

Let's Go

While Everyone Outreach is designed to develop an outreach culture congregation-wide, Let's Go is designed to encourage and equip Christians to become more comfortable and confident personal witnesses. The course is divided into seven lessons, each consisting of a video and an accompanying study guide and leader's guide. The lessons are designed to be used by either large or small group Bible study gatherings as well as by individual Christians. Let's Go dials in the conversation from "what can the congregation do for outreach," to "how can I talk to my friends and neighbors about Jesus." Get the resources at welscongregationalservices.net/lets-go.

The WELS Congregational Services website, welscongregationalservices.net, has a host of additional resources, including National Hymnal Week (Sept. 19-26, 2021) information; Marriage Moments videos; Marriage Maintenance Bible study; One By One personal witnessing Bible study; compassion ministry resources about ministry to military members, learning to be a recovery-friendly church, ministry to the deaf and hard of hearing, and training to identify and respond to child abuse; resources for different aspects of worship and worship planning; and much more.

Did you know...

WELS has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/welslutherans

WELS has Instagram?
instagram.com/welslutherans

WELS has Twitter?
twitter.com/welstweets

Forward in Christ magazine has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/forwardinchristmagazine

Forward in Christ magazine has Instagram?
instagram.com/forward_in_christ_magazine/

TOGETHER



June 15, 2021

Synod Convention update

You're probably aware that the synod convention is scheduled to meet at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis., on July 26-28. What you may not know is that the convention business has already begun.


Last January, because of the many unknowns caused by COVID-19, the Conference of Presidents changed the location and the format of the convention. The location was changed to Watertown from Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Mich. (since Michigan restrictions were tighter at the time and anticipated to be tighter in July). Instead of the normal 400 delegates attending in person, the Conference of Presidents decided that about 100 delegates would attend in person, and the remaining delegates would attend virtually. A plan is in place to enable remote delegates to vote on reports and resolutions that come before the convention.

This means that floor committees, which address all of the various areas of the synod's work, would need to do their work virtually in advance of the convention. Many of those committees have already begun their work, and all committee work will be done by July 3. The committee resolutions will then be presented to the convention in July for discussion and action.

In addition to committee work, elections for various synodical positions will also be done electronically in advance of the convention. All delegates will participate in these elections, scheduled to begin on Monday, June 21, and conclude on Tuesday, July 13.

Even though the format is different, the Conference of Presidents has worked hard to make both the election process and the convention business process as normal as possible.

You are welcome to review convention information, including the *Book of Reports and Memorials*, the slate of candidates for elections, and delegate information, at wels.net/2021synodconvention.

Serving together with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 



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

Encouraging and equipping congregations and members

WELS Congregational Services' mission is to encourage and equip WELS congregations for faithful and fruitful ministry. It does this by identifying trends and needs in local ministry and offering free resources to assist congregational ministry. WELS' global mission of spreading the saving gospel message to all nations begins with healthy congregations.

In addition to the long-term trends the broader Christian church has seen in North America, congregations are also facing the collateral from the past year of pandemic upheaval. Doors are opening again, neighbors are gathering again, and WELS Congregational Services has released a suite of resources to help congregations seize the opportunity for outreach and growth. "These are the kinds of resources that in the coming year, or years, are going to be able to feed a congregational hunger, if congregational ministries have stalled, to get ministry up to speed again," says Rev. Donn Dobberstein, director of the WELS Commission on Discipleship.

God's People Gather

Already before COVID-19, some churches were utilizing video and streaming technology for worship and Bible study. The pandemic forced many more congregations to make this pivot. In much of the country, in-person worship was prohibited for months. As lockdowns lift, congregational leaders are wrestling with two key questions:

1. How can we encourage our members to return to in-person worship?

2. How should we think about virtual worship post-pandemic?

The first is a timely, virus-related question. That second question is timeless, something churches may be asking until Jesus returns.

Dobberstein says, "How do we keep that balance between realizing that while electronic/virtual/digital ministries are definitely a blessing from God, they are not meant to replace God's good intent for us to be gathered."

He continues, "God's People Gather was created to help congregations as they're coming out of COVID. If congregations are going to make a splash, to celebrate the fact that we have the ability and we can re-gather like we once did, it's flexible so that congregations can pick the right time to celebrate depending on where they're at."

God's People Gather provides resources that help churches put together a congregation-specific plan that reaches out to the various types of members who have not yet returned. Access videos, elder encouragement, Bible study, worship plan, and event ideas at welscongregationalservices.net/gods-people-gather.

A God-Lived Life

A God-Lived Life is a whole-life challenge to God's people to live the life to which he has called them. The hope is that being challenged in specific ways will urge members to put into practice a closer walk with God and a life of love toward others.

There's a double meaning in "God-lived." God lived for his people. His life is now theirs. And that produces

in Christians a life lived for God. When the Word touches people, it changes them forever. It changes how they view everything God gives them. Jesus talked a lot about money, but it was never far apart from a greater conversation about life and things that have a pull on hearts and minds.

The goal of A God-Lived Life is to encourage greater growth in four key areas:

- A life of being a disciple.
- A life of service for others.
- A life of hospitality for all.
- A life lived shrewdly.

"It's not just talking about money. As we come back post-COVID, it addresses how we demonstrate what God looks like in our lives, how he lives in our lives, and how that shows God to others. I think that's going to be huge in the coming years," says Dobberstein.

The program is designed to last four months with a variety of resources to bolster each monthly emphasis. View and download the resources at welscongregationalservices.net/a-god-lived-life.

For WELS Commission on Evangelism, the focus for its latest programs is on personal evangelism. Rev. Eric Roecker, director of the WELS Commission on Evangelism, explains why: "The number of never-churched people in our country has gone up dramatically in the last 20 years. Because they've never been churched, they have zero interest in church; it's not even on their radar. Because the way the church is portrayed in media a lot of times, it's a negative. Fewer and fewer people in our culture are churched. Some have never been churched, which means

that traditional methods of outreach like corporate outreach events and inviting people with postcards is becoming less effective. At the same time, studies are showing that people in our country don't trust the church as much as they used to, but they do trust their Christian friends. So, while they probably won't come to church because of a postcard or an advertisement, they might check it out if a friend brought them, not necessarily because they're interested in the church, but because they trust their friend."

Everyone Outreach

Everyone Outreach is designed to help congregations build a culture of outreach so that every ministry and every member is thinking about and participating in outreach. The Everyone Outreach workshops are designed to reveal the unconscious and invisible thought habits people hold and provide participants with unique insights to help begin the journey of transformation.

"Everyone Outreach is a culture-shaping program. If a congregation is not outreach minded, if it's just not part of who they are, it would be great for them to use this program to shape the way they think so they think more about outreach," says Roecker. "And then, after that, they can use some of the personal witness training Bible studies, like Let's Go, so now that members are fired up to [reach out], they can become equipped to do it."

All members of a congregation are encouraged to attend. Learn more or sign up your congregation to host a workshop at everyoneoutreach.com.