

Devotional

“What I say to you I say to all, ‘Keep awake.’” Mark 13:37



AUGUSTANA WITNESS newsletter

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Warnings like that from Jesus always make me a little nervous. We are certainly more accustomed to, and comfortable with, the Jesus who is kind and merciful, the Jesus who is full of forgiveness. But a Jesus who speaks as if there is disaster on the horizon . . . one who warns us against resting, against taking it easy . . . that Jesus is a little bit frightening. After all, isn't part of what we cling to the fact that we can take it easy? That we can rest in him? Warnings like this call that notion into question.

The people Jesus spoke with about the end times had been given every warning. Jesus himself had warned them of the importance of wakefulness, but in the moment of truth, not one disciple was there. Everyone fled from Gethsemane (after falling asleep a few times) and they didn't look back until Easter morning. Perhaps the spirit was willing, but the flesh was certainly weak. If none of those people could stay awake, how can we be expected to?

After all, we are tired. We get tired of trying to figure out what is right. We get tired of trying to be good parents, or children, or spouses, or employees, or bosses. We get tired of trying to be good Christians, tired of carrying heavy burdens. We work hard and when we are tired we want to be able to go to sleep. This demand to stay awake is unreasonable. It is too much for God to ask of us when all we want is a little rest. All we want is a little peace.

How can God ask us to watch all these signs and stay awake? The signs are awful. Wars and rumors of wars, disasters of all kinds, sufferings not yet imagined. These are the signs Jesus spoke of signs that foretell the coming of the age. Who can watch these signs without crawling into bed and just waiting for it all to be over? It is exhausting and terrifying. Who can stay awake for this?

When push comes to shove, we all sleep through the big event. We won't make this kingdom come and we will likely be quite surprised by its arrival. It comes like a thief in the night. Jesus shows up in unexpected places, at unexpected times, in unexpected ways. His ways are not predictable.

But there is one thing you can absolutely count on. What he is doing in the world he is doing for your salvation and when he comes again, he will be coming for you, coming to bring you home. He will wake you from your slumber. That is the source of the peace that passes

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World Missions

A BEACON OF LIGHT: A TREASURE OF HOPE



Deep in the heart of Kerala, India, lies a school, an outreach center, a place of refuge called Bishara. A

delegation of four people (Ian McDonald, Zeke Hanson, Nate Hanson and Randy Freund) visited this ministry, sponsored by the New Hope Mission Society, a vetted mission partner of the Augustana District. Although the Bishara Center primarily provides outreach, service and training to Muslim converts, its reach of love and support extends further.

During this recent visit, we witnessed the scope of this outreach, participated in three dedication services and filmed what will become a documentary on the life of Rev. K.K. Alavi.

The Outreach



A father of four sustained injuries from a fall that no longer allowed him to work. His family was destitute. Adding to this, their conversion to Christianity had

consequences. The oldest son was kidnapped and drugged. The damage is permanent. They turned to this place called Bishara. With funds provided by the Tabshir Project, they received a Tuk-Tuk vehicle. This will allow them to transport goods and provide income for their family.

She was young and quiet, but present, serving during our meals. When asked about her story, we found that she was rescued from a red-light district, the victim of human trafficking.

At the microphone during a service celebration, one convert after another lined up to tell their story of conversion and hope. The Center's Administrator, Dr. Abdul Messiah, translated their stories into English for us.

With dedication and attention, students listened and took copious notes as their instructor taught about early mission development in India.



A beautiful and long-anticipated building to house guests and those who need refuge was finally completed and ready for use. Worship and meditation in the chapel three times a day provided a consistent rhythm for our time at Bishara.

The Dedications

During this amazing week, we were privileged to be a part of three dedications. A guest house with seven beautiful rooms and office space was dedicated, complete with the beautiful songs from the school choir. We dedicated the Tuk-Tuk for the family mentioned above. What a joy to hand over the keys and accompanying papers indicating their ownership. Bisharah's founder, Rev. K.K. Alavi, is no longer able to walk around the campus. A motorized wheelchair, funded by gifts from NHMS donors, was received during our stay and we also dedicated this wonderful gift. It will allow Rev. Alavi to attend chapel services and teach in spaces outside his home.

The Documentary Film

One main purpose of our trip was to capture film and interviews to document the amazing life and ministry of Rev. K.K. Alavi. Film producer and writer,



Zeke Hanson, captured hours of interviews and thousands of images during the week. Sponsored and provided by New Hope Mission Society, Hanson will produce a short documentary film that will soon be available.

We were humbled and honored to witness this ministry. Bishara is truly a beacon of light and a treasure of hope deep in the heart of Kerala, India.

Pastor Randy Freund
Service Coordinator
Augustana District



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 Augustana District will again be hosting a retreat for first call pastors.

Watch for more information coming soon!

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/



High School Retreat Recap

The first annual Augustana District High School retreat was held in Okoboji Iowa in October. Pastor Julie Smith, along with two youth directors (Kristen Durst from Faith Lutheran in Hutchinson and Mark Nissen from Peace Lutheran in Watertown) led 40 students as they spent the weekend digging into the book of Ephesians. It was a great weekend and we look forward to more participants next year!



As the district continues to grow into new areas like the high school retreat and first call pastor retreat, as well as having a full-time service coordinator, our budget has expanded as well. Congregational and Individual giving, however, has decreased. Please prayerfully consider financially supporting the district. There are enough congregations to more than cover the current deficit if each congregation gave just \$200 per month for the next two months. Please consider what the district does or can do for you, and how you can help the district.



Congregation giving	4/1/23 - 11/21/23 (8 months).....	\$61,183
Individual giving	4/1/23 - 11/21/23	\$5,925
Non-giving income	4/1/23 - 11/21/23	\$298
Total received through.....	11/21/2023	\$67,406
Estimated budget commitments	4/1/23 - 3/31/24	\$158,945
Giving needed by end of fiscal year to break even		\$91,539

For those of you who do regularly support the district, the council would like to express their sincere gratitude.

Convocation of the Cross

“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/

CONGREGATIONS TO PRAY FOR IN DECEMBER

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

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ✝ Trinity Lutheran Church, Hallock, MN | ✝ Zion Lutheran Church, Caroline WI |
| ✝ Trinity Lutheran, Birchwood, WI | ✝ Zion Lutheran Church, Skanee MI |
| ✝ Vernes Lutheran Church, Trail, MN | ✝ Zion Lutheran, Buffalo Lake, MN |
| ✝ Wang Lutheran Church, Wang, MN | |

In January, we will go back to the beginning of our list as the January congregations were not shared in time. In February, a new list will begin as we hope that you and your congregation will continue to keep the district in your church prayers.



LCMC 12th Annual Three Days of Prayer

January 2-4, 2024

Prayer was a holy habit practiced by Jesus Himself (see Mark 1:35; Luke 11:1). The disciples who walked alongside Him witnessed a connection between His public life and ministry, and this habit of prayer. It was a connection so significant, that they asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1).

LCMC's Three Days of Prayer on January 2-4 is an opportunity for us to follow the Lord's example and to come together as one across the association with a shared purpose: to pray.

Each congregation or person can structure these days of prayer however seems best. In the past, some congregations put together a prayer vigil, a person signing up to pray in 30 minute intervals – perhaps for all three days or a few hours each day. Others have offered a prayer service at a set hour on each of the three days. Some have encouraged their people simply to pray at work, home, or

school, wherever they are and whatever they are doing. We encourage you to do whatever works best for your congregation.

No matter how you structure this time of prayer, let's come together as an association of congregations across the U.S. and around the world to pray.

Check out our Three Days of Prayer Resources page to download a sample guide for your congregation at <https://www.lcmc.net/three-days-of-prayer>



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
- ◆ 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
- ◆ 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

Women of the Word

Blessings this Advent to you, may you be preparing for the birthday celebration of Christ and his second coming – I am extending an invitation to you:

2024 Fall Gathering

Women of the Word of Augustana District

September 21, 2024

Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, MN

8:30 AM coffee and 9:00 AM start

Theme verse:

“Pray all the time. Ask God for anything in line with the Holy Spirit’s wishes. Plea with him, reminding him of your needs.”

- Ephesians 6:18



Guest speaker: Gretchen Ronnevik, author of *Ragged: Spiritual Disciplines for the Spiritually Exhausted*. She is an author, writer, and speaker associated with 1517. (In case you are not familiar with 1517, check out their website: 1517.org – Christ

for You. They offer daily articles, podcasts, and videos with a focus on theology, apologetics, and history. Daily free on-line resources.) Need HELP with your shopping list – *Ragged* would be a great Christmas gift idea!! For a friend, for your mom, or even for yourself. I found it in the 1517 bookstore. (Just in case some guys are perusing this article – perhaps this gift idea is helpful for you.)

We are excited to be hosting the Fall Gathering and look forward to what the Spirit prepares to speak about through Gretchen. She loves rich theology rooted in real life. She created Gospel Mentoring, a training program for intergenerational discipleship, and is the co-host of *Freely Given*, a podcast on living free in Christ. So, mark the day on your new 2024 calendar and join us at the Fall Gathering.

Your sister in Christ,
Jan Kreie
AD WOW Coordinator,
jkreie@mediacombb.net



Church Administrative Staff Support Group

This administrative support group continues to meet monthly. It includes experienced staff as well as new ones.

The support group meets on the second Tuesday of each month from noon – 1 p.m. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, December 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.

For Church Administrators | Secretaries | HR Professionals | Finance Coordinators



(Devotional - Continued from page 1)

all understanding. That is where we find our rest. That is why you can go to sleep at night without

fear. Jesus is keeping watch over you, and he doesn't fall asleep.

Pastor Julie Smith

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



**Save
the
Date**

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



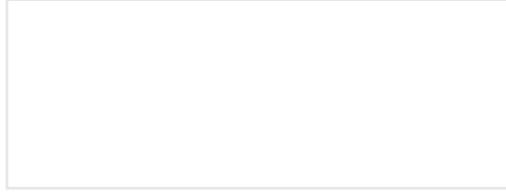
Is your church looking for new staff? Do you find it challenging to determine a fair and competitive salary and compensation package for church staff? The Augustana District has a subscription to *Church Salary Report*, a program that can assist district churches in determining what a competitive package should look like in your specific area.

To get your report:

- Visit augustanadistrict.org
- Click on Boards
- Select Board of Congregational Services
- Scroll to the section
- Fill out the brief questionnaire and submit it.

A report based on your information will be provided by one of the board members, processed through the Church Salary site.

ChurchSalary
MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION
REPORT



Address Service Requested

Hutchinson, MN 55350

335 Main St S.

Augustana District



BLESSINGS TO YOU THIS

Christmas

AND ALWAYS

The AD Staff, Council and Board Members