

**TOGETHER**

January 9, 2024

## Leaders from three Lutheran synods meet


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**T**wenty-one representatives from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) met on Dec. 4–5, 2023, in Florida to continue our annual informal discussions. This meeting was the 11th in-person meeting. Like the others, it was an opportunity to compare notes on the challenges that our synods face and to talk about doctrinal points on which we agree and disagree—without any indication that we will come back into fellowship soon.

This year we had fruitful discussion about the cultural challenges that we face in the United States and Canada. All three synods have statements or are planning statements on issues like critical theory and gender identity. These are matters where all three synods speak in similar ways as they uphold scriptural principles.

There also was continued discussion about the doctrine of the ministry. Our three synods have practices in regard to the ministry that are very similar, but there have been differences in how we talk about the doctrine. We are trying to understand each other and to evaluate the nature of these differences.

Plans are being made to meet again in December 2024 and to distribute a fuller report about our meetings in 2025. There was some discussion about the possibility of holding free conferences to share more fully what we have learned in these meetings. God willing, the leadership of the three synods will remain the same for a few years. Pres. Glenn Obenberger of the ELS was reelected to a four-year term in 2022, Pres. Matthew Harrison of the LCMS was reelected to a three-year term in 2023, and I was reelected to a four-year term in 2023.

Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

## Forward in Christ magazine offers new series in 2024

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**F**orward in Christ (FIC), the synod's official magazine, is starting 2024 off with an updated look, new series, and extra opportunities to dig into God's Word.

"Our new look can be seen most clearly in the updated cover, which highlights a full-sized photo of

Joan Prince, a member at St. Philip, Milwaukee, who is featured in the January issue" says Rev. James Pope, FIC's executive editor. "Our goal is to include members of our WELS family on the cover whenever possible."

The January issue also debuts a new yearlong series entitled

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“Free in Christ.” Articles will show how different congregations and individuals approach faith activities such as prayer, confirmation, and outreach—all in Christian freedom. The first article highlights different ways that two congregations are helping members delve into Scripture through congregational Bible studies.

“These articles are by no means intended to pit one particular activity or practice against another or to suggest that one approach is right and the other is wrong. Far from it,” says Pope. “The articles are intended to illustrate some of the freedoms New Testament followers of the Lord have.”

He continues, “It is my hope and prayer that these stories of Christian freedom will stimulate thinking, promote sharing of ideas, and expand the ways we glorify our Lord and serve our neighbor.”

Another series starting this month is a six-month Bible study by Rev. Greg Lyon entitled “What if it’s true . . .” This study will explore six scriptural truths and how they impact our lives in tangible ways. As an added bonus, Lyon will lead a live online Bible study each month from January to June on the topic covered in the magazine, offering participants opportunities for discussion and questions. The first study on mankind being created in God’s image is at 7 p.m. Central Time, Jan. 23. Find out more and register at [forwardinchrist.net/online-study](http://forwardinchrist.net/online-study).

“We’re excited to start another year and pray that each issue provides content that is beneficial for you and that you can share with others,” says Pope.

Order *Forward in Christ* at [nph.net/forwardinchrist](http://nph.net/forwardinchrist) or by calling 800-662-6093, ext. 5613. 

### Did you know...

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