

Minnesota District Constitution Committee

Rev. David Peters, chairman

Rev. Robert Harting

Mr. Bradley Kletscher, Esq.

REPORT TO THE MINNESOTA DISTRICT PASTORS CONFERENCE MEETING AT BAXTER, MINNESOTA

Dear Brothers in Christ Jesus:

April 15-16, 2026

Our committee's charge is to work with congregations and other organizations within our district when they rewrite or amend their constitutions and/or bylaws. These organizational documents are very important! They give expression to how a group of believers has, in Christian freedom, agreed to work with one another in order to carry out the ministry of God's Word and Sacraments. We covenant with one another to serve our Lord together in full compliance with the teachings of the Bible, our Lutheran confessions, and the constitution and bylaws of our synod and district.

Formatting Instructions

Our committee has been using the current *Model Constitution and Bylaws of the WELS* (1997) as a tool for suggesting well thought out wording as part of our critique. Now that the Conference of Presidents has issued two new models (named *Sample A* and *Sample B*), we will be working with those as well — especially since some congregations have already been trying out several of the ideas contained therein. We want to be sure that your congregation or organization has carefully thought through your proposed methods and language, and that your 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 used the same or similar methods and language. Sharing the wisdom seems wise.

On the other hand, using the bylaws from other congregations whose documents did receive approval from our committee years ago, or even from a constitution committee in another district, is not a wise strategy since changes in personnel tend to import changes in editorial approaches and evaluations as to what should be approved and what should not. Nevertheless, uniformity around our synod is obviously to be desired, and the twelve constitution committee chairmen will continue working to achieve that. Sticking with the language found in the officially approved models is the best way to assure that our congregations are all walking together in these matters.

All of our synod's model constitution and bylaws documents — including the "old one" from 1997 — aim to involve men and women in as much Gospel ministry as possible, while at the same time honoring the biblical principles of God-given male and female roles. In each document the term "oversight" indicates the exercise of "binding authority." (What kind of authority is not binding?) We have been told that "manage" or "management" indicate a performance of tasks or services without the exercise of any real authority. This brings up the question "Doesn't a manager have any real authority?" Not all questions have been answered. The CoP continues to study these matters on our behalf. I encourage you to trust their leadership.

Both *Sample A* and *Sample B* retain the Voters Assembly, which shall have final oversight (authority) over the congregation's entire ministry. The term "Church Council" has been replaced by "Council of Ministry," which is elected by the Voter's Assembly to oversee ministry planning, operational decisions for carrying out the congregation's mission, and oversight of "Boards" and "Ministry Action Teams" (which we used to call "committees"). Ministry Action Teams are "management groups" with no authority to manage anything. They are really "task forces" set up to carry out specific tasks which are assigned to them by others who do have authority, i.e., a board, the council, or the voters. Careful attention to the biblical headship principal must be kept in mind when establishing the duties and responsibilities of each Ministry Action Team, how it will function internally, and how it will function in relation to the rest of the congregation's structure. Be careful with titles such as chairman, leader, coordinator, etc., which may imply headship!

- ☞ **Sample A** was designed for smaller congregations. The intent is for a “Council of Ministry” to build consensus through regular ministry updates to the congregation using various communication methods, open forum settings which allow for discussion, and the use of straw polls. All of this, of course, can be done while continuing to use the 1997 *Model Constitution and Bylaws*.
- ☞ **Sample B** is intended for larger congregations in which a consensus building approach would be too cumbersome.

Digital files of *Sample A* and of *Sample B*, with or without explanations, can be downloaded from the “Resources” tab on our www.welsmn.org district website.

Submission & Approval Procedure

Whenever your Voters Assembly adopts any amendment to your constitution and/or bylaws, please be sure to include the following statement in your resolution: “... **pending approval by our Minnesota District Constitution Committee.**” Then submit your proposal(s) to the chairman of our committee in either PDF, WPD, DOC, DOCX, ODT, or RTF format. We do not work with Google Docs! When we finish our initial review, we will get back to you with initial comments and suggestions for improvements, and we will await your revised draft which should incorporate our suggested improvements. Upon our final approval, we will forward your finished PDF document to our District President’s office for his records.

Concerning Dissolution and 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. That 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, and was signed by President Ronald Reagan.¹ However, our synod’s 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.” The new *Sample A* and *Sample B* mentioned above repeated this mistake. However, that 1994 code does not exist (except in Puerto Rico)! I pointed this out to President Schroeder, and he said that he’d “make a note of it.” Please be sure that your congregation gets it right, or we will not approve your document!

We urge you: 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 26.2.² You do not need to run that change through our committee because you will simply be obeying the law of the land.

Finally

Thank you for the privilege of involving our committee in this portion of the ministry being done by your congregation. Due to the press of my duties, and since I was recently elected president of the Lutheran Science Institute, I have informed Pres. Klatt that I will not serve as chairman of our committee after our district convention this June. I will be happy to continue serving as a committee member if I am asked to do so. May our risen Redeemer continue to bless all of our labors in his name!

With you in Christ’s service,
Rev. David Peters, chairman
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¹ “Tax Reform Act of 1986.” *Merriam-Webster.com Legal Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/legal/Tax%20Reform%20Act%20of%201986>. Accessed Oct. 31, 2022. Cf. also Wikipedia contributors, “Internal Revenue Code,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Internal_Revenue_Code&oldid=1115554749. Accessed Oct. 31, 2022.

² <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title26&edition=prelim>. Last visited Mar. 15, 2025.

THE MINNESOTA DISTRICT PRESIDENT'S REPORT



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April 15, 2026

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Joyously Complete Christ's Afflictions

Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. (Colossians 1:24)

"It is finished." With those words Jesus announced his suffering had ended, correct? The answer is "yes" and "no". Christ suffered in the flesh to make full atonement for our sins. The saving work of objective justification has been accomplished for all through Jesus' suffering and death. In this sense Jesus' suffering is finished.

Yet, in another sense Jesus' suffering continues. The saving work of subjective justification through the preaching of the gospel will go on till the end of time. But it goes on through us. Satan, the world, and our flesh will oppose all Jesus seeks to accomplish through us.

Mockery, rejection, verbal and physical abuse will be heaped on us as we proclaim Christ crucified and risen. We are the body of Christ. When we suffer, he suffers with us. In this sense Jesus' suffering is not complete. "[We] are filling up in [our] flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions."

Embracing the mission of the Church therefore means that we embrace suffering. We do not shy away from such affliction. Rather we lean it for Jesus because Jesus leaned into his affliction for us. "For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12:2,3). Brothers, it is our joyous privilege to be like Christ in suffering for others—to bring the faith working and faith preserving message of the crucified and risen Christ to the world.

In the midst of this suffering, we do not lose heart. We are the members of this body. He knows and understands the unique challenges of our ministries. He feels our heartache when a soul in whom we invested hours of instruction in the Word and prayer walks away from him as their Redeemer. Paul felt all of this too. But the Word does not return to the Lord empty. It accomplishes what he desires. His elect will be gathered. In the midst of his suffering for the gospel, Paul rejoiced in the souls whom the word had gathered into Christ's body in Colossae and everywhere else it had been proclaimed. We do the same with the strength Christ has promised to give us.

Finally, we do not conduct our callings with an "if" but a "when" mindset. Through Jesus' sufferings the victory has been won for us. **When** Jesus returns or calls us home, we will experience the fullness of that victory. Therefore, let's follow Paul's example by joyously completing Christ's afflictions.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Dennis Klatt

WELS Called Worker Vacancy Update

Pastor Vacancies

Synod wide there are a total of 174 pastor vacancies, 149 of those are parish vacancies. In the Minnesota District there are currently 25 congregations actively calling. 6 congregations are not actively calling. There is one vacant pastor position at Martin Luther College. The vacancy picture will improve significantly after the assignment of the 41 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Graduates in May

Christ, North St. Paul/Hugo, MN 11/22
Pilgrim, Minneapolis, MN 2/23
Calvary, Glenwood/ St. John, Hancock 4/23
Hope, Andover, MN 5/23
Good Shepherd, Burnsville 8/23
Grace, South St. Paul, MN 4/24
Crown of Life, West. St. Paul, MN 2/24
Mt. Olive, St. Paul, MN 4/24
Christ, Zumbrota, MN 5/24
St. John's, Redwood Falls, MN 6/24
St. John's, Lake City, MN 7/24
Beautiful Savior, Austin, MN 8/24
Zion, Sanborn, MN 9/24
Shepherd of the Hills, Duluth, MN 10/24
St. John, Glencoe, MN 11/24
St. Peter, St. Peter, MN 8/25
Christ Alone, Dardenne Prairie, MO 2/25
Trinity, Nicollet, MN 4/25

Zion, Hokah/Immanuel, South Ridge, MN 7/25
St. Peter, Monticello, MN 7/25
St. Mark, Bemidji, MN 8/25
Resurrection, Rochester, MN 10/25
Grace, Oskaloosa, IA 1/26
Immanuel, Tyler/St. Peter, Balaton 3/26
Trinity, Lake City/St. John, Mazepa (Bear Valley), MN 4/26
Director of Admissions, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

Vacant Congregations Not Calling

Grace, Nye Twshp (Osceola) WI
St. John, Boyd (Omro Township), MN
Zion, Russell, MN
Zion, Morton, MN
Grace, Clear Lake, WI/Zion Almena, WI

Zion, Olivia; St. Matthew, Danube; St. John, Renville will be voting this Sunday on a proposal to merge on the Renville campus.

The pastor call acceptance rate over the past 12 months across WELS is 7%. Over the past 12 months 161 MN District parish calls were extended. Within that period 5 parish pastor calls, 3.1%, were accepted.

Recent District Ministry Changes

Kendall Cook Accepted to NorthCross, Lakeville, MN

Lutheran Schools Update

Current MN District Teacher/Staff Minister Vacancies

High School Instructors: 1
Principals: 5
LES Teachers: 13
ECE Teachers: 4

The active teacher calling window will close April 15. There will be 47 Martin Luther College graduates available to be assigned anywhere. Of the 47, there are only 3 Early Childhood candidates who can be assigned anywhere. An additional 32 graduates will be available for assignment within a restricted area due to marriage, national guard commitments, and other similar situations. 4 staff ministry graduates will also be available for assignment. There will likely be more than 120 teacher vacancies remaining in WELS following the May 15th graduate assignments.

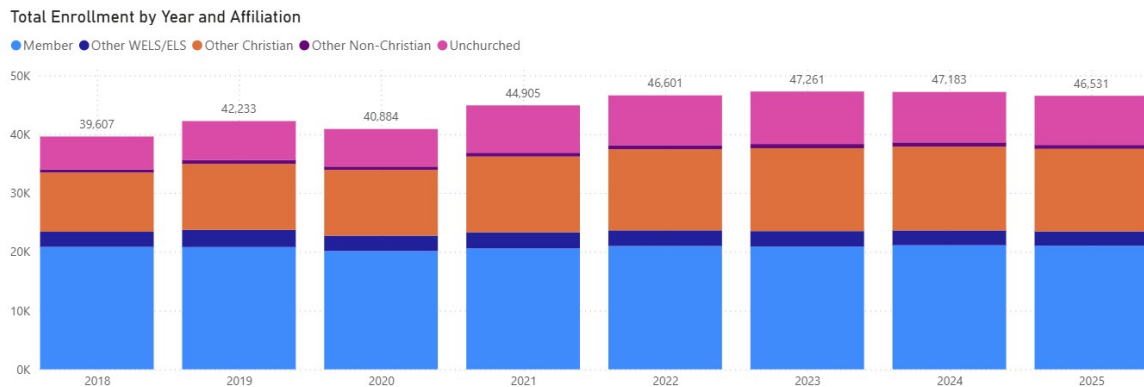
Schools are encouraged to have contingency plans in place in the event their assignment request cannot be filled.

April 6 Teacher Vacancy Projections

210 Total Teacher and School Leader Vacancies

51 Principal Vacancies or Interim Situations

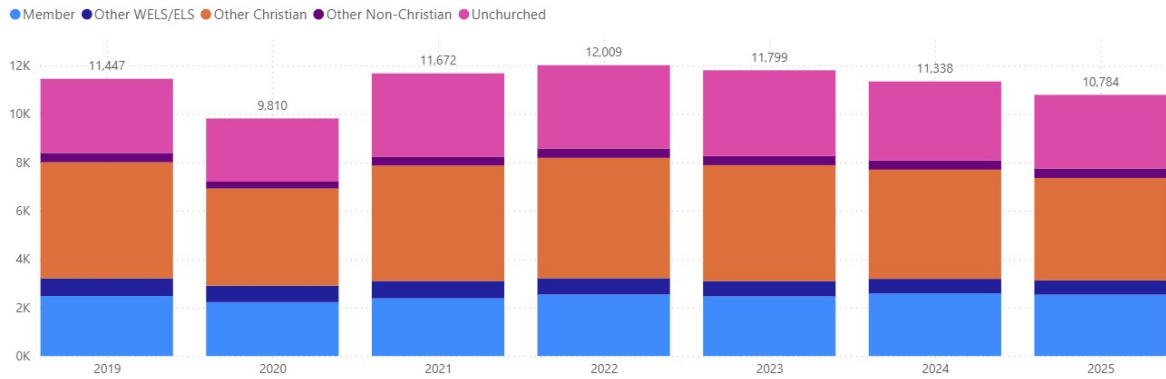
Grades K-4 Vacancies especially heavy as well



Total Enrollment 2018-Present

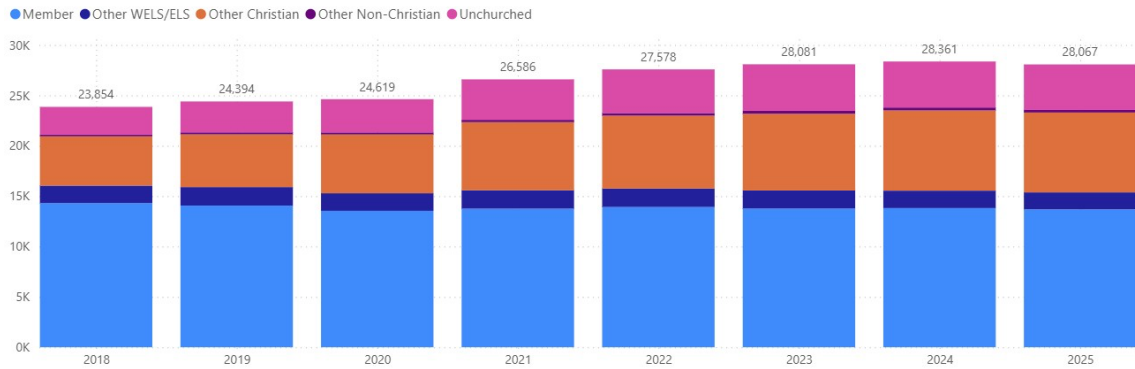
Did Enrollment Crest in 2023?

ECM Enrollment by Year and Affiliation



ECM Enrollment 2019-Present 372 ministries to 332 ministries

LES Enrollment by Year and Affiliation



LES Enrollment 2018-Present 294 Schools – 272 Schools

2019-2026 WELS Pre-K-12

Student Enrollment Changes						
Year	WELS	Other Christian	Non- Christian	NONE	Total	
2019-20	23712	11228	686	6598	42224	
2025-26	23462	14042	672	8355	46531	
Change	-250	2814	-14	1757	4307	

Teacher Attrition

YEAR	Resignation	Retirements	Total
2018-19	130	76	206
2019-20	136	64	200
2020-21	118	64	182
2021-22	139	77	216
2022-23	149	65	214
2023-24	139	62	201
2024-25	130	91	221
2025-26	92	58	150

A Look At Teacher Attrition Trends

3/31/26
Nine Months in to 25-26

School Statistics: Teacher Shortages

	Average 21/22, 22/23, 23/24	SY 24/25
Positions Available	655	553
Active Teachers Accepting Calls	326	247
Teachers Assigned from MLC	104	94
Secular Trained	103	87
Inactive Teachers Returning	113	97

WELS CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS REPORT

The Conference of Presidents (COP) met for its spring meeting April 8–10, 2026. The following issues were discussed:

- **Notable 2025 Statistics:**
 - On average in WELS, about half of adult confirmations drop out of church within a year. This highlights the importance of new member assimilation.
 - There were 2854 births in 2025, the lowest total ever. The sharp trend down in births seems to have ended. But it is still trending down at a lower level. It is possible that by the end of this decade, in an average year, WELS will gain more youth who are children of adult confirmations than we will gain through children being born to WELS couples (provided the rise in adult confirmations trend continues).
 - From 2015 to 2025, WELS lost 47,221 members, a 12.8%-decade decline. By comparison, WELS lost 7.3% of members from 2005 to 2015, and 3.8% from 1995 to 2005.
 - The WELS called worker to communicant member ratio is at its highest level in WELS history. This would include pastor to communicant member ratios. Do we have a true pastor shortage issue or a congregation consolidation issue?

- **Child Safety Resources** Development of a suite of Child Protection resources is well underway. It is intended for use by both congregations and schools. God-willing it will be ready to roll out in 2027.
- In March, the Christian Family Solutions (CFS) MAP program was discontinued in many states because CFS is not licensed to provide services in those states. CFS is licensed to provide services in Minnesota and Missouri, but not Iowa to date. They will continue to work toward licensure there as well. In the meantime, services are available through: **Soul's Apothecary**; <https://mearsapothecary.com/>; (952) 767-9374. Joshua Mears, a WELS member, is the founder of and a therapist of Soul's Apothecary. He charges an \$80 per session flat fee and is in the WELS Veba network.
- **Called Worker Biographies:** We continue to have issues with called worker biographies being badly out of date. Marriage and dependent children information is frequently inaccurate. More disruptive is a failure to indicate when a called worker is not able to consider a call due to health reasons, adoptions in progress, etc. Please notify me if you cannot deliberate a call at this time and update your WELSource biography to reflect the same. You may indicate your inability to move in the "Comment" section of your WELSource record. Please pass this encouragement on to your school administrator and faculty as well.

YTD 2026 MN District Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) Performance

Communicants	2026 Subsc.	3 Mo Receipts	March Offerings	% Proj. Receipts	Ave. Per Com
30,865	2,725,957	546,465	222,318	105.7	74.87

UPCOMING DISTRICT EVENTS:

MN District Convention – June 9-10 at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN.

WELS 2027 Worship Conference will be held in June at Martin Luther College, New Ulm.

MN DISTRICT DISCIPLESHIP REPORT

MINNESOTA DISTRICT

District Ministry Workshop 2026

The Workshop was held on Saturday, March 14 at St. Croix Lutheran Academy in West St. Paul. Attendance at the workshop was quite a bit less this year, with 67 registered plus guests, helpers, and volunteers. Our keynote speaker was Pastor Mark Schroeder, who spoke about recruitment for called ministry and the role of individual members and churches in the process. Breakouts on worship, school planning, women's ministry, turnaround churches, and WELS history were well received. Materials from the presentations will be available for all at www.mnworkshop.com. As of April 1st, the District Account (held at Salem, Stillwater) holds \$7,450.33, with some funds yet to be disbursed for the workshop.

WELS International Youth Rally

- *Christ Through Us* – July 14-17, 2026, at Bowling Green State University, OH. Registration is now open. I'm not aware of anyone putting together a bus for group travel.

ONGOING RESOURCES

Most resources available at WELS Congregational Services website.

- **Direct email subscriptions:** *Marriage Moments, WELS Family Devotions, Transformed Teen Devotions*
- **WELS Youth Night:** Fall 2025 keynote & resources now available.
- **WELS Online National Teen Bible Study:** Regular online Bible studies offered live for teens in any size congregation. Perhaps consider gathering your teens to attend together at church. Led by Prof. David Scharf.
- **MadeKnown.net:** A website designed for a Christian person struggling with LGBTQ issues.
- **Women's Bible studies:** Many studies available at WELS website. Click "Resource Center" and "Women's Ministry." You can also find a module "Equip Women to Teach the Word" at WELS Congregational Services.

NEWER RESOURCES

- **Advent by Candlelight:** Several archived versions and a new service for 2026 at the WELS website.
- **"Welcome Home"** is a congregational initiative emphasizing the importance and responsibility of church members caring for one another before they drift away. It's not just the task of the pastor or the elders. Resources include planning for special Sunday worship, sermon ideas, bible study handout & leaders guide, a promotional video and a startup guide. The program has been revised and updated since the 2019 version.
- **STEWARDSHIP LEGACY SERIES:** The 3rd installment of the 5-part stewardship series is now available at www.welscongregationalservices.net. This third series on TEMPLE emphasizes four areas of stewardship: church membership, authentic relationships, healthy living, and a Christian view of the environment.
- **Marriage Enrichment Resource** ("Speak to My Heart"): This video-based resource, built on the book of Ruth, is led by Prof. Mark Paustian. Four WELS couples at a retreat were recorded with the intent that couples can "attend" with them through videos, pause points, and discussion. The 5-part series includes participant and leader guides with potential use as Saturday workshops, retreats, or small group studies. Each session is 60-90 minutes long. Also available at www.welscongregationalservices.net.



Minnesota District
Mission Board

SPRING 2026 UPDATE

March 19, 2026

Current Missions:

Immanuel Hmong, Inver Grove Heights, MN (Cross-Cultural)

This past year brought both significant challenges and clear evidence of God's provision. St. John Lutheran Church (St. Paul, MN) voted to sell their facility. This uncertainty hindered long-term planning and threatened the stability needed for continued ministry growth. During this same time period, Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights, MN voted to merge with Immanuel Hmong and entrusted their facility to Immanuel Hmong's care. On November 23, 2026, Immanuel Hmong relocated to their new permanent church home. This was a tremendous blessing that has restored stability and renewed momentum for mission work.

With ownership comes new responsibilities. Immanuel Hmong's annual expenses have increased, plus they are assessing the maintenance and long-term needs of a facility requiring both cosmetic and functional updates. Many spaces were previously modified for preschool use, and they are carefully evaluating improvements that will best support ministry and outreach in the coming year.

St John / San Juan, St. Paul, MN (Cross-Cultural)

Over the past year, average Spanish-language worship attendance has been approximately 20–25 participants. Pastor Tim Otto continues to support outreach efforts through a Spanish-language Instagram account featuring short evangelistic videos. San Juan's core families remain actively engaged—sharing their faith, assisting with ministry events, and growing in both their understanding of God's Word and their personal faith.

The decision by St. John congregation to sell their property and relocate has had a notable impact on the San Juan mission. During this transitional period, San Juan is temporarily worshipping at St. Croix Lutheran Academy while seeking a more permanent location. The area immediately north of St. Croix includes a densely populated Hispanic community, making it a favorable and strategic neighborhood for a future ministry home.

There remains significant growth potential for WELS Hispanic outreach efforts within the Twin Cities. Several urban congregations are exploring similar opportunities, including Pilgrim in Minneapolis (noted below).

Due to the ministry's temporary location and the final year of Home Mission support, St. John/San Juan will not be submitting an MPSA renewal or update at this time. As long-term plans continue to be revised and a permanent location is identified, the Minnesota District Mission Board will retain this congregation within its opportunities pipeline for potential future mission enhancement consideration.

Risen Savior, North Liberty, IA (New Start)

In 2025, the mission in North Liberty became an independent congregation rather than a multi-site campus of Good Shepherd in Cedar Rapids. While this transition required members to embrace a new congregational identity, it was supported by ministry teams that had already begun forming and by strong encouragement from both congregations. Operating independently presents its own challenges; however, the congregation remains committed to maintaining a healthy, collaborative relationship with Good Shepherd.

In March 2025, Pastor Lucas Callies accepted a call, resulting in a pastoral vacancy for the remainder of the year. By God's grace, Paul Schroeder accepted a call to serve the congregation and will be installed on February 15, 2026. Despite the vacancy, worship attendance reached a new milestone in 2025, averaging approximately 50 people each Sunday. Campus Ministry proved to be a tremendous blessing, supporting both the congregation and students from local colleges. Community events—such as Easter Fest, STEM Bible Camp, and Breakfast with Santa—strengthened the congregation's presence in North Liberty and created new opportunities to connect with families. Members continue to bring forward creative outreach ideas, demonstrating a growing passion to reach the lost and lead more people into God's Word.

The North Liberty congregation continues planning a Capital Fund Drive and evaluating when to begin pursuing property options. Establishing a 24/7 presence in the community is a key next step, with current plans focused on securing a rental or lease space as they move toward a permanent location.

Beautiful Savior, West Des Moines, IA (Mission Enhancement: Restart)

In 2024, the mission restart in West Des Moines has truly been blessed. Since Pastor Brian Schmidt's arrival in late 2023, Beautiful Savior has seen significant re-engagement from current members and several new members. Average weekly attendance has consistently been in the 60's following many years in the 40's or below. In addition, Sunday School attendance remains high, and a teen class is held twice per month. The Sunday and midweek Bible Classes also see around 20 attendees each week.

Over the past several months, Beautiful Savior has continued to welcome new prospects. Pastor Schmidt follows up consistently with all prospects that provide contact information. A Bible Information Class will soon begin with approximately 5 prospects and several current members expected to attend. In addition, they have begun to focus on friendship evangelism by asking members to invite family and friends to attend with them. Their members continually look to share the Good News with their entire network

Peace, O'Fallon, IL (New Start) DISSOLUTION

In 2025, the decision was made not to continue calling a pastor due to challenges within the core group. As a result, the mission was placed on hold. During this pause in formal ministry efforts, members have been attending another WELS congregation in the St. Louis area. While the work in O'Fallon, Illinois, has been suspended, the area continues to be viewed as having potential for future mission work.

In March 2026, a formal letter of dissolution was communicated to the core group in O'Fallon. The letter from the Minnesota District Mission Board requested that the remaining members of Peace O'Fallon, Illinois—most of whom are currently worshiping at Martin Luther in St. Louis—take the necessary steps to dissolve Peace Lutheran as an official and legal entity. The letter also encouraged consideration of next steps for future new-mission ministry in the St. Louis area, noting that Martin Luther congregation would likely serve as a primary driving force in shaping a potential new plan, location, and ministry focus in the future

Faith, Prior Lake, MN (Mission Enhancement)

Faith continues to partner with New Creations, a childcare and preschool ministry whose facility is located across the parking lot from the church. As part of the property sale agreement, Faith retained the ability to provide the religious curriculum. The owners of New Creations agreed to this arrangement, and the relationship has continued to strengthen over time.

Mr. Ric Gibson, a retired principal from St. Croix Lutheran Academy, faithfully served as a part-time staff minister for several years. At the end of 2025, Ric has stepped down from this role. In response, the congregation has intentionally worked to sustain the ministry by distributing his responsibilities among a group of dedicated members.

Pastor Stephen Schmiel has remained actively involved by welcoming families, regularly conducting chapel services, and building relationships with parents. With more than 100 students enrolled, this partnership presents a significant outreach opportunity for Faith. Over the past year, several parents from the childcare facility have begun attending worship services. In addition, the congregation has experienced an increase in young families, reflecting its renewed and growing focus on community-centered mission outreach.

Anchored in Christ, Greenfield & Rockford, MN (Unsubsidized Mission Status)

Salem in Greenfield and Cross in Rockford was granted unsubsidized mission status in Spring 2024, allowing them to continue working closely with the DMB while transitioning their ministry approach. The two congregations have since merged into a single multi-site ministry, with joint worship services beginning in 2024.

Anchored in Christ remains actively engaged in its growing community, participating in numerous community events and maintaining a strong focus on outreach. The congregation is also listed below as a New Enhancement request, as they seek to further expand their ministry efforts in response to continued outreach opportunities and significant population growth in their area.

Saint Mark, Mankato, MN (Mission Enhancement)

Saint Mark is a rapidly growing turnaround congregation that is effectively reaching people who are new to the faith as well as young professionals in the Mankato area. The congregation remains intentionally focused on its mission, core values, and strategic plan—an approach that continues to bear fruit. As a result, Saint Mark has experienced sustained and significant growth. Its outreach efforts have reached many unchurched individuals, while also providing meaningful spiritual growth opportunities for both new and longtime members.

This growth has increased the demands of ministry, including Bible information classes for prospects, intentional integration of new members, and the expansion of ministry programs. These efforts require a substantially greater investment of time in pastoral leadership and member care. In Spring 2025, Saint Mark was approved for a Mission Enhancement to add a half-time Manager of Ministry. This role will allow the congregation to maintain its momentum in reaching the Mankato community while also ensuring consistent discipleship and support for its growing membership.

2026 New Missions Enhancement Requests:

Faith, Excelsior, MN (New Enhancement)

Anchored in Christ (AIC) Lutheran Ministries Greenfield & Rockford, MN (New Enhancement)

Mt. Olive, St. Paul, MN (New Enhancement)

For more than a century, Mt Olive has been a place where people gather to hear the gospel of Jesus. While the past decade has included seasons of both growth and turbulence, a committed and “battle-tested” core remains deeply devoted to urban ministry. Mt Olive’s lay leaders recognized the challenges facing Twin Cities congregations and responded by organizing the grassroots Gather WELS TC effort, which later developed into the Merge for Mission initiative under their leadership. Although the outcome of the merger vote did not unfold as many had hoped, the congregation now stands at a pivotal moment.

Mt Olive possesses a clear vision, a strategic location, and a dedicated group of leaders working toward becoming a healthy and effective city ministry. The congregation is debt-free, maintains a well-kept facility well suited to its mission field, and is blessed with creative and committed lay leadership. What is currently lacking is a full-time pastoral presence to provide focused leadership, strengthen ministry efforts, and amplify outreach to the more than 100,000 people in its immediate mission field.

Mt Olive is requesting a three-year salary subsidy to support a full-time pastor. This investment would build upon the strong foundation already laid by its lay leaders, refocus and energize discipleship efforts, and leverage the congregation’s unique artistic and musical gifts to create welcoming, “invitable” worship experiences that resonate within its diverse urban community. Mt Olive is uniquely positioned to serve as a healthy and vibrant WELS presence in the Twin Cities.

Future Opportunities

Pligram, Minneapolis, MN (Cross Cultural)

Pilgrim has requested assistance in assessing the potential for a Hispanic outreach ministry. Tim Flunker has been asked to conduct a high-level assessment, after which the Minnesota District Mission Board will keep this opportunity on its near-term radar for further consideration.

Hmong Ministry, Divinity, St. Paul, MN & Twin Cities Area (Cross Cultural)

Recently, a Hmong individual who has completed synod certification expressed a desire to assist with Hmong outreach efforts in the Twin Cities. This individual will begin attending Divinity Lutheran Church in St. Paul, MN, an area with a significant Hmong population that remains largely unchurched. Initially, this individual will serve in an informal, unpaid capacity, assisting with outreach activities and Bible Information Classes. Should this opportunity continue to develop, there is potential to formalize the role through a Mission Enhancement. At this time, it is unclear whether such an enhancement would be pursued through Divinity Lutheran or, more likely, through Hmong Circuit Ministries. The Minnesota District Mission Board will continue to monitor and remain engaged with this opportunity for future consideration.

Other Opportunities on the radar in Minnesota District

- Somerset, WI (Dual-site Mission Start with Salem Stillwater)
- Ankeny, IA (Mission Start)
- East Bloomington, MN (Unsubsidized / Potential Enhancement)
- Lincoln Heights/Des Moines, IA (Cross Cultural)

Our district mission board keeps a website for updates and resources: www.mndistrictmissions.com.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Stephen Schmiel (Chairman)

Rev. Robert Guenther

Mr. Galen Holzhueter

Rev. Mark Kaesmeyer

Rev. Brian Schmidt

Mr. Daryl Schultz

Mr. Glenn Schulz

World Missions Report

Spring 2026

Use the QR code to view this report with images for each of the world missions mentioned below.



WELS World Missions conducts and encourages gospel outreach in 49 countries and is exploring outreach opportunities in 16 prospective new mission fields. World Missions brings the light of God's Word to the world through evangelism efforts, church planting, training national workers for ministry, and providing religious materials in foreign languages.

World Mission supports mission work:

- in Africa, where missionaries partner with national church bodies in eight countries and are exploring outreach in 10 additional locations throughout the continent;
- in Asia-Oceania, where 17 missionaries partner with God's people to equip, encourage, and empower others to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the billions still lost in darkness;
- in Europe, where missionaries partner with national churches to train the next generation of church leaders and bring the true gospel to countries without a strong Lutheran presence;
- in Latin America, where tens of thousands of people are being reached through Academia Cristo online courses and more than 35 individuals are actively leading a group in worship and study;
- through Multi-Language Productions, which has produced materials in 56 languages and reaches tens of thousands of English-speakers in 32 different countries through the TELL online training platform;
- and on Native American reservations, where the gospel is being shared on the Apache reservations in Arizona and the Native Christian Network has begun outreach to additional tribes.

French Outreach in Africa

Gospel outreach among French-speaking churches in Africa continues to expand as WELS works to build confessional Lutheran relationships in regions where French is a primary language, including areas connected to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and Ivory Coast. Through the One Africa Team, WELS is engaging with church bodies such as the Mission Évangélique Luthérienne au Congo (MELC), meeting with church leaders to study doctrine, discuss theological training, and explore possibilities for formal fellowship. These conversations, held in stable locations when political unrest limits travel, reflect the synod's careful, Word-centered approach to partnership and unity of confession. This ministry is featured in the April WELS Connection. Please share this update with your congregation to highlight how the gospel continues to unite believers across languages and borders.

Laying the Groundwork for Mission Work in Senegal

WELS World Missions is moving forward with plans to establish gospel outreach in Senegal, a predominantly Muslim nation in West Africa, by laying the groundwork for long-term missionary service. In February, Director of World Missions Operations Stefan Felgenhauer traveled to Dakar to finalize language and cultural immersion plans that will serve as the first phase of ministry for Missionary Dan Kroll and his wife, Karen, with plans in place for a second missionary to join this effort in the future. The visit addressed key logistics such as housing, healthcare, and immigration and formalized partnerships with Africa Consultants International, where missionaries will live with host families and receive intensive Wolof language training.

Learn more: wels.net/laying-the-groundwork-for-mission-work-in-senegal/

TELL Expansion through Africa – Seminars in Nairobi, Kenya

WELS World Missions continues to strengthen theological training and leadership development in Africa through the TELL (Think, Evaluate, Learn, Lead) program, which recently brought students together in person for the first time. In October, TELL participants from across Kenya gathered in Nairobi for two intensive seminars led by WELS missionaries Jake Vilhauer and Joel Hoff, allowing students who had previously studied together only online to meet face to face and deepen their understanding of key scriptural teachings, including Baptism as a means of grace. The seminars also outlined next steps for the program, as students prepare to serve as growth group leaders and potential church planters in their own communities.

Read more: wels.net/face-to-face-for-the-first-time/

Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM)

In February, Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM), in partnership with the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ–Kenya (LCMC), hosted a short-term medical camp in Chabera, Kenya, serving as both a mercy effort and an opportunity for gospel outreach. Over five days, the camp provided free medical screening, treatment, and medication to nearly 2,400 children, women, and men, many of whom traveled long distances from this underserved rural area. Kenyan medical professionals worked alongside CAMM volunteers, while local church leaders ensured that each patient also received Christian materials, prayer, and a gospel-centered welcome.

Read more: <https://wels.net/welcome-to-kenya/>

The Europe Team Goes to Brazil

Global Lutheran partnerships continue to grow through intentional, on-the-ground engagement, including a recent visit to Brazil coordinated by the WELS Europe Team. During a December trip, Rev. Dr. Ken Cherney of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, who serves as liaison to Portuguese-speaking churches, traveled across multiple regions to encourage congregations, support church leaders, and strengthen fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Portugal and the Brazilian Lutheran Church. The visit included the

ordination and installation of Pastor Gilberto Andrade da Silva, who is now serving geographically isolated congregations, as well as support and transition planning following the return of Missionary Charles Flunker after years of faithful service in Brazil.

Read more: wels.net/the-europe-team-goes-to-brazil

God's Work in Ukraine Continues

Even amid continuing war and widespread hardship, God's work through the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC) continues as congregations remain active in worship, mercy, and outreach. With support from WELS prayers and offerings, the ULC has been able to provide essential aid such as food, fuel, medicine, clothing, and heating supplies to congregation members and neighbors affected by displacement, winter conditions, and infrastructure damage. Rather than keeping this aid only for themselves, ULC members have shared generously within their communities, creating new opportunities for Christian witness. Through these works of love, many non-Christians have come into contact with the gospel, leading new people to worship, instruction, and confirmation, even as pastors continue preaching, caring for the needy, and encouraging God's people in the midst of ongoing instability.

Latin America: *Academia Cristo* Bearing Fruit

The One Latin America Team continues to see strong, measurable momentum across the region, with *Academia Cristo* reaching an average of 1.78 million people weekly, more than 102,500 students enrolled in Bible study, and 57 active church plants (*Grupos Sembrador*) currently being led by trained local leaders across Latin America. (Read more: <https://wels.net/one-latin-america-team-winter-2026-quarterly-update/>)

To better support follow-up, mentoring, and in-person encouragement of emerging leaders, Missionary Luis Acosta has relocated from Doral, Florida, to Quito, Ecuador, and Missionaries Joel Sutton and Matt Behmer, along with their families, have relocated to Mexico City.

Ecuador provides a clear example of this fruit. In Guayaquil, a church plant led by Isidro Chonillo, an *Academia Cristo*-trained leader, recently celebrated the baptism of 11 new believers, ranging from infants to adults. (Read more: <https://wels.net/a-harvest-of-faith-in-guayaquil/>)

Women's Ministry in Asia-Oceania

Women's ministry efforts continue to expand within the Asia-Oceania Team, with Cindy Lendt recently accepting the call to serve as Women's Ministry Coordinator for the region. Prior to accepting this call, Lendt volunteered to participate in a women's workshop held in Nepal, offering a helpful example of the types of outreach and training she will now help coordinate more broadly. The workshop, organized in partnership with national church leaders, equipped local Christian women for relationship-based, woman-to-woman gospel conversations grounded in God's Word.

Read more about the workshop: <https://wels.net/coffee-cribbage-and-christ/>



Minnesota District Special Ministries Report

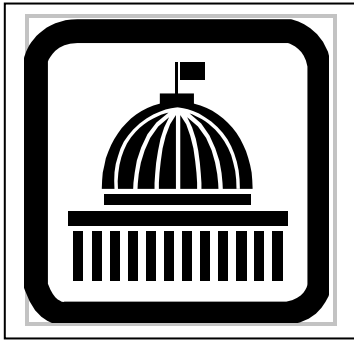
Highlights from Special Ministries

- 1. WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI)** Since many people who are visually impaired are looking to audio resources, MVI continues offers audio recordings of *Meditations*, *Forward in Christ*, about half of The Peoples Bible commentaries, and other resources at listen.wels.net. MVI continues to add to the listen library. csm.welsrc.net/visually-impaired.
- 2. Ministry to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing-** The newest resource from MDHH is <https://gospelhands.net/> the first ever online dictionary of Christian religious signs. Also available on that page are weekly streamed signed services and sermons. An interpreter continues to help at the Jesus Cares Program at St. John's in Glencoe MN and our Joy in Jesus Camp.
- 3. Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry/Jesus Cares Ministry/Joy in Jesus Camps**—There continues to be a strong partnership between IDDM and JCM in the District. Twice a year in the first Semester and 2nd Semester, Joel Gaertner, Stephen Schmidt, and Patrick Feldhus continue to connect our future WELS Teachers and our future Special Ed teachers from MLC to these ministries. There are 28 Jesus Cares programs in our District. The two “Joy in Jesus” Camps had 40 campers and 18 volunteers. We are planning for next year. Our Camp at Omega in Waterville MN is September 11th & 12th. Our camp At Green Lake in Spicer is October 12th & 13th.
- 4. Committee on Mental Health Needs**-There is help available for those struggling with mental health issues. The MAP program connects our members to CFS councilors. Also there is our WELS/ELS Christian Therapists Network.
- 5. WELS Chaplaincy**-Chaplaincy can be described as taking the gospel "outside the walls" to people who may never enter your sanctuary. Chaplains serve in a variety of settings, such as: Nursing homes and assisted living facilities, Hospitals and hospices, Jails and prisons, Fire/EMS and law enforcement, Schools and sports teams, Businesses and military bases.

The Chaplain Certification Program is open to called and lay workers, male and female. Currently there are 34 certified chaplains and 27 more in training. Some signed up when someone "just happened" to mention it. Many more have gifts for this type of ministry yet may be unaware of the program. Others may already be serving in a chaplain role but do not know of the formal training available. Chaplaincy was highlighted in the WELS connection. Please promote Chaplaincy to your members as an opportunity for them to engage in ministry.

- 6. Military Services** -There is a great partnership with Lutheran Military Support Group in our District. There are scholarships for anyone who is/was in the military and is looking to go into the ministry. There is a need to keep the referrals incoming and updated, especially with the constant movement of our military personnel.

Pastor Patrick Feldhus, MN District Coordinator
Email: pfeldhus@hotmail.com
Cell Phone: (920)918-9949



Minnesota District Legislation Committee



Report to the MN District Spring Pastors' Conference— April 2026

Minnesota Paid Family and Medical Leave

The new Minnesota Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFMLA) went into effect on January 1st. As of the middle of March more than 34,000 applications for leave had been processed by the state. We encourage our churches and schools to update their personnel policies to bring them in compliance with this new law if they haven't already done so. Reminder that the first premiums for the PFML program need to be sent in in April.

New Tax-Credit Scholarship Program

The Minnesota Legislature is considering a bill that would have the state participate in the new federal tax-credit scholarship program, a federal provision that allows individual taxpayers to donate up to \$1,700 annually to scholarship granting organizations to be awarded to students. The taxpayer can receive dollar for dollar up to \$1,700 in a federal tax credit.

Cuts to Funding for Private Schools Again on the Table

Included in the supplemental budget recently proposed by Governor Tim Walz for 2026 is a recommendation to opt the state of Minnesota into the new federal tax-credit scholarship program. The trade off would be that the budget for non-public schools would be zeroed out. This includes the funding for pupil aid and transportation. The money budgeted for non-public schools would be redirected to the state's Voluntary Prekindergarten program. Cutting the funding for nonpublic schools is something that was proposed in the governor's budget last year, but was ultimately restored in the final budget approved by the legislature. Now those cuts are once again on the table.

Conversion Therapy Ban Struck Down

On March 31st the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Colorado law banning "conversion therapy," a treatment intended to change a client's sexual orientation or gender identity. Kaley Chiles, a licensed counselor had challenged the Colorado law, claiming that it infringed on her freedom of speech. The Supreme Court agreed, striking down the law by a vote of 8-1. This decision will likely affect other states (including Minnesota) which also have laws banning "conversion therapy."

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

Minnesota District Worship Committee Report

District Pastors Conference – April 14-16, 2026

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

- Worship planning and execution for pastoral conferences, District Leadership Workshop, and District Convention.
- Support for congregations for introducing resources, demonstrate flexible use of resources, answer questions, and assist with worship planning.
- Leadership Workshop presentation by Craig Engel on Worship Education in the parish.
- District Easter Vigil service held on Easter Eve in the Chapel at St. Croix Lutheran Academy. This worship event included singers, musicians, and attendees from three conferences in the District. The intent is to host the Vigil once again in 2027. #1 feedback: This is the best kept secret. Promotional help by District pastors is appreciated. You are the information gatekeepers between enriching events like these and your congregation.

Christian Worship Hymnal Suite

- *CW: Guidebook* is in final editing phase. This volume will help worship leaders make the most of CW21 “suite of resources” available at christianworship.com and online.nph.net/church-supplies/categories/hymnals-songbooks/christian-worship-suite.
- *Musician’s Resource* (downloadable choral alternates, lead sheets, modulations, and instrumental packs (SATB voices of pew edition settings in a variety of transpositions for instruments. New materials are added regularly at: online.nph.net/musicians-resource. Some of these resources will be used during the conference.

A Look Ahead for the Commission on Worship

- In cooperation with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, C/W will be developing materials for pastors who want to improve their preaching. This may include resources like refresher materials for those who have found themselves drifting when it comes to purpose statements, or good Lutheran video examples of alternate preaching styles.
- In cooperation with Lutheran Schools, C/W plans to work with the content development team for the new theology curriculum, incorporating resources for teaching Lutheran hymnody at all age levels. This collaboration began in 2025. The hymnology instructional materials published by NPH are available to congregations and schools who want to

include hymnody instruction even before development on the new theology instructional resources begin.

- C/W plans to publish online Hymnal and Psalter Handbook resources, including the history and common usage of all hymns and psalm settings, and one-sentence descriptions of hymns for use in bulletins. These resources are currently linked through *The Foundation* ([The Foundation – Year A 2025-2026 – CongServe](#))
- In cooperation with worship planners at WELS area Lutheran high schools, C/W plans to supply resources that will allow and encourage high schools to make the best use of the treasures old and new available in the new hymnal suite. Similarly, C/W will work with Home Mission personnel to discover which of the new hymnal resources work best in unique Home Mission settings.
- Carthage is unable to host the worship conference in June 2027 due to building projects. Strong consideration is being given to holding worship conference in June 2027 at MLC.

Respectfully submitted,
Joel J. Gawrisch

WELS Commission on Evangelism

Report to Conferences – Spring 2026

Outreach Newsletters

The Commission on Evangelism has offered *Outreach Newsletters* to WELS congregations for many years. The newsletters each consist of a devotional article targeted at congregations' prospects.

Note: Beginning in 2026, newsletters for specific years will no longer be produced. Rather, all newsletter series will be available on the Congregational Services website. Congregations can choose which series to use.

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

Come and See

Come and See assists congregations in encouraging members to invite unchurched people in their lives to connect to God's Word and God's people in their congregation. It includes a congregational survey which can be used to discover aspects of congregational life that encourage or discourage members from inviting the unchurched. The congregation can then address any aspects that discourage invitational evangelism. Removing these barriers will, Lord willing, lead more members to offer invitations to others. *Come and See* will be available in the summer of 2026 at www.welscongregationalservices.net.

Everyone Outreach

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 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.

More than 420 congregations have expressed interest in the program. More than 220 workshops have been held. Spring 2026 workshops are now being scheduled.

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

Congregational Evangelism Kit

The *Congregational Evangelism Kit* provides video-based training for congregational evangelism leaders and teams. The *Congregational Evangelism Kit* is available at www.welscongregationservices.net.

One by One

This Bible study is 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.welscongregationservices.net.

In Season and Out of Season

This Bible study, based on the Apostle Paul's evangelism experiences in the city of Philippi, seeks to encourage and equip God's people to share the gospel in any and every situation. The three-lesson, video-based bible study can be used in large or small group settings.

In Season and Out of Season is available at www.welscongregationservices.net.

Let's Go!

This Bible study provides online, video-based personal witness training. 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.welscongregationservices.net.

Serving alongside you,

Eric

Rev. Eric Roecker
Director, WELS Commission on Evangelism
Eric.roecker@wels.net 14-256-3287

Knighted for Ministry!

By President Rich Gurgel

Adapted from a November 2025 morning chapel devotion

God is sending us on a divine rescue mission—to help gather all the elect, those he’s known by name from eternity. For this task—this privilege!—Paul urges us to “Put on the full armor of God.”

Put on the full armor of God . . . take up the shield of faith . . . take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

From Ephesians 6:10-17

As a Roman prisoner, Paul may have had a fully armed and armored Roman soldier guarding him at the very moment he wrote. So he painted for us the armor of God, piece by piece: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation—all these elements to protect us. And he gave us an offensive weapon as well: the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

That’s why we’re here in this chapel and on this campus. God is equipping you, MLC students, with the Spirit’s sword day after day to arm you as soldiers of the cross—knights in God’s army.

One day God may very well call you to be leaders in this mission: pastors, staff ministers, teachers. Then you’ll truly be “Knighted for Ministry”! Amen.



MLC’s New Brand Has Landed!

This rebrand is an outcome of MLC’s Project Sunrise, a multi-year effort to improve the college in three key areas, one of which is branding and outreach.

Our mission, of course, has not changed! We are still the WELS College of Ministry, training men and women to meet WELS ministry needs. The purpose of the new brand is to help us tell the beautiful story of MLC’s ministry training in bolder, stronger ways!

Check out mlc-wels.edu/brand to view several short videos that explore all aspects of our brand, including the design intention behind the new logo.



By the Numbers

SPRING SEMESTER ON-CAMPUS ENROLLMENT: 650

(Estimated figure. Official figures available in February 2026.)

PROJECTED 2026 GRADUATING CLASS

- 89 BS Education
- 3 BS Staff Ministry (includes staff ministry certification)
- 2 BS Parish Music
- 43 BA Preseminary (includes seminary certification)
- 25 MS Education & MA Theology

Academic Highlights

APPLE Bears Fruit: Twenty-two returning adult learners are enrolled in our Alternative Pathway to Professional Licensure Eligibility (APPLE) program, taking online courses to become eligible for Minnesota state licensure and synod ministry certification as WELS elementary teachers.

Dual Credit Launches: About two dozen MLS and LPS students are receiving both high school and college credit for their Modern West and Elementary Statistics courses this year, and we're planning to offer more courses at the prep schools in 2026-2027. We're also exploring a dual-credit Psychology course at Fox Valley LHS and more options with several other ALHSS.

Staff Ministry Options Opening: We're investigating a 3+2 program with Bethany Lutheran College, which enables students to earn a BS Staff Ministry and an MA Clinical Mental Health Counseling in five years. We also continue to explore other ministry-integrated minors in social media/marketing and leadership/management.

DECEMBER GRADUATES ASSIGNED

Emma Pufahl (*Phoenix*) to **Michigan Lutheran Seminary:** gr 9 band and choir

Morgan Ritter (*Jordan MN*) to **God's Treasures-Winthrop MN:** ECE (6-month call)

Carter Seltz (*Columbia TN*) to **Christ the King Academy-Palm Coast FL:** gr 7

Abigail Winkel (*Milwaukee*) to **St. Paul LS-Columbus OH:** gr 7-8

On Campus

OLD MAIN: Work is proceeding to ensure we have an entrance that's engineered for safety and designed to align with our beautiful, historic aesthetic.

CAFETERIA: In January we welcomed Fresh Ideas, a new food service vendor bringing fresh dining options now and cafeteria renovations next summer.



CPGP: Blessing & Opportunity

We're grateful to God that the Congregational Partner Grant Program has proven very successful in lowering student debt. With more than 90% of our students participating, we're matching about \$930,000 in grants this year—and we can only do that with everyone's help! Please consider giving to the CPGP Matching Fund! You'll be making a huge difference in the lives of our future called workers!



mlc-wels.edu/cpgp

Mark the Date

FEB 27-28 **MLC Forum:** *Murder on the Orient Express*

MAR 5-14 **College Choir Spring Tour**
- Arizona, Utah, and Nevada

MAY 2 **MLC Forum:** *The BFG*

MAY 6 **Worldwide MLC Day**

MAY 15 **MLC Commencement Concert**

MAY 16 **MLC Graduation/Call Day**

MAY 17-22 **Wind Symphony Tour**

JUN 16-17 **Open Learning at MLC**
- Lutheran School Culture
- Teacher Burnout

Worldwide
MLC DAY
MAY 6, 2026



mlc-wels.edu/calendar



If you have any questions, contact us at mlcinfo@mlc-wels.edu.
Martin Luther College • 1995 Luther Court, New Ulm MN 56073
507.354.8221 • mlc-wels.edu

Share this video with the teens in your life who might have the gifts to come to MLC and one day be *Knighthed* for ministry!

YouKnighted

Whether you're serving in a classroom or congregation, in another career, or at home—you're an important part of the MLC Alumni community.



We know many of you were Trojans or Lancers—or MLA/DMLHS Rams or MLTC Spartans—but we also know you agree with this: we are all **YouKnighted** in our mission and our purpose: to put on the armor of God and go out into the world, sharing the gospel of Jesus.

Alumni have said:

- "I'm too far away to attend things."
- "I didn't even know we had an alumni association."
- "I wish I felt more connected."
- "I'd love more encouragement."

So we're making connection easier:

- Email updates with stories and resources
- Encouragement for all of our alumni—laypeople and called workers
- Opportunities to reconnect, serve, and stay inspired

WHAT WE DO

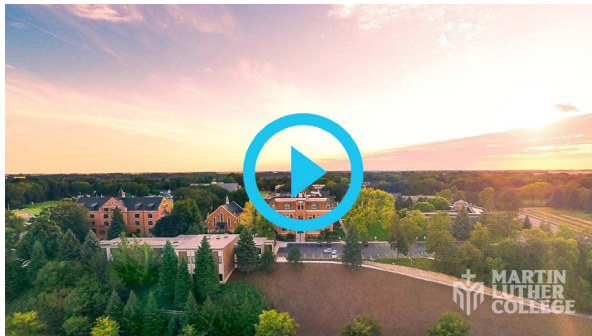
The MLCAA serves alumni and strengthens our alma mater by . . .

- Hosting events such as the Sprinter Fun Run and the Homecoming Alumni Mixer.
- Supporting current students through the Alumni Scholarship.
- Funding special projects that enhance student life and ministry training.
- Publishing the *MLCAA Messenger*, our quarterly alumni newsletter.
- Fostering lifelong connections among alumni across generations and legacy schools.



TUNE IN

On January 13, President Gurgel delivered a State of the College address. Watch this alumni-only event here.



Reconnect today • Stay connected • Stay encouraged

MLCAA Co-chairs

Abe Degner MLC '05: abedegner@gmail.com
Karl Schauland MLC '08: pastorschauland@gmail.com

Alumni Director

Michelle Markgraf DMLC '90
alumni@mlc-wels.edu or 507.233.9135



1995 LUTHER COURT • NEW ULM MN 56073 • 507.354.8221 • MLC-WELS.EDU



Peace Lutheran Church A Story of Faith, Growth, and Gospel Partnership

Peace—a WELS church in Gilbert, Arizona, **is growing a community around the Good News of Jesus.** With God’s blessing—and through the generous support of WELS members like you—this Home Missions congregation has been able to take root, build a worship space, and begin sharing Jesus with their neighbors. Their vision is clear: *to be the most easily accessible source of Good News for their community.*

When Peace Lutheran set out to secure land and build a church home, the financial challenge was real. But thanks to the support of WELS Church Extension Fund (WELS CEF), their prayers were answered.

WELS members, churches and affiliated organizations that invest in WELS CEF help provide the funding needed for mission churches like Peace. In addition

to the loan, Peace received a matching grant from WELS CEF. That grant helped the congregation reduce its loan burden and move forward with joy and confidence.

By combining the congregation’s commitment with matching support from WELS CEF, these projects become not only possible—but sustainable.

We’re thankful for your partnership in gospel ministry. And we invite you to continue being part of this mission by investing in or giving to WELS Church Extension Fund. Together, we can help plant and grow churches like Peace—and bring the gospel to more communities.

Our monthly e-mail features the current WELS CEF investment rates. If you’re interested in receiving this e-mail, please contact us at cef@wels.net.

Explore current investment rates and discover how your investment supports gospel ministry. Visit wels.net/cef or scanning the QR code.



The purchase of WELS CEF securities is subject to risks, which are described in our Offering Circular. The selected financial information above should be viewed in conjunction with our audited financial statements contained in the Offering Circular. The WELS CEF Offering Circular can be found online at wels.net/offering-circular. This is not an offer to sell, nor the solicitation to buy, our securities. We will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. WELS CEF certificates are unsecured general debt obligations. WELS CEF is not a bank or regulated financial institution. This offering is made solely by the Offering Circular.

Not FDIC or SIPC insured • Not a bank deposit • No WELS guarantee

Where Investing in Your Future Builds Churches

wels.net/cef • cef@wels.net • 1-866-511-7793



WELS Church Extension Fund

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Where investing in your future builds churches



You invest
in CEF



You earn
interest on your
investment



Your investment
helps fund loans

WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF) provides loans and grants to new mission congregations, and loans to self-supporting congregations to acquire and build ministry facilities—made possible through the investments of WELS members, congregations, and affiliated organizations.

wlhs.net/cef | cef@wels.net | 866-511-7793



The purchase of WELS CEF securities is subject to risks, which are described in our Offering Circular. The selected financial information above should be viewed in conjunction with our audited financial statements contained in the Offering Circular. The WELS CEF Offering Circular can be found online at wels.net/offering-circular. This is not an offer to sell, nor the solicitation to buy, our securities. We will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. WELS CEF certificates are unsecured general debt obligations. WELS CEF is not a bank or regulated financial institution. This offering is made solely by the offering circular.

Not FDIC or SIPC insured • Not a bank deposit • No WELS guarantee



CHRISTIAN LIFE RESOURCES

— FOR LIFE • FOR FAMILY —

Clear, biblically grounded direction on today’s most challenging topics—bioethics, end-of-life care, reproductive technology, gender questions, and more. Whether you’re serving in ministry, teaching, counseling, or simply navigating life, we provide resources and support tailored to your needs.

The Life Challenges Podcast

We are closing in on 250 episodes and have reached over 50,000 downloads. Check out our top five episodes:



1. **The Pro-Life Diet** (<https://bit.ly/4d90Si3>)
2. **Interview with Pastor Kurt Ebert on Suicide and Grief** (<https://bit.ly/4s2Xj0Q>)
3. **From Transition to Truth: A Journey with Katie Coblentz | Part 1** (<https://bit.ly/4uMQ9A6>)
4. **A Christian Dialogue on the Death Penalty** (<https://bit.ly/4bPnhP7>)
5. **“Acceptable” Addictions? with Mike Helwig** (<https://bit.ly/47mfGX3>)

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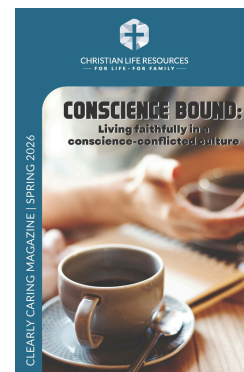
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A quarterly publication of Christian Life Resources, focusing on the issues and challenges of our time. The current issue focuses on situations that challenge the Christian conscience.

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Photothermal Therapy Opportunities and Challenges: Photothermal therapy uses light-activated tin oxide nanoparticles to selectively heat and kill cancer cells internally, sparing nearby tissue and offering a potentially safer option than radiation or chemotherapy, but long-term DNA and multigenerational risks remain, especially for younger patients. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2c3t2lvj> accessed 11-6-25)

Artificial Womb “Baby Steps”: Pun intended. Artificial wombs like AquaWomb, aimed at saving 22-25 week premature babies, are marketed as lifesavers despite commodifying procreation risks. Trials are under consideration; I've covered similar stories before. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/23rw62rm> accessed 11-9-25)



Procreation through the Futurist Lens: Futurist Tom Frey, former CLR and New Beginnings board member, past convention speaker, and podcast guest, wrote a provocative article on the future of procreation. Known for accurate predictions, he remains a respected voice in forecasting societal trends. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/29m8pebu> accessed 11-10-25)

CRISPR and High Cholesterol: Despite dystopian fears about CRISPR's impact, a new one-time gene-editing injection shows promise in curing high cholesterol, illustrating that while ethical concerns remain, CRISPR technology also holds remarkable potential for medical benefit. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/29pvvg9u> accessed 11-10-25)



Advances in Food Modification: While bioethics typically focuses on human concerns, food bioengineering is noteworthy. Malthus (1798) wrongly predicted population would outpace food supply – a "linear projection fallacy." Advances in crop bioengineering proved him wrong, though neo-Malthusians now redirect their concern toward environmental damage. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2cg7qvm5> accessed 11-10-25)

Sperm Selling: The Continued Commodification of Procreation. Online sperm donor groups on social media offer an unregulated, cheaper alternative to official channels for those using IVF to have children – a freelance route that is surprisingly accessible but potentially dangerous. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2yn6c3se> accessed 11-11-25)



Japanese Woman Marries AI Partner: A Japanese woman ended a real relationship for an AI she felt "truly understands her." This troubling trend will worsen as society devalues marriage and embraces self-centered individualism. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2cnjwu3x> accessed 11-13-25)



Regenerative Medicine and Finger Joints: Unlike salamanders that regrow tails, humans have limited regenerative ability. However, new research on fibroblast growth factor (FGF) protein shows promising potential for human tissue regeneration. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2c3vkouv> accessed 11-16-25)

Using AI to Chat with Deceased Loved Ones: Recent iterations of digitizing technology now preserve avatars of deceased loved ones, extending their presence beyond death. Like earlier projects digitizing Holocaust interviews and authors' works, this development draws both curiosity and criticism. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/24lqqbwv> accessed 11-17-25)



The Miracle of a Forming Embryo: Though evolution-focused, the article fascinatingly explores how physics and genetics interact to explain human biological formation – a possible scientific window into how God "knit us together." This understanding may eventually yield treatments for birth defects. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2xkabw2c> accessed 11-18-25)

Canada MAiD Deaths 5.1% of All Deaths: Euthanasia (MAiD) deaths (a total of 16,499) increased by almost 7% representing 5.1% of all deaths. Euthanasia (MAiD) deaths for people who were not terminally ill increased by 17%. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/255s9h3w> accessed 11-29-25)



Perspective on Organ Transplantation in the United States: A man died after receiving a rabies-infected kidney – only the fourth such case in 50 years of transplantation. Donors are screened for HIV and hepatitis, but not rabies. In 2024, 48,149 transplants were performed from 24,018 donors. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/22vo4kxz> accessed 12-7-25)

Restoring Damaged Mitochondria: Texas A&M researchers may have found a way to stop or reverse cellular energy decline using adult stem cells to repair mitochondria. This could potentially treat diabetes, muscular dystrophy, Alzheimer's, and more – though research remains in early stages. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2b4jnn6d> accessed 12-8-25)



Light Used to Restore Senses: Researchers have developed a wireless device that uses light to send information to the brain, bypassing natural sensory pathways; it could help restore lost senses. With ongoing research on longevity and enhancement, it is good to see incredible reparative research. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2aucab5l> accessed 12-9-25)

Mutations in a Single Gene Linked to Some Mental Illness: Physicians specializing in genetics and neurology linked mental illnesses like schizophrenia to mutations in the GRIN2A gene, which produces the GluN2A protein. This protein regulates neuron communication, enabling electrical signal transmission, learning, memory, language, and brain development. (Source: <https://tinyurl.com/29xqtupc> accessed 12-10-25)

