

March 2026

AUGUSTANA WITNESS

Theology | Church | Mission

1st Annual Men's Retreat

Prodigal: The Road Home

Explore the prodigal son with fresh eyes and discover how its story still shapes and challenges men in home, church, and community.

1st Call Retreat

Sabbath, Rest & Ministry Limits

A retreat for new pastors and seminarians to rest in God's Sabbath, embrace healthy limits, and sustain a joyful, lasting ministry.

2026 Annual Convention

Who Is My Neighbor?

Discover how God's gift of vocation—our everyday callings—becomes both a cross and a freeing compass, grounding us in Christ and directing us to love our neighbors.

The Upper Room

You are warmly invited to join us for The Upper Room — Augustana District's monthly virtual prayer gathering.



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Devotional:

Luther on Galatians: How God's Word, Not Human Free Will or The Law, Bring Us God's Peace and Forgiveness

I recently studied the book of Galatians somewhat thoroughly (thoroughly for me, anyway). My co-pastor and I are preaching through Galatians on Wednesdays in Lent. In my prep and studies, I learned that Luther's lectures on Galatians are unique in the landscape of commentaries on the letter. Luther understood the problem that's addressed in the letter differently than just about every other person that has attempted to comment on Galatians. Everyone else teaches Galatians as a call to arms against false preaching, a call to stand your ground in what you believe, a motivational plea to keep the faith, a call to renounce bad teaching and preaching, a call to be on the watch for charlatans, etc. Luther picked up Galatians, though, as if the Galatian church people had no power in them to actually do those things. That is what makes Luther's presentation of Galatians drastically different than everything else out there. Instead of ragging on the Galatian church people for straying from the Word, Luther's attack was against the preachers that were in Galatia usurping. Instead of laying out ways the Galatians could have kept the faith (or should in the future), Luther laid out how the Word found them again through Paul. In short, Luther approached the Galatian problem uniquely: as if the Galatians had no free will and as if everything they believed completely depended on what kind of preacher God sent them.

Apparently, it was God's plan to expose the Galatians to two different types of preachers: (1) a Gospel-proclaiming, cross-mouthed, no-strings-attached, unconditional-forgiveness messenger like Paul, and (2) the Judaizing agitators that "bewitched" the Galatians upon Paul's exit, the latter of which attempted to reintroduce the Law in a way that it cannot actually function. Even the bad Galatians commentators picked up on this: the Judaizing agitators wanted to introduce *just a little Law*. They didn't necessarily want the whole thing reintroduced. They just wanted a little skin in the game, just a little contribution, seemingly minor conditionality. But Paul saw right through it: "*Every man who lets himself be circumcised is obligated to obey the whole law...*" (Gal. 5:3). There's no such thing as observing "just a little bit of the Law." It's all or nothing. If you want to pick up even just one little ceremonial law, you're picking up the whole rest of the catalog with it. Paul wanted no part of the Law as a condition to the Promise. Hence, he writes the Galatians their now-famous letter, starting boldly with these words: "*Grace and peace to you...*" His letter included no strings, no conditions, not even a shred of "you ought to." He simply lays out to the Galatians their forgiveness and their freedom.

Have great Lent and Easter seasons!
Pastor Jesse Carson

Mission Update:

All India Masihi Hamat Ministry (AIMJ)

AIMJ is one of our partner ministries. The district sends a minimum of \$1,500 per quarter to AIMJ. This money supports the salary of four pastors (they earn \$125/month). These pastors and other believers talk to Muslim's and believers of Hindu and share the Gospel with them. They are doing tremendous work for the Kingdom. In January of this year 98 people were baptized, they shared God's Word with 116 seekers, met with 142 women, 159 youth, and 150 children.

WORD OF THANKS:

- ✠ We thank the Lord for blessing us abundantly as we organized evening meetings for our pastors and believers every day by Zoom. The prayer meetings are led by Mikhael. Every day, 60-70 people including our believers joined and prayed for our nation, our people and the safety of all the pastors and believers.
- ✠ We praise God, as He helped us organize diabetes check-ups for about 7,000 people between November and January 2026. They were all non-believers and the majority of them were Muslim. We are glad that not only did they get a free check-up but they also got to hear the Word of God for the first time. We hope and pray that through these medical check-ups many Muslims come to the Kingdom of Heaven.
- ✠ We thank the Lord for blessing us abundantly as we continue to train our believers. This month, we organized two training sessions. Meetings to encourage the faith of our believers to go door-to-door and share the Word of God with their family members, friends and neighbors. We also answered their questions.
- ✠ The training session for January 2026 is as follows:
 - 1/21/26 Tamluk, West Bengal - 88 believers
 - 1/26/26 Raghavpur, West Bengal - 62 believers



Diabetes Check-up Event

Mission Vetting

At the request of congregations, the BWM will research and vet recommended mission organizations. If an organization you are interested in is vetted, the BWM will offer a brief introduction on the AD website with their contact information for others to consider for congregational or individual support. If there are agencies, missions, and/or organizations that you would like to have considered by the Board of World Missions, please contact them through the district office by sending an email to office@augustanadistrict.org.



A vertical event poster with a dark red border. At the top, a dark red banner contains the text "Friday, April 17, 2026 • 3:00 PM" in white. Below this, the text "Free Event • Open to the Public" is written in a smaller font. The main title, "GERHARD O. FORDE, A PRACTICAL THEOLOGIAN PAR EXCELLENCE", is in large, bold, red capital letters. Underneath, it says "Presented by Dr. Timothy J. Wengert" and includes a subtitle: "A reflection on how Forde's teaching shaped Dr. Wengert's ministry and what it means for proclaiming the gospel today". The event location is "Luther Memorial Church at Grand View University, 1201 Grandview Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50316". At the bottom, there are logos for "GRAND VIEW UNIVERSITY" and "VID MIA Lutheran Quarterly".

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 QR Code to learn more or visit www.augustanadistrict.org/church/staff-openings/



Current Listings

- Co-Lead Pastor | Christus Lutheran Church | Clintonville, WI.
- Pastor | Living Word Lutheran Church | Milbank, SD
- Pastor | Peace Lutheran Church | Watertown, MN
- Pastor | Aurdal Lutheran Church | Aurdal, MN
- Pastor | Salem & Sauk Valley Lutheran Parish | Osakis, MN
- Pastor | Living Word Lutheran Church | Alexandria, MN
- Minister of Faith Formation | Holy Cross Lutheran Church | Maple Lake, MN
- Lead Pastor | New Life Lutheran Church | Duluth, MN
- Organist | Our Savior's Lutheran Church | Lambertton, MN
- Part-time Pastor | Our Redeemer Lutheran Church | Badger, MN

Convocation Recap:

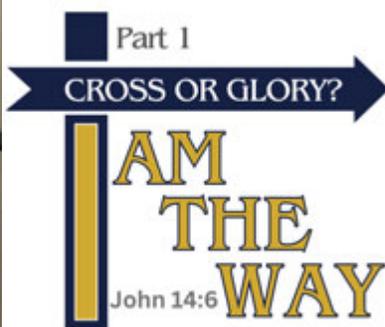
This year's Augustana District Convocation of the Cross began a three-year series taking up Gerhard O. Forde's book *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (1997). Rev. Dr. Chris Croghan of Luther House of Study was the keynote speaker over the two-day event. In part one of this series, "Cross or Glory: I Am the Way (John 14:6)," Dr. Croghan covered the historical background of the Disputation and Luther's own theological development that brought him to these assertions. Dr. Croghan delivered three highly informative presentations illustrating the unpacking of Luther's nominalist and Aristotelian "theological backpack" and repacking it with Scripture alone, particularly sola verba, without the mode of Aristotle. Videos from this event are now up on the AD website. This event has nicely set up next year's convocation: "Part 2: What Good Are Good Works?" with Julie Smith as our keynote speaker.

We also heard updates on AD from our coordinator team, Aaron Deutsch, Marney Fritts, and Nate Hanson. Of note, Aaron shared that the district will be starting a new men's conference this year on April 18 at Christ the King Church in Hutchinson, MN. The theme for this inaugural retreat, "Prodigal: The Road Home," will feature

Randy Freund as keynote. Information and registration for the event is now live on the AD website. Additionally, Marney shared the new digital journal, *The Chronicler*, which contains manuscripts from keynotes and sermons from our annual convocations and conventions that can now be found on the website for personal and congregational use.

The convocation also heard from Michelle Anderson from Norfolk, NE, who is an M.Div. student at Saint Paul Lutheran Seminary and one of four recipients of the AD scholarships this year. Finally, Nate directed our focus to missions, since we are Lutheran Congregations in **Mission** for Christ. He encouraged us to actively support missions, particularly by taking a good look at our congregations' priorities when it comes to our budgets. He reminded us that we have the gift of outreach and, when we give to those in need, it has a way of producing fruit and giving us life again.

We also had the great pleasure of worshipping together, hearing the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, singing joyous hymns, and receiving the sacrament. Thanks to Beckey Hand and Culynn Curtis for unwaveringly handing over the goods.



Let Us Pray: March Prayer Calendar

The Augustana District Prayer Calendar is a simple but powerful way for us to walk together in unity as the body of Christ. This monthly list invites us to uphold one another by name throughout the year, lifting each congregation in the district before the Lord in prayer. The next section outlines unified prayer focuses that help center our petitions on the mission, faithfulness, and vitality of our shared life together. We encourage you to use this intentionally in your congregation during Sunday worship, in prayer groups, Bible studies, staff meetings, or wherever your people gather. As we join our voices before the Father, may he bind us together in Christ, strengthen our witness, and sustain our congregations with his steadfast love.

AD Congregational Prayer Calendar: February 2026

- ✝ Faith Fellowship Church of Odessa, TX
- ✝ Hawley Lutheran Church of Hawley, MN
- ✝ Lake City Lutheran Church of Lake City, SD
- ✝ North Immanuel Lutheran Church of Pelican Rapids, MN
- ✝ Reformation Lutheran Church of Cataula, GA
- ✝ Salem Lutheran Church of North Branch, MN
- ✝ St. James Lutheran Church of Niagara Falls, NY
- ✝ Trinity Lutheran Church of Jeffers, MN
- ✝ Zion Lutheran Church of Caroline, WI

Monthly Unified Prayer Points for Individuals & Congregations:

- ✝ The Augustana District Support Staff
Rev. Becky Hand, Wendy Magruder,
Niki Pokornowski and Karen Eckstrom
- ✝ The behind the scenes work they do
for our events, programs and churches

You are always welcome to submit additional prayer requests to be shared here by sending them to Wendy at office@augustanadistrict.org.

Congregations Going Into the Call Process

If your congregation finds itself entering the call process, we are here for you! Reach out to Pastor Aaron Deutsch, Augustana District Coordinator, before you begin. He will be happy to meet with your leadership team, discuss your options, and suggest best ways to proceed before you even get started.

Pastor Deutsch can be reached via e-mail at adc@augustanadistrict.org or by phone 605-742-4469.



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Rev. Dr. Marney Fritts
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Rev. Becky Hand
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Wendy Magruder
Office Administrator

Niki Pokornowski
Financial Coordinator

Augustana District Men's Gathering

Prodigal

THE ROAD HOME

SATURDAY, APRIL 18
8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

**Christ the King Lutheran Church
Hutchinson, MN**

The prodigal son story in Luke 15 is so familiar that we may assume we've already learned all it has to offer. But this parable still has sharp edges and fresh surprises — especially for fathers, brothers, grandfathers, and sons.

Join us as we revisit this story with fresh eyes, exploring what it reveals about wandering and returning, resentment and reconciliation, sin and grace. We'll consider how the relentless grace of the Father shapes our callings as men in our homes, churches, and communities. Come to be encouraged, challenged, and renewed by a story that never grows old.

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

augustanadistrict.org/events/ad-mens-conference/





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BOUNDARIES and BALANCE



SABBATH, REST & LIMITS IN MINISTRY

FIRST CALL PASTORS RETREAT

Ministry rarely fits tidy hours or expectations. The Augustana District First Call Retreat offers pastors (and those discerning ministry) space to rest in God's Sabbath gifts, embrace healthy limits, and sustain faithful, lasting service.

Open to all Seminarians and First Call Pastors & spouses.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

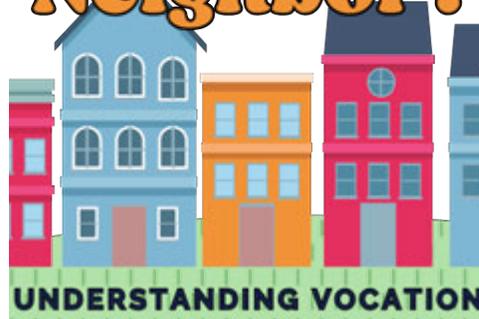
augustanadistrict.org/events/2026-first-call-retreat/



APRIL 23-24, 2026
Mt. Carmel in Alexandria MN.

**Register before Holy Week
so you don't forget!**

Who Is My Neighbor?



The 2026 annual convention will look at how our everyday callings—as spouses, parents, workers, and neighbors—become God's way of grounding forgiven sinners in Christ directing us to love and serve others with both costly sacrifice and real freedom.

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

augustanadistrict.org/events/2026-annual-convention/



APRIL 25, 2026
Mt. Carmel in Alexandria MN.

**Register before Holy Week
so you don't forget!**



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Dear friends in Christ,
You are warmly invited to join us for *The Upper Room* — Augustana District's monthly virtual prayer gathering. This will be a simple and informal time for people from across the district to come together and lift up the needs of our congregations, communities, and world.

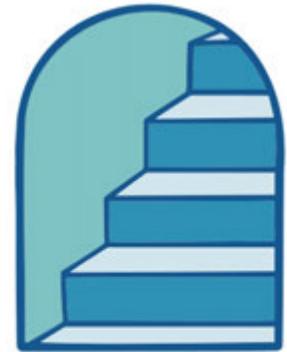
You are welcome to join us regularly or whenever you're able. We will meet by Zoom at 9 AM on the second Tuesday of every month. This link will give you access to the prayer room each month
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85469245577>

If you have specific prayer requests, you may share them during the prayer time or you can email them in advance to prayers@augustanadistrict.org.

If you are unable to attend you are still encouraged to send your prayer requests so we may lift them up on your behalf.

I hope you will consider joining us as we gather to bring our praises, burdens, and petitions before the Lord. Save the link above and join us for our first meeting on Tuesday, March 10, at 9:00 a.m.

In Christ,
Pastor Aaron Deutsch
Augustana District Coordinator



THE UPPER ROOM
monthly virtual prayer gathering
Second Tuesdays | 9:00am



PLEASE

Update
your
Information!



See the new look and check your congregational information on the Augustana District Congregational webpage at

<https://augustanadistrict.org/church/roster-of-churches/>

Please let us know if we need to update or change anything by clicking on the “Update Church Information” button at the bottom of that page.

Welcome

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
of Glenwood City, WI

Augustana District Scholarship Fund

The Augustana District is currently offering a one-time scholarship award for seminary students. The application deadline is June 30. An award of up to \$2,000 will be paid out directly to the seminary for fall classes. Scholarships are available to students enrolled in a seminary that has a working relationship with LCMC including:

- Beeson Divinity School
- Cross-Cultural Ministry Center
- Faith Evangelical Seminary
- Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- Institute of Lutheran Theology
- Kairos University: Luther House of Study
- The Master’s Institute Seminary
- St. Paul Lutheran Seminary



Apply online at

<https://augustanadistrict.org/theology/scholarship-application/>

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

Administrative Support Group

Office Manager | Pastor | Secretary | Financial Manager | HR Professional | Administrators



Join us at our monthly 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.

