



## Minnesota District Special Ministries Annual Report

### Highlights from Special Ministries Work in The MN District

1. **WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI)** Since many people who are blind 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](http://listen.wels.net). MVI continues to add to the listen library.
2. **Ministry to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing-** The newest resource from MDHH is 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.
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 October and February, Joel Gaertner, Stephen Schmidt, Patrick Feldhus, and Carrie Ogonoski continue to connect our future Special Ed teachers from MLC to these ministries. A new program called SMILES is being developed and was promoted at the District Convention and the International LWMS. There are 28 Jesus Cares programs in our District.  
The two “Joy in Jesus” Camps had 43 campers and 18 volunteers.
4. **MN District Workshop**-On March 9<sup>th</sup>, Special Ministries brought in CSF for a presentation on Mental Health at St. Croix Academy. There was a reminder to make use of the MAP program in our congregations and schools.
5. **Prison Ministry**-While the work of prison ministry has historically been done via sharing printed Bible study books, much of that work is transitioning to tablets which the institutions make available. With this transition, we have seen an increase in tests returned and have a need for more test correctors.
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.

#### Future Plans

- Continue the partnership between JCM and IDDM with presentations at MLC and the “Joy in Jesus” camps
- Continue promotion of Special Ministries in our District especially the ones that are centered in our District (MVI & Prison Ministry)
- Use our District workshop conference to emphasize an area of Special Ministries
- Emphasize [wels.net/referral](http://wels.net/referral) for all areas of Special Ministries.

**Our committee members** – Pastor Patrick Feldhus, Pastor Steve Smith, Pastor Ed Fredrich, Pastor Robbin Robbert, Michelle Markgraf, Professor Kari Muentel, Brad Price, Ursula Heuer, and Pastor Darren Green

Pastor Patrick Feldhus, MN District Coordinator

Email: [pfeldhus@hotmail.com](mailto:pfeldhus@hotmail.com)

Cell Phone: (920)918-9949



## **MN District Reporter**

The district email list consists of 457 records; 213 pastors, 79 teachers, and most of the rest are lay men and women.

Please submit news items either as text that is complete, proofread, and ready to go, or as a PDF document that is formatted to your liking.

Circuit pastors are encouraged to invite pastors who are new to the district to subscribe to the list. Please also encourage all pastors in your circuits to invite their called workers and laypeople to subscribe. Here is a bulletin announcement you might use/modify:

**MN District Email List...**Do you want to keep up with what's going on in the Minnesota District of the WELS? Stay in touch by subscribing to the district email list. Go to [welsmn.org](http://welsmn.org) and click 'mailing list' at the top of the page to sign up.

The Presidium recently sent out a survey to solicit feedback about our district email list. The results seem to indicate that people are generally satisfied with it. Do you have suggestions for improvement?

## **MN District Nominating Committee**

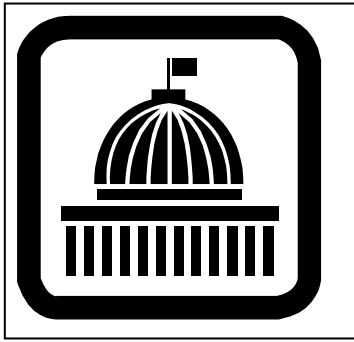
In October the district nominating committee began its work of assisting in the process of identifying nominees for the 2025 Synod Convention elections. The positions that are up for election as shown below. If you know someone (in or out of the MN District) who is qualified to serve in a position and would like to put their name forward, please talk to, text, or email me.

<b>Board</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Incumbent</b>	<b>Can be re-elected?</b>
Appeals	Chairman (pastor)	Kenneth Cherney	No
Appeals	Member (pastor)	Thomas Jeske	No
Appeals	Member (pastor)	Paul Zell	Yes
Appeals	Member (teacher or staff minister)	Nathan Kieselhorst	No
Appeals	Member (teacher or staff minister)	Steven Rosenbaum	Yes
Appeals	Member (teacher or staff minister)	Stephen Schultz	Yes
Appeals	Member (layman)	Gregory Galler	Yes
Appeals	Member (layman)	Mark Werre	Yes
Commission on Evangelism	Chairman (pastor, teacher or staff minister, or layman)	Douglas Tomhave	Yes
Commission on Lutheran Schools	Chairman (pastor, teacher or staff minister, or layman)	Ryan Wiechmann	Yes
Board for Ministerial Education	Member (parish pastor)	John Bortulin	Yes
Board for Ministerial Education	Member (teacher or staff minister)	James Henrickson	Yes
Board for Ministerial Education	Member (layman)	Adam Zastrow	Yes
Martin Luther College Governing Board	Chairman (parish pastor)	Michael Woldt	Yes, not running
Board for Home Missions	Chairman (parish pastor )	Matthew Brown	Yes
Board for World Missions	chairman (pastor)	Jonathan Schroeder	Yes
Board for World Missions	Member (teacher or staff minister)	Matthew Doering	Yes
Synodical Council	At large member (pastor)	John Bortulin	Yes
Synodical Council	At large member (pastor)	Joel Jenswold	No
Synodical Council	At large member (teacher or staff minister)	Thomas Plitzuweit	Yes

### **James Panning**

**[james.a.panning@gmail.com](mailto:james.a.panning@gmail.com)**

**talk/text: (702) 237-9272**



## Minnesota District Legislation Committee



### Report to the MN District – November 2024

#### **Abortion Amendment in Missouri**

Earlier this fall the Missouri Supreme Court cleared the way for an abortion amendment to be put on the November ballot. This amendment to the state constitution would guarantee a woman's right to have an abortion in all 9 months of pregnancy.

#### **New Tax**

Chances are you have heard about the new Minnesota Paid Leave Law (PLL). What you may not have heard about is the new tax associated with this new law, a tax of 0.7%. This new tax is scheduled to go into effect in January of 2026, but reporting is scheduled to start in October of this year. All of our WELS churches and schools are subject to this PLL reporting and tax. The new tax is based on called worker compensation. The question has been raised as to what constitutes compensation. To the best of our understanding, compensation includes whatever a called worker gets taxed for self employment/ social security-Medicare tax. In other words, both salary and housing allowance are considered compensation. If you need further guidance, we suggest that you contact your local tax attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Bentz, Chairman  
[mbentz@trinitybelleplaine.org](mailto:mbentz@trinitybelleplaine.org)

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

# DISTRICT DISCIPLESHIP REPORT

## Ongoing Resources

Resources at WELS Congregational Services website. The first three are subscription-based and will be sent directly to church/member emails:

- *Marriage Moments* (weekly)
- *WELS Family Devotions* \* now linked as a resource on **The Foundations** page
- *Transformed Teen Devotions* (+ facilitator guides) \* now linked as a resource on **The Foundations** page
- *WELS Youth Night* (fall '24 keynote & small group discussion guide uploaded)

## NEW 2024 RESOURCES

- **APOLOGETICS: Defend the Faith** - - Uploaded a couple months ago, this is Dr. Mike Berg, WLC, riffing on apologetics for six parts. Fascinating, well-done video series packed full of info. Originally intended as a youth resource, my gut tells me it may be better received by an adult audience because of its meaty content. Discussion guides accompany.
- **MadeKnown.net** - The WELS Committee on Identity, Gender, & has launched <https://madeknown.net/> a website dedicated to walking in faith alongside those who struggle with identity, gender, and sexuality. Resources, devotions, topical perspectives, and dedicated support through speaking engagements and personal connections are offered.
- **"An Honest Conversation"** – a youth ministry video resource meant to encourage teens to open up and talk about questions they have regarding LGBTQ topics. This isn't a doctrinal study of passages pointing out right and wrong. Before teens share law & gospel that they've been taught, how do they establish a relationship of love and trust with others that lead to conversations? That's the gist of the study.
- **WELS Online National Teen Bible Study <NEW>** \* the first one was successfully held Sunday, Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>! The next one is scheduled for **Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm CST**. Many WELS churches lack a "critical mass" of teens. The goal is to create online connect opportunities with each other around God's Word.

## INCOMING YET THIS FALL ...

- **STEWARDSHIP LECACY – "Beautiful Truth" Series.** The 2<sup>nd</sup> installment of the eventual 5-part stewardship series will be uploaded by October 1<sup>st</sup> for use yet this fall. This series explores the beauty of Christian truth, the importance of deeply grasping it for ourselves and communicating it to others, especially the critical need to connect younger generations living in an increasingly ambivalent culture.
- **"Welcome Home"** is a ministry emphasis with resources to heighten awareness and encourage members of their personal role in being hospitable to and welcoming back missing members. Resources will include planning for special Sunday worship, sermon ideas, bible study handout & leaders guide, a promotional video and a start up guide. Due to come out by the end of October.

## FUTURE RESOURCES BEING DEVELOPED IN 2025 ...

- *Revitalizing Sunday School* – best models and practices
- *Small Group Ministry* - to build relationships
- *"Speak to My Heart"* – a congregational marriage enrichment video resource based on the book of Ruth & presented by Prof. Mark Paustian.
- *Stewardship Legacy: "Temple" series*
- *"Man Up or Girl Fight"* – 3-part teen video series on similarities/differences of young men and women as they serve together in God's church.