



**AUGUSTANA  
WITNESS**  
newsletter

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Staff Staff

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

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

Wendy Magruder . . . . . Office Assistant  
office@augustanadistrict.org

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

Phone... .. 320.234.8403

Web . . . . . www.augustanadistrict.org

Unbind Him!

*Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." - John 11:40-44*

Life is not always okay. We tend to seek joy to feel happiness, comfort, and meaning, including Mary and Martha, who seek Jesus to come and heal Lazarus, who is ill and close to death. Scripture reveals we are not only close to death but also dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1). When one realizes this death, we claw at the grave and try to free ourselves. Mary and Martha are no different when they scramble to interrupt Jesus' teaching and demand He come to save Lazarus before he dies. We come to Christ with our terms, which we think we have been clever in crafting as though appearing before a court as our own witness and defense.

Mary and Martha are distraught that Lazarus is close to dying. They allow the weight of the law to dig its fingers into their hearts, and they come to Christ with a demand. When He finally tends to Lazarus, He is moved and troubled. He cried to see the hurt that occurred with Lazarus's death and was concerned that His words were of little recognition to the people. He is constantly teaching that He IS life and He is God. Upon hearing the phrase, "If you were here, He would not have died" (John 11:32).

The law apart from Christ is certainly binding, and Lazarus is no exception to this rule. Once he died, the family wrapped him in linen and anointed him with oil. This action completes the understanding that he genuinely is dead according to the law. We truly bind ourselves to sin and cannot free ourselves. We lay at rest and stink of death. We can put on as much perfume (justification of sin) as we want, but we are dead and stink.

That is until a preacher comes and presents the words of forgiveness of sins. Two things occur here. First, God's mercy allows us to ask for forgiveness of sins; second, he restores us through forgiveness. On behalf of Jesus Christ, the preacher stands before the sinner who

is dead in sin and declares, "Lazarus, come out," followed by, "Unbind him!"

These words given by Christ through a preacher remove the sin that binds us and signifies only death. We come out as a new creature without the stench of death, or that stuff that binds us. Although the resurrection of Lazarus is only temporary, we see what Christ has promised. Let

the word of our Lord echo in the ears of the dead, "Come out" and "unbind him!"

This is the Glory of the Lord that you are forgiven of sin, and sin does not confine you to death. You are resurrected and anew in Christ's declaration of life.

Peace to you.  
Rev. Cody Mills

## Prayers for Leaders, Pastors, and Congregations of NCEs in Troubled Times

### REFLECTIONS FROM THE BOARD OF WORLD MISSIONS BY PASTOR PAUL KNUDSON

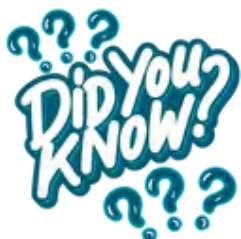
The fires of conflict can refine you or consume you in the flames. We in America have our own bitter conflicts, but at this point few of us expect our lives to come to horrific ends due to our divisions. We are called to pray earnestly for partners in mission who literally face life and death at the hands of those who seem to place no value in the life of others they assume stand in the way of their wielding power.

The North Central Ethiopia Synod of the Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus is one such Augustana District partner. One AD congregation, Living Word in Moses Lake, WA, is the primary source of funding for the continuing education of pastors and evangelists in this synod. Led by the synod president, Pastor Wagnew Andagre, these servant leaders are growing in their faith and witness.

These leaders and their people, however, are caught in the middle of violence perpetrated by tribal militias and informal military groups,

that are striking out in random violence that is putting our partner leaders at great risk. President Wagnew has shared how this can lead to fear and exhaustion for himself and others. I am sure that we can hardly imagine how one's witness could result in your life being snuffed out and your family left in jeopardy.

Pray, dear friends, for these committed servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that the perpetrators of this violence can be stopped short, turned around, and work for the common good. Pray that our Lord's witness, that has reaped such a magnificent harvest in Ethiopia, will be able to continue moving forward. This is just one center of horrific violence in our painfully troubled world. Our hearts go out to so many who are struggling. Today we unapologetically ask that you lift up the North Central Ethiopia Synod in prayer. Pray without ceasing dear brothers and sisters in Christ.



... The Board of World Missions will vet a mission entity you're thinking of supporting? Reach out to the district office for more information on how the BWM can help your congregation.

## Women of the Word: Recap Part II.

As a continuation of last month's WOW Gathering recap, we would like to highlight the three speakers in this edition. The first was Pastor Julie Smith, the Coordinator for Districts and Fellowships came with an update from LCMC. She stated that there has been an increase in the number of districts s being formed recently. Less than half of the LCMC congregations are currently a part of a district and an effort is being made to try to connect churches through districts.

The Augustana District continues to stress the importance of Theology, Church and Mission through an annual theological conference, stressing working together on events and the call process and by stewarding a high percent of the district revenue to missions.

LCMC is working on a Strategic Plan that has four parts: 1) Welcoming new churches; 2) Leader care - many pastors are leaving and they are trying to be proactive to work with them; 3) Rejuvenating connections through districts and fellowships by building up, reviving, and creating new ones; 4) Tending to theological commitments so they don't lose their core identity.

LCMC, approaching 1000 congregations, many without pastors, continues to grow and support congregations to remain healthy and theologically sound. Pastor Julie also emphasized the need to keep looking for people that would be interested in becoming pastors.



The second speaker, Pastor Erica Varcoe is pastor at the Table Ministry Church that was planted two years ago in Sioux Falls. The church meets in the Shenanigans Bar and even though some thought it would only last a couple weeks it has

a large following of adult and youth activities. The church began during the time of

covid when many with community rooms were not allowing them to be used. The bar had a room that they rented out for birthday parties, etc. and were willing to let them use it. Pastor Erica expressed thanks to all who have supported the church and said that it continues to grow. It is a place where sinners gather to be met by the Word of God – the Word that forgives.

Using the example of egg shells, she shared that God comes for the broken so why are we walking on egg shells afraid that someone will find out about our lives. The lost are found and saved. We would rather be lumped with 99 than the one lost sitting at the table of sin and shame. No faking can hide our sin, on the cross Jesus exposed us all. It isn't about us and how we appear, it is about what He has done for us. Trust in the Lord as said in Isaiah. Jesus comes for the imperfect, the wandering sheep, tax collectors and prostitutes. He comes for our failures and our flaws. Hope comes in the empty tomb of Sunday.

Shenanigans is the only bar in Sioux Falls that hires felons and the presence of this ministry has lifted them up. This congregation is touching many lives by giving rides to court, serving low-income schools, serving at the soup kitchen and just helping those in need. They do not pay rent but they need more space. They have just three paid staff – a secretary, a DJ who runs the tech equipment, and a part time worship leader. The owner of the bar is sick and wants to sell it but no matter what happens the Table Ministry hopes to keep the partnership alive. The offering for the WOW gathering was given to the Table Ministry.



The third speaker, Pastor Jennifer Bennett from Faith Lutheran in Castle Rock, CO spoke about Faith Over Fear. She has recently returned from a mission trip to Latvia. In that country all religion was outlawed from the time of

World War II until the 1990's so they have no older generations of Christians as Latvia was occupied by the Soviets for over 50 years. Exodus 15:2 says "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him" was the theme verse for the gathering. The love of God is only through faith given to us through Him. The Father satisfies our thirst, we drink of the water from the well of salvation. God is worthy of thanks and praise and we need to continue to sing praises to Him.

Pastor Jennifer traveled to Latvia in June with a group of ten people and they worked at what would look like an all day Vacation Bible School which ran Monday through Friday where she was teaching 3-5th graders. Paganism is dominant but Lutheran is a popular religion for those that are coming to faith. Members of the mission team were responsible for their own funding working through SON (Spiritual Orphan Network) which is an approved mission of the LCMC.

## REGISTER NOW FOR THE FEBRUARY THEOLOGICAL CONVOCATION OF THE CROSS

### 2024 ANNUAL THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

"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.

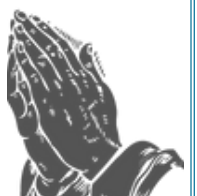
**Registration is open!** For full details, please visit:

[augustanadistrict.org/events/2024-annual-theological-convention/](https://augustanadistrict.org/events/2024-annual-theological-convention/)

## CONGREGATIONS TO PRAY FOR IN NOVEMBER

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

- ✝ St. Olaf Church, Bode IA
- ✝ St. Paul Lutheran Church, Springfield, MN
- ✝ St. Paul Lutheran Church, West Falls NY
- ✝ St. Peters Evangelical Lutheran Church, Walmore, Sanborn, NY
- ✝ Tahoma Lutheran, Maple Valley, WA
- ✝ The Table Ministry, Sioux Falls, SD
- ✝ Trinity Lutheran Church, Jeffers, MN
- ✝ Trinity Lutheran, Carrington, ND



# AUGUSTANA DISTRICT FINANCIALS

The financial news for October is not great. As of right now, we are at a net loss of \$9,354.04 for the month and a net loss of \$22,008.50 for the fiscal year which ends in March. Last year at this time we were at a net income of \$646.39.

## 2022 to 2023 Comparison

	April 1, 2023 - Oct 25, 2023	April 1, 2022 - Oct 31, 2022
Income	\$59,666.85	\$79,227.79
Expenses	\$81,675.35	\$78,581.40

As you can see, expenses are just slightly higher this year, due in part to a new high school retreat and additional service coordinator travel to meet the needs of district congregations.

The number that is more concerning is the Income which is down significantly from last year. This puts the district in a very difficult position as we are trying to be responsive to the increasing needs of our congregations with decreasing financial resources.

You can financially support the district by mailing contributions made out to the AUGUSTANA DISTRICT to: Augustana District 335 Main St. S. Hutchinson, MN 55350 or by going to the district website and giving electronically at: [www.augustanadistrict.org/donate-now-2/](http://www.augustanadistrict.org/donate-now-2/)

Thank you for your support!



PLEASE

Pastor's & Congregations, is your contact information up to date?

Have you recently changed your contact details such as your address, email, phone number, website URL/domain name? It would help us greatly if you could verify your profile information.

Verify congregational information at [www.augustanadistrict.org/church/roster-of-churches/](http://www.augustanadistrict.org/church/roster-of-churches/)

Verify pastoral information at [www.augustanadistrict.org/theology/endorsed-clergy/](http://www.augustanadistrict.org/theology/endorsed-clergy/)

If you require changes, please contact the district office at 320.234.8403 or by emailing Wendy at [office@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:office@augustanadistrict.org).



# Church Support Staff Support Group

## Church Administrator/Secretary/HR/Finance Coordinator Support Group



This administrative support group continues to meet monthly. There are experienced admins as well as new admins in the group.

The support group meets the second Tuesday of each month from noon – 1 p.m. and the next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 14. 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](mailto:office@augustanadistrict.org).



## Church Staff Openings

Do you have a leadership position in your congregation, clergy or lay, that you must fill? Is your church a member of the Augustana District? Does your congregation have an internship opportunity available for a seminarian?

If you've answered "yes" to any of these questions, we invite you to list them on the Augustana District website. Current position openings:

- ◆ Full Time Youth Director, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, MN.
- ◆ Pastoral Leader/Solo Pastor, Faith Community Lutheran Church, Slayton, MN.
- ◆ Full-time Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church, Springfield, MN.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Solo Pastor, Faith Community Lutheran Church, Slayton, MN.
- ◆ Worship Leader, Living Word Lutheran Church, Marshall, MN.
- ◆ Organist, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Lamberton, MN
- ◆ Pastor, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Lamberton, MN.
- ◆ Part-time Pastor, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Badger, MN.

# ChurchSalary

MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION

# REPORT

Are you looking for new church staff? Does your church council or personnel committee struggle to figure out what a fair and competitive salary and compensation packet should look like for your church staff? The Augustana District has a subscription to a program called Church Salary Report that district

churches can access at no cost to themselves. This tool can help you figure out what a competitive package should look like in your area. To get your report, visit the website via the following steps:

Visit [augustanadistrict.org](http://augustanadistrict.org) >> Boards >> click on Board of Congregational Services in the sub-menu >> Scroll to the bottom of the page where you will find the form.

Fill out the brief questionnaire and one of the board members will process your information through the Church Salary site and get back to you with a report based on your submitted information.

## 2024 DISTRICT CONVENTION NOTE

Please note that this event is being moved up a week in 2024 to Saturday, April 27 at Mount Carmel in Alexandria, MN.

Thursday, April 25 and Friday, April 26 the district will again be hosting a retreat for first call pastors.

Watch for more information coming soon!

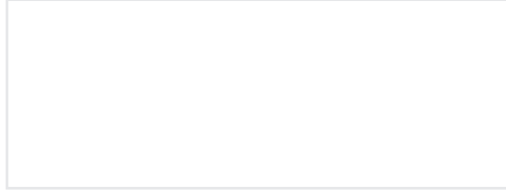


**Save  
the  
Date**

**The 10th Annual  
Confirmation  
Retreat  
is happening  
March 1 - 3, 2024.**

## SCHOLARSHIP

The Augustana District offers Scholarships to seminary students. You can find information about how to apply on the website at [augustanadistrict.org/theology/scholarship-application/](http://augustanadistrict.org/theology/scholarship-application/)



Address Service Requested

Hutchinson, MN 55350

335 Main St S.

Augustana District

## A Call To Pray

With a very secular society, more than 50% of Montevideo, Uruguay's population declares itself without religion... We want to reach them with the Gospel of Christ!

Be part of a new church plant in Montevideo, Uruguay!

### PLEASE PRAY WITH US FOR

- ◆ Montevideo
- ◆ The church planting project
- ◆ The missionaries
- ◆ Financial support

Missionaries Varinia Cuello & Miguel A. Nunez



Missionaries Varinia Cuello & Miguel A. Nunez

Questions? Please contact Pr. Randy Freund at

[director@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:director@augustanadistrict.org)

