

## **An Update from Your District**

September 15, 2011



### **The Augustana District ... Helping Churches**

In this new day for Lutheranism on the North American continent, nobody – thankfully – wants hierarchy. Most of us have left a denomination, one way or another, where we experienced a disconnection between the ministry and needs of our local congregation, and wants and priorities of “church headquarters.” The latter not only had adopted major revisions which conflict with confessional Lutheranism, but also with the whole consensus of orthodox Christianity. To make matters worse, it is quite likely that a bureaucracy and its mechanisms tried to control your congregation’s freedom and ability to determine its own future and affiliation. We are free of that! Praise God!

The Augustana District fully embraces the freedom and authority of the congregation. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” says our Lord (Matt. 18:20). “The Church” is wherever people are gathered by the Holy Spirit and the Word is preached and the sacraments are administered (*Augustana VII*). Where this happens, there is nothing lacking for “the Church to be the Church.”

And yet, the Holy Spirit is always “calling, gathering, and enlightening” not only individuals, but also congregations, one to another. We are given gifts of togetherness, of fellowship, and of mutual ministry. Congregations are given, one to another, so that mission and ministry can be enhanced, so that we can keep one another honest and accountable, and so that we don’t live in isolation from the rest of our Lord’s Church.

This is one of the main reasons the Augustana District has been formed. Through some very minimal structuring, we are able to organize in such a way that congregational and pastoral ministries are helped and enhanced. We are able to preserve and

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### **Why Lutheran Matters**

“Well, we can always skip the sermon.” It was said in jest (and frankly to bait me). It was one of those Sundays when we had so much packed into the service that we were looking for ways to pare things back due to time constraints. Now this wasn’t the first time (and won’t be the last) that the sermon length was offered up as a potential solution in such a situation. And in fairness to the person who made the remark, he would be the first to resist such a move. I, of course, took the bait and we bantered a bit.

However, comments like these do make me wonder what it is about my “Lutheran DNA” that reacts to this in a deeper way. Am I just trying to “protect” something so central to Lutheran theology? Am I trying to “preserve” strong Lutheran tradition? These are questions one must honestly ask.

Because the “Lutheran lens” powerfully speaks in our context, the answer cannot simply be about protecting a theology or preserving a tradition. It is both practically and theologically necessary. It is about the human need for an external word. Finally, all Lutheran theology starts here. In fact, this is what makes Christianity unique among all world religions. A simple way to put it is this: The direction of the arrow matters. Lutherans insist on this. This is to say that the movement is always from God down to us. Faith, life, salvation are all gifts and power that comes from above (externally – from God) to us. God pursued His way to us before we could ever find our way to God. It is this insistence that makes Christianity unique among all world religions. The problem and human tendency is “*Why Lutheran Matters*,” continued from page 1

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preach, and protect and promote, a classic Lutheran witness to a “Theology of the Cross” where Christ Crucified is always front-and-center. We are able to assist congregations in call process and in crisis. Pastors willingly, openly, and gladly submit to an authority greater than the self – that of colleagues under the Word. We are able to encourage congregations and pastors to focus on evangelism. We are able, with intentionality, to train confessional pastors for the future, and to educate and grow disciples through faithful curricula. We are able to band together and undertake world missions endeavors in ways we can’t accomplish alone.

There are always some few who think that any structure is too much structure. But such a view unwittingly short-circuits the Holy Spirit’s ability to stir within our intentional connections to- and for- one another.

Yes, it is a “new day” for Lutheranism on the North American continent. If we were asleep, it is time to rise. If we were complacent, it is time to be bold. The world has too many voices preaching a plethora of so-called solutions to the troubles of this life. It is time – again – to drown them out with these words of Paul:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith” (Rom 1:16).

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always to reverse this direction (the arrow). It is subtle how this happens. Before we know it, the onus of faith, the will, even our salvation is on us. Luther and the reformers recognized how subtly this can happen and gave us a Lutheran lens to help see it.

Right alongside mission, evangelism, providing service support to congregations and new mission starts, Augustana District is dedicated to giving away the gift of Lutheran theology. Because none of these things (mission and ministry) are easy in the current culture and all of them need and deserve intentionality and discernment, we dedicate ourselves to “Lutheran matters” in order to serve Lutheran congregations. It is an attempt to be the gift Lutheran is to the Christian community.

Pastor Randy Freund  
Augustana District Council Chair

## Upcoming Events

Join us at the LCMC convention for “District Dinner Night” on Monday, October 3. Sign up for this dinner when you register for the convention!

Augustana District Women of the Word meets in their annual convention on October 1, at Chris the King in Hutchinson, MN. Women of all LCMC churches are invited to attend this big event! Check out their web page at: [http://www.augustanadistrict.org/wow\\_news.html](http://www.augustanadistrict.org/wow_news.html)

## Augustana District Boards

### Board of World Missions

The Augustana District Board of World Missions has accomplished three main tasks that benefit missions around the world:

- ✦ Provided a vetting process to help local congregation's choose the missions they wish to support
- ✦ Has vetted a number of missions entities themselves.
- ✦ Has been instrumental in launching conversations with LCMC and NALC as we think about creative and effective ways of connecting with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

Chaired by Pastor Paul Knudson of Hutchinson, MN.

### Board of Theology and Ministry

- ✦ Has in place Augustana District Ministry Standards, adopted by the convention.
- ✦ Has developed an Endorsement Process for pastors who want to identify theologically and professionally with the commitments of the District. This voluntary "designation" assures Call Committees that applicants with the Endorsement have had theological conversation with colleagues and peers who rigorously uphold the LCMC and Augustana Statements of Faith.
- ✦ In conjunction with the Board of Domestic Mission and the Institute of Lutheran Theology, has been planning an Evangelism Conference to take place in February of 2012.
- ✦ Has in place a process for addressing alleged sexual misconduct.

Chaired by Pastor Mark Jamison of Sterling, NE.

### Board of Congregational Services

- ✦ Has in place a "Simplified Outline of the Call Process" that accompanies the LCMC Call Packet.
- ✦ Is able to assist with congregational conflict and mediation.

Chaired by Pastor John Beem of Alexandria, MN.

### Board of Publications

- ✦ The Augustana District has a supporting relationship with Sola Publishing and ReClaim Resources, and encourages churches to use their educational and worship resources.

Chaired by Pastor Steven King of Buffalo Lake, MN.

### Board of Theological Education – Institute of Lutheran Theology

- ✦ The Augustana District has a supporting relationship with ILT, encouraging churches to support this strongly confessional seminary and utilize its excellent Word at Work lay education opportunities.
- ✦ Is committed to adult education in LCMC congregations.

Chaired by Pastor Scott Grorud of Hutchinson, MN.

### Board of Domestic Missions

- ✦ Finds ways to support numerous mission start-up congregations.
- ✦ Lends support to congregations as they stay focused on their own health and vitality.

Chaired by Pastor Craig Werling of Milbank, SD.

### **Women of the Word**

- ✦ The Augustana District Women of the Word hold their second annual convention at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, MN, on Saturday, October 1, under the theme “Coming Together.” All area LCMC churches are invited to attend and participate, whether they are affiliated with the Augustana District or not. WoW focuses on a wide variety of worthy missions projects and Bible Study. They will elect new officers at their convention. Visit their website at: [http://www.augustanadistrict.org/wow\\_news.html](http://www.augustanadistrict.org/wow_news.html)

### **ChurchTalk**

- ✦ ChurchTalk is a conversation opportunity for people to meet face-to-face in real time online. Four groups are available:
  - ✦ PastorTalk for pastors who have led, or are leading, their churches out of the ELCA.
  - ✦ LeadershipTalk for lay leaders engaged in the process of transitioning out of the ELCA.
  - ✦ MissionStartTalk is a group of pastors who are starting new congregations.
  - ✦ YouthTalk is a group for any and all people who are engaged in youth ministry in their congregation.

### **Service Coordinator:**

- ✦ Has preached in 18 different churches.
- ✦ Has made presentations in 30 different churches, most of which have been transitioning out of the ELCA into LCMC.
- ✦ Has coordinated meetings of boards, puts together groups like the Regional Communications Council in the Marshall MN area, and meetings between smaller and larger churches.
- ✦ Assists with finding pulpit supply and interim ministers
- ✦ Resources call processes for call committees.
- ✦ Writes and coordinates mailings, newsletter, website, and other communications of the district.
- ✦ Fields some 15 calls and 25 emails per week regarding questions and needs of individuals and churches, whether they are Augustana, LCMC, or ELCA.

See [www.AugustanaDistrict.org](http://www.AugustanaDistrict.org) for more information.