

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a desert landscape at sunset. In the foreground, there is a large, natural rock archway. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow across the sky and the rocky terrain. The hills in the background are silhouetted against the bright sky.

Augustana Witness

April 2025

2025 Events

Online and in person
opportunities for learning,
fellowship, and support

Mission Report

Read the latest report from
All India Masihi Jamat Ministry

Event Recap

Successful connections
Confirmation Retreat 2025

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DEVOTIONAL

As you receive this newsletter we will be in the thick of Lent, gearing up for Holy Week. In that week, all the bright expectation of Palm Sunday will give way to the darkness of betrayal and arrest, abandonment and death. It's a roller-coaster week for those immersed in the texts and the liturgical ritual. Of course, that's a fairly small group of people. Most people know that Easter is coming, but they don't necessarily run the gauntlet of Holy Week in order to get there. That is the unique habit of liturgically oriented Christians.

But the roller-coaster of Holy Week in the church, while artificial in some ways, is not so very different from our lives every day. Our lives are filled with highs and lows. We experience success and failure in the blink of an eye. We are celebrating one moment and grieving the next. The best version of ourselves gives way to the worst in moments as mundane as driving down the road. This is the reality of life in this world, life marked by joy and sorrow, death and life.

However, something is different about life in this world after the events in Jerusalem 2000 years ago than had ever been the case before. That roller-coaster week 2000 years ago changed our lives forever. That roller-coaster week ushered in a new day, a new era, a new kingdom. And in this new kingdom, death has been defeated forever.

The highest highs and lowest lows of this life reach their limit, their end, in death, but that death gives way to resurrection.

Paul tells us that when we were baptized into Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death. He further tells us that since we have been united with him in death, we shall certainly be united with him in the resurrection.

The events we remember during Holy Week are not only the events of 2000 years ago. They carry forth to this very moment. In every moment, in every circumstance, you are being united to the death and resurrection of Christ. In every moment, you are being made an heir to his kingdom. In every moment, you are receiving the benefits of that work 2000 years ago.

Because he lives, you will live also. Because he is risen, so will you be. So that, someday, what is now said of him will be said of you as well. He is risen! He is risen indeed!! She is risen! She is risen indeed!! Hallelujah!
Thanks be to God!

Rev. Julie A. Smith

Coordinator for Districts and Fellowships

Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ

MISSION REPORT

ALL INDIA MASIHI JAMAT MINISTRY REPORT FEBRUARY 2025

This report was submitted by Asad Masih and was edited by Rev. Nathan Hanson for this edition of the Augustana District newsletter. There are many photos and stories to consider, which are available at your request. You are encouraged to read and consider the testimonies of those converted from other faith practices in northern India. Look for these impressive stories on pages 6-9 of the full AIMJ report for stirring and powerful life stories of conversion from despair and darkness to light and hope in Jesus.

BAPTISM CAMP

We conducted eight baptism camps in which 79 people were baptized. Sites included Najafghar, Delhi; Pakur, Jharkhand; Betul, Madhya Pradesh; West Champaran, Bihar; Basudebpur, West Bengal; Siliguri, North Bengal; Maheshtala, Kolkata, West Bengal; Muraroi, Birbhum, West Bengal.

SEEKERS MEETING

We organized seven seekers' meetings in which 88 seekers participated, with all 88 participants being baptized. The details include the largest event, where there were 20 seekers present baptized at Kolkata, West Bengal. The total baptized was 37 people between the two camps.

WOMENS MEETING

The Lord helped us to organize four women's meetings in February 2025, in which 188 women participated and were blessed by the fellowship. They were held in four separate sites. The first group of 35 women gathered to consider the theme from Jeremiah 29:13, "Seek God with your whole heart." The second group of women, with 49 present shared from Proverbs 3:5-6, "Surrender to God and His will." The third women's meeting had 73 women present to hear and discuss James 4:8, "Draw near to God through prayer." The final gathering for women's study of God's Word was held with 31 women present for a study of Ruth 1:1-4:22, "The story of Ruth."



YOUTH MEETING

We conducted four youth meetings, attended by 141 youths. Thirty-two young people gathered in Ramnagar 2, West Bengal to learn about I John 2:3-6 with the theme "Dedicate yourself to God." Deaulti, Howrah, West Bengal was the next meeting site, attended by 28 youth who sang songs and worshiped the Lord. Their

theme was “Serve others to honor God” from Matt.25:40. “Acknowledge that you are a child of God” was the theme at the third youth camp, which had 38 participants to consider John 1:12. At the fourth and final camp, 43 youth were present and convened around the topic “Carry out God’s plan for your life” from Ephesians 2:10.



CHILDREN’S PROGRAM

We conducted four children’s programs, attended by 166 children. The Word of God and the topic “Four friends of Jesus” was shared with 37 children. Then, 58 children participated in the second camp, gathered for the topic “How to be a prayer warrior.” The third camp was conducted with 43 children present, to also consider “How to be a prayer warrior.” The fourth and final camp had 59 children present to hear about Fruit of the Spirit.



WORD OF THANKS

We thank the Lord for blessing us abundantly as we continue with training

for our believers. This month, we organized two training sessions. On February 22, we organized a meeting for 97 believers in Raghavpur, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal and the topic was “Jesus said: My sheep hear my voice.” We also organized a meeting in Samastipur, Bihar and it was attended by 65 people. The topic was “Does the Bible talk about Muhammad? No.” We also answered the doubts they had and encouraged them in sharing their faith with others.

TESTIMONIES

Maulana Safar Ali Mullick of Pakur district, Jharkhand was an instructor in Islam who was converted to faith in Jesus Christ by a former student of his who witnessed to him. One great line in his impressive testimony reads: “The Bible verse that touched my heart most was Romans 12:12, ‘Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer’. This verse really touched me as it gave me hope that even in my sadness the Lord will be with me and He is there with me in every step.”

Morjeena Begum, Daughter-Samima Akter, Daughter-Safirun Akter of Siliguri, North Bengal. This entire family turned to faith in Christ following the death of Morjeena’s husband in 2014, completing their baptisms in February of 2024. The closing line of their collective faith story is very powerful: ‘The Bible verse that touched our heart was John 3:36, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.’ During the

Christmas meeting of 2024, we decided to surrender our lives to Jesus and so all of us were baptized on February 22, 2025. Please

pray for us so that we can be the living testaments of our Lord's work."

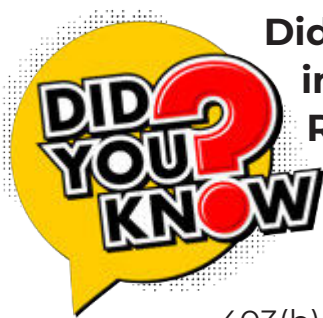
AUGUSTANA DISTRICT MISSION PARTNERS

Is your congregation looking for global mission partners to support? The Augustana District Board of World Missions has three large mission partners and several vetted mission organizations hoping and praying for more partners.



At the request of congregations, the BWM has researched and vetted over a dozen mission organizations. There is a brief intro with their contact information on the district website for you to consider for congregational or individual support. You can find their information at www.augustanadistrict.org/mission/mission-partners/

If there are other agencies, missions, and/or organizations that would like to have considered or vetted by the Board of World Missions, please contact the district office.



Did you know LCMC and AD have help for congregations in finding information about Health Insurance and Retirement Benefits for their pastors and staff?

Here is a brief note from a plan specialist:

I am the Retirement Plan Specialist for the LCMC sponsored 403(b)(9) Retirement Plan. For the past 15 years, I have worked with LCMC congregations, pastors, and staff to ensure they are ready for retirement. I help with enrollment, prior employer plan rollovers/transfers, contributions and more. I can explain the tax benefits of housing allowance distributions for retired Pastors from their LCMC Retirement Plan, which is not available from IRAs.

You can find more information on the LCMC website at <https://www.lcmc.net/retirement-benefits> or you can reach out directly to Annette LaPlant, Retirement Plan Specialist by calling 952-746-1118, or by emailing alaplant@cap-mgt.com



WOMEN OF THE WORD

Hello! My name is Myrna Chamberlain, and I am thrilled to be a new member of the Augustana District Women of the Word Board. Originally from Iowa, I married my late husband, Robert, in 1967. Together we raised two beautiful children, Michael and Jodi, and I am the proud grandmother of three. In my professional life I was a library technician at Mankato State University and later Northern State University in Aberdeen, SD. I returned to Mankato in 2020, and soon thereafter became a member of Resurrection Lutheran Church, where I am active in our women's



Lutheran families, and their faith was an integral part of their identity in the new world of the United States. In fact, it was at Mill Pond Lutheran Church in rural Iowa where my grandparents met and started their life together. I love the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 1:5: "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also." Genealogy only covers part of our history, dear friends. It covers dates, locations

and names. But faith is equally, if not more, important to who we are, where we come from, and where we're going. Sharing our history with the next generations isn't only about birth certificates and tombstones. It's also about sharing the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to save us from our sin, and give us heaven.



group, choir, evangelism committee, and anywhere else a helping hand is needed. I've been thinking a lot about genealogy and family history lately. The older I get, the more important I feel it is for me to pass on our family's story to my children and grandchildren. My maternal great-grandparents were both German immigrants who entered America through Ellis Island. Both were also born into devout

Share your story! And more importantly, share your faith! I'll look forward to seeing all of you at the Women of the Word Gathering in Perham this next September, and then here at Resurrection Lutheran in 2026.



2025 CONFIRMATION RETREAT RECAP

In February the Augustana District had 200 students and chaperone's attend a weekend

confirmation retreat at Inspiration Point in Vining, Minnesota. The topic this year was "What Is the Church." There was worship, time to dig into the Bible, large group time, small group time, and lots of games and fun inside and outside. This event will be held February 27-March 1 in 2026 at the same location. Get the date on your church calendar now and watch for registration details to be out in August.



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



REGISTER BEFORE HOLY WEEK SO YOU DON'T FORGET

AUGUSTANA DISTRICT CONVENTION

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



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:

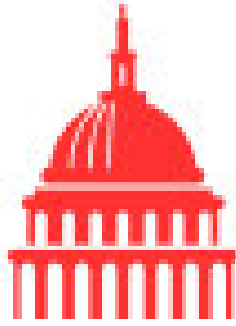
how do we navigate being citizens of both kingdoms? What is the relationship between the two, and how do we live faithfully in both? In light of the current political climate in America and our congregations, with the Scriptures and catechisms in hand, how can we engage the world, even as we recognize 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 CONVENTION

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



TWO KINGDOMS

life in the overlap



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



REV. SCOTT GRORUD
Faith Lutheran Church
Hutchinson, MN

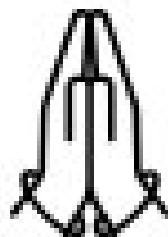


REV. BRIAN CROCKER
Christus Lutheran Church
Clintonville, WI

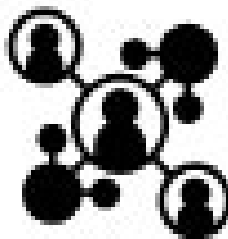
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 9:00am: Registration Opens
- 9:30am: Opening Worship
- 10:00am: Keynote 1
- 11:00am: Keynote 2
- 11:45am: Lunch
- 1:00pm: District Coordinator Reports
- 1:45pm: Breakout Sessions
- 3:00pm: Business Meeting
- 3:30pm: Sending and Blessing

WHY JOIN US?



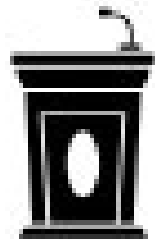
INSPIRING WORSHIP



NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES



MISSION UPDATES



ENGAGING SPEAKERS

For more information or to register, please visit www.augustanadistrict.org and visit the "events" tab

CHURCH STAFF OPENINGS

We have an a list of church staff openings on our website. If you or someone you know is looking for a ministry position, we'd love for you to check out the listings! Scan or click the QRCode to learn more or visit www.augustanadistrict.org/church/staff-openings/




Current Listings

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



**Have you seen the new format of the LCMC
By the Word Newsletter?**

If not, you can find it here  or by visiting:

www.lcmc.net/files/newsletters/25_BTW_spring_FINALrev0308202.pdf



PLEASE 

Update
your
Information!



Please let us know if your information has changed!
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Augustana District

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](#), or scan the QR Code.