

TOGETHER



August 2, 2022

WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership


I'm happy to invite you all to the second WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. It will be held January 16-18, 2023, at the Hilton Chicago. This conference is not only for those who serve in formal leadership positions in their congregation: called workers, church council members, school board members, and the like. This conference is for *anyone* who is passionate about the mission of the church. It is for *everyone* who, by encouragement and example, wants to lead others to engage in that mission. So, all are welcome—called workers and laity, men and women, retirees and high-school students, lifelong WELS members and those new to the church.

The conference includes five keynote presentations that will discuss the larger strategic issues and challenges facing every congregation. Attendees also will be able to choose from almost 50 breakout sessions. Some breakouts will focus on aspects of leadership: leadership development, planning, management, church polity. Others will share some “best practices” in various ministry areas: evangelism, worship, schools, youth ministry, adult discipleship. There will be a variety of panel discussions: teens, educators, worship leaders. Still other breakout sessions are purely devotional in nature. There is something for everyone and for every congregation. To take full advantage of all the breakouts, I'd encourage you to consider having a delegation from your congregation attend.

When WELS Congregational Services planned the first National Conference on Lutheran Leadership three years ago, it was hoping to have 400 people attend. In the end, 800 registered; the enrollment had to be capped due to capacity limits. This year's venue has more capacity.

I believe the reason so many were interested in the conference is simple to understand. We all know the challenges confronting American Christianity. Our congregations were—and still are—experiencing those challenges. Coming together to hear God's Word and to discuss our path forward was both edifying and encouraging. All the presenters at that first conference encouraged us to see those challenges as opportunities—opportunities to trust in the power of God's holy Word; opportunities to explore new ministry tactics; opportunities to recommit ourselves to doing all we can with the gospel.

The second WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership will do the same. I look forward to seeing you there.

Serving together with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

Learn more about the conference and register at lutheranleadership.com.

Conference highlights purpose and identity in Christ

More than 330 women attended the WELS Women's Ministry Conference July 21–23 at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., to learn how to

- identify barriers that get in the way of knowing our purpose,
- stand firm on Scripture in the face of conflict, and
- extend grace in everyday relationships.

The conference, under the theme “Won to be One,” dug deep into the book of Ephesians and God's grace that gives us our identity in Christ. “As a woman, I constantly ask what my role is in the church and in the ministry. I cannot be a pastor and I am not a teacher, so how can I be an asset to my congregation and to the church of Christ as a whole? This conference put the Great Commission in the forefront of everything and refocused our place and identity as ambassadors of Christ. We minister in everything we say and in all we do,” says Janet Block, a member at New Hope, West Melbourne, Fla.

In his “Know the Love too Big to Know” presentation, Rev. Paul Wendland, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., examined Ephesians chapters 1 and 3, where Paul shares God's perspective on our purpose grounded in his grace. In his presentation, Rev. Benjamin Kratz, pastor at Our Savior, Birmingham, Ala., reminded attendees that they are united in one Savior who gives us our identity. Rev. Snowden Sims, pastor at St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio, and Rev. Ryan Kolander, pastor at Palabra de

Vida, Detroit, Mich., showed how unity with Christ and unity in mission are hard work, but God's plan for ministry opens unexpected doors for opportunity through his grace. Prof. Tingting Schwartz from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., shared how she learned that her Christian identity unifies her other identities of being an immigrant, a mother, and an educator.

Tara Dezso, a member at Shepherd of the Hills, Tucson, Ariz., was thankful for these scriptural reminders from Ephesians. She says, “There just have been so many lessons I've taken away from the general sessions and the breakout sessions that I can apply to my life. When I go back home, it's just going to be incredible.”

For the past 20 years, WELS Women's Ministry, part of the WELS Commission on Discipleship, has nurtured, encouraged, and equipped women to use their gifts for joyful service in God's kingdom. Learn more about Women's Ministry and access conference resources and livestreamed videos at wels.net/women. You can also sign up for a twice monthly newsletter to keep up to date on upcoming events and new resources at wels.net/subscribe. 

Missionaries receive support and direction during orientation

Six new world missionaries, one world mission vicar, and their spouses attended world missionary orientation at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis., from July 11-14. Attendees included

- Rev. Keegan and Mrs. Kate Dowling, One Africa Team;

- Rev. Ben and Mrs. Becky Foxen, One Africa Team;
- Rev. Conifer Berg and Mrs. Ruth Nitz, Europe Team;
- Rev. Luis and Mrs. Carolina Acosta, One Latin America Team;
- Teacher Luke and Mrs. Rachel Beilke, One Latin America Team;
- Vicar Caleb and Mrs. Emily Koelpin, One Latin America Team; and
- Rev. Jonathan and Mrs. Kim Bare, Asia One Team.


Rev. Paul Nitz, WELS World Missions' One Team counselor and former missionary in Africa, organized the training. He notes, “Our missionaries are very excited to get out into the world and help get that sweet message of Jesus and salvation into the hands and hearts of the lost. They would be a bit odd if they weren't also going out with a bit of worry. They will confront challenges. We can all imagine the physical challenges. We think of things like driving on the ‘wrong’ side of the road, learning how to shop and cook, and putting kids into a school. There are also cultural challenges they will face. As we are sending out our new missionaries, we want to help them with some encouragement and some perspective.”

“The orientation was immeasurably valuable,” says Mrs. Kate Dowling. “Before that week, I was drifting in a rough sea. During the orientation I learned that there is an entire well-organized team behind all the missionaries. The Board for World Missions administration is made up

of experienced missionaries and an operations director who know the concerns we have and who know what to say to calm our fears. The most valuable part of everything was making connections with other people and feeling supported as we go across the ocean to a new place with a new culture. And all of this to serve the Lord—what a privilege.”

“To be welcomed and accepted by experienced missionaries like this was a very uplifting experience for all of us new to this calling,” says Rev. Keegan Dowling. “Priorities for what we should do when we first land on the field were clearly laid out. So were the core values of the WELS World Missions global team as well as our team's goals and dreams of what we'd like to accomplish over the next few years—laying it all at the feet of our Father in heaven. For all these reasons, I came away from orientation feeling that we new missionary families were given clear and concrete direction.”

“Our prayer,” explains Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions, “is that the Lord uses these few days as a way to help ensure our missionaries are not shipwrecked by difficulties that are common experiences for all missionaries. We want these families to be able to serve for many years in this most important task, to take the gospel to places and people that do not have it yet.”

For more information, including biographies about each family, visit wels.net/missions. 



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit wels.net/together.