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Devotional

In the northern part of the northern hemisphere, the season of Epiphany coincides with the time of year when we notice that the days are getting longer. As the lectionary marches steadily on to the Transfiguration, the sun hangs a little longer in the sky in the evening and the darkness recedes a little earlier in the morning. We can start to imagine the shape of the landscape as something more than a vast sea of white.

Our scripture readings in the Epiphany season also find us seeing more clearly who Jesus is and what he is up to in the world. As he roams about Galilee, eventually making his way to Judea, he is preaching with authority, casting out demons, healing the sick, bringing the presence of God into the midst of his people. And large crowds of people are impressed by what they see and hear.

But even in this season of increasing light, the darkness is encroaching. The more clearly people see Jesus, the more concerned they become. The demons see it first. "Have you come to destroy us?" But soon that's what everyone will be wondering. Have you come to mess everything up? Have you come to disrupt our plans? Have you come to take what we've worked so hard to accumulate? Have you come to be Lord when we're happy to be our own lords?

When God's Word goes to work on us, we may wonder the same thing. "Does this mean I can't . . . ?" "Does this mean I have to . . . ?" "Does this mean I shouldn't . . . ?" "Does this mean I'm not . . . ?" At first we may think, "This is great. I can do this. I can be who Jesus calls me to be." But soon enough we are there with those crowds in Galilee, in Jerusalem. Those crowds that start to turn because the demand is too much, the cost is too high. Jesus seems to want everything.

The demons, despite their twisted vision, saw Jesus clearly and they knew it meant an end to them. And when Jesus comes into focus in our sin-clouded eyes we figure out the same thing. He's out to get us. He wants to destroy us.

Well . . . he is out to get you. That much is true. And he is out to destroy the sinner and that is the end of the old you. That's the end of the you that lives in darkness and fear, sin and death. It's the end of the you that isn't sure Jesus is someone you want to have around. But it's just the beginning for the new you,

the one for whom darkness and death, sin and fear are behind you. The one who will finally see clearly, without vision twisted by sin, the God who is for you.

Pastor Julie Smith

Mission Minute

Children in India Learn the Meaning of Christmas

By God's Grace, we were able to organize 3 seminars for children in celebration of Christmas. The first and second seminars were organized on 23 and 24 December, 2021 in Sarenga Bankura District, West Bengal by Pastor Tanmoy and his wife. A total of 350 children who mostly come from a Maoist community attended the program combined on two days. The second seminar was organized on 24 December 2021, in Muneer Child Development Center, Kalindi, East Medinipur, West Bengal. A total of 200 children attended the Christmas program. All the children

celebrated Christmas by singing and dancing to carols. The children were also given their Christmas presents. They learned Bible verses related to Christmas and also learned the real meaning of Christmas which is the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful to the Lord that both the seminars went well and all the children and their families are safe. We hope that whatever the children learned in the seminar, they could share with their parents and help in bringing them to Christ.



Special Prayers for AIMJ

Please pray for our ministry as we plan to reach even more Muslims this year. Please pray for the protection of all believers, seekers, pastors and all the families. Please pray that the Lord may protect all the people from extremist groups and the government.

Please pray for all seekers who are about 50,000. Please pray that in this year the Lord may touch their heart and they could come forward for baptism and start their new life in Christ.

Please pray for India as the omicron variant is spreading more and more everyday. In the peak it is expected that India could have more than 1 million cases a day. Things only started to feel normal as once again people started to have jobs. But again, during this third wave, more people will lose their job. Please pray that the third wave ends early and that the number of cases could be controlled.

REGISTRATION ENDS TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH!!!

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?

To register online or download the brochure and/or the emergency contact form, please visit augustanadistrict.org/events/2022-confirmation-retreat/

This year the retreat is 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.

REGISTER NOW



Faith Lutheran Church in Monticello, MN
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Buffalo Lake, MN

The Story of a Mission Start Church



The Log Church's Journey

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Big Sandy just celebrated 85 years of serving the Lord as a Lutheran church in a rural lake country setting around McGregor, Minnesota. Known as the "Log Church" because of the original log church, which is still being used, it began as a member of the Augustana denomination in Minnesota. Later, in the 1960's they were merged into the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and then in 1988 they were merged again into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Throughout these times the congregation served the area much like a Lutheran community church with fulltime and seasonal lake area residents of many Christian faiths attending. In 2019 Grace's pastor left and the ELCA Synod provided an interim minister. With Covid-19 running rampant, Grace stopped in-person services. A Call Committee was formed and after filing a Site Profile with ELCA, began to also look for alternatives. As debates over social issues and ELCA initiatives surfaced, the congregation divided. Church attendance and financial support suffered. There was much discontent with the secular political agenda. Research was conducted and presented on reasons to leave the ELCA and reasons to join another denomination. The two most important issues sought

were to find a Bible-centered pastor and to eliminate secular politics in the church. Choices were narrowed down to Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and North American Lutheran Church (NALC). After much open discussion and presentations by ministers and representatives of the ELCA, LCMC, and NALC, the Church Council, guided by the congregation, decided that the congregation would vote to leave the ELCA and join both LCMC and NALC. Official notice was given to the ELCA Synod Bishop and then Covid-19 again shut everything down. In April 2021 the church was finally able to conduct a first vote, which resulted in an intention to leave and then in a required final second vote, 90 days afterward in July 2021, Grace voted by a margin of 94% to leave the ELCA and join LCMC and NALC. Since that time the church is very pleased with the reception into LCMC and the support they have received. Grace also joined the LCMC Augustana District. The Call Committee is currently busy with LCMC pastoral applicants and pray to have a called minister by the summer. Throughout the journey, Grace has felt the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Two pastors have served Grace as Pulpit Supply to keep the church open and new members and visitors are growing the church. God is great and present in our lives.

Reflections from Ash Wednesday 2021 at University

On the morning of Ash Wednesday last year, Pastor Isaiah Bai and I went to a university in Fargo, ND to serve as witnesses to our Lord Jesus. We planned to use the tradition of the distribution of ashes as a simple exercise to call people to remember the significance of the day.

Given the Covid-19 protocols of the time, we used Q-tips to apply the slurry of ash and oil to each person's forehead. One of us would make the mark of the black cross while declaring "remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The other would have the more joyful part of the brief liturgy, announcing to the participant "hear now the good news, Jesus Christ forgives you all of your sins, now and always."

During seventy-five minutes, approximately three hundred people walked by our table in the student union. Perhaps we looked like we were dressed for Halloween in our white albs and purple stoles. Many people passed by with their eyes transfixed upon their mobile phones, while others were in too much of a hurry to even return our friendly greeting. Some said to each other, "Oh yeah, it's Ash Wednesday." Others shared with us that they were either on their way to a church service over the noon hour or would worship later that evening. One small group of students asked us about our church affiliation.

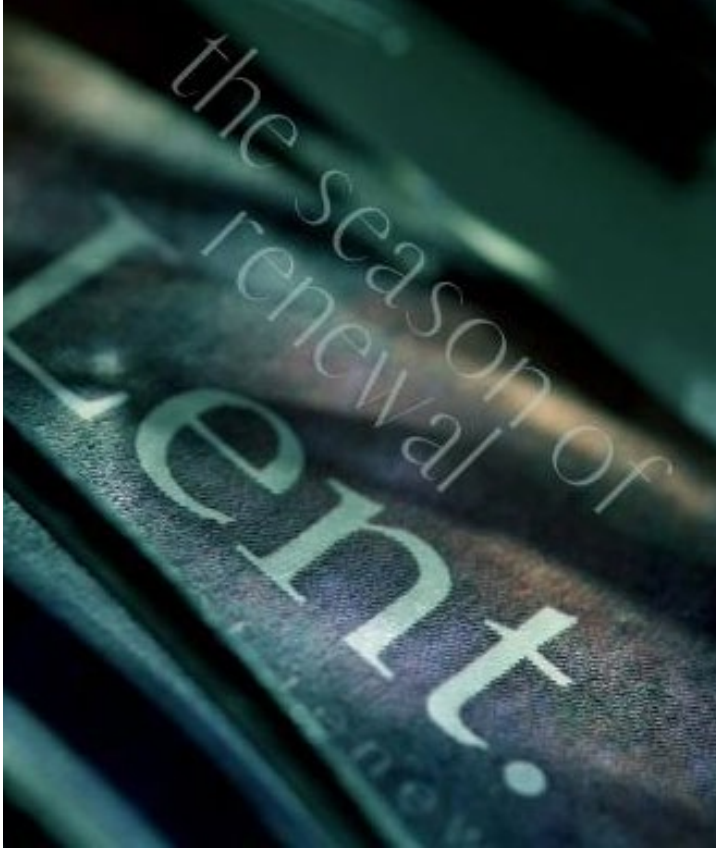
We were thankful that by the end, twenty-nine people had received ashes. One can never know what happened to the seeds that were planted, but one can always trust that the Lord is faithful to those

who go out into the fields. We did receive thanks and encouragement from many of the people who stopped by. They seemed to agree that even a small presence in the public square was helpful.

At the same time, we were curious how some folks would decline the imposition of ashes by politely saying "I'm okay" or "I'm good." The statements are intriguing, to say the least, for those who are theologically-minded. Were we to be rude or in an urgent mood, one of us would want to rush over to that person and say, "No, you're not good - you are under the sentence of death for being the sinner that you are." Without a clear statement about this reality, the person exposed to God's Word has little context, hunger or need for the blessing of forgiveness.

As we preached our sermons in our home congregations that evening, each of us brought this point forward. We can be thankful that our God has revealed to us both a Law that damns and a Gospel that releases. We can see that a philosophy of "I'm okay, you're okay" does not fit alongside the many dangers and accusations of this life. As you enter the season of Lent this year, hear not only the difficult report that you are mere dust, but also the tremendous promise that as a forgiven sinner, you are a confident recipient of the treasures of your Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor Daniel Ostercamp
Trinity Lutheran Church
Hallock, Minnesota



Has the Augustana District done something to help you or your congregation? We would love to hear and share your story. In just a few brief sentences or a few paragraphs, would you share how you have been blessed by the district? Send your submissions to office@augustanadistrict.org

Is there something you or your congregation are going through that you would like the district to be praying for? You can send those to the district office or to go to the AD website at <https://augustanadistrict.org/prayer-warriors/> and submit your prayer requests there.

Have you decided what your special Lenten offering will support this year? Consider using it to support the growing mission and ministry of the Augustana District.

Are you concerned about sending checks through the mail? Does it seem to take forever for a mailed contribution to get to its destination and finally get deposited? Take away the worry and help your bookkeeper to be able to balance the account faster by using the new Augustana District payment platform STRIPE. You can find it on the district website. It is easy to use as well as safe and secure. You can use it for a one-time gift to support the district or its specific missions. It can also be used to quickly and easily register for AD events. **Please share this information with your church treasurer/bookkeeper!**



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A Word From WOW

My name is Jodi Dalsgaard. I am the vice-coordinator for the Augustana District Women of the Word. I am a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Springfield, MN. I was asked to volunteer for this position. Saying no is not something I am good at it but, I look forward to the Annual Gatherings of the Women of the Word, so I said yes.

The vice coordinator serves one year and then becomes coordinator the following year. One of the main jobs of the vice-coordinator is to secure a host church for the annual gathering. St. John's Lutheran in Springfield is looking forward to hosting the Annual Gathering in 2023.

My husband Del and I have been married for forty-two years. We have two sons. Del and I grew up in Springfield and returned after his career in the Air Force as a musician. We were stationed in New Jersey, outside Tokyo, Japan, and Ohio. We were either members of a local church or attended a base chapel. We learned the importance of being part of a church family during that time.

Music is my passion. My "career" as a church organist began in ninth grade. I have also enjoyed being a choir director in a couple of our churches. Sharing the talent God has given is a joy for me and I especially love playing for my Abba Father. My mother was also the organist in the church I grew up in until she was in her seventies. My goal is to play on Sunday morning when I am seventy-five or maybe eighty.

I have also served as Youth Group Leader, Sunday school teacher, Circle president, and Women's Group

president. When my older son was in high school and was looking for community service hours, we joined the world hunger committee at our church. I continued to be a member of that committee long after he graduated.

Before the pandemic, our church had two circles that gathered monthly for a Bible study and fellowship. Twice a year, we would gather together. We hope to meet again, but it may be only one circle. Women also help with bingo and birthday parties at St. Johns Lutheran Home and are encouraged to be a member of the Auxiliary. We also take part in World Day of Prayer.

We have a dedicated quilting group that meets once a week during the school year and once a month during the summer. They send quilts and devotional materials to Furniture Mission in Sioux Falls, SD, Operation Christmas Joy, and LWR. At graduation, fleece blankets are given to high school seniors, and baby quilts are given at baptisms.



Congregational Services

There are Staff Openings on the AD website so if you know someone who is seeking a position, please share this information. Don't forget that if your congregation has an 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 Staff Openings

- Director of Music (Part-time) | St. John's Lutheran Church | Howard Lake MN
- Part-time/Half-time Pastor | Pioneer Lutheran Church | White SD
- Lead Pastor | New Hope Lutheran Church | Comfrey MN
- Full-time Pastor | St. John's Lutheran Church | Springfield MN
- Part-time Pastor | Our Redeemer Lutheran Church | Badger MN
- FT Senior Pastor | Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Big Sandy | McGregor MN



Prayers

- ✝ Praise and thanks for the variety of WOW leaders – both local and on the AD level. May God continue to provide them with willing hearts and serving hands. Bless St. John's in Springfield as they prepare to host the WOW Gathering in 2022.
- ✝ Help those congregations that are confused about their current leadership to seek a Biblical foundation in Christ. Provide leaders that will help them see opportunities and clearly defined options. Give them the courage to question and make changes according to your will.
- ✝ Strengthen and uphold Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Big Sandy as they seek to return to a Lutheran foundation. Welcome to Faith Lutheran Church in Monticello and Zion Evangelical Lutheran in Buffalo Lake. May they find the support, camaraderie, and fellowship they need as we all work together for God's kingdom.
- ✝ As we travel the cold earthly season of winter, guide us during this church season of Epiphany. May this time draw us closer to Christ and prepare us for the spiritual disciplines of Lent.
- ✝ During this season of 'annual meetings' – may we rejoice in what God's Spirit has done through our congregations and move to do what God wills, blessing others as He has first blessed us!!



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.

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

Combined Events of
CONVOCATION &
CONVENTION

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



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

*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.



Calling



NEEDED!! YOUNG ADULTS!

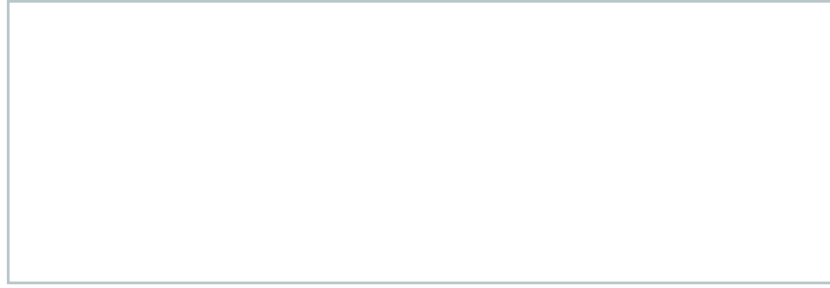
~ Pastors & Congregations ~

If you know young adults (high school seniors through college students)
with a passion for ministry, please contact

Randy Freund at director@augustanadistrict.org

- or -

(320)583-3648



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



2022 Confirmation Retreat



TIME IS

RUNNING OUT!

Registration Ends
Tuesday,
February 15, 2022



Pause



Play



Refresh