



Good News-Letter

St. Michael's Ev. Lutheran Church

June 2026

A Member of the WELS

The following is a portion of the president's message by WELS synod president Mark Schroeder that appears in the 2026 Report to the Twelve Districts.

In the name of Jesus—the One who was, who is, and who is to come,...

It's important to look back on what has been done because it reminds us of the many ways in which God graciously works through us. In spite of our own human weaknesses and failings, he sees to it that the gospel is preached, the message is proclaimed, and souls are saved. And he reminds us of the amazing privilege that he has given to us to be workers in his harvest field.

The delegates will also have their attention directed forward to the work before us. Guided by the new long-range plan that was adopted at the last convention, they will hear of challenges and opportunities in mission fields at home and abroad. They will review the ways in which our ministerial education schools are continually making adjustments in their programs and curriculum to meet the changing needs of the church. They will be given a glimpse of plans that are being made to strengthen congregations as they carry out their mission in a hostile and changing culture. They will be informed of efforts to equip those now serving as called workers with all that they will need to do their work faithfully. As plans are reviewed, delegates will have an opportunity to provide input and direction in several important areas for the next synod convention in 2027.

We are living in the last days. And those last days, as Jesus told us, will not always be easy. Satan will be doing all he can to silence the gospel and to oppose God's church. There will be wars and rumors of wars. The love of many will grow cold. At times it will seem that the church is in retreat. But in these last days, we know that we have God's unbreakable promises that he will be with us and that the gates of hell will not be able to withstand the power of God as his church carries out its mission.

In 2 Samuel 7, King David found himself at a time when he was looking back on the blessings God had given him and looking forward to the challenges still

before him. After years of battle, the Ark of the Covenant had finally been brought to Jerusalem. The Lord let it be known that a temple would be built for him, but David would not be the one to build it. But God gave to David some amazing promises. God would give the nation of Israel peace & rest from its enemies. God would bless David with an unequalled reputation and with unrivaled power. The Lord would see to it that the temple would be built by Solomon. And most important, the Lord repeated the promise of an eternal King, the Savior, who would come from David's line. God assured him, "I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom" (2 Sa 7:12). It was at that point, overcome with humble awe and thanks, that David responded, "Who am I, Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?" (7:18).

That's a question that we can and should be asking when we reflect on God's blessings of the past and his promises for the future. "Who are we, Lord, that you have brought us this far?" We ask that question because we know that we are nothing but poor, miserable sinners. We know that we deserve nothing from God but his anger and eternal punishment. We know that on our own we can do nothing for him or his glory. Who are we? We know all too well.

But there is another answer to that question. Who are we? We are redeemed children of God. We have been adopted into his family through faith in Jesus. We are people who have been called to belong to a gracious and forgiving God. And more than that, and just as amazing, is that we are people who have been called to be his messengers, his witness, his workers.

As delegates meet for district conventions, they will ask the question that David asked. And, marveling as David did, we will hear God give us the answer to that question. He will answer that question at the foot of the cross and at the door of an open, empty tomb. And when he answers, we will believe. We will trust. And we will commit ourselves to remaining faithful to his Word, to cherishing our great heritage, and to proclaiming all of the things that we have seen and heard.

Synodical Council holds spring meeting

The Synodical Council (SC) normally meets twice each year. It held its spring meeting April 24-25. Some of the business addressed follows:

- In keeping with its role of acting on behalf of the synod between conventions, the SC approved modifications to the ministry financial plan (budget), including:
 - \$1,230,000 for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., to begin construction of a new education building, new faculty offices, library renovation, and gathering space. Groundbreaking is scheduled to take place in May.
 - \$630,000 for capital projects in progress for Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., primarily the cafeteria renovation and rebranding project.
 - Since available reserve funds were used, neither of these adjustments required increased operating support from the synod's budget.
 - The SC encouraged Congregational Services and Home Missions to discuss how those two entities might work more closely in serving mission congregations.
 - Chief Financial Officer Kyle Egan reported that the financial results of the synod through the first nine months of the fiscal year are encouraging, and that the synod remains in a strong and stable position with robust reserves. There has been a higher level of bequests, and investment results remain strong.
 - Development of the Ministry Financial Plan for the next biennium has already begun, with the SC identifying key assumptions on compensation increases; healthcare, insurance, and utilities costs; as well as a total spending target. While Congregation Mission Offerings have increased, they have not been keeping pace with inflation. In the past we have been blessed with resources from the Financial Stabilization Fund that were higher than anticipated, but the gap between receipts and usage continues to grow. That fact will require careful planning and spending.
- The following appointments or re-appointments were made:
 - Mr. Jeffrey Fischer, Mr. Kevin Rusch, and Mr. David Maccoux, re-appointed to the Accounting Oversight Committee
 - Mr. Mark Hartman, re-appointed to the WELS Church Extension Fund Board
 - Rev. Charles Degner, re-appointed to the WELS Investment Funds Board
 - Rev. Jonathan Kolander and Mr. Michael Krueger, re-appointed to the WELS Foundation Board
 - Rev. Jeremiah Gumm, to the Northwestern Publishing House Board
- MLC President Richard Gurgel provided a detailed report on MLC's efforts to ensure fiscal sustainability and operational efficiency in view of enrollment levels.
- Congregational Services Coordinator Jon Hein presented an overview of synod statistics and how those statistics will impact future synodical planning.
- Administrator of Home Missions Mark Gabb provided an overview of the work of Home Missions. He described the challenges of manpower (vacancies in home mission congregations) and funding (due to rising costs of establishing and supporting mission congregations).
- The SC approved providing an annual stipend of \$2,400 for each district president in view of their workload and responsibilities. The stipend will begin in Fiscal Year 2027.
- The SC reviewed reports from WELS Investment Funds, WELS Foundation, WELS Church Extension Fund, Benefit Plans, Communication Services, Human Resources, Technology Services, and the Ministry of Christian Giving.
- The Compensation Review Committee, together with synod leadership, completed a comprehensive review of inflation, compensation trends, and labor-market benchmarks for called workers. The analysis found that the WELS Salary Matrix has generally kept pace with inflation over time and that, when the core compensation components (including salary, housing, cost-of-living adjustment, and the Self-Employed Contributions Act tax) are applied fully and as intended, called worker compensation compares favorably with relevant labor-market benchmarks. The Compensation Review Committee is continuing to work to improve communication and understanding of the compensation guidelines, including core compensation components, benefit provisions, and tax-related considerations, so that congregations are better equipped to apply them consistently and thoughtfully.
- The committee noted that while local congregational offerings have generally kept pace with inflation, Congregation Mission Offerings have not.
- Six members have completed their time of service on the SC:

- Rev. Philip Hirsch (Conference of Presidents representative, voting member)
- Rev. Charles Westra (Conference of Presidents representative, voting member)
- Rev. Joel Zank (Conference of Presidents representative, voting member)
- Mr. John Fowler (South Atlantic lay representative, voting member)
- Rev. Kurt Lueneburg (Ministry of Christian Giving director, advisory)
- Mr. Dennis Maurer (Human Resources director, advisory)

We thank these men for their faithful service.

God provides new workers

In the last two weeks, we experienced another amazing demonstration of God's blessing on our synod. Candidates for the teaching ministry and staff ministry received their first calls on May 16 at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn. Later the next week, at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis., pastoral ministry and vicar candidates received their assignments. We gathered during the call services in both locations to thank God for sending these workers into his harvest field.

Forty-seven teacher candidates with no geographic limitations accepted assignments into full-time ministry. In addition, 31 teacher candidates limited geographically received calls, and 17 teacher candidates were re-assigned to their current places of service. Two additional teachers received calls after their husbands received their vicar calls. Eighty-eight teacher requests to the Assignment Committee were not filled.

Three staff ministry candidates were also assigned. One additional staff ministry candidate had been permanently assigned to her current place of service earlier in the year.

The Assignment Committee received 108 requests for pastors. Forty-nine candidates were assigned, leaving 59 requests unfilled. Of the 49 assigned, 45 were 2026 seminary graduates and 4 were from previous classes. In addition, 3 men were re-assigned to their present place of service. After the Assignment Committee finished its work, 128 vacancies for pastorally trained men remained, bringing the percentage of vacancies for pastorally trained men down to about 10 percent. While this is a significant improvement, we pray that the Lord of the harvest continues to move his people to heed his call to service in the public ministry.

We thank God for these gifts to his church, and we thank his servants for their willingness to serve.

Commencement celebrated at Martin Luther College

On May 16, 166 students graduated from Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn. MLC's mission is to train men and women to meet the public ministry needs of WELS.

Forty-three of the 2026 graduates completed a bachelor of arts degree or seminary certification. Of those, 42 men plan to continue on to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., to train as pastors. Thirty received master's degrees, further continuing their education as they serve in their various vocations. The remainder completed other programs, including training to be teachers, staff ministers, and parish music directors in congregations.

Also in May, 100 candidates, from the 2026 graduating class and from years prior, accepted assignments into full-time ministry as teachers or staff ministers; of those, 17 were reassigned to their current service.

"It's such a wonderful thing to see the Lord of the church providing workers for his harvest field as he promised," says Charles Vannieuwenhoven, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education. "We are thankful to God for these members who are so willing to say, 'Here am I, send me!' We pray for God's blessings on the work they will do in his name."

Growing in grace: 2026 master's graduates and retreat

At the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) graduation service on May 22, 2026, four men received Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degrees through the Grow in Grace program. Grow in Grace provides pastors with enrichment opportunities to grow spiritually and professionally throughout their ministries.

In 2010, WLS established Grow in Grace to oversee the seminary's continuing education program, of which the STM degree program is a significant area. Since 1978, 109 men have earned an STM degree through WLS, which was officially accredited in April 2024 by the Association of Theological Schools. The largest cohort to receive the degree at one time, in 2025, consisted of nine men.

At present, classes are held in person and online. Some pastors only elect to participate in continuing education, while others will complete the entire program of 24 credits for the degree. For some pastors, the STM program will enable them to pursue a doctorate degree. "Our pastors appreciate the time and resources

churches have given them to grow in the Word,” says Brad Wordell, the current program director. Currently 38 pastors are pursuing the STM degree.

The above items recently appeared on our synod’s webpage: www.wels.net.

What’s going on at St. Michael’s

- The vacancy at Christ in Cochrane continues. On the second Sunday in June (6/14), district President Jensen will meet with members of Christ following their 11am worship to discuss its ministry. We’ll keep you informed of any decisions that affect St. Michael’s.
- Support is still needed for members affected by the April 17 storm damage. Your prayers, donations, & comfort are greatly appreciated. A free-will basket is at church for any wishing to contribute. We’ll keep you informed as further opportunities arise.
- Spring cleaning at church is happening. See the cleaning list in the binder where you circle your name for attendance. Thank you to all for your faithful service to God’s house.
- With summer’s warm weather, we want to make use of it by inviting the unchurched in our area to join us for worship and other activities. These invitations will made on Saturdays in June. Ask Pastor how you can help.

Calendar Highlights

- Board of Elders mtg. Wed. June 3, 5pm
- 19-min. Bible study, Wed. June 3 & 17, 6:30pm
- VBS planning mtgs., Sun. June 7 & 21, 9am
- District Convention, June 8 & 9 at LPS in Watertown
- Outreach mtg., Sun. June 14, 5:30pm
- Church Council mtg., Sun., June 14, 6:30pm
- Bible study at The Landing, Fri. June 19, 8am

Your Council Members

Mark Horstman	President/Education
Kyle Wolfe	Secretary
Ben Kafer	Outreach
Jim Baures	Treasurer/Stewardship
Jess Veraguth	Properties
Mike Baures	Financial Secretary/Elders

Those Who Help

Ushers for June

Mark Horstman	Richard Suhr
Mike Baures	Hale Madsen
Ronald Hohmann	Roger Bechly
Todd Klinger	

Altar Guild for June

Diane Baures	Amy Jilk
Amanda Brakke	Trinity Jilk

Kamryn Hund

Money Counters for June

Roger Bechly Kevin Buswell

Ushers for July

Ben Kafer Jason Putz
Kyle Wolfe Charles Heller
Michael Kafer Mark Ellefson
Damian Jilk

Altar Guild for July

LaVonne McCutchen Patty Mayer
Machelle Plank Lydia Mayer
Emily Mayer

Money Counters for July

Elroy Conradt Michael Baures

The **Coulee Region Owls** will be holding their regular monthly meeting on Thursday, June 11, 2026 at First Ev. Lutheran Church, 400 West Avenue South, La Crosse at Noon with a Potluck Luncheon. Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Coffee will be provided. All church members – men and women age 55 or older – are welcome. Please come for a visit, enjoy the friends you meet, a good lunch and the young children’s play. There will be a free will offering.

Dear Friend of Missions,

We invite you to join us on **Saturday, June 13**, for a day that begins with worship and the commissioning of missionaries and continues with stories, conversations, and connections from across WELS missions.

Date: Saturday, June 13, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Location: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. OR online!

If you’re attending in person and would like food tickets, registration is \$15 per person. Children 13 and under attend for free. Can’t make it to Mequon? Please join us online through the livestream.

Faith Lutheran Church of Black River Falls and Cataract, Wisconsin would like to invite you to a Christian concert by WELS Christian musician – Mike Westendorf. This will be a part of Black River Falls’ concerts in the park series at the Lunda Community Park (1400 Tyler St, Black River Falls, WI 54615).

It is scheduled for Tuesday, June 9, at 7 pm. There is no cost. Check Mike out at mikewestendorf.com and then join us at Lunda Park on Tuesday, June 9 at 7 p.m. For more information on the concert, go to faithwels.com and click on the events page.