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# Devotional

## A Treasure in Clay Jars

At our annual convention and convocation in May we spent some time reflecting together on what it means that God has placed the treasure of the gospel in the clay jars that are you and me. It is such a strange place to find a treasure, in a vessel that is fragile, easily broken, and nowhere near fitting for something so precious. Yet, this is precisely what God has done. In the wisdom of God, which is so often baffling to us, he has chosen to work in and through the likes of you and me.

As I write these words I am thinking, in particular, about the fragility of these vessels in whom God has entrusted the promise. The news today is filled with the horrifying story of the massacre at Robb Elementary School. And, of course, social media is filled with all manner of opinion on possible causes and solutions for such events.

I can't bring myself to read any of it – not the reporting or the opining. It all just leaves me cold. What I did do, somewhat accidentally, is look at pictures of the victims. Those pictures brought me back to the verse that was the focal point of our time together as a district. In the pictures these children and their teachers are so alive. Showing off their end of the year awards, wearing shirts that proudly announce the name of their school or their favorite teams or their aspirations. Alive with the kind of light and energy that just pours out of ten-year-olds.

So alive! So fragile. So quickly lost. Our instinct in the aftermath of such events is to make our cases for how to avoid future tragedies. Laws to enact, security measures to adopt, ways to hang on to this fragile life as long as possible. But even as we make our cases, we know we are doing so from deep within the valley of the shadow of death. We know that death casts its long shadow over every moment of our lives.

The promise we cling to in the midst of this deep darkness is not that we will find a way to defeat death. It is not that we're going to figure out a way to reinforce our clay jars and make them stronger, make them bullet-proof. The promise is that death does not get the last word. Its long shadow is giving way to the light of Christ.

That is not the word the parents of 10-year-olds want to hear. They want to hear their children bursting through the door of the house ready for summer vacation to begin. But when that voice, that life is snatched away, when these fragile clay jars shatter into pieces, our comfort will never come from the politicians or pundits. But Christ Jesus says, "Take heart, I have overcome the world." And while that may seem like much less than we are hoping for, it is infinitely more than we can imagine.



## Mission Highlight

by Eric Knutson, Chair of the AD Board of World Missions

Augustana District signed an agreement back in January of 2014 to support the Tabor Congregation in expanding their mission outreach throughout Ethiopia. Through your prayers and financial support, we have witnessed the amazing expansion of their outreach ministries over the last eight years.

### ***A Partner that Keeps Living Under the Call of Our Lord's Great Commission***

- Tabor Congregation was founded in 1995 with 350 members. Through their ever-growing outreach throughout Ethiopia, they have given birth to 33 new congregations.
- This year they set a goal of reaching out to 16,800 non-Christians in witness to Jesus Christ. As of March 31, they have already reached out to 3,342 people with 122 of these individuals drawn into a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- This year they have trained 29 full-time ministers and 63 part-time ministers for a total of 92 outreach ministers. These outreach ministers are deployed to strategic locations throughout Ethiopia.



### ***Does Tabor Congregation Still Need Augustana District Support?***

Our Lord will lead them forward with or without us by their side. However, there is no doubt that our support of indigenous witnesses in this part of the world has accelerated their growth at a time when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and divided. Our support and encouragement will continue to multiply greatly their determined efforts to "go therefore and make disciples . . ." Their leaders are ever so grateful for our District's partnership.

### ***Updates from Pastor Meseret, Head of Tabor's Outreach Program***

Pastor Meseret recently explained Tabor's evangelism training program. It has several key components that include how to reach individuals from various religions (including Islam) with the Gospel, discipleship making, church planting, self-support, self-reliance, self-propagation, and self-administration. He explained many of the challenges they are facing. Although the recent civil unrest has settled down, there remains

a lot of tension, especially in the northern Tigray Region of Ethiopia. The area coordinator of that region was recently captured and spent eight months in jail before

being released. Despite the dangers, churches and evangelists are expanding into the northern regions of Ethiopia. One such church is in the Aba Calla Region of Ethiopia, and another is the Wabo Abaya Region as shown in these photos. As if that isn't challenging enough there are parts of the country that are experiencing a serious famine that is resulting in



starvation. Despite all these challenges, Pastor Meseret is encouraged by the large numbers of Ethiopians that are coming to Christ through their outreach efforts.

### ***Calls to Strengthen Our Partnership***

The AD Board of World Missions is ever so thankful for your generosity and support of this mission. Our concern is that support for Tabor Congregation has been slipping over the last few years, though the need continues to grow. Currently less than 20% of the AD congregations are supporting this mission. We would like to challenge you and your congregations to reverse that trend. Any financial support would be welcome. We live at a time when Christians in these faraway places are being persecuted more than ever. We need to stand side by side with our Ethiopian



brothers and sisters as they witness to those longing for the saving grace of Jesus Christ. If you would like to learn more about the Tabor Mission



(and how you can help) please feel free to reach out to Pastor Paul Knudson (paulk@faithlc.com) or Eric

Knutson (eknutson@lynnccard.com). They would be happy to talk with you.



## Convocation/Convention Recap



Distinguished Service Award presentation by Pr. Craig Werling.



Small group discussion time.



Q & A Panel discussion

The Augustana District Council and the Board of Theology and Ministry decided to take a new approach with their annual gatherings this year. The annual Convocation of the Cross (theological conference) and Annual Convention were scheduled together (May 6-7) at Mt. Carmel Ministries, in Alexandria, MN.

While the Board of Theology and Ministry (BTM) focused discussion on the next generation of pastoral leaders and the purpose of theological education, the main topic centered on Dr. Steven Paulson's latest work, "Outlaw God." Dr. Chris Croghan served as the keynote speaker for the conference and summarized the basic content of Paulson's work. Pastor Paul Koch also moderated a panel to further this discussion. Panelist were Pastor Julie Smith, Dr. Chris Croghan, Pastor Mike Hanson and Pastor Brian Crocker. The opening worship was led by BTM Chairs, Pastor Sarah Carlstrom and Pastor Culynn Curtis. Pastor Carlson preached a powerful sermon on the theme verse for both days, II Corinthians 4:7-12.

The BTM will evaluate the conference and a new venue for next year. They would welcome your input through the brief survey that is attached to this newsletter or by contacting Pastor Sarah Carlstrom (Carlstrom.sarah@gmail.com)

The Augustana District Convention began with an impromptu hymn sing that set the tone for the day. Pastor Becky Hand followed by leading worship. LCMC National Service Coordinator, Pastor Mike Bradley, enthusiastically concluded a great start

to the morning with his sermon on the theme verse. Keynote speaker, Pastor Julie Smith (LCMC Coordinator of Districts and Fellowships), led a creative and inspirational walk through II Corinthians 4:7-12. A highlight of our time together was the presentation of the annual "Augustana District Distinguished Service Award." District Council Chair, Pastor Craig Werling, presented the award to Pastor John Beem's family, in his memory, and in recognition of John's contributions to the Augustana District in its formative years.

At our business meeting, Treasurer Eric Knutson noted that the Augustana District is on solid financial ground and thanked individuals and congregations for their faithful support. Elections were held for open BTM and District Council positions. Welcome and congratulations to Pastor Sarah Carlstrom (Chair), Pastor Horatio Castillo, Pastor Brad Soenksen, and Pastor Lexy Carson, who will join the Board and Theology and Ministry. Congratulations also to Pastor Nathan Hanson, and Pastor Julie Smith who were re-elected for second terms on the District Council. Welcome to Melissa Burns, Bruce Shearer and Sara Wegner, as the newly elected members of the District Council.

The District Council will also evaluate the convention setting and set the date for next year's convention soon. Following the convention, the Council met and elected Pastor Craig Werling as Chair, Bruce Shearer as Vice-Chair, Jan Ferguson as Secretary, and Sara Wegner as Treasurer.

A recording of the Convocation and Convention is now available on the Augustana District website at [augustanadistrict.org](http://augustanadistrict.org) for those of you that may want

to re-watch parts of the event or for those of you who were not able to attend.



Pastor Julie Smith talking to attendees present and via Zoom.



Pr. Randy Freund, AD Service Coordinator and Pr. Becky Hand, AD Program Coordinator providing an Augustana District update.



## WE LIFT IN PRAYERS ...

- ✝ One of our mission supports: The Tabor Congregation in Hawassa, Ethiopia; may God continue to multiply their efforts at making disciples; may those training ministers grow in maturity of faith and share their passions for Christ; may they all stand strong against the disbelief, evil, and false religions; keep all Christians and especially the traveling ministers safe – may the tension following the unrest be eased; may the drought end and the earth provide sustaining food again; may these hard times draw those without hope, Spirit – come and give them eyes to see that Christ's salvation is for them.
- ✝ Preparing new leaders to serve on the AD WOW board. New officers will be elected at the fall gathering on Saturday, Sept. 17 at New Hope Lutheran Church in Comfrey.
- ✝ Those who are serving us by maintaining our relationships with mission partners. They add so much value and detail to what we hear and understand – and they help us continue to reach many corners of the world.
- ✝ All who are refugees, displaced due to war and conflicts; may the world work together to resolve the conflicts.
- ✝ Peace and comfort for those struggling with the loss of loved ones in places from Uvalde to Ukraine; We know that sin and death are a part of this world, but we also know that you work through these things in ways that we cannot see. Help us, oh Lord, to see your hand at work as we grieve these heartbreaking losses.

## PRAYERS OF THANKS FOR

- ✝ The AD gatherings for theological conference and convention. May evaluations be used for guidance for next year. May your hands prepare the format, venue, and topics that give us growth in faith, knowledge, and fellowship.
- ✝ The years of service given by Pastor John Beem. His family received the "Augustana District Distinguished Service Award" in his memory.



## Women of the Word

Grace and peace to you from our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't it great to be on this side of Resurrection Sunday? I am Jan Kreie, a WOW from Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, MN. I am the "Member at Large" of your Augustana District Women of the Word.

Last year as we prepared to update our General Policies, we chose to remove the positions of Education and Missions/Stewardship Secretaries. A blessing of the internet is the access to a vast variety of Bible Studies and connections to missions. We did feel that we needed a position that could be a contact with the local WOW units, a person to bring awareness to WOW. The tasks defined for the "Member at Large" position include: represent WOW at gatherings and other church functions; act as liaisons (ambassador) between congregants and the WOW board; and advocate for new executive members. I have been busy with a few items.

The AD is a non-geographical district, but our board wrestled with how to better involve those who do not wish to travel and still be a part of our fall gathering. After our meeting in Dawson in 2021 I contacted those congregations who gathered with us online. I see a need to facilitate a better experience with those who are remote. Some great suggestions were made – and I encourage you to please let me know if you have needs or ideas. Also, contact me if you have any questions about what WOW entails at the Augustana District level or in your congregation. As you've read the articles by other officers in the previous newsletters, you have been introduced to several local WOW groups. We are not prescribing how your group should be organized or what it is to do – we are simply

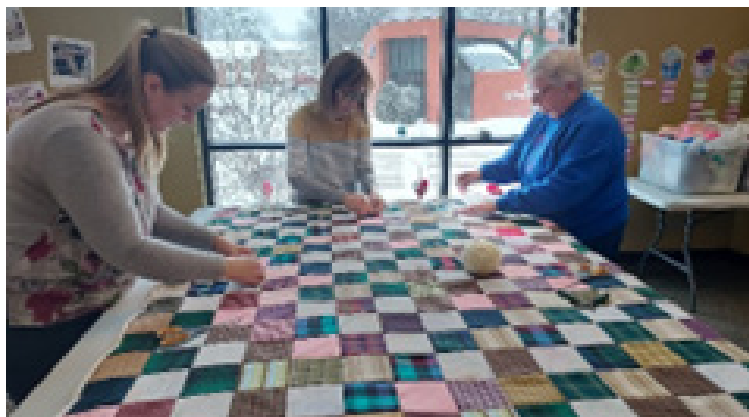
here to encourage you to continue to get to know your Savior better and to find ways to serve inside and outside of your congregation. Please know that each of you are unique!



One of the great aspects of serving on the AD WOW board is that we meet via zoom. Getting organized and working on tasks is much easier with less need to travel – especially with the wide area our congregations' cover. Each year half of our officers are elected, so each year we are looking for women to serve on the board. Please add to your prayer list: Lord, please prepare new leaders for all Augustana District committees, boards and WOW – keep our mission and tasks renewed through changing leadership.

A little bit about me: I'm married to Bob, a retired insurance agent who still announces or keeps books for high school sports. I'm also retired - from an Information Technology career. Five years of retirement and I find it hard to keep up with the changes to my smartphone! Ugh. We have four grown children who live in Brookings SD, San Antonio TX, Arvada CO, and Goodhue MN; and 11 grandchildren.

As a member of Faith Lutheran in Hutchinson, I have so many opportunities to be involved with women's ministry. My favorite part is the Bible studies – I've been a member of an 'early birds' group that meet at 6:30 on Friday mornings. It gives working women a chance to come early and go to work. We have a yearly garage sale the week after Easter – it is our big fundraiser and biggest work project. Some of FLC WOW tasks include the men – who do you think does the lifting for large items at our sale? Men often





## Women of the Word

help with hosting funeral meals (great guys run the dishwasher). The photos show our quilters, and the process of boxing up quilts for delivery.

To conclude talking about myself – I pray that many of you will join the AD WOW at our FALL GATHERING. Please add September 17 to your calendar and mark the location as: New Hope Lutheran Church, 204 Court

St., Comfrey, MN 56019. The theme verse is Psalm 100:2 – *“Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!”* Watch for next month's newsletter – there will be a cutout bookmarker that can be replicated and distributed to your women. Let me know if I should mail you some, send me details about the number you desire and a mailing address. Jan Kreie, jakgarb@mediacombb.net or 320-510-1942



## 2022 Women of the Word (WoW) Fall Gathering

### Featured Guest Speakers



Pr. Patricia Baglien

Patricia Baglien is a retired Lutheran (LCMC) pastor. She has served as co-pastor with her husband, Tim Baglien, in Comfrey Lutheran Parish and Liberty, Missouri. She was also pastor of Danebod, Tyler, Minnesota. Patricia also served as chaplain in the senior care centers at St. John's, Springfield, and Knute Nelson, Alexandria. She currently resides in Carrollton, Missouri, near her only daughter, Rachel, son-in-law, Ian, and grandchildren- Maliyah and James.

Music is her passion. She plays guitar, piano, and writes her own songs which she's recorded on three CDs. She enjoys sharing music as music leader for a local children's midweek school and, along with Tim, at the Adult Camps held every August at Mount Carmel Camp in Alexandria. She loves to sing and share the Good News about Jesus!



Pr. Diane Odermann

Diane is a wife, mother, pastor, spiritual director, and retreat leader. She's married to Bill and has an adult daughter, Anneliese. She has been an ordained Lutheran pastor for 33 years. She and her husband currently co-pastor a small congregation of the North American Lutheran Church. She lost her mom at age 19 to cancer and is a two-time cancer survivor herself. She has spent much of her ministry specializing in pastoral care in diverse ministry settings.

As a spiritual director, she companions individuals on their faith walk, noticing where God is present. Diane and her husband Bill have been trained in healing prayer and biblical dream interpretation. She has led retreats for both of these passions. She has a love and passion for helping people hear Jesus through their numerous life changes. She also enjoys music, spending time with friends, and walks with her dog Bella. She lives in Austin, MN.

# 2022 Women of the Word (WoW) Fall Gathering

## Women of the Word

Ministry through  
Music



## September 17, 2022

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Hosted by

New Hope Lutheran Church  
204 Court Street • Comfrey MN 56019

Email: newhopeluth@frontiernet.com  
Phone: 507.877.2316

8:30AM Coffee/Registration  
9:00AM Worship • 3:00PM Dismissal

*Serve the Lord with gladness!  
Come into his presence with singing!*

*Psalms 100:2*

Attendees please bring an item for the Operation  
Christmas Child shoebox.

The offering is designated to go to Samaritan's  
Purse ([www.samaritanspurse.org](http://www.samaritanspurse.org))

### Places to Stay

Microtel Inn & Suites  
502 E Rock St  
Springfield Mn 507-  
723-3500

Inn of Seven Gables  
1100 US 14  
Sleepy Eye, Mn  
507-794-5390

Super 8  
1210 Heckman Ct St  
James, Mn  
507-375-4708

AmericInn  
2270 Highway 60 E  
Windom, Mn 56101  
507-832-8300

For questions, please email Diane Anderson at [dkrisdahl@gmail.com](mailto:dkrisdahl@gmail.com)  
Registration Deadline: Before Sep 1, 2022. Please mail to the address below by Sep 1, 2022

**Please make all checks payable to: Women of the Word**

#### Type of Registration

(Circle one & enclose check)

In-Person OR Online Individual (\$10/person)

Online Group (\$50)

#### Mail to:

Dianne Anderson C/O Wow Treasurer  
134 Detroit Avenue SE  
Hutchinson MN 55350

First & Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Church \_\_\_\_\_

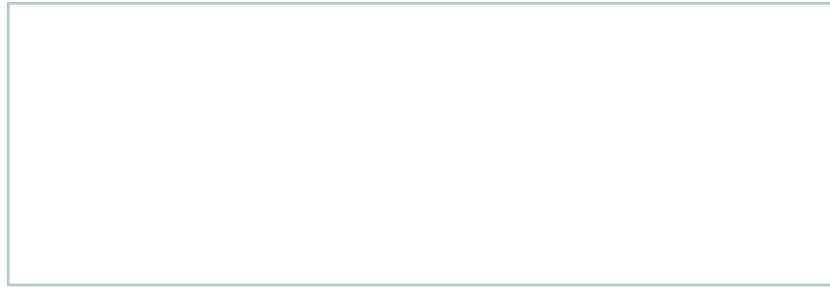
Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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



*Ministry through  
Music*



*Serve the Lord with gladness!  
Come into his presence with singing!*  
*Psalm 100:2*

## Women of the Word 2022 Fall Gathering

September 17, 2022



Featured Guest Speakers  
Pr. Patricia Baglien  
&  
Pr. Diane Odermann

See additional details on pages 6 & 7