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# Devotional

*“Woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!” -1 Corinthians 9:16b*

This past weekend I preached at my uncle’s funeral. In 25+ years of preaching this was, I think, the first time in my life I was tempted to do something other than preach the Gospel at a funeral. My uncle had a complicated relationship with the church and I just wasn’t sure what to do with that. I’ve preached at countless funerals for people who had complicated relationships with the church, or no obvious relationship at all, and wasn’t as puzzled about what that meant for preaching as I was this time around.

I suppose part of that being puzzled had to do with having a pretty good idea of what my family wanted to hear. I was more tempted than ever before to eulogize rather than preach. It was just sitting right there for the taking, like a shiny piece of fruit. “Just grab it. It’s the easy thing!”

But somewhere in my memory this passage from 1 Corinthians was banging around, or maybe it was the voices of countless teachers and mentors over the years. “Woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!”

There are all sorts of things the church tries to be in the world. All sorts of roles we try to fill in people’s lives or in society. It’s easy to forget that there is only one thing that makes the church the church. There is only one thing that is our true calling in the world and that is to make Christ known, to deliver his Word to his beloved. Woe to us if we opt for anything else!

And the truly miraculous thing is that when the gospel is proclaimed, when it breaks through the grip of sin and death, something happens. We who were hungering and thirsting for a different word are taken up into the new life that is given by this Word. While we clamor for something else, anything else, Christ Jesus is doing for us what is needful – forgiving sins, raising the dead, establishing his kingdom. He will not be deterred from this mission and he will not stop until you have been brought to new life.

Pastor Julie Smith

# Service Coordinator Resignation

Dear Augustana District,

With gratitude and a deep sense of privilege, I hereby offer this letter of resignation as Augustana District Service Coordinator, effective May 31, 2024. It has been an honor to serve as Service Coordinator for the District since 2015. I believe that the Augustana District is in a time of transition and growth. After prayer and reflection, it seems right that this transition marks the time to turn leadership over to a new District Coordinator. Because I have no plans to retire from active ministry, I hope to be of service in other ways. Although I will not be involved in the transition and call process, I will certainly offer whatever would be helpful to the District Council while I remain Service Coordinator.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve the Augustana District. The encouragement I have received, the many gifts and strong leadership of those who faithfully serve this District, and the dedicated, supportive District staff have all made this calling one I will always highly treasure.

In Christ,

Pastor Randy Freund

Augustana District Service Coordinator



## From Pastor Julie Smith, Augustana District Council Chair

It is with profound appreciation for years of dedicated service that the District Council prepares to say goodbye to Randy Freund as our Service Coordinator. Randy has been a leading voice in the Augustana District since day one, and especially in these last nine years. We trust that he will continue to be a leading voice in our district, even as he exits the position of Service Coordinator for new adventures. Randy exits this post having established Augustana on a solid foundation for moving forward. We are grateful for all he has done.

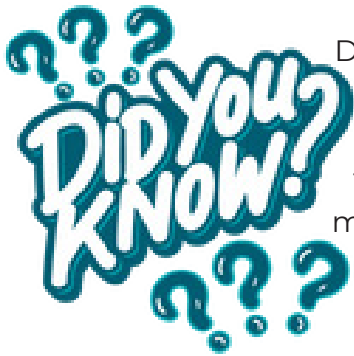
We are also grateful that he has given us plenty of notice to begin planning for what comes next in Augustana. The District Council will hold a special meeting on February 2 to establish a transition team. This team will review all aspects of the operation of the Augustana District and will make a recommendation to the District Council for future staffing arrangements. If you have interest in serving on the transition team, please contact Julie ([julie@lcmc.net](mailto:julie@lcmc.net)) and your name will be passed on to the District Council for consideration.

We will not be inviting applications for the District Service Coordinator position until the transition team has made a recommendation to the District Council. We will provide regular updates through the newsletter on the status of the work of this team. Please keep the Augustana District in your prayers during this time of transition, and please inundate Randy with words of appreciation for his work!

# Mission Minute: All India Masihi Jamat (AIMJ) Ministry Report

As always, AIMJ has been busy spreading the Gospel and Celebrating Christ. In December they baptized 40 people and had 56 seekers participate in a meeting. In August and December 955 women attended Women's meetings, and in December over 2,200 youth attended meetings to hear the gospel with over 900 children hearing about Jesus. Pastor Asad writes: "By the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we were able to organize Christmas

programs in multiple locations. We saw so many believers and Muslims who received the gospel for the first time. The Lord really protected all our pastors, believers and all the people who attended the programs. In total, Christmas programs were attended by 16,865 people. We thank God for such a blessing as he continues to grow His ministry through us. May this ministry grow even more and many more Muslims come to Christ."



Did you know that the Board of World Missions has a well-established process to vet missions? If your congregation is looking at a new mission or would like to be reassured about a mission you support, feel free to reach out to the board at [office@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:office@augustanadistrict.org). There are also several well vetted missions listed on the Board of World Missions page on the district website at [augustanadistrict.org/boards/board-of-world-missions/](http://augustanadistrict.org/boards/board-of-world-missions/) if you are looking for a mission to support.

## How Every Little Bit Can Make a Big Difference

The district office recently received this note along with a contribution check from First Lutheran Church in Britton, South Dakota.

*"Please direct this \$2,500 to the Tabor Church, Pastors Motorcycle Fund. Our Sunday School Students raised these funds via their weekly "Noisy Can" offering. Thank you so much for your support of this ministry!*

*Happy New Year!*

*First Lutheran Church Sunday School"*

A quick thank you was sent off to Pastor Terrill Sorensen at First Lutheran and he replied,

*"For the kickoff of this effort we had a couple of kids ride bikes up the center aisle of the church. Then one of the kids told the congregation what they planned to do with the noisy can offering. Then we put cards in the spokes and had them ride back down the aisle sounding like a motorbike. It was a lot of fun."*

What a great way to teach giving and missions to your children. Thank you First Lutheran for sharing your story and for blessing the Tabor Church with this gift.

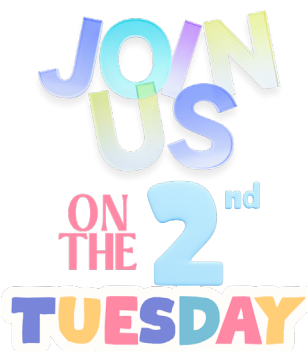


# Please, Can You Help?

The finances of the district have started to trend a little more positively the past month but there is still a ways to go. Thank you to those of you who have sent in extra contributions over the past couple of months, it has made a difference. If you/your congregation has not had the opportunity to support the district recently would you please prayerfully consider sending in support for the active mission and ministry that is taking place in the district? The district council and staff are so excited with all that is happening through the district and it cannot be done without your help. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

## Church Administrative Staff Support Group

**For Church Administrators | Secretaries | HR Professionals | Finance Coordinators**



This administrative support group meets monthly. It includes experienced staff as well as new ones.

The support group meets via Zoom the second Tuesday of each month from noon – 1 p.m. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 13. 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, [email Wendy](mailto:wendy@augustanadistrict.org), or scan the QR Code.



## Church Staff Openings

The district staff would like to invite you to join them in praying for district congregations that are currently searching for church staff.

- ◆ Christ the King in Hutchinson, MN searching for a full-time youth director
- ◆ Faith Community in Slayton, MN searching for a pastoral leader/solo pastor
- ◆ St. John's in Springfield, MN searching for a full-time pastor
- ◆ New Hope in Comfrey, MN searching for a pastor
- ◆ Zion in Kent, WA searching for a pastor
- ◆ Living Word in Milbank, SD searching for a pastor
- ◆ Hope in Fosston, MN searching for a lead pastor
- ◆ Trinity in Carrington, ND searching for a full-time pastor

If you have a church staff opening feel free to submit it to the district through the website at [augustanadistrict.org/church/staff-openings/](http://augustanadistrict.org/church/staff-openings/)







# THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

- John 8:32

**March 1 - 3, 2024**

**Last Day To Register is February 16, 2024!**

How do you discern what is TRUTH and what is A LIE? What does Scripture teach us about TRUTH?

Join other confirmation students and Augustana District pastors and leaders for a weekend of fun indoor and outdoor activities at an exciting new location. This year the learning sessions will explore the differences between the world's truth, your truth and experiences, and God's truth. To register, please visit:



OR SCAN ME

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

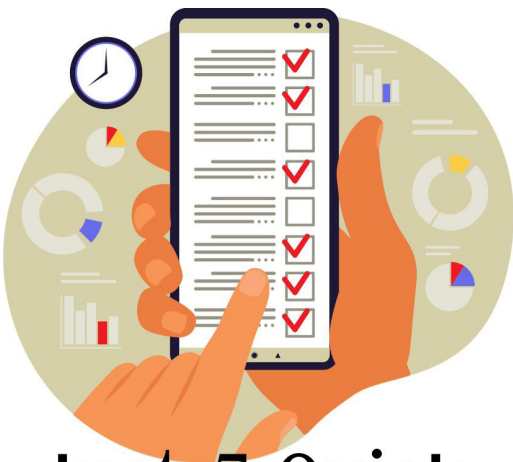
If anyone in your group has any special dietary restrictions they must be registered, and dietary restrictions noted before Feb. 16 so that we can get a diet request form to them to fill out by the 16th in order for the camp to accommodate those restrictions.

## Save The Dates: District Convention & First Call Pastors Retreat

- ◆ First Call Pastor Retreat April 25-26
- ◆ District Convention April 27
- ◆ Location: Mount Carmel in Alexandria, MN

**REGISTRATION INFORMATION COMING SOON!**

## Your Feedback Is Requested Please...



**Just 5 Quick Questions**

The **Board of Christian Education** is seeking your input into a potential project for supporting, encouraging, and educating the next generation of church leaders and pastors. This short, 5-question survey is an opportunity for you to tell us what you believe would be most helpful for youth and second-career adults exploring a call to ministry.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the board chair, Rod Ford at 859-620-7417.

Here's the link to the survey form:.

<https://forms.gle/vUT4t6qYeT2N8Pli6>

or scan the QRCode.



# A Word From WOW

Dear Women of The Word,

Winter is in full force for those of you in the Midwest. I know we have some Sisters in Christ who are enjoying these winter months in fairer weather. Just think what you are missing not driving on snowy, icy roads. We all just need to remember that the Lord is with us wherever we are.

We have had many sick people in our church including several with new and complicated diagnosis of cancer. That has brought to mind the Prayer Shawl ministry. If this is something you haven't done in your church, you might want to consider adding it. It is a way to reach out with love and care to others who are hurting. Many people have been comforted and felt loved through this ministry. If you do a web search for prayer shawls you will find patterns, prayers, and other information.

Just as a general guideline, it is suggested that as the person making the shawl does the work, they should offer prayers for the person that might

receive the shawl. It is nice if a prayer is given to the recipient along with the shawl.

There are many patterns for the shawls. They are generally made out of bulky soft yarn with big needles or hooks. They can be crocheted or knit, and the finished size is generally 26 x 60" or about 30 x 64." The main thing is that they just need to be soft and cuddly.



I know many of you find puzzles relaxing and keep your hands busy during these cold winter days and that is great, but I like to have something that shows what I have accomplished which is why I enjoy keeping my hands busy with something that doesn't have to go back in

the box when it is done.

I pray that each of the churches in our district has an organized women's group. If any of you don't, and would like suggestions or help in forming one, feel free to contact any of the WOW officers.

God's Blessings,  
Marcia Heinje

Augustana District WOW Secretary

**UNTIL ALL  
HAVE HEARD  
MATT  
HEW  
28:19**

## 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/](https://augustanadistrict.org/theology/scholarship-application/)





# 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)



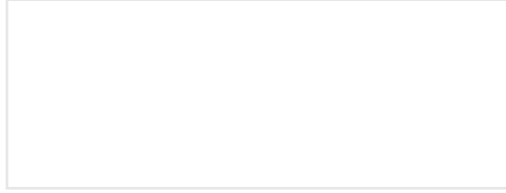
Is your church looking for new staff? Do you find it challenging to determine a fair and competitive salary and compensation package for church staff? The Augustana District has a subscription to *Church Salary Report*, a program that can assist district churches in determining what a competitive package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

To get your report:

- Visit [augustanadistrict.org](http://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

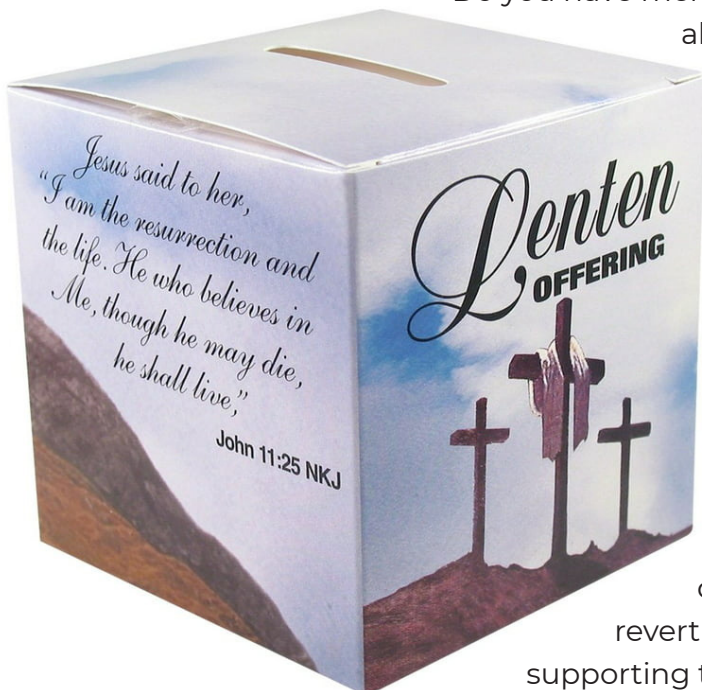
335 Main St S.

Augustana District

## Support Strategies

Has your congregation decided how to use your Lenten offerings this year? Would you consider using a portion of them to support the Augustana District?

Do you have members that are eligible for **Thrivent Action Grants**? How about hosting a Lenten dinner using a Thrivent Grant as seed money and collecting a free will offering to support the district or its ministries, maybe sponsoring a scholarship for the First Call Pastors Retreat?



**Choice Dollars:** Did you know that **Thrivent Choice Dollars** is another way that you can support the Augustana District? If you are a Thrivent policy owner you are most likely eligible for Thrivent Choice Dollars. You can designate these Choice Dollars to any non-profit organization, one of which is the Augustana District. You can do this via the Thrivent website or by contacting your Thrivent representative. If you do not designate your 2023 dollars by March 31, 2024, they will revert back to Thrivent. Thank you for prayerfully considering supporting the district via this opportunity.