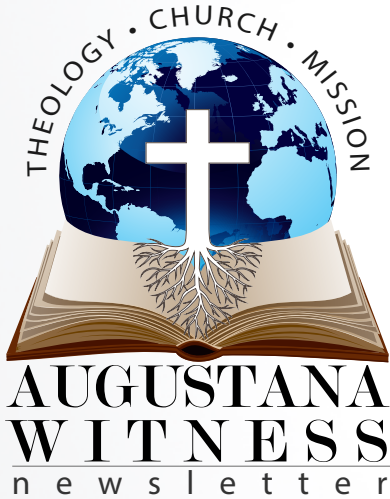


# Devotional



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We're just over halfway through Lent and Jesus' relentless, unflinching march to the cross. We're also trudging through the last stubborn days of winter. Both of these marches bring a kind of weariness. With the later sunsets we can start to imagine warm days ahead, but the actual days begin with a chill in the air. If we could speed the process along, we wouldn't mind. If we could skip over the mornings and frozen mud and jump right to short-sleeved shirts and flip flops that would be great.

The same with this annual rehearsal of Jesus' Passion. Six weeks is a long time, especially when we are so acutely aware of the great and terrible day that comes in the final week. If we could just speed this along, skip over Friday and jump right to the celebrations of Easter morning, we wouldn't mind. This relentless march toward death is quite a lot to take.

And yet, here we are, just putting one foot in front of the other, receiving each day as it is given. There's no jumping ahead. There's no skipping over the tough parts. There's no ignoring the darkness in the middle of our story, in the middle of our lives. There is no choice but to go where this road leads, through all the ugliness.

Our desire to skip over the rough spots is one of the many ways we are so very different from the one who came to save us. The one who holds the powers of creation in his hands, who could skip over whatever he wanted to skip over, doesn't. He doesn't avoid the darkness that lives in our hearts, that dominates our world. He goes straight at it. Straight through it.

I heard that this last round of snow lifted most of the region out of the drought conditions that have plagued us since last summer. I heard it, and I didn't really care. I still would have preferred sunshine and warmth because my vision is extremely short-sighted. When we hear the promise that Jesus' death breaks into the realm of darkness to shine his light, we might have a similar reaction. I don't really care. I just want the light, all the time. Just flip the switch, Jesus. Enough with suffering and death. Just defeat it already!

But I also know that, come July, I'll be wishing for cooler days. I will take the warmth for granted, even grow tired of it. Without the suffering and death that are a constant reminder of our rebellion against God, I would also grow tired of his light. I would go looking for a shady spot, away from his gaze. Without a taste of the wrath we have earned for ourselves, we become indifferent to the mercy he gives.

So, we trudge on. One foot in front of the other. Every day closer to that great and terrible day. Every day under the shadow of the cross, until the new day dawns and there is nothing but brilliant light.

Pastor Julie Smith

# Mission Minute

From the Board of World Missions

## How can you help Ukrainian refugees?

Dear Augustana District Congregations and Members,

I'm sure we are all shocked and dismayed by the recent invasion of Russia into the Ukraine. The images we have seen in the news showing the senseless death and destruction in that country are almost too much to bear. There is a feeling of helplessness as to what we can do to help our brothers and sisters in this war-torn country.

Recently, Pastor Siimon Haamer of Tartu Academy and Outreach Center in Estonia reached out to several members of the Augustana District Board of World Missions with an urgent request. They are hoping to transform some of their facilities in Estonia to house Ukrainian refugees. They are promising to cover all their costs and living expenses. In his letter, which I have provided below, he provides a means for churches and individuals to support the Ukrainian refugees and the services they intend to provide. This is an answer to the question that a lot of us have been asking . . . "How can I help out?"

Tartu Academy and Outreach Center in Estonia is a longtime vetted ministry partner of Augustana District. It is becoming quite clear that they are on the front lines of the

battle between good and evil. The Russians would love nothing more than to stamp out Christianity once again in this Baltic Region. Please keep Tartu Academy and their brave pastors and staff in your thoughts and prayers. Let us also pray for the Ukrainian people and their leaders that God may protect them and bring this war to an end.

If you are interested in supporting Tartu Academy's effort to host Ukrainian refugees, we ask that you follow the instructions in Pastor Haamer's letter below.

God's Blessings,  
Eric Knutson, Chairman  
AD Board of World Missions

P.S. Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, MN is excited to welcome Pastor Siimon Haamer, and his son Mattias, for a speaking engagement on Sunday, April 24, beginning at 7 p.m. All are welcome to attend and meet Pastor Haamer in person and hear about their efforts to help these refugees. If you have any questions or would like to attend, please call the AD office at 320-234-8403.

## Dear Friends of Estonia

Friends of Estonia,

It's hard to find words about the Russian aggression in Ukraine. It's hard to describe the sadness that we feel for the Ukrainian people. Although Estonia is currently not under attack we are members of NATO so we have to be alert as well.



At the moment it is our duty to help the Ukrainian people. Currently over 15,000 refugees have arrived in Estonia with over 100,000 expected. We have offered the Home of Hope guest apartment for refugee use. Soon our apartment will also become a temporary home for war refugees. Our goal is for Tartu Academy to cover all their daily needs. For their



more long-term stay we need to change some furnishings in the apartment, as it is currently furnished for shorter stays.

As we experience this war which is so close to our border and launched by our neighboring country, the Estonian people are very anxious. We are receiving more calls to the Pastoral Care help-line and we see how our society is becoming more and more emotionally stressed. The COVID crisis was like a preparation for that. Now we need to find more ways how to reach out to the people and offer them comfort and spiritual encouragement. There is a need to activate more of our network of pastoral caregivers.

If you would like to help support these Ukrainian refugees you can do so through these options:

#### CHECKS

Charity Lutheran Church (Tax deductible.)  
120 Aspen Ave. Bismarck, ND 58503, U.S.A.  
Designation "TAT Ukraine"

#### ELECTRONIC GIVING

To give electronically through Charity Lutheran Church in Bismarck ND (Tax deductible) please visit

[Charity Lutheran Church in Bismarck, ND](#)

Choose from the "Fund" drop-down list "Tartu Academy of Theology" and then choose the sub fund "Ukraine".

At this critical time I ask you to pray for Ukraine and the Baltic region so that once earned freedoms would not be taken away again!

God bless you,  
Pastor Siimon Haamer  
President of Tartu Academy of Theology



**Welcome  
New Congregation  
& Individual Associate  
Members**

#### Congregation:

Faith Community Lutheran Church in Slayton, MN

#### Individual Associate Members:

Charlie Ziemann, seminary student at Sioux Falls Seminary Luther House & Intern at Zion Lutheran Church in Wausau, WI

Ben Lashley, seminary student at St. Paul's Lutheran Seminary

## Financial Update

**GOOD  
NEWS**

Sound the trumpets! We have a reason to celebrate. Your generous giving to this district is up over 11% (\$14,000) to date and our March giving has yet to be counted. This outpouring of generosity comes at a time when the district is planning to increase its staffing levels to meet the rising demand for AD services. Thank You!

Warm Regards,  
Eric Knutson, AD Treasurer

**We would like to extend a thank you to Eric for serving as the district council treasurer. Eric is leaving this position to focus on his new roll as the Chair of the Board of World Missions.**



## 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](mailto:director@augustanadistrict.org)  
- or -  
(320)583-3648

## 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

"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.



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



Registration  
**DEADLINE**  
April 27!!

To register, visit [augustanadistrict.org/events/2022-convocation-convention-meeting/](https://augustanadistrict.org/events/2022-convocation-convention-meeting/)





## We Lift In Prayers ...

- ✠ For penitent hearts to seek Christ's forgiveness in this season of Lent and as we walk with our Lord through the Passion.
- ✠ For weather that allows for a strong growing season and for protection for your children from storms and natural disasters.
- ✠ For our enemies: Lord, please, turn the hearts of our enemies to you.
  - ✠ For the peace of Christ to be with all refugees, prisoners of war, those fighting, and those caught in the middle of this battle.
  - ✠ For missionaries and those who are lending aid to refugees and others struggling finding food, shelter and the basic necessities for life.
- ✠ For safe travels for Pastor Siimon Haamer and his son Mattias. May you guide their travels and words as they speak to current and potential supporters for Tartu Academy in Estonia.
- ✠ That God would take the seeds that were sown during the confirmation retreat and nurture them for His service in His time.
- ✠ Pray thanks to God for all of the amazing women's groups in congregations around that world that use their hands to serve and create things that bring warmth, comfort, and joy to those they serve.
- ✠ For thanks to God for the financial support for the district that is opening the doors for continued growth and service.

Lord, in your mercy – Hear our prayers!



## ChurchSalary REPORT

MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

The Augustana District has purchased access to the service ChurchSalary.com. This service is available to all AD congregations. You can find more information, and submit a request for information, via the website at [augustanadistrict.org/board-of-congregational-services/](http://augustanadistrict.org/board-of-congregational-services/)

## Church Staff Openings

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

- Pastor | Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church | Buffalo Lake, MN
- Associate Pastor | Shepherd of the Hills | Hubertus, WI
- 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
- Part-time Pastor | Our Redeemer Lutheran Church | Badger MN
- FT Senior Pastor | Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Big Sandy | McGregor MN



# Women of the Word

Greetings from a cold snowy corner of South Dakota. My name is Marcia Heinje and I am the secretary of the Women of the Word of the Augustana District. I am excited to learn more about the other congregational WOW groups in our district. I am a member of Living Word Lutheran Church in Milbank, South Dakota. We joined this church after being members of an ELC congregation for over 45 years. During that time, I was active in the local conference and state women's group holding the office of Mission Action Coordinator for the state. I held all the offices of our ELCW several times and taught Sunday School for many years. I enjoyed the mission projects and the benefits they provided for so many.

I have been married to my husband, Howard, for almost 55 years. We both graduated from South Dakota State University and have lived on our farm for 53 years. We have three children: Rhonda, Bryce and Chuck. They too graduated from SDSU. We have seven grandchildren. Rhonda and her husband live in GA so we only see them and their children two or three times a year. Bryce, Chuck, their wives, and the five grandchildren live on farms a couple miles from us, so we enjoy following their activities. I have nursed most of my married life on a part-time basis. I especially enjoyed my years of home health care and hospice. I retired the last time about a year ago from long term care. I thought since I was almost 75 that it was time. There is such a shortage of nurses that I almost feel guilty not working. I enjoy my church activities, reading, crocheting, knitting, gardening, genealogy, and keeping up with the grandchildren.

I was raised on ranches in eastern Montana and Wyoming where church was held occasionally in the school house

and we could attend when the roads were passable. We could listen to the Circuit Rider on the radio. I have always been a believer in Jesus as my Savior, but my years of attending Circle, women's meetings, and Bible studies have certainly strengthened my faith. I continue to want to grow in my knowledge of the Scriptures.

I just completed two years as coordinator of our WOW group at church. I am currently the chairperson of my Circle. I enjoy our quilting days twice a month. Our quilts are distributed through the Orphan Grain Train. We also contribute layettes, hygiene kits, and homeless mats (crocheted from plastic bags), to the Orphan Grain Train. We have a yearly St. Lucia brunch and invite women of the community. Twice a year we try to organize a fun event for all members of the church that includes a supper and games. We send cards to shut-ins and started an outreach where we are sending cards and notes to the young people that have graduated from high school in the last four years. We make quilts for the graduating seniors and hopefully the cards help them remember the church. We have a Mitten Tree at Christmas time to collect caps and mittens to be distributed locally where needed. Our Circles are currently serving the weekly Lenten suppers. The church has Servant Teams that serve the weekly coffees, funerals, etc. The three Circles meet monthly for Bible study and to coordinate the women's activities. We make donations to charities and are always looking for service ideas.

I look forward to meeting more women from the Augustana District and learning more about your activities.



St. Lucia Event



Family Night



Making Layettes

# Confirmation Retreat 2022

Questions for you to ponder:

Why would 125 youth and adults from three states gather at a Bible camp for a weekend? Why would a former youth director volunteer to help organize such an event? Why would two young men, who knew none of the participants, give up a weekend to register confirmation kids, play games, and stay up late with them? How is it that people who had never sung together could belt out songs together (including some they had never heard before)? How is it that energetic teenagers would attentively sit through four sessions learning about Martin Luther? How is it that one of Augustana's newest congregation would send a vanload of kids and provide key leadership? How is it that 125 people can gather in a gym and have fun competing in group games? Well, that one is easy to answer, but it doesn't answer all the other questions.

Could it be their love of the Lord? Their church? Each other? Was it their desire to learn about and praise God?

Is it just something that happens when the people of God come together?

Only God knows the answers to why he called and gathered all of these people together. What I can tell you is that after a hard Covid delay, we all enjoyed, and were blessed by, a wonderful experience at the 2022 Augustana District Confirmation Retreat. The pictures tell only a small part of the story.

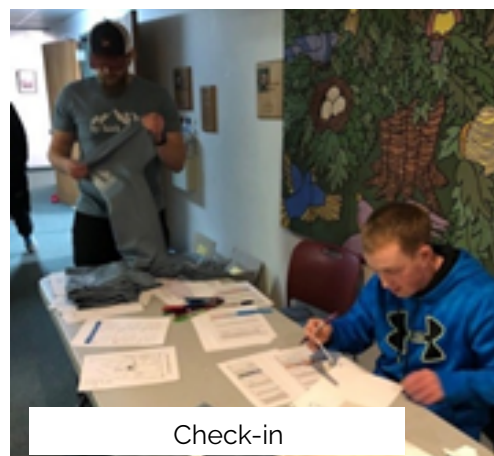
Start your planning now for next year's retreat March 3-5, 2023! Tell a friend or neighboring congregation and invite them to attend!

Submitted by Pastor Randy Freund, AD Service Coordinator

Thank you to all who made this such a great event including Gladys, Eric, Grayson, Julie, Mark, Erica, Janae, John and Nate – all mentioned above. Thank you, Wendy and Niki for your work behind the scenes!



Worship



Check-in



Game Time





"...for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

March 20, 2022

### ***Thankful for God's Provision***

Eunice and I are exceedingly grateful for all of God's provision. God blessed us with 19 years of service and partnership with Hegland, Lysne, and Solem Lutheran Churches in Hawley, MN. Our last Sunday was June 27, 2021. On that Sunday, Hegland and Solem members hosted a farewell reception, with program, for us that was well attended by many friends from the community. We are very thankful for all the cards, best wishes, blessings, and gifts people lavished upon us.

The following week, we were in the cities at World Mission Prayer League (WMPL) to study a language acquisition method called the Growing Participator Approach. We are thankful for the following week at Mount Carmel Family Bible Camp in Alexandria before traveling to Ohio for a family reunion. We returned to finish our language acquisition studies at WMPL the last week in July. It was on our second to the last day of training that we received a phone call from Pastor Paul Cross of Atonement Lutheran in Fargo. He asked if Eunice and I could help Atonement build a relationship with an African Pentecostal Congregation. Many of the members of this African church are from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). We gladly accepted the invitation to help.

August was a month of more travel and transition. Our initial visit with Atonement leadership and the Congolese pastor was on August 10. On the August 15 we had a memorial service for father, who had passed away on May 8. Dad encouraged us to accept the call with WMPL to serve in Congo and not to come back for his funeral. But rather "use the money for something good for the Kingdom of God." We are thankful he took care of that while we were still in the states! We are grateful for Dad's life and all the blessings he gave us and others. Thanks for leaving a legacy of servanthood, Dad! During the third week of August, we spent four days at a Field Security Training in Colorado. This was an eye-opening training, and we pray we will never have to use the skills we learned.

September and October were filled with preaching at numerous sponsoring congregations. We also spent more time with the members of the African Pentecostal Congregation as we wove a relationship between this wonderful congregation and Atonement Lutheran Church. I also began and finished an enlightening course on avoiding the creation of a culture of unhealthy dependency in mission work. The course met for eight weeks via weekly Zoom meetings. It included 8 other participants from around the world. It was based on the book; *We Are Not the Hero: A Missionary's Guide for Sharing Christ Not a Culture of Dependency*. I recommend this course to anyone interested in protecting and promoting the dignity, integrity, and independence of the people they serve.

November was full of praise and thanksgiving. On November 14, Atonement Lutheran hosted a mission festival, which included a joint service with the African Pentecostal Congregation. Six staff members from WMPL took part in the festivities and our Executive Director, Paul Gossman, preached at both services. Following the last service, the leaders of the Pentecostal congregation signed a long-term lease with Atonement and will be worshipping every Sunday afternoon at Atonement Lutheran Church. We continue to accompany this vibrant African congregation every Sunday. It has been a great way to brush up on our French and be exposed to Swahili and Lingala.



In December, we spent two weeks in Florida with our son Constant and granddaughter Aaliyah. Our daughter Olivia flew down to join us for Christmas. It was a beautiful time together. We were back home to spend New Year's Eve with our African Pentecostal brothers and sister at Atonement Lutheran Church. They prayed out 2021 and prayed in 2022 from 9pm – 1:30am. The service was full of singing, preaching, praying, and testimonies. Even though it was a 4 ½ hour service, it literally felt like a normal one-hour service! We are blessed to have these brothers and sisters with us.

In January I began re-taking the course *We Are Not the Hero*. I will complete it on March 24. Eunice was called back to work at Concordia College in November. She will continue to work there until we leave for Congo.

### ***Thankful for God's Calling***

After months of seeing how God has been opening doors, slowing things down, and building relationships here in Fargo/Moorhead and the Congo, WMPL, with the encouragement of the members of Atonement Lutheran, has modified our call to be full-time global workers by serving half-time in the DRC and half-time in the states. We will be traveling to the Congo on April 10, 2022 to spend six-weeks with our WMPL colleagues, Didi and Serafina Panzo, getting acquainted with the leadership of the Community of Confessional Lutheran Churches of Congo. This will give us time to discover and discern how the church could best use our gifts to serve them. Immediately following our time with the church in Congo we will travel to the Central African Republic (CAR) to spend two weeks with Eunice's family, giving us the time to mourn together the loss of Eunice's mother who died in August 2020. Due to the pandemic, we have been unable to assist her family in CAR. We look forward to this special and necessary time together.

Upon our return we will engage in mission and prayer mobilization for WMPL throughout NW Minnesota and Eastern North Dakota. Atonement has graciously provided us with office space. Eunice will return to work at Concordia as needed.

I am also a member of the Perspectives Coordinating Team. Perspectives is a 15-week course that has equipped thousands of everyday believers with greater vision, hope, and passion. In Perspectives, scripture, history, culture, and strategy converge to reveal the unfolding of God's redemptive purposes. God is on a mission to bless the people of the earth, and you're invited to join him. Perspectives will be held in Fargo from August 21 – December 11. You can find out more about Perspectives on the website <https://www.perspectives.org/>

We will return to serve the church in Congo for a 4-6-month deployment beginning in January 2023. Our commissioning service will be held at Atonement Lutheran in Fargo on Sunday March 27, 2022, at both services, 9 & 10:30 am. You are all welcome to attend or stream it online at <https://www.atonementfargo.org/>

Our hybrid call is unique and will be a challenge, but we sense that God is doing something new enabling us to share our gifts both here at home and in Africa. Please join us as we pray as Jesus did in Luke 10:2 "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

We thank you all for your prayers and support. To God alone be the glory. As Pastor Paul Cross never ceases to proclaim, "God alone is awesome!"

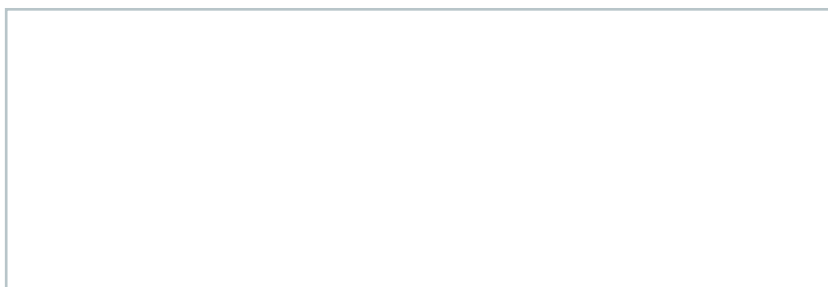
Your fellow servants in Christ,  
Tom & Eunice Olson



TOGETHER IN CHRIST, PRAYER & GLOBAL MISSION

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Address Service Requested



## Hidden Treasure

**Registration  
DEADLINE  
April 27!!**



**REGISTER NOW**