

“When the days drew near for him. . . He set his face to go to Jerusalem.” - Luke 9:51

Some call it “Rally Day.” Some call it “Fall Kick-off.” A pastor recently told me he prefers baseball, so it is “Opening Day” with his congregation. Some, however, refuse to name it at all because it suggests that the congregation was somehow “off” and now is back “on.” Since I am not currently the pastor of a congregation who is getting ready for fall programming, I offer no opinion. It seems a wise move.

But whatever this thing that happens in the fall is called or not called, it is clear that things change in congregational life once the summer is over, and programs resume. Regardless of how one might regret the summer slowdown (as it relates to worship attendance/activities), it is the case that most pastors and congregational leaders have been preparing for folks to “come back.” We even say things like “we have been preparing for you.” We put our best foot forward. We come up with creative programming titles and sermon series. We put on our “game face.” I would argue that there is something right and good about this. Borrowing words from Paul, “whatever is honorable, lovely, commendable, if there is any excellence...think about these things” (Phil. 4:8). We have been thinking about such things. Doing things with excellence is honorable and serves the neighbor.

The problem comes when everything we do, and attempt is measured solely by numbers. How does worship attendance this fall compare to last year? Do we have more people in Bible study? Will the budget get the bump we need and expect? Don’t get me wrong, we all should want the number of people joining our congregations to go up. God does also. But if the only measure of success, that is, what is “honorable, lovely, commendable, and excellent” is measured by the flow of people outside coming inside our congregations, it may well be a set-up for disappointment.

Maybe we can all take some comfort from Luke 9:51, where the flow is reversed. Jesus has his face set outward. He pursues this road, the grand plan of salvation, with the same relentless pursuit and eye He has towards each of us. He always has His “game face on” because there is so much at stake.

So, whatever your congregation’s fall “game face” looks like, and despite the end results of your best and honorable efforts, take some peace, solace, and freedom in this: His face is set toward you, your congregation and to all who do not show up this fall. Christ Jesus will not be deterred or grow weary in his relentless pursuit of love.

In Christ,

Pastor Randy Freund



AUGUSTANA WITNESSES

newsletter

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Staff Stuff

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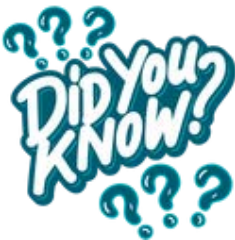
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... The Augustana District is preparing to host the **first annual** High School Retreat at Lake Okoboji in Iowa? It is!! Happening the weekend of October 20-22, 2024 and registration is open! For full details visit: augustanadistrict.org/events/2023-high-school-retreat/

Registration Is Open

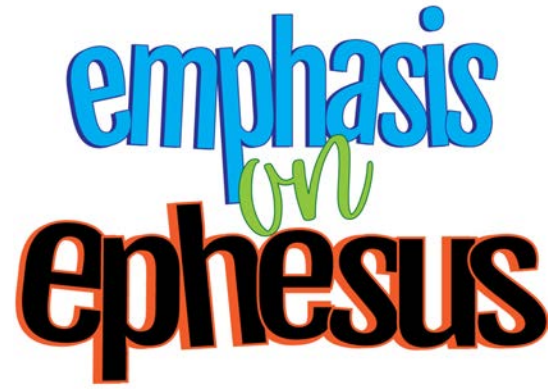
The First Annual AD High School Retreat!

October 20-22, 2023 • Camp Okoboji • Milford, IA.

This is a retreat focused on studying Ephesians, led by pastors from the Augustana District. Please help spread the word about this event to both high school students and parents during fall kick-off events and orientations. For full details visit:

www.augustanadistrict.org/events/2023-hs-retreat/

CHURCHES: PLEASE ADD THIS INFORMATION TO YOUR CALENDAR AND/OR NEWSLETTER TO INFORM YOUR HIGH SCHOOLERS & PARENTS!



AIMJ Vocational Children Program

In the month of June, All India Masihi Jamat conducted three vocational children's programs which were attended by 304 children. These vocational programs were like 3-day retreats for the children, where they could come together to learn more about Christ. This was organized during summer vacation so that all the children could attend. There were many action songs, movies, dancing, storytelling, acting, food, and games. The

children were very happy to spend these three days with their friends and also made many new friends. We also thank our youth as they came forward in organizing and especially in acting out some of the most famous biblical stories. We hope and pray that the lives of these children that were touched during these days could one day help them and their families in coming to Christ



Church Support Staff Support Group

Church Administrator/Secretary/HR/Finance Coordinator Support Group



This new administrative support group met for the first time in July. There are experienced admins as well as new admins in the group. A couple of pastors who are on their own without any support staff are also joining the group for some support in the office part of their jobs.

The support group meets the second Tuesday of each month from noon – 1 p.m. and the next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 12. Participants are welcome to enjoy their lunch while we talk. If you are interested in taking part in these conversations please contact the district office for the Zoom link at 320-234-8403 or office@augustanadistrict.org.



Budget Planning

Please include the following in your congregational 2024 calendar planning and church budget:

- ◆ February Theological Conference, registration is open, please visit: augustanadistrict.org/events/2024-annual-theological-convention/
- ◆ March Confirmation Retreat (NEW LOCATION as we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of this awesome event) For developing details, visit: augustanadistrict.org/events/2024-confirmation-retreat/
- ◆ April First Call Pastor Retreat and District Convention
- ◆ Support of the District's General Fund

Congregations To Pray For In September...

As you, the Augustana District, continue to pray for one another, we ask you to lift up the following churches as we move through August:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ✝ Resurrection Lutheran Church, Mankato, MN | ✝ Sauk Valley Lutheran Church, Osakis, MN |
| ✝ Romsdal Lutheran Church, Hudson SD | ✝ Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Hubertus, WI |
| ✝ Rushford Lutheran Church, Rushford, MN | ✝ Solem Lutheran Church, Hawley, MN |
| ✝ Salem Lutheran, Osakis, MN | |
| ✝ Salem Lutheran Church of Oxford, North Branch, MN | |



2024 ANNUAL THEOLOGICAL CONVENTION

“THE HEART OF THE MATTER: WHOSE WILL BE DONE?”



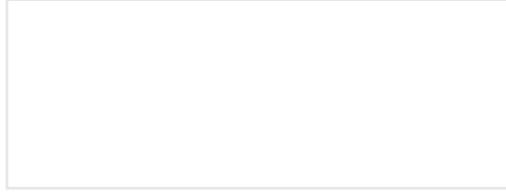
We live in a world saturated with ideas of “Free-will” while being a church that confesses that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. Join us for Augustana District’s annual Convocation of the Cross as Pastor Marney Fritts, Dr. Ken Jones, and Pastor Scott Grorud discuss how the bound will affects theology, church, and mission while helping to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified for the forgiveness of your sins.

“This, therefore, is also essentially necessary and wholesome for Christians to know: That God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will. By this thunderbolt, “Free-will” is thrown prostrate, and utterly dashed to pieces. Those, therefore, who would assert “Free-will” must either deny this thunderbolt, or pretend not to see it, or push it from them.”

– Luther, De Servo Arbitrio Section 9

Registration is open! For full details, please visit:

augustanadistrict.org/events/2024-annual-theological-convention/



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Augustana District

SAVE THE DATE



March 1 - 3, 2024

We have a new location!! See the developing details and watch the shareable promo video at:

<https://augustanadistrict.org/events/2024-confirmation-retreat/>