

# THE MINNESOTA DISTRICT PRESIDENT'S REPORT



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April 29, 2025

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## Rejoice and Be Glad in Your Ministry Calling

*The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad. (Psalm 118:22-24)*

*"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us."* So stated a Western Union *internal* memo dated 1876. The foresight of that memo's author was in need of an optometrist! Such is human wisdom. It often doesn't know a good thing or the next big thing when it appears on the stage.

When Jesus appeared on the scene in Judea and Galilee, the spiritual experts and authorities were plagued with blurred vision. Though

Jesus matched up with everything the Scriptures said the Messiah would be, they wrote him off as an imposter. They discarded him as inherently of no value. Fast forward 20 centuries and many still see Jesus as overrated scrap on history's cutting room floor. "Who better than we to set moral standards for our times. We've progressed beyond the outdated codes of the past." "Whatever needs mending between us and God, we can handle it ourselves." The blindness of human nature remains along with the associated hubris and despair. This is the context in which we carry out ministry.

By the grace of God alone, the Spirit through the gospel has restored our sight. We don't see Jesus as the next big thing. He is the only thing—the chief cornerstone. Only he has lived in righteousness for me. Only he has suffered the curse of my sin for me. Only he has laid down his life and by his own power taken it back again. God's grace has opened our eyes to see his marvelous, vicarious work for us. With the psalmist, we rejoice and live in gladness because of what his empty tomb means for us personally. As called servants of the Word, we joyfully embrace our calling to administer Christ's life-giving, sight-restoring gospel. That joy remains whether we are well or poorly received by our hearers.

The sine qua non of a satisfying and fulfilling ministry is not the amount of visible fruit from our labors or the honor we receive from those we serve. It is the privilege of serving him who served us. That's the inherent value of our ministries. Seeing the fruits of the gospel produced in the lives of our hearers along with any love and honor we receive as Christ's representatives is icing on the cake.

Your servant in Christ,

*Pastor Dennis Klatt*

## **WELS Called Worker Vacancy Update**

### **Pastor Vacancies**

Synod wide there are a total of 156 pastor vacancies, 149 of those are parish vacancies. In the Minnesota District there are currently 27 vacant fulltime parish pastor positions. You will note eight congregations are not actively calling due to either current merger/joint ministry conversations or inability to support a pastor.

***Christ, North St. Paul/Hugo, MN (Associate Pastor)	St. John, Glencoe, MN
***Salem, Stillwater, MN (Associate Pastor)	Shepherd of the Hills, Duluth, MN
**Shepherd of the Lakes, Fairmont, MN	Christ Alone, Dardenne Prairie, MO
**Mt. Olive, Delano, MN	St. Peter, St. Peter, MN (Calling but not vacant)
**Petra, Sauk Rapids, MN	Divinity, St. Paul, MN
**Hope, Andover, MN	Trinity, Nicollet, MN
**Calvary, Glenwood/ St. John, Hancock	Risen Savior, North Liberty, IA
*Zion, Olivia, MN	****Pilgrim, Minneapolis, MN
*Zion, Springfield/ Peace, Marshfield, MO	****Mt. Olive, St. Paul, MN
*Good Shepherd, Burnsville (Associate Pastor)	****Grace, Nye Twshp (Osceola) WI
*Grace, South St. Paul, MN	****St. John, Boyd (Omro Township), MN
*Crown of Life, West. St. Paul, MN (Associate Pastor)	****Zion, Russell, MN
Christ, Zumbrota, MN	****Shepherd of the Hills, Inver Grove Heights, MN
St. John's, Redwood Falls, MN (Associate Pastor)	****Zion, Morton, MN (Not Calling)
St. John's, Lake City, MN	****Grace, Clear Lake, WI/Zion Almena, WI
Beautiful Savior, Austin, MN	
Zion, Sanborn, MN	

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\*Vacant for over one year  
\*\*Vacant for over two years  
\*\*\*Vacant for over three years  
\*\*\*\*Not actively calling

### **Recent District Ministry Changes**

2/8/2025 Steven Waldschmidt accepted call to St. Peter, Appleton, WI

2/22/2025 Matthew Nowak accepted the call to Anchored In Christ Ministries, Greenfield/Rockford, MN

4/6/2025 Micah Plocher accepted call to Rock of Ages, Kansas City, MO

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### **Current MN District Teacher/Staff Minister Vacancies**

High School Instructor: 2

Principal: 8

LES Teacher: 11

ECE Teachers: 5

Staff Ministers: 1

There are presently 240 teacher vacancies synod wide.

**NB:** Teachers issued provisional calls must be enrolled in the WELS Ministry Certification program through Martin Luther College to qualify for Minister of the Gospel tax status with the IRS. Provisionally called teachers who fail to enroll must have FICA withheld and submitted by the calling body.

## WELS CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS REPORT

The Conference of Presidents (COP) met for its spring meeting April. 7–9 2025.

President Schroeder's report included these items:

- The COP continues develop sample governance examples for congregations developing congregational constitutions and bylaws. Current samples are available on the [welsmn.org](http://welsmn.org) website under the resources tab.
- The COP reviewed the procedures it will follow as it carries out teaching assignments at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., in May, including clarifying that preseminary graduates (who do not continue at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) are not automatically certified for non-pastoral ministry. Those called to other types of service (such as teaching) will normally need to enroll in the synod's teacher certification program.
- The COP continues to review the calling process, especially in view of the challenges of pastor and teacher shortages.
- The Assignment Committee will continue to consider emergency teaching calls after the assignments are made in May.
- The COP was asked to reconsider a proposal to change the synod convention from a biennial to a triennial schedule. The 12 districts heard this proposal last summer, and the majority of districts were not in favor of the change. In view of that, the COP declined to reconsider the proposal at this time, but it did decide that additional rationale could be placed before the district conventions in 2026.
- The COP reviewed the new long-range strategic plan that will be presented to the synod convention in July.
- As of the April meeting of the COP, there were 156 pastoral vacancies in the synod, with 149 of those being parish pastor positions. The 2025 seminary graduating class will provide candidates numbering in the mid-20s, meaning that the pastoral vacancy situation will improve only slightly in the near term. Larger classes at the seminary in the coming years, however, will provide some relief in the future. In the meantime, the COP asks every WELS congregation and member to encourage young men to consider training for the pastoral ministry.

- A similar high vacancy rate is taking place in teacher positions. WELS school enrollments have increased significantly in the last two years—a real blessing—but that has caused a need for more teachers than are currently available. It's estimated that even after teacher candidates are assigned at Martin Luther College in May, there will still be approximately 100-120 vacancies in teaching positions. The Commission on Lutheran Schools has been working with congregations to find ways to fill the vacancies. At the same time, Martin Luther College has been redoubling its efforts to recruit both traditional and non-traditional teacher candidates. It will also be exploring other ideas to provide more teacher candidates. As in the case of pastors, those in the best position to recruit and encourage young people for the teaching ministry are congregational members, called workers, parents, and grandparents.
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### **MN District Presidium Long-range Goals**

<b>Long Range Goal</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Enhance MN District Workshop: 2026 attendance target - 150	Dennis Klatt
Improve Communication within the District	Eugene DeVries
Encourage Leaders to Utilize Performance Assessments	Matt Pfeifer
Training Pastoral Leadership in Congregations	Dennis Klatt
Helping congregations do more effective long-range planning.  Q1 March 31, 2024 - Determine whether live, in person presentation is best, or initial video training, or combination. Ask around what online training is available.  Compile list of Circuit Pastors and put together a google form they can fill out regarding Long Range Planning ability and reality.	Nate Scharf
Help congregations and schools do more through partnerships (maximize capacity and HR gifts)  1. Partnership efforts are being explored and sustained throughout the district  2. Gather Feedback of areas where partnerships may be possible, but are not currently known	Dennis Klatt

## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

MLC Assignments: May 15-16

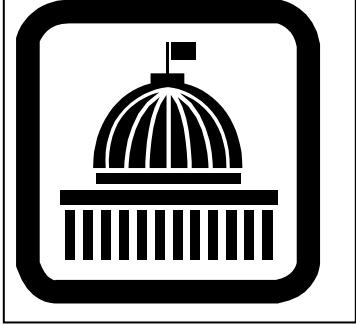
MLC Graduation and Call Services: May 17

WLS Assignments: May 20-21

WLS Vicar Assignment Service: May 21

WLS Graduate Call Service: May 22

WELS Convention at New Ulm, MN: July 21-24



# Minnesota District Legislation Committee



## Report to the MN District – April 2024

### **Proposed Budget Cuts to Impact Nonpublic School**

In January Governor Walz released his proposed budget for fiscal year 2026-2027. It included eliminating funding for Nonpublic Schools in the following areas: Nonpublic Pupil Aid and Transportation. Our WELS schools utilize both of these critical funding sources, and their removal would impact their ability to provide essential services to our students.

There are three basic categories of nonpublic pupil aid supporting the following services:

- Textbooks, individualized instruction materials, and standardized tests;
- Health services; and
- Guidance and counseling services.

Regarding transportation the proposal eliminates aid and includes the elimination of school districts being required to provide transportation of nonpublic students to their nonpublic school buildings.

If you haven't already done so, be sure to contact your legislators and express your views on these issues.

### **More Licensure Issues**

The Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) announced it intends to establish a new Ethnic Studies teaching license. This license would require teachers to “analyze social and human relationships with the natural world through indigenous, pre-colonial, decolonial, and post-colonial lenses.” PELSB states that its separate teaching license for Ethnic Studies is needed to address a 2023 Minnesota law that requires Ethnic Studies in schools. Minnesota high schools must offer an Ethnic Studies course starting in the 2026-2027 school year, and elementary and middle schools must offer Ethnic Studies instruction by the 2027-2028 school year.

## **Issues Before the Missouri Legislature**

Bills currently being considered in the Missouri legislature include:

House Bill 75 which would establish the “Missouri Religious Freedom Protection Act.”

House Bill 286 which would allow the reporting of a privileged communication regarding child abuse and neglect that is made to a minister or clergyperson.

House Bill 1194 which would establish the “Praise Act,” prohibiting the closure of places of worship during an emergency.

Respectfully submitted,

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

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

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## **WELS Commission on Evangelism**

### **Report to Conferences – Spring 2025**

#### **Everyone Outreach**

More than 360 congregations have expressed interest in the program. 156 workshops have been held. Summer and fall workshops are now being scheduled.

The workshop has been revised from eight hours to five hours. This seems to be encouraging even more congregations to participate.

Learn more about *Everyone Outreach* at [www.everyoneoutreach.com](http://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 <https://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 <https://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 <https://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](http://www.welscongregationservices.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.welscongregationservices.net](http://www.welscongregationservices.net).

## Come and See

*Come and See* will be a program congregations can use to encourage and equip members to invite unchurched people in their lives to connect to their congregation and to Christ using invitational evangelism. The COE plans to release the program in early 2026.

Serving alongside you,

Eric

Rev. Eric Roecker  
Director, WELS Commission on Evangelism  
[eric.roecker@wels.net](mailto:eric.roecker@wels.net) 414-256-3287

# Minnesota District Worship Committee Report

## April 2025

**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](mailto: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 Pastor Adam Mueller: More than Good Worship: Congregational Health.
- 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 many parts of the District.
- **2024 National Conference on Worship, Music, & the Arts:** July 30-August 2, 2024, Carthage College, Kenosha, WI. Two committee members presented at the conference: *School Chapel Worship* (Marquardt & Gawrisch) and *Strategic Planning for Worship Enrichment* (Gawrisch)

### Christian Worship Hymnal Suite

- *CW: Guidebook* is in the early stages of the editing phase. This volume will help worship leaders make the most of the CW21 “suite of resources” are available at [christianworship.com](http://christianworship.com) and [online.nph.net/church-supplies/categories/hymnals-songbooks/christian-worship-suite](http://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](http://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 will begin 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.
- 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.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joel J. Gawrisch

**WELS Synodical Council  
Meeting Summary - Spring 2025  
April 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>**

The Synodical Council met at the WELS Worship Center Friday and Saturday, April 25-26<sup>th</sup>. The meeting followed the traditional format. On Friday morning, the Plenary session was held which included the President's Report, a Special Presentation from an area of ministry and the Financial Update. The afternoon broke up into Committee Meetings (Ministry, Finance, and Administration). The meeting reconvened on Saturday morning for Committee Reports and Motions.

***Plenary Meeting Highlights***

- Long Range Plan Update - Johnathan Hein presented the updated work on the Long-Range Strategic Plan (2025-2035). The long-range plan document includes the identification of 20 strategic objectives. The report and Pastor Hein's presentation identified the number one strategic issue facing the WELS is the loss of the young people demographic from the WELS (Ages 20-30 approximately)
- CFO Kyle Egan provided a summary of financial results. The Synod continues to be richly blessed by God through the generous giving of WELS members. CFO Egan reviewed the revised Capital Projects Planning Process and Policy which aims to provide greater discipline but also flexibility in the Capital Allocation Process

***Ministry Committee Update***

1. The Ministry Committee spent most of its time meeting with MLC President Gurgel and reviewing the findings from the Blueprint Schools' report
2. Several motions were made and approved. They included the following:
  - a. BME to engage with MLC and the Blueprint Schools Consultancy to identify strategies to produce as many called workers as possible
  - b. FY26 & FY27 ministry financial allocations were approved

***Administrative Committee Update***

1. 14 appointments/reappointments to various WELS Boards approved (WELS Investment Funds, Church Extension Fund, Retirement Program, VEBA Commission, NPH, Accounting Oversight Committee)
2. Church Extension Fund
  - a. CEF has an active portfolio of 194 loans, totaling \$210M in loan balances
  - b. The liquidity of the CEF is being closely monitored given the increase in borrowing costs in recent years
  - c. The CEF's overall balance of uncommitted funds is presently low
3. Church Giving Report

- a. CMO's remain strong. Through the first three months of 2025 (January - March), the total CMO was \$5.34M, which was 1.8 percent higher than the first three months of 2024
  - b. \$3.80M has been collected for 100 Mission in 10 years
4. Investment Balances
    - a. WELS Investment Funds net assets totaled \$333M as of March 31, 2025
    - b. WELS Foundation assets totaled \$204M as of March 31, 2025
  5. WELS Pension Plan - Proposal was made and approved to payout a group of approximately 950 participants who have left WELS service and have a present value pension value of less than \$7K - the total cost of the payout is ~\$2.25M

#### ***Finance Committee Update***

1. Approved FY25 plan modifications for Congregational Services, Home Missions, Communications, and MLC - total incremental spend of ~\$1.8M. No additional Synod Support was required
2. Approved FY26 & FY27 Ministry Financial Plan - \$121.1M and \$118.6M in expenditures respectively
3. Authorized the sale of residential triplex in New Ulm owned by MLC - estimated market value of \$375K per county records
4. Approved proposed changes to the WELS Capital Projects Planning and Approval Policy

## **Minnesota District Schools Coordinator Report**

*WELS MN District Spring Conference*

*Submitted by: Dave Gartner*

Dear brothers in Christ,

It has been a busy and productive year serving as the Minnesota District Schools Coordinator. I thank God for the many opportunities he has provided to serve our schools and congregations as we work together to carry out gospel ministry through Christian education.

Over the past few months, I have made several visits to schools in our district that are currently experiencing transitions due to vacancies in leadership—either lacking a principal, a pastor, or in some cases, both. These visits have allowed me to listen, offer guidance, and assist congregations as they prayerfully consider their next steps forward. The resilience and dedication of our local faculty and congregations in these situations are a testament to God's ongoing work among us.

Additionally, I've spent time working with schools facing teacher-related challenges, including staffing, performance concerns, and communication issues. These are never easy situations, but I am encouraged by the willingness of our leaders and teachers to seek biblical, constructive solutions rooted in love, professionalism, and mutual support. Please continue to pray for wisdom and strength for all involved.

Currently, I've been actively engaged with MINNDEPENDENT in response to the recent budget proposal made by Governor Walz. The proposed changes have significant implications for nonpublic education in Minnesota. Through this partnership, we have now successfully mobilized all WELS schools in the state to write to their legislators and Governor Walz, advocating for fair funding practices. It's heartening to see our school leaders take this civic responsibility seriously and speak up for our students and families.

In preparation for MLC Assignment Day, I've been collaborating closely with District President Klatt. We are working to ensure that our district's staffing needs are clearly communicated and that we are ready to welcome new teachers and staff ministers who will be assigned to serve in our Minnesota District schools and congregations. Assignment Day is always a joyful occasion, and we thank God for the workers he is raising up for service.

Looking ahead to the summer, I am working to ensure that we have our full complement of ten delegates prepared and registered for the WELS Synod Convention at MLC. The involvement of our district delegates is critical for shaping the direction of our synod, and I am grateful for their willingness to serve.

Finally, as we move through April and May, we are coordinating visits from the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools to various schools across our district. These visits provide valuable feedback and encouragement for the Commission on Lutheran Schools as well as a

willing person to listen to our principals and early childhood directors and teachers joys and challenges.

Thank you for your prayers, support, and partnership in this ministry. May God continue to bless our efforts to serve him and his lambs through our Lutheran schools.

In Christ's service,

Dave Gartner  
Minnesota District Schools Coordinator



## Minnesota District Special Ministries 2025 Spring Report

### Highlights from Special Ministries

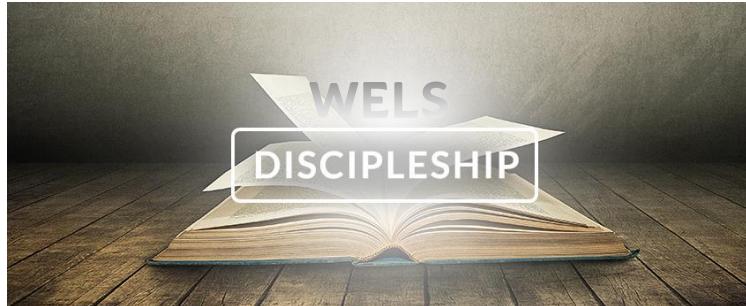
- #1 – MDHH Hands of God Conference for the deaf and those ministering to the deaf July 18-20 at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Lake Mills WI. <https://wels.net/being-the-hands-of-god-in-the-deaf-community/>
- #2 – Large print CW '21 are available through MVI <https://csm.welsrc.net/ministry-to-the-visually-impaired/>
- #3 – WELS Prison Ministry is transitioning under Institutional Ministries will continue.
- #4 – Please promote referrals to Special Ministries especially military. Please use this link <https://wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/special-ministries/online-referral/>
- #5 Citizen Abroad <https://gf.wels.net/citizens-abroad/> - this is for people traveling around the world and looking for WELS related places to worship

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

Pastor Patrick Feldhus, MN District Coordinator

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## MN DISTRICT DISCIPLESHIP REPORT

### MINNESOTA DISTRICT

#### District Ministry Workshop 2025

The Workshop was held on Saturday, March 15 at St. Croix Lutheran Academy in West St. Paul. The workshop was a bit smaller this year, with 103 registered to attend plus 10 guests, helpers, and volunteers. Presentations on apologetics, worship, evangelism, college ministry, and church governance were well received. Materials from the presentations are available for all at [www.mnworkshop.com](http://www.mnworkshop.com). As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, the District Account (held at Salem, Stillwater) holds \$4,868.89.

#### Proposed MN Discipleship Resource Team

One of my hopes in accepting this position is to put together a team of MN district people who could serve as resources for our pastors and churches in different areas of discipleship. Examples would include people with experience in coordinating youth mission trips, Sunday school teacher training, ministry to college students, men's and women's ministries, marriage, etc. My intention is not to meet regularly, if at all, but to be available to offer help and guidance to others. If you would like to be part of this Discipleship Resource Team, please let me know. I hope to assemble a list and be able to publicize it by the Fall Conference.

### 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

### NEWER RESOURCES

- **Apologetics: Defending the Faith** is a video-based Bible study designed to help church members engage in thoughtful, loving conversations with skeptics of the Christian faith.
- **MadeKnown.net** is a website dedicated to walking in faith with individuals who are wrestling with and have questions about faith, gender, and sexuality. The site provides a growing library of written resources, as well as dedicated support through speaking engagements and personal connections. There is support for both those caught in those sins and those affected by loved ones in these sins.
- **Stewardship Legacy Series: Beautiful Truth** – The second in a five-part series, this installment explores the beauty of Christian truth and the responsibility of congregations to steward it for future generations. Resources include sample sermons, weekly worship helps, and Bible studies.

## LOOKING AHEAD

- **Speak to My Heart ... Fall 2025**  
A video-based **marriage enrichment resource** centered on a redemptive love story from the book of Ruth. This study pauses at key moments for couples to reflect and apply lessons to their marriage. Adaptable for use in congregational marriage ministry.
- **A Truthful Conversation... August 2025**  
Our youth continue to wrestle with the **intersect of LGBTQ+, identity, faith, and biblical truth**. This discussion series helps teens navigate difficult conversations with a firm foundation in God's Word as well as a love for someone who is struggling.
- **Revitalizing Sunday School ... Winter 2025**  
As many congregations face declining attendance, this online module helps assess key challenges, providing ministry models and best practices to strengthen youth discipleship.
- **Welcome [Back] Home ... August 2025**  
A congregational initiative emphasizing the importance of church members caring for one another before they drift away. Resources include a planning guide, promotional videos, worship materials, and more, culminating in a *Welcome Home* Sunday celebration.
- **Youth Rally: Christ Through Us** – July 14-17, 2026, at Bowling Green State University, OH.
- **Third installment of the Stewardship Legacy Series:** *Hoped for arrival in Fall 2025*

## WELS COMMISSION NEWS

- Exploring discipleship-focused audio podcasts covering topics connected to women's ministry, marriage, and parenting.
- Renewed focus on the retention of 18-24-year-olds in the church.
- Establishing a Family Discipleship Task Force to better equip churches in supporting faith development within the home.



## SPRING 2025 UPDATE

April 2, 2025

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### *Current Missions:*

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#### **Immanuel Hmong, St. Paul, MN (Cross-Cultural)**

Immanuel Hmong is a cross-cultural mission congregation in the heart of St. Paul, Minnesota. Immanuel is still very active in reaching out to the Hmong community around them. Events are planned for just about every month, and each one is geared toward outreach.

Pastor Pheng Moua is a highly motivated missionary with a gift for teaching. Immanuel Hmong continues to utilize shared space with St. John. St Johns continues to be a center for Spanish, Hmong, and English-speaking ministries. Since Immanuel Hmong is a congregation of over 200 members, they have expressed a desire to acquire their own building which they might have a place to call home and that they might show their Hmong neighbors that they have a permanent stake in the community.

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

A core of 7 Hispanic families has been formed. An average of 15-20 attend worship in Spanish. San Juan holds Spanish services on Saturday evenings. Pastor Tim Otto continues to have a Spanish Instagram page for short evangelistic videos in the Spanish language. San Juan core families more and more see their new church as their church as they share their faith and use their time and gifts to help run events. They are also growing in their knowledge of God's Word and in their faith. God be praised!

This is an exciting time in the young history of the WELS Hispanic Outreach Effort in Twin Cities. St. John is working with four other Twin Cities urban congregations as they investigate the possibility of a merger. The vision is that the newly merged congregation will have the critical mass and passion to embrace the complexity of the city and reach out to people of all nations. Part of the vision is to free up Pastor Timoteo to dedicate much of his time to the Hispanic Ministry.

#### **Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids & North Liberty, IA (Multi-Site Mission)**

This multi-site ministry has continued to worship and hold Bible classes on the Cedar Rapids campus (original campus) and in North Liberty at the local community center. Pastor Lucas Callies is the missionary at the North Liberty campus and has been focused on connecting with prospects in the area.

Over the past six months, there has been on-going discussion amongst the Good Shepheard pastors, leaders and the DMB as to the challenges of the multi-site ministry. Some of the key challenges have been the roles and responsibilities between the pastors, conflicting styles of worship, and the different thoughts on the strategic goals for the North Liberty campus (i.e.. Potential land/building direction).

On February 9, 2025, the Good Shepherd congregation unanimously (at both campuses) voted to move forward with separating. The updated MPSA submission was granted an additional week to revise their 2025 Spring Submission reflecting the North Library mission as a separate mission apart from Cedar Rapids. In

March 2025, Pastor Callies accepted a call to Livonia, MI, so pending MPSA approval, North Liberty will be looking for a temporary vacancy pastor and starting the calling process.

### **Beautiful Savior, West Des Moines, IA (Mission 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. Calendar year 2024 was highlighted by celebrating Beautiful Savior's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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)**

Over the past year, the original Christ Our Savior home mission in Collinsville, IL made a name and location change. This in part due to the original worship space in Collinsville no longer being available, plus in part to the appeal to a more populated and economic growth community in O'Fallon, IL. Since there was already a "Christ Our Savior Lutheran" in that area, the name was changed to Peace. Peace has been holding worship services at O'Fallon High School.

Personal spiritual needs within the core group have continued to take up a portion of Pastor Schroeder's time and energy. In addition, Pastor Schroeder's family has dealt with serious health issues which have greatly impacted the outreach efforts. After much discussion between Pastor Schroeder, the DMB, and Minnesota District President, Pastor Schroeder was granted an opportunity to be placed early on a call list. Pastor Schroeder accepted a call to Luther Preparatory School. Pastor Schroeder's last service at Peace was on Christmas Eve 2024.

Although Peace O'Fallon, IL has a pastor vacancy and a couple core group personal challenges, the Minnesota DMB still believes O'Fallon, IL is a good location for a Home Mission. This area continues to be growing population with few existing Christian churches, plus is a major military base located around this eastern St. Louis metro area.

### **Faith, Prior Lake, MN (Mission Enhancement)**

Faith was approved last Spring for a mission enhancement to fund a part time staff minister. The congregation sold a portion of their property to New Creations, a childcare and preschool organization with several locations in the Twin Cities area. They built a preschool across the parking lot from the church. One condition of the sale was that Faith would be allowed to provide the religious curriculum. The owners of New Creations agreed, and the relationship has been strengthening over time.

Mr. Ric Gibson, a retired principal from St. Croix Lutheran Academy, continues to serve as part time staff minister for another year, while the congregation is actively working on filling the position for the future.

Pastor Stephen Schmiel has continued to reach out and welcome the parents and to conduct chapel on a regular basis. With over 100 students enrolled at this location, there is a significant outreach opportunity for Faith. During this past year, a couple of the parents from the childcare facility have started to attend worship

services. The congregation itself has also experienced recent increase of young families joining because of their increase mission focus on the community.

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

Salem in Greenfield and Cross in Loretto were granted unsubsidized mission status in Spring 2024. This has allowed them to continue working closely with the DMB through a transition in ministry approach. The two congregations merged into one multi-site ministry and joint worship services have begun in 2024.

Anchored in Christ is active within the growing community. The congregation as a part of a recent daylong community event, “Crow River Christmas” in Rockford. Anchored in Christ offered a “Candy Cane Christmas” which included a Christmas play put on by their youth, Christmas crafts, and various treats offered to guest. An estimated 60-70 community guests participated.

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### *New Missions Enhancement Requests:*

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### **St Mark, Mankato, MN (New Enhancement) (Approved for 3 years)**

St Mark is a rapidly growing turn-around church that is reaching people new to the faith and young professionals. They want to continue focus on their mission, core values and strategic plan and enhance what has already proven to bear fruit. St Mark has been blessed with continued significant growth. Their outreach efforts have impacted many unchurched people in the Mankato area and provided additional spiritual growth opportunities for current and new members.

Bible information classes for prospects, integrating new members into the congregation, and added programs require a significantly increased time commitment for pastoral and related care. They have tried to help keep up with growth by adding a part-time ministry coordinator in 2023 and a part-time worship coordinator in 2024. However, it was obvious that they need a new ministry management position to maintain our pace of growth. Their current pace may result in them “hitting a wall soon.”

St Mark is proposing that the addition of a half-time Manager of Ministry in which will allow them to simultaneously continue the momentum they have in reaching Mankato while also discipling all the new members they have received.

### **Faith, Excelsior, MN (New Enhancement) (Defer to 2026)**

Faith Lutheran Church of Excelsior, MN is located on the southwestern side of the Twin Cities metro area. The campus is right off highway 5 which is a main road through the southwestern side of the metro area. When the congregation started 50 years ago, it was serving a small rural community but now has turned into a booming metropolitan area with new homes and condos being built nearby and in the surrounding areas.

Faith’s leadership realized that to better reach the unchurched and de-churched neighbors, they needed to make some dramatic change, and that’s when they began to partner with NorthCross Lutheran in Lakeville. NorthCross mentored Faith to help them create a more welcoming culture focused on living out the principles outlined in Acts 2 of dedicating themselves to the teaching of the Apostles, meeting together regularly in each other’s homes for small group Bible studies, and using their resources to bless the surrounding community.

Faith ministries are experiencing a season of exciting growth! Like a thriving business that recognizes the need to expand its team to serve a growing clientele, they believe it's time to invest in a full-time Worship

and Youth Director who will continue to help them build a vibrant community of faith for generations to come. This key addition will allow them to reach more people for Jesus and continue to equip His people for ministry

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### *Future Opportunities*

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#### **WELS Gather TC**

Focus continues with the WELS Twin Cities Urban congregations merge for mission efforts. The WELS has five churches with six congregations in the Twin Cities urban center: (Pilgrim in Minneapolis, St. Johns in Minneapolis, Mount Olive in St. Paul, St. John / San Juan in St. Paul, Immanuel Hmong located at the St. John/ San Juan facility, and Divinity in St. Paul). Except for Immanuel Hmong, all these congregations have seen a decades long decline. Most worship between 40-80 on a Sunday. Pilgrim, Mount Olive, and Divinity are vacant.

An organization called WELS Gather TC (Twin Cities), <https://www.gatherwelstc.org>, was formed in 2024 to look at the best way for these congregations to move forward. The DMB has had representation at many of these meetings. Divinity St. Paul opted not to participate with Gather TC. The four remaining congregations formed an executive committee made up of leaders of each of the remaining four congregations. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 the executive committee presented their Merge for Mission (M4M) Unification Proposal and Final Report. On April 27<sup>th</sup> two of the four churches voted not to proceed with the proposal.

Our district mission board keeps a website for updates and resources: [www.mndistrictmissions.com](http://www.mndistrictmissions.com).

In February 2025, Steve Waldschmidt accepted a call to the 922 Ministries in Appleton, WI. The Minnesota District Mission Board has a new chairman, Stephen Schmiel. Pastor Schmiel is based in Prior Lake, MN. Faith Lutheran in Prior Lake, MN has a current Mission Enhancement working with an independent preschool located right next to the church. We are thankful for the many years of service to our board by Steve Waldschmidt and we also welcome on board our new chairman Stephen Schmiel!

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Stephen Schmiel (Chairman)

Rev. Robert Guenther

Mr. Galen Holzhueter

Rev. Mark Kaesmeyer

Mr. Daryl Schultz

Mr. Glenn Schulz

Rev. Dustin Sievert



WINTER 2025

## WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY SPOTLIGHT

### SECOND SEMESTER ENROLLMENT

Enrollment at the seminary is the highest it has been in fifteen years. The second semester began with 47 first-year students, 36 in their second year, 39 serving as vicars, and 25 seniors. Counting one student who is serving in an emergency call and another who was granted a one-year leave of absence, seminary enrollment stands at 149. In addition, a student from our sister church in Germany is spending the year on campus. Early estimates suggest that the incoming class in fall 2025 will be larger than the graduating class.

### FACULTY RETIREMENTS

Professor John Schuetze, who served at the seminary for 28 years, retired at the end of December 2024. During his time on the faculty, he taught courses in systematic theology, pastoral theology, and counseling, while also serving as campus counselor and registrar, among other duties. He is living in Tennessee and will continue to teach online courses in the STM program.

Professor Bill Tackmier will retire at the end of June after 15 years of service on the seminary campus. He has taught courses in Old Testament and homiletics and is currently serving as academic dean. He and his wife, Dorcas, who worked in the seminary library, will be living in South Bend, Indiana, in retirement. Professor Tackmier will teach some face-to-face courses in the STM program.



### CALL ACCEPTED

Mr. Sean Young, who has served as the WELS Director of Mission Operations since May 2012, has accepted the Lord's call to serve as the director of mission advancement. He will take up that work in the spring. He takes over the work from Mr. Kevin Keller, who was hired in 2005 to establish the mission advancement office. The Lord has graciously poured out great blessings on Mr. Keller's work over the last 20 years.

### WINTERIM

During early January, Winterim—the two-week session between semesters—gives students who choose to stay on campus an opportunity to study in areas not normally part of the seminary curriculum. This year 36 students participated in learning opportunities that took them off campus, whether to participate in outreach trips in Virginia, Texas, and Florida, or to walk in the footsteps of Paul in a trip to Greece and Italy.

Grow in Grace offered four continuing education courses during the first week of Winterim, with 24 pastors attending, more than any year in recent memory. Those Winterim courses are open to all WELS/ELS pastors. Next year's dates are January 5–9.

### MISSION AND MINISTRY

The seminary held its 2025 Mission and Ministry seminar February 4–6. This annual three-day event provides students an opportunity to hear from a wide range of people in a variety of ministry settings. It's another chance for them to see the real-world gospel work for which their coursework is preparing them.

Attendees heard updates and stories from WELS World Missions, Home Missions, and Congregational Services under the theme of "God's Power, Our Mission." Each day of Mission and Ministry offered a keynote speaker, highlights from World Missions, Home Missions, and Congregational Services, and breakout sessions. Attendees also had the opportunity to explore displays by various synodical boards and commissions.

## SATELLITES

This is the year for continuing education events for pastors in the districts. We call them satellites.

Satellites provide a unique opportunity for pastors to study together with a seminary professor or an adjunct instructor. Pastors wanting to take a course for credit will do some pre-course work, attend about 12 hours of class, and complete post-course assignments within a month. Pastors not taking the course for credit (audit) will do some pre-course work and participate in the classes. In previous years about one-third of the pastors have taken courses for credit and two-thirds have audited. If pastors have not taken a course for credit recently, we would encourage them to give it a try. The post-course assignments provide growth for the pastor and are often immediately practical for parish ministry.

The instructors of satellite courses are interested in the spiritual and professional growth of the pastors who take their courses. All courses are gospel-centered and mission-focused, with an emphasis on student learning. At the satellite events, time in class and time outside of class provide rich opportunity for brothers in faith and ministry to support and encourage each other and to enjoy the blessings of fellowship.

Most of the 12 districts are hosting at least one satellite course in 2025. Pastors are encouraged to enroll in a course for credit or audit. Pastors are welcome to attend any course in any district. This is especially helpful for pastors who are pursuing their STM degree or who want to take a specific course that pertains to their ministry.

The dates and places for nine 2025 satellite events have been set.

- Feb 4 – 6 in Pacific Northwest district in Seattle, WA
- April 29 – May 1 in Minnesota district in Rochester, MN
- May 28 – 30 in Dakota/Montana district in Sioux Falls, SD
- June 2 – 6 in Arizona/California district in Las Vegas, NV
- June 9 – 11 in North Atlantic district in Adamstown, MD
- June 9 – 12 in Pacific Northwest district in Tacoma, WA
- June 9 – 11 in Western Wisconsin district in Watertown, WI
- Oct 27 – 28 in South Central district in Rockwall, TX
- Oct 30 – 31 in Northern Wisconsin district in Appleton, WI

\*\*The South Atlantic District and the Michigan District are also planning continuing education events in their districts in 2025, with dates and places still pending at this writing.

For information about these courses and events, contact us at [growingrace@wls.edu](mailto:growingrace@wls.edu).

**Visit our website for the dates and times of our graduation week events on campus.**

## PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

a partnership of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary  
and WELS Joint Missions

*"After the fall, theologians are not born, but are made,  
namely taught by God through the written Word."*

~ John A. Quenstedt

How does God make a pastor? How does the seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) serve in making a pastor from a people group that is not part of our historical WELS community?

It begins with a prayer of thanks for WELS members who support the seminary and PSI's important work. It is followed with a prayer for wisdom and insight that the PSI Team and its many pastor-instructors would be able to communicate the truths of God's Word across cultures and language.

In North America, it begins with a pastor who has members of another people group in his congregation and the pastor notices that one of the men has the character and gifts for pastoral ministry. That local pastor is willing to serve as a PSI instructor to his member and mentor him in his PSI studies. Pastoral (and parental) encouragement of men for pastoral ministry is as important today as it was in the Apostle Paul's day when he mentored young pastors Timothy and Titus.

Outside of North America, the making of a pastor continues with a PSI Team of three WLS professors willing to travel to other countries to teach classes in person. It can also mean altering their schedules to provide instruction via video to a classroom of men, through an interpreter, halfway around the world, during hours when their families are asleep. Wherever a PSI student is located, there are no tuition costs to the student or his congregation, thanks to the support of God's people.

Whether a man is of traditional age attending WLS, or he is a PSI student from a people-group different than ours, the tool that sculpts and forms, shapes and fashions a confessional Lutheran pastor is the same tool that God has always used to communicate truth, create life, and equip his people to serve—his powerful Word.



The following are official numbers for semester two.

### ENROLLMENT

#### UNDERGRADUATES

**589** Undergraduates,  
representing **27** states  
and **6** countries



#### EDUCATION

Includes Staff Ministry

<b>123</b>	First-year
<b>107</b>	Sophomore
<b>73</b>	Junior
<b>96</b>	Senior
<b>28</b>	Fifth-year
<b>9</b>	Other
<b>436</b>	Total

#### PRESEMINARY

Year of graduation

<b>45</b>	2027-28
<b>32</b>	2026-27
<b>45</b>	2025-26
<b>31</b>	2024-25
<b>153</b>	Total

### NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATION

**25** Competency-Based Theology students

### CONTINUING ED / GRADUATE STUDIES

**1,017** Continuing Education students



<b>123</b>	Graduate Studies students
<b>13</b>	MA Theological Studies
<b>56</b>	MS Educational Admin
<b>17</b>	EC Director
<b>37</b>	Principal
<b>2</b>	Technology Director
<b>41</b>	MS Education
<b>7</b>	Ed Tech
<b>13</b>	Instruction
<b>12</b>	Leadership
<b>9</b>	Special Ed
<b>13</b>	MS Special Education

### NEW TEACHER INDUCTION

**204** Beginning Teachers

**156** Schools

**145** Mentors



### EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER



<b>80</b>	Children
<b>4</b>	Lead teachers
<b>9</b>	Student teachers
<b>4</b>	Student workers
<b>7</b>	Full-time staff

### "MLC RECOGNIZED BY WALL STREET JOURNAL AS SHREWDEST COLLEGE IN THE COUNTRY!"

by Rich Gurgel, MLC President



No, that headline isn't real. Yes, in 2024 the *Wall Street Journal* listed MLC as the #1 college/university in the country for career preparation. But there's no shrewdness listing.

Would we strive to top that list if it did exist? Jesus does urge us in that direction.

In a shocking turn in one of Jesus' parables, a dishonest steward receives commendation from his defrauded master "because he had acted shrewdly" (Lk 16:8). Neither the master (nor Jesus) commends dishonesty. The master commends his servant's focused use of temporary resources to reach his goal of being welcomed into debtors' homes (Lk 16:4).

Then comes a second shocker. Jesus looks each of us in the eye and speaks these words: "For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friend for yourselves so that when it is gone you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings" (Lk 16:8-9).

There it is! Jesus longs for us "people of the light" to prove ourselves as shrewd as those "people of this world." And we get to do that without frantic fear and for a greater purpose. We don't act in fear as if only our shrewdness ensures that our needs are met. That's how pagans operate (Mt 6:32). Our Father gives us everything we need since he's already given us Jesus (Ro 8:32). And we act shrewdly with a far greater purpose. The world pursues shrewdness to enhance temporal bottom lines. We pursue shrewdness with "worldly wealth" to "gain friends" who in thanks to God will be a heavenly welcoming team!

Now, back to that imagined headline. This is a very challenging time for higher education in our country. About one college a week closes its doors. In that setting, MLC seeks, under God's blessing, to be A-list shrewd in handling "worldly wealth." We aren't fearful that our doors will close—God provides us with synodical support and many generous individual donors. Instead, we seek top-level shrewdness to help us raise up a new generation of messengers who will be gaining friends for heaven!

That's why, in 2024, in partnership with synod leaders, we engaged experienced higher ed consultants to analyze where we can be shrewder in how we operate as a college. Now, in 2025, we are implementing those recommendations, which will lead to stronger fiscal stability and operational efficiency—not primarily for a better bottom line, but for a mission that matters forever.

So, pray for God's blessings as MLC embarks on an aggressive effort to be "the shrewdest college in the country." The *Wall Street Journal* may never notice. Heaven's welcome party will.

# COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION CONTINUES TO MOVE FORWARD

MLC continues to move forward with the Competency-Based Education initiative to meet the need for more teachers in our elementary schools. The data from our first term of CBTE (Competency-Based Theology Education) Minor affirms that the coursework has had a powerful impact on the scriptural and doctrinal foundations of the learners in the program.

Feedback from stakeholders, including the learners, has been instrumental in shaping our admissions, enrollment, and financial processes to support individuals in this new modality. We are also preparing to launch two new cohorts in January, one online with virtual meetings and one online with in-person meetings in Milwaukee.

We are also excited to share that our Alternative Pathway to Professional Licensure Eligibility (APPLE) - Elementary Education is in the final stages of our accreditor's approval process. Once approved, MLC will offer courses beyond the CBTE Minor to support returning adult learners who are studying to serve as teachers at their local Lutheran schools.

If you have questions about or interest in either program, please contact Dr. Nichole LaGrow, director of Nontraditional Education, at [lagrowna@mlc-wels.edu](mailto:lagrowna@mlc-wels.edu) / **507.354.8221**.



## SAVE THE DATE MLC DAY IS MAY 7, 2025!



Join MLC supporters across the globe in celebrating and promoting ministerial education on MLC Day.

### What can you do to participate in MLC Day?

You can pray, share, and give to support the training of future called workers.

- Use MLC's Project Elijah classroom materials to have your own ministerial education recruitment week.
- Write a prayer for our students and staff.
- Submit photos and videos to celebrate MLC students and graduates.
- Download signs and materials.
- **Give to your College of Ministry. Your gifts on MLC Day will help fund the Congregational Partner Grant Matching Fund, directly supporting MLC students.**

**MLC Day is part of a year-long effort to raise just over \$776,000 for the CPGP Matching Fund.**



## EXCITING NEWS FOR OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS!

**Our online Associate of Science (AS) in Early Childhood Education (ECE) degree for preschool teachers has been approved by our accrediting agency!** This program is intended for adult learners, and we are enrolling them right now!

This 67.5-credit AS-ECE degree program is the final tier in our 4-Tier "Support at Every Step" program for early childhood educators. It qualifies individuals to receive a divine call to WELS early childhood ministries, though it does not provide licensure for public school teachers.

The course of study includes general education courses, early childhood professional courses, and ministry certification (theology) courses. All professional and theology courses are available online through MLC, and we can also help you earn your required general education credits.

As early childhood ministries continue to grow in churches across the country, they need more teachers—teachers who understand the fundamentals of early childhood education and who are well grounded in biblical theology. Our AS-ECE can prepare these teachers—yet another way Martin Luther College is *Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross* as we meet the ministry needs of the WELS.



## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**NATIONAL BAND FEST**—March 7 - 9

**COLLEGE CHOIR SPRING TOUR**—March 15 - 23

Missouri, Tennessee,  
Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin,  
and Minnesota



**MLC FORUM PRESENTS**

- **ASK ANY GIRL**—February 28 - March 1
- **ONCE UPON A CRIME: THE TRIAL OF GOLDILOCKS**—May 3



**MLC DAY**—May 7

**MLC GRADUATION**—May 17

**WIND SYMPHONY TOUR**—May 18 - 25

*Destinations to be determined.*



MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY  
A MINISTERIAL PREP SCHOOL OF THE WELS

# SNAPSHOT

Spring 2025



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, REV. MARK LUETZOW

A shepherd's voice is both necessary and comforting. To warn of impending evil the shepherd beckons his sheep back to him. To lead them to pastures where green grass grows the shepherd invites his sheep to come and eat. To guide them to safety in the evenings, the shepherd calls each sheep by name and gathers them together in the shelter.

It's no wonder that the Church has found the inspired illustration of Jesus as our Good Shepherd a worthy scene for artistic expressions of Jesus' care. Each piece is a reminder of the gospel truth that Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

One of the reasons that many of our students are considering entering the ministry is because they have been faithfully shepherded throughout their lives by teachers and pastors who have echoed the voice of our Good Shepherd. Your Christlike love in shepherding the people that you serve inspires their desire to bring the same comforting voice to others.

So, on behalf of all of us at MLS, *Thank You*. Thank you for your faithful shepherding of God's people. Thank you for your sacrificing service to God's sheep. Thank you for leading his lambs into his Word and feeding them in the pastures of gospel goodness. And, thank you for partnering with us in encouraging another generation of sheep who have the gifts and desire to serve as under shepherds of the Good Shepherd.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR DISTRICT CHAMPIONS!



Girls' Basketball



Wrestling

## NEW DUAL CREDIT AND AP MATH OPTIONS!



New in the 2025-26 school year are two new Math courses: Statistics (Dual credit with MLC) and Personal Finance/Financial Literacy. Upperclassmen will still have the option of AP Precalculus and AP Calculus, but these course additions will give MLS students even more options for their Math curriculum. Additional dual credit options in other departments are being investigated.



## CLASS OF 2025 TOP 10



Logan Broekhuizen



Samantha Priem



Isabella DeLong



William Schoch  
Valedictorian



Camden Fager



Grace Steiger



Kaylee Green



Joshua Thompson



Caleb Martin  
Salutatorian



Addison Whitmer

GRADUATION  
MAY 24, 2025 AT 10:30 AM

## CHILDREN'S THEATER...ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Expecting 25 high schoolers to hop on a bus at 6:00 AM is a tall ask for most, but after napping for an hour or two, they might surprise you with their enthusiasm. This is the third year in a row that the MLS Children's Theater has taken their show "on the road" to Zion Lutheran School in Monroe, MI. The students have become pros at packing and unpacking, loading and unloading. More importantly, they've become pros at making 100+ kids smile with their energy onstage and friendliness offstage. From the stage to the playground, the trip to Monroe is as unforgettable as it is tiring.



## 2025 PROJECT TITUS LOCATIONS

Project Titus is a ministry program where students take part in summer mission trips to serve churches and communities nationwide. Since 1981, MLS students have helped with events like soccer camps, worship services, and community outreach through canvassing and exploration.



*Small School Advantage, Big School Opportunities*



MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

2777 Hardin Street  
Saginaw, MI 48602  
Phone: 989.793.1010  
Fax: 989.401.7334



JUNE  
12-13

FINE ARTS CAMP  
GRADES 3-6

JUNE  
16-18

BOYS' BASKETBALL  
GRADES 5-9

JUNE  
18-20

BOYS' FOOTBALL  
GRADES 6-9

FATHER/SON FOOTBALL  
GRADES 2-5

JUNE  
21

HALF ROUND  
GIRLS' BASKETBALL  
GRADES 5-9

JUNE  
23-25

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL  
GRADES 5-9

JUNE  
25-26

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL  
GRADES 5-9

SCAN ME



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT  
[WWW.MLSEM.ORG](http://WWW.MLSEM.ORG)

## MLS ADMISSIONS CORNER

"Fifty percent" is a figure that gets tossed around often in our Admissions meetings—it is our standing goal that 50% or more of our graduates would matriculate to MLC to pursue called worker ministry. As much as we want measurable goals, however, we know that we can't force a number on our students and their future plans. But when that number does turn up on our stats, we need to celebrate it! Rejoice with us that this year, as plans currently stand, 50% of our senior class is planning to attend MLC in the fall. Please also rejoice with the other 50% of graduates that will take their MLS experiences and their Christ-centered education into other vocations and fields of labor, as they also work in the harvest field as faithful laypeople.

As the academic year comes to a close, the Admissions department bids farewell to Instructor Mark Burger, who served as Admissions Counselor this year on an emergency basis. We are grateful for his work, his energy, and his dominance in intramural basketball! God's blessings, Mark, as you head back to WLS to finish your pastoral training. We look forward to seeing your name on an upcoming assignment list!



Instructor Burger speaks with some future Cardinals!



SCAN ME



# SPRING UPDATE

FROM MISSION ADVANCEMENT

## A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

by Caleb Zahn

I thought I was always going to come to Luther Prep. However, as my 8th grade year went on, I became torn between Prep or public high school at home in South Carolina. God provided me with so many blessings and opportunities in public school that I am so thankful for, amazing experiences in academics, athletics, and the fine arts on the local and state level, incredible friendships and supportive teachers. I cherished my experiences and I didn't know if that would exist at Prep. I knew that a Christ-centered education would be a HUGE blessing, but I didn't really know how much.

Luther Prep is incredible. My freshman year has been one of the best years of my life. This place, built and centered on God's Word and promises, creates such a unique environment that supports everyone here and cultivates lifelong friendships and pushes you to try everything. The professors, directors, coaches, and tutors here do a great job of that. They encourage us to grow and develop our God given gifts and abilities.

That has been the best thing for me: being able to try everything. I can go to football, and then rehearse to play on Sunday for a church service. I can practice with Brass Choir on a weeknight. I can go from wrestling to musical practice. I am free to be involved in as much as I want to be, without having to worry about the schedules colliding.

I am thankful to God for Prep, and it has only been two-thirds of my freshman year. I can't wait to keep doing all the things that Prep has to offer!

*Caleb Zahn is a freshman from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and participates in football, wrestling, track and field, chorus, band, Brass Choir, chapel band and musical.*



## LIVES PREPARED

Thanks to the generosity of the over 400 attendees and volunteers plus 130 viewers joining on livestream, over \$173,000 was raised for Magnify, Luther Prep's music center campaign at Lives Prepared on March 29.

This year's event featured the talents of our student body through a student art gallery and program, *Prep on Stage!*

Visit our website to relive the fun of the evening where you can watch *Prep on Stage!* hosted by Dave and Ben Scharf, the hilarious Fixer-Upper parody about our 113-year-old music auditorium, and find more information about Magnify.

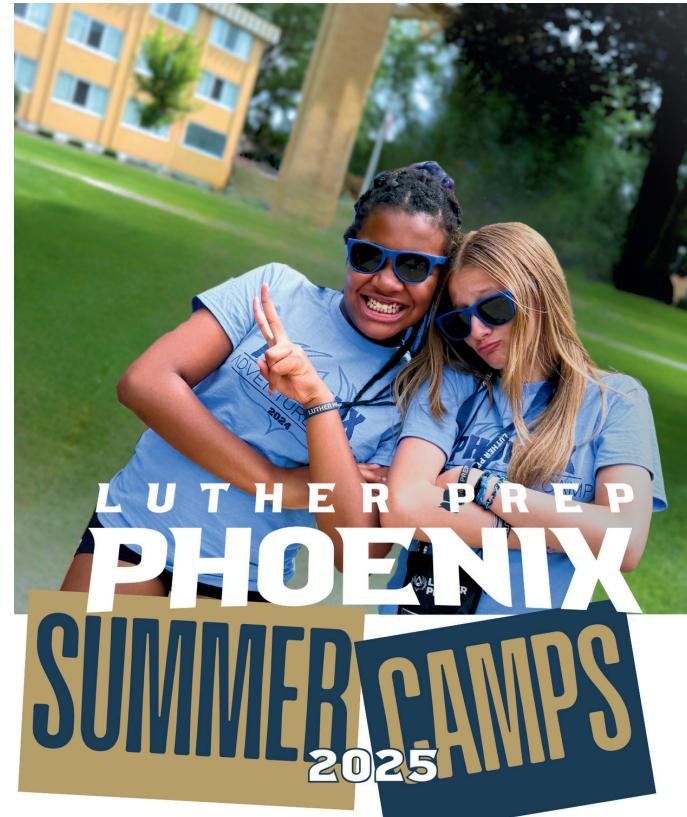
Find pictures, videos and more at [lps.wels.net/gala](http://lps.wels.net/gala)



## SUMMER CAMPS

Luther Prep offers a variety of summer overnight and day camps for students entering grades K-9.

While most of the camps focus on athletics, Phoenix Adventure Camp is a co-ed 4 day, 3 night camp that gives the full Luther Prep experience! Campers will enjoy chapels and Bible studies, music and drama sessions, art and classroom sessions, with lots of fun games throughout the camp. Sleeping in the dorms, eating in the cafeteria, and spending time with new and old friends will cap off the adventure of being an LPS Phoenix.



Register now at [lps.wels.net/summercamps](http://lps.wels.net/summercamps)



## SPRING EVENTS

**Saturday, May 3** Children's Theater @ 7pm

**Sunday, May 4** Children's Theater @ 4pm

**Sunday, May 11** Spring Band Concert @ 7pm

**Friday, May 23** Commencement Concert @ 7pm

**Saturday, May 24** Graduation @ 10am



Find out more about visiting Luther Prep at [lps.wels.net/visitLPS](http://lps.wels.net/visitLPS)

**FOLLOW US!**



@LutherPrepSchool



@LutherPrepLive

# Grace in Action Strengthens, Serves, and Supports Ministries

with strategies and tools to connect more people to Jesus



## INDIVIDUALS

### Ministry & Leadership Coaching

Shawn Herkstroeter

Helping you as school leaders, teachers, staff ministers, and lay leaders build a balanced, three-legged stool of spiritual, emotional, and physical health, so you can serve God and others with joy, strength, and resilience.

### 360 Degrees

Todd Russ

Assist ministries in executing 360 degree reviews of staff members by gathering input from supervisors, colleagues, and direct reports and then follow up with a coaching session to discuss, reflect, and plan.

## TEAMS

### Clifton Strengths Part 1

Steve Granberg

Utilize this powerful assessment to deepen your understanding of how your Creator knit you and other people in your life together as you serve in gospel ministry.

### Clifton Strengths Part 2

Steve Granberg

Expand your knowledge and application of the Strengths tool for enhancing personal and ministry relationships for service in the Lord's kingdom.

### The 5 Essentials of a Ministry Team

Steve Granberg

Evaluate and strengthen your ministry team's culture in the areas of trust, positive conflict, commitment, accountability, and results.

### Working Genius

Todd Russ

Utilize this great tool for job description reviews, high school leadership teams, and any group that works together. Provides a better understanding of God-given differences and a framework for group effectiveness and efficiency.

### Strengthening Your Board

Todd Russ

Evaluate your school board in six key areas and develop an improvement plan to solidify their proper role of support and governance in your overall ministry.

### Presentations and Keynotes

Shawn Herkstroeter

GIA offers a variety of presentations and keynotes for your ministry team or conference. Topics include resilience, habit formation, ownership, hospitality, and customized topics to meet your needs.

## MINISTRIES

### Vision/Traction Organizer (VTO)

Steve Granberg

Create and implement an ongoing planning process to identify long-range strategic targets and short-term action steps to help your ministry wisely steward God's gifts of time, people, dollars, and energy.

### Level 10 Meeting Training

Steve Granberg

This VTO tool is part of a complete operating system that helps you maximize meeting time for focus, clarity, and efficiency in your ministry setting.

### Strategic Staffing Planning

Peter Wolfgramm

Create and implement a proactive 5-year staffing plan that balances all the needs of your ministry to prepare and be poised for growth, transitions, and new opportunities.

### Organization and Ministry Assessment

Todd Russ

Assist your ministry with a customized assessment of a specific aspect of your ministry. This process allows ministries to dig deeply into the root of an issue or an opportunity through interviews and data collection. The report allows for planning based on data from your unique ministry context.



**Grace  
in Action**

### Contact Us to Schedule a Conversation

Dr. Todd Russ | truss@grace-in-action.com | 651-200-8443

Peter Wolfgramm | pwolfgramm@grace-in-action.com | 920-221-0611

Steve Granberg | sgranberg@grace-in-action.com | 262-224-5314

Shawn Herkstroeter | sherkstroeter@grace-in-action.com | 920-266-6295

# WELS Foundation— serving God's people through gift administration



Scan to learn more about  
giving options.  
Visit [wels.net/foundation](http://wels.net/foundation).

## Faithful Stewardship | Meaningful Impact

There are many ways to leave a lasting impact through faithful stewardship. Explore the giving options below that align with your goals.

### Ways to Give

**Charitable Gift Annuities**—A charitable gift annuity allows you to support ministry while receiving fixed income payments for life.

Learn more> [wels.net/charitable-gift-annuity](http://wels.net/charitable-gift-annuity)

**Charitable Remainder Trusts**—A charitable remainder trust provides income for you or loved ones while supporting ministry in the future.

Learn more> [wels.net/charitable-remainder-trust](http://wels.net/charitable-remainder-trust)

**Donor-Advised Funds**—A donor-advised fund allows you to make a charitable contribution today and recommend future ministry distributions.

Learn more> [wels.net/donor-advised-fund](http://wels.net/donor-advised-fund)

**Endowments**—Provide ongoing financial support for ministry with an endowment fund.

Learn more> [wels.net/endowment-funds](http://wels.net/endowment-funds)

**Estate Gifts**—A legacy gift through your will, trust, or beneficiary designation ensures ministry impact beyond your lifetime.

Learn more> [wels.net/estate-planning](http://wels.net/estate-planning)



**Donor-Directed Gifts**—A one-time or recurring gift where the donor specifies the ministry or purpose for the funds.

Over the last three years,  
WELS Foundation has distributed  
more than **\$47.7 million**  
in donor-directed gifts  
to WELS ministries.

### Get started today!

Discover how WELS Foundation can help you enhance your charitable giving through donor-directed gifts. Contact us today to learn more about giving options.

Contact: Jim Holm, Executive Director

Call: 414-256-3206

E-mail: [jim.holm@wels.net](mailto:jim.holm@wels.net)

Visit: [wels.net/foundation](http://wels.net/foundation)

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

—2 Corinthians 9:7



**WELS Foundation**  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

# WELS Investment Funds— guiding WELS ministries through smart investment

## A Strong Partner in Ministry

At WELS Investment Funds, we provide WELS congregations, schools, and WELS-affiliated ministries with cost-effective, professionally managed investment portfolios to support long-term ministry needs.

## Why Invest with WELS Investment Funds?

- Focus on ministry:** Reduce the time and effort spent managing financial matters by entrusting WELS Investment Funds with your investments. Our expertise allows you to be better stewards of your resources, freeing you to focus on your ministry's mission.
- Lower fees:** By pooling our God-given talents and resources, we unlock lower-cost investment opportunities that might not be available to smaller accounts. As more congregations invest, the cost-savings grow. All mutual funds within the WELS Funds have investment expenses significantly below the industry average.
- Easy account setup:** Communicate directly with WELS staff for personalized assistance in opening and managing your investment account.
- Minimum investment:** Open an account with a minimum investment of \$10,000.
- Expert investment oversight:** Our board of directors partners with Mercer Investments LLC, a trusted investment consultant, to provide professional portfolio management for WELS Investment Funds.



Connect with us to see how  
we can help you achieve  
your ministry goals.  
Visit [wels.net/welsfunds](http://wels.net/welsfunds).

## Join the more than 260 ministries already investing!

As of March 31, 2025, WELS Investment Funds manages more than **\$330 million** for WELS and its affiliated ministries.

Your investment today helps ensure lasting financial strength for generations to come.

### MEETING OPTIONS



MEET WITH YOUR  
ORGANIZATION IN PERSON

WELS Investment Funds

## Get started today!

Please contact WELS Investment Funds for your ministry's long-term investment needs.

Contact: Jim Holm, Executive Director

Call: 414-256-3206

E-mail: [jim.holm@wels.net](mailto:jim.holm@wels.net)

Visit: [wels.net/foundation](http://wels.net/foundation)



**WELS Investment Funds**  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod



## CHRISTIAN LIFE RESOURCES — FOR LIFE • FOR FAMILY —

### Miscarriage & Infant Loss Support for Your Members

CLR offers theologically sound and practical support for your members experiencing a miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss. In addition to the wealth of material and an online memorial wall, CLR can also provide a free “Care Box” sent to the church or directly to the home for members needing such support. Visit this dedicated page to learn more:  
[tinyurl.com/25y9g6jc](https://tinyurl.com/25y9g6jc)



### Life Talks: Presentations for Children and Their Parents

For over a decade, Ms. Rachel Greiner, the director of CLR Bridge Ministries, has given talks to grade school, middle school, and high school students and separately to their parents. These are positive, life-affirming, and age-appropriate presentations on God’s gift of life. In the “Parent Talks,” Rachel offers insights to help navigate the challenges they face with their tweens and teens.



To learn how this can help your classrooms and families visit: [tinyurl.com/29njgs3q](https://tinyurl.com/29njgs3q)

### Phone & Video Consults for Pastors

With the growing spectrum of complex life and family issues, pastors will find decades of experience and knowledge remotely available. To schedule a free phone call or video consult with Pastor Bob Fleischmann, the CLR National Director and Director of Christian Ethics, call (414-376-0594) or email ([info@christianliferesources.com](mailto:info@christianliferesources.com)) to schedule.



## Preachers/Presenters for Celebration of Life Services

Pastors on the CLR National Board can help you conduct a Celebration of Life event by serving as preachers and Bible Class presenters. Learn more at:  
[tinyurl.com/25av7xw7](http://tinyurl.com/25av7xw7)



## Life Challenges Podcast

CLR has conducted a weekly podcast addressing various life and family issues for nearly three years. Join Christa Potratz, Pastor Fleischmann, Pastor Samelson, and occasional guests for a half-hour of focused discussion on the issues. Join hundreds for a Christian perspective on challenging issues. Visit:  
[tinyurl.com/2a9oej88](http://tinyurl.com/2a9oej88)

## Coming Soon: AI and the CLR Website

Sometimes, you don't know the right word to begin your search of the CLR website. Maybe you face a challenging diagnosis, or the background story is more complicated than a single search term. CLR will soon enhance its website using artificial intelligence. You can ask a question through an AI field, and it will search the website for you. We are working on it now. Check frequently for when it is up and ready to use.



## Live Video Q&A Experience

Pastor Fleischmann's most popular Bible Class presentation is Q&A on any of the life and family issues. This can be coordinated to occur during a regular Sunday Bible Class period or at any other gathering during the week. CLR will help you navigate the technology and provide material in advance so your members can be ready to ask and learn about life and family issues from a Christian perspective. To learn more visit: [tinyurl.com/2ay8kwc9](http://tinyurl.com/2ay8kwc9)



## Website Resources

"It is a ton of material." Christian Life Resources has been around for over forty years, and in that time, we have addressed a lot of issues. Visit the website and use the search field or the dropdowns for quick and immediate access to valuable information. Visit: [www.ChristianLifeResources.com](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com)

### Christian Life Resources Staff

Rev. Robert Fleischmann, National Director & Director of CLR Bioethics Institute | Ms. Rachel Greiner, Director of CLR Bridge Ministries | Mrs. Brittany Jahns, Donor Relations Associate | Ms. Casey Stanke, Creative Content Director | Mrs. Jennifer Bloomier, Office Manager

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