

## **Informal doctrinal discussions with the Missouri Synod continue**

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**R**epresentatives of the Wisconsin Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod will meet Nov. 27 and 28 for another in a series of annual informal doctrinal discussions.

These meetings have proven to be beneficial in helping the three synods better understand the doctrine and practice of one another. The meetings have opened lines of communication between the leaders of the three synods and between various groups such as those responsible for world mission efforts. The meetings have also been beneficial in providing mutual encouragement to stand firm in the areas where there is full agreement.

In previous meetings the group has focused on various areas of doctrine and practice, working to identify where we agree and where disagreements remain. Topics discussed in the past have been Church and Ministry, fellowship, the role of men and women, and principles that guide the interpretation of the Scriptures. The main focus of discussion for this year's meeting will be to identify, from each synod's perspective, what issues would need to be resolved—on the basis of Scripture—for fellowship to be possible.

These discussions have been termed “informal” to avoid giving the impression that they will result in a re-establishment of fellowship in the near future. Any restoration of fellowship would be possible only when the three synods are in full agreement in doctrine in keeping with the Scriptures. Even though fellowship might not be possible now, the informal discussions will continue because of the benefits and opportunities they bring.

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder 

## **Conference digs into developing multi-site congregations**

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**M**ore than one hundred pastors, teachers, staff ministers, laypeople, and other ministry leaders from across the

country gathered in Pewaukee, Wis., Nov. 12-14, for the 2018 WELS National Multi-Site Conference. Attendees met to engage in discussions and activities

about developing multi-site churches throughout WELS.

Multi-site churches preach, teach, and carry out other ministry work from more than one physical location. These additional sites can help the congregation share the gospel message with new people and underserved communities. In many cases, they can also gather and use resources with increased efficiency.

Rev. Ron Koehler, pastor at Grace, a multi-site church in Tucson/Sahuarita/Benson/Vail, Ariz., led the conference's first keynote presentation. He highlighted key reasons why a congregation may launch a multi-site effort. Rev. Jon Hein, director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling, then spoke about the potential of multi-sites to expand ministry work beyond their current reach. Rev. Nathan Strutz, conference planning committee chairman and pastor of a multi-site congregation, Resurrection, Verona/Monroe, Wis., closed the conference with a final keynote presentation reviewing what multi-site strategies are and can be for WELS.

Four sessions of workshops gave attendees opportunities to hear about experiences with multi-site development directly from project leaders. Pastors, church elders, and lay leaders spoke about reaching specific audiences, managing multi-site finances, uniting under one mission, and more.

Rev. Brad Snyder, Mt. Olive, Suamico, Wis., appreciated the


fellowship among attendees at the conference: "We get together, enjoy and encourage each other, and stay minded on the mission." Mt. Olive has called a second pastor to serve at a site it is developing in Hobart, Wis.

Rev. Paul Schupmann and Rev. David Brandt serve at St. John's, Juneau, Wis., which is officially expanding to Horicon, Wis., in June 2019. They look forward to implementing what they learned from the conference at this new multi-site.

"The key concept is to grow the kingdom and continue to enable our people to share Jesus," Schupmann explains.

"We all struggle with limited time and resources, but I see multi-site as a way to do more with what we've got," Brandt continues. "I'm excited for the possibilities."

Rev. Jeffrey Mahnke, St. Peter, Schofield, Wis., led a workshop at the conference to share what he is learning from an ongoing merger with Salem, Wausau, Wis. For any WELS church leaders considering undertaking multi-site initiatives with their congregation, he suggests, "Think big. Start talking about what could be done for the kingdom of Christ."


The conference was partially sponsored by an Antioch II grant. For more information about multi-site churches and other home mission work, visit [wels.net/missions](http://wels.net/missions). 

## Ministering to Millennials

In November, WELS Congregational Services launched a new set of resources aimed at helping congregations minister to Millennials, those born from 1980-2000.

"The Commission on Congregational Counseling has worked with so many churches that have identified that the Millennial generation is opting out of church on a large-scale basis," says Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services and director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling. "I hear it from individuals too. They have a relative in their late twenties who still confesses faith in Jesus but who does not see the benefit in being a member at a church."

Hein continues, "The Ministering to Millennials resources are meant to help congregations think through how they might better retain and gain members from this largest generation in America. However, I think individuals might benefit from it too. It can help them learn how to better understand ways to personally witness to Millennial-aged friends or neighbors. So we are hoping that everyone—congregational leadership and individual Christians—goes to [welscongregationalservices.net](http://welscongregationalservices.net) and utilizes the Ministering to Millennial resources."

Four videos with accompanying discussion guides are available as well as a playbook that outlines 10 important ministry behaviors to consider to retain Millennials in our congregations and when reaching out to share the gospel with them. To view these materials, visit [welscongregationalservices.net](http://welscongregationalservices.net), choose the "Modules" dropdown menu, and then choose "Discipleship Modules." 

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