

AES MINISTRIES

Augustana/East Sveadahl Lutheran Churches

OCTOBER 2026 NEWSLETTER



Pastor's Column

"We need to ensure and safeguard a space for proper human control over the choices made by artificial intelligence programs: human dignity itself depends on it."
- ELCA Social Statement on Artificial Intelligence (2026)

I recently attended our Watonwan River Conference clergy gathering. We get together monthly to worship, be in fellowship with each other, and then partake in some sort of educational time together. This past gathering had us looking at the topic of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how our faith should inform our understanding and use of it.

I think we can all agree that AI is advancing at an exponential rate. I have heard AI be compared to a severe, rapidly moving spring thunderstorm—there are both benefits and significant dangers. While severe, such a spring storm brings needed rain. Likewise, AI benefits society by turning days of research into an hour, increasing productivity in business, helping scientists solve long-standing mysteries, and much more. Yet AI also brings destructive high winds. AI threatens livelihoods, the natural environment, relationships, shared understandings of what it means to be human, and much more.

I have been thinking a lot about AI and the future of the church and what this could all mean for ministry. Ministry, at its core, is deeply relational. It is embodied and communal. AI can create social media posts, format newsletters, and even help organize schedules. It can't, however, replace the ministry itself. AI cannot replace the presence of another human being sitting beside someone as they die or showing up at someone's house after a horrible diagnosis. AI cannot know the history behind someone's tears or be able to recognize when a teenager has become withdrawn. AI can explain to you what baptism and holy communion are, but it cannot gather you around the table or the font as you participate in the embodied life of Christ.

Christian ministry is witness. It is about showing up - imperfectly - and proclaiming what God has done in your life. AI cannot replace that. Preaching is vulnerable and emotional. There is a deep sense of rawness when someone proclaims God's Word. The sudden pauses, the words that shake as a preacher holds back emotion, and the adrenaline that comes across as the words grow louder. AI cannot replace that.

AI is here and it's growing rapidly. The question isn't how do we avoid it? The question is how do we use it and not lose sight of what it means to be human and to be the church? I do believe we can use AI to help us do certain things and to be more efficient in certain areas - but I urge us to remember that efficiency has never been the heart of the Gospel. God chose not to come to us as an idea or an algorithm, but in the fully human body of Jesus Christ. Let us keep showing up in real, human ways for real, human people and proclaim the very real love of Christ.

Pastor Mandy France

AUGUSTANA

CIRCLES

October 6: 9:00 am Rebecca Circle
 October 7: 9:30 am Martha Circle
 October 20: 9:30 am Sewing Circle
 October 21: 2:00 pm WELCA – Brandt Ridge

USHERS

John Coleman, Andrew Farr, Adrian Rodriguez-Farr, Stan Kunkel, Kyla & Kaitlyn Schlomann

LECTORS

October 4: Jodi Coleman
 11: Kari Miest
 18: Judy Thulien
 25: Kirsten Freitag

ALTAR FLOWERS

Please call the church office if you wish to provide altar flowers for a particular Sunday, and your name will be placed on the schedule.

MEMORIALS

None to report

RADIO INFORMATION - 1370 AM

Sponsor a half hour broadcast for \$40.00.
 East sponsors the 2nd Sunday of the month, and two of the four 5th Sundays of 2026.
 Augustana sponsors the 4th Sunday of the month, and two of the four 5th Sundays of 2026.
 To sponsor an Augustana broadcast, call 375-4792.

October 25th: Gene & Carol Zarn

Volunteers Needed!

Augustana is looking for volunteers willing to come sit at church on Mondays from 8:30 am – 12:00 pm starting Monday, October 5th. A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board in the narthex.

If there is a volunteer who signs up, we will have the Education Door open during those hours.

AUGUSTANA

MISSIONARY SPONSORS

Please call the church office to sponsor our Missionary. The cost is \$20.00 per week.

The month of October: Gene & Carol Zarn

NOISY OFFERING

Sunday, October 26th – Going to Food Shelf

ELECTRONIC GIVING

1. Electronically: visit church website and click on the "Secure Contributions" tab, or scanning our QR Code
2. Secure Contributions: visit church Website www.augustanachurch.org
3. Give+Text: from your phone, text number 844-686-4439 (unique to Augustana)
4. Offering envelopes: through the mail or into the Drop box.



Questions? Contact Financial Secretary, Deanna Hoffman 507-317-7724.

ALTAR GUILD

Becky Schmidt, Carol Zarn, Jill Beckius

GREETERS

October 4: John & Jeanne Miest
 11: Darrick & Kari Miest
 18: Greg & Judy Thulien
 25: Bill & Kirsten Freitag

COMMUNION SERVERS

October 5: Jodi Coleman & Sandy Berg
 12: John Coleman & Sandy Berg

LITTLE FOOD PANTRY

Rebecca Circle

Save the Date! St. Lucia

St. Lucia will be held on Sat., December 12, 2026

EAST - October

TRANSITIONS:

PRAYER CONCERNS: Brenda, Mike, Jamie,
Marie, Phyllis, Bruce, Sam, Chloe, Orval

STEWARDSHIP REPORTS:

Needed through August	\$54,293.36
Received through August	46,209.42
Behind through August	- \$ 8,083.94
Received in August	\$ 3,819.90

Happy Birthday Happy Baptismal Birthday

- 2 Cindy Torkelson 11-25
- John Wolle 11-23
- 8 Daniel Avila 4-14
- 15 Tama Bridges 11-29
- 16 Scott Reinke
- 17 Denae Bridges 12-24
- Sonja Coleman 11-23
- 18 Judy Beck 11-25
- 19 Bruce Sharp
- 21 Nancy Vargeson 4 -
- 27 Emily Braaten 4-22
- 31 Tiffany Fast 12-16

LEFSA

The East WELCA will be
making lefsa this fall.
Orders can be placed with
Evonne Moll or Janet Bloomquist.

*The real secret of happiness is
not what you give or
what you receive;
it's what you share.*

EAST - October

RADIO BROADCASTS

October. 4: First Lutheran, St. James
11: East Sveadahl
18: First Lutheran, St. James
25: Augustana

VISITING COMMITTEE

Sonja Coleman and Julene Hoffman

ALTAR COMMITTEE

Lorita Nasman and Bernie Jurgens

USHERS

Kris Suess

LECTORS

October 4: Kris Suess
11: Leigh Rolshoven
18: Sonja Coleman
25: Cindy Torkelson

NOISY OFFERING

October 25:

RADIO SPONSORS

October 11:
November 8: Don and Tammy Stevens-Rathman
November 29: Don and Tammy Stevens-Rathman
December 13:

Sponsors are needed for the October and
December broadcasts. If you would like to be a
sponsor, please call Susan. The cost is \$40.00 per
broadcast.

STEWARDSHIP !!!

*Encourage each other
to build each other up.
- 1 Thessalonians*



AES October NEWS



YOUTH NEWS

ROAR ~ 6:00-7:00 pm ~ October 7, 21, 28

CONFIRMATION ~ 6:00 – 7:00 pm ~ October 7, 21, 28

SUPPERS ~ 5:30 pm ~ October 7, 21

BINGO ~ October 4

Youth in grades 5-12 are invited to help with Bingo, Sunday October 4th, 2:00 pm at Pleasant View!

HALLOWEEN PARTY ~ October 23

Calling all youth in grades 5–12! Join us for a fun-filled Halloween Party at East Sveadahl on Friday, October 23rd, from 7:00–11:00 PM! Come enjoy food, fun, games, and fellowship! 🍬

Want to bring a friend? Absolutely! Friends are welcome, but they must be registered as well. Please register by October 11th by contacting Sandy Berg at (507) 381-8903. A minimum of 10 youth is required. We hope to see you there!

TURKEY DINNER ~ November 18th

The Annual Turkey Dinner is Wednesday, November 18th from 5:30-7:00 pm at Augustana. Tickets (\$10.00) can be purchased from October 4 – November 8 from any AES Youth grades 7-12, Sandy Berg (507-381-8903), or at the Augustana office. Must have a ticket in advance to attend; takeout meals will be available with a ticket. Menu: turkey, potatoes, dressing, vegetable, dessert, beverage. Come enjoy a wonderful meal and fellowship with us!

JUNIOR HIGH YOUTH GATHERING ~ November 20th – 21st

Youth in grades 6-7 are invited to attend the Junior High Youth Gathering at the Holiday Inn in Willmar on Friday and Saturday, November 20th – 21st. Contact Pr. Mandy or Sandy Berg to sign up!

WELCA'S BAKELESS BAKESALE ~ October 11

The Augustana WELCA is hosting a “Bakeless Bake Sale” and serving brunch during coffee hour at Augustana on Sunday, October 11, 2026. **NOTE DATE CHANGE!**

Donations can be given at worship and coffee hour that day or dropped off at the church office.

The Bakeless Bake Sale Fundraising Poem

Many is the time I heard you say
I would rather give a “Dollar” than bake today
And so, we are asking you to help more or less
To make our Bakeless Bake Sale a big success.

Just send us the money that it would take
To bake a loaf of bread or a beautiful cake
Or send in the amount of money it takes to buy
A dozen rolls or maybe a pie.
We know you can help us if you will but try.



PANCAKE SUPPER ~ November 3

The Augustana Lutheran Churchmen's All-You-Can-Eat Pancake Supper is Tuesday, November 3rd from 4:30 – 7:00 pm. Free will donation.

SAVE THE DATE: ST LUCIA CELEBRATION ~ December 12

We will hold our St Lucia Swedish tradition with a candle lit breakfast and our Bake Shoppe. Everything will be in the lower level of the Education Building. HAVE YOU PLANNED YOUR RECIPES TO PREPARE ITEMS FOR THE BAKE SHOPPE? Donations will be received on Friday the 11th from 9am-6pm. Come and share the beautiful decorations, tasty breakfast, and get some holiday baking for your celebrations you share with others or enjoy in your home.

We are looking for baked goods and treats, plus any members who would be willing to help prepare, serve and reset. Check with Jeanne Miest (507-380-0350), Ray Berg (507-995-7964), or Deanna Hoffman (507-317-7724). Hope to see you there!

THANK YOU

My whole-hearted thank you to all who sent prayers, cards, thoughts, and phone calls while I have been recuperating from surgery. To all who I missed on your birthday, I apologize. My thoughts were with you.
 Francey Anderson

FINANCIAL FACTS – AUGUSTANA – August 2026

	<u>August</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Total Giving	\$13,179.14	\$120,117.02
Total Expenses	- \$14,936.14	- \$134,073.67
General Fund	- 1,757.00	- \$ 13,956.65

As you can see, the Month and Year-to-Date totals are in the negative. Please prayerfully consider how you can help support our Augustana/AES Ministries.

Your ongoing support is vital to your church and the programs offered. Every monthly gift, regardless of size, adds up to a powerful impact. Scan the QR code or go to <https://secure.myvanco.com/YNR9/home> to set up your monthly contribution.

Respectfully Submitted, Lauren Moll -Treasurer

AES JOINT COUNCIL MINUTES – September 3, 2026

Members present: Tom Anderson, Sandy Berg, Heidi Engel, James Joosten, Wayne Jurgens, Lynn Rolshoven, Lori Urevig, Kyla Schloman, and Pr. Mandy.

Absent: Susan Anderson

Kyla Schlomann, Council Chair, called the meeting to order at East Sveadahl.

No member concerns were presented.

Prayer concerns were addressed.

A motion was made by Tom, seconded by Wayne to approve the minutes from the last meeting.

Motion carried.

PASTOR'S REPORT:

September 16: confirmation meeting for students and parents.

September 23: confirmation class from 6-7 pm

August 25: Fundraising meeting [selling cookie dough] for National Youth Convention

August 23: Ecumenical youth night at First Presbyterian

The Worship in the Park was well received. Almost 90 people attended.

Pastor Mandy is working on new worship ideas.

OLD BUSINESS:

~ The compensation package was presented. A motion to approve Pastor Mandy's salary and insurance increases for 2027 was made by Sandy Berg, seconded by Lori Urevig; motion carried. Her mileage compensation was raised to meet current guidelines.

(continued)

A motion to keep Deacon Lyla's salary the same was made by Tom Anderson, seconded by Heidi Engel; motion carried. Her mileage compensation was raised to meet current guidelines.

~ Plans for the Spaghetti Supper on September 21st were finalized.

Thank you to Smithfield for the donation of hamburger for the Spaghetti Supper.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

The next meeting date was not set.

Respectfully submitted, Wayne Jurgens

EAST SVEADAHN COUNCIL MINUTES – September 10, 2026

The East Sveadahl Church Council met on Thursday, September 10, 2026 at 7 pm. Those present were Tom Anderson, Wayne Jurgens, Janet Bloomquist, Dale Anderson, Julene Hoffman, Sonja Coleman, Kris Suess, Lori Urevig, Susan Anderson, and Pastor Mandy.

Absent: None

Tom Anderson, Council Chairman, called the meeting to order, and Pastor Mandy opened with prayers that were brought forth by the council.

A motion by Dale, seconded by Wayne, and passed to approve the minutes for the East Council meeting from August 11, 2026 as printed in the newsletter.

Sonja Coleman, Financial Secretary, presented her report, and Kris Suess, Treasurer, presented her report. A motion by Lori, seconded by Dale, and passed to approve the reports as presented.

Outstanding bills were presented by Tom and approved to pay.

PASTOR MANDY'S REPORT:

- Confirmation class will begin on Wednesday, September 23.
- A tentative lock-in for youth at the Lake Crystal Rec Center is being planned.
- Friday, October 23 grades 6+ are planning a Halloween Party at East.

AES REPORT: A motion by Wayne, seconded by Lori, and passed to accept the compensation Packet for Pastor Mandy for 2027 as approved by the AES Council. See full AES report in the newsletter.

SUSAN'S REPORT: None

OLD BUSINESS: Reminder of the upcoming Spaghetti fundraiser with funds being used for future outreach programs for AES. Mark your calendar for September 21.

NEW BUSINESS: We discussed the possibility of adding an additional partner to AES Ministries.

As there was no further business, a motion by Janet, seconded by Dale, and passed to adjourn.

The next church council meeting will be October 8, 2026.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Janet Bloomquist, Council Secretary

AUGUSTANA LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES -- September 9, 2026

Present: Sandy Berg, Jodi Coleman, John Coleman, Terry Engel, Pastor Mandy, James Joosten, Nicole Meyer, Darrick Miest, Bob Moll, Jill Beckius

Absent: Nick Dannhoff, Andy Freitag

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm

Prayer Concerns: Pastor Mandy opened the meeting with prayer, including concerns brought forward by council members.

Approval of Minutes: Sandy made a motion to approve the minutes from last month. Bob seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Reports:

Treasurer: Lauren presented the Treasurer's Report. Darrick made a motion to approve the report, seconded by Jodi. Motion carried.

Giving: Darrick presented the giving report on behalf of Deanna. Year-to-date giving statements were mailed to members; however, some members reported that the amounts appeared to be inaccurate. A motion was made to table the Giving Report until the report can be reviewed. Jodi seconded the motion. Motion carried.

(continued)

Pr. Mandy's Report: Pastor Mandy is planning a confirmation orientation meeting with students and parents on Sept 16. Confirmation classes will begin Sept 23 from 6-7 pm. Pastor Mandy will also ask a parent to volunteer to sit in on the class each week. An ecumenical youth night was held on Aug 23 at First Presbyterian Church. Additional ecumenical events will be scheduled in the future. Pastor Mandy received positive feedback regarding the worship service held in the park. She expressed a big thank-you to everyone who helped make the service possible and to those who helped with lunch afterward. Pastor Mandy attended the Synod Convention this year and therefore will not attend the Fall Theological Conference. She also noted that her mileage will be higher than usual next month due to hospital visits to members in Rochester and other pastoral visits.

AES Ministries: Planning continues for the spaghetti supper on Sept 21. Approximately 200 tickets have been sold at this time. Volunteers are still needed to help serve and to provide desserts. It was also reported that Pastor Mandy's health insurance will increase approximately 15% for 2027.

Committee Reports:

Education - Plans are set for Rally Sunday on Sept 27. The theme will be "You are God's Masterpiece." There will be activities for ROAR students, followed by lunch after the joint worship service.

Evangelism/Social Ministry - The committee did not meet this month.

Worship/Music/Technology - Lucy Kulseth is willing to fill in for Heidi and will be paid for each Sunday that she serves.

Finance - Darrick and Jodi continue to work on the Excel spreadsheet for the giving report.

Property/Cemetery - The air conditioner in Pastor Mandy's office is working great, and Pastor Mandy expressed her appreciation. John also reported that a faucet in the kitchen was repaired.

Youth/Ministry - The youth committee is selling cookie dough from Aug 26-Sept 30. Upcoming events: Sept 13-Youth will participate in God's work, Our Hands project. Sept 21-Youth will help with the spaghetti supper. Oct 4-Youth will play Bingo at the nursing home. Oct 23-Halloween party for grades 5-12 from 7-11 pm. Sign up by Oct 11. Nov 18-Youth will serve the turkey dinner from 5-7pm. Cost remains at \$10 a ticket. Nov 20-21 Jr High Youth Gathering for 6-7 grade students. Cost is \$75 per person. Dec 6-Bingo at the nursing home at 2 pm, followed by Christmas caroling at 3 pm. Dec 20-Youth will serve lunch following the ROAR program.

Old Business:

God's Work, Our Hands: Sept 13, there will be communion during the worship service, as well as a Blessing of the Hands. Following worship, the group plans to go to the cemetery to trim trees, fill in low ground areas, and clean monuments. Tree branches and other debris will be brought to Meadowlark. Terry will contact Doug Nibbe to arrange trailers. John Coleman will also bring assorted tools. Lunch will be provided and the group plans to work for approximately 2 hours.

Employee Reviews: Terry will send review forms to Karen, Heidi, Deanna, and Lauren. Employees will complete the form, and individual review meetings will be scheduled in Oct.

Opening of the Church: Sandy made a motion for the church to be open on Monday mornings from 8:30 to noon, provided a volunteer is available to greet visitors. Bob seconded the motion. Pastor Mandy will try to be available during these hours, but may occasionally need to leave for hospital, home visits, other meetings.

Church Survey: Approximately 170 surveys were mailed out, and approximately 40 have been returned.

Beginning Sept 14, members will be contacted by phone and reminded to return their surveys. Terry is compiling the data as surveys are received. The complete data will be forwarded to Pastor Troy at SWMN Synod. Pastor Troy will review and discuss the results with the church council at a later date.

New Business:

Church cleanup day: The council would like to establish a church clean up date this fall and plan another clean up day in the spring.

Partnership discussion: Tom Anderson, Kayla Schlomann, and Terry met with representatives from St. Olaf and Zion Lutheran Church in Odin. They are very interested in joining a 3-point parish. This discussion is in the very early stages, and more information will be shared as it becomes available.

Book Reflection: The council will discuss the book, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*

Other Business: The pancake supper is scheduled for Nov 3.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 pm. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Jill Beckius

**YOU ARE INVITED TO THE ANNUAL
AUGUSTANA LUTHERAN CHURCHMEN'S**



**ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT
PANCAKE SUPPER**

**Tuesday, November 3rd
4:30 - 7:00 p.m.**

**AUGUSTANA LUTHERAN CHURCH
603 ARMSTRONG BOULEVARD NORTH
SAINT JAMES, MN.**

(across from the Armory and SuperFair Foods)

Free Will Donation

AES MINISTRIES
P.O. Box 151
ST. JAMES, MINNESOTA 56081
TELEPHONE: 507-375-4792

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October 2026 Newsletter

OCTOBER SUNDAYS

October 4 & 11 9:00 am Augustana Communion Service
10:30 am East Communion Service
October 18 & 26 9:00 am Augustana Worship Service
10:30 am East Worship Service

OCTOBER WEDNESDAYS

October 7 & 21 - 5:30 pm Supper at Augustana
October 7, 21, 28 - 6-7 pm ROAR at Augustana
October 7, 21, 28 - 6-7 pm Confirmation at Augustana

AES MINISTRIES

Augustana and East Sveadahl Lutheran Churches
Mandy France, Pastor Lyla Klee, Visitation Deacon