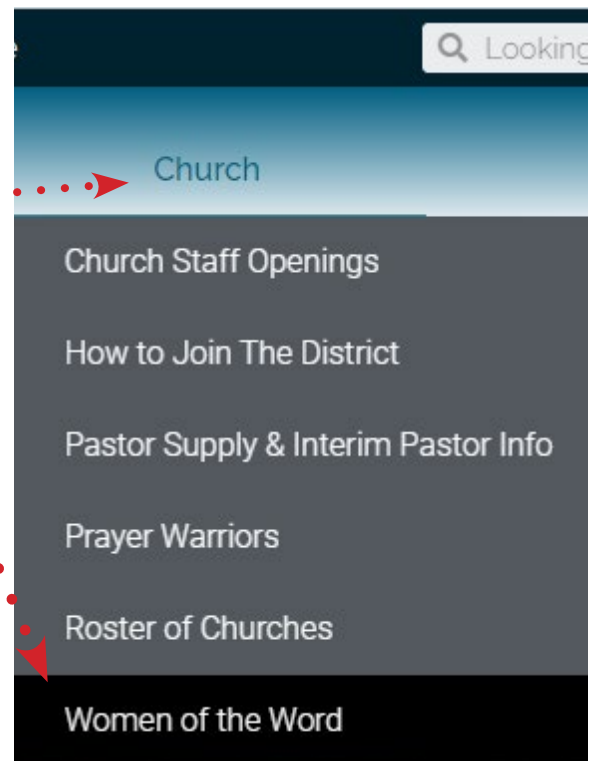
If you ever have questions regarding WoW, you can find the answers on our page, or by contacting the leaders of WoW through the contact form there.

I am so thankful for all Women of the Word! You live and witness in this world while trusting God's promise for the eternal world.

Respectfully,

Jan Kreie

AD WOW Member at Large



Save the Date!

2022 Annual Gathering at New Hope Lutheran
Church Comfrey, Minnesota.

September 17, 2022

Please Keep In Prayers

- ✝ We ask that your Spirit motivate and guide those of Your choosing to the Young Adult Missionary Internship (YAMI). Remove all financial barriers. Provide sites and experiences that help young adults to understand the need for Christian witness. Thank you for the leadership in this initiative.
- ✝ We praise You for the fact that Your Light shines in the darkest times. As we walk in Advent, may we shine light to those around us and help others to experience the hope that Christ brings. During these days of less sunshine, provide us with warmth and fellowship that encourages us to continue in your promises. Bless us with happiness as we celebrate Christ's birth.
- ✝ We give thanks for Table Ministry in Sioux Falls. We all are needy and sinful, and we thank you that Table Ministry is welcoming and engaging. Grant them growth in relationship to you and welcoming of others.
- ✝ Guide the leaders of our AD WOW – may they build awareness of WOW and find ways to encourage all women's group. May they assist local groups if there are needs. Shine your light in them that they may reflect it in the tasks, fellowships and events they participate in.
- ✝ Jesus, your Son our Lord, has prophesied that those who bear his name will be hated and persecuted by the world. Strengthen and provide hope to all those in places where they live in fear because they are Christians. Grant them the means to survive and courage to bear witness to you. Turn the hearts of those with harmful intent to love and provide governments that protect all their citizens.
- ✝ Continue the flow of invitations and fellowship from our Augustana District. May the awareness of the confirmation retreat and May gatherings be shared. May the core values of theology, church and mission be 'caught' and enable growth for all congregations and members. Direct our leaders and all who work out the many tasks that are laid before us.



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.



Please Consider Our Ministry This Season...

When setting your 2022 church budget, we ask you to please remember the Augustana District. The district and LCMC need your prayerful and financial support to continue serving our growing number of congregations. As you know, the district does not have dues but relies on individual and congregational contributions to provide services to the district and beyond. Your consideration is appreciated.

Direct Your Choice Dollars Today!

Did you know that if you have a policy through Thrivent you may be eligible for "Choice Dollars?" Those choice dollars can be directed to the non-profit of your choice, one available option is the Augustana District. If you need help directing your choice dollars please contact your Thrivent representative or the AD church office.



amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

Did you know that the Augustana District is a non-profit that is eligible for Amazon Smile dollars? If you are shopping through Amazon this holiday season (or anytime) please set the Augustana District as your favored non-profit and Amazon will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the district.

“SENT ONES”

Usually Annual Reports are meant to recount the changes, progress and challenges of the year past. Along with that, they might highlight some new things coming. In a time when there seems to be so many changes and challenges (in the church and in the culture), I thought it best to highlight the one thing that remains the same and unites us all.

One of the speakers at the LCMC Annual Gathering lifted this up in a simple and profound way. He said, “We are simply messengers of the one message that does not change.” This has important implications. The Lord has given us this treasure, the gospel, of which we are merely the messengers. Jesus doesn’t need us to dress it up or spice it up. It is arrogant of us to think we could or should change the message. It is HIS message, not ours. This message does not need our humor or winsome personalities to be heard. It needs a messenger. The message will not return empty, but will accomplish that for which it is sent (Isaiah 55:11).

I’m reminded of a simple poem by Gerhard Frost called, “The Sent One.” Frost recalls being a young child sent to the grocery store by his mother with a grocery list. How good it felt to be sent by another. How wonderful to know that in his little hand was an important and urgent message. How good it was to see how the message he held was soon put into action when received by another.

The Augustana District is made up of many different congregations, with many different histories and challenges and trials. This diversity is held together by one thing. We are “sent ones” who have been given the same message. This seems to be the most important thing to note at year end. Our challenges and accomplishments are recorded on our website and in monthly newsletter, it all reflects the same thing, times change, culture changes, challenges change. This 2021 Annual Report is actually much like last year’s report, as well as all the years previous to this one. It is best summarized by St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:20:

***“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ,
God making his appeal through us.”***

I give thanks to all of you through whom God is making his appeal. What an honor to be “sent ones” of this message of love and grace.



In Christ,
Pastor Randy Freund,
Service Coordinator

Hidden Treasure

"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"

7:00PM - 9:00PM

For those who are in, or interested in, ministry.

Combined Events of
**CONVOCATION &
CONVENTION**

**New in
2022**
One Trip
Two Great Events

*While the emphasis for this evening session 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"

9:00AM - 4:00PM

Annual Convocation of the Cross



THE SENT WORD

Saturday, May 7, 2022

"Jesus' Life/Our Bodies"

10:00AM - 4:00PM

Annual District Convention

**Registration
NOW OPEN**
Limited Space
so please register
soon!



NEEDED!! YOUNG ADULTS!

~ Pastors & Congregations ~

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

Randy Freund at

director@augustanadistrict.org

- or -

(320)583.3648

Calling

HOLY
BIBLE

Financial Update

The Augustana Districts general fund is currently at a net loss of **-\$7,150.89**. This shows a need for strong end of year contributions.

Please remember the Augustana District in your prayers and year-end giving as you are able.

A sincere and heartfelt thank you to those of you who continue to faithfully support the district.

DONATE ONLINE

Please visit the website at www.augustanadistrict.org

DONATE NOW

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.

Save The Dates

Confirmation Retreat

March 4 - 6, 2022

2022 Convocation/ AD Convention

May 5 - 7, 2022

2022 WoW Gathering

September 17, 2022

Augustana District Sunday Success Story

Here at Christus, Clintonville (WI), we used the power point supplied by the district, and I used much of the provided commentary, while adding some of my own - most specifically, that I had spoken with Erica Varcoe at the LCMC convention and would like to support The Table Ministry. The following week, we received a letter from Our Savior Church in New Castle Wyoming, together with a returned support check, saying (sadly) they had to fold. Our Council quickly re-directed the check to The Table Ministry, and odds are that we'll make

them one of our four mission congregations to be supported in our annual benevolence budget.

I did receive some comments afterward that it was good to know what's going on with the district's ministries/initiatives, and what's available from the district. We do regularly post updates on bulletin boards, but as a marketing major (in a previous life) I know print communication is usually the least effective.

Pastor Brian Crocker



AUGUSTANA DISTRICT
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Hutchinson MN 55350
Address Service Requested



BLESSINGS TO YOU THIS

Christmas

AND ALWAYS