

teens who can be encouraged and know that they are not alone. Here is a mass of kids just like them, who feel the same way, but more important, they have an awesome God who is always there and will always be there," says Oldenburg.

Follow the rally as it happens at [facebook.com/WELSYouthRally](https://facebook.com/WELSYouthRally); on Instagram @WELSLutherans; and on Twitter @WELStweets, using #WELSYouthRally2016.

## Did you know...

**WELS has a Facebook page?**  
[facebook.com/welslutherans](https://facebook.com/welslutherans)

**WELS has Twitter?**  
[twitter.com/welstweets](https://twitter.com/welstweets)

**WELS has Instagram?**  
[instagram.com/welslutherans](https://instagram.com/welslutherans)

**WELS has an app?**  
WELS offers a mobile application for the iOS and Android cell phone platforms. Get the WELS Mobile app at iTunes and Google Play.

## District conventions underway

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**D**uring the next two weeks, all 12 districts will be meeting for their biennial conventions. Districts meeting this week are:

Michigan – June 6-8

Nebraska – June 6-8

North Atlantic – June 7-8

South Atlantic – June 7-9

Western Wisconsin – June 6-7

The districts will receive reports from all areas of the synod's ministry and administrative areas to review the work that has been done in the past year and what is planned in the coming year. The districts will also have the opportunity to provide input on a number of different issues, including:

- A preliminary proposal of the Compensation Review Committee, which is conducting a study of the synod's compensation plan for called workers.
- An initial review of the proposed long-range plan for 2017-2025.
- Initial plans of the Synodical Council for the next two-year ministry financial plan (budget).

Input from the districts will be forwarded to the next synod convention when final decisions are made.

Another important matter at the district conventions is the election of district officers. Rev. Phil Hirsch was elected president of the Nebraska District, succeeding Prof. Earle Treptow, who accepted a call to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Rev. Michael Jensen was elected as the president of the Western Wisconsin District, replacing Rev. Herb Prah, who retired as district president. Additional elections are underway and results will be updated in this article when they are available.

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder 

## Spanish websites expand reach

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Internet and smartphone usage is on the rise in Spanish-speaking countries; there were more than 70 million smartphone users in Mexico at the end of 2015. WELS World Missions is using these tools to reach out to Spanish speakers around the world, connecting them with each other and their Savior.

The One Latin America team (1LA) and Multi-Language Publications, with help from national Spanish-speaking church bodies, have developed the following online resources.

**Academicristo.com** (Christ Academy) offers free Spanish video and audio resources that share the gospel message and teach lessons on Christianity and the Bible. The two most popular downloads are Spanish versions of the recent WELS movies *Come Follow Me* and *My Son, My Savior*. National pastors and missionaries are online for live chats with those visiting the site.

Leaders' guides are available for Bible studies so that local lay leaders can use the materials in their communities. "We want to empower people to start churches that faithfully teach Christ," says Rev. Mike Hartman, field coordinator for Latin America. "Our main focus is working with contacts who reach out to us." In April, the site began offering live weekly online classes to train leaders how to conduct Bible classes in their communities. More than one

hundred people have already signed up for these courses.

The Academia Cristo Facebook page is used to get the name "Lutheran" out in Latin America as well as to promote resources. With limited advertising, the site reaches an average of more than 400,000 people a day with Christ-centered messages and links to the Academia Cristo website.

**Iglesialuteranacristo.com** (Christ Lutheran Church) enables people to participate in live-streamed Christ-centered worship, prepared especially for the online viewer. Visitors can also download resources such as liturgies and hymns for their own use.

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia has taken the lead on this project, broadcasting the services from Most Holy Trinity in Medellín. Spanish speakers from ten different countries have gone through instruction classes and joined Most Holy Trinity.


**Cristopalabradevida.com** (Christ Word of Life) serves as a digital newsletter for Spanish-speakers. Meant mainly for those already in our fellowship, the site contains daily audio devotions, Christian resources in Spanish, and news about confessional Lutheranism.

While the Internet is being used to distribute information, Hartman is quick to point out that this doesn't replace face-to-face communication. It's actually meant to promote it. "We are seeking to use online means of communication God has given

us to empower more people to do on-the-ground ministry," he says. Several members of the 1LA team live in Mexico and work directly with contacts to start new churches. Another team member works with Spanish-speaking members in the United States who want to reach out with the gospel to their families back in Latin America.

The sites also allow any WELS member to spread the gospel to their Spanish-speaking neighbors. "You don't have to know Spanish," says Hartman. "We're giving you the resources to help you share your faith with someone who prefers to speak Spanish."

Multi-Language Publications prepares the resources for these sites, while the 1LA team makes connections and follows up on contacts. Rev. Nate Seiltz, director of Multi-Language Publications, says this model of using digital media may be used in other areas of the world in the future.

Learn more about outreach in Latin America in the June *WELS Connection*. 

## A look ahead to the WELS Youth Rally

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More than 2,500 WELS teens, chaperones, and speakers will be arriving in Fort Collins, Colo., on June 28 to kick off the biennial WELS International Youth Rally. The event, which runs June 28-July 1, will be the largest youth rally since 2005 and is the largest gathering of WELS members for any regular event.

Attendees will hear two keynote speakers, including Rev. Jared Oldenburg who will be taking the stage for the first time with a presentation titled "I've Got Nothing."

Oldenburg's presentation addresses the idea that "we all enter the world in more or less the same immediate circumstances, but somehow our lives are so different. Why? We read about the characters in the Bible and their lives seem so, well, epic. Why isn't my life like that? Why is my life so ordinary? Could it be that our lives are not all that much different at all?"

He says this is timely to discuss in America today. "It is really easy in America to obsessively compare ourselves with others. Other people are smarter, better athletes, prettier, or more successful. However, in our most important relationship with God, we are all the same," says Oldenburg.

In addition to two full-assembly presentations, several breakout workshops are offered, designed to help teens face the challenges in their lives using God's Word as a guide. Some topics include "My Superhuman Life," which examines the popularity of super heroes through the lens of Christianity; "#lovewins, #lovewon," which gives participants the spiritual tools they need to address the LGBT culture; and "Standing Up to Bullying," which is becoming an increasing problem in a social media-driven culture.

"A youth rally is an awesome event because we have thousands of