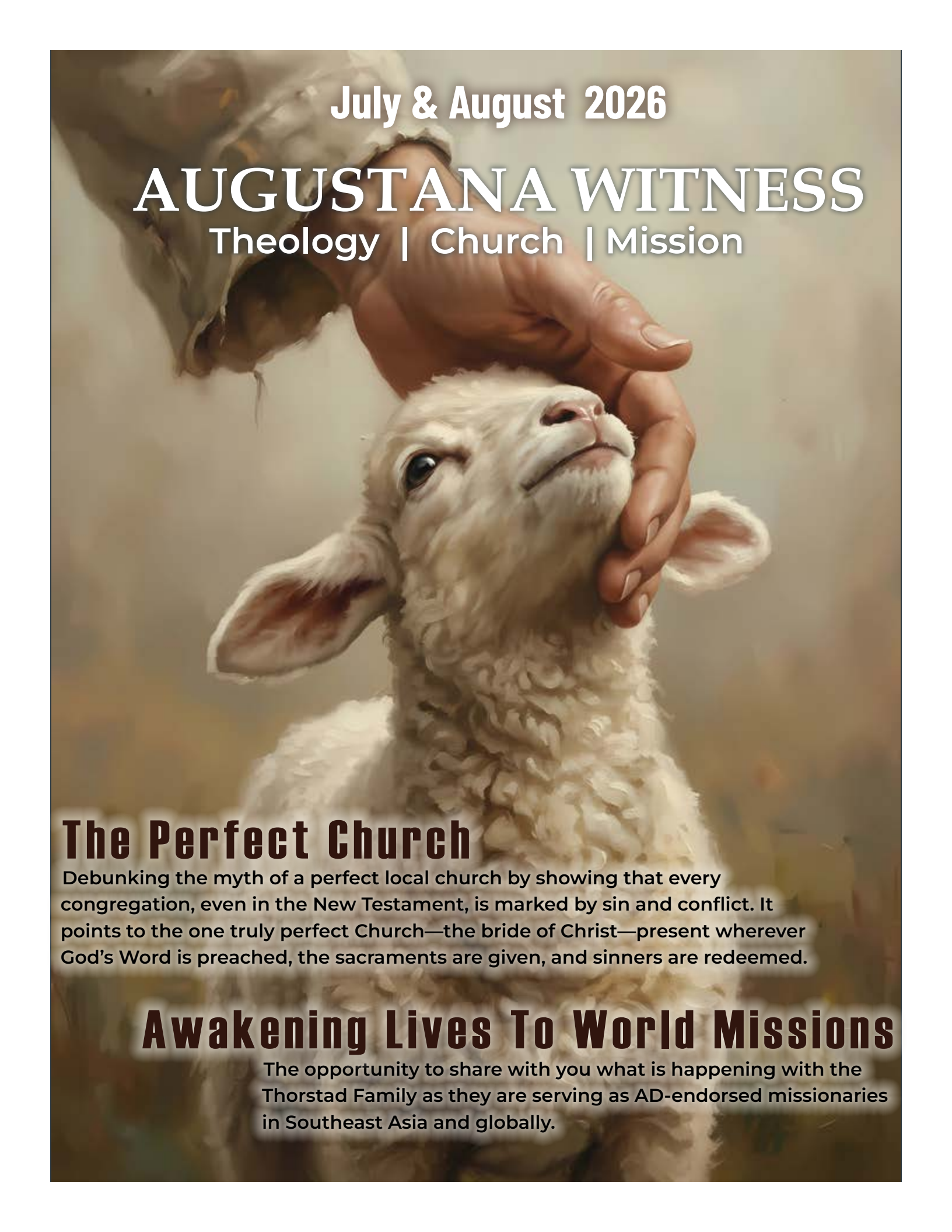




July & August 2026

AUGUSTANA WITNESS

Theology | Church | Mission

The Perfect Church

Debunking the myth of a perfect local church by showing that every congregation, even in the New Testament, is marked by sin and conflict. It points to the one truly perfect Church—the bride of Christ—present wherever God's Word is preached, the sacraments are given, and sinners are redeemed.

Awakening Lives To World Missions

The opportunity to share with you what is happening with the Thorstad Family as they are serving as AD-endorsed missionaries in Southeast Asia and globally.



Please note that this is a combined July/August edition of the Augustana Witness. The next edition will come out on September 4. Have a safe and blessed summer!

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Devotional: The Perfect Church

Have you found the perfect congregation yet?

Yeah, me neither.

And yet I sometimes hear about this romanticized concept of a perfect church—people yearning to recapture the vision of “the New Testament church.” And I always wonder: have they read the New Testament? It feels like such people zero in on certain descriptors of the church, in particular from the book of Acts. They yearn for a church that is “devoted...to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers,” where “awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles,” and where they “*had all things in common*” (Acts 2:42–44).

Well, yes, that sounds great. The problem appears when you zoom in on the “New Testament church.” That’s when you find deception (Acts 5:1–11), division (1 Corinthians), disagreement (Acts 15), false teaching (Galatians), antichrists (1 John), and the list goes on.

The problem was that the church was so full of sinners—and it’s no different today. The old Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon once said about finding the perfect church: “If I had never joined a church till I had found one that was perfect, I should never have joined one at all; and the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect church after I had become a member of it.” A congregation, by its very nature, is a

gathering of sinners. Because of this, sin is going to be a feature of it. Sinners sin. Divisions happen. Conflict erupts. There will be disagreements. You’ll never find a perfect congregation.

However, you can find the perfect Church.

Despite everything I’ve argued above, there is a perfect Church. She’s been created by God, who made “her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word...to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” The bride, the body of Christ, is the Church, and she is perfect on account of Christ.

And the perfect Church is present in your church—in your congregation—when God’s Word is proclaimed and when his sacraments are given. The perfect Church is present when sins are forgiven and God’s name is praised. When sinners in an imperfect church are redeemed, the perfect Church is there. You are in a perfect Church—you are in the perfect Church—because you are in Christ.

So keep going to your imperfect church. It’s the only option you have. Bring your own imperfection there, your own bondage to sin, and the gifts that God has given you, and then be on the lookout for the perfect Church to be revealed.

Pastor Dave Wollan
Faith Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, MN

Missions:

Awakening Lives to World Missions

Greetings Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This is a great opportunity to share with you all what is happening with the Thorstad Family as we are serving as AD-endorsed missionaries with our work in Southeast Asia and globally. We are always thankful when given the opportunity to write to you all. In a nutshell, the past six months have been very fruitful in ministry; I have seen three groups of students that I have been teaching at three different schools between Laos and Thailand, one of which I was able to attend the graduation and enjoy their celebration of completing their degrees.

May 2026 Graduating Class



As ministry continues to increase we have decided to shift gears and focus more on our ministry of Theological Education and Church Leadership support not only in Laos and Thailand but also globally; partnering with several theological seminaries to do that which includes: Moody Bible Institute (and their seminary) lecturing and teaching online for undergraduate, Masters, and Doctoral (DMIN) Courses, Trinity Evangelical Theological University and Seminary for undergraduate, Masters, and Doctoral

(ThD/PhD) courses, Bangkok Institute of Theology for Master of Divinity Courses, Hong Kong Life Road Theological Seminary for undergraduate, Master, and Doctoral (PhD) Courses, and Global Theological Seminary for Master of Ministry Courses. I have transitioned from a leadership role with the Bible translation agency I was working with, but am still supporting some languages in Central Asia as a Translation Consultant. The reason for these changes is purely considering our time and energy, and also where our heart and desire to build discipleships of Christ and be well-trained, developed, and equipped pastors.

My wife, Pastor Vongdeuane, has been busy building an Our Daily Bread Ministry in Laos by disbursing Daily Devotional Booklets (partially supported by Heart for Mission Ministry) and other ministry-supported resources, serving as a pastor in Nakham Church, and serving the Pastoral Social Welfare Development ministry.

Nakham Church



Our children continue to grow. Abraham just completed 8th grade and is moving into 9th. David finished primary school (5th grade) and is moving into secondary school. Joseph finished 2nd grade and is moving

into 3rd. Please continue to pray for them as they study in English and are learning both the Lao and Chinese languages for how God will equip them for the future.

The Thorstad Family



We pray that your churches would consider supporting us and our ministry and that we can be a light of good theology for the church, not only in Southeast Asia but globally.

Blessings,
Pastor Tom Thorstad, Pastor Vongdeuane,
Abraham, David, and Joseph
AD Endorsed Missionary, Awakening Lives
to World Missions
<https://www.alwm.org/laos-thailand>

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.

JONAH

DIVING DEEP
INTO GOD'S LOVE

AUGUSTANA DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL RETREAT
OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 | INGHAM, IA

SAVE THE DATE

Cost: \$95 per person
Watch for the registration to open soon.



Rev. Dr. Marney Fritts, Theology Coordinator for the Augustana District of LCMC, will be hosting a series of free online classes covering the theological distinctives the District is held together by, and which give the fellow congregations life and nourishment when gathered. The classes will cover topics such as: *What is in the AD Statement of Faith; The Law-Gospel Distinction; The Power of Proclamation: Handing Over the Goods; Justification and Vocation; Sanctification as Purely Passive; On Being Theologians of the Cross; The Office of Pastor and the Royal Priesthood of Believers.* These classes are

geared for those congregations that are interested in Augustana District AND for member congregations. The classes will be held via Zoom the third Thursday of each month from 7-8 p.m. (Central), September 17, 2026 – March 18, 2027. The Zoom link may be found in the Events tab of the Augustana District website: <https://augustanadistrict.org/events/>. Any questions may be directed to dtc@augustanadistrict.org



LCMC Annual Gathering & Convention

October 4-7, 2026 at Lutheran Church of Hope (West Des Moines, IA)

Early Bird registration pricing ends on 7/31/26, so register today!

<https://www.lcmc.net/annual-gathering>

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." – Galatians 5:1

Freedom in Christ is LCMC's first core value and an essential part of our DNA, but what does being free in Christ actually mean? What are we free from, who or what are we free for, and what exactly are we free to do? Join us for the 26th Annual Gathering & Convention to find out!

Let Us Pray: July & August 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: July 2026

You and your congregation are invited to continue to pray for the Augustana District:

- ✝ Bethesda Lutheran Church of Aitkin, MN
- ✝ Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Willow Lake, SD
- ✝ Crossroads Lutheran Church of Dawson, MN
- ✝ Hope Lutheran Church of Fosston, MN
- ✝ Pleasant Valley Lutheran Church of Kidder, SD
- ✝ Solem Lutheran Church of Hawley, MN
- ✝ Stavenger Lutheran Church of Seneca, IL
- ✝ Tahoma Lutheran Church of Maple Valley, WA
- ✝ Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Buffalo Lake, MN

AD Congregational Prayer Calendar: August 2026

You and your congregation are invited to continue to pray for the Augustana District:

- ✝ Bethany Lutheran Church of Covington, MI
- ✝ Bethesda Lutheran Church of Dresser, WI
- ✝ Christ the King Lutheran Church of Hutchinson, MN
- ✝ Fahlun Lutheran Church of Nelson, MN
- ✝ Falls Community Church of Sioux Falls, SD
- ✝ Kensington Lutheran Church of Kensington, MN
- ✝ Spring Valley Lutheran Church of Viborg, SD
- ✝ St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Stacy, MN
- ✝ Wang Lutheran Church of Maynard, MN

Monthly Unified Prayer Points for Individuals and Congregations:

July

Augustana District Events

- ✝ The planning of our youth, lay leader and pastoral gatherings
- ✝ Speakers and breakout leaders
- ✝ Good attendance

August

Our Augustana District Mission Partners

- ✝ Tabor Evangelist Project - Ethiopia
- ✝ Evangelist Training - North Central Ethiopian Synod
- ✝ All India Masihi Jamat



About Our Gathering

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. Through baptism, we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection. Because Christ lives, we no longer live in fear, shame, or despair, but in freedom and promise. Join women from across the district as we gather around God's Word, prayer, worship, and fellowship to explore what it means to die and rise with Christ each day. Together we will reflect on how the resurrection shapes our identity, hope, relationships, and life together as God's faithful people.

WHY JOIN US?

*inspiring speakers – engaging breakout sessions
delicious luncheon – uplifting worship – real connections*

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Julie Smith



The Rev. Julie Smith is an author, speaker, theologian, mentor and currently serves as the national Service Coordinator of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ. An LCMC-certified and Augustana District-endorsed pastor, Julie is a graduate of Gustavus Adolphus college in St. Peter, Luther Seminary in St. Paul, and widely sought after as a teacher and preacher. Along with serving on the faculty of St. Paul Lutheran Seminary, Julie travels thousands of miles across the United States each year proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2026 WOW Gathering

September 19, 2026

Resurrection Lutheran Church
Mankato, Minnesota

Augustana District Fall 2026 Women of the Word Gathering

September 19, 2026

Resurrection Lutheran Church

1735 East Main Street – Mankato, MN 56001

AGENDA			
9:00am: Registration and Coffee Fellowship		9:45am: Worship 3:00pm: Dismissal	
PLACES TO STAY			
Courtyard Marriott 901 Raintree Road Mankato, MN 507-388-1234		Motel 6 1731 Premier Drive Mankato, MN 507-345-6666	
TownePlace Suites 911 Raintree Road Mankato, MN 507-344-1234			
COST			
In-person: \$25 Individual Online: \$25 Church Online: \$50			

Send Registration & Payment To:

WOW Treasurer – c/o Gail Telecky

607 Bluff Street NE – Hutchinson, MN 55350

Pay checks to: Women of the Word



2026 WOW Gathering Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Church Name: _____

Dietary Needs/Special Accommodations: _____

Online Prayer Gathering

You are welcome to join us regularly or whenever you're able. We meet by Zoom at 9:00 AM on the second Tuesday of each month. 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.

Join us for our next meeting on Tuesdays - July 14 and August 11 - at 9:00 AM - this link will give you access to the prayer room each month <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85469245577> so you may want to bookmark it.

In Christ,
Pastor Aaron Deutsch
Augustana District Coordinator



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

- Pastor | Holy Cross Lutheran Church | Glenwood City, WI
- Pasor | St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church | Stacy, MN
- Co-Lead Pastor | Christus Lutheran Church | Clintonville, WI
- Pastor | Living Word Lutheran Church | Milbank, SD
- Pastor | Aurdal Lutheran Church | Aurdal, MN
- Pastor | Salem & Sauk Valley Lutheran Parish | Osakis, 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 | Lamberton, MN
- Part-time Pastor | Our Redeemer Lutheran Church | Badger, MN

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

Administrative Support Group

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



You are invited to a 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 during the meeting. 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.

