



# The Augustana Ministerium

**A pastoral association formed to preserve and promote Lutheran pastors and a distinctively Lutheran Ministry of Word and Sacrament to Lutheran congregations.**



## Good Enough?

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Romans 12:2 (ESV)

When God created the world, He did not pronounce it “good enough.” No, He declared that it was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Again, when God the Father sent His Son to assume our human natures and suffer and die on the cross for us, He gave us His very best, His perfect Son (Matthew 3:17). In Him we have perfect forgiveness, perfect salvation, perfect eternal life. Nothing that God has done for us has been mediocre. None of it is merely “good enough.”

That is an important thing for us to remember, because a lot of us are rather pragmatic people. We take the “good enough” approach. We don’t think of the lawn as needing to be golf-course quality manicured...if it’s mowed down to two inches tall, that’s “good enough.” Much of life is like that. It would be unhealthy of us to be

perfectionists at everything. An attitude that gets the job done “good enough” and moves on to the next job is, frankly, necessary in order to do all the tasks that have been placed before us. But do we really want to have a “good enough” attitude when it comes to matters of the Holy Faith?

Look at the Scripture passage above. We find there not a hint that maybe it would be okay to allow only a minimum renewal of our minds, while maintaining as much conformity with the world as possible, all the while calling it “good enough.” No, as those who have received the perfect gifts of God, we want to confess them perfectly. Repentant and forgiven for the sake of Jesus’ perfect

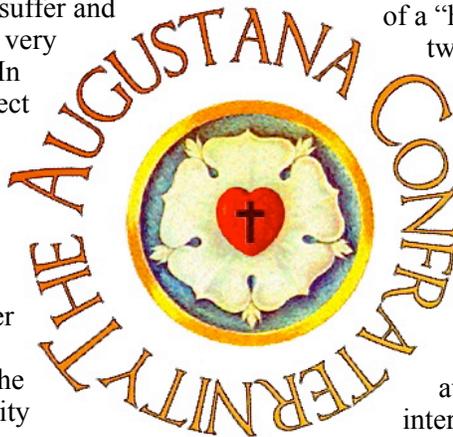
sacrifice on the cross, we rejoice in the perfect doctrine which God gives us in His perfect Word, and we strive to keep it and confess it whole and undefiled.

Consider a story told about a man in the old west who needed a new wagon driver. The job involved driving the horses as they pulled this wagon on narrow mountain dirt roads, with steep mountain on one side and steep cliff on the other. One applicant came in, and when asked about his skill, said that he was so good with a horse drawn wagon he could come within an inch of the edge of the cliff and still be fine. The next applicant said that he was something of a “hot dog,” and could balance the wagon on two wheels on one side, while the other two actually went out over the edge of the cliff, and still succeed in delivering the wagon load of material. The third applicant said simply, “Sir, if you hire me, I’ll keep your wagon as far away from the edge as I possibly can.” Whom, do you suppose, got the job?

The theological attitude of The Augustana Ministerium is a lot like the wagon driving attitude of that third man. We are not interested in how worldly we can be and still get away with it. We don’t ask how sloppy we can be with the administration of the Lord’s Supper, or how far we can push the envelope in

having women do kinda-sorta-maybe-authoritative-looking things in the Divine Service, or how non-Lutheran looking the Sunday morning service can be and still leave us room to call ourselves Lutheran. Quite to the contrary, we try to keep the wagon of our doctrine and practice as far away from the cliff of world-conformity as possible.

As the Legate of The Augustana Ministerium, I want to thank you for your participation in the Augustana Confraternity. Your support of these faithful Pastors enables ministries to continue which would suffer without your support, and might even fail...ministries committed to being as faithful to the Word of God as they can possibly figure out how to be. Remember with (cont. on Page 2)



**Confessional Lutheran Laity  
Supporting Confessional Pastors**

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## Your Gifts in Action

Where do I begin? A few weeks back Rev. Stefanski asked if I might provide a brief "update" as to my pastoral situation, since I have been blessed with support by the Augustana Ministerium over the past two years.

Within the first month of my very first Call, I had been "cursed in tongues," attacked for having the audacity to request that the upright piano be moved from blocking the pulpit, roundly criticized for using *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *Lutheran Worship* instead of the Nazarene hymnal in the pew racks, and informed that our congregation would be hosting a joint VBS with the Roman Catholic and ELCA churches in town (using a Baptist-based VBS program, at that). At the first "wink!" I attended, one of the senior pastors introduced himself by sharing that he had been praying for me, because "that congregation is a pastor killer." Things only got worse after that.

I don't know if Pr. Michael Liese was thinking of me specifically in his "Starting from Scratch" article, but I did indeed spend many hours on the phone receiving support and encouragement from Pastor Liese during the months leading up to my being forced out of the Ministry at my first congregation. I cannot begin to express how grateful I was, just to have a sympathetic ear during those

sleepless nights leading up to my eventual ouster from the congregation.

Jobless and homeless, *The Augustana Ministerium* immediately began providing a monthly stipend that has continued through my (miraculous) second Call to a small congregation in southeast Colorado.

I am pleased to report that things in Colorado are dramatically better in every way. Trinity does not suffer from the grave theological shortcomings of my previous congregation. We are a liturgical, traditional congregation (hence our new slogan: "Traditional Worship + Traditional Values.")

Since arriving, we have hosted the first VBS that anyone can remember (20 children in attendance), begun a new radio ministry to La Junta and the Arkansas Valley, engaged in several charitable events for the community, and become known as southeastern Colorado's "champion of life Church."

Personally, I have been blessed to the point of being able to reduce my stipend to the point that I shall be able to discontinue it completely in the coming new year! Additionally, I am appealing to the Trinity Voters Assembly to include TAM as a mission worthy of our support, and encouraging other congregations and their pastors to do the same.

I cannot begin to convey my gratitude to every member of TAM for their love and their support. Just knowing that

you were there through all the dark times was enough to keep me going. Your financial support over the past two years has gone a long way in keeping a little Confessional congregation (and her pastor) afloat as well.

**The Rev. Philip A. "Tony" Bolen  
Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church,  
La Junta, Colorado**

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(*Good Enough?* continued from Page 1)

gratitude the life of God's faithful and now translated servant Mary Ley; and please pray for our Superintendent, Pastor Bruce Ley, as he is now given to continuing in his service of the Lord without the earthly support of his wife of 42 years. Pray that vacant congregations would seek, and find, faithful Pastors who will preach the Word of God in its truth and purity, and administer the sacraments according to Christ's institution. (On this point, the Augustana Ministerium can help!) And pray for all of the Pastors of the Augustana Ministerium, that by the grace of God, we may all resist conformity with this world, and instead faithfully attend to the Word of God, and thus continually be transformed by the renewal of our minds through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**The Rev. Dr. Kent Heimbigner  
Pastor, Charity Lutheran Church,  
Burleson, Texas  
TAM Legate  
<http://ConfessionalLutheran.org>**

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## A Little Bit of 'Accounting'...

One of the things The Augustana Ministerium seeks in its service to Christ's Church is to be fiscally responsible with the gifts with which we are entrusted by Christ's people. Along with that desire comes something a little more complicated: the challenge of being as financially 'open' as possible, without allowing those who are helped (or the parishes they serve) to be embarrassed.

What we have therefore resolved to do is periodically to list in this newsletter the amounts of *monetary* aid given and a little bit about the situations into which that aid was sent...being careful to keep from releasing too much personally identifiable information. God willing, we will also continue to have articles written by those who have

been aided, such as by Pr. Ahonen last issue. and Pr. Bolen this issue.

**Through 08/31/08, we received \$ 18,015.39 for mission pastor assistance and personal emergency assistance.**

- In January, a pastor forced out of his parish without severance received \$ 2,000.00 and began a mission congregation, needing no further support to this point.
- In January, a pastor received \$1,000.00 to assist his family with uncovered medical expenses.
- In February, a designated gift of \$1,000.00 was received to assist a pastor with vehicular expenses.

## Accounting cont.

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- In April, a pastor received \$1,000.00 to allow him to catch up on bills that were overwhelming him in his low-salaried secular job after having been illegitimately forced out of his parish.
- In April a designated gift of \$750.00 was received to assist a pastor with his wife's medical expenses.
- In May, a CRM pastor received \$850.00 to keep him from being evicted.
- In May, a designated gift of \$1,000.00 was received to assist a pastor with living expenses after having been forced from his parish.
- In May, a grant of \$2,000 was given to assist a mission pastor and his family of four with basic living expenses while he relaunched his employment search following the unexpected withdrawal of a job offer.
- In July, an additional \$1,000 was provided to a pastor and his family who continued to suffer through a severe financial crisis, due in large measure to legal bills incurred while battling an unjust effort to remove him from serving faithfully the faithful people of God in his parish.

### **Total emergency assistance through 08/31/08: \$10,600**

At the same time, we have worked to keep pastors in parishes where they could not afford to stay without our assistance:

- A pastor in California has received mission assistance in the amount of \$100 per month, for a total of \$800.
- A pastor in Michigan has received mission assistance in the amount of \$250 per month, for a total of \$2,000.
- A pastor serving a three-point mission in Wisconsin and Michigan has received mission assistance in the amount of \$300 per month, for a total of \$2,400.
- A pastor serving a mission in Minnesota has received mission assistance in the amount of \$500 per month, for a total of \$4,000.
- A pastor in Nebraska, serving in a parish and on a reservation, has received mission assistance in the amount of \$300 per month since March, for a total of \$1,800.

**Total mission pastor assistance through 08/31/08: \$11,000** (plus the above-mentioned \$4,000 of personal aid that allowed pastors to continue to serve or to establish new mission work)

On the other hand, TAM operates very frugally. Outside of the \$1,556.24 (all raised from members' dues, *not at all* from gifts for personal and mission aid) that paid for this year's Theological Conference, our total administrative costs have amounted to \$102.50 (due, in part, to the fact that

Administrative Council members often do not seek reimbursement for their expenses).

In fact, our low administrative costs have allowed the Administrative Council to do something that is foreign to bureaucratic thinking: we intend to reallocate a portion of membership dues to personal assistance and mission funding. While we have seen church bodies increase their administrative staff and expenses while recalling missionaries, etc., The Augustana Ministerium seeks to proceed in precisely the opposite fashion, moving money out of the Administrative Account into the account where it will serve our constituting objectives, the support of pastors who preach and teach and administer the sacraments in accord with our Lord's Word.

The amount that will be transferred has not yet been determined, but we believe it will be a significant portion of what the members of The Augustana Confraternity have paid in dues. We know that your desire is to help faithful pastors and that you would like as much of your dues payment to go to that end as possible. Some have suggested that we could direct even more of your dues to that work if we did not publish this newsletter *in print*, but simply made it available on the internet. While it is true that some money would be saved and that most of our current members could read the newsletter that way, there is a further purpose to using the print medium: being able to hand other members of your parish this publication in hard copy gives them the opportunity to be introduced to the work of the Ministerium and Confraternity without their having to go to a website and download something that they're not sure that they are interested in. In fact, if you wish to have more than one copy sent to you specifically for that purpose, let us know. (You can also photocopy the newsletter or, better, download the .pdf file from our website and print it on your own color printer.)

We will be updating all of these figures as we go on, though in a briefer manner than we are using this month. We will plan on having a short column on what has been disbursed in each issue, as well as letting you know how much of your annual dues have been reassigned to emergency and mission pastor aid. While we made it clear up front that dues money was for administration, we are thankful that the Lord has so blessed us this year that we will need only a small portion of what was received for that purpose and we pray that such will always be the case. We are confident that as you present the work of the Ministerium and Confraternity to others in your congregation, they will appreciate this commitment to making the best use of membership dues and to the commitment to confine the use of other gifts and offerings 100% for their intended purpose.

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## **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Theological Conference**

The Fourth Annual Theological Conference and Plenary of The Augustana Ministerium will be held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Kearney, Missouri, May 11–13, 2009. Our program will consider Ecclesiastical Supervision in a 'Post-Synodical' Age...that is, how pastors may be prepared for service, kept fit for service through mutual accountability, and cared for in such a way that they are best able to care for the household of God, even as the Holy Spirit charges them through St. Paul.

Speakers announced thus far include:

The Rev. William Weedon, pastor of St. Paul, Hamel, Illinois

<http://stpaulchurchhamel.org>

<http://weedon.blogspot.com>

The Rt. Rev. James Heiser, pastor of Salem, Malone, Texas and Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America

<http://salemlutheranchurch.net>  
<http://eldona.org>

The Rev. Eric Stefanski, pastor of Holy Trinity, Harrison, Arkansas

<http://holytrinitylc.com>  
<http://CAT41.org>

Plan to join us in the Kansas City area for a wonderful time of learning and of rejoicing in our mutual endeavor to *Preserve and Promote Lutheran Pastors and a Distinctively Lutheran Ministry of Word and Sacrament to Lutheran Congregations!*

### **Donation Info**

*Make checks payable to:*

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<http://www.augustanaministerium.org>

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