



# SAINT AUGUSTINE'S HOUSE

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## NEWSLETTER

**Summer, A.D. 2026**

The Congregation of the Servants of Christ, St. Augustine's House, is an ecumenical Christian community whose life of discipleship is inspired and shaped by the Holy Rule of St. Benedict. We identify with the Lutheran tradition, understood as a movement within and for the one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.

We are committed to the growth of the permanent resident community, to the pursuit of ecumenical understanding, and to the provision of retreats for members of the Fellowship of St. Augustine and others. We seek to serve the whole Church by our life of prayer and by the use of our facilities.

✠ PAX

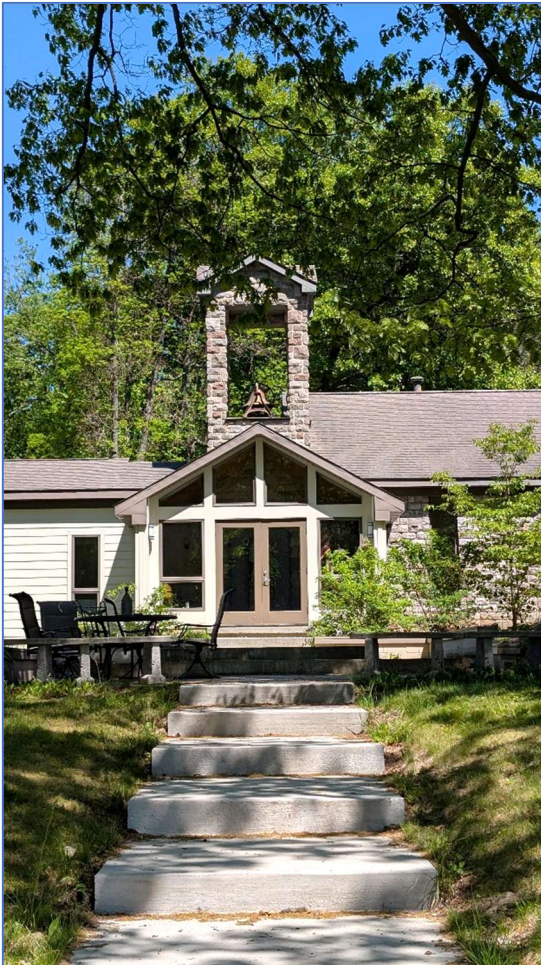
[The article below is a slightly abbreviated version of the preface Robert L Wilken wrote for *My Brothers' Place: An American Lutheran Monastery*, George Weckman's 1992 history of St. Augustine's House.]

In the wake of the Reformation monasticism lost its appeal and eventually disappeared from the life of the churches of the Augsburg Confession. This was not the intent of the reformers, and in a few cases monks who had embraced the Reformation continued to practice the religious life. Yet the historical record shows that in the main, as the reforms of the 16th century took root in northern Europe, the monastic way of life seemed out of spirit with the new impulse and in time the houses that remained were forced to close.

The demise of monasticism was a great loss to the Reformation churches, but it has taken centuries for Lutherans to realize how much had been lost. That is not to say that monasticism is on the edge of a great rebirth within our churches, but to acknowledge that in the last several generations some Lutherans have begun to look more closely at the disciplined life of prayer, and wherever prayer is taken seriously some form of communal life inevitably follows.

The reasons for renewed interest in monasticism are several. As relations between Lutherans and Roman Catholics have deepened, and Lutherans have spent time on retreat in monastic houses, and also become friends with monks and nuns, many of the traditional criticisms of monasticism seem jejune and superficial. As a consequence, it is time to rethink our conventional reservations about the monastic life.

Of course, monasticism has also changed over the centuries. In the 16th century the monastic institutions went through a great period of renewal that eliminated many of the abuses of medieval times. In light of this history many of the charges leveled against the monastic communities in the 16th century today seem anachronistic.



As we have learned to value the church's history during the patristic and medieval periods, not only during the age of Reformation, many have realized that monasticism is one of the most persistent marks of the Christian community. Though the reformers may have been historically correct in asserting that monasticism is not apostolic, nevertheless it arose early in the church's history and penetrated so quickly into the heart of Christian piety, that it has become an enduring part of Christian life and experience. Indeed, looking now from the vantage point of two millennia of Christian history, monasticism is a permanent feature of the Christian tradition, and in forming Christian self-understanding is second only to the Scriptures, the Liturgy, the Creed, and the office of the ministry. For some Christians, most notably the Orthodox, monasticism is one of the "marks" of the Church.

From its beginning monasticism was a lay movement, and to this day it has retained its lay character. To be sure in some male religious communities many of the members have been ordained, but among the Benedictines, for example, lay vocations have been encouraged in recent years. In antiquity monasticism was not a clerical movement, and many of the lives of monks written in the early church view ordination to the priesthood as a temptation the monk should shun. The point is an important one in the church today. It is not necessary for one to be ordained, which would mean spending several years in seminary, to embrace the religious life. It is possible, indeed desirable, for monks to bring their particular secular experience and skills into the religious community.

There are, then, many reasons, theological, spiritual, and historical, why Lutherans should welcome efforts to renew the monastic life in our circles. Yet as in so many things in life, it is not ideas or arguments that change our thinking and move our hearts, but the example of particular persons. This is why Father Arthur Carl Kreinheder will stand out in American

Lutheran history. For he did not simply talk about monasticism, he became a monk, and through his actions changed the lives of many others. He gave me an appreciation and respect for the monastic life, and I am grateful that I met Father Arthur as a young man.

In autumn 1957 a small group of students from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis traveled to St. Augustine's House in Oxford, Michigan, to spend the Thanksgiving holiday in prayer and meditation. I was among that group and I can still remember being received warmly by Father Arthur at the door and being instructed as to how we would spend our time during our short stay at this Lutheran "monastery." The group that went to Oxford that November had been prepped by another Father Arthur, Professor Ar-



*Robert Wilken, Fellowship Day 2006*

thur Carl Piepkorn, who in his courses had awakened an interest in the monastic life and taught us, by his example, to practice a disciplined life of prayer. If, God willing, there is to be a renewal of monastic life in the churches of the Augsburg Confession in this country, Arthur Carl Piepkorn must be credited with offering a theological rationale for what Arthur Carl Kreinheder bore witness to by his life.

Looking back now I realize that the short stay at Oxford not only piqued my interest in this new and unfamiliar aspect of Christian experience, but it also deepened my understanding of the nature of the Church. For the first time I realized that celibacy was a worthy vocation for a Christian. I also learned that the church need not be bounded by the parish structure with its familiar pattern of a married pastor and a congregation made up largely of married people many of whom were culturally and spiritually quite homogenous. I began to see that the life of prayer was much more spacious and diversified than I had imagined. And I learned that in daily prayer we join with a great company of people who envelop the globe. Today when singing the hymn "The Day You

Gave Us, Lord, Has Ended," (LBW #274) I think of monastic communities all over the world: "We thank you that your Church, unsleeping/ While earth rolls onward into light,/ Through all the world its watch is keeping/ And never rests by day or night./ As to each continent and island/ The dawn leads on another day,/ The voice of prayer is never silent/ Nor dies the strain of praise away."

Monasticism offers a more radical form of devotion displayed not only in stories from the Bible, or in lives of the saints, but in vibrant examples from one's own time, people who are like oneself, yet different, whose way of life is at once an ideal and yet lived by actual human beings, people one can know as friends and confidants. Monasticism adds texture to the Church's life.

Monasticism also gives the Christian community a different sense of place, for it offers a setting for prayer and worship that is set apart, psychologically and geographically, from the local parish church, yet is not a shrine, but a living community of Christians. Many Lutherans have learned how important such a place can be by visiting a monastery or going on retreat with Roman Catholics. But as George Weckman points out in this book on Father Arthur Carl Kreinheder and St. Augustine's House, there is a need for such places that are recognizable and familiar, where the books that are used, the music that is sung, the rituals that are observed are similar to those in one's home parish. Until that day, and may it come soon, when the churches of the Augsburg Confession are again in communion with the Church of Rome, there is good reason to encourage the founding of Lutheran monasteries and to pray for the success of St. Augustine's House. "Raise up we beseech you, Almighty God, men and women to serve you in religious communities to the praise and honor of your Holy Name and to the good of your Church. Amen."

—Robert L. Wilken, 1936-2026

## News and Notes

In May, our resident oblate Frank McSherry enjoyed a small family reunion here when three of his sisters

and their husbands visited. He is the oldest of eleven siblings. Frank has a long history with us going back to his first visit in 1972 when he also met Fr. Arthur. In 2017 he became part of the resident community and was the first to occupy a room in the newly completed Brugger Hall wing. Since then, in addition to faithful participation in the prayer offices he has managed the upkeep of our guest rooms.



*Frank with his sisters, Ginger, Noreen, and Kathleen*

Our vegetable garden has a new look this year. Property manager and neighbor, Brad Froehlich installed a number of raised metal beds to make weeding and harvesting easier. We will know this fall how it all works out.



For the past few decades, we have developed a network of hiking trails on our most wooded property. This last winter an unusual number of large trees fell on the trails and were blocking the way. As they were deemed beyond our chain sawing skills, we hired a professional arborist to clear them. Our trails are now

open with only modest challenges along the way. Years ago, a friend, Ernie Baker, composed a poem that is posted at one of the trail heads. It ends with the cheerful thought: "If there's a trail, maybe we're not lost after all."



Early in June we were saddened to learn of the death of Dr. Robert Louis Wilken, noted historian of Christianity. He, along with Richard John Neuhaus was an early supporter of Fr. Arthur and of our monastic community. As noted above, he wrote the preface to George Weckman's book, *My Brothers' Place: An American Lutheran Monastery* and in 2006 he presented a lecture here on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fellowship of St. Augustine.

[www.StAugustinesHouse.org](http://www.StAugustinesHouse.org)

*Find us on Facebook.*

Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in memory of

ERNIE and MARY LOU BAKER  
THOMAS A. MCELWEY  
MARY LEE STRUBLER

and in honor of

CHRISTOPHER TORGLER



*Frank's brothers-in-law, Bob and Suchard in the kitchen*

## Daily Prayer Schedule

<b>Vigils</b>	5:10
<b>Lauds</b>	6:00
<b>Terce</b>	8:15
On Sundays at 9:30	
<b>Holy Eucharist</b>	8:30
On Sundays at 10:00	
<b>Sext</b>	12:00
<b>None</b>	2:30
<b>Vespers</b>	6:00
<b>Compline</b>	8:30

