

**TOGETHER**

February 21, 2017

marriage led by Rev. Randy Hunter. The final session will be tomorrow, Wed., Feb. 22. Hunter will be leading the study live at both 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. (central). If you've missed this Interactive Faith series, archived sessions are available at [livestream.com/interactivefaith](http://livestream.com/interactivefaith) for viewing at your convenience.


While some couples participate at home, some congregations have been using the online study for group Bible study. Members of Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif., have been meeting each week as a group to participate in the study.

"This was our first Interactive Faith done as a group. I think it might have been the first anyone did here," says Rev. Brian Doebler, pastor at Mt. Calvary. "The main benefit of the Interactive Faith is the expertise from other pastors you can bring into your own church. Pastor Hunter regularly does marriage retreats and brings a lot of research, biblical insight, planning, and experience. Plus, I got to participate with my wife as a student rather than the teacher."

Hunter says he wrote this study to help couples continue the conversations that will help grow their marriage. "Each of the study guides includes conversations that can continue for weeks to come. Sometimes the timing isn't right or the couple next to us is too close or maybe one spouse just needed to think about it more. Couples

can take their study guide with them on date night and rekindle the conversation at a restaurant, coffee shop, or on a walk. The online study may only last an hour, but the conversations can continue for many more," he says. The study guides can be downloaded for free at [cad.welsrc.net](http://cad.welsrc.net).

Beyond the online study, Hunter travels around the country to lead marriage enrichment weekends hosted by congregations. He says, "One reason WELS Marriage Enrichment and Getaway Weekends are so successful is the unique Lutheran emphasis on our fallen nature and the rescue Jesus has carried out. The Spirit uses that message to change hearts; I just follow up with application of the difference that makes in our marriages, skills that demonstrate the fruit of faith, and help couples learn from other couples."

Though individual congregations organize these weekends, anyone is invited to attend. Upcoming marriage enrichment weekends are scheduled in Zion, Ill., March 17-19; Leesburg, Va., April 21-23; Lake Mary, Fla., Aug. 4-6; and Deadwood, S.D., Oct. 20-22. Learn more about these marriage enrichment weekends at [wels.net/events](http://wels.net/events). 

## "A Return to Grace" Luther film premieres

Three congregations (two WELS and one Evangelical Lutheran Synod) volunteered to serve as pilot projects in sponsoring showings of the new Luther feature-length film *A Return to Grace: Luther's Life and Legacy*. Mount Olive in Appleton, Wis.; Holy Word in Austin, Tex.; and Peace in Mankato, Minn. (ELS), worked with WELS Communication Services to sponsor screenings of the film at local theaters.

We are happy to report that an estimated 800 people viewed the film in these three locations. One of the congregations had such good participation it is considering offering additional showings in the future. The reaction of members who viewed the film was very positive.

This film was produced in connection with our celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. It will prove to be a valuable resource to educate our members about Luther and his rediscovery of the gospel in the pages of the Scriptures. Because of its emphasis on the centrality of grace and the message of the gospel, it can also be used as an outreach tool to local communities.

Now that the pilot efforts have proven to be successful, all congregations of our synod are being invited to sponsor showings of the film at their local theaters. Congregations can do this individually or in a shared partnership with sister congregations nearby.

If you're interested in how to host a screening, please visit [wels.net/reformation500](http://wels.net/reformation500). You can contact WELS Communication Services if you have questions.

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder 



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit [wels.net/together](http://wels.net/together).

## Seminary students learn about WELS ministry work

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From Feb. 7-9, presenters from around North America and the world spoke to those who attended Mission and Ministry, an annual three-day event at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., that introduces seminary students to the worldwide work of WELS.


Under the theme “Plant the Enduring Word,” 31 presenters spoke to participants. As they hear from world and home missionaries, as well as congregational leaders, these future pastors get a big-picture view of synod work. Because assignments, calls, and ministries will vary, three breakout sessions are offered each day, allowing students to learn more about areas of personal interest. Some of these topics include transitioning to and from missionary life, revitalizing your church, using teens in outreach, sharing Christ in crisis, creating small group Bible studies, reaching out to the military, and using the new edition of Luther’s Catechism.

In addition, 30 WELS organizations set up display booths. This allows students the opportunity to learn more about what synodical resources are available. “It made me realize the willingness of all the synod to put together something for the promotion of the kingdom,” says senior Ben Schone, one of the event organizers. “We have a lot of people with very good ideas, abilities, talents, but most of all a desire to serve our Savior Jesus. It brings me joy and

confidence to be a fellow worker in God’s vineyard with them.”

Not only does Mission and Ministry help students learn more about their synod, the organizers learned personal lessons that will carry into their ministry. “A lot of details hang in the balance, and I had to learn to be efficient and clear in setting up the registration process,” said senior Eric Melso. “There’s a lot of communication that needs to take place. Being timely in responding to e-mails is something I’ll have to do as a pastor, and Mission and Ministry was definitely good practice!”

Seminary students are not the only ones who benefit from the event. On Tuesday, the junior class of pastor track students at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., attended presentations and the entire student body of Bethany Evangelical Theological Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) attended sessions on Wednesday and Thursday. In all, almost 200 students, professors, and guests participated.

For photos of the event, visit the seminary’s Facebook page. 

## New Luther film gets rave reviews

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On Feb. 15, almost 800 people attended the premiere of *A Return to Grace: Luther’s Life and Legacy*, a new feature-length film that explores the life of Martin Luther and his quest for truth.

Three congregations—Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis.; Holy Word, Austin,

Tex.; and Peace, Mankato, Minn. (an Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation)—served as pilot locations, hosting screenings in local movie theaters for their congregation and community.

“Having the film shown in the local theater was the perfect venue,” says Rev. Joel Zank, pastor at Mount Olive. “To watch it with our members and hear them humming and softly singing ‘A Mighty Fortress’ together made for a wonderful event.”

Attendees were excited to learn more about Martin Luther, the man who sparked the Lutheran Reformation 500 years ago with the nailing of the 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church.

“I grew up in a WELS church and attended our schools. You think you know all about Luther, but the film taught me historical things I was not aware of,” says Mr. Brian Zuberbier, a member at Mount Olive.

At the same time, members were happy to see another emphasis throughout the movie—God’s grace to sinners.


“I was impressed how well it conveyed Lutheran theology through the lens of Luther’s struggle to find God’s grace and his battle to proclaim it freely, all while maintaining the measured tone of a historical documentary,” says Mr. Adam Gould, a member at Holy Word. “It was a real pleasure to see our own WELS pastors sharing our history and God’s grace for us on the screen. It reminded me that God’s Word really is our great heritage and made me proud to be part of a church that clings to it.”

“Even though this was a movie about Martin Luther, it was so much more than that,” says Mrs. Ashley Crane, a member at Holy Word. “It is a movie about our relationship with God, our understanding that it is God who saves and Jesus who makes us worthy, a truth we cling to today and one I cannot imagine living without 500 years ago and beyond.”

Because of that focus, Zuberbier says the film makes a wonderful evangelism tool: “It is a great opportunity to invite people who are not WELS to learn more about our faith.”

Rev. Don Patterson, pastor at Holy Word, says, “The presentation is so clear that anyone who comes finds that it’s all about Jesus and his grace.”

Funding from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans made it possible to produce the movie.

Any WELS or ELS church, or group of churches, can set up a screening of the film in their community—at no cost to the church. More than a dozen congregations have already scheduled a screening for later this year. Learn more about the film and hosting a screening at [wels.net/reformation500](http://wels.net/reformation500). 

## Enriching marriage through online Bible study and getaway weekends

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Throughout the month of February, hundreds of WELS members have joined the Interactive Faith online Bible study discussing