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Devotional

THE EUCATASTROPHE OF THE RESURRECTION

He is Risen!

The echoes of that most excellent Easter proclamation is still ringing in my ears! This year's Holy Week, for me, was particularly powerful. Packed services, powerful imagery and symbols, and the proclamations of the Triduum, energized me and stirred my soul.

And yet, we live in a world that often mocks our confession of who Christ is and what he did. They mock the crucifixion of Jesus as pathetic weakness. They laugh at our insistence of a resurrection Christ. To them, we are believers of fairy tales and myths- weak minded and unintellectual.

And, indeed, the story of Jesus is mythical and fantastical in nature! In fact, it shares an important feature with fairy tales. Just ask Tolkien.

J.R.R. Tolkien, of The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings fame, was a master storyteller, and a deliberately intentional one! In explaining his use of "fairy stories," Tolkien coined a new term: "eucatastrophe." A eucatastrophe, for Tolkien, is "the consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn.'" A eucatastrophe is Gandalf arriving with reinforcements to save the day, or the Eagles swooping in to turn the tide.

But the joy of the eucatastrophe goes beyond fairy stories. It is also an apt description of the greatest story ever told, the true story of God. Tolkien explains, "The birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy."

I think of the catastrophe that I regularly experience in my life and in this world. From school shootings, natural disasters, political division, selfishness, greed, and so much more, it is easy to lose hope, to despair. But there is an incarnation! There is a Good Friday! There is a Resurrection Day! It's a sudden joyous turn, a happy ending, a good catastrophe- for you!

So, Augustana District, continue with your foolish beliefs and even more foolish proclamation! The world needs to hear it, and by the

power of the Holy Spirit, perhaps our witness to the great eucatastrophe can re-enchant the world!

Pastor Dave Wollan
Faith Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, MN

Quotations taken from: <https://jrrjokien.substack.com/p/what-easter-has-to-do-with-fairy>

2023 Retreat & Convention Recap

This past week was filled with worship, teaching, support, and connecting at Mount Carmel.

Thursday night and Friday a group of 18 First-Call pastors and seminarians gathered with a group of seven seasoned pastors for a time of reflection, conversation, and support. Topics such as “The Blessings of Being a Pastor,” “Becoming a Pastor,” and “Learning Moments” (things not taught in seminary) were addressed.



A handful of the first-call pastors with a seasoned mentor.

Friday night the District Council met to do some long-range planning. Pastor Randy Freund, the AD Service Coordinator, led a discussion around the theme “A Necessary Confusion” and talked about how good theology shapes all aspects of Augustana’s ministry. Augustana also has an important role to play in LCMC 3.0.

During this time the new district council officers were elected. They are:

Pastor Julie Smith, Chair
Pastor Steve Olcott, Vice-Chair
Pastor Aaron Deutsch, Secretary
Sara Wegner, Treasurer

Saturday was the Annual District Convention. There were 71 people in attendance representing 33 Augustana District congregations. There were also

six individuals who joined for the day via Zoom. Opening Worship was led by Pastor Lexy Carson and Pastor Steve Olcott was the preacher. Pastor Julie Smith was the keynote speaker sharing thoughts on “There’s Just One Mission” based on the theme verse, “I do it all for the sake of the Gospel.” I Corinthians 9:23a

The LCMC/AD Update included conversation around the clergy shortage and the number of congregations reaching out to LCMC and AD on a regular basis looking for support.

There was a Board of World Missions presentation that included a personal visit from Siimon Hammer from Estonia. Pr. Thomas Thorstad also spoke of his plans to go with his family to Laos to serve in the mission field there. Finally, there was a video presentation from the Tabor Congregation that is supported by the AD.

During the final business meeting Ben Luense was presented the Distinguished Service Award for his help in getting the Augustana District started and his work to bring the district into the world of Zoom meetings before Zoom meetings were cool.

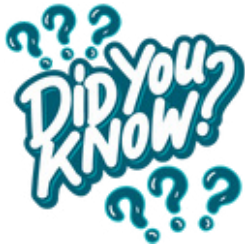
Another piece of the district business was to elect four new members to the district council.

They are:

- ◆ Pastor Aaron Deutsch from Resurrection Lutheran in Mankato, MN,
- ◆ Pastor Karen Seifert from Aurdal in Portland, ND,
- ◆ Pastor Terrill Sorensen from First Lutheran in Britton, SD, and Lake City Lutheran in Lake City, SD, and
- ◆ Todd Johnson who is a member at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hallock, MN.

If you would like to watch the videos of the convention they can be found on the AD website at augustanadistrict.org/resources/video-channel/

This event is always a great time for learning, fellowship, and worship. If you did not attend this year the district council hopes and prays that you will start to make plans now to attend the convention next year on May 4, 2024.



The Augustana District Convention is open to all AD Clergy, AD Congregations, all members of AD congregations, as well as anyone interested in learning about the Augustana District?

Please make sure you share with your church council and church leadership information about how they can be a part of the annual convention next year, May 4, 2024.



Worship with the Zoom participants



Time to reconnect



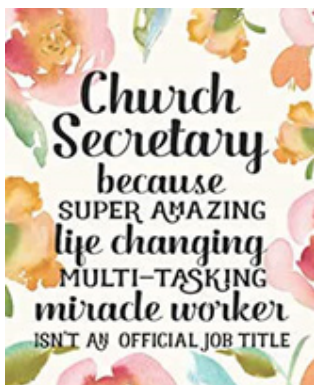
Chairman Craig Werling presenting the Distinguished Service Award to Ben Luense



Time to socialize with other pastors and delegates

Church Support Staff Support Group

COMING SOON: Church Administrator/Secretary/HR/Finance Coordinator Support Group



Do you sometimes feel like you are all alone, trying to figure out the best way to do things? Do you wish you had someone to talk to who understands the challenges of your day? Do you have a lot of experience in the church office that could be helpful to new office staff that you could share? Would you like to network with others in the same field?

If you answered yes to any of these questions then this new support group is for you! This group will meet for one hour, once a month, via Zoom to share struggles, ask questions, advise, encourage, and pray for one another. It is open to all church office staff as well as pastors and volunteers who work on church communications, scheduling, finance, etc.

If this is something you would be interested in please reach out to the Augustana District Office at office@augustanadistrict.org or 320-234-8403 for more information. Exact day and time of the month will be set based on what works best for those interested in participating.

Please share this information with anyone you think may be interested in participating in this group.



Board of World Missions

... "A Little Child
Shall Lead Them"
Isaiah 11:6

A reflection from Pastor Paul Knudson

What moves us? Arguments for and against a cause are being found not to work but often alienate those we may seek to reach. We sometimes minimize a picture or a scene as simple. For most of us, what moves us to action is when our hearts are touched, when we are moved emotionally and visually.

Eric Knutson, the Augustana District Board of World Missions chairman, took these first two pictures. He was a part of a delegation of eleven representatives from the district who traveled to begin a covenant agreement with the Tabor Congregation of the Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in January of 2014. Leaders from Tabor and our district agreed to work together to help them multiply their amazing response to our Lord "to be his witnesses to the Good News of Jesus Christ" beginning in their city of Hawassa and throughout Ethiopia and beyond its borders.



Eric has long been a committed Christian seeking to bear witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. His experience in going out to places where Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is lifted as the precious Good News for all, moved him to action. He has in his heart this little boy to whom he gave this cross, which he brought with him on our trip. This child and

Tabor Partnership

others also pictured from a tiny village and countryside has not been forgotten by Eric.

He now leads the Board of World Missions, not so much because he understands that Tabor Congregation, with our partnership, has gone from 25 evangelists to nearly 70. Understanding that may move a few of us who are impressed with numbers. However, his memory of this little child looking down on that cross hanging around his neck is what keeps Eric's heart engaged and inspired to invite you to experience that joy through your witness.



Eric has created a brochure, featuring this Tabor Partnership, for the board to distribute to

congregations and others who may be moved to join in extending our Lord's Great Commission. (Contact info: office@augustanadistrict.org).

As your hearts are moved by the Holy Spirit, please join as congregations and as individuals in supporting this outreach.



Women of the Word: Faith Over Fear



2023 WOW Gathering

Saturday, September 16, 2023

hosted by **St. John's Lutheran Church**
Springfield, MN



The Women of St. John's Lutheran church in Springfield, Minnesota invite all Augustana District Women of the Word to attend the WOW Fall Gathering on September 16, 2023. The annual gathering is an opportunity for women to get together to share thoughts and ideas on what their women's groups are doing as well as to worship and hear from some amazing speakers.

The theme verse this year is, *"Behold God is my salvation. I will trust and will not be afraid for the Lord God is my strength and my song and He has become my salvation."* Isaiah 12:2

There are two amazing speakers scheduled for the Fall Gathering.



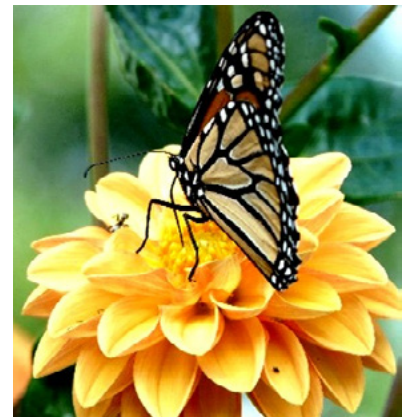
Pastor Erica Varcoe is the pastor at The Table Ministry in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. There is an article on The Table Ministry in the April AD newsletter. Pastor Varcoe will be speaking on faith over fear.



Pastor Jennifer Bennet serves Trinity Lutheran in Jeffers, MN and Bethany Lutheran in Storden, MN. She will speak on the transformation that occurs when we trust.

The WOW Fall Gathering is a day filled with food, fellowship, and faith. Registration information is now available on the Augustana District website augustanadistrict.org/church/women-of-the-word. We look forward to seeing you there.

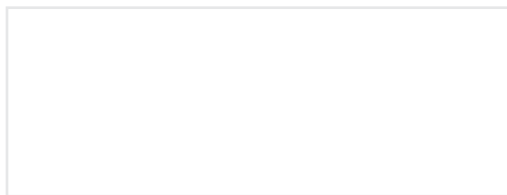
Jodi Dalsgaard
WOW Coordinator
St. John's Lutheran Church
Springfield, MN



Please continue to join the district in prayer for these Augustana District Congregations this month:

- ✠ His Light Ministries, Miami, FL
- ✠ Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Maple Lake, MN
- ✠ Hope Lutheran Church, Fosston, MN
- ✠ Hope Lutheran Church, Huron, SD
- ✠ Hosanna Lutheran Church, Watertown, SD
- ✠ Kensington Lutheran, Kensington, MN
- ✠ Lake City Lutheran Church, Lake City, SD
- ✠ Living Word International Christian Fellowship, Lauderdale, MN





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Augustana District



Women of the Word 2023 Fall Gathering

Saturday, September 16, 2023

Hosted by

St. Johns Church • Springfield, MN

Registration form available at

augustanadistrict.org/church/women-of-the-word

Coming Soon! The First Annual AD High School Retreat!

October 20-22 at Camp Okoboji in Milford, IA.

This retreat will feature a study of Ephesians that will be led by pastors of the Augustana District. Share this date with your high schoolers and their families and watch for registration information to be available soon.

