



June 2025

AUGUSTANA WITNESS

Theology | Church | Mission

2025 First Call Retreat

Another successful Pastors retreat for first call pastors.

2025 Annual Convention

Recap of the 2025 convention and a special service award.

Annual Gathering

Registration is now open
for the Women of the Word
2025 Annual Gathering

Mission Minute

Learn about our Mission
Partners and our vetted
missions.



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THEOLOGY | CHURCH | MISSION

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Devotional

The Promise For You And Your Children

"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call." - Acts 2:39

Those who have received the promise of Christ have quite a task in the season (and age!) of Pentecost. You, the readers of this newsletter, know this job quite well. It's in your call letter. It's all over your Augustana District Statement of Faith. Christ himself commanded that his Word be preached, and through this proclamation the Holy Spirit extends the promise of the resurrected Jesus Christ to sinners in dire need of his mercy. In this call of Pentecost that has been placed on you, there is a sense of urgency, too.

"But..." we say, "it's June! Summer break is here. Can't we just relax a bit, slow down the youth and adult programming and take a breather?" We can honestly confess (at least on a good day) that receiving and sharing the mercy of Christ is an absolute privilege, while also conceding that the long list of demands and the rapid-fire cadence that we encounter in this vocation (and world) is too much. We can't righteously sidestep the task at hand, either. Though we grow tired, the Apostle Paul tells us not to become weary. *"There is a harvest to reap, so don't give up!"* he says. (Galatians 6:9-10)

There are serious obstacles to the delivery of God's goods. Those barriers include the preacher's reluctance and wavering passion. Then there are the "children and those far off" who aren't listening. They're up at the lake cabin again, unbothered and unaware of sin's dangers. How do we get the word to those who are innately deaf to it? We can surely get bungled up in the complexities that surround our task, and begin to question, "How is this going to get done?"

The Lord does not abandon us in our questions or our relentless activities, and instead equips us once again with the Living Word that makes things right and new. Just as the members of your congregation need this word to rest in, so do you. The word you carry will never fail. (Luke 1:37) God has the power to do what He promised. (Romans 4:21) His promise of mercy IS for you and your children and for all who are far off. The Word will break out and accomplish all that it says, whether the programs are still going or not. Neither the tired preacher nor the oblivious hearer can stand in the way of God through the Holy Spirit. May the Lord strengthen you today to deliver his Gospel. Amen.

Pastor Owen Hoegh
St. Paul Lutheran Church - Hull, Iowa

Mission Minute

BOARD OF WORLD MISSIONS

It became evident at the Mission breakout session of the Augustana District Convention held this past month that there are a lot of questions about the world missions that the district supports that need some clarification. Having reviewed the questions from the breakout session, my hope here is to clarify two terms used by the district and Board of World Missions (BWM) that seem to cause confusion.

Let's begin with the two terms that describe our two basic mission support systems. The BWM for the Augustana District has two types of mission support identities. One is the MISSION PARTNER, the other is the VETTED MISSION.

What does it mean to be a MISSION PARTNER of the Augustana District?

A mission partner is a sponsored mission that Augustana District has voted to support directly with prayer and funding. Augustana District has elected to financially support these missions. In each sponsored mission, there are international financial considerations and analyses of reliable information as to how these resources are used. Accountability is vital, as those who give donations to such missions expect those resources to be used precisely for that which they have been designated. Sometimes there are emergencies and exigencies that cause mission funds to be used in ways other than intended. Clear communication helps to refine the response of the mission to these many and various adjustments. When you send a contribution to the AD they send this support directly to a mission partner as you direct, or (when you don't designate specifically) the board determines where it is most needed.

The AD Board of World Missions has three mission partners at this time.

- I. Tabor Mission to Hawassa, Ethiopia
- II. North Central Ethiopia Synod also referred to as NCES or EECMY
- III. All India Masihi Jamat mission in northern India AIMJ



What does it mean to be VETTED by the Augustana District?

These partners receive mission support from individuals and churches, some of whom may not be affiliated with AD or maybe just one or two AD congregations support them on their own. The needs of these missions have been assessed for their viability and content materially and theologically when they have applied for support. Upon affirmation of their mission needs and goals by the BWM, these vetted organizations are welcome to make their own appeals to AD congregations and individuals for support. Such outreach enterprises do NOT receive direct support from the BWM. Should you wish to support such a vetted mission, you can direct your questions and/or send funds directly via their websites.

Here is the information you need to get in touch with these vetted missions and their representatives directly.

- Awakening Lives to World Missions (ALWM) and Heart For Mission www.alwm.org/heartformission
- Bole Congregation (EECMY) of Addis Ababa
- Camp Penuel www.cp-cr.org
- In His Light Ministry www.lightinmiami.org
- Lutheran Bible Translators www.lbt.org
- Lutheran Church Myanmar lcmyanmar@gmail.com
- Lutheran Church of South Sudan www.lcss.church
- Madagascar Mission Friends of Madagascar Mission www.madagascarmission.org
- Ministry in Mission: Center of Refuge Orphanage, Jacmel Haiti www.ministryin-mission.com
- New Hope Mission Society NewHopeMissions.org
- Project Video www.project-video.org
- Spiritual Orphans Network / Tartu Academy of Theology www.tatest.org
- World Mission Prayer League <https://wmpl.org>

Feel free to view any one (or all!) of these vetted mission sites as you consider your local church's actions to serve people throughout the world with the good news of Jesus Christ.

These mission outreach opportunities are cited here to help each congregation in their consideration of Jesus' directive to make disciples of all nations. Our Savior calls us to support missions. If we can't find the energy or are not able to take the time ourselves to

undertake the actual mission work, we can certainly provide prayer support and resources to send someone on our behalf to bring the life and light to other people and places.

It may be something of a surprise to note that of our 103 AD congregations only 14 provide regular support to our mission partners. It is my hope this information will clarify misunderstandings and stir up more faithful members of the Augustana District to join these compatriots in the joy to be found in generating a more vital and extensive response to God's work in our world.

Mission work for local needs, mission partners, and vetted missions, is certainly an extension of the charge Jesus gave to us, and to all followers of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20. "Go!" and "Get!" ("Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.") "Give!" (Give it all you've got, just like Jesus does for you!).

Pastor Nate Hanson

Stewardship and Mission Coordinator

First Call Pastor Retreat Recap

For a day and a half before the convention, about 25 seminary students and first call pastors gathered with a handful of senior pastors who shared insight on how to confront your own brokenness while simultaneously leading and caring for your congregations.



Pastor Dave Christensen speaking to the First Call Retreat attendees.



Opening worship for First Call attendees.

2025 Annual Meeting Recap

The first Saturday in May was the annual Augustana District Convention at Mount Carmel in Alexandria, MN with about 100 participants. The opening worship service was led by the three new coordinators. Then participants delved into Martin Luther's explanation of The Two Kingdoms presented by Pastor Scott Grorud and Pastor Brian Crocker. After an extended lunch hour with time to network and enjoy a little sunshine there were three breakout sessions to participate in.

- 1) Theology with Rev. Marney Fritts, Theology Coordinator
- 2) Church with Rev. Aaron Deutsch, District Coordinator
- 3) Mission with Rev. Nate Hanson, Missions and Stewardship Coordinator



Pastor Aaron Deutsch, Pastor Nate Hanson, Pastor Marney Fritts and Pastor Becky Hand introducing themselves to the assembly.

Then everyone came together for a brief business meeting in which two new District Council Members were elected (Brian Bentley and Pastor Naomi Stout), and three new Board of Theology and Ministry members were elected (Pastor Owen Hoegh, Pastor Ralieggh White, and Pastor Dave Wollan).

After an approval of the 2025 budget the meeting concluded with the presentation of the Distinguished Service Award to retired pastor Mark Richardson who was the very first Augustana District Service coordinator and who was instrumental in getting the Augustana District off and running.



Pastor Mark Richardson receiving the Distinguished Service Award.

You can watch the recorded sessions available now on the district website by scanning this QRCode:



At the convention a new Augustana District Logo was unveiled. If you would like to have a copy for your church website or other use please contact the district office.



Women Of The Word

Hello Everyone! My name is Kris Olson and I serve as the Secretary for the current Women of the Word board. As a member of New Creation Lutheran Church in Perham, we are so excited to welcome you to our church and community this fall.

I spent a majority of my career working in Human Resources and Higher Education. Upon retirement in 2024, my husband and I moved permanently to Perham where we had a family cabin for nearly 30 years. One important piece to our move was finding a church home. We visited many churches, but none felt "right"... until we finally stumbled upon New Creation. We were welcomed with open arms and the rest is history. I hope you experience the same when you celebrate "Be Still" with us in September.

I grew up in the Twin Cities, attended college in Iowa, met my husband in graduate school in North Dakota, and we raised our children in Maple Grove, MN. I have worked in big corporations, been a small business owner, and worked at two different institutions of higher education. However, my absolute favorite and most

rewarding job has been the title of Mom. We have two grown sons. One lives in Chicago and the other lives in Fargo with his wife and daughter (and another on the way!). We raised our children in an amazing church in Maple Grove but it has been very inspiring to see how their faith grew through college athletics and beyond. Their strength and trust in the Lord has impacted my husband and me in ways we never dreamed of. We are extremely blessed!

In my free time I enjoy dabbling in a few part time "gigs", exercising, enjoying God's beauty around the lake, volunteering, and helping out at church where I can. Registration for the Gathering on September 20 is open. There is abundant enthusiasm from the women (and actually the men too) in planning out the day. You deserve the gift of fellowship with other faith-filled women. Please join us in the practice of being still. Enjoy the blooming of a new season and we will roll out the welcome mat for you in the fall.

Kris Olson,
WoW Secretary

Scholarship Application Deadline ~ June 30

If you are attending seminary and would like to apply for a one-time scholarship from the Augustana District you have until June 30 to send in an application for the 2025-2026 school year. You can find application information on the AD website at:

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



2025 Annual Gathering

Guest Speakers



Erica Varcoe is an LCMC pastor of Table Ministry, a church that got started in a sports bar in Sioux Falls, SD. She also runs the “Hot Mess Moms” Facebook group. Pastor Erica loves making the Bible relatable and has a knack for making Bible stories come alive in fun and unexpected ways.

Lexy Carson is the pastor at Salem and Sauk Valley Lutheran Churches in Osakis, MN. She’s really into rural ministry and loves the cozy country vibe of her family’s place right on the Sauk River. Her husband is also a pastor in the LCMC-AD and works in Alexandria. Together, they have three children, all under five years old.

Jessica Bergland, a physical therapist and the founder of *Empower*, is all about helping women learn about mindfulness. She believes in mixing mindfulness with faith to help us find true peace and more joy in the busy world we live in. Jessica will share how we can use Bible verses and prayers along with mindfulness to boost our spiritual, mental, and physical well-being.

Registration Is Now Open

Registration Deadline: September 8, 2025

Hosted By New Creation Lutheran Church
295 Coney Street, Perham, MN 56573

See full details & download registration form at

augustanadistrict.org/events/2025-fall-gathering/



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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.

