



Minnesota District Discipleship Fall 2023 Report

The mission of the district discipleship committee is "to provide resources, encouragement and training to assist congregations as they seek to strengthen individuals and families in their connection to Christ and their ongoing walk of faith."

DISTRICT UPDATE

MN District Workshop – March 9, 2024

This annual workshop is designed to be a gathering space for church workers (called, paid, and volunteer) to have conversations around specific areas of ministry. A keynote address is followed up by various breakout workshops that participants can choose from.

This year's District Workshop will be on Saturday, March 9, at St. Croix Lutheran High School. Details will be posted at mnworkshop.com and emailed out to the district as soon as they are available. Last year we welcomed about 150 people to this event, most of whom were lay members who were excited to learn and grow.

WELS UPDATE

Online Resources

WELS Discipleship produces a variety of resources to help churches in their gospel efforts to encourage their people's walk of faith at every stage of life. Most of these are disseminated at welscongregationalservices.net and are free. Some examples:

The Foundation:

The Foundation is a suite of resources that attempts build upon the importance of public worship both on Sunday morning and throughout the week. WELS Discipleship produces **family devotions** (w/ age-appropriate discussion questions) and **teen devotions** (w/ facilitator guides). All the devotions capture the worship themes from the previous Sunday.

Women's Ministry Resources:

Through online webinars, bible studies, devotionals, and programs like Advent/Lent by Candlelight, Women's Ministry seeks to nurture, encourage, and equip the women of our congregations to faithfully use their gifts for service in God's kingdom. <https://wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/womens-ministry/>

Marriage Enrichment Resources:

In addition to weekly marriage enrichment videos, *Marriage Moments*, and marriage bible studies, *Marriage Maintenance*, two added resources are now or will soon be available: **Marriage Keys** is an entry-level 3-part series with leader guides for congregations to strengthen the bond between husbands and wives with Christ. **Marriage for Life** (scheduled for upload May 2023) is a pre-marital course to provide a core for a congregation's pre-marriage counseling.

Youth Ministry Resources:

- **"WELS Youth Night"** provides a series of youth-focused events, three times a year (fall, winter, post-Easter), to gather youth from area congregations for fun fellowship and connecting with each other through Scripture. This kit provides all the pieces needed to plan, train, promote, and host a Youth Night

event. The spring Youth Night topic is “Dealing with Anxiety.” Resources include keynote video, small group discussion guide, and event planning guide.

“Who Am I?” - a video-based topic series to equip youth leaders to engage teens in a timely discussion on teen identity.

A look ahead

WELS Discipleship will continue to identify common needs within our congregations and produce the resources or programs that help meet those needs. Here are some upcoming efforts, events, and resources.

- **“A Time for Everything” stewardship resource** – Stewardship is the lifelong management of all the resources God has given us ... including a quickly depleting resource called “time.” So much competes for our time. How we manage the time we have left has huge implications on what we as individuals and as a church do for the rest of our lives ... beginning today. “A Time for Everything” provides four weeks of worship, sermon, bible studies, and devotional resources as congregations consider these important times: A Time to PRIORITIZE, A Time for PERSPECTIVE, A Time to PLAN, and A Time to PAUSE.
- **Small Group Ministry** – This online module will share various ways to approach using small groups and step-by-step instructions how churches can arrange for small groups in their ministry setting to build better connects for members to care for each other and serve in their church.
- **Identity, Gender and Human Sexuality** – Every generation has identified and grappled with the issues of their time. Gender and human sexuality have become the issue of our time and one of the reasons our church body is losing people. Churches and schools are asking, “What do we do? How do we handle this?” A gender/ human sexuality task force has been working to better understand and respond to this ideology with its cultural implications. Here are three things this group is working on: 1. **Development of a website** (devotionals, bible studies, educational resources) that comes at the issue from a confessional Lutheran perspective to help struggling individuals and families, 2. A **speakers bureau** who can present on the issues to congregations, and 3. **Church/school resources** to give guidance to handbooks, policies, statements, etc. Target date: *late summer/fall 2023.*
- **Sunday School** – This module will help congregations assess a struggling or declining Sunday school ministry and provide healthy approaches that build on a needed commitment of parents as partners in Sunday School ministry. Target date: *September 2023.*
- Multiple video-based topic series like **“Defending the Faith”** (May 2023), **“Never Too Young to Talk about Jesus”** (June 2023) and **“Everything LGBTQIA+”** (August 2023) equip youth leaders to engage teens in timely discussion on the issues of apologetics, sharing their faith, and a Christian approach to gender and sexual orientation.

Respectfully Submitted,



Rev. Matthew Ewart, Chairman
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MN District Schools Coordinator Report

September 10-12, 2023

The MN District has been very active since Assignment Day at MLC. The MN District received 13 graduates to serve in our early childhood, elementary, or high schools. Later in the summer, West Lutheran High School hosted the annual New Teacher Induction (NTI) seminar on July 24 for those new graduates as well as those that have only served one year in the ministry and their assigned mentors. We had over 30 attendees and feel that this workshop along with MLC's mentor program is helping our teachers stay in the ministry long-term. The new MLC graduates serving in the MN District are:

Abigail Robbert, Mt. Olive-Delano
Amanda Weddle, St. Croix Academy
Chantel Vant Hul, St. Pauls- St. James
Hannah Renner, Trinity-Belle Plaine
Hannah Willems, St. Croix Academy
Jakob Casper, Bloomington Lutheran
Joel Holz, Immanuel-Hutchinson

Katherine Fink, Salem-Woodbury
Matthew Krueger, Salem-Greenfield
Max Holmes, West LHS, Plymouth
Rebecca Loescher, Immanuel-Hutchinson
Sophia Scheuerlein, St. Paul's - Arlington
Lydney Marohn, Building Blocks..Cambridge

On August 15, St. John-Redwood Falls hosted an early childhood and principals workshop for the SW Conference. This was an opportunity for principals and early childhood teachers to get together and discuss items for the coming school year. I had the opportunity to talk to both groups and asked, "What can I or the MN District administration do for this conference?" The answer from the early childhood directors was, "We need help in all of our after school care programs. We are expected to run these programs if employees can't be found." The principals commented with, "The Christ Light Curriculum does not use NIV references when that's what most schools use as their Bible choice. Is there a way to include several Bible references in the new Christ Light?" This was brought up because they thought they heard that another Christ Light revision may be taking place.

Later in the summer, August 27-28, MLC hosted a workshop in the Twin Cities, coordinated by Jon Schaefer, Ben Clemons, President Gurgel and their team, for all seniors entering into the ministry at the end of this school year. There were five sectionals of 80 minutes in length encouraging and helping seniors to be ready for life in the full-time public ministry. The surveys showed the students graded the workshop/retreat 4.5 out of 5 and want MLC to continue to host this for years to come for future seniors.

The MN District Schools Coordinator along with President Klatt are looking for another early childhood director to assist our current Early Childhood District Schools Coordinator, LaShawn Smith. We hope to have this position filled this month.

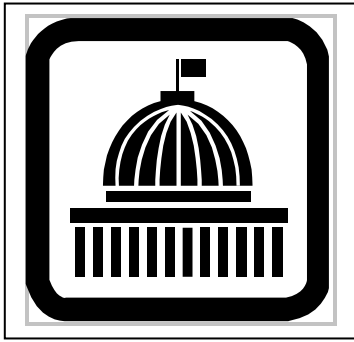
The Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) along with all District Schools Coordinators and Early Childhood District Schools Coordinators will be meeting for our annual DSC meeting September 21-22 in Pewaukee, WI at synod offices. This is where much of what the CLS will be doing will be shared with the DSCs and can be rolled out to our districts. I have included a link to the CLS Newsletter that will be shared later this month. I have listed the topics that will be in the newsletter in an effort to draw your attention to a few topics.

- Record enrollment - gifts and challenges
- Training for future leaders in your ministry
- Future leaders already teaching
- Active teacher calling window
- Save the dates
- School openings and closings
- Theology curriculum task force
- WELS devotions
- Heart Imprints - chapel talks
- Telling the Next Generation
- 2023-2024 Substitute teacher reimbursement rate
- Business certificate for school leaders
- Ministerial Growth and Evaluation Process

Thank you for your thoughts and prayers for the leadership of the MN District along with all the teachers, staff ministers, and staff that serve our varied ministries. Many of our schools in the MN District are growing and we continue to look for more ways to reach more students with the gospel message. May the Lord continue to bless you and your ministries.

In Christ's Service,

Dave Gartner
MN District Schools Coordinator
Principal - West Lutheran High School
dgartner@westlutheran.net



Minnesota District Legislation Committee



Report to the MN District – September 2023

Minnesota Legislature Approves Abortion Rights Bill

Earlier this year the Minnesota legislature approved the *Protect Reproductive Options Act*, a bill on abortion rights, a bill that was signed into law by Governor Walz on January 31st. The bill guarantees a woman's right to abort her baby for any reason, at any time, up to birth. The right to an abortion was already protected in Minnesota due to a 1995 state Supreme Court decision known as *Doe v. Gomez*. This new legislation makes it official state law. The bill also prohibits local governments from restricting access to abortion, birth control, sterilization and prenatal care

In May the Minnesota Legislature took things even further and passed the Abortion Repealer Bill which was signed into law on May 24th. Among other things this bill...

- removed provisions is state law requiring lifesaving care for infants born alive during a botched abortion. Lifesaving care is no longer required, only "comfort care" while the child is allowed to die.
- increased taxpayer funding of abortion for women covered by MinnesotaCare.
- repealed the protection provided by the physician-only law, meaning that abortions can now be performed by individuals who are not trained or licensed as a physician.
- repealed Women's Right to Know and informed consent.
- repealed Minnesota's viability law which states that abortions cannot be performed when the baby is viable outside the womb.
- repealed the Positive Alternatives Grant program, so that pro-life pregnancy resource centers can no longer receive state funding to provide vital services to women in need.

Minnesota Legislature Strips Parents of Their Rights

In April Governor Walz signed into the law The Kidnapping Bill. Under this new law, parents may lose custody of their child to a state court if they refuse to provide "gender-affirming healthcare," such as puberty-blocking drugs, cross-sex hormones, or gender transition surgery. Such refusal on the part of parents would be considered "abuse" or "neglect" under the new law and be grounds for a Minnesota court to take custody of their child. Moreover, an adult from another state would be

protected from prosecution by that state for bringing a minor to receive “gender-affirming care” in Minnesota.

Minnesota Legislature Approves Take Pride Act

On May 19th Governor Walz signed into law the “Take Pride Act.” Among other things this law removes explicit legal protections for children by removing language in the Minnesota Human Rights Act which previously state that adults who have “physical or sexual attachment to children” do not have legal protected status under current antidiscrimination laws. Here’s the impact: Adults who “identify” as sexually attracted to children may now be protected by nondiscrimination laws if they sought employment at a preschool, daycare center, or other facility serving children.

New Teacher Licensing Standards Approved

The new standards for teacher licensure that were proposed by the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) were mostly approved by two administrative law judges in December of 2022 and are set to go into effect on July 1, 2024. The new standards will apply to all new teachers applying for state licensure (including educators who end up teaching at private schools). Among other things, the new standards will require candidates to demonstrate from their coursework their ability to:

- “affirm” student identities, including sex and gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation and “incorporate” them into a learning environment
- “understand” how “ethnocentrism, eurocentrism, deficit-based teaching, and white supremacy undermine pedagogical equity”
- “assess” their “biases” and “mitigate their own behavior to disrupt oppressive systems”
- “empower” learners “to be agents of social change to promote equity”

Obviously these new standards will have a dramatic effect on students in the teaching track at Martin Luther College as they pursue state licensure. And if Martin Luther College chooses not implement or follow the new standards, it will effect the college’s status as state-licensed school.

Other Items

This year the Minnesota legislature also passed a number of other new laws affecting WELS churches and schools and their employees. The new laws pertain to things such as sick and safe leave, bereavement leave, family military leave, domestic abuse or harassment leave, and lactation breaks.

Missouri Legislature Approves Study of Bible

Earlier this summer the Missouri legislature passed a bill, authorizing school districts to offer elective social studies courses on the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Bentz, Chairman
mbentz@trinitybelleplaine.org

Minnesota District Legislation Committee: Nate Birkholz, Rev. Ed Lehmann, Rev. Martin Bentz

Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) Report - Minnesota District FALL 2023

Current ministry and blessings from the Lord:

- **Congregation Mission Offerings** - July 2023 CMO were 3.8 percent (\$69,000) more than July 2022 CMO. On a calendar year-to-date basis through July 2023 (seven months), total CMO is \$12.68 million, which is 1.1 percent (\$132,000) higher than we received during the first seven months of 2022 and 3.6 percent (\$436,000) higher than projected receipts. To God be the glory!
- **100 Missions in 10 Years** – Ministry of Christian Giving is working with WELS Home Missions on this campaign. WELS mailed materials to congregations in August and sent e-appeals and a mailed appeal to individuals in September. Please encourage pastors in your circuits and conferences to review these materials with their congregations. The campaign runs through June 2024. Praise God!
- **WELS Endowments** – For assistance in encouraging gifts/bequests, request a “Different Ways to Make Planned Gifts” presentation or a seminar on congregational planned giving by calling 414-256-3209.
- **100 Missions in 10 Years** – Ministry of Christian Giving is working with WELS Home Missions on this campaign to plant 100 mission in 10 years and enhance 75 current ministries. The campaign runs through June 2024. WELS has received 1,971 gifts/commitments from 1,480 individuals/groups totaling \$1.69 million. Praise God!
- **IRA Charitable Distribution Opportunity** – These provide a unique giving opportunity for anyone 70.5 or older to direct qualified distributions to WELS ministries from their IRA accounts. These count as the donors’ required minimum distributions and are tax-free. Encourage members to see their tax planner or visit wels.net/christian-giving and click *IRA charitable distributions* to learn more.

Congregation Mission Offerings and Statistics:

- **2023 CMO Deadline** – The deadline for sending in offerings that will be credited to 2023 is Friday, January 5. Please notify your financial officers of this deadline.
- **2024 CMO Subscriptions** – The deadline for submitting subscriptions for 2024 Congregation Mission Offerings is Friday, February 2, 2024 at noon. The synod will send paper instructions for submitting CMO. This process only takes a few minutes. Go to <https://mcg.welsrc.net/cmo/> and click “Begin CMO Subscription”. If your congregation(s) is on a fiscal year budget, you may simply submit the CMO amount that your congregation approved this past June.

Those who have not submitted by the later part of January will be contacted personally. Vacant congregations and any 2023 seminary graduates will be contacted to see if there is any assistance needed in submitting CMO.

- **2023 Congregation Statistics Submissions** – The deadline for submitting congregation statistics from 2023 is also Friday, February 2, 2024 at noon. The statistics form tab will be open in January of 2024 at this web address <https://welscongregationalservices.net/stats/>.

If you have any questions regarding CMO subscriptions and stat submissions or you are having technical issues, please contact Karen Martinez by e-mailing karen.martinez@wels.net or calling 414-256-3209.

Useful tools provided by the Ministry of Christian Giving:

- **“A God-Lived Life” Challenge** – This stewardship program produced by Congregational Services will give pastors and God’s people an opportunity to put into practice what God’s Word teaches – to help us live a more “God-lived” life. This challenge is focused on digging into God’s Word at church and home. Find the program at [A God-Lived Life](#).
- **Joyful Generosity: Creating a culture of generosity in our congregations** – This is a comprehensive school of stewardship with many beneficial resources which a council or stewardship committee/team can use to develop a stewardship culture and plan. [Previous Stewardship Programs](#)
- **Grace of Giving Newsletter** - MCG works with WELS Communication Services, WELS Foundation, and Sharpe Group to produce a newsletter that shares ministry updates and opportunities for supporting WELS ministry through planned gifts. The April 2022 issue was mailed to all active pastors as well as WELS donors. An online version of the newsletter is found at wels.net/christian-giving.
- **An Encouraging Word E-newsletter** – A bi-monthly e-newsletter intended to help you promote joyful giving in your congregation. Click subscribe at [Stewardship Resources](#).
- **Other Stewardship Programs** – Find stewardship programs and resources (i.e. 10 for 10, 364 days of Thanksgiving, Faith Focused Finances) at congregational services or click this link - [Previous Stewardship Programs](#)
- **Congregational Planned Giving Program Manual** – Help your congregation jump-start a program of promoting planned giving opportunities to members. [Congregational Planned Giving Program](#)

Christian Giving Counselors:

Three Christian giving counselors serve our district. Rev. Michael Hatzung (612-280-4491 – michael.hatzung@wels.net) serves as a deferred counselor (estate planning and deferred gifts to WELS). Rev. Steve Schmeling (612-222-2050 – steve.schmeling@wels.net) and Rev. Phil Spaude (612-720-1323 – philip.spaude@wels.net) serve as current gift counselors (immediate offerings and gifts to WELS mission and ministry). Your counselors provide services to your congregation and the constituents of WELS with no expectations of an honorarium: preaching and presentation for a Stewardship Sunday, Mission Festival, or WELS Mission and Ministry Sunday, Bible studies on various aspects of Christian stewardship, Christian estate planning seminars, and information on tax-wise offerings/gift planning.

Please contact me if you would like any assistance or guidance in stewardship planning, personal finance courses, wills and estate planning, endowment funds, setting CMO, or budgeting for ministry. If I don't have the advice or answers you are seeking, I will connect you with someone who does.

In Christ's Service,
Rev. Peter Sulzle
Ministry of Christian Giving District Chairman
pastorsulzle@stjohnredwood.org
507-430-5343



Fall Update – 2023

There are a number of great things going on for the missions within our district. Over the past four years, we've secured funding for new starts in North Liberty, IA and Collinsville, IL; a restart in West Des Moines, IA; a ministry enhancement to begin Hispanic outreach at St. John in St. Paul, MN; and continued the support for Immanuel Hmong. Each of these ministries is now fully staffed.

Here is a summary of the work being done in those places.

Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids and North Liberty, IA

Pastor Lucas Callies has been meeting people and growing relationships in a number of ways, including a Grief Share support group, among other programs. This year they held their second Easter Fest weekend which drew 272 kids (450+ with adults).

They continue to have a strong relationship with the North Liberty Community Center where they hold weekly Bible class and worship services. The Community Center has even asked Good Shepherd to be involved in different things, like providing Bible lessons and activities for the Center's "Breakfast with Santa."

A focus this year has been cultivating leaders for the North Liberty location. Reworking the constitution and bylaws will ensure that both campuses are represented in leadership. They have also formed three subcommittees identified as the "Outreach Team," the "Faith and Fun Team," and the "North Liberty Property Team."

Christ Our Savior, Collinsville, IL

Christ Our Savior, which started as a preaching station in the early 2000s out of Martin Luther in St. Louis, was approved as a new mission start in fall of 2021. Since that time, they had been patiently waiting for a missionary to accept the Lord's call to serve them. Despite the extended vacancy, weekly attendance has been holding steady around 25. Prayers for a missionary were answered by the Lord via the assignment committee. Pastor Philip Schroeder—who previously tutored at Martin Luther College—and his family moved to the area this summer and he was installed July 23rd.

There are open opportunities to reach out to different groups in the Metro East. There is a sign language interpreter at every worship service, which provides opportunities to serve the deaf and hard of hearing. The group includes some college students, as they are located near several campuses. There are also military families connected with the nearby Scott Air Force Base. Pastor Schroeder is currently focused on meeting people and cultivating relationships with his neighbors and with the core group.

Beautiful Savior, West Des Moines, IA

Beautiful Savior's request for a mission enhancement was approved in the spring of 2023. This allows them to call a full-time pastor. Pastor Brian Schmidt has accepted that call and will be installed on August 27th.

Beautiful Savior has much ministry potential in West Des Moines, a suburb of over 70,000 in a metro area of 750,000. Their facility is in an excellent location, adjacent to an elementary school and a nursing home. It's also near a sprawling retail and commercial development. Our mission

board has confidence that with the Lord's blessing and with faithful shepherding, Beautiful Savior has an excellent opportunity for mission work.

St. John / San Juan, St. Paul, MN

The need for Hispanic outreach in this neighborhood is obvious, and the opportunity is there, with the Mexican Consulate right next door and the *Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio* (CLUES) even renting a portion of St. John's building for community services. Pastor Timothy Otto wasted no time in meeting new people, quickly growing the prospect list to over 100 people.

Pastor Otto's wife, Jenny, is leading a Bible study with Latina women whom they meet through the New Day pregnancy resource center. Members of St. John volunteer to help in this ministry and there is even an effort to expand it to support husbands and youth as well. Pastor Otto currently has couple of BIC courses running in Spanish with a dozen or so in attendance. They have also begun worship services on Saturday evenings.

Immanuel Hmong, St. Paul, MN

A vibrant congregation in the heart of St. Paul, Immanuel is very active in reaching out to the Hmong community around them. An event is planned for just about every month, and each one is geared toward outreach. For example, 30+ couples had registered for February's Valentines Banquet. Rev. Pheng Moua shows his passion for teaching by leading many Bible classes both locally, and online where he has a global reach.

Immanuel Hmong continues to utilize shared space with St. John— which is now a center for Spanish, Hmong, and English-speaking ministries. St. John recently began to call for an English-speaking pastor to round out the ministry team. This call has been accepted by Prof. Paul Wendland.

Looking Ahead to 2024

We will continue to be aggressively pursuing all avenues to start up new missions and to enhance existing mission-minded ministries. As it stands right now, we may bring as many as four ministry enhancement requests and one mission status request to the Board for Home Missions in 2024.

If you would like to learn more about the process or how you might help, you can reach out to a board member or visit the following links.

www.mndistrictmissions.com

www.wels100in10.net

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Steve Waldschmidt (Chairman)

Mr. Douglas Dorn

Rev. Robert Guenther

Rev. Mark Kaesmeyer

Mr. David Sauer

Mr. Daryl Schultz

Mr. Glenn Schulz

Rev. Dustin Sievert

Minnesota District Worship Committee Report

September 2023

Who We Are

Rev. Craig Engel, Prof. Craig Hirschmann and Teacher Mike Marquardt serve as members of Minnesota District Worship Committee. **Pastor Joel Gawrisch** has served as the coordinator for the committee since 2021, filling out the term initially held by Teacher Mike Marquardt. Please reach out with worship-related questions and feedback. Joel Gawrisch: joelg@wels.us

Activity in the Past Year with Special Reference to Hymnal Introduction

- In-person congregational, pastoral conference, and district Leadership Workshop to introduce resources, demonstrate flexible use of resources, and answer questions.
- Support to help promote purchase of CW resources.

Christian Worship Hymnal Suite

Service Builder Playlist

Playlist is simple and intuitive to use. Answers to FAQ's can be directly from Service Builder: <https://help.christianworship.com/hc/en-us>. This offers FAQ, live chat, and "submit a request" options. See below for more information.

Floor Committee Synod Convention Report

The Floor Committee assigned to evaluate *Christian Worship Hymnal* included the following paragraph in its report:

The services and music of the new hymnal seem to require a high level of musicianship and significant preparation, with some items seeming to require a concert-level ability to do well. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but we could see congregations with fewer musical resources having some struggles. Simplified accompaniments may be welcome for some congregations. Some members have found it difficult to sing some of the psalms, chants, and other liturgical parts. The books for musicians are cumbersome to transport and to use. Perhaps there could be a different organization of material to ease in playing for worship. With those comments noted, the committee does not mean to disparage the project or the finished product. The committee thanks the hymnal project participants for a wealth of resources and the beauty of what they have brought together.

WELS Commission on Worship Administrator Bryan Gerlach responds (edited):

...not every congregation should expect to use every musical resource provided for hymns, liturgies, psalter – whether based on organist/pianist ability or size of congregation. Especially smaller and newer congregations are better served by a careful cultivation of – at first – a limited repertoire. See Jon Bauer's comments on this in [Worship the Lord #119](#).

With this background, I offer the following summary observations:

1. The vast majority of hymnal content is within the ability of a trained organist. (Of course, this doesn't mean that everyone who plays organ in WELS worship is adequately trained.) "Significant preparation" may still be required, whether that be two weeks to learn a new Gloria setting or four. But this has always been true. While this level of difficulty expects more of an organist, it also makes the music far more interesting for the singer.
2. Easy accompaniments for both piano and organ are available (see the bottom of [this NPH page](#)).
3. Simply because the hymnal contains a broad range of music does not mean that every congregation should attempt to master every item. For example, while a large congregation with strong musical leadership (and a higher-than-average musical literacy) might happily manage all four settings of The Service (and more!), a small congregation might choose only one setting and then use metrical canticles (hymn tunes) for other musical variety in The Service. [Such variety encourages] a long and durable shelf life.
4. Some congregations have a wide mix of keyboard talent available. One person might play only piano and need the easy accompaniment volumes. One church might rely on its only organist to play some services and then use Service Builder's Playlist add-on for other services.
5. About the thick accompaniment volumes:
 - The intent is to provide a wide variety of resources (more service settings, more psalm choices, more acclamations, alternate hymn accompaniments, sometimes both piano and organ settings) so that musicians do not need to go hunting for such variety.
 - The cost of the alternate accompaniments for hymns alone (not counting the standard settings), if purchased separately in multiple collections, would far surpass the cost of the three-volume set of accompaniments for hymns. As such, many keyboardists or churches would never acquire such variety.
 - With the thick volumes, organists cannot stack on the music rack several books in order of use. But this really isn't a problem. The flow of The Service makes it easy for the organist to be ready to play the next musical element even if it means removing one thick volume from the music rack and replacing it with another. Unlike some services in CW93, most short dialogues are spoken instead of sung. This, along with "downtime" during lessons, allows ample time to have ready whatever is next – even if both hands are needed to remove one volume and place another.
 - From DWC Joel Gawrisch: The larger volumes can be easily divided and rebound into thinner volumes through a local printer.

In Case You Missed It...

My Christian Worship

A note-taking journal for use during worship and throughout the week, My Christian Worship is meant to enhance and facilitate a more mindful participative worship experience, a more personal connection to the hymnal, and personal devotional use throughout the week. Features/Benefits:

- Tips to help get the most out of time spent in God's Word and worship.
- Lists of passages from God's Word that provide guidance, comfort, encouragement, and strength in a variety of situations.
- Helpful prayers to be used in worship and throughout the week.
- Tool to organize and take notes during the service to help with retention.

- Suggested Christian Worship: Hymnal devotional resources for use throughout the week.
- Complimentary 2-Lesson Bible Study to help Christians best utilize My Christian Worship in their daily walk with Jesus.

Foundations – the book, not the free web resource

A new book in the new hymnal suite, *Foundations*, is now available: [*Christian Worship: Foundations*](#). Written for pastors but valuable for all who care about Lutheran worship, this book explores a wide variety of worship topics including the history of worship in the church at large and in WELS, the church year, various rites and services, various roles in worship, art and music choices, the culture of worship, and outreach. This book is designed to help God's people grow in their understanding of Christian worship principles and practices.

Both this book and [*The Foundation*](#) (the free resources from Congregational Services) are invaluable for those planning worship.

The non-festival half of the Year B planning resources from [*The Foundation*](#) is also now available. Impactful worship planning and execution will benefit from using both resources: [*Christian Worship: Foundations*](#) and [*The Foundation*](#).

Christian Worship: Service Builder – Playlist add-on

Playlist became available in June. While the *Playlist* option is meant to serve congregations without live keyboard players, it is also beneficial for other reasons. Like the primary *Service Builder* program, it is available on a trial basis—only without ability to **export** a playlist of audio files. This trial feature allows one to **hear audio samples**. But please note that while these samples from within the program sound pretty good on a computer with decent speakers, the actual downloaded mp3 files are of far higher quality. And when played over a quality church system with decent amp and speakers, they sound wonderful.

One way to use the trial audio samples is to help a pastor or worship planner without piano skills to hear what a new hymn sounds like—and to become comfortable with it before helping to lead it in worship.

To demonstrate the features and benefits of *Playlist*, a webinar is available that covers all the essentials for fully utilizing this amazing new tool. Watch the webinar and subscribe to *Playlist* [here](#).

Several FAQs are available:

- [*Preparing a Playlist*](#)
- [*Common Questions on Playlists*](#)
- [*What hymns and psalms are included in Playlist?*](#) *A spreadsheet is available that is periodically updated. All hymns and hymnal psalms are included along with the vast majority of liturgical songs. Some psalter psalms not yet included will be added as recordings are completed and copyright permissions are secured.*

2024 National Conference on Worship, Music & the Arts

Save the date:

July 30-August 2, 2024

See wels.net/worshipconference for details

Respectfully submitted,
Joel J. Gawrisch

Minnesota District Constitution Committee

Rev. David Peters, chairman
Rev. Paul Welke *Mr. Bradley Kletscher, Esq.*

REPORT TO THE MINNESOTA DISTRICT COUNCIL

September 8, 2023

Dear Brothers in Christ Jesus:

Our Committee has been working with the following congregations with the rewriting or amending of their Constitutions and/or Bylaws. These are in various stages of the process. Some have received our committee's critique but have not yet submitted to us their revised documents after incorporating our suggestions. A couple of pastoral changes have certainly slowed down the process at certain churches. A few of these are practically finished.

Brooklyn – Brooklyn Park, MN
Christ – Eden Prairie, MN
Crown of Life – West St Paul & Eagan, MN
Friedens – New Prague, MN
Good Shepherd – Cedar Rapids & North Liberty, IA
Grace – Oskaloosa, IA
Mt. Olive – St. Paul, MN
NorthCross – Lakeville, MN
St. John – New Ulm, MN
St. John – Redwood Falls, MN
St. John – Sleepy Eye, MN
Trinity–Mt. Olive – Johnson, MN

We have completed the approval process for these congregations.

Cross of Christ – Coon Rapids, MN
Holy Trinity – New Hope, MN
Beautiful Savior – Austin, MN
Our Redeemer – Wabasha, MN

Whenever your voters are formalizing any amendment to your constitution or bylaws, please be sure to include the following statement: "... pending the approval of our Minnesota District Constitution Committee." Thank you.

Please submit all proposed constitutions, bylaws, and amendments of the same to the chairman of our Committee. He will forward your submission, together with his own initial critique, to the other two men who serve on our Committee for their review and suggestions. After they send their suggestions back to the chairman, he will collate their suggestions together with his own and send them back to your congregation and await your revised draft which should incorporate our suggested revisions. At that point I will be the pen pal of the submitting congregation, which will resubmit revisions to our Committee until the three of us approve of the document. Our chairman will forward all approved documents to our District President's office for his records.

Please submit your documents to our chairman in PDF or RTF format only. (This is a change from our previous request for other formats.) This will simplify our work and save us time. Our committeemen

work with a variety of word processors, not necessarily the same as your congregation. For example, WordPerfect (WPD) and MS Word (DOC/DOCX) do not work together very well, and Google Docs don't work well with others, either. However, Portable Document Format (PDF) and Rich Text Format (RTF) work well on almost everyone's systems.

Our Committee uses the current *Model Constitution and Bylaws of the WELS* as a tool for suggesting well thought out wording as part of our critique. We may ask questions about variances from the *Model* — though not all variances will be rejected! We want to be sure that the submitting congregation, school, or organization, has thought through their proposed methods and language very carefully, and that their submission is consistent with God's Word, with our Confessions, with our synod's and district's *Constitution and Bylaws*, with the laws of your state, and with the experience of others who have attempted to use the same or similar variant methods and language. Sharing the wisdom seems wise.

Please take our Committee's suggestions and update your proposed Constitution and Bylaws accordingly. Many of our editorial comments are just typos which need to be corrected. All of our suggestions can easily be incorporated into your document before you approve it for submission a second time. Be sure that your voters assembly approves your revised document "... pending approval of our Minnesota District Constitution Committee" again. Then resubmit it to our Committee through our chairman. Please direct any questions you may have to him. He will inform you when your finished document has received our Committee's formal approval, and he will send your approved document to the office of our district president.

Concerning Constitutions which Reference the IRS "Code of 1954"

Many of our churches' constitutions cite "the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code" — or words to that effect. Very good — except that the 1954 Code was rewritten and renamed by Congress in 1986. The 1954 Internal Revenue Code, as amended, was specifically renamed the "Internal Revenue Code of 1986" by section 2 of the Tax Reform Act of 1986.¹ However, our synod's current (1997) *Model Constitution and Bylaws* (Article XI, Section 2) says: "the Internal Revenue Code of 1994 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code." However, that 1994 code does not exist (except in Puerto Rico)!

SUGGESTION: Change that date in your constitution from "1954" to "1986, as amended," You will be bringing your church's constitution up to date in accordance with Public Law 99-514, §2, Oct. 22, 1986, 100 Stat. 2095 of the United States Code, Article 26.² You won't need to run that change by our Committee.

Thank you for the privilege of involving our Committee in this portion of the ministry being done by our district's congregations! May our Lord Jesus continue to bless our labors in his name.

With you in Christ's service,
Rev. David Peters, chairman

¹ Merriam-Webster.com Legal Dictionary, s.v. "Tax Reform Act of 1986," accessed October 31, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/legal/Tax%20Reform%20Act%20of%201986>. Also cf. Wikipedia contributors, "Internal Revenue Code," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Internal_Revenue_Code&oldid=1115554749 (accessed October 31, 2022).

² <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title26&edition=prelim>

Greetings!

Our WELS Commission on Evangelism has been focusing their efforts and materials on resources that pastors can use in their congregation with their own people. Instead of focusing on one or two weekend seminars, the aim is to get the materials to the pastors to share with Bible study groups, evangelism teams, and church councils.

On the following pages you'll find great materials for encouraging your people to share our Savior with the people God has brought into their lives. If you have questions or if I might be able to help you in some way, please contact me (Stephen Meyer).

God's blessings as you lead and encourage Christ's people in this essential work!

Pastor Stephen Meyer (MN District Evangelism Coordinator)
pastormeyer@rlrochester.org
507-254-9205

WELS Commission on Evangelism

Update – Fall 2023



In his second letter to Timothy, St. Paul wrote, "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season" (4:2). Although originally written as an encouragement to a first-century pastor, Paul's words are equally applicable to twenty-first-century Christians. We have the same message to share with sinners who desperately need to hear it. Using St. Paul's experiences in the city of Philippi as a model, *In Season and Out of Season* seeks to encourage and equip God's people to share that message in any and every situation.

This video-based bible study is available at www.welscongregationalservices.net



Let's Go provides online, video-based personal witness training. Where *One by One* is primarily motivational, *Let's Go* is instructional. It teaches a simple, three-part approach that any Christian can put into practice. 1) Love the unchurched people God has brought into your life. 2) Listen carefully to their thoughts, beliefs, concerns, etc. 3) Lead them to the gospel. *Let's Go* can be used by both large and small group Bible studies as well as by individual Christians.

Let's Go is available at www.welscongregationalservices.net



The *Congregational Evangelism Kit* provides video-based training for congregational evangelism leaders and teams. It explains the importance of and implementation of tools such as:

- creating a prospect database
- capturing prospect information
- creating a welcoming worship atmosphere
- Come and Go strategies
- And more

A pastor or evangelism team can work through the kit, putting each tool in place and, when finished, have all the basic evangelism elements functioning.

It should be noted that the *Congregational Evangelism Kit* does not address the encouraging and equipping of members as personal witnesses. Other resources such as *Let's Go* and *One by One* are designed for this task.

The *Congregational Evangelism Kit* is available at www.welscongregationalservices.net



One by One is a Bible study based on Pastor David Rosenau's keynote presentation at the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership in January of 2020. Using powerful personal stories and drawing from his wealth of experience both as a detective and a parish pastor, Pastor Rosenau helps Christians understand why it is so important to see every soul as a treasure and why we want to be willing to spend the time and effort necessary to share the gospel with each one.

One by One is available at www.welscongregationalservices.net



Everyone Outreach is a program designed to help congregations build a culture of outreach so that every ministry and every member is thinking about and participating in outreach. The program kicks off with a two-day workshop where participants discover thought habits that may be keeping them and their congregation from reaching out with the gospel as well and as often as they would like. Following the workshop, resources are provided that help create new thought habits resulting in new behaviors and, Lord willing, more outreach.

38 facilitators have been trained and are being deployed to workshops across the WELS.

More than 275 congregations have expressed interest in the program. 78 workshops have been held to this point. 17 workshops are scheduled for this fall.

Learn more about *Everyone Outreach* at www.everyoneoutreach.com

Christmas Eve and Easter Resources

The Commission on Evangelism provides outreach resources for Christmas Eve and Easter as part of the Congregational Services resource called *The Foundation*. The resources include graphics, a promotional video, postcards, and more.

You can access resources for Christmas Eve outreach at <https://welscongregationalservices.net> under *The Foundation*.

WhatAboutJesus.com

[WhatAboutJesus.com](https://www.whataboutjesus.com) is an outreach website produced by the Commission on Evangelism. It aims to be a source of information and inspiration for those seeking to know more about the Bible and its message. Congregations are encouraged to make their members aware of it so they can direct unchurched acquaintances to it.

Daily Devotions

Daily Devotions are brief, daily encouragements from God's Word. They are produced both in print as well as via podcast. The devotions appear on the home pages of wels.net and WhatAboutJesus.com. They are also posted on WELS Facebook. Additionally, devotions are sent to about 10,500 e-mail subscribers every day.

Evangelism Certificate Program

The WELS Commission on Evangelism offers evangelism courses through the Martin Luther College online continuing education program. These evangelism courses are intended for laypeople and called workers to help them lead their congregations with planning and implementing efforts to reach more people with the gospel. These courses make up the Evangelism Certificate Program at Martin Luther College. There are three one-credit courses: The Mission of the Church, 2) Practical Evangelism for Congregations, and 3) Friendship Evangelism.

Information is available at www.wels.net/evangelism

School of Outreach

The *School of Outreach* seminar shares key components of a congregational evangelism program. Participants work with workshop leaders to develop outreach plans and strategies. Congregations can contact their district evangelism coordinator to schedule a workshop.

Information is available at www.wels.net/evangelism

Telling the Next Generation

Telling the Next Generation is a workshop developed by the Commission on Evangelism, the Commission on Lutheran Schools, and Early Childhood Ministry. The program serves congregations with planning, assistance, and resources for the implementation of outreach strategies utilizing a Lutheran elementary school and/or early childhood ministry.

Learn more at www.welscongregationalservices.net

Outreach Newsletters

The Commission on Evangelism annually offers *Outreach Newsletters* to WELS congregations. The newsletters each consist of a devotional article targeted at congregations' prospects. There are twelve newsletters offered each year.

The newsletters can be downloaded, free of charge, at www.welscongregationalservices.net.

Resources currently being developed

Local

Helping regional churches establish a local presence

Many WELS congregations have members who travel a significant distance to worship. 30-60 minutes is not unusual. This makes it difficult for members to invite neighbors to join them for worship, BIC, or congregational fellowship activities. *Local* will help congregations in such a situation create a presence in their local communities to reach the lost in their neighborhoods.

Come and See

Encouraging and equipping Christians for invitation evangelism

More than 70% of unchurched people surveyed say they would be at least somewhat likely to accept an invitation to church from a church acquaintance. Yet, many WELS members have never invited an unchurched person. We hope to help WELS congregations understand what may be keeping their members from proffering invitations, remove unnecessary obstacles, and encourage and equip members to do invitation evangelism.

Serving alongside you,

Eric

Rev. Eric Roecker

Director, WELS Commission on Evangelism

eric.roecker@wels.net

414-256-3287

The MN District Reporter

The MN District Reporter maintains an email list of individuals who have subscribed to receive information and announcements that are relevant to the MN District. If you wish to disseminate information to the MN District or have questions about how I might serve you in this capacity, please contact me at reporter@welsmn.org, or direct to my office at (320) 593-5782. If you are not subscribed to the email list, please do so at welsmn.org by clicking on the mailing list option in the upper right hand corner.

The MN District Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee prepares slates of candidates for MN District Convention elections, and assists in assembling slates of candidates for the biennial WELS Convention elections. This fall the committee will begin its work in preparation for the 2024 MN District Convention.

In HIM,

Pastor James Panning
MN District Reporter
MN District Nominating Committee Chairman