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# Devotional

## Sunrise is Coming!

*"But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen."* Luke 24:1-5

Here, in the depths of the Lenten Season, we start looking for the glories of Easter morning. Your pastors, worship planners and choirs are letting the "Alleluias" seep out a little early. The planning is well underway, the music is selected, and the celebration is laid out. Yet, here we still are, in the depths of the Lenten Season, in the solitude of the road to the cross, in the purpleness of the journey.

Isn't this life as a whole? Isn't our whole life spent this way? In the midst of our day-in and day-out routines, in the midst of the gloomy news on T.V. and in the papers, in the midst of attending funerals, and tending to the ill aren't we looking forward to the glory and the "Alleluias?" Isn't this our lives? Granted, there are bright spots of births, and birthdays to celebrate, newlywed couples to toast, and accomplishments to hail. Rainbows appear after the rains, and the sun peaks through the storm clouds. Life is not all a Lenten journey... or is it?

*"Why do you look for the living among the dead?"* We look for the living among the dead because Christ has given us life. We look for the living among the dead because the author of life dwells within us. We look for the living because Christ has promised us life. We look for, and forward to, life. So, whether we are tending to the sick, or grieving, or celebrating a newborn, we look for life. We look for the Living One, the giver of life. And, in all of our looking, He is looking back at us. He is looking at you, celebrating you and your life here, and your life in the world to come. He is the source of life for all the living. He rejoices over your now. He rejoices also, over your life to come.



Pastor Becky Hand,  
AD Program Coordinator

# The Theological Conference Recap

## The Heart of the Matter

The annual theological conference of the Augustana District, LCMC, was on February 5 and 6 at the Embassy Suites Airport Hilton hotel, under the title *"The Heart of the Matter: Whose Will Be Done?"*

As several of the speakers reminded us, Luther once remarked that after his death all of his works should be burned except the Small Catechism and his book on the Bondage of the Will. Our speakers also reminded us that our context is deeply mired in the notion of a free will. It can be a most difficult task for those of us who would be preachers of the Gospel to speak to ears tuned to the thinking of free will, but our speakers did an admirable job in clarifying and helping us with this matter.



The conference speakers were Rev. Dr. Marney Fritts of Maple Valley, WA; Rev. Dr. Ken Jones of Des Moines, IA; and Pastor Scott Grorud of Hutchinson, MN. The initial panel discussion with all of the speakers was moderated by Sarah Stenson who gave us a broad introduction to their presentations, offered for us to gain an appreciation for the wide range of impacts an improper understanding of the will can have in our time and culture. Dr. Fritts admirably presented the scriptural and confessional witness concerning our incurable condition of a will curved in upon itself in dire need of a redeemer – who is, of course, Jesus Christ our Lord. Dr. Jones followed up with this in terms of how the bound will in our cultural context is affecting college students, who are quite frankly exhausted and desperate to hear some other word which can set them free from the expectations and agendas of the free will advocates who insist all kinds of social ills can be addressed

and ameliorated if we just work harder. Oh, the bondage! Finally, Pastor Grorud gave us insights into practical matters of pastoral care to people who oftentimes seem to have no ears to hear a different word on the bondage of the will.

Rev. Randy Freund shared his plans to step down from his servant position as our district service coordinator. He will be missed. A process is beginning to determine what course our district will follow as we move on. Rev. Julie Smith also reported on her work with LCMC and how our district can assist the umbrella organization in furthering our mutual goals.

Further comments were heard about how much fun was had by people reconnecting with old friends and acquaintances, and making new connections during breaks, meals, and free times. This is an often overlooked positive outcome to a conference like ours.

Thanks to our vendors who were present, for the work they do and service they provide – Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT), Luther House of Studies, and Sola Publishing. A unique event also occurred at this conference as Carolyn Nestingen came with boxes of Jim's books for us to claim for our own libraries. He is missed by us all.

All in all, it was a wonderful time of insight and fellowship, well worth my trip from Washington to attend, and I hope to do it all again next year, (unless Jesus returns first!)

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Louis M Hesse,  
Moses Lake, WA

Videos can be found at <https://augustanadistrict.org/resources/video-channel/>

# Mission Minute: Update

Greetings AD!

Last May, I had the opportunity to attend the AD District conference in person for the first time, after years of virtual participation. It was truly a thrilling experience for me, especially being present as the first Endorsed Missionary of AD. During the conference, I shared about God's calling for my family to return and serve in support of unreached people groups in Laos and parts of the Mekong region. I am pleased to announce that God has made what seemed unachievable, achievable, as we are preparing to move back to Laos in the upcoming summer of 2024.

God has graciously provided us with supportive partners to help us reach our goals so that we can return. While there will be some changes, I will continue to provide theological support and work on Bible translation for unreached groups. However, my focus will now shift from a regional impact to a global one. My family and I are still processing what this transition means for us, but we are genuinely excited about the opportunities that lie ahead in the coming months.

Nevertheless, we are in urgent need of launch funds to facilitate this transition. These funds will assist us in covering expenses such as flights, visas, moving costs, and other initial expenses crucial for our relocation. Our launch fund requires immediate support as we prepare for the upcoming months. Unfortunately, the slow response from many Lutheran churches is a

significant concern. Therefore, I kindly appeal not only to churches but also to individuals who may be interested in supporting our mission. For those willing to contribute, please visit our website at Heart for Mission ([www.heartformission.com](http://www.heartformission.com)) or <https://www.alwm.org/laos-thailand> to find out how you can help.



We humbly request your continued prayers and partnership as we embark on this journey towards the future. Your support is invaluable to us. Thank you!

Rev. Dr. Thomas Thorstad  
Heart for Mission – A Ministry of Awakening Lives to World Missions



Does your congregation have a footprint with an overseas mission? If not, please consider looking to the Board of World Missions for some suggestions of vetted missions that you and your congregation can support.

## Who are Ambassadors and What Do They Do? You Are Invited to Learn More!

AD ambassadors want to pray for your congregation, specifically. Also, we'd like to fill you in on what's going on in the district. Therefore, ALL PASTORS, currently with a congregation, or awaiting a call, are invited to join a special AD ambassador's meeting via Zoom on Wednesday, March 6 at 10:00 a.m. CT. We'd love to see you there and check in with you and your congregation. Please join us by going to Zoom and joining a meeting with this Meeting ID 839 6777 4599 and Security Passcode 006675. If you have any questions on how to join the meeting feel free to contact the district office for help.

# You're Amazing!

PLEASE SCAN  
TO HELP

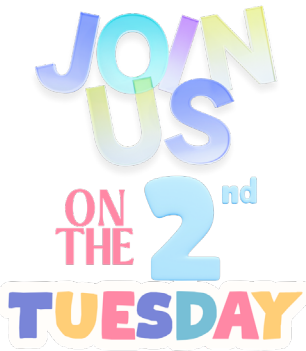


THANK YOU to those of you who have really stepped up to help the district move from a significant YTD loss to a much better financial position as we approach the end of the fiscal year on March 31. At the time of this printing we had recorded a net income of \$22,379 for the month of January and we are at a net income YTD of \$11,651. Thank you for your ongoing, and above and beyond, support of the district.



## 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, March 5. 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](#), or scan the QR Code.



## Prayers

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

- ✝ Living Word Lutheran Church in Marshall, MN – Looking for a Director of Children's Ministry and Worship Leader
- ✝ Our Savior's Lutheran in Lamberton, MN is looking for a pastor and an organist.
- ✝ Our Redeemer Lutheran in Badger, MN is looking for a part-time pastor.
- ✝ The Augustana District as they navigate the search for a new service coordinator.







"Free in Christ" has arguably been the most notable and referenced theme of LCMC. How is it best understood in the context of the other three LCMC themes (Accountable to One Another, Grounded Scriptures and Confessions, and Carry out the Great Commission)? How is it best understood in the broader context of Galatians? Dr. Steve Turnbull will help us explore these questions.

Registration is now open!

See full details at the website:  
[augustanadistrict.org/events/2024-annual-district-convention/](https://augustanadistrict.org/events/2024-annual-district-convention/)



Calling All First Call Pastors and Seminary Students! You are invited to a special retreat designed just for you!

The Augustana District understands the challenges of a first call and would like to help you navigate some of those challenges by offering this retreat.

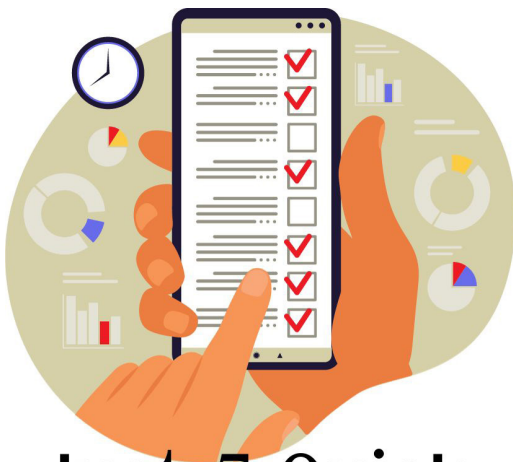
Enjoy time with colleagues and build connections and relationships with fellow pastors in the district.

Registration is now open!

See full details at the website  
[augustanadistrict.org/events/1st-call-retreat/](https://augustanadistrict.org/events/1st-call-retreat/)



## 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

Hello! My name is Diane Anderson, and I am the current treasurer for the Augustana District Women of the Word. I live in Hutchinson with my husband, Jim. We have three adult children and their spouses and five wonderful grandchildren in our family. We have been members of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Hutchinson since 1970.

Our church supports many causes. I'm involved with our quilting group which meets two days a month. We send most of our quilts to Lutheran World Relief, but also give some to local causes. I serve on the rummage sale committee, which supports our Property Management Team. We also serve a community breakfast once a month and serve a lunch to high school students once a month. The students walk over to a church across the street, have lunch and hear a message from our area youth directors. The food is donated by members of our church.

I have been involved with Women of the Word since it began. I served on the first committee as the secretary. Back then we did newsletters that had to be copied and mailed! I was willing to serve on this committee because I believe it's important to interact with other women from LCMC churches to hear about what they are doing and just having fellowship with them.

At the end of this year's WOW gathering, I am resigning from the position of treasurer. It will be my third year and it's time for someone else to take the job. The treasurer receives the registration forms and makes out the attendance

sheet and checks in the people as they come to the meeting. After the meeting the registration money is deposited and used to pay the expenses incurred at the meeting. The offering money goes to whatever charity is designated by the WOW Committee. There isn't much to do after that except to make out the treasurer's report for the next annual gathering. Augustana District uses Wells Fargo Bank, so whoever takes this job will need to have access to a Wells Fargo Bank. I hope you will prayerfully consider taking this job.

The next WOW gathering will be held September 21, 2024, at Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson. I believe the very first meeting was also held there. The theme for this year's gathering is PRAISE-PRAY-PROCLAIM and we will have a very special guest who is a writer and speaker, Gretchen Ronnevik. You can find out more about her at [gretchenronnevik.com](http://gretchenronnevik.com). I hope you will make plans now to attend.



*"I'm Gretchen, farm-wife, mother and teacher to six hilarious children, writer, tutor, knitting designer and mentor. I am passionate about teaching women*

*about their freedom and identity found in theology of the law and the gospel."*



## 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/)



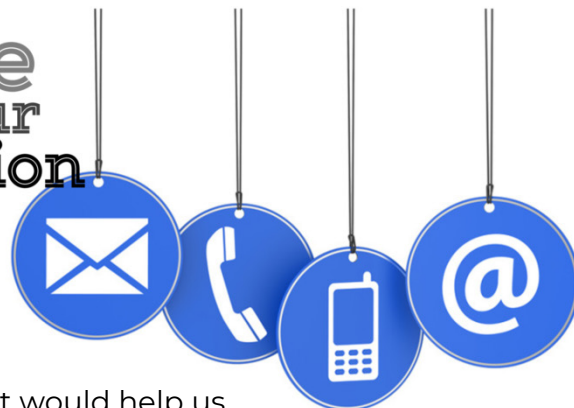
# Congregational Contacts

Does your congregation have a point person who is the best contact for the Augustana District (pastor, council president, other plugged in lay person)? If so, do they receive this e-mail directly? If not, is there someone who should be your point of contact? In either case, if there is someone that should be receiving district information directly please reach out to the office at 320-234-8403 or [office@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:office@augustanadistrict.org) with the name and contact information of anyone that should be looped in to district happenings.



Update  
your  
Information

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).

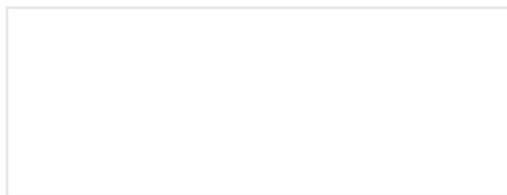
Is your church looking for new staff? Do you find it challenging to determine a fair and competitive salary and compensation package for church staff? The Augustana District has a subscription to *ChurchSalary Report*, a program that can assist district churches in determining what a competitive package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

**ChurchSalary**  
MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION  
**REPORT**

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



Address Service Requested

Hutchinson, MN 55350

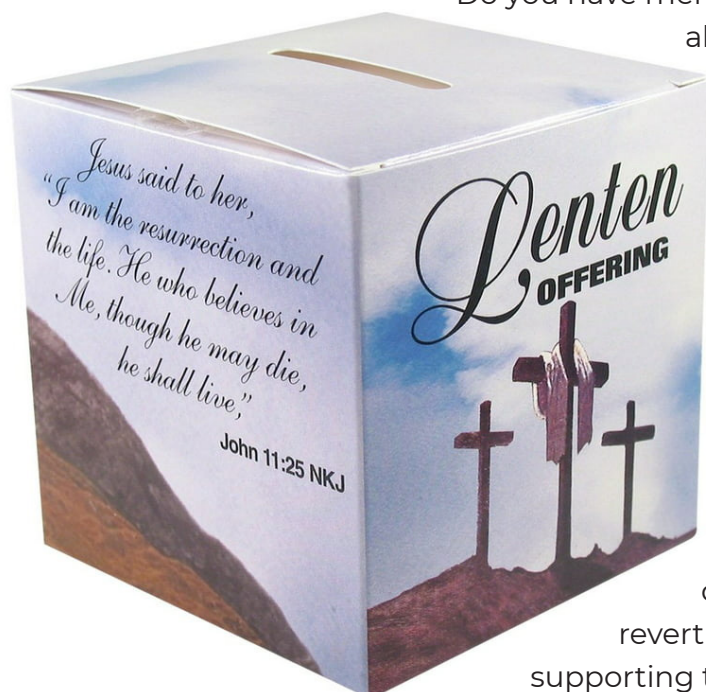
335 Main St S.

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.