

Devotional

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith. Grace be with you all.

1 Timothy 6:20-21

Earlier this month I prepped for what would be my 25th Rally Day. This was of course followed by my 25th first day of confirmation and 25th of all the other things that start up again every September. First as a Youth Director and then Pastor, I have found that September always brings a new kind of energy and rhythm to those of us in ministry. Some years I can hardly wait for it to begin and other years I am overwhelmed by the thought of what is to come. The days are getting shorter, but our list of responsibilities is getting longer and longer. In fact, by the time you read this, September will be long gone, and we are knee deep in reformation preparation with an eye looking towards... gasp.... Advent. Tired yet? It can be easy to become weary. It can be easy to forget the joy embedded in what we do as we minister to the many generations of Christ followers that walk through the door. That said, here are a few things to consider that may give you the shot in the arm we all need!

Firstly, we have the greatest news of all time to share- "The Gospel supplies the world with the salvation of Jesus Christ, peace of conscience, and every blessing." Luther hit this nail right on the head. It can be tricky to navigate our calendars and meetings as we shuffle those responsibilities but let us never forget that the Holy Spirit is working to create faith in Christ all around us and we get a front row seat! I have found that praying prayers of purpose before each meeting or study can really remind you of why you are there. Plus, always remember, God has called you to this!

Secondly, the gifts of the Sacraments- week by week, season by season we are witnessed to God's mighty work done in the Sacraments. In the waters of baptism, we behold the Holy Spirit swoop down and cover God's chosen people with promises that will cover them for all time. At the table of the Lord our God shows up and feeds His people forgiveness, life and salvation. Let us never forget that He is really present there for those who call on Him. What an honor and privilege we have that God would use us in this way. Do yourself a favor and hear those beautiful prayers coming out of your mouth as you say them next time. They are as much for you as they are for the hearers around you.

Finally, remember that you are not alone. As peculiar as our craft is, there are others who dare to do the same. Fellow ministers/sinners who are striving to share the Gospel are not too far from you. It takes some intentionality, but building bridges with others is important. The Lord often sent them out 2 by 2. There is great joy in sharing your hopes, and frustrations as well as your confessions. After all, you need a pastor too!



AUGUSTANA WITNESS newsletter

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Staff Stuff

Pr. Aaron Deutsch ... Service Coordinator
adc@augustanadistrict.org

Pr. Becky Hand Program Coordinator
b.hand@augustanadistrict.org

Wendy Magruder Office Assistant
office@augustanadistrict.org

Mailing Address
Augustana District
335 Main St. S.
Hutchinson MN 55350

Phone..... 320.234.8403
Web www.augustanadistrict.org

So, whether this is your first trip through the church year as a minister, or your last before retirement, enjoy what you do. "Guard what has been entrusted to you." May you see, in the eyes of all who come to worship, a need for Jesus. May you bless them in His name and

may you be filled with the joy that comes in delivering the Gospel. "Grace be with you all!"

Pastor Steve Olcott
Christ the King Lutheran Church

EXCITING NEWS



After a long and prayerful process the Augustana District Council is excited to announce that a New District Coordinator has been named. Please join us as we welcome Pastor Aaron Deutsch to the staff. You can reach out to him via e-mail at adc@augustanadistrict.org

At this time, applications are being accepted through October 31 for the Theology Coordinator and the Missions and Stewardship Coordinator. Applications should be sent to office@augustanadistrict.org.

Here is an introduction to Pr. Deutsch:

Tell us a little about yourself.

I am a northeast South Dakota native, and grew up in a Lutheran church in Sisseton, South Dakota. I have an undergraduate degree in Music Education from South Dakota State University in Brookings. I went right from my undergraduate degree into seminary at Luther House of Study at Sioux Falls Seminary. I went to my first call in Hull, Iowa at St. Paul Lutheran Church. At the end of 2021, I was called to Resurrection Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota. I have a wonderful wife, Sarah, who is also a Luther House graduate and Lutheran pastor. We have two children - Jonah (4) and Ruth (2).

What motivated you to apply for the ADC position?

I am seeing a trend in the Augustana District that is really exciting, where younger leaders are beginning to emerge and take ownership in our district. I wanted to be a part of that. I feel I have gifts and talents, particularly in my ability to build relationships, that will help in the future of the district and continue to establish us as a leader in LCMC.

What was the first thing you did upon finding out that you were the new ADC?

I prayed over our list of churches and pastors. I think we are entering a new, exciting chapter in Augustana District history, where we are forging this three-prong leadership team of three coordinators. I am so deeply humbled and excited for the work that is ahead of us. But I know that we need to keep the main thing the main thing, which is to remember that this is Jesus' Church and not ours. So I spent my first hour of my first day on the job going through our list of pastors and congregations on the website and praying, by name, for our body of believers; praying that the Holy Spirit would continue to do the proclaiming work of the Gospel amongst us.

What are your personal strengths, and do you have any areas you hope to develop or improve as you grow in the position of ADC?

I think strengths I bring to the table are organizational, relational, and theological. I think I possess a nature of keeping organized, which is going to be important as we have a list of just over 100 churches

and somewhere in the neighborhood of 100 or so pastors. As for relational, I think anyone who has met me would know that I have a desire to hear peoples' stories and to connect with them on a personal level. Then theological - I don't dub myself as a theologian, but I do feel that I have a theological compass that will prioritize the Augustana District's theological commitments. I credit that to Luther House. I came out of a good Lutheran program. As far as growing areas, sometimes I need to say, "I don't have an answer for that right now." I think too often I listen, and I want to come up with a solution or have an answer on the fly or in the moment. I need to temper myself a little and say, "I need to think about that or pray on that more."

What are you most excited about as the new Augustana District Coordinator?

I am excited to see what we can do in the areas of conflict resolution teams, call coaching teams, and creative staffing solutions. I think the more resources we can pile together and the more tools we can hand to congregations to be successful, the better. I'm excited to see a lot of collaboration between the leaders in the district. I'm excited to set congregations up for good experiences in the parish and for our pastors to be well-equipped and well-trained in some of these areas.

You addressed a few of the challenges the district faces in the previous question. Do you want to share any specifics on how you might approach some of these challenges or any preliminary ideas on how to take them on?

I think one thing we're always going to have to keep on the front-burner is the clergy shortage. Creative staffing solutions are going to play into that. We definitely have a clergy shortage, and that doesn't seem to be getting any better at the moment. However, I hope to work hand-in-hand and create good relationships with our seminary partners to maintain an open line of communication. We might be able to put up-and-coming, training pastors in pulpits with an intentional supervisor to guide them which might alleviate the clergy shortage a little bit. As new congregations are filtering into LCMC and the Augustana District, their expectation might be that we have this deep pool of pastors for them to choose from. That's not necessarily going to be the case. So, we have to look at how to support congregations in their interim period.

Why will the Augustana District still be going strong five years from now?

Scripture says that when the Word is cast out and proclaimed, that it will not return void or empty. So we put our trust in the Holy Spirit, whose work is to bring the kingdom of God to bear on the world through the proclamation of the Gospel and the means of grace. I know that the Spirit will do what he has promised to do, to make that saving grace of Christ known. We keep the main thing the main thing, which is, we keep Jesus Christ on our lips and trust that the Spirit is going to make everything else fall into place.

How can members of the district support you as you begin in this new position?

I covet your patience and understanding, and I covet that for the entire coordinator team we're going to be putting in place. I am a parish pastor. We'll see about the other two coordinator positions that make up the team, but it's likely they'll be parish pastors, too. Instead of taking one full-time pastor out of the pulpit and making them the District Coordinator like Randy had been, we've decided to partner with congregations and share our time. So we may not be able to be in congregations on Sunday mornings. That doesn't mean that we won't be available or won't be traveling to churches. However, that's going to be a culture shift that we're going to have to wrap our heads around a little bit. So I covet patience and understanding. This three-prong leadership system hasn't been tried before so we're not working

out of a handbook, but I'm excited for that collaboration and synergy. I get to work with a theological coordinator and a mission/stewardship coordinator. Each of us are going to have strengths and weaknesses. I really want it to be a well-formed and cohesive unit for the betterment of the district. I ask for your patience. I think the leadership team and the congregations of the district are going to have to be people of grace to make this thing work.

Anything else you'd like to share?

Yes, I am walking into a position that has been well-cared-for by Pastor Randy Freund. I am deeply humbled. I am deeply thankful for the work that Randy did in our district. I think we owe Randy a debt of gratitude. I hope that I'm up to the task to fill the shoes. I'm going to be relying a lot on prayer and on my colleagues and those who have come before me to help chart the path forward.

Mission Updates

A Call to Action for Our Ministry Partners in Ethiopia

Our ministry partners in Ethiopia, including the Tabor Congregation and the North Central Ethiopian Synod (NCES), are experiencing some really challenging times and desperately need your prayers and financial support. We have tried to keep you updated over the last few years about the



civil unrest and wars that have been occurring in Ethiopia. These conflicts have cost thousands of lives including the life of one of the Tabor evangelists. There are still some regions in the Northern and Western parts of the country that continue to experience this violence. There is some good news on that front. According to Pastor Dawit, former lead pastor at Tabor Congregation, "There is dialogue currently underway that will hopefully bear good fruit in the near future."

More recently Ethiopia was hit with devastating floods and mudslides that claimed many lives. Ashenafi Wagisso, the lead elder of the Tabor Congregation, reported that "One of our outreach buildings has been washed away and destroyed by the flood." This has left many Ethiopians displaced from their homes and relying on government assistance while they piece their lives back together.

As if it isn't bad enough to be faced with war and natural disasters, Ethiopians are being severely impacted by something we Americans can relate to . . . inflation! Over the last two years inflation has gone up 45.5% in Ethiopia. This puts our Ethiopian Ministry partners in an extremely tough

position. Ashenafi stated that in August they raised the salaries of their evangelists to help offset some of the devastating effects of inflation. However, he acknowledged that this will place a huge burden on the church to maintain the number of evangelists that they currently support.

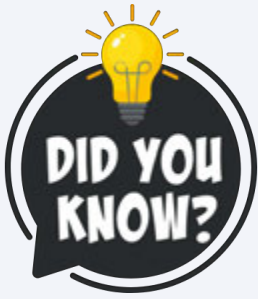
Despite all of the challenges in their way, Tabor congregation keeps moving forward. Most recently they have established an outreach in Central Ethiopia near Wolkite University. They have about 60 believers in this Muslim dominated area. They are seeking funds to purchase land to build an outreach center there. They truly believe in stepping out in faith and trusting that God will provide. If you or your church would like to help the Tabor Congregation with a financial gift they would be very appreciative.

Thank you and God Bless You!

Eric Knutson

Chairman of AD Board of World Missions

MISSION VETTING



Did you know that if your church is looking at supporting a new mission the Augustana District Board of World Missions would be happy to vet the ministry for you? Did you know that if your congregation is looking for a mission to support the board has already thoroughly vetted several missions that are listed on the AD website? You can find out more about the Board of World Missions, Key District Mission Partners and Vetted Mission Organizations as well as how to submit a

mission for the vetting process on the district website at

<https://augustanadistrict.org/boards/board-of-world-missions/>

This is just one way that the Augustana District can support and assist your congregation.

Church Salary Report



As you prepare your budgets for next year, or consider hiring new church staff, you may want to check out the Church Salary Report. You can fill out a brief questionnaire and a report will be generated and sent back to you with information about suggested salary and benefit packages for clergy and church staff in your area.

You can request the information at

<https://augustanadistrict.org/resources/congregational-services/>

BUDGET PLANNING



For the early Sunday mornings,
For the middle of the night calls
For the wise counsel and advice
For the patience, love & sacrifice

~ Thank You ~

For always giving your all.
You are so appreciated!



The search for the new District Coordinators is complete. The next step is to begin accepting applications for the Theology Coordinator (DTC) and the Mission and Stewardship Coordinator (DMSC) positions. Application will be accepted through October 31, 2024.

You can find descriptions of these two positions at <https://augustanadistrict.org/position-open/> or scan the QRCode



Confirmation Retreat



This annual retreat will be held at Inspiration Point in Vining, MN and is designed for 7-8th grade students. The theme this year is *“What Is the Church.”* The registration deadline for this event is February 14, last year we were at capacity so please plan to register early to guarantee space for your students. Please share this information with your confirmation families as soon as possible so that they can plan for and register as soon as possible. Registration is open!



<https://augustanadistrict.org/2025-confirmation-retreat/>

Church Administrative Staff Support Group

For Church Administrators | Secretaries | HR Professionals | Finance Coordinators



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@augustanadistrict.org), or scan the QR Code.





LCMC GROUP HEALTH PLAN/BENEFITS PACKAGE

Is your congregation considering a new health plan for your church staff for 2025? Did you know that the LCMC has a Group Health Plan in place that LCMC congregations can use to obtain coverage for their church staff? One benefit of this program is that the more congregations that use the plan the lower the annual rates go for all participating congregations.

The LCMC Group Health Plan is available to clergy members and W-2 employees of LCMC churches that are working twenty (20) hours or more per week. To be eligible to enroll, participants and/or the church and entity they serve must be on the LCMC roster or be associated with a rostered LCMC church (such as a school or daycare).

LCMC also currently has a group plan in place for Dental, Life and Long-Term Disability through Hahn Financial Group. If interested in learning more about the LCMC Group Health Plan, please reach out to the Hahn Financial Group, Inc. directly for more information.

Hahn Financial Group, Inc.
3101 S. Phillips Ave
Sioux Falls, SD 57105
www.HahnFinancialGroup.com

Toll-free: (800) 516-4246
Email: Health@HahnFinancialGroup.com



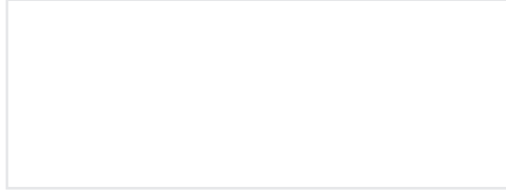
High School Retreat

New
Freedom
New
Family



The October 18-20, 2024 High School Retreat registration is now open! This year the retreat will be held at Luther Crest Bible Camp in Alexandria, MN and is designed for 9-12th grade students. This year students will dig into Galatians with a theme of New Freedom New Family. Space is limited and the registration deadline is **TODAY** so please register by the days end.
<https://augustanadistrict.org/events/high-school-retreat/>





Address Service Requested

Hutchinson, MN 55350

335 Main St S.

Augustana District

PLEASE **Update your Information**

Please let us know if your information has changed!
office@augustanadistrict.org
320.234.8403

