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## Devotional

by Rev. Lou Hesse

**The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve ...**

Here in Moses Lake, WA., during the months when school is in session, the local Christian ministers come together on the first Tuesday of the month for a lunch and ministerial association meeting. There is usually a devotion offered by the host pastor and then some discussion of challenges in our community, or prayers and opportunities the gathered congregations are offering. A short time ago, one host asked the question, *"What have you been reading?"* of the pastors present. Over half of all the pastors responded with titles focused on various aspects of leadership. This seemed to me to be odd. At a meeting last spring, one of the pastors had made the comment that what we really needed as a nation was leadership. I spoke at the time in respectful disagreement that the last thing we needed was more leadership – we have "leaders" all over the place. What we need(ed) was servanthood. Ironically, the pastor clamoring for more leadership "led" his congregation into a church split, which has become an embarrassment to all Christians in our town.

Jesus regularly confronts the disciples and us with the challenge to not seek the path to power, but rather the path to humble service of the neighbor. On his last night with his disciples, gathered in the upper room, his first action was to don the role of a slave and wash feet, (John 13:1-17). This service was normally delegated to the lowest slave in the household, and the disciples were taken aback that their Lord and Master would stoop to such a menial task. But Jesus perseveres, washes everyone's feet, and asks the disciples to ponder what he has done. Finally, on that night he spoke his new command that his followers are to "love one another as I have loved you."

This theme of humble service is prominent throughout Jesus' ministry and a necessary refocus (repent) for his followers. The disciples have the annoying habit of debating among themselves who is the greatest among them (Luke 22:24-30, Mark 10:32-35), or who will sit at Jesus right and left hand when he comes in his glory (Mark 10:37). Multiple times Jesus reminds his disciples of his ethos with statements like *"whoever would be first among you must be your slave,"* (Matthew 20:27, Mark 10:44)

*“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink” (Mark 10:38); “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it,” (Matthew 18:3, Mark 10:15, Luke 18:17); and “even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many,” (Mark 10:45).*

I am the son of a dairyman and still shepherd a flock of actual sheep. Any keeper of livestock will tell you the best livestock people are people that see themselves as slaves to their animals. I want my sheep well fed, well watered, safe from predators, healthy, and content. They are more productive that way. I know many dairymen who speak that same way -- slaves to our animals is our lot in life. Jesus says *“I am the Good Shepherd.”* He enslaved himself to our most basic need, the forgiveness of sins. A good shepherd dies for his sheep.

There are words which take on different meanings and importance when heard in the key of the humble service of Jesus versus the key of power and might of Nimrod, who built the first city state of power in the scripture, (Genesis 10:8-12). Dominion is usually understood as power

and control of things and people around us. Biblical dominion is actually responsibility to and accountability for our surroundings. We have been given a stewardship to care for and serve. Yes, serve.

Other words that can and should be heard in the key of service rather than power include sovereignty, submission, headship, and authority. We are to follow Jesus’ lead in service – don’t be a Nimrod. *“Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward,” (Matthew 10:42).*

We pray: Heavenly Father, who so loved the world You sent Your only Son to reveal Your true heart to us, which is to serve us in every true need, empower your Spirit to bring us to realization of our own call to be of service in this old world You have blessed us with. Turn our hardened hearts seeking power and prestige in leadership to humble service to the true needs of our neighbors. In the name of the Shepherd of our souls, Jesus our Lord, Amen.

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## Finance update

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The Augustana District is supported solely by congregations and individuals. To meet the April 2022 - March 2023 budget (our fiscal year is April 1 – March 31), Augustana District needs to receive \$145,000 in offerings. As of November 27, 2022, we have received just over \$85,000, which is about 60% of the annual budget. With four months remaining, we still need about \$60,000 in contributions.

The district staff and council extend a heartfelt thank you to the 36 congregations and 10 individuals that have supported Augustana District so far this year. Currently only 40% of our churches are financially supporting the district. We would like to challenge the 56 churches that have not yet supported the district financially to prayerfully consider doing so. It is because of

congregational financial support that Augustana District can operate and provide the services that it does.

We continue to give thanks to God for the prayerful and financial support of the Augustana District by congregations and individuals alike. Please consider supporting the district with an online contribution made through the district website at <https://augustanadistrict.org/product/donate-now/>

You can also send support to the district via USPS at:  
Augustana District  
335 Main St. S.  
Hutchinson, MN 55350

Niki Pokornowski, Augustana District Financial Coordinator



Did you know that if you are a Thrivent policy holder that you can support your favorite non-profits, like the Augustana District in two ways?

First, you are allotted a certain number of *Choice Dollars* each year, depending on the number and type of policies you have. Those *Choice Dollars* can

be directed to your favorite non-profit or can be split between different organizations.

Second, policy holders are eligible for two \$250 Thrivent grants each year. That money can be used for a variety of uses. One thing that the district could use grants for is to help with the cost of the confirmation retreat.

If you, or someone you know would like more information on how you can support the district via these Thrivent opportunities, please reach out to your Thrivent representative or the AD Office.



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.



## Church Staff Openings

Here are the current staff openings we have listed at the Augustana District website. Please visit <https://augustanadistrict.org/staff-openings/> to learn more about each listed position, and how to apply.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| » Pastor (Full-time)   Carrington ND                      | » Pastor   Montecello MN                |
| » Senior Pastor   Slayton MN                              | » Solo Pastor   Kerrville TX            |
| » Director of Worship & Connection Ministry   Marshall MN | » Interim Pastor   St. Cloud MN         |
| » Pastor or Interim Pastor   Maynard MN                   | » Full-time Pastor   Gonvick MN         |
| » Church Secretary   Springfield MN                       | » Pastor   Buffalo Lake MN              |
| » Organist   Lamberton MN                                 | » Part-time/Half-time Pastor   White SD |
| » Lead Pastor   Hutchinson MN                             | » Lead Pastor   Comfrey MN              |
| » Pastor   Lamberton MN                                   | » Part-time Pastor   Badger MN          |
|   | » FT Senior Pastor   McGregor MN        |

If you have a leadership position vacancy for your congregation, please consider listing it on the Augustana District website.



# Mission Minute: AIMJ (All India Masihi Jamat) a Key District Mission Partner of the Augustana District

I am Maulana Afjal Ahmed. I come from a very orthodox family and was born and brought up in Delhi. I studied in Madrasa for 12 years. Even though I came from an orthodox family and studied in Madrasa, I still had doubts as to if I would be able to go to heaven after I die. I thought about this problem for hours every day but could never understand if I would be able to go to heaven or not. One day I met Brother Abdul Salam who was previously a Muslim. We talked for some time and I told him about my doubts. He shared with me about Jesus but I refused to talk to him about Christianity. He then told me that I am not following the real God by reading a passage from Quran in which Muhammad says that he does not know what will happen to him after he dies. He told me that I have been following a God who himself does not know what will happen to him and told me about how Jesus knew about everything from the start. He then gave me a Bible and told me to call him when I have doubts. I agreed to read the Bible and a verse which I cannot forget is John 14:6: Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." After reading this verse I started to believe in Jesus and thought that Jesus is the only way to go to heaven.

When I talked about my faith to my wife, son and daughter, they all got furious and told me that if I didn't stop all this nonsense, they would abandon me. I tried to talk to them many times and after one month I was finally able to convince them to read the Bible with me. We all sat down at bed to read the Bible and then all of them understood what I was talking about. So, we began reading the Bible everyday as a family and also, we called Brother Abdul Salam to clarify our doubts. He also invited us to join his Sunday worship group. We all started going to his fellowship and there we met several other people who were once Muslim like us. We read the entire Bible in about one and half year. It gave us strength in our faith and so by January 2021, all of us accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. The word spread out about our new faith and all our relatives, friends and neighbors started to warn and torture us. Sometimes they even gave us death threats. But by God's grace nothing happened to us and our faith increased more and more in the Lord. So, on October 16, 2022, we were all baptized together as a family. I am happy and praise God that He has brought all my family members to his heavenly family. Please pray for us so that we could bring our friends, relatives, and neighbors to Christ.



Pictures are of Maulana Afjal Ahmed, wife, daughter and son each being baptized.

# The Awaken Project Gap Year Program

## *Written by Steven Wagner, Gap Year Director*

The Awaken Project (TAP), a nonprofit organization housed on campus at Mount Carmel Ministries in Alexandria, Minnesota, is pleased to continue to offer an eight month/two semester gap year program for students who are interested in a full or part-time career in ministry, seeking to study the Bible on a collegiate level in community, and travel across the United States while engaging with practical ministry opportunities.

Our partnership with Mount Carmel is one of the most crucial aspects of our program. Drawing on Mount Carmel's rich history within the Lutheran Bible Institute, The Awaken Project seeks to draw upon the same spirit that spurred on so many to attend LBI and cultivate that wonderful community for many decades. We believe that young adults who are committed to living, serving, learning, and growing together under the cross are an immensely valuable part of the Body of Christ, and we are committed to providing young adults the opportunity to experience this transformational community life.

The fall semester is primarily Bible classes, taught by independent instructors who join us for a week at a time and teach one subject for the duration of the week. Other rhythms of the fall include a morning devotional centered around the Moravian Daily Texts, weekly community meals, weekly spiritual formation sessions with mentors, and hangouts with the residential community. The spring semester is when most of our travel occurs. We partner with Quake Events, a national youth conference circuit of events geared toward middle and high school students. Our students attend these events throughout the spring and lead in relational ministry, workshops, and production assistance.

We strive to sponsor a program that sees all students grow in relationship with one another, teachers, mentors, community members, and our Lord, Jesus Christ. A recent alumnae of our program, Courtney Corrente, has described her time with TAP as an



answer to prayer that she never thought would come to pass, but now can hardly imagine her life without the community she's found through TAP's gap year program. After completing her year with TAP, she was hired onto Mount Carmel's staff as their Communications Coordinator, which has allowed her to gain immediate experience in her fields of study (strategic communications), continue to maintain the community she gained last year, and invest back into this year's cohort of TAP students.

I am expecting that there will be plenty more stories like Courtney's over the years of TAP's gap year program. If you know anyone who has been longing for a community to do life with, who seeks high quality and affordable Biblical education, and who has an itch to travel and serve, The Awaken Project's gap year program can be a wonderful opportunity.

Please contact myself, Steven Wagner, at [steven@theawakenprojectmn.com](mailto:steven@theawakenprojectmn.com) if you have any questions or know someone who may benefit immensely from this program.

If you feel led to contribute a tax-deductible donation to The Awaken Project, gifts can be sent to The Awaken Project at 800 Mount Carmel Drive NE, Alexandria, Minnesota, 56308.

# 2023 Confirmation Retreat

## Life of Faith

The Augustana District will provide its annual Confirmation Retreat Friday, March 3, until noon on Sunday, March 5, 2023. The retreat will be held at Luther Crest Bible Camp in Alexandria, Minnesota.

Meant to augment confirmation instruction in our local churches, the retreat will also offer the opportunity for our youth to experience fellowship with youth from other churches. The retreat is open to any LCMC and NALC congregation.

There will, of course, also be plenty of opportunities for fun, recreation, worship, and fellowship to accompany the learning sessions.



Pause



Play



Refresh

Please visit <https://augustanadistrict.org/2023-confirmation-retreat/> to register online or download the brochure & form.



## Welcome New Pastors

Pastor Raleigh White, St. Paul Lutheran Church in Osceola, NE  
Pastor Jonathan Anderson, Peace Lutheran Church in Post Falls, ID



You and your congregation are invited to join the district in praying for:

- † Pastors who are leaders and shepherds to be guided to care for their flocks in the way of Christ.
- † Congregations to share the Annual Service Coordinators report and prayerfully consider supporting the Augustana District financially.
- † Prayers of thanksgiving for those who do faithfully support the district.
- † Prayers of thanksgiving and protection for those who are sharing the Gospel in India, and for those who are accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior.

† The Awaken Project in providing strong theological education and healthy community for those interested in ministry. Pray God will prepare the hearts of students and show them the way to this program.

† The Confirmation Retreat, that leaders will be Spirit filled in preparing for this event; and for the safety and wellbeing of the students, leaders and churches who are participating in this event.

† God to call, safely gather, enlighten and sanctify the many who attend the Convocation of the Cross "Living in the Promise" annual event.

† The clergy and congregations who are coming from difficult congregational situations and decisions. Many clergy are coming into the district through their seminaries and are second career pastors who seek your prayers, support, and encouragement.





Augustana District is firmly grounded in the function of the law being to order society and convict us of sin, showing our need for a Savior. Within the Christian body and our Lutheran heritage, there are differing views about the law's function, while others have no idea what the conflict is or why it matters today.

This year's Convocation of the Cross topic "Living in the Promise" does not offer a resolution to this centuries-old debate, but rather a healthy and theologically rich conversation about law and gospel. We invite you to witness Dr. Robert Kolb and Dr. Steven Paulson discuss the topic and join the conversation as we live in Christ's promise together!

## Guest Speakers



Dr. Robert Kolb is an emeritus professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, the co-editor with Timothy Wengert of the translation of *The Book of Concord* (Fortress Press 2000) and the author of

several books on Luther and on the Lutheran confessions, including *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God. The Wittenberg School and its Scripture-Centered Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016) and *Luther's Treatise On Christian Freedom and Its Legacy* (Lanham, MD: Fortress Academic/Lexington, 2019).



Professor Steven Paulson has been teaching and preaching for over thirty years and is chair of Lutheran Theology at LHOS. He holds degrees in theology from St. Olaf College, the Master

of Divinity from Luther Seminary and the Theological Doctorate from the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. He has taught at Concordia College, Moorhead, and Luther Seminary, St. Paul, before coming to Sioux Falls. He is the author of many books and articles, including *Luther's Outlaw God, Volume 1 and 2*.

**To register and for more event details, visit [www.augustanadistrict.org/2023-theological-conference/](http://www.augustanadistrict.org/2023-theological-conference/)**

# Women of the Word

Advent Reflection - Luke 2:19 “... *and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.*”

There are so many comforting and familiar stories during this Advent and Christmas season. This verse picks up after many busy events for Joseph and Mary, and places us in the manger with the Savior.

Think about Mary and all that she has experienced. First an announcement from an angel. Her response to the angel's news was not doubt – to ask a reasonable question: “How can this be with me?” Then, Mary's visit to a female relative. The visit sounds like an occasion to have someone to talk with and the angel's news is confirmed. Women of faith were sharing and counseling with each other. Perhaps there was support and encouragement from Elizabeth about the uncertainty of how to talk with fiancé, Joseph. Their conversations were based on a foundation of God's presence in their lives and the work of the Holy Spirit. Now Mary and Joseph had made a long journey to a different city; where would she rest and be comfortable? Where can she bear the child? The baby is born, and local shepherds arrive during the night – sharing the news the angels told them and in awe of the choir of angels! And now – Mary has time to ponder.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, please know that my feelings about all that had happened would be described as ‘fearful,’ ‘worried,’ and ‘overwhelming.’ Perhaps there were times when Mary felt that way also. Trusting in the Lord carried Mary and Joseph on. The verb ponder means ‘think about something carefully, especially before making a decision or reaching a conclusion.’ As she pondered, she gave God glory for all that had happened.

Perhaps our lives are much like Mary's, challenges and uncertainties filling our already busy schedule this Advent season. Perhaps our time at work and with family flow with necessary tasks and commitments. Can we take time to ponder all that Advent is preparing us for? Can we allow the foundation of God's presence in our cacophonous lives to smooth the wrinkles and grant us contentment? I encourage you to answer with a confident ‘Yes!’ There is much to ponder: what God has revealed in His Word; what our relationship with Christ means at this time; and the promises and anticipation of what is yet to come. Reflecting will help us see the glory of God as he is at work in our lives. We will have a deeper appreciation for the treasure that Christ's birth and resurrection gave us!!

There is so much that we can ponder ... carry on!  
AD WOW Member at Large – Jan Kreie



## Upcoming Lay Preaching Class

St. Paul Lutheran Seminary is planning a Lay Preaching class beginning February 23, 2023, that will last for approximately six weeks. If you know of someone who may be interested in this class please watch our Facebook page or website, and [semcl.org](http://semcl.org) for more information as it becomes available.



PLEASE SHARE THIS WITH YOUR CONGREGATION AT YOUR ANNUAL MEETING

# ANNUAL REPORT FOR CONGREGATIONS – AUGUSTANA DISTRICT

*Prepared by Pastor Randy Freund, AD Service Coordinator*

The role of LCMC Districts and Fellowships within LCMC is significantly changing as a function of “LCMC 3.0.” As an association, LCMC is taking specific and intentional steps to address growth within LCMC, while maintaining our congregationally focused DNA. “LCMC 3.0” is the general way in which we refer to these changes. For the purposes of this Annual Report, it seemed best to address these changes as it pertains to the Augustana District using the categories of our motto, “Theology. Church. Mission.”

## **THEOLOGY**

In order to be clear about LCMC’s theological commitments and distinctives, a number of initiatives are taking place under the direction of Pastor Julie Smith, LCMC Coordinator for Districts and Fellowships. Because Augustana has a long-standing commitment to the role theology has in forming and shaping our district, the Augustana District has the opportunity to offer itself to this new emphasis in “LCMC 3.0.” We do this as we continue to focus on how theology shapes our district. An active and talented Board of Theology and Ministry guides us in this area.

## **CHURCH**

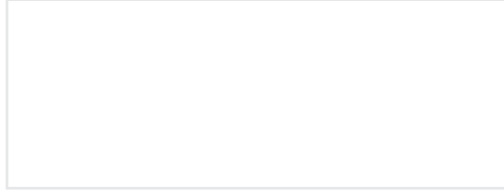
In general, the “Church” part of our motto has to do with support to congregations. This support is carried out primarily by staff, as well as the Board of Christian Education and Board of Congregational Services. The call process, conflict resolution, assimilation into LCMC and AD from new congregations, are primary ways in which this is played out. Under “LCMC 3.0,” church plants are now carried out by districts, fellowships and congregations (and not coordinated by a LCMC staff position). To date, Augustana has been involved in four church plants or “re-starts.” They are, The Table Ministry (Sioux Falls, SD), Faith Community Lutheran Church (Slayton, MN), Tahoma Lutheran (a house church in Maple Valley, WA), Living Word International Christian Fellowship (a mission restart in St. Paul, MN). We are anticipating first international church plant in Mazatlán, Mexico.

## **MISSION**

Global Mission has always been a hallmark of the Augustana District. Under the guidance of the Board for World Mission, 40% of all proceeds to support this “Great Commission” work in places outside the US. The challenges and opportunities here will only increase. As LCMC congregations seek to have closer ties with vibrant missions around the world, global mission partners continue to reach out to AD, seeking closer ties with our district.

As you can sense, it is an exciting and significant time to be a part of the Augustana District!

THANK YOU to the many congregations and individuals who make this possible through your prayers, support, and financial contributions!



Address Service Requested

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Augustana District



## SAVE THE DATES 2023

**May 6, 2023**

Annual Convention  
Mount Carmel in Alexandria, MN

**September 16, 2023**

WOW Gathering  
Springfield, MN



## BLESSINGS TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY...

*May you be completely  
filled with the Word of God,  
the wonder of Mary, the  
obedience of Joseph, the joy  
of the angels, the eagerness  
of the shepherds, the  
determination of the magi,  
and the peace of the  
Christ child.*

*Peace be with you.*