



**AUGUSTANA
WITNESS**
newsletter

March 2025

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Devotional

All Christian churches need sound stewardship and mission to survive. Over the past four decades, Pastor Fred Westerhold has worked in several mission settings as a pastor/developer in the western United States. His experience in supporting the outreach of his latest two points of service (Harvey, ND and Lebanon, OR) are unique. Both chose to become LCMC parishes, after having been unable to secure the required two-thirds majority to assume control of their respective properties. Fred and his wife Sheryl are an extremely effective team in encouraging congregations starting from scratch.

When You Come To The Fork In The Road...

Sometimes you may feel like old Benaniah (1 Chronicles 11:22) – a mighty warrior under king David known for his bravery and exploits, including a lion in a pit (on a snowy day). Ya just gotta get in there and fight the good fight, regardless of how dauntless it may seem!

2010 was the year we came upon the proverbial fork in the road. The fork we chose took us on an adventure that still remains, entry into the LCMC. My journey as a pastor post-2010 took me to two locations, Harvey, North Dakota and Lebanon, Oregon. Each of these congregations were split almost 50/50 regarding their ELCA memberships. Those choosing to leave the ELCA walked away - not with glee. They left knowing they had responded to God’s call to follow His truth in Scripture and His reliable leading. They departed and confidently walked into a “new world” of opportunities and freedom without a heavy-handed hierarchy, with LCMC.

Either congregation’s remnant could have dispersed into the winds of other churches, but they firmly believed there was a need for a faithful Lutheran church in the area, and God was directing them to do so.

I received affirmation to follow God into His sure and certain future through a dream I experienced. This dream was as vivid and powerful as one could imagine. In it I heard the voice of God say, “Look!” When I looked, there were, on a wall, the words, “ego ami ton theon.” Now, I’m not a Greek geek, but I knew what it meant. “I Am God. Follow Me!” I had been struggling to understand how to convey the gravity of needing to leave a heretical and apostate church. He would do the leading and give the words necessary for me to speak. I had to be faithful and listen to Him.

Over time, both congregations discovered how God provides all the resources needed to make a new start. In both locations, the Seventh Day Adventists offered the use of their building; we had Sunday School teachers, lectors, and worship leaders. We were ready to go. “Leaving home” (from beautiful buildings and grounds in which one was baptized, confirmed, married, etc.) hurt, but was a no-brainer, following Jesus trumps everything else.

The apostle Paul’s words to the Philippians (3:13-14) rang true; “Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”. For the congregations I served, LCMC was the way to go. (continued next page)

The LCMC, as an association, has provided just enough autonomy to do “church” in a faithful way according to Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and good order. We have developed liturgies which maintain solid Lutheran theology and we have the freedom to send mission and missionary support to entities we choose. In the LCMC, pastors develop closer relationships, pray for each other, encourage each other, and share ideas. The LCMC National Gatherings actually have more Bible study than business! What a refreshing move it has been!

Following our congregation’s division in Lebanon, Oregon, a committee was organized to search for land on which to build or purchase an existing building. Property is expensive. A church building with lots of potential was bought out from under us so they began looking at vacant office buildings. For a lot of folks that’s not very high on their list of places for a new church, they get caught in a mindset that the building needs to look “churchy,” be a structure easily recognized as a church.

We prayed and searched for two years and came back to one of the first buildings we looked at. It was built in 1950 as a feed store on one end and a furniture store on the other. The building was a maze of cubicles, a small kitchen, and six restrooms; two of which were handicapped accessible. What we discovered was it was a free-span building. The structural support was provided by steel poles set every twenty feet. As a result, we were able to configure the inside space the way we wanted. There was just enough parking, but we were

given permission to use the next-door business parking lot on the weekends. We bought that building and have paid off the mortgage in ten years. This year, 2025, is our fifteenth anniversary.

If you began your saga in a rented room or shared (or are sharing) a facility with another congregation, I pray you’re putting it to its best use. God is faithful to bless His kingdom workers. Refuse to allow yourselves to say or think, “We can’t do that – we’re too old, or too small, or too poor, or too tired.” Don’t let Satan put that into your heads – unless you want to die. Where is your heart? To whom are you going to be faithful?

Let the public know what you are doing for mission work. Invite them to join you on a journey in helping others more than yourselves. A congregation with a strong mission and outreach ministry will grow – spiritually and monetarily. Guaranteed! “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” (Luke 6:38)

Anything worth doing has hidden surprises galore. Do your due diligence. Go into your search and purchase with your eyes open.

The fork in the road is behind us. Run the race - being bold like Benaniah – and expect God’s blessings as you do.

Fred Westerhold

Pastor from Lebanon, Oregon

Opportunities to Financially Help the District

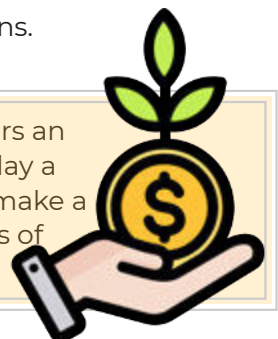
Direct your
Thrivent Choice
Dollars
Today!



Are you a Thrivent client who is eligible for Choice Dollars? If so, did you know that the Augustana District is one of the non-profits that you can designate those Choice Dollars to? You have until March 31, 2025, to designate where you would like your 2024 Choice Dollars to go if you have not done so already. Please consider the Augustana District when designating your Choice Dollars this year.

You can contact your Thrivent representative or the Augustana District office with any questions.

Another impactful way to support the district: Did you know that the Augustana District offers an opportunity to support first-call pastors? By contributing to the sponsorship fund, you can play a vital role in helping first-call pastors attend the annual first-call retreat. Your generosity can make a significant difference in supporting these beginning pastors navigate some of the difficulties of being a pastor. Consider sponsoring a first-call pastor today!



Missions

Greetings to you, Augustana District, from Laos; I am thankful for another opportunity to write to you about what is happening here, and globally, as one of your Endorsed Missionaries. Our ministry here in Laos has been ongoing and fruitful on many levels, but our work is not limited to just Laos or Thailand. We have been able to serve globally by supporting Bible translation and theological studies in a multitude of regions between South Asia and the South Pacific.

At the local level here in Laos, my wife is serving as one of the pastors at the national church headquarters, where our family worships weekly. Her ability to support the women's ministry, worship team, and Sunday school program has her busy throughout the week. She is also taking on some national roles as the director for social and welfare ministries, which cover a range of programs like our Pigs for Pastors ministry and support for natural disasters. I have taught theological courses here in Laos and Thailand with partner seminaries that we are working with; these teaching times generally have a week to two-week J-term feel.

My work globally centers primarily on Bible translation, where I am working in two ways. The first is ongoing Bible translation projects in South Asia under Islamic-run governments. I work with church partners as a translation consultant for around 36 languages.

Unfortunately, I cannot say where those countries are located for safety concerns and due to the internet and the ability to search, but you may ask Pastor Nate Hanson, the new Missions and Stewardship Coordinator, Pastor Becky Hand, the Ambassador Liaison, or Eric Knutson, the chair of AD Board of World Missions for more information. The second area I am working in is supporting new churches by starting translation projects in the South Pacific, where we are starting projects in four countries using around 80 different languages.

Familywise, our boys are enjoying being back in Laos. They are active in school and church activities. They are relearning the language, it will take time for them to really develop the language skills. Our oldest, Abraham, participated in a National Science competition and received a gold medal.

We are thankful for all your prayers and support. Like all ministries, your support through prayers and financial gifts make this work possible. You can learn more by visiting us at: <https://www.alwm.org/laos-thailand> Blessings,

In Christ,
Tom



Pr. Tom's wife at a Sunday School meeting



Pastor Cindy with her cows for the Pigs for Pastors Program



Pastor Tom teaching and working with trainers on the Bible translation process



Lenten Offering: Scholarship Fund Support

Does your congregation collect a special Lenten offering? Are you trying to decide what that offering should be used to support this year? How about designating it for the Augustana District Seminary Student Scholarship Fund? Congregations and individuals are encouraged to support this fund so that the district can continue to offer this scholarship to seminary students. You can donate to this fund anytime throughout the year, and seminary students can apply for this scholarship by June 30, of each year on the Augustana District website.



Convocation Convention Recap

2025 Convocation of the Cross		6 Videos
1. Opening Worship	38:15	
2. John Pless: Session 1	49:21	
3. John Pless: Session 2	48:39	
4. Panel Discussion	52:18	
5. Speaker Pr. Randy Freu.	24:51	
6. Closing Worship	45:54	

The February Theological Convocation was a wonderful day and a half event attended by about 80 pastors and lay people. There were two great speakers, Rev. John Pless and Rev. Randy Freund, who shared their thoughts on the topic Pastoral Care: Battling Doubt, Despair, and Desperation. There was plenty of time to network and catch up with old friends and make a few new ones. This event was recorded and you can watch it by going to the Augustana District website at <https://augustanadistrict.org/resources/video-channel/>



What/Who are AD Ambassadors?

That is a great question for the Ambassador Liaison (previously program coordinator) Pastor Becky Hand. Augustana District Ambassadors are congregational friends that lift churches in prayer and connect with pastors or council presidents to keep congregations informed of district news as well as checking in for prayer requests and/or needs of congregations.



Each quarter there is an Ambassador Zoom Meeting that is open to all pastors and congregational leaders. The next meeting is on April 2, at 10 a.m. CST. You can join this Zoom Meeting via the following link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86429106520?pwd=SggvXz84SiOpZMAp95AxAky2clFB> **Cx.1** Or you can log into Zoom and use Meeting ID 864 2910 6520 with Passcode 794649.

If you'd like more information about what ambassadors do please contact the Ambassador Liaison, Pastor Becky Hand at b.hand@augustansdistrict.org.

Women of the Word



Hello, my name is Gail Telecky, I am the new treasurer for the Augustana District Women of the Word board. I am a member of Faith Lutheran in Hutchinson, Minnesota. In September of 2024 Faith Lutheran hosted the district WOW gathering, it was fun to see so many women come together for a day of fellowship, worship, and praise. I was unsure about agreeing to have my name on the ballot, but I am so happy I did. I have met so many wonderful women and I look forward to the blessings I receive as this journey continues.

I am a widow of almost fifteen years, some days are difficult, but I have a dedicated support system of three married children, seven grandchildren and two bonus grandchildren (who are married to my grandchildren). I keep throwing out not so subtle hints for great-grandchildren, I will see what happens. I am retired,

which gives me an opportunity to volunteer. What joy is received by volunteering; it is true that the giver receives more than the recipient.

I am a two-time cancer survivor, unfortunately I was left with severe neuropathy affecting my mobility which has created a change in my lifestyle. It has not slowed me down! Our God is so good. He along with family and friends have seen me through so many difficulties. How easy it is for us to want control, but that control is God's and God's alone. I am still learning the truth of this, and each time I relinquish the control I want, I am reminded, then rewarded with my choices. Sometimes hard lessons are learned.

Soon it will be Ash Wednesday and then Lent. Our Wednesday night Lenten services at Faith Lutheran are so meaningful, helping us on our walk with Jesus to the cross. At times it brings tears, then joy at the realization that I am forgiven, as we all are, as believers in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Dear friends, may your path to Easter and the wonder of the resurrection be one of contemplation, prayer, and peace.

Gail Telecky, WOW Treasurer

Church Staff Openings

Did you know we have a cool listing of church staff openings on our website? If you or someone you know is on the lookout for a ministry position, we'd love for you to check out our listings! Visit our website or scan the QRcode to see the latest postings!

- † Lead Pastor | New Life Lutheran Church | Duluth, MN
- † Part Time Pastor | North Immanuel Lutheran Church | Pelican Rapids, MN
- † Full-time Pastor | St. Pauls Lutheran Church | Springfield MN
- † Solo Pastor | Faith Lutheran Church | Slayton MN
- † Pastor | Grace Lutheran Church | Erhard MN
- † Full-time Pastor | St. John's Lutheran Church | Springfield MN
- † Lead Pastor | Hope Lutheran Church | Fosston MN
- † Organist | Our Savior's Lutheran Church | Lamberton MN
- † Part-time Pastor | Our Redeemer Lutheran Church | Badger MN



Update
your
Information!



Please let us know if your information has changed!
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AUGUSTANA DISTRICT FIRST CALL RETREAT

May 1-2, 2025
Mt. Carmel Ministries - Alexandria, MN



All First Call Pastors and/or seminarians are invited to explore the delicate balance of vulnerability in the pastoral office at our 1st Call Retreat. At this retreat, you'll engage with insightful speakers and participate in thoughtful discussions on what it means to be both a broken sinner and a leader in Christ's Church. You can see full details, download the brochure, and register at augustanadistrict.org/events/1st-call-retreat/ or scan the QR CODE →



AUGUSTANA DISTRICT CONVENTION

Saturday, May 3, 2025
Mt. Carmel Ministries - Alexandria, MN



TWO KINGDOMS

life in the overlap



In his 1523 essay *On Temporal Authority*, Martin Luther explores the concept of two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. According to Luther, all people live under the authority of these two realms—the earthly kingdom of the left hand and the spiritual kingdom of the right hand. The central question is: how do we navigate being citizens of both kingdoms? What is the relationship between the two, and how do we live faithfully in both? In light of the current political climate in America and our congregations, with the Scriptures and catechisms in hand, how can we engage the world, even as we recognize that this world is not our true home? Join us at the 2025 Augustana District Convention to delve into Luther's teachings on the left and right hand kingdoms and discover their profound relevance for your life as a Christian today.

Please visit <https://augustanadistrict.org/events/annual-convention/> or scan the QR CODE to see full details, download the brochure, and to register online.



Augustana District
335 Main St S.
Hutchinson, MN 55350
Address Service Requested

Church Administrative Staff Support Group

For Church Administrators | Secretaries | HR Professionals | Finance Coordinators

Join
US on the
2nd
TUESDAY

Join us at our monthly administrative support group where experienced and new staff come together to collaborate, share insights, and learn from each other. It's a fantastic opportunity to network and grow in your role.

The support group meets via Zoom the second Tuesday of each month from noon – 1 p.m. 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), or scan the QR Code.

