

**TOGETHER**

December 6, 2022

## Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown

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**T**he 67th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., July 31—August 3. This will be the first “normal” convention after the pandemic necessitated a scaled-back, partially virtual convention in 2021.

The theme of the convention will be “Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown.” The focus of this year’s convention theme will be twofold. As a synod, we embrace the cross of our Savior Jesus in a number of ways. We embrace the cross as we look to what Jesus did on the cross to win forgiveness and salvation for us. We embrace the cross as we offer our thanks and praise for the sacrifice he made. We embrace the cross as we proclaim to a sinful world what the Savior’s death on that cross means for them and for all people.

We embrace the cross in another way. As believers, we recognize that Jesus asked us to be willing to live under the cross in a sin-damaged world. Believers will experience hardships and trials. The church itself will be under constant attack by Satan and his followers. The church will face difficulties, challenges, and, from our human point of view, setbacks and obstacles. But as a synod and as individuals, we are reminded that we can bear those crosses willingly, even joyfully, knowing our God will never leave us or forsake us and his Word will always accomplish his gracious purpose in our lives and in our mission.

As we embrace the cross, we also anticipate the crown. God’s church, comprising all of God’s believers, looks ahead to when all of God’s promises will be completely fulfilled. We look ahead with confidence and trust to the time when God’s church will be transformed from the church militant to the church triumphant. We eagerly anticipate when the King of Kings, wearing his crown of victory, will take us to his side and crown us with the gift of eternal life.

So, this convention will focus on the here and now, on the meaning of the cross for our lives and on recognizing the work of the church will be one of continued struggle and spiritual warfare. But it will also focus on the time when our victorious and living Savior returns to make his final victory our final victory as well.

Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

*Reminder:* The deadline for submitting memorials to be printed in the Book of Reports and Memorials is Jan. 15, 2023. Memorials submitted after Jan. 15 and approved for convention consideration will be posted on the convention website, [welsconvention.net](http://welsconvention.net), if they are received by June 15, 2023. Further directions can be found at [welsconvention.net](http://welsconvention.net). Send memorials to the President’s Office, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188; [carla.martin@wels.net](mailto:carla.martin@wels.net).

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## Teens gather at area WELS Youth Nights

This past fall, almost 30 congregations hosted WELS Youth Nights, offering area-congregation teens and youth leaders opportunities to grow in God's Word and build relationships with one another.

Introduced at the 2022 International Youth Rally, WELS Youth Night is a series of three youth-focused events to bring teens and youth leaders from area churches together in between large rallies. WELS Discipleship provides all the resources to help congregations plan and run the events, which include games, food, music, prayer, a keynote address, and small group discussion.

King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif., invited youth from 16 congregations in southern California to its WELS Youth Night in October. More than 50 6th- through 12th-graders from 8 different congregations attended.

"I had this dream of pulling [area youth groups] together out here just because when we get together it's so special. But I was intimidated by all the work to make it happen," says Mr. Josh Robertson, a teacher at King of Kings and the congregation's youth and family elder. "At the youth rally, as I sat in on the WELS Youth Night presentation, I was floored by God and his goodness because literally my entire dream was already being planned by the synod."

Robertson says he's passionate about youth ministry because of all the societal pressure put on teenagers

today. "I want to be able to share the gospel with them and help them be in a personal relationship with their Savior," he says. "I think this event does that really well. They get to experience God's love and Christ's mercy and grace through growing with one another through games and play and fun but more importantly through worshipping their Lord, discussing important topics that need to be discussed, and praying together."

Mr. Mike Leahy, the youth group leader at St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis., also sees the importance of events like these. He coordinated St. Paul's October WELS Youth Night, which gathered about 50 teens from 10 area congregations. "It's good to expose them to other teens in the area . . . so they can see that there are more people their age who have the same passion for their Savior," he says.

Mary Athorp, a senior at Howards Grove High School and a member at St. Paul, appreciated the event. "I knew it would be an incredible way to experience the community faith can create with other people," she says. "I experienced this on a larger scale at the WELS International Youth Rally, so I was looking forward to the same idea but with a closer-knit group. I also wanted to learn how different people my age express their faith in God."

Learn more about WELS Youth Night at [welscongregationalervices.net/wels-youth-night](https://welscongregationalervices.net/wels-youth-night). The Youth Night #2 kit will be available later this week. Subscribe to the Youth Leader Resources newsletter to notified when the resource is released. ☩

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