

**Together**

NEWS. RESOURCES. ENCOURAGEMENT.



## Assignment and graduation days at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary


It's that time of year when we will again see prayers answered. Students at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., will be graduating from our WELS college of ministry. Some of those graduates will continue their preparation to be pastors at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Others will graduate on Sat., May 17, having completed their training to be teachers and staff ministers. Later on that same day, candidates will be assigned to their places of service in God's kingdom. As we see those prayers for workers in God's harvest field answered, we respond with thanks to God for providing those workers and to the many young people who have answered God's call with the words, "Here am I. Send me!"

The following week, something similar will happen at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Seminary students in their second year will be assigned as vicars. For an entire year, they will see firsthand what the pastoral ministry is all about and gain hands-on experience in serving God's people with Word and sacrament. Seniors will also be assigned to their first place of service. Some will be assigned as pastors while others will be assigned for a year as tutors in our synodical ministerial education schools.

As of the April meeting of the Conference of Presidents, there were 156 pastoral vacancies in the synod, with 149 of those being parish pastor positions. With 25 candidates available, their assignment will reduce the number of pastor vacancies, but the pastoral shortage will continue.

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 this month, there will still be approximately 100 to 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.

We thank God for our ministerial training system and for the workers it trains so well. We send them into their new calls with the prayer that God will bless them and the people they serve.

Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

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## Equipping leaders

The WELS leadership conference offered a fantastic opportunity for our members to learn from experts across the synod and encourage them as leaders at our church," says Rev. Kurtis Wetzel, pastor at Cross of Christ, Nampa, Idaho.

Wetzel and members from Cross of Christ attended the first two WELS National Conferences on Lutheran Leadership in 2020 and 2023. He and his congregation are planning to send another group to the leadership conference in January 2026.

Cross of Christ in Nampa is a mission congregation established as a second site to Cross of Christ in Boise. Wetzel shares, "Some of the guidance I received early on in our mission was to train up lay leaders quickly and involve members in lots of ministry."

The keynotes and workshops at the leadership conference equipped his members for just that.


"We are striving to equip and empower the universal priesthood at our congregation and encourage leaders to work alongside the called staff to do more ministry and increase our local impact on souls for eternity," says Wetzel. "Cross of Christ has always encouraged personal witnessing. Because of some of the workshops on outreach and evangelism, our members came back with renewed outreach energy and shared with the congregation even more about the need for personal

(as well as corporate) evangelism. This has energized other members at our church for witnessing."

Member Cindy Harris says she was honored to be invited to attend the conference. "I was humbled to be in the company of so many gifted spiritual leaders who passionately shared their knowledge about how to best proclaim the gospel in our communities," she says. "Our pastors at Cross of Christ in Idaho do a wonderful job of training and encouraging our members for works of service, but this was an opportunity to learn from pastors and teachers in other congregations throughout our entire church body and take it home and share it!"

Cindy and her husband are founding members of Cross of Christ. She serves through leading a women's Bible study and as the coordinator for the spiritual needs committee. She says of her time at the conference, "The whole time I was there I was thinking how wonderful it would be for every member back home to experience this conference. We 'Western WELS' members don't often have the opportunity to personally experience the depth of our synod's leadership and their passion for proclaiming the gospel throughout the world. It is a taste of heaven!"

The next WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership will be held Jan. 19–21, 2026, at the Hilton, Chicago.

Learn more about the conference at [lutheranleadership.com](https://lutheranleadership.com). 

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