

Devotional



AUGUSTANA WITNESS newsletter

In This Issue...

Devotional	1
Mission Minute.....	2
COTC Review	3
Prayers	4
Church Staff Openings	4
Educational Opportunities	4
Financial Update	4
Did You Know?	4
WOW	6
1st Call retreat	7
Annual Convention	7

Staff Stuff

Pr. Randy Freund... Service Coordinator
director@augustanadistrict.org

Pr. Becky Hand Program Coordinator
b.hand@augustanadistrict.org

Wendy Magruder Office Assistant
office@augustanadistrict.org

Mailling Address
Augustana District
335 Main St. S.
Hutchinson MN 55350

Phone..... 320.234.8403

Web www.augustanadistrict.org

While [Peter] was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. Matthew 17:5-9

In February of 2020, while at the AD Convocation of the Cross in Bloomington, MN, I found out I was pregnant for the first (and only) time! This was a mountaintop for my husband and me. We saw God's hand at work everywhere. We felt like Peter. We wanted to build a house and live right there forever. We had finally been given our heart's desire to be parents and have a family!

A month later, the ground shook and we fell to our knees as we lost this child to miscarriage. It would be an understatement to say we were overcome by fear. We were overcome by fear, hurt, grief, questions, and utter heartbreak. Where at first, we could easily see the Lord's light on the mountaintop, now we couldn't see anything overshadowed by this cloud. It wasn't the first time we had been taken through the valley of the shadow of death. Nor will it be the last.

As pastors and church leaders, we sometimes think our eyesight should be better than most. We know that Christ has promised to be in the valley of the shadow of death. He said he will never leave or forsake us. We've heard it before. A lot. We shouldn't be surprised when bad things happen. The theology of the cross even tells us that God is revealed even more clearly in these times of suffering. We know the truth and should be able to walk through it better than most. Right?

We can easily forget that this wasn't the first time Peter's eyes betrayed him. When he was walking on the water to Jesus he noticed a strong wind, was frightened, and began to sink. (Matthew 14:30) And when Jesus was teaching that he was going to suffer and die, Peter couldn't possibly imagine a crucified Savior. He rebuked the Lord and worked against God's will. Each time, Jesus spoke to Peter, rebuked him, and saved him. Now he needs to be saved again? Absolutely, yes!

(continued next page)

No matter how often we've heard and spoken the good news, we are deeply affected when darkness envelopes us. We have times when our sight is rendered useless, and we fall to our knees in terror. We can't escape it. Jesus took Peter to the mountain top, and Jesus led him back into the valley to face demons, death and taxes. (Matthew's order, not mine! See verses 14-27)

The most important part, however, lies between the terror and the taxes, smack-dab in the middle of the darkness and demons. What Jesus gave to Peter then, he gives to you today. Jesus comes to you. He touches you. He speaks to you. He raises your eyes. And he causes you to see no one but himself. The Lord does it, not once or twice, but each and every time you need him.

Looking back, God's presence was revealed even more clearly in the darkness than on the

mountaintop. He came to us in the presence of our friends. He touched us in the hugs of our family. And he spoke to us in the words of our church family. The Lord has used this to place my hope back on him alone, rather than on other things, temporary things. He gave me the honor of walking with and speaking to others going through the valley. Just as you are called to do. Not because of anything you have done. Simply because He is God's Son, the beloved, and you listen to him. Thank God you don't need anything more, or anything less than Jesus Christ – because he has you.

To God alone be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Pastor Sarah Carlstrom
New Creation in Perham, MN
Board of Theology and Ministry Chair

Mission Minute

UPDATE FROM THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF MYANMAR

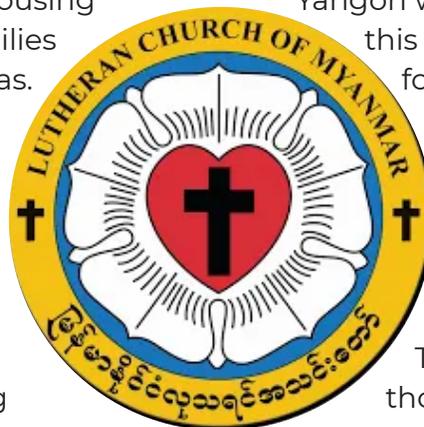
Much of the news in the USA will focus on what is going on in Eastern Europe, but you will hear very little about the civil war taking place in Myanmar (Burma). Following the coup d'état in Myanmar in February 2021, widespread displacement was caused by resurging military conflict throughout the nation. There is an urgent need for food, medicine, warm clothing, blankets, housing and protection services for many families from the conflict's worst-affected areas.

As a result of declining incomes and rising costs for food and agricultural inputs, vulnerable people are being forced to sell off assets, incur debt, and use savings in order to meet their families' food needs. Farmers are unable to produce food for consumption or sale in the upcoming

season if they sell off their land and other assets now, making them dependent on food aid eternally.

The Lutheran Church of Myanmar is currently working to reach out to many of the people from the Kalaymyo township and the slum areas of Yangon who have been greatly affected by

this war. We ask you to continue to pray for us as we hope to help around 200 families with food and cash relief for continuation of their livelihoods and sustainability. If you are interested in finding out more please contact the Augustana District Board of World Mission representative, Pr. Tom Thorstad at 716-990-6244 or thorstad@gmail.com.



REGISTER NOW

May 2023

1st Call Pastors Retreat & the Annual Convention

Mount Carmel in Alexandria, MN

SAVE THE DATES 2023

September 16, 2023

Women of the Word Gathering

Springfield, MN

Convocation of the Cross 2023 Review

“LIVING IN THE PROMISE: A CONVERSATION ABOUT LAW AND GOSPEL”

The Augustana District Convocation of the Cross, “Living in the Promise”, was attended by 81 in-person participants and 19 online individuals and church groups. The Embassy Suites by Hilton, Minneapolis Airport hosted us, with specifics set up by the dedicated Wendy Magruder. This is the planned site of next year’s convocation on February 5-7, 2024, as well.

The Convocation kicked off in worship with communion on Monday, February 6, with Pastor Dave Wollan preaching and Pastor Culynn Curtis leading us in music. Our keynote speakers each presented a voice in a conversation about Law and Gospel with Dr. Robert Kolb in support of the third use of the Law and Dr. Steven Paulson expressing a two-fold dialectic between Law and Gospel. Following these presentations, Pastor Sarah Stenson facilitated a Q & A session with our keynote speakers guided by participant-submitted questions. Through it, we witnessed a respectful and theologically rigorous conversation about Law and Gospel. An informational Augustana District update was given by Service Coordinator, Pastor Randy Freund, concluding our first day.



(Q & A with Dr. Kolb, Dr. Paulson, and Pastor Sarah Stenson)

Tuesday morning devotions included an excerpt from Dr. James Nestingen’s sermon “Handing Over the Goods” as preached at the 2006 Word Alone Conference. Following this, Pastor Mike Hanson

led a panel of four (Pastors Lexi Carson, Marney Fritts, Lou Hesse & Craig Werling) in sharing their experience with witnessing the Law-Gospel distinction in ministry. The convocation closed in worship with Pastor Horacio Castillo delivering the sermon. Ample time for discussion and fellowship was woven throughout the two days. The offerings given during worship throughout the conference totaled \$1,157 to be split between support of the Tabor Evangelist Project in Hawassa, Ethiopia and a First-Call retreat to be held in connection with the AD Annual Convention in May.

On behalf of the AD Board of Theology and Ministry, let me give a resounding thank you to each person who shared their time and gifts in order to make this gathering a success! Many of you were named above, and there were countless of you behind the scenes. We pray that all who took part left this year’s Convocation encouraged, theologically grounded, and energized for ministry! If you missed the Convocation, or want to watch something again, check out the recordings at: <https://augustanadistrict.org/resources/video-channel/>

Respectfully Submitted,
Pastor Sarah Carlstrom
New Creation Lutheran Church, Perham, MN
Board of Theology and Ministry Chair

CONGREGATIONS SHOULD
EXPECT A CONTACT FROM
YOUR AD AMBASSADOR SOON!

This month the district asks you to prayer for the following congregations. You can learn more about each one by clicking on the name which will take you to their website or Facebook page.

Please pray for these Augustana churches, pastors and leaders this month:

- ✝ [Faith Fellowship Church - Odessa, TX](#)
- ✝ [Faith Lutheran – Moline, IL](#)
- ✝ [Faith Lutheran Church – Hutchinson, MN](#)
- ✝ [Faith Lutheran Church – Monticello, MN](#)
- ✝ Falls Community Church - Sioux Falls, SD No website
- ✝ [First Lutheran Church - Clear Lake, WI](#)
- ✝ [First Lutheran Church – Britton, SD](#)
- ✝ [Fron Lutheran Church - Roslyn, SD](#)



Church Staff Openings

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

- ◆ Director of Connection Ministry | Living Word Lutheran Church | Marshall MN
- ◆ Pastor | Living Word Lutheran Church | Milbank SD
- ◆ Full Time/Lead Pastor | Hope Lutheran Church | Fosston MN
- ◆ Pastor (full-time) | Trinity Lutheran Church | Carrington ND
- ◆ Senior Pastor | Faith Community Lutheran Church | Slayton MN
- ◆ Director of Worship Ministry | Living Word Lutheran Church | Marshall MN
- ◆ Organist | Our Savior's Lutheran Church | Lamberton MN
- ◆ Lead Pastor | Christ the King Lutheran Church | Hutchinson MN
- ◆ Pastor | Our Savior's Lutheran Church | Lamberton MN
- ◆ Pastor | Faith Lutheran Church | Monticello MN
- ◆ Solo Pastor | Zion Lutheran Church | Kerrville TX
- ◆ Full-time Pastor | Samhold Lutheran Church | Gonvick MN
- ◆ Part-time/Half-time Pastor | Pioneer Lutheran Church | White SD
- ◆ Part-time Pastor | Our Redeemer Lutheran Church | Badger MN

If you have a leadership position vacancy for your congregation, please consider listing it on the Augustana District website. If your position has been filled please let us know.

Educational Opportunities

CONFERENCE AND RETREAT

April 11 & 12, 2023

Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

303 North Laurel Street Springfield, GA 31329
(North Suburban Savannah)

Sponsored by St. Paul Lutheran Seminary and the SEC LCMC Fellowship this Lutheran Retreat offers refreshing, faith-enriching experiences for pastors, lay leaders and spouses by offering Christian discussions, rewarding comradery and outdoor relaxation. There will be speakers, discussions, thanks and praise. You won't want to miss this event.

RENEWING THE LOCAL CHURCH

Our retreat this year will offer many helpful ideas to bring life back into congregations. Pastors cannot do it alone ... A congregation-wide effort using biblical principles is needed.

Pr. Bradley Hales and Rev. Julie Smith will lead the presentations and discussion. Pr. Hales is the pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church, Culpeper, VA; the Director for Renewal for the North American Lutheran Church, and author of "*Reviving the Aging Church.*" Rev. Julie Smith is the Coordinator for Districts and Fellowships of the LCMC.

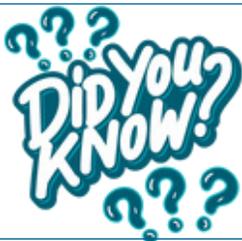
Be prepared to delve into the root causes of congregational stagnancy and decline and learn about biblical ways that the church can be revived for His purposes.

We can learn together and don't forget to bring your Bible! Come a few days before...Stay for the conference...perhaps stay longer!

Financial update

The 2022 – 2023 annual budget was set at \$145,000. As of February 21, 2023, with just over a month left in the fiscal year, the income to date is \$142,946 – which is 90% of our annual budget. Thank you to those of you who continue to financially support the district. Contributions can be sent to the district office or submitted online via the AD website. Please make all checks payable to Augustana District.

Please plan to attend the District Convention on May 6, 2023 to learn what your contributions provide and how you are serving the Kingdom through your support. You can find convention registration information on www.augustanadistrict.org/2023-annual-convention-may-6-2023/



For many years the Augustana District has hosted a confirmation retreat. Churches from 4 states make the trek to Minnesota for a great weekend of fun and learning. We even "exported" this retreat to churches in New York! The 2023 retreat happens in March, so watch for pictures in the April edition of the Augustana Witness.

Women of the Word

An Easy Winter Project to Try:

Many of you have been experiencing a lot of snow and cold days. We are so fortunate to have warm homes and beds. There are many homeless in our world and this must be an extremely difficult time for them. One of the things we can do to help them is to make sleeping mats from plastic bags. It is a project that many can help with as it takes almost as long to get the bags ready as it does to crochet them into mats. Find women in your congregations that have time to make the balls of plarn and then those that enjoy crocheting. It is a great way to recycle your plastic bags.

Start by folding your plastic bag in half vertically. Do this two more times, then cut off the top handles and the bottom seam to create a flat, open plastic tube. From here, you cut these into strips. The thicker the strips, the thicker your mat. Now take your strips and roll them together into a ball of "plarn," or plastic yarn.

I generally make my strips 2-2½ inches wide. The strips can be cut with a scissors or a rotary cutter and ruler. I like the rotary cutter. Once the strips are cut they will be in a circle so you loop them together. You will get a long strip of plastic that you can roll into balls or stuff into a bag. Plarn does not tangle like yarn.

The mats are made by crocheting the plarn into a large mat. You need a very large crochet hook such as a Q. You begin by making a chain that is

36-42 inches long. You continue by doing single crochet in each chain. Every row is done by single crochet until your mat measures about 72 inches long. There are videos on the internet if you would like to watch them to get further instructions. This will give you a mat that is large enough for most people. It will be waterproof and warm.



You finish by crocheting a strip that can be tied around it after you roll it up. You can put one tie in the middle or one close to each end. They should be hooked to the mat. It is good to then crochet a handle so it can be carried with the person.

I have found that these mats can be made from plastic tablecloths and are very colorful. I do it by folding the tablecloth in half the long way. (If your tablecloth is 100 x 36 you will then have a folded tablecloth 50 x 36.) You sew the two ends together. You then fold it several times and cut it into strips as you did the plastic bags. Your strips will be longer but can still be looped together and rolled into balls. If you do not sew you can cut the tablecloth in strips and tie the ends together firmly. You just work them in as you crochet if you choose this method.

These waterproof, warm mats can be slung over the shoulder with the addition of a plastic strap. They're so lightweight and perfect for anyone who may need it. We hope you enjoy giving this worthwhile project a try.

2023 AD WOW LEADERS who would love to hear your suggestions, questions or feedback:

Coordinator: Jodi Dalsgaard – jodidalsgaard@gmail.com; 507-766-2323

Secretary: Marcia Heinje – mhheinje@tnics.com; 605-237-0373

Member at Large: Linda Anderson – lindaanderson46@yahoo.com; 507-381-0761

Member at Large: Jan Kreie – jkreie@mediacombb.net; phone (no texts) 320-510-1942

1st Call Pastors Retreat

MAY 4-5, 2023

Hosted by Mount Carmel in Alexandria, MN
Presented by Augustana District

Calling All First Call Pastors and Seminary Students! You are invited to a special retreat designed just for you!

The Augustana District understands the challenges of a first call and would like to help you navigate some of those challenges by offering this retreat. It will be a time of resource sharing and gaining insights into the roles of pastors, leadership structures, and text studies. Enjoy time with colleagues and build connections and relationships with fellow pastors in the district.

On Thursday, May 4, check-in will be from 6:00PM to 7:30PM. There is no meal accommodation this night, so grab a bite before check-in. Following check-in, there will be one session on "The Blessings of Being a Pastor" presented by Julie Smith beginning at 7:30PM, followed by free time and fellowship.

After breakfast on Friday, May 5, the morning will focus on "Becoming a Pastor," presented by Pastor Randy Freund. After lunch, there will be a

Panel Discussion and following supper there will be a Text Study on upcoming Lectionary Texts by Pastor Julie Smith.

You are encouraged to stay Friday night and attend the 2023 District Convention from 10:00AM to 4:30PM on Saturday.

First call pastors and seminarians are requested to pay \$25/per person or couple if both are first-call pastors to cover meals. Spouses, who are NOT first-call pastors, are invited to attend under the regular convention rate.

Please register online at augustanadistrict.org or mail the completed brochure form with payment to our office. **Please make checks payable to Augustana District.**



If interested, please get in touch with the district office if you or your congregation would like to support this new venture by sponsoring a 1st call pastor or seminary student (\$135/person).

2023 Annual Convention

MAY 6, 2023

Hosted by Mount Carmel in Alexandria, MN

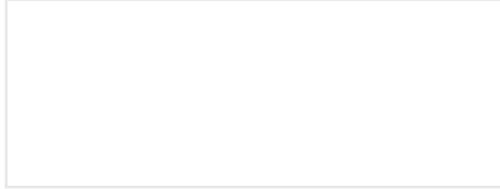
Presented by Augustana District

Registration Now Open!

Register at www.augustanadistrict.org/convention-may-6-2023/

AGENDA

9:00am	Registration	1:00pm	Presentation 2: "There's Just One Mission" with Pastor Julie Smith
10:00am	Welcome & Opening Worship	1:45pm	Table Discussion / Q & A
10:45am	Presentation 1: "There's Just One Mission" with Pastor Julie Smith	2:15pm	Board of World Mission Presentation
11:30am	LCMC/Augustana District Update: • Pastor Becky Hand, • Pastor Randy Freund, • Pastor Julie Smith	3:15pm	Break
12:00pm	Lunch	3:30pm	Distinguished Service Award Business Meeting
		4:30pm	Closing



Address Service Requested

Hutchinson Mn 55350

335 Main St S.

Augustana District



Convocation of the Cross 2023

The recordings of the COTC are now live at the website.

Please watch and share.

[augustanadistrict.org/resources/
video-channel/](https://augustanadistrict.org/resources/video-channel/)



WE NEED YOUR HELP...

We are in need of sponsors for 1st Call Pastors & Seminary Students... and we were wondering if you, by any chance, are able to help with this first ever endeavor.

The cost per sponsorship is \$135. We understand if you just can't do it. We thank you so much in advance for your prayerful consideration and *continued prayers for this first ever endeavor*. If you are able to help, please visit <https://augustanadistrict.org/sponsorship-plea-checkout>