

# Devotional

*“So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord, even the King of Israel! And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” - John 12:13-15 (ESV)*

One of the members of the church I serve shared a wonderful gift with me this winter. I was on a visit to his homestead, and he asked if I had seen a “Hail Mary” donkey. Joe and his wife, Peggy, have one of these beautiful creatures, who comes in handy to protect the other farm animals from the attacks of wolves and coyotes.

The gray donkey bore a distinct black cross down his back and over his shoulders. I had a chance to pet her as she nuzzled up to me, even as a feistier one came over to nip my finger. The legend holds that she is a descendant from the donkey who carried Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, even as the biblical texts center more upon the journey of Jesus from Bethany to Jerusalem. One could also recognize her as a “Jerusalem Donkey,” or even a “Sicilian Donkey.”

Regardless of name and origin, the donkey always has a special place in my heart and in my mind. I remember that just as Christ was brought into the city on that Palm Sunday on the back of a donkey, I am also called as a preacher to bear the Savior to others. The burdens and challenges of such a task may seem arduous at times, but our Christian freedom and humility is actually rather simple.

Jesus will reach out and find you. He will sit down upon you and let you carry him into town. You will be present as people cry out, “O save us, Lord.” You will be there as the cries turn bitterly into “Crucify Him!” You will keep going on the path that has been prepared for Him and for you. You may be given something to share, but more likely you will listen, you will see and you will respond with groanings too deep for words. For that hour, for that day, for that week, the Lord Jesus has decided how to put you to work. It is enough to be a donkey who bears Christ. Thanks be to God.

Pastor Daniel Ostercamp  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
Hallock, MN



## AUGUSTANA WITNESS newsletter

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### 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

# Confirmation Retreat Recap

On March 3-5, over 100 confirmation youth and adults from five states gathered at Luther Crest Bible Camp, Alexandria, MN for the Augustana District Annual Confirmation Retreat. The goals of this annual retreat are multi-faceted. Building relationships, group activities, relaxation, worship, and solid learning are all a part of this event. This year, Pastor Culynn Curtis and Pastor Julie Smith led four presentation that focused on our identity and how it is centered in Christ's identity and claim on us.

Over the years, we have seen that many groups return to this event, while new congregations continue to join in the fun, fellowship, and learning. The success of this annual event has prompted Augustana District to now focus on the possibility of a High School Retreat. Watch for details on this!

BIG PLANS ARE UNDERWAY FOR OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY NEXT YEAR.  
Be sure to watch for details this summer.

Thank you to all participating churches who help to make this event possible for your confirmation youth. If you have any questions about this event, please contact the AD office through our website.

Submitted by Pastor Randy Freund





# March 2023 ~ The Table Ministry turned TWO! Look at ALL God can do.

A woman at Jacob's well.

A congregation at Shenanigans Sports Bar.

YOUR church's generosity continues to help us grow.

YOUR regular gifts are building His church. I pray you feel our prayers of gratitude. While we are not the richest congregation, still very dependent on YOU, our hearts are gold. We are so thankful for all the ways you set The Table.



Thank you for making this Table milestone possible. For loving us so big, embracing our crazy, and joining in on this beautiful adventure.

Come and visit ANYTIME. There is always a seat FOR YOU.

Take a peak at our birthday video...It's full of joy and full of your gifts! (<https://youtu.be/k0AIRvrxIwY>)

## On the two-year anniversary celebration of the Table church plant the Augustana District is excited to announce another church plant in Mexico!

Districts in the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) are counted on to be on the front lines for church plants. The Augustana District has been involved in three recent church plant ventures and now there is an opportunity for a fourth. Since January 4, Pastor Miguel Angel Nunez, and his wife, Varinia Cuello have

begun a church plant in Mazatlán, Mexico. These long-time friends of the Augustana District are excited to give us an update on everything that has happened at our May Convention. As more information becomes available, we will share ways that you can be a part of this new venture!

## Holy Spirit Empowered Witness Reaches to the "Ends of the Earth."

Without vision nothing of significance happens. Spirit empowered vision has led our partner, the Tabor Congregation, to send its first missionary outside the boundaries of their country, Ethiopia. When Pastor Dawit y Wario visited us in 2012, he shared that the Tabor Congregation, where he served, would one day go to what seemed to them, "the ends of the earth." It is amazing that one congregation sends out over 60 evangelists throughout its country. They prayed that they would one day move out to another African country.



Some ten plus years later this has happened. You see pictured here the dedication of Samuel

Hayeso to be a missionary to Ghana. This dedication calls for great joy and thanksgiving. For the Augustana District to have been a small but meaningful partner in this congregation's outreach is humbling and gratifying as we have watched this bold vision become reality. Praise be to God!

For five years now the AD has been supporting evangelists sent by the Tabor Congregation. This congregation is one of the largest Lutheran bodies in the world (Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus). With modest help from us they send out over 60 evangelists throughout the country.

Four of them work in the North Central Ethiopia Synod, the synod referenced in the next article, that is training 80 plus evangelists with the strong financial help of Living Word. The training and fellowship is vital as encouragement is needed to sustain their witness in many challenging situations.

## Mission Minute: Purifying Fires and Sweet Blessings

### AN AMAZING REPORT FROM THE NORTH CENTRAL ETHIOPIA SYNOD



Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. President Wagnew is pictured here upon his installation to a second term as Synod President.

The past five years have brought them through fires that could have overwhelmed them but in the end purified them for bold witness in the face of death and destruction. Here are some of the challenges they have faced:

- ◆ Experiencing the grief of deadly tribal conflict within the nation and their Church;
- ◆ Seeing one of their towns with a synod congregation burned to the ground leading to the scattering of their people;
- ◆ Making it through two years of horrific civil war with multiple church buildings destroyed;
- ◆ Seeing the synod compound with its offices and President Wagnew's home looted and destroyed;
- ◆ Knowing members who were killed and women who were raped.

These horrific experiences could have destroyed faith and brought bitterness and a sense of

despair. But in the midst of such absurd conflict the Spirit of the living God instead purified these Christians for amazing witness in the following ways:

Sweet Blessings from God:

- ◆ Eight new congregations have been added, as well as ten new outreach places that have been established with hundreds coming to faith;
- ◆ 20 additional trained pastors and evangelists have been added;
- ◆ 80 part-time and full-time ministers have been trained in a degree and diploma seminary through the generosity of Living Word Lutheran Church, in Moses Lake, WA which is an Augustana District Church;
- ◆ Over \$50,000 has been given through other AD congregations to help with the reconstruction of these congregations and communities in face of the civil war.

Thanks go to God.

Leaders of NCES and President Wagnew Andagre say, THANK YOU!



Augustana District Ethiopia Partners  
Working with Each Other

# Women of the Word: Faith

I looked up the word faith on the internet. A noun, defined as: a strong belief in God or in the doctrine of a religion.

So often in conversation and social media, I hear “you just have to believe” or “you just have to trust.” Soon faith starts sounding like something we create and control. It’s all about us. Just flip the switch and turn on faith. The sinner in us loves this control and we think we can do it on our own.

Sometimes life just doesn’t go as planned. Ten months ago, my spouse died of cancer at the age of 67. Suddenly we were traveling a different road and it was very dark and dreary. A road we couldn’t get off or fix. We tried to rid ourselves of this hateful intruder called cancer, but it was out to destroy. Death was imminent. There was nothing

we could do but pray “Lord I believe, help my unbelief.” (Mark 9:24)

Thank God, through his Word, I was reminded of the Easter promise. Jesus conquered death. The grave could not hold him. This promise of the resurrection is for us too! This promise brought great peace and helped me through a very difficult time. Now, almost a year later, I am once again reminded of this promise.

Faith is a gift from God. It is not something we conjure up or try to earn. The Lord gives graciously and mercifully.

Thanks be to God!

Connie Klemz

Augustana District Council WOW liaison

**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

SAVE THE DATES 2023

**September 16, 2023**

**Women of the Word Gathering**

Springfield, MN

Welcome

Immanuel Lutheran Church  
in Absarokee, MT

As we continue to pray for the congregations, pastors and leaders of the Augustana District we encourage you to pray this month for:

- ✝ Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Morris, MN
- ✝ Grace Lutheran, Willow Lake, SD
- ✝ Grace Lutheran Church, Erhard, MN
- ✝ Grace Lutheran Church, McGregor, MN
- ✝ Hawley Lutheran Church, Hawley, MN
- ✝ Hazel Run Lutheran Church, Hazel Run, MN
- ✝ Heglund Lutheran, Hawley, MN
- ✝ Heritage Lutheran Church, Brandon, SD

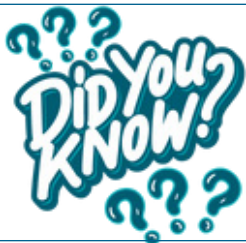


## Church Staff Openings

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

- ◆ Director of Youth Ministry | Living Word Lutheran Church | Marshall MN
- ◆ Pastor | Abounding Joy Lutheran Church | St. Cloud MN
- ◆ Pastor | New Hope Lutheran Church | Comfrey MN
- ◆ Pastor | Zion Lutheran Church | Kent WA
- ◆ Pastor | Living Word Lutheran Church | Milbank SD
- ◆ Lead Pastor | Hope Lutheran Church | Fosston MN
- ◆ Pastor (full-time) | Trinity Lutheran Church | Carrington ND
- ◆ Senior Pastor | Faith Community Lutheran Church | Slayton MN
- ◆ Worship Leader | 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 | Montecello MN
- ◆ Solo Pastor | Zion Lutheran Church | Kerrville TX

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.



Did you know that Augustana District is funded solely by individual and congregational support? In the 2022-2023 fiscal year individual giving has gone down by 27% but congregational giving has gone up by 11%. Your support is what allows the district to do the work that it does. Thank you for your ongoing support into the 2023-2024 fiscal year.



# Mount Carmel Invitation

Mount Carmel, a Family Camp and Bible Training Center north of Alexandria, Minnesota, is offering pastors, church workers, and their families a free 2-night stay in our cabins or lodge rooms. This event is scheduled for Sunday, April 16 (first Sunday after Easter) through Tuesday, April 18. On Monday evening, April 17, at 6:00 P.M., we will be hosting a free banquet honoring pastors and other church workers.

Lodging during this event is free for all pastors, church workers, and their families. We welcome you to come for one or two nights. The Monday evening



banquet is also free. Other meals are available in our dining room, but there will be a charge for those, and we need people to sign up in advance. Our cabins have fully furnished kitchens which allows you to prepare your own meals.

To register or for more information, please contact Shae at [registrar@mountcarmelministries.com](mailto:registrar@mountcarmelministries.com) or call 320-815-0874.

We thank you for your ministry! May God bless you now as you prepare for worship in Holy Week and on Easter!

## 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.

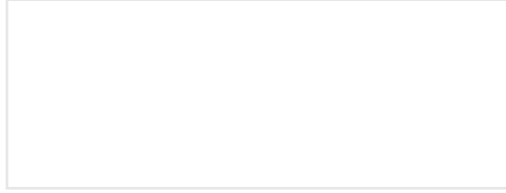
### “CONFERENCE & RETREAT ~ RENEWING THE LOCAL CHURCH”

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!



Address Service Requested

Hutchinson Mn 55350

335 Main St S.

Augustana District



Augustana District  
2023 1<sup>st</sup> Call Retreat



Augustana District  
2023 Convention

## Discounted Rates End April 8, 2023 For Both Events

No registrations will be accepted after April 28, 2023 so please make sure to register earlier rather than later.

Register now to take advantage of the discounted rates for the Annual Convention.

**Absolute deadline** is April 28, 2023. Convention attendees registering after this date are not guaranteed a meal or packet.

**We ask that those with special dietary needs register before April 21, 2023.**

**Register today at [www.augustanadistrict.org](http://www.augustanadistrict.org)**

**The May newsletter edition will be late to include information on the District Convention and First Call Retreat.**