

# Book of Reports and Memorials

107<sup>th</sup> Convention

of the

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

and the

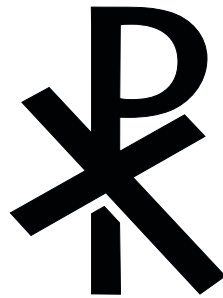
68<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of

Bethany Lutheran College, Inc.

and the

9<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of

Lutheran Schools of America, Inc.



To be held at

BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE

Mankato, Minnesota

June 16–20, 2024

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WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY IN THE WORLD  
GOD SO LOVES

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*Essayist:*

*Rev. James Braun*



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# GENERAL INFORMATION

You are serving our Lord and his church as a pastor or delegate to our synod's convention. The synod convention is the legislative body of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). It establishes, reviews, and amends the policies and the direction of ELS as we pursue our mission. You have a high privilege and a solemn responsibility.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the synod convention is

- To review the activities of the synod as conducted by its officers, boards, and committees during the previous year;
- To arrange for the future work of the synod by careful planning and proper resolutions;
- To elect a president, a vice president, and a secretary of the synod;
- To elect the boards and committees of the synod.

## YOUR ROLE

Each congregation is entitled to send two delegates to the convention. These delegates, along with the pastors serving member congregations, constitute the voting membership of the convention. You represent your congregation and the synod and should prayerfully ponder and vote on what ELS should be doing for the Lord.

## PRE-CONVENTION INFORMATION

The convention business is printed in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM), which contains reports from all permanent boards and committees of the synod. The BORAM also may contain "memorials" which are recommendations in the form of proposed resolutions requesting action on the part of a convention and which originate from a source other than standing boards and committees. Normally memorials are submitted by a congregation. It is essential that you read the BORAM to get a picture of the synod's work. You may make notes in the BORAM as it is your copy. Remember to bring it with you to the convention.

Each delegate will need a signed copy of the *Delegate's Credentials* form. This form can be found on the back cover of the BORAM. It certifies that you were properly elected by your congregation, and it needs to be signed by the *secretary of your congregation*. **The Delegate's Credentials form cannot be mailed in advance** and cannot be presented by anyone other than the elected delegate named on the form.

## THE CONVENTION

**Upon Arrival:** All pastors and delegates need to report to the credentials table in the lobby of the Sports and Fitness Center:

- Pastors' attendance will be gathered at the Credentials Table. There will be a written register where all pastors will need to sign their own name. If you fail to sign the register, your attendance will not be reported for the convention.
- Delegates, likewise, will be asked to sign an official register. Credentials must be presented upon arrival at the convention. *Each delegate needs to present this form in person at the Credentials Desk before they can vote on the convention floor.*
- Lay members of permanent boards and committees, who are in attendance at the convention, are to report their attendance to the Credentials Committee and to sign the register. They will be regarded as advisory members having the right to speak on the floor of the convention.

**Sessions:** All sessions will be held in the Ronald J. Younge Gymnasium in the Sports and Fitness Center at Bethany Lutheran College unless otherwise announced. All registered delegates are eligible to speak and vote on every issue before the convention.

**Assignments:** Prior to the convention, all pastors and delegates are assigned to serve on a convention committee (sometimes also referred to as a floor committee). When you know your committee assignment, carefully study your committee's section in the BORAM. Committee members shall serve until the committee is dismissed.

**Voting Members:** The pastors serving member congregations who are in attendance at the convention and the properly seated delegates, who are lay voting members of the congregation and are elected by the voting membership of the congregation, constitute the voting membership of the convention. The president shall have the right to vote only to break a tie (*Bylaws*, Chapter IV).

**Elections:** An important duty of delegates is to elect synodical officers and board members. A brief biographical sketch of each nominee is included in the BORAM. Ask questions before you vote so you are as informed as possible.

**Excuses:** Any excuses for late arrival or non-attendance at the convention are to be sent to the office of the synod president prior to the opening of the convention. The Credentials Committee serves as the Excuse Committee for late arrivals and early departures.

**Alternate Delegates:** Alternate delegates replace the main delegate and *do not need to be announced on the convention floor*. Such changes are to be reported to the Convention Committee secretary.

## CONVENTION COMMITTEES

The voting members of convention *committees* shall consist of clergymen, male teachers, and male professors who are permanent members of the synod, and delegates who have been assigned to committees by the convention. Advisory members may also serve on convention committees. Others may (1) attend the committee meetings if such attendance is approved by the committee, and (2) with approval, enter into the discussion. Only those who have been elected to the convention committees by the convention shall have the right to vote during the committee deliberations.

Prior to the convention, it is the responsibility of the nominated committee members to review the report of the standing board(s) or committee(s) as contained in the *Book of Reports and Memorials*. The work that the board or committee reports should be consistent with its guidelines.

Following ratification by the convention, the committee members shall adjourn to the committee's assigned workplace under the direction of the temporary chairman, and shall elect a permanent chairman and a recording secretary.

1. The committee shall:
  - a. Read Article I.E of the Convention Guidelines so that it might fully understand its duties and responsibilities.
  - b. Review the guidelines as they are printed in the Handbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod under which the standing board or committee is operating. (For example: The convention committee on Higher Education shall review all of the guidelines for Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary).
  - c. Review the report(s) contained in the Book of Reports and Memorials and the Convention Handbook that are pertinent to its assignment. The committee may wish to schedule and interview invited resource people (for example, officers of the synod, of a permanent board or of an institution) to assist the committee in its assignment.
2. The primary work of the convention committee is to review and assess the work of the standing board or committee.
  - a. The committee shall determine the resource people it wishes to invite (standing board members, officers, memorial sponsors, etc.).
  - b. The committee should consider whether there are any discrepancies in the report insofar as the duties of the standing board are concerned and, if necessary, so report.
  - c. The committee may consider other suggestions for the standing board and make recommendations for studies or research by the Synod Review Committee or another committee. It may recommend development of guideline changes that would be reviewed at a future convention.
3. Any recommendation concerning changes in the budget of a committee to be enacted at the current convention must be submitted to the convention Committee on Finance (see Guidelines for the Planning and Coordinating Committee, Article IV.A.2.a.).

God's people are filled with gratitude to our gracious Lord at all times, as is reflected regularly in our prayers and praises. Except for special circumstances, it is not necessary to pass resolutions of thanks as our Lord already knows our thoughts and feelings in this regard. Proper acknowledgment can be put in whereas clauses of other resolutions. Floor committees should be assured that reviewing the work is essential—the number of resolutions does not make that work any more significant. Reports by standing boards and committees are there for everyone to read. Resolutions are for the purpose of having the synod put into action things that are prompted through the reports.

It is expected that the **Finance Committee** will make recommendation concerning the acceptance of the Report of the Board of Trustees, Treasurer's Report, and the Report of the Equalization Committee. The **Home Outreach Committee** and the **Elementary Education Committee** will make recommendation concerning respective salary scales for clergy and elementary school teachers. It also is expected that the **Miscellaneous Committee** will recommend the dates for the next convention.

Secretaries of **circuit pastoral conferences** are reminded to hand in their respective reports to the floor committee on the **first day of the convention**.

For ease of the convention committees, the *Book of Reports and Memorials* will be available during the convention on the synod website, [els.org/convention](http://els.org/convention).

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

The typing, printing, and distribution of all committee reports, and other floor information is to be coordinated through the Head Usher (two copies of all reports are to be given to the president and four copies to the secretary). Typists, printer, pages, and ushers are under the direction of the Head Usher.

It is important to include a list of the names of all committee members who have been present at any of the committee meetings; this list of names will be used to verify committee assignments for publication in the *Synod Report*.

The chairman and the secretary of each convention committee will prepare resolutions according to the following format. Convention typists can assist with formatting and line numbering of the report. Reports should be emailed to [elsynod@blc.edu](mailto:elsynod@blc.edu) for assistance from the typists and duplication. Capitalize the words "synod," "board," and "committee" *only* when used in a complete proper name.

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June 18, 2024  
Committee 13  
Synodical Membership

Re: BORAM (page)  
Resolution (number) : Subject

WHEREAS, T \_\_\_\_\_, and,  
WHEREAS, T \_\_\_\_\_, therefore,

A. BE IT RESOLVED, That  
\_\_\_\_\_, and,

B. BE IT RESOLVED, That  
\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman, Secretary,  
Committee members attending meetings:

**ELECTION PROCEDURE** (*General Synodical Guidelines*, Article V)

Unless stated otherwise in the Constitution, its Bylaws, or these guidelines, a simple majority (a vote of fifty percent plus one) shall determine the decision of any election. Should an election end in a tie, the chairman may vote to break the tie or he may order another vote (*Bylaws*, Chapter IV, Paragraph 2).

If there is no majority, another vote of the same nominees will be taken for as many as three additional times. If there is no majority after the fourth ballot, a motion from the floor may request that those names with less than five percent of the total vote be removed from the next ballot. If that motion is defeated, an election using the original candidates will be continued.

**THE DIFFERENCE YOU MAKE**

Please attend all joint and committee meetings and take an active part in discussions. Remember that the business conducted here establishes the work of the synod for the next year and beyond. Your input is valuable, and your vote is important. When issues are discussed and presented for a vote, consider what you feel is best for the Lord's kingdom. May God bless your efforts.

**COURTESY PLEASE**

Please turn off cell phones while in the convention hall.  
In consideration of your fellow delegates, please exit the convention hall for any conversations during the sessions.

**OTHER INFORMATION**

**On-campus check-in:** Upon arrival, you should visit the credentials desk (delegates need a completed form found on the back cover of this book) in the lobby of the gymnasium. Credentials and registration will be on Monday between 7:30 and 9:00 a.m.

**Computer access:** If you plan to use your laptop for note taking during the convention, you will need to run on battery power when you are on the convention floor. Outlets are available in the classrooms during committee meetings. Due to the size of the gymnasium, Wi-Fi is unreliable and may not be available.

**Smoking:** Smoking is not allowed in any of the buildings (including dormitories) on the BLC campus. If you choose to smoke, please do so in the designated smoking areas and properly dispose of the cigarettes.

**Meals:** Breakfast and lunch will be available beginning on Monday. You may purchase meal tickets at the cafeteria entrance.

**Expense reimbursement:** Your congregation already should have paid into the Layman's Equalization Fund for delegates. The purpose of the fund is to help defray the transportation costs of the laymen delegates. Delegates should fill out a reimbursement form upon arrival at the convention. Clergy equalization will be announced during the convention. Thank you for keeping convention expenses to a minimum.

**TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Bethany Lutheran College Switchboard 507-344-7000  
Evangelical Lutheran Synod & Seminary Office 507-344-7354  
Convention Manager, Amanda Stahl 507-344-7346

The *Handbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod* is available at [els.org/handbook](http://els.org/handbook).

# 2024 CONVENTION PROGRAM

All events are in the Ronald J. Younge Gymnasium of the *Sports and Fitness Center* unless noted otherwise.

## SYNOD SUNDAY, JUNE 16

- 4:00 Synod Sunday Service (*Trinity Chapel*) [Honor Choir]  
Preacher: The Rev. David Thompson (Mankato, Minnesota)  
Liturgist: The Rev. Shawn Stafford (Janesville, Minnesota)  
The offering has been designated toward bringing representatives from the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya (ELDK) to the 2025 convention.
- 5:00 Dinner (*College Cafeteria*) (free will donation)  
Credentials/Roll Call will be gathered on Monday morning.
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| 7:00 ELS Historical Society<br>(Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center) * |
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## MONDAY, JUNE 17

- 7:30– 9:00 Credential/Roll Call  
9:00 Opening Devotion (*Trinity Chapel*)  
Chaplain: The Rev. Shawn Stafford (Janesville, Minnesota)  
9:45 Organization of the Convention:  
Roll Call Report  
Credential Committee Report  
Official Opening of the Convention  
Dedication of the Rev. John Arthur Moldstad memorial cross  
President’s Message and Report  
Adoption of the Convention Program  
Pastors’ Equalization Rules  
Welcoming of Guests  
10:30 Higher Education Presentation (Bethany Lutheran College)  
11:30 Recess (*lunch served in the cafeteria*)  
1:00 Scripture, Prayer & Hymn: The Rev. Shawn Stafford (Janesville, Minnesota)  
Anniversaries observed:  
Robert Otto—50 years  
Darryl Bakke—40 years  
Thomas Fox—40 years  
Daniel Larson—40 years  
Ken Mellon—40 years  
Steven Sparley—40 years  
Steven Brockdorf—25 years  
Paul Fries—25 years  
Cory Hahnke—25 years  
Young-Ha Kim—25 years  
Phillip Lepak—25 years  
Daniel McQuality—25 years  
Bernt Tweit—25 years  
1:20 Credentials: Committee 3  
1:25 Organization of the Convention (continued)  
Nominating ballot for the 2025 Committee on Nominations (printed ballot)  
Assignment of Committees  
Assignment of Work  
2:00 Committee meetings (*Honsey Hall*)  
*The official list of delegates attending committee meetings is gathered by the committee secretaries. Any alternate delegate name changes are to be reported at this time.*  
3:00 Coffee (*Honsey Hall*)  
3:30 – 5:00 Committee meetings continue  
7:15 – 9:00 Committee meetings continue
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| 1:30 Bethany Auxiliary sponsored<br>Tea at the home of President &<br>Mrs. Pfeiffer * |
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| 6:00 Heritage of Hymns<br>(Trinity Chapel) * |
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| 7:15 Cross-stich Presentation<br>(Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center) * |
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## TUESDAY, JUNE 18

- 8:00 Committee Meetings
- 9:00 Opening Devotion (*Trinity Chapel*)  
Preacher: The Rev. Peter Heyn (Green Bay, Wisconsin)
- 9:40 Preliminaries:  
Minutes: Committee 5  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 9:45 Synodical Membership & reception of new members: Committee 13
- 10:00 Election of secretary (four year term)  
*(Once balloting for an office has begun, the convention shall remain in session without interruption until the office has been filled—Convention Guidelines [§240] Article VIII)*
- 11:00 Higher Education: Committee 8
- 11:15 Greetings and Presentations
- 11:30 Recess (*lunch served in the cafeteria*)
- 1:00 Scripture, Prayer & Hymn: The Rev. Abe Faugstad (Waukon, Iowa)
- 1:05 Preliminaries:  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 1:15 Election of the 2025 Committee on Nominations [first printed ballot] †
- 1:30 Essay and Discussion: *Walk Circumspectly in the World God So Loves*  
Essayist: The Rev. James Braun (Brewster, Massachusetts)
- 3:00 Coffee
- 3:30 Doctrine Committee 6
- 4:00 Greetings and Presentations
- 4:15 Higher Education: Committee 8
- 4:45 Recess for the Communion Service
- 5:00 Communion/Memorial Service (*Trinity Chapel*)  
Preacher: The Rev. Jonathan Madson (Sebring, Florida)  
Liturgist: The Rev. Shawn Stafford (Janesville, Minnesota)  
The offering has been designated toward bringing representatives from the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya (ELDK) to the 2025 convention.
- Deaths noted:  
Rebecca Jaech (1949–2023)  
Ruth Reichwald (1939–2023)

† *Subsequent ballots for the 2024 Committee on Nominations will be brought forward as and when needed.*



## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19

- 8:00 Opening Devotion (*Trinity Chapel*)  
Preacher: The Rev. Doyle Holbird (Mankato, Minnesota)
- 8:45 Preliminaries:  
Minutes: Committee 5  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 8:50 Elections: Committee 2
- 9:30 Essay and Discussion: *Walk Circumspectly in the World God So Loves*  
Essayist: The Rev. James Braun (Brewster, Massachusetts)
- 11:00 Board for Lutheran School presentation
- 11:15 Elementary Education: Committee 11
- 11:30 Recess (*lunch served in the cafeteria*)
- 1:00 Scripture, Prayer & Honor Choir: The Rev. Michael Lilienthal (Belview, Minnesota)
- 1:10 Preliminaries:  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 1:15 Greetings and Presentations
- 1:20 Synodical Membership (written ballot: clergy roster): Committee 13
- 1:25 Home Outreach Presentation
- 1:55 Home Outreach Committee 9
- 2:15 Higher Education Presentation (Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary)
- 2:30 Higher Education: Committee 8
- 3:00 Coffee
- 3:30 Finances: Committee 7
- 3:45 Elections: Committee 2  
(*Convention Guidelines §240 Article IX.B*)
- 4:15 Greetings and Presentations
- 4:30 World Outreach Presentation
- 5:00 Recess

5:15 Honor Choir Recital  
(Trinity Chapel) \*

7:00 Apologetics Conference  
(Trinity Chapel) \*

## THURSDAY, JUNE 20

- 8:00 Scripture, Hymn & Prayer (*Sports and Fitness Center*)
- 8:15 Preliminaries:  
Minutes: Committee 5  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 8:20 Parish Services Committee 12
- 8:30 President's Message and Report: Committee 1
- 8:45 Miscellaneous Committee 14
- 9:15 World Outreach: Committee 10
- 9:45 Pastoral Conference Records & Resolutions: Committee 15
- 9:50 Excuses: Credentials Committee 3
- 10:00 Recess
- 10:15 Unfinished Business  
Adjournment  
Closing Hymn & Prayer (Chaplain)

10:30 Apologetics Conference  
(Trinity Chapel) \*

\* These concurrent events are not an official part of the convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

# DELEGATES

“... The Credentials Committee report, which is read by the committee’s chairman should state in substance, that, ‘Attached is the list of the names of the voting members of the convention and their alternates who have registered up until ... [indicating the hour to which is the list is corrected].’ This statement should be followed by whatever statistical summary is customary in the particular organization. ... Normally the list of delegates and alternates is not read unless a portion of it is read upon request for information. ... The report with the attached list of names should then be handed to the secretary.” [Robert’s Rules of Order, §59. Organization of a Convention of an Established Society, Adoption of Report.]

“A voting member who registers after the submission of the first report assumes his full status as soon as he has done so, if his status is not questioned.” [Robert’s Rules of Order, §59. Organization of an Established Society, Roll of Voting Members; Supplementary Reports.]

**THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF ANTICIPATED DELEGATES:**

*only the names of congregations reporting by April 20, 2024 are listed*

Bethany .....Ames, IA .....Joel Franzen	Lake Mills .....Lake Mills, IA ..... William Humphrey
Bethany .....Princeton, MN..... Gien Hansen	Lake Mills .....Lake Mills, IA .....Orlan Lau
Bethany .....Princeton, MN..... Russ Kampa	Manchester .....Manchester, MN ....Gordon Rasmussen
Bethany .....Port Orchard, WA..... Chris Denney	Mt Olive .....Mankato, MN..... Silas Born
Bethany .....Port Orchard, WA..... Henry Shadbolt	Mt Olive .....Mankato, MN.....Paul Tweit
Christ .....Port St. Lucie, FL.....David Clark	Norseland .....St Peter, MN .....John Merseth
Christ .....Port St. Lucie, FL..... Keith Duin	Norseland .....St Peter, MN .....Allen Quist
Concordia .....Eau Claire, WI .....David Backstrom	Norwegian Grove ..Gaylord, MN .....Jim Flantz
Concordia .....Eau Claire, WI ..... Duane Steinhauer	Norwegian Grove ..Gaylord, MN ..... Bob Reid
Divine Mercy .....Weatherford, TX.....John Schreiber	Our Saviour .....Lake Havasu City, AZ ..... Joe Osinski
Divine Mercy .....Weatherford, TX..... Lew Sulzle	Peace .....North Mankato, MN ..... David Ewert
English .....Cottonwood, MN .....Dustin Basel	Peace .....North Mankato, MN .....Greg Miller
English .....Cottonwood, MN ..... Robert Borning	Peace .....Jefferson City, MO ..... Joshua Ernst
Faith .....San Antonio, TX..... Aaron Arkeen	Peace .....Jefferson City, MO .....William Smith
Faith .....San Antonio, TX.....Curtis Bull	Pinewood .....Burlington, MA .....Bill King
First Trinity .....Marinette, WI ..... Gary Johnston	Redeemer .....Scottsdale, AZ .....Norman Hartigan
First Trinity .....Marinette, WI .....Joseph Keske	Redeeming Grace ....Rogers, MN ..... Ronald Menough
Good Shepherd .....Indianola, IA .....Loren Meyer	Reformation .....Hillsboro, OR ..... Bill Ivers
Good Shepherd .....Bloomer, WI ..... William Anderson	Resurrection .....Winter Haven, FL.....Dan Weaver
Grace .....Madison, WI..... Lance Steffen	River Heights .....East Grand Forks, MN... Luke Schmidt
Hartland .....Hartland, MN..... Stephen Groven	River Heights .....East Grand Forks, MN... Paul Sorenson
Hartland .....Hartland, MN.....Jonathan Jordahl	Saude .....Lawler, IA..... Dennis Benzing
Holton .....Holton, MI .....Steven Anderson	Saude .....Lawler, IA..... Mike Webster
Holton .....Holton, MI ..... Jeff Tillman	Saved by Grace .....Gresham, OR.....Kirk Campbell
Holy Cross .....Madison, WI..... Dennis Behr	Saved by Grace .....Gresham, OR.....Jerry Herbek
Hope .....Farmington, MN..... Dean Kluge	Scarville Synod .....Scarville, IA.....Harlan Bergo
Hope .....Leander, TX .....Ed Krieger	Scarville Synod .....Scarville, IA.....Karl Bloedel
Immanuel .....Audubon, MN ..... Marty Wolbaum	Somber .....Northwood, IA..... Greg Holt
Jerico .....New Hampton, IA .....Jim Costello	Somber .....Northwood, IA..... Joseph Holt
Jerico .....New Hampton, IA ..... Neil Shaffer	St John’s .....Frankenmuth, MI ..... Jeremy Aiello
King of Grace .....Waukon, IA.....Greg Gilbertson	St John’s .....Frankenmuth, MI ..... Steve Walsh
King of Grace .....Golden Valley, MN .....Tim Larson	Trinity .....Brewster, MA ..... Paul Chamberlin
King of Grace .....Golden Valley, MN ..... Ned Silber	

# CONVENTION COMMITTEES

*locations indicated are those of the congregations represented*

## 1. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE AND REPORT

Dr. Thomas Kuster\* .....New Ulm, MN  
Rev. Rodney Flohr ..... Cold Spring, MN  
Rev. Jesse Jacobsen .....Lakewood, WA  
Rev. James Kassera ..... Weatherford, TX

## 2. COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

*(elected at the 2023 convention)*

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Rev. Jerome Gernander  
Rev. Kyle Madson  
Rev. Ken Mellon  
Rev. Matt Moldstad  
Mr. Dan Browning  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai  
Mr. John Merseth, Jr.  
Mr. Mark Perlwitz

## 3. CREDENTIALS

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Rev. Erich Hoeft ..... Holton, MI  
Mr. Loren Meyer..... Indianola, IA  
Mr. Larry Rude .....Mankato, MN

## 4. PROGRAM

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Rev. Gregory Haugen.....Neenah, WI  
Rev. Phillip Lepak .....Hartland, MN

## 5. MINUTES

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Rev. David Locklair..... Hobart, IN  
Rev. Matthew Moldstad ..... North Mankato, MN  
Mr. Paul Tweit..... Mankato, MN

## 6. DOCTRINE

Rev. Nathan Krause\* ..... Cottage Grove, WI  
Rev. Daniel Basel..... Atlanta, MI  
Mr. Dan Bruss .....Pella, IA  
Rev. Mark DeGarmeaux..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. David Emmons ..... Lombard, IL  
Rev. Aaron Ferkenstad..... Golden Valley, MN  
Rev. Paul Fries..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. David Haeuser..... Waterloo, WI  
Rev. Adolph Harstad ..... North Mankato, MN  
Rev. Erich Hoeft ..... Holton, MI  
Rev. Shawn Kauffeld .....Menomonie, WI  
Rev. Brad Kerkow ..... North Mankato, MN  
Rev. Jeffery Luplow .....Hillman, MI  
Rev. Mark Marozick..... Madison, WI  
Mr. Marvin Meyer .....Brainerd, MN  
Rev. Steven Petersen ..... Farmington, MN

Rev. Nicholas Proksch ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Alexander Ring.....Port Saint Lucie, FL  
Rev. Kenneth Schmidt ..... West Bend, WI  
Rev. Paul Schneider..... Midland, MI  
Rev. Paul Sullivan..... Waukesha, WI  
Rev. Randy VanMehren..... Lakeland, FL  
Mr. James Young.....Oconomowoc, WI  
Rev. Timothy Zenda ..... Princeton, MN  
Mr. Jeremy Aiello .....Frankenmuth, MI  
Mr. Harlan Bergo..... Scarville, IA  
Mr. Paul Chamberlin .....Brewster, MA  
Mr. David Clark ..... Port St. Lucie, FL  
Mr. Joshua Ernst ..... Jefferson City, MO  
Mr. Glen Hansen ..... Princeton, MN  
Mr. Neil Shaffer ..... New Hampton, IA  
Mr. Paul Tweit..... Mankato, MN

## 7. FINANCES

Rev. Timothy Buelow\* ..... Lake Havasu City, AZ  
Rev. Joseph Abrahamson ..... Vesta, MN  
Rev. Colin Anderson .....Suttons Bay, MI  
Rev. Peter Bockoven.....Mount Vernon, WA  
Rev. Steven Brockdorf..... Hillsboro, OR  
Rev. Robert Carter ..... Belle Plaine, MN  
Rev. Christian Eisenbeis ..... Marinette, WI  
Rev. Erwin Ekhoft.....Minneapolis, MN  
Rev. Daniel Faugstad..... Redwood Falls, MN  
Rev. William Grimm..... Portage, WI  
Rev. Jeffrey Hendrix .....Oregon, WI  
Dr. Brian Klebig..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Lee Kuhns .....Kissimmee, FL  
Rev. Nicholas Lilienthal ..... Roseburg, OR  
Rev. Joshua Mayer..... Rogers, MN  
Rev. John Merseth..... Audubon, MN  
Rev. James Ruppel.....Eugene, OR  
Rev. John Smith .....Shawano, WI  
Rev. Frederick Theiste ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Rev. Bernt Tweit..... Crystal, MN  
Rev. Lawrence Wentzlaff ..... Haska, MN  
Mr. Steven Anderson..... Holton, MI  
Mr. Aaron Arkeen ..... San Antonio, TX  
Mr. Keith Duin..... Port St. Lucie, FL  
Mr. Jim Flantz..... Gaylord, MN  
Mr. Norman Hartigan..... Scottsdale, AZ  
Mr. John Merseth..... St Peter, MN  
Mr. Henry Shadbolt..... Port Orchard, WA  
Mr. Paul Sorenson..... East Grand Forks, MN

## 8. HIGHER EDUCATION

Rev. S Piet Van Kampen\* ..... Deerfield, WI  
Rev. Timothy Bartels ..... Gresham, OR  
Rev. Klebe Brumble ..... Waxahachie, TX  
Rev. Joseph Burkhardt ..... Beaverton, OR  
Rev. Peter Faugstad ..... Lawler, IA  
Rev. Kurtis Freimuth ..... Deshler, OH  
Rev. Aaron Hamilton ..... Phoenix, AZ  
Dr. Daniel Hartwig ..... West Bend, WI  
Rev. Thomas Heyn ..... Madison, WI  
Rev. Roger Holtz ..... Kaukauna, WI  
Rev. Jacob Kempfert ..... Saginaw, MI  
Rev. Daniel Larson ..... Charles City, IA  
Rev. David Meyer ..... Australia  
Rev. Homer Mosley ..... Olympia, WA  
Rev. Michael Muehlenhardt ..... Cottonwood, MN  
Rev. Daniel Oberer ..... Rosemount, MN  
Rev. Anthony Pittenger ..... Port Orchard, WA  
Mr. Larry Rude ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Gaylin Schmeling ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Gregory Schmidt ..... Naples, FL  
Rev. William Stehr ..... Irvine, CA  
Rev. Richard Warnecke ..... Kissimmee, FL  
Rev. Benjamin Wiechmann ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Thomas Zeller ..... Pleasant Hill, MO  
Mr. David Backstrom ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Mr. Jim Costello ..... New Hampton, IA  
Mr. Joel Franzen ..... Ames, IA  
Mr. Joseph Holt ..... Northwood, IA  
Mr. Bill King ..... Burlington, MA  
Mr. Dean Kluge ..... Farmington, MN  
Mr. Greg Miller ..... North Mankato, MN  
Mr. Jeff Tillman ..... Holton, MI

## 9. HOME OUTREACH

Rev. Daniel Ruiz\* ..... San Antonio, TX  
Rev. Cody Anderson ..... Klamath Falls, OR  
Rev. Mark Bartels ..... Madison, WI  
Rev. James Braun ..... Harwich, MA  
Rev. Carl Busse ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Rev. Michael Dale ..... Burlington, MA  
Rev. Micah Ernst ..... Eugene, MO  
Rev. Ernest Geistfeld ..... Mankato, MN  
Mr. Josh Gregovich ..... Crystal, MN  
Rev. Caleb Helmen ..... Thornton, IA  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai ..... Port Orchard, WA  
Rev. Bruce Leonatti ..... Irwin, PA  
Rev. Michael Lilienthal ..... Belview, MN  
Rev. Jonathan Madson ..... Sebring, FL  
Rev. Jeffery Merseith ..... Oklee, MN  
Rev. John Petersen ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Tosten Skaaland ..... Wittenberg, WI  
Rev. J. Kincaid Smith ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Richard Tragasz ..... Siloam Springs, AR  
Rev. Paul Webber ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Rev. James Wilson ..... Citronelle, AL  
Mr. David Ewert ..... North Mankato, MN

Mr. Stephen Groven ..... Hartland, MN  
Mr. Jerry Herbek ..... Gresham, OR  
Mr. Russ Kampa ..... Princeton, MN  
Mr. Tim Larson ..... Golden Valley, MN  
Mr. Lance Steffen ..... Madison, WI  
Mr. Marty Wolbaum ..... Audubon, MN

## 10. WORLD OUTREACH

Rev. Matthew Moldstad\* ..... North Mankato, MN  
Rev. Harvey Abrahamson ..... Clintonville, WI  
Mr. Steve Beilke ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Christopher Dale ..... Port St Lucie, FL  
Rev. Thomas Fox ..... Burlington, MA  
Rev. Theodore Gullixson ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Wayne Halvorson ..... Mankato, MN  
Dr. Doyle Holbird ..... Eagle Lake, MN  
Rev. Herbert Huhnerkoch ..... Fort Myers, FL  
Rev. Charles Keeler ..... Winter Haven, FL  
Rev. Young Ha Kim ..... Las Vegas, NV  
Rev. Paul Lange ..... Oconomowoc, WI  
Rev. Boyd Longshore ..... Peyton, CO  
Pres. Gene Pfeifer ..... Mankato, MN  
Dr. Steven Reagles ..... Mankato, MN  
Dr. Timothy Schmeling ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Thomas Smuda ..... Rogers City, MI  
Rev. Andrew Soule ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Shawn Stafford ..... Janesville, MN  
Rev. Christian Walz ..... Clara City, MN  
Rev. Paul Zager ..... Flint, MI  
Mr. William Anderson ..... Bloomer, WI  
Mr. Dennis Behr ..... Madison, WI  
Mr. Robert Borning ..... Cottonwood, MN  
Mr. Greg Gilbertson ..... Waukon, IA  
Mr. Bill Ivers ..... Hillsboro, OR  
Mr. Gary Johnston ..... Marinette, WI  
Mr. Joe Osinski ..... Lake Havasu City, AZ  
Mr. Gordon Rasmussen ..... Manchester, MN  
Mr. William Smith ..... Jefferson City, MO  
Mr. Duane Steinhauer ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Mr. Lew Sulzle ..... Weatherford, TX

## 11. ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Rev. Glenn Smith\* ..... Forest City, IA  
Rev. Nathanael Abrahamson ..... Cottage Grove, WI  
Dr. Adam Brasich ..... West Jordan, UT  
Rev. Abraham Faugstad ..... Waukon, IA  
Rev. Jerome Gernander ..... Leander, TX  
Rev. Lloyd Harter ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Rev. Gregory Haugen ..... Neenah, WI  
Rev. Samuel Johnson ..... Bowling Green, OH  
Rev. Kurt Kluge ..... Shawano, WI  
Mr. Allen Labitzky ..... Crystal, MN  
Rev. Robert Lawson, Jr. ..... The Dalles, OR  
Prof. Dennis Marzolf ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Kenneth Mellon ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Ronald Pederson ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Mark Rogers ..... Cape Girardeau, MO

Rev. Sean Scheele ..... Waterloo, IA  
 Dr. Erling Teigen..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Noah Thompson ..... East Grand Forks, MN  
 Rev. Richard Wiechmann..... Bloomington, MN  
 Mr. Chris Denney ..... Port Orchard, WA  
 Mr. Joseph Keske ..... Marinette, WI  
 Mr. Allen Quist..... St Peter, MN  
 Mr. Bob Reid ..... Gaylord, MN  
 Mr. John Schreiber..... Weatherford, TX  
 Mr. Steve Walsh ..... Frankenmuth, MI  
 Mr. Mike Webster ..... Lawler, IA

**12. PARISH SERVICES**

Rev. Peter Heyn\* ..... Green Bay, WI  
 Rev. Darryl Bakke ..... Albert Lea, MN  
 Rev. Matthew Brooks ..... Holts Summit, MO  
 Rev. Edward Bryant ..... Washougal, WA  
 Rev. Roger Emmons..... Redmond, OR  
 Rev. Patrick Ernst..... Frankenmuth, MI  
 Rev. Richard Fyffe..... Lake Havasu City, AZ  
 Rev. Cory Hahnke ..... Madison, WI  
 Rev. Martin Hoesch ..... Ames, IA  
 Rev. Max Kerr ..... Midland, MI  
 Rev. Frederic Lams ..... Hobart, IN  
 Rev. Robert Lawson, Sr. .... Princeton, MN  
 Rev. Matthew Luttman ..... Vero Beach, FL  
 Rev. Nile Merseth..... Somerset, WI  
 Rev. Donald Moldstad ..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Thomas Rank ..... Lake Mills, IA  
 Rev. Samuel Schmeling ..... Tracy, MN  
 Rev. Steve Sparley..... Tacoma, WA  
 Mr. Ben Springer ..... North Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Luke Ulrich ..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Larry Vinton ..... Acworth, GA  
 Mr. Craig Zibrowski ..... Mankato, MN  
 Mr. Dustin Basel..... Cottonwood, MN  
 Mr. Karl Bloedel ..... Scarville, IA  
 Mr. Curtis Bull..... San Antonio, TX  
 Mr. Kirk Campbell..... Gresham, OR  
 Mr. Jonathan Jordahl..... Hartland, MN  
 Mr. Luke Schmidt..... East Grand Forks, MN  
 Mr. Ned Silber ..... Golden Valley, MN

**13. SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP**

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*  
 Rev. Timothy Erickson..... Dodge Center, MN  
 Rev. Gene Lilienthal..... Lengby, MN  
 Rev. Robert Otto..... Bloomer, WI  
 Mr. William Humphrey..... Lake Mills, IA

**14. MISCELLANEOUS**

Rev. Joshua Skogen\* ..... Scarville, IA  
 Rev. Karl Anderson ..... Apple Valley, MN  
 Mr. Silas Born ..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Andrew Burmeister..... Bishop, CA  
 Rev. Matthew Crick ..... Onalaska, WI  
 Rev. Mark Faugstad..... Port St Lucie, FL

Rev. Erik Gernander..... Jefferson City, MO  
 Rev. Samuel Gullixson ..... Tacoma, WA  
 Pres. Timothy Hartwig..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Bradley Homan ..... Cottage Grove, WI  
 Rev. Dale Jaech ..... Cornelius, OR  
 Rev. Phillip Lepak ..... Hartland, MN  
 Rev. David Locklair..... Hobart, IN  
 Rev. Kyle Madson ..... Saint Peter, MN  
 Rev. Daniel McQuality ..... Carthage, MO  
 Rev. Andrew Palmquist ..... Luverne, MN  
 Rev. Trent Saari ..... Cottage Grove, WI  
 Dr. Michael Smith ..... Ames, IA  
 Rev. David Thompson..... Lombard, IL  
 Rev. David Jay Webber..... Princeton, MN  
 Mr. Dennis Benzing..... Lawler, IA  
 Mr. Greg Holt..... Northwood, IA  
 Mr. Ed Krieger ..... Leander, TX  
 Mr. Orlan Lau..... Lake Mills, IA  
 Mr. Ronald Menough ..... Rogers, MN  
 Mr. Loren Meyer..... Indianola, IA  
 Mr. Dan Weaver..... Winter Haven, FL

**15. PASTORAL CONFERENCE RECORDS AND RESOLUTIONS**

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*  
 Rev. Timothy Erickson..... Dodge Center, MN  
 Rev. Gene Lilienthal..... Lengby, MN  
 Rev. Robert Otto..... Bloomer, WI

**16. TELLERS**

Cody Anderson  
 Colin Anderson  
 Peter Bockoven  
 Abraham Faugstad  
 Caleb Helmen  
 Max Kerr  
 Matthew Lehne  
 Nicholas Lilienthal

**17. CHAPLAIN**

Rev. Shawn Stafford ..... Janesville, MN

**18. HEAD USHERS**

Rev. Micah Ernst..... Eugene, MO  
 Rev. Gene Lilienthal..... Lengby, MN

**19. PARLIAMENTARIANS**

Rev. Edward Bryant ..... Washougal, WA  
 Dr. Brian Klebig..... Mankato, MN

**20. ASSISTANT SECRETARY**

Rev. Matthew Moldstad ..... North Mankato, MN

**21. CONVENTION MANAGER**

Amanda Stahl..... Bethany Lutheran College

## COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS—INELIGIBLES

Mr. William Anderson  
Mr. Dennis Behr  
Mr. Dan Browning  
Rev. Erwin Ekhoﬀ  
Rev. Timothy Erickson  
Rev. Peter Faugstad  
Rev. Craig Ferkenstad  
Rev. Paul Fries  
Rev. Jerome Gernander  
Rev. Aaron Hamilton  
Rev. Thomas Heyn  
Rev. Jeff Hendrix  
Dr. Doyle Holbird  
Rev. Brad Kerkow  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai  
Mr. Matt Lukasek  
Rev. Kyle Madson  
Mr. Mark Madson  
Mr. Paul Manning  
Mr. Justin Marthaler  
Rev. Josh Mayer  
Mr. John Merseth, Jr.  
Rev. Ken Mellon  
Rev. Matthew Moldstad  
Mr. David Norris  
Rev. Glenn Obenberger  
Mr. Mark Perlwitz  
Mr. Allen Quist  
Dr. David Reagles  
Mr. Robert Reid  
Rev. Daniel Ruiz  
Mr. Channing Smith  
Dr. Michael Smith  
Mr. James Sundby  
Rev. David Thompson  
Rev. Piet Van Kampen  
Rev. David Jay Webber  
Mr. Ronald Younge

\* denotes temporary chairman  
*Names in italics are to be received into  
membership at this convention*



# COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

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6. Doctrine.....	BORAM, page 20 BORAM, page 47 BORAM, page 72 BORAM, page 73 Honsey Hall – Room 210
7. Finances .....	BORAM, page 53 BORAM, page 66 Honsey Hall – Room 311
8. Higher Education.....	BORAM, page 21 BORAM, page 24 BORAM, page 30 BORAM, page 73 BORAM, page 74 BORAM, page 76 Honsey Hall – Room 337
9. Home Outreach .....	BORAM, page 33 BORAM, page 72 Honsey Hall – Room 214
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11. Elementary Education .....	BORAM, page 42 Honsey Hall – Room 215
12. Parish Services .....	BORAM, page 45 BORAM, page 49 BORAM, page 51 Honsey Hall – Room 213
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15. Pastoral Conference Records and Resolutions.....	BORAM, page 17 Honsey Hall – Room 237

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*Committee #1: President's Message and Report (unless noted otherwise)*

## ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

Caleb Helmen was ordained and installed as pastor of Richland Lutheran Church in Thornton, Iowa on Sunday, July 2, 2023. He also serves Prince of Peace Lutheran Church (WELS) in Mason City

Candidate Cody Anderson was ordained and installed as pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Klamath Falls, Oregon on July 7, 2023.

Candidate Max Kerr was ordained and installed as pastor of Holy Scripture Lutheran Church in Midland, Michigan on Sunday, July 9, 2023.

The Rev. Paul Webber was installed at Concordia Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in July 2023.

The Rev. Piet Van Kampen was installed as associate pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School in Madison, Wisconsin on Sunday, August 6, 2023.

The Rev. Adam Brasich was installed at Hope Lutheran Church, West Jordan, Utah, on October 15, 2023.

Rev. Andrew Soule was installed as pastor at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota on Sunday, December 10, 2023.

The Rev. Michael Dale was installed at Pinewood Lutheran Church, Burlington, Massachusetts on February 3, 2024.

The Rev. Dan Basel was installed at Faith and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Hillman and Rogers City, Michigan on February 4, 2024.

The Rev. David Thompson was installed as Director of the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews was held on February 4, 2024, in the Bethany Lutheran College chapel.

The Rev. Glenn Smith was installed at Lake Mills Lutheran Church, Lake Mills, Iowa, on February 25, 2024.

The Rev. Michael Lilienthal was installed at Our Savior's and Rock Dell Lutheran Churches, Belview, Minnesota, on March 10, 2024.

The Rev. Andrew Burmeister was installed at Our Savior and Faith Lutheran Churches, Grants Pass and Medford, Oregon, on April 6, 2024.

The Rev. David Emmons was installed at St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Lombard, Illinois, on May 5, 2024.

## DEDICATION AND ANNIVERSARIES

Redeemer Lutheran Church of Iola, Wisconsin, celebrated God's rich grace on its 50th Anniversary on Sunday, July 30, 2023.

On Saturday, September 23, 2023, Trinity Lutheran Church, Brewster, Massachusetts, observed the 50th anniversary of its incorporation. President Glenn Obenberger preached on 1 Peter 1:22–25 with the theme: "God's Never-Ending Story Continues by His Life-Giving Word." Former Pastor David Jay Webber was the lector. The day was blessed with special music from the choir and an orchestra, organized by former pastor, the Reverend James Krikava, who played as well. Valerie Hayes, great-granddaughter of the congregation's founder, the Reverend Christian Moldstad, accompanied the service. Following, a catered dinner was served during which greetings were read from several pastors who had a Trinity connection.

On October 22, 2023, Peace Lutheran Church of North Mankato, Minnesota, observed the 25th anniversary of her first Divine Service. All of the congregation's previous and current pastors participated in the service: Robert Otto (1998–2000), Bradley Kerkow (2000–2011), Timothy Harwig (2011–2022), Matt Moldstad (2017–present), and Ben Wiechmann (2022–present). The services were followed by a video history presentation and a reception.

On February 18, 2024, Christ Lutheran Church in Port St. Lucie, Florida, dedicated a high school building.

## MEMBERSHIP REQUESTS *(Committee #13: Synodical Membership)*

The following individuals have applied for membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod:

Cody Anderson, graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Caleb Helmen, graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Max Kerr, graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

## RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

After the 2023 convention per the request of the Doctrine Committee at its March 2023 meeting, Dr. Erling Teigen was appointed as an advisory member to the Doctrine Committee.

Rev. James Braun and Lance Schwartz were appointed as members of the Committee for Communication for one-year terms.

Karl Bloedel was appointed to the Synod Review Committee.

Rev. Daniel Finn resigned from the office of the public ministry for personal reasons on December 6, 2023, and is no longer on our ELS clergy roster.



Since Rev. Michael Dale has accepted the call to serve Pinehurst Lutheran Church, Burlington, Massachusetts, he has resigned as Circuit 1 Visitor. The following pastors have been appointed at the conclusion of 2023, with their consent, Revs. Mark Faugstad and Jonathan Madson as Circuit Visitor and Alternate Circuit Visitor of Circuit 1 respectively.

The Rev. Jeffery Merseith has taken a medical leave of absence from his parish and hopes to return in the fall.

## **RETIREMENTS**

The Rev. Paul Schneider retired on June 30, 2023.

The Rev. Thomas Fox retired on October 31, 2023.

The Rev. Jeffrey Luplow retired on January 31, 2024.

## **CONGREGATIONS CLOSED**

Our Savior Lutheran Church in Bishop, California, conducted its closing and decommissioning service on Easter Sunday, March 31, 2023.

## **DEATHS** (*Committee #15: Pastoral Conference Records and Resolutions*)

Rebecca Jaech, wife of Pastor Dale Jaech, entered her heavenly home on August 22, 2023.

Ruth Reichwald entered the Church Triumphant on November 9, 2023. She was the widow of the Rev. Glenn Reichwald.

## **CONSTITUTION REVISION** (*Committee #13: Synodical Membership*)

Ascension Lutheran Church, St. Helens, Oregon, and Jerico Lutheran Church, New Hampton, Iowa, have submitted changes to their constitutions/by-laws for review.

## **ANNIVERSARIES OF ORDINATION** (*Committee #15: Pastoral Conference Records and Resolutions*)

The following anniversaries of ordination are being observed in 2024:

Robert Otto—50 years

Darryl Bakke—40 years

Thomas Fox—40 years

Daniel Larson—40 years

Ken Mellon—40 years

Steven Sparley—40 years

Richard Warnecke—40 years

Steven Brockdorf—25 years

Paul Fries—25 years

Cory Hahnke—25 years

Young-Ha Kim—25 years

Phillip Lepak—25 years

Daniel McQuality—25 years

Bernt Tweit—25 years

## **CONGREGATIONS VISITED**

Since June 2023 your president has been privileged to preach in fifteen of our ELS congregations and to make presentations in seven ELS congregations; attend three funerals, two installations; conducted two congregational meetings; preached ten times in the Bethany Lutheran College Trinity Chapel, which included the LYA Convention and ELS/WELS Teacher Conference; visited two WELS congregations.

## **PASTORAL CONFERENCES ATTENDED**

The ELS president attended at least in part the Circuit #7 Pastor Conference, Indianola, Iowa, (Sept. 11); the ELS General Pastoral Conference, Bloomington, Minnesota (Oct. 4–6); Circuit #9 Winkel, North Mankato, Minnesota (Jan. 8 & Mar. 11); Great Lakes Pastoral Conference, West Bend, Wisconsin (Apr. 9 & 10); West Coast Pastor Conference (Apr. 10 & 11) & The Emmaus Conference, Tacoma, Washington (Apr. 12); Great Plains Pastoral Conference, Mankato, Minnesota (May 22).

## **CIRCUIT VISITORS**

An essay was presented and discussed: “The Circuit Rider In Church History” by Rev. James Braun. Visitors were reminded that the vision statement, *Tell of Jesus and His Love*, directs visitors to make at least one visitation in each congregation by 2025, which was amended to a completion date of 2026. Rev. Paul Schneider was asked to be the monitor who tracks and encourages these visitations. A presentation and discussion of the implementation of the report of the Commission for Congregations at Critical

Mass as directed by the 2023 convention was led by Revs. Brad Kerkow and Ben Wiechmann. A subcommittee was appointed to lead the conference in 2024 to consider a recommendation of redrawing circuit lines: Revs. Peter Faugstad and Aaron Ferkenstad. Pastor emeritus status was awarded to Revs. Edward Bryant, Robert Lawson, Sr., Paul Schneider, and Paul Sullivan.

## COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATION

The Committee for Communication met in April 2023 and members of the committee were in contact with the communication director throughout the year. Plans are in place to meet via Zoom and by email several times in 2024. An updated and much faster website was launched in January 2023 with upgraded security features. The website will allow the synod to manage registrations for various events, resulting in significant cost savings for the synod and various boards. *One Little Word* devotions written by President Obenberger and recorded at Bethany Lutheran College studios continue to be produced and released monthly. Daily Devotions continue to be available on our synod website, by email and through our social media channels. These devotions are viewed by an average of 3,000 people daily. A new voting system for the synod convention was recommended by the Committee for Communication. However, the availability of these systems has drastically declined. The communication director has identified several possibilities and will make a recommendation to the trustees in 2024, with the goal of a new system to be in place for the 2025 convention. Approximately 3,500 copies of each issue of the *Lutheran Sentinel* are printed and the magazine is also available online. Congregations are encouraged to renew their blanket or bulk subscriptions to our magazine. Committee member Rev. James Braun has begun the *Lutherans Unplucked* podcast, with a scheduled launch in early 2024.

## AD HOC COMMITTEES

### *ELS Military Monument Committee*

The Military Monument Committee, after tying up some loose ends after the 2023 convention, was dismissed on October 1, 2023 with thanks being expressed for their faithful and diligent service.

### *ELS-ELDK Liaison Committee*

The EELC has been tasked to aid in the continuing establishment of relations with our sister synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya. Since being appointed, the committee has been asked to advise the president on some of the issues that have arisen since the declaration of fellowship at the 2023 ELS convention, including: facilitating speakers from the ELS clergy roster for an ELDK pastor conference, requests for funding the ELDK seminary, issues relating to the arrests and lawsuits lodged against the ELDK by the ELKCK regarding ownership of property, facilitating a face-to-face online meeting with President Gwachi Evans and President Obenberger, and advising on whether or not it be recommended that the ELDK should be considered as another field under the supervision of the ELS Board for World Outreach. The members of this committee are: chairman: Pastor James Braun, liaison with the ELDK: Pastor David Jay Webber, Pastor Karl Anderson, Pastor Sean Scheele, and Mr. Chris Hoffman.

### *ELS Pastoral Support Committee*

Since August 2023, the Pastoral Support Committee has been working toward organizing a mid-week, three-day retreat in late January or early February of 2025 under the theme: *“Never Confounded.”* Their aim is to make this retreat an opportunity for the pastors to be refreshed and rejuvenated by the Word of God, by His Sacraments, and through the “mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren.” The Rev. Peter Faugstad has agreed to be the chaplain for the retreat with the ELS Committee on Worship organizing the devotional times together. There will be various presentations to encourage and support pastors personally, as well as in their vocation as seelsorgers (pastoral care workers). Grants will also be applied for to defray most, if not all, the costs for this opportunity. Pastors are encouraged to keep this timeframe open until the dates and location are set. Congregations are encouraged to encourage their pastors to attend and make it possible for them. Members of the committee: the Rev. Peter Faugstad, the Rev. Samuel Gullixson (chair), the Rev. Jesse Jacobsen, the Rev. Jonathan Madson, Dr. Joshua Mears, Mr. Mark Perlwitz.

## 2023 CONFSSIONAL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

God granted a successful international convention to the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference on June 6-8, 2023. The convention was hosted by Seoul Lutheran Church and was held at the Olympic Parktel, part of Olympic Park in downtown Seoul where the 1988 Olympics were held. The convention had 94 registrants from 27 countries, representing 25 of the 34 churches of the CELC. By God’s grace, this was the most diverse CELC convention ever. There were nine participants from Africa and twenty from East Asia. Members of Seoul Lutheran Church joined the convention for the opening service on Tuesday and the closing banquet on Thursday.

We thank Seoul Lutheran Church for its fine work in hosting the convention of the CELC. The pastors and members were well-organized, and they provided a nice taste of Korean cuisine and culture to enhance the convention.

The Global Theological Education Commission (GTEC) of the CELC gave its initial report at the convention. The report was entitled: *“Shepherds under Christ: The Training of Confessional Lutheran Pastors in Our Time and in Our Places.”* This report lays

out a model CELC seminary curriculum, representing a consensus of best practices based on the input of theological professors from the various regions of the CELC. It is hoped that this document may serve as a useful tool for evaluating and enhancing theological training programs throughout the CELC.

A highlight of the CELC convention in South Korea on June 6–8, 2023, was the presentation of five theological essays by pastors representing the five regions of the CELC. The reading of each essay was followed by discussion involving people from around the world. The five essays represented the traditional branches of theology (exegetical, doctrinal, historical, and practical), with topics of interest to people everywhere—including the end times, civil government, original sin, and evangelism. The CELC thanked the essayists for their work in confessing the Lutheran Christian faith and in strengthening the theological foundation of the CELC.

*Nicolas Proksch (ELS) – Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

*Ugis Sildegs (Latvia) – Civil Government*

*Kebede Yigezu (Ethiopia) – Formula of Concord, Articles I+II*

*Angus Cheung (Hong Kong) – History of Lutheranism in East Asia*

*Mario Gálvez (Chile) – Training the Laity for Evangelism*

The CELC Planning Committee has started its planning for the next triennial CELC convention, scheduled for 2026 in Zambia, Africa.

### **WELS–ELS–LCMS INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS**

Twenty-one representatives from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) met on December 4–5 in Florida to continue our annual informal discussions. This meeting was the eleventh 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 America. 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 President Mark Schroeder of WELS was reelected to a four-year term in 2023.

### **INACTIVE MEMBERS** (*Committee #13: Synodical Membership*)

The Guidelines for the Clergy Roster (III.A) read: “An ordained clergyman who does not have a current call but desires to remain on the clergy roster and is eligible to perform the duties of the office of ministry described in Article II., and who is not emeritus may, by action of the president and secretary, be continued on the Clergy Roster for a period not to exceed three years from the beginning of the period of inactivity. Upon the application of the individual and the recommendation of the president and secretary for an extension of such classification, the convention shall determine in each instance, on written ballot, whether the request shall be honored for an additional three-year period.”

The following individuals have been on our inactive list for the three-year period ending at this convention: Matthew Crick, Erik Gernander, Brad Homan, David Meyer, and Richard Tragasz. All five have requested to remain on the ELS clergy roster. The president and secretary recommend the extension of this classification for an additional three-year period.

*Glenn R. Obenberger, president*

# REPORT OF THE DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

*Committee #6: Doctrine*

*For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,  
And do not return there, But water the earth,  
And make it bring forth and bud,  
That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater,  
So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;  
It shall not return to Me void,  
But it shall accomplish what I please,  
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10,11)*

“Neither you nor I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe on Him, and have Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel [1 Corinthians 12:3; Galatians 4:6]. The work of redemption is done and accomplished [John 19:30]. Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, and so on [Colossians 2:3]. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew about it, then it would be useless and lost. So that this treasure might not stay buried, but be received and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed. In the Word He has the Holy Spirit bring this treasure home and make it our own.” (*Concordia, Large Catechism, Third Article, p. 403*)

## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The committee consists of the following: Mr. Gregory Costello, Pastor Jerry Gernander, Seminary Pres. Timothy Hartwig, Dr. Timothy Schmeling, Prof. Thomas Rank, Dr. David Reagles, and the Rev. David Jay Webber. President Glenn Obenberger is an advisory member, and Vice President Michael Smith is an advisory member. Prof. Em. Erling Teigen serves as an advisory member. The committee’s three meetings were devoted to the consideration of doctrinal questions and other matters referred to it by the synod convention, the synodical president, the chairman of the committee, and groups or other individuals within the synod.

The committee held regular meetings August 17, 18, 2023; December 11, 2024; and March 18, 2024.

## WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

The committee met with representatives of the WELS Conference of Presidents Doctrine Committee in February 2024. The meeting was devoted to presentations on the history of ELS’ discussions on the Lord’s Supper and the Ministry; a study of Luther’s “Bondage of the Will” (led by Pres. Treptow of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary). Time was spent on various doctrinal issues and concerns each synod is facing. There was mutual encouragement as we work faithfully to confess Christ. We are planning on meeting annually with the representatives of the WELS.

## INFORMAL MEETING WITH THE LUTHERAN CHURCH–MISSOURI SYNOD

For the past twelve years, representatives from the ELS and from the WELS have been holding informal discussions with representatives from the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS). The most recent meeting occurred December 4–5, 2023, in Jacksonville, Florida. There were updates from the presidents regarding their respective synods. The following items were discussed: the ministry (with presentations from the LCMS & WELS), a study of Acts 6, and brief presentations by representatives of each synod on church and culture concerns. The ELS was represented by Pres. G. Obenberger, Vice Pres. M. Smith, and Doctrine Committee chairman, T. Rank.

## THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

The Doctrine Committee is to keep informed of doctrinal trends and issues within the church at large. These include issues facing Lutheran synods in America, various worldviews, Critical Theory, apologetics, topics under the LGBTQ heading, the influence of feminism, the “church growth” movement, “contemporary worship” practices, modern gnostic influences, modern challenges to the Lutheran teaching on the two kingdoms, universalism, Christian nationalism, etc. The committee members continue to monitor and read from a variety sources, including theological journals, magazines, periodicals, internet materials and discussions, and theological essays.

In fulfillment of the goals of the synod’s Strategic Plan, “Tell of Jesus and His Love,” (*Synod Report 2023*, page 138: “help instill a Christian worldview among our membership and the succeeding generations”), the committee is in the process of completing a series of articles for the *Lutheran Sentinel*: Anti-Christian Secular Forces, Cultural Marxism, Critical Theory and Social Justice, Transgenderism, Transhumanism, Social and Emotional Learning.

In Jesus' name Our work must all be done  
If it shall compass our true good and aim,  
And not end in shame alone;  
For ev'ry deed Which in it doth proceed,  
Success and blessing gains  
Till it the goal attains.  
Thus we honor God on high  
And ourselves are blessed thereby;  
Wherein our true good remains.  
(ELH 4:1)

*Prof. Thomas L. Rank, chairman*  
*Dr. David Reagles, secretary*

## **REPORT OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE AND BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

*Committee #8: Higher Education*

### **BOARD OF REGENTS' MEMBERS**

Type A Members of the Board during fiscal 2023:

The Rev. Mark Bartels, chairman; Holy Cross Lutheran Church; Madison, Wisconsin  
The Rev. Alexander Ring, secretary; Christ Lutheran Church; Port St. Lucie, Florida  
The Rev. Erwin Ekhoﬀ; King of Grace Lutheran Church; Golden Valley, Minnesota  
Mr. Lyle Fahning, Prior Lake, Minnesota; Heritage Lutheran Church; Apple Valley, Minnesota  
Mr. Mark Madson, Mankato Minnesota; Mount Olive Lutheran Church; Mankato, Minnesota  
Dr. Joshua Mears, Lakeville, Minnesota; Heritage Lutheran Church; Apple Valley Minnesota  
Mr. James Minor, Danbury, Wisconsin; King of Grace Lutheran Church; Golden Valley, Minnesota  
Mr. David Sparley; Saved by Grace Lutheran Church; Gresham, Oregon  
The Rev. David Thompson; St. Timothy Lutheran Church; Lombard, Illinois

Type B Members of the Board during the past fiscal year:

The Rev. Aaron Ferkenstad; King of Grace Lutheran Church; Golden Valley, Minnesota  
Mr. Timothy Roemhildt; Mt. Olive Lutheran Church; Mankato, Minnesota  
Mr. John Scott; Grace Lutheran Church; Vero Beach, Florida

Voting Member – Ex officio

The Rev. Glenn Obenberger, Mankato, Minnesota, President of the ELS

Advisory Members:

Dr. Gene R. Pfeifer, Mankato, Minnesota, President of Bethany Lutheran College.  
The Rev. Timothy Hartwig, Mankato, Minnesota, President of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

### **ACTION TAKEN BY THE BOARD OF REGENTS FOR BLC**

#### ***Financial Action***

- A. Approved the fiscal year 2024 budget for the college.
- B. Approved a list of authorized signatures for Bethany Lutheran College, Inc.
- C. Appointed Hahn Financial as Bethany's retirement plan provider.
- D. Approved the 2024–25 tuition, housing and food, and activity fees. (Tuition \$30,570, Housing and food \$8,620; Activity fee \$790).
- E. Authorized the administration to sell two parcels of land owned by the college (226 Hinkley St. and 729 Marsh St.).
- F. Approved the use of a \$1,000,000 loan to reimburse its \$620,000 contribution to the Bethany Activities Center and that the remaining balance be used at the discretion of the administration in accord with the purposes of the loan.

- G. Approved the 2023 audit report from CliftonLarsonAllen.
- H. Approved the non-faculty salary ranges for 2023–2025.
- I. Approved the 2024 Annual Funding Request from the Schwan Foundation.
- J. Adopted the Cost Effectiveness 5-Year Plan in answer to the 2023 synod convention resolution that “the Board of Regents take the actions necessary to ensure the continuing solvency of our college.”
- K. Adopted adjustments to the Cost Effectiveness 5-year Plan. The adjustments included restoring funds for theater set design and construction, speech team budget and communications professor.
- L. Resolved that the spending rate of Bethany Lutheran College for fiscal year 2025 be 6% for scholarships and 6% for operations.

***Academic and Enrollment Action***

- A. Approved the 2023–24 President’s Annual Goals
- B. Approved the 2023–24 Cabinet Annual Goals
- C. Resolved to maintain a teacher education program that is licensable for as long as possible without compromising our Christian mission and Confessional Lutheran teachings.
- D. Approved the list of 2023 spring graduates, the 2023 summer graduates, and the 2023–24 the mid-year graduates.
- E. Approved a hiring to fill the open Media Arts Position

***Legacies***

Acknowledged estates received in 2023:

- Fischer, Robert
- Imm Bashour, V
- Johnson, Gloria
- Koenen, David A
- Lusky, Glenn R
- Navig, Dennis O
- Roemhildt, Eugene
- Schwan, Doris
- Sponberg Family Foundation
- Stueck, Thomas
- Winsor, Renata

**ACTION TAKEN BY THE BOARD OF REGENTS FOR BLTS**

- A. Approved the seminary fiscal 2024 budget.
- B. Approved the tuition for the 2023–2024 academic year.
- C. Approved Cody Anderson, Caleb Helmen, and Max Kerr, for graduation from the seminary with a degree of Master of Divinity and declared all three eligible for calls into the ELS.
- D. Appointed Mr. Timothy Roemhildt; Mt. Olive Lutheran Church; Mankato Minnesota to his second full term as a type B member and seeks ratification of this action at the 2024 synod convention.

***Legacies***

Acknowledged estates received in 2023:

- Faugstad, Esther E.
- Hammer, Terence
- Levorson, Judy B.
- Lusky, Glenn R.
- Welkener, Kenneth C.

**CONCLUSION**

We are truly thankful to the Lord for the leadership and dedication of the entire college administration, faculty and staff through challenging times, as the Lord continues to bless us. Likewise, praise the Lord that the seminary has remained faithful to its purpose. We ask all of the members of our synod to keep Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in your prayers and to support the work of our dear college and seminary.

*The Rev. Mark Bartels, chairman  
The Rev. Alexander Ring, secretary*



**Timothy Roemhildt**

Age 63, member of Mount Olive Lutheran Church of Mankato for the past 30 years. Formerly held positions of School Board member of Mount Olive Lutheran School, member of the Board for Parish Education of Mount Olive Lutheran Church, and vice chairman of the congregation. Retired high school and college mathematics instructor. A graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran College AA Liberal Arts, Winona State University BS Mathematics, Minnesota State University Mankato MS Mathematics, with additional study at Carleton College of Northfield Minnesota, and the University of Colorado Pueblo. Married with four living children, three of which are Bethany graduates: David a PA at the Orthopedic Fracture Clinic in Mankato, Sarah an RN who currently is homemaking with her husband and children on Parris Island Military Base of the USMC, and Joseph, an Engineer for Kato Cable of Mankato. My passion for Bethany Lutheran College is the Great Commission and that it remains ever faithful to the teaching of the Word of God as taught in the Lutheran Confessions, and that our seminary continues to recruit and train faithful pastors for the advancement of the Kingdom of God among us.

**BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE, INC.****Mankato, Minnesota**

Consolidating Statement of Activities

Year Ended June 30, 2023

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	2023 Total	2022 Total
<b>REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT</b>				
Tuition and fees, net of scholarships	8,711,357	-	8,711,357	7,427,782
Government grants	116,291	-	116,291	1,412,984
Contributions	2,803,912	4,576,110	7,380,022	7,509,713
Investment income	1,193,014	2,432,947	3,625,961	833,235
Investment gains (losses)	-	(592,665)	(592,665)	(5,763,582)
Gains (losses) on beneficial interest in funds held in trust	-	248,414	248,414	(40,156)
Gain (loss) on beneficial interest in perpetual trust	-	-	-	62,432
Gain on forgiveness of loan payable	-	-	-	-
Mineral rights royalties	338,083	-	338,083	528,005
Other sources	1,017,224	-	1,017,224	752,453
Auxiliary services	3,823,920	-	3,823,920	3,603,287
Adjustment of actuarial liability	-	-	-	(245,294)
Total revenues, gains and other support	<b>18,003,801</b>	<b>6,664,806</b>	<b>24,668,607</b>	<b>16,080,859</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Program expenses				
Instruction	6,189,187	-	6,189,187	8,033,592
Academic Support	805,824	-	805,824	1,123,585
Student services	4,561,787	-	4,561,787	5,324,159
Auxiliary	2,828,758	-	2,828,758	3,226,674
Support expenses				
Institutional Support	3,974,988	-	3,974,988	4,130,853
Allocable expenses				
Operation and maintenance of plant	2,290,130	2,570,962	4,861,092	2,024,503
Depreciation	2,532,805	-	2,532,805	2,277,521
Interest	450,094	-	450,094	465,923
Less: Allocated expenses	(5,262,347)	-	(5,262,347)	(4,827,119)
Contributions receivable written-off	52,300	-	52,300	13,700
Total expenses	<b>18,423,526</b>	<b>2,570,962</b>	<b>20,994,488</b>	<b>21,793,391</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	(419,725)	4,093,844	3,674,119	(5,712,532)
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	36,849,004	48,017,975	84,866,979	90,638,683
<b>NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR</b>	<b>36,429,279</b>	<b>52,111,819</b>	<b>88,541,098</b>	<b>84,866,979</b>

# REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE

*Committee #8: Higher Education*

## BOARD OF REGENTS

Bethany Lutheran College (Bethany) appreciates the time and expertise provided through the Board of Regents. For a list of members and board actions on behalf of the college, please see the Board of Regents Report submitted to the synod by Chairman Rev. Mark Bartels.

## THE FACULTY AND STAFF

Bethany Lutheran College and Theological Seminary are thankful that the Lord continues to provide talented and committed men and women who embrace the mission of the college and seminary and serve as faculty and staff. We praise God for sending us these dedicated workers. During a special service on February 5, 2024, the college and seminary observed the following anniversaries:

### BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE ANNIVERSARIES OBSERVED 2024

Terri Fries – Clerk, Spirit Store .....	10 years
Sara Traylor – Director, Nursing .....	10 years
Daniel Gerdts – Manager, Spirit Store .....	15 years
William Holt – Housekeeping Technician .....	15 years
Alyssa Inniger – Director, Library Services .....	15 years
Estelle Vlieger – Director, Admissions.....	20 years
Joni Bode – Data Specialist, Advancement.....	25 years
Jonathan Geistfeld – Accounts Payable Clerk.....	25 years
Lars Johnson – Professor, English.....	25 years
Matthew Kuster – Professor, Exercise Science .....	25 years
Lisa Shubert – Manager of Administrative Computing & Institutional Reporting.....	25 years
Jeffrey Younge – Director, Financial Aid .....	25 years
Michael Fletcher – Maintenance Tech, Superintendent of Buildings .....	30 years
Daniel Johnson – Head Groundskeeper.....	30 years
Andrew Overn – Professor, Graphic Design/Media Art/Studio Art .....	30 years
Brian Strom – Head Housekeeper.....	30 years
Arthur Westphal – Senior Development Officer, Advancement.....	40 years

### BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY ANNIVERSARY OBSERVED 2024

Elsa Ferkenstad – Executive Assistant.....	20 years
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In January 2023, Laura Evans, Head Coach, Women’s Volleyball, was installed during a morning chapel service.

In August 2023, the following new faculty and professional staff were installed during the opening service: David Paulson, Assistant Professor, Music and Emma Purfeerst, Head Coach, Women’s Basketball.

## GRADUATES

In December 2022, 34 students graduated and in May 2023, 86 students graduated for a total of 120 graduates receiving the baccalaureate degree as part of the 24<sup>th</sup> four-year graduating class. These graduates represented 24 of the 30 majors.

Additionally, the first cohort of seven students graduated receiving their Masters of Arts degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in May 2023.

## ENROLLMENT

10-year Bethany Fall Report on Attendance Statistics

	FA2014	FA2015	FA2016	FA2017	FA2018
FT Undergraduate	488	490	514	523	593
Graduate					
FTE	507	500	537	566	641
All Enrolled	536	529	588	655	743



# of FT ELS	85	79	87	90	88
	FA2019	FA2020	FA2021	FA2022	FA2023
FT Undergraduate	591	633	651	632	671
Graduate			15	35	48
FTE	641	679	710	721	777
All Enrolled	742	772	800	832	905
# of FT ELS	81	81	67	68	76

Unlike significant enrollment declines that have been experienced at most colleges and universities across the U.S., we thank our gracious God for blessing Bethany this past fall with the highest full-time undergraduate enrollment in the history of the college. In addition, in fall 2023, Bethany's total student count (including full and part-time, undergraduate and graduate enrollment) stood at an all-time high of 905. This is the first time in Bethany's history for the college to serve more than 900 students in a semester, and marks the fourth consecutive year of record fall enrollment.

Along with strong retention of returning students, Bethany's record fall enrollment was due in part to another large class of new students as the college welcomed 221 first-year students in August 2023, and an additional 21 new students in January 2024. Also, of note, the fall 2023 student body included 126 full-time international undergraduate students from 28 countries. The countries with the largest enrollments were Ethiopia, Albania, Spain, Netherlands, Canada and the Congo. Vietnam is also emerging as a country with strong representation with seven students.

As Bethany has experienced enrollment growth over the past decade, some may wonder about the reasons for such growth. Over the years, several enrollment strategies have proven successful. These include increased promotion of Bethany in the Lutheran high schools across the country and in our ELS congregations, enrollment growth through the addition of several new majors, outreach to international students, and the maximizing of the college's co-curricular and athletic rosters. But this year more than ever, data shows that a new enrollment "strategy" is emerging. As more colleges and universities continue to move away from the Bible's teachings and Christian family values, what's working at Bethany is that the college has remained faithful to its mission to proclaim the "One Thing Needful." Certainly, the Lord has fulfilled His promise in Isaiah 55:11 for His Word to not return empty, as 32 additional full-time students from a confessional Lutheran background attended Bethany in fall 2023 than the year prior. In your congregations, please continue to do everything possible in word and action to promote Bethany among your members, and especially among your families with school-aged children. It is only at a college like Bethany where students will receive a Christ-centered experience in higher education as preparation for a life of purpose and meaning.

The Lord has indeed blessed Bethany with many souls that may daily be engaged on campus with their Savior, Jesus. As future challenges to enrollment growth may begin to unfold, such as a shrinking pool of high school graduates in the Upper Midwest, and the rollout of the Minnesota NorthStar Promise Grant set to launch in fall 2024 that enables students from Minnesota households whose adjusted gross income is under \$80,000 per year to attend a state public college or university for free tuition, we pray the Lord will continue to bless our efforts to engage even more students with their Savior, Jesus.

## ADMISSIONS

It is a statement of fact that the government has a way of collecting information on K-12 students and sharing that information with public colleges and universities for the purpose of student recruitment. Bethany does not benefit from public institution information sharing. Instead, Bethany relies upon and treasures the student information we receive from congregations.

Regarding Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) student recruitment to Bethany, the following information was pulled in February of 2024.

- ELS students often graduate in fewer semesters than the average student, with several graduating each year in December. 39 of the total 66 ELS students attending Bethany in the second semester of the 2023-24 academic year are from either Mt. Olive (26) or Peace (13); 59% of all ELS students at Bethany. The remaining 27 are not from the greater Mankato Area.
- Of the 39 local ELS students at Bethany, 21 are staff dependent. 32% of all ELS students at Bethany are children of faculty/staff. An additional eight students of faculty/staff are not ELS (being either WELS or Missouri Synod).
- The number of 149 reported ELS high school students graduating in 2024 is down from last year's number of 182. Of the 149 reported ELS high school students graduating in 2024, the admissions office has received information on 153 students (note the different classification of "ELS" students), but email addresses have been received for only 83.
- For this rising high school senior class that will graduate in the spring of 2025, the admissions office has received information on 128 students (out of 150 reported ELS students), with email addresses included for 49 of these students.

Thank you for making improvements in collecting the information of the youth in your congregations. While the overall number of students at ELS congregations has decreased, Bethany is receiving more actionable contact information. Again, thank you for sharing your student's information and for connecting them with Bethany!

In the second semester of the 2023-24 academic year, Bethany's graduate program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is serving 45 full and part-time students, 23 of which were new full-time students who started in fall 2023. The second cohort, projected to include 14 members, is set to graduate in May 2024. Pastors, teachers, and anyone ready for a new career, and who have interest in developing skills as a Christian counselor, are encouraged to watch the new video at [blc.edu/cmhc](http://blc.edu/cmhc), and contact us at [gradschool@blc.edu](mailto:gradschool@blc.edu) or 507-344-7302.

Numerous Lutheran high schools and ELS grade school groups visited Bethany within the last year. Bethany desires that all ELS 6th to 8th grade groups have a visit rotation. A travel grant is available to help with costs, contact [admissions@blc.edu](mailto:admissions@blc.edu) to make arrangements.

A full set of Bethany promotional videos is available for you to watch and to share with parents and students. Bethany's YouTube playlists ( <https://www.youtube.com/@bethanylutheran>) include an explore tab with videos on affordability, faith in college, virtual tour, and various vocations. Additional playlists include a section on the arts, sports, important events, and student reels.

Perhaps the Lord will bless you with the opportunity to talk with a parent about the college decision-making process. Sometimes parents are confused about what their role entails. While parents may acknowledge that young adults have some freedom to make a decision on their college choice, parents still play an important and influential role in the college decision-making process and may need your encouragement to speak up.

Please encourage parents to place young people at the foot of the cross. While parents cannot make children believe something, they can stand firm in bringing them to God's Word. In the college decision making process, this means that parents can strongly influence their child to visit Bethany. (Monday-Friday during the college school year is the best time to visit.) Big schools may dominate the media and the process for choosing a college, but parents can insist on a visit to Bethany where students will be engaged with their Savior, Jesus. Invite parents you know to talk to you about how their child explores colleges and have them visit Bethany [blc.edu/visit](http://blc.edu/visit). Thank you for your thoughtfulness in doing this.

The COVID-19 pandemic was difficult on young people and school was a different experience for K-12 students. Bethany has maintained admissions standards and has not lowered the academic expectations for incoming students, meaning that the acceptance rate for new students has gone down from over 70% to under 60%. Denials are highest with public schools in urban settings where less than 50% of students meet proficiency levels. Your college seeks to use education as an integrated tool for faith development, and does not necessarily seek to be an exclusive institution. However, when many colleges are lowering or eliminating standards, Bethany is maintaining a basic standard of entry requirements.

Bethany continues to be a great place for homeschool families and students from under-accredited Christian schools, yet if students are not meeting basic benchmarks in English, Math, Science and History, Bethany is not able to extend an acceptance. Families who apply and experience an admission denial, often do not like to share this information openly and are likely to find rationale for how Bethany has failed them. Our prayer is that families experiencing an admissions denial are able to preserve their integrity and approach the situation with grace.

## ENGAGING STUDENTS WITH JESUS

In 2023 four Bethany students took adult confirmation classes on campus and joined area ELS or WELS churches. Another group of four were confirmed through local ELS churches. One of our music majors served as the choir director at Mt. Olive Lutheran church. Two current international students and four former Bethany students continue to meet every week in a group of 10 to 12 Chinese nationals who read Scripture together and sing Christian songs. Four other Minnesota State University-Mankato Chinese students have joined them in worship at Mt. Olive on a regular basis. Two of them have taken confirmation classes. In the recent academic year two Bethany students received Christian baptism. Another series of confirmation classes on campus started after Christmas with three attending.

Chaplain Don Moldstad worked with eight couples in pre-marital counseling, and conducted five weddings. (One was a recent graduate who grew up with no Christian background, but wished to be married in a Christian service in Bethany's Trinity Chapel due to the instruction he received here.) Three Bethany students were sent to Grace Lutheran Church in Vero Beach, Florida to teach VBS last summer. There has been a notable increase in daily chapel attendance starting in the fall of 2023.

Bethany was privileged to host our synod's 2023 LYA Convention, July 27-30, 2023. Numerous professors were involved as preachers and instructors. Bethany also hosted 350 ELS and WELS teachers for a conference October 19-20, 2023. Chaplain Moldstad was the keynote speaker, and a number of our ELS clergy conducted the chapel services for the two-day event. Our ELS Board for Apologetics also hosted an event on campus.

In this academic year Prof. Rev. Tom Rank, Chair of our Religious Studies department, organized monthly "Theology Tuesdays," where students came and asked theological questions of religion professors. Between 20 – 30 students have attended. Our evening Bible Studies with Chaplain Don Moldstad hit a high of 32 students in attendance, averaging more than 20 students per week this academic year. Two other student-led studies have begun under the chaplain's oversight. A book which deals with Lutheran education by the sainted Rev. Martin Galstad titled "*Findings*," was studied by our faculty.

Bethany is grateful for the generous donations from ELS members and churches who have helped with the purchase of EHV Bibles for all of our incoming freshmen taking RELG 108-109 courses. Chaplain Don Moldstad begins each freshman religion class with a five-minute devotion to show how the precious truths of Christ are applied to the lives of God's faithful. In this

way, even those who may never attend chapel hear a devotion twice a week. The following unsolicited comments are from non-fellowship freshmen taken from a class survey:

- “As my siblings and I got older, we were able to go (to church) less and less, as we had sports events almost every weekend. Because of this I always felt behind ... and I would struggle to answer questions about my faith. The knowledge that I had of the Bible was limited.... Now being at a Lutheran school and taking religious classes, I have been able to further my knowledge and learn more about God and His Word.”
- “I personally wasn’t raised to believe in anything... I have always wondered what it was like to be raised in the faith, and coming to Bethany has really answered many of my questions. I was baptized Catholic, and received my first communion there as well. However, I was never confirmed, and that is something I would love to do. I am very eager to learn more about my faith, and what I believe to be true and who God is as a whole.”
- “(My family wishes) we could’ve been a part of the Christian faith sooner and had this as one of our priorities. I wanted to mention this, because it has truly made an impact attending Bethany Lutheran College.”

It is such a privilege to see and hear how God’s truth is taught throughout all of our various disciplines. We strive to keep the wonderful Gospel message of Christ-crucified at the center of a Bethany Lutheran College education because it alone is the “*power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*” (Romans 1:16).

### **MINNESOTA LICENSURE STANDARDS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION CAUSES CONCERN**

New K-12 standards for teacher licensure in Minnesota have been adopted and are set to go into effect in the summer of 2025. These new standards approved by Minnesota’s Professional Education Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), endorse a cultural Marxist worldview and a LGBTQ+ ideology. For example, one particular standard requires that pre-service teachers “... foster an environment that ensures [various] student identities are contextualized, *affirmed*, and incorporated into a learning environment where students are empowered to learn and contribute as their whole selves.” As written, these standards may impact Bethany’s and other Christian college’s ability to continue to license pre-service teachers for Minnesota public schools. While certainly troubling for colleges, such as Bethany, that believe, teach, and confess the teachings of the Bible in accord with the Lutheran Confessions, what remains uncertain at this time is the definition of terms by which these standards are to be understood, and by which these standards will be enforced that could require teacher education programs to train teachers in a way that could violate the missions of their Christian colleges. For example, the rule judge who gave endorsement to the language of the above-mentioned standard stated, “To the extent [this standard] addresses student identities, the purpose is to ensure students are not shamed or effectively excluded from the classroom and learning. *The regulation does not require the teaching of a particular political or religious viewpoint.*” Also, a PELSB official stated in response to testimony against the proposed standard, “*the proposed standard merely means educators should prove their capacity to provide a safe environment for all students to learn.*” Of course, as Christians and Christian educators we are to show love, kindness, care, concern, respect, and dignity for all people.

For obvious reasons, the Bethany administration, Board of Regents, and teacher education faculty are monitoring and assessing the development and rollout of these standards. In May 2023, the Bethany Board of Regents adopted a working document to guide the college through this potential challenge to our mission. The document was shared with the ELS convention delegates last June and copies are again available for review by the delegates at this year’s convention.

It is the hope of our Bethany administration that we will be able to, in good conscience, continue to carry out a teacher education program that leads to the state licensure of our education graduates. In doing so, however, know that one thing will be certain in Bethany’s response to these standards. As a Christian college of the ELS, we will not teach anything that would require our faculty or our students to violate our Confessional Lutheran beliefs, teaching, and confession.

Our prayer is that an outcome that would deny Bethany the opportunity to license teachers in Minnesota would not come to pass, and the Bethany administration is looking at all potential means, including collaboration with the administrations of other Christian colleges in Minnesota, and with our legal counsel with the potential to file a lawsuit, to prevent us from losing our first amendment rights to teach according to our Christian mission.

### **BETHANY NATIONALLY RANKED FOR THE FIFTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR**

For the fifth consecutive year, *U.S. News and World Report* has ranked Bethany Lutheran College as a top National Liberal Arts College for graduates’ social mobility—the ability of our alumni to move up in socioeconomic status following their college graduation. In 2024, Bethany is ranked number 39 in the United States and number two in the State of Minnesota. The rankings were released in September 2023. The high ranking indicates that Bethany is doing a good job educating students from a variety of academic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Also, of significance, for the first time in Bethany’s history, the college is ranked for overall performance by U.S. News as one of the nation’s best liberal arts colleges coming in at number 159. The ranking as a best national liberal arts college is indicative of the college’s twenty-plus year development as a baccalaureate degree-granting institution, its growth in reputation in the region, and a tribute to the thousands of four-year alumni of the college who are carrying out productive and fulfilling lives in their homes, churches, workplaces, and communities.

## **RESIDENTIAL LIFE ON CAMPUS**

With growing enrollments, increased retention, and the growth of student populations who tend to live on campus for four years, such as international students, Bethany continues to be blessed with on-campus housing facilities operating at or near capacity. The number of students living on campus has increased from 348 in the fall of 2017 to a new record number of 440 students living on campus in the fall of 2023. In fact, five out of the past six years have started with more than 410 students living in the residence halls.

This concluded the second year of only requiring first-year students to live on campus, a change made to accommodate the growing enrollment amid limited space. Even with this change, 67% of our student body lived on campus during the 2023-24 academic year, a percentage similar to what the college has traditionally seen under the former two-year requirement (the average for the previous six years under the two-year requirement was 67.6% living on campus, with a range of 62% to 72%).

The Student Affairs division has been engaged in a multi-year residential space study to determine the best way to meet the needs of Bethany's growing student population in the future. The college continues to monitor both policy and facility usage, seeking to find a balance between maximizing use of the residence halls, meeting students' needs, and addressing student satisfaction.

## **RETENTION**

The college pays focused attention on retaining the students it recruited. For the past eight years, Bethany's first-year retention rates have hovered around the 80% mark, a benchmark of a high-performing college, and outperforming the college's previous historic average of 72%. The college also closely monitors the retention of student groups such as athletes, international, domestic, and conditionally admitted students, and considers ways to enhance student success at all levels.

Above and beyond the personal mentoring relationships that take place on Bethany's campus, a number of tools are in place to aid in student success and retention. Partnerships with Christian Family Solutions for mental health counseling and wellness, and the on-campus Mayo Express Care Clinic addressing student health needs are both well utilized by students. All new students complete a survey called the *College Student Inventory* which provides data to help the college serve the needs of each incoming class. The college has a very active Student Success Committee that meets weekly to identify individual students who may be missing classes, receiving poor grades, or experiencing other challenges standing in the way of their college success. An online form called *Bethany Cares* is available to the campus community allowing anyone to submit a concern for the well-being of any Bethany student.

## **BETHANY GRADUATION RATES**

Bethany's focus on retention has positively influenced increased graduation rates. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, four-year graduation rates were steadily increasing from a previous 12-year average of 42% toward 50%. Bethany's current four-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at Bethany in fall of 2019 and graduating in 2023 was 48%. Noted is that for the two years following the COVID-19 pandemic, four-year graduation rates briefly dipped back to 43% due to numerous students voluntarily extending their time in college to take advantage of the additional year granted for athletic eligibility extensions under NCAA COVID-19 provisions. Those fifth year athletic extension students have now been graduating, and the result can be seen in the positive increase in 4-year graduation rates.

## **CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR UPDATE**

As the generation of learners that were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic arrive on our campus, we continue to find ways to best meet their learning needs. We have found that our liberal arts approach to teaching and learning has proved to be successful in preparing students to meet the challenges of being served by others in a radically changing world through their various vocations (Martha purpose), while at the same time, "Seeking first the kingdom and His righteousness" in all the ways they encounter Christ in their classes, activities, and interactions with people (Mary purpose).

Our Bethany institutional objectives allow for the liberal arts to shine forth among our students in numerous ways. These objectives, developed in 2018, have served to ensure a strong liberal arts education is evident in every class taught. We continue to make sure that this liberal arts ethos is evident in other corners of campus—from co-curricular activities, to campus events, to internship opportunities, and beyond. These objectives are tied to each and every class that is taught at Bethany, and are assessed by ensuring that key assignments and activities align with the objectives of the college, and are taught with a Christ-centered, liberal arts approach.

This year remained somewhat quieter in the development of new programming. Our focus in the 2023-24 academic year was spent ensuring that all programs were achieving both the items listed above (quality endeavors), while at the same time, measuring more closely how majors were populating on campus (quantity endeavors). This process has actually been in place for the past several years, as the Board of Regents continue to challenge the administration to find ways to be wise stewards of the resources given to the college to do its work. This work led to some sobering findings in a few of our academic departments.

As a part of the above programming analyses, November 2023 brought challenging decisions to the college in the sunsetting of a series of majors, including American Studies, Social Studies, History, and Theatre, as well as various minors and other courses.



While these decisions have been met with sadness and resistance, the administration and Board of Regents painstakingly examined enrollment trends for the past two years before making these challenging decisions. Efforts to maintain faculty and staff remained a top priority, as we see our most treasured asset on campus as our people. These people can help us promote our beloved college to students so they may be engaged with our Mary-Martha purpose. As we move forward to the 2024-25 academic year, we look forward to the challenges that lie ahead, knowing that Christ is in control and has all things working for the good of His Kingdom.

### *Staffing*

The college continues to be blessed by the amazing talent of our teaching faculty. The expertise, care, and concern for the success of our students, as well as their pedagogical skills, continue to make Bethany a blessing for many.

- **Choral Music:** In July 2023, David Paulson joined the Bethany faculty as an Assistant Professor of Music. Prof. Paulson stepped in to lead the Bethany Lutheran College concert choir, following long time Prof. Dennis Marzolf's retirement. David leads this choir, as well as our handbell ensemble and music skills classes. Paulson has experienced many "firsts" in this role, highlighted by his first "Christmas at Bethany" where he was able to lead the finale of "O, Rejoice Ye Christians Loudly." At the time of this writing, Paulson is planning his first national tour with the choir to ELS congregations in Florida in mid to late May.

### **BETHANY FINANCES**

In fiscal year 2022-23, Bethany's statement of financial position (without donor restrictions) indicated the college had a loss of \$336,230. This was mainly due to an increase in instructional and student service expenses. Bethany's annual operating budget ended the fiscal year with a negative balance of \$640,415. The auxiliary enterprise and the graduate program fund had a positive balance of \$324,012. As in year's past, the college contingency fund was used to offset the deficit in the operating fund. This brought the college's contingency fund balance to a zero. It has been depleted. Any future operational deficit spending will need to be covered by the Board of Regent's designated endowment fund. That fund currently has a balance of approximately \$5,000,000 and is helping to show the Minnesota Office of Higher Education that the College has three months of operating cash in reserve.

Thankfully, looking ahead to the 2023-24 fiscal year ending on June 30, 2024, at the time of this writing, the college projects a positive balance in the operating, auxiliary and graduate program funds. A projected balanced budget in 2023-24 can be attributed to a large net increase in tuition revenue of nearly \$1,000,000; the repricing of our group health insurance costs resulting in a savings to the college of approximately \$400,000 (and a positive fund balance in the college's self-insured health insurance fund); and the budget savings being realized already this fiscal year in not replacing two faculty positions (\$146,000). God-willing, these combined efforts will enable the college to experience a balanced budget this fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

The Board of Regents has adopted a five-year budget forecast model to indicate the steps or strategies necessary in order to achieve a balanced budget each year. The forecast includes a six-step approach to achieve this goal:

1. Increased enrollment growth through targeted investments in programs that demonstrate opportunity.
2. Increased net tuition revenue per student by \$1,000 per year (\$4,000 cumulative/\$3,057,600).
3. Increased fundraising for the Bethany Fund by \$50,000 per year (\$500,000 cumulative).
4. Fixed annual support increase from the ELS to \$325,000 per year (\$200,000 cumulative).
5. Increased base support from the Schwan Foundation of \$200,000 per year (\$800,000 cumulative).
6. Budget adjustments and other cost containment measures estimated at \$300,000 per year.

The need for increased and ongoing financial support from Bethany constituents and the ELS is perhaps more important now than ever before. To ensure the central mission of the college may endure until Christ's return—namely, the engagement of students with Jesus Christ as their sure and certain hope for eternal life with Him in heaven—financial support of Bethany's mission is critical today. Such support will continue to enable the college to fulfill its charge to proclaim the "One Thing Needful" for students today and in the future. May God continue to send blessings and resources upon Bethany Lutheran College so we may continue to carry out this vital mission.

### **PHYSICAL PLANT**

This past year and moving forward, Bethany will focus on facility repairs and improvements. For example, the exercise science major received a grant from the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation to upgrade its classroom equipment, while the Old Main building roof will be repaired, and SFC/YFAC parking lot will be resurfaced in summer 2024. The Bethany Activity Center opened on May 1, 2023, and the final netting system over the turf portion of the activity center was completed by November 2023.

### **GRANTS**

Financial support from a variety of grants continues to aid the mission of the college. Bethany again received a generous grant from the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation to enhance our student services, programmatic offerings, and physical

facilities. In total, Bethany received from the Schwan Foundation \$3,125,000 in 2023. We are thankful for the foundation's generous support.

Bethany is also grateful for the continued support of Thrivent Financial. During calendar year 2023, the college received \$9,236 as a result of the Thrivent Choice Program, down from the previous year. In this program, Thrivent members direct funds to organizations and charities of their choosing.

The National Bethany Auxiliary has been a consistent and important supporter of the college for nearly 91 years. Members of the Bethany Auxiliary from throughout the Upper Midwest met on the Bethany campus on September 25, 2023, and \$13,500 in new project funding were selected for support. We are grateful for this consistent support from the Auxiliary. The projects chosen for support in 2023 were the following:

Standing Projects

Dorothy Theiste Scholarship Fund – \$3,000

Music and Choir Room Chairs Fund – \$2,400

New Projects

Media Arts/Photography Digital Cameras - \$2,000

Media Art Department Lighting - \$1,800

Student Affairs - Security Cameras - \$1,500

Student Affairs – Teqtable Game - \$2,000

Visual Arts Magazine Printing - \$800

The auxiliary meets annually the fourth Monday in September. Their next meeting on the Bethany campus is scheduled for September 23, 2024.

Bethany received a first time grant from The Bolick Foundation in the amount of \$25,000. Funds were sought to assist in the teaching of Religion 108 and 109, Essentials of Christianity, which is the gateway to learning about God's plan for salvation as set forth in the Bible. This class introduces the students to the teachings of the essential elements of Christianity and served about 120 students during the 2023-24 academic year. These funds also supplemented instruction in Greek and Hebrew classes.

In 2023, the Bethany Education Department was awarded a grant from the Sauer Family Foundation in the amount of \$59,000 to fund the Literacy Clinic on campus. Through the clinic, Mankato community students come to the Bethany campus to receive supplementary reading help free of charge. The clinic is taught by Bethany education students facilitating one-on-one meetings with young readers.

## CONCLUSION

Based on this annual report, I believe you will agree with me that our Lord continues to richly bless Bethany Lutheran College. We as faculty, staff, and administration are humbled by your prayers to our gracious God on behalf of the college, and for the generous financial support, testimony, and words of encouragement received from alumni and constituents. We are grateful to have the opportunity to provide a Christ-centered, confessional Lutheran liberal arts experience in higher education so that our students may be provided the foundation needed as they develop their God-given gifts and abilities for productive and fulfilling lives in their families, churches, workplaces, and communities.

*Dr. Gene R. Pfeifer, president*

# REPORT OF BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*Committee #8: Higher Education*

When the women went to the tomb early that first Easter morning, the first rays of sunshine were lighting their way, but they were shrouded in gloom. All of their hopes were shattered. Their lives were gutted of the meaning that just days before they possessed so confidently. Their lives were rocked once more: first by an earthquake, then by an empty tomb.

Two angels began to bring clarity to the events that they were witnessing. They said, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has been raised! Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again?" (EHV Luke 24:5–7). The rays of hope and understanding were starting to break through the gloom of their despair. Matthew tells us that the women left the tomb afraid and yet filled with joy. Christ is risen! Their lives would never be the same again. They carried the message of Jesus' resurrection to the disciples.

The hope-giving message of Jesus' resurrection still needs to be carried to others today. God has placed pastors in the unique position of publicly declaring this message and the forgiveness of sins that it secures to their congregations, communities, and the world. The purpose of the Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary is to prepare men to faithfully serve in this Office.

## BOARD OF REGENTS

The Board of Regents is responsible for overseeing and governing the operations of the seminary. The members of the board are listed in their report. The president of the seminary submits a report to each meeting of the board.

## FACULTY

The following professors taught in the seminary during the 2023–24 school year: Brian Klebig, Nicholas Proksch, Gaylin Schmeling, Timothy Schmeling, and Timothy Hartwig. Prof. Proksch leads New Testament studies and teaches homiletics, hermeneutics, and other practical courses. Dr. T. Schmeling directs our Old Testament studies and teaches symbolics, church history, homiletics, and other practical courses. Dr. Klebig teaches communication, and Pres. em. G. Schmeling taught dogmatics. President Hartwig taught pastoral theology, apologetics, and other practical courses.

## ENROLLMENT

There were ten students enrolled at the seminary in the 2023–24 academic year. It breaks down as follows: 3 juniors, 2 middlers, 3 seniors, and 2 vicars.

## VICARS

Joel Hansen served as vicar of Bloomington Living Hope Lutheran Parish (WELS) in Bloomington, Minnesota. His supervisor was the Rev. Scott Spaulding.

Matthew Lehne served as vicar of Saude Lutheran Church in Lawler, Jerico Lutheran Church in New Hampton, and Redeemer Lutheran Church in New Hampton, Iowa. His supervisor was the Rev. Peter Faugstad.

## RECRUITMENT

Seminary open houses are held in the fall and spring each year. These events are open to all but the students at Bethany Lutheran College are the focal point. This year our guest presenters were Pastor Michael Smith and Prof. Shawn Stafford. About 15 potential students attended each event.

The following is a table of expected first year enrollment. This is a tabulation of men that are in the process of meeting the entrance requirements or have indicated their intent to do so and the earliest year that they could enter seminary.

Year	2024 Projection	2023 Projection
2024	1	1
2025	4	4
2026	5	1
2027	1	1

## ACTIVITIES

**Bjarne Wollan Teigen Reformation Lectures:** The Bjarne Wollan Teigen Reformation Lectures were held October 26–27, 2023. This year the theme was “Lutheran Ethics”: 1. Lutheran Bioethics—Dr. Scott Stiegemeier, Concordia University Irvine, Irvine, California; 2. Lutheran Social Ethics—Dr. Angus Menuge, Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wisconsin; 3. Lutheran Ecoethics—Dr. Doyle Holbird, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota.

**Clergy Finance and Tax Presentation:** On November 4, James Buseth, CPA, presented to the students and faculty on clergy finances and taxes. If the number of questions and amount of discussion are any indication, the material was well received and of great interest. Plans will be made in future years for similar presentations.

**Mission and Ministry:** An invitation was extended to our students to attend the annual Mission and Ministry Seminar at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin, on February 6–8, 2024. The seminar was extremely informative for our students.

**Senior Recognition Dinner:** This event was held on the evening of April 22, 2024. This is always a pleasant and relaxing evening for the students and staff.

**Vicar Workshop:** Our annual vicar workshop was held on Wednesday, May 8, 2024. The returning vicars reported on certain phases of their vicarages. President Glenn Obenberger spoke to the student body concerning the pastor and his relationship to the synod. President Hartwig spoke to the student body concerning the various responsibilities of a vicar. Brief presentations were also given on our synod's retirement plan, insurance plan, and deferred giving.

**Commencement Service:** The seminary commencement service was held on Wednesday, May 8, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. in Trinity Chapel. The Rev. Nathanael Abrahamson served as the preacher, and Pres. Timothy Hartwig served as liturgist. The following graduated from the seminary with a Master of Divinity degree: Joel Hansen and Matthew Lehne. The vicars assigned at this service were: Skyler Hepler, Caleb Strutz, and Caleb VonDeylen.

### **LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY**

The *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* is a continuation of the *Clergy Bulletin* (1941–1960). The purpose of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, as was the purpose of the *Clergy Bulletin*, is to provide a testimony of the theological position of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and to promote the academic growth of her clergy roster by providing scholarly articles rooted in the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The subscription price is \$25.00 per year and can be obtained by writing to Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001. If you would prefer to receive the *LSQ* in PDF format, rather than a printed copy, please contact the seminary office. Past issues of the *LSQ* are to be found on the Bethany Seminary website, [www.blts.edu/lsq](http://www.blts.edu/lsq).

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

Individuals and members of the ELS ladies' organizations have given support to the Seminary Fund, Scholarship Fund, and Student Support Fund. This has been a wonderful blessing for our students. Thank you for all your help.

Legacies received during the past fiscal year are noted in the report of the ELS Board of Regents.

### **SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS**

The Scholarship Endowment Funds continue to be a blessing to the seminary students. Several scholarship funds have been set up in memory of individuals and the annual dividends are used to help students with their tuition costs. The students are most appreciative of this financial assistance as they pursue their theological education. It is our concern that no one desiring to study for the ministry be denied a theological education for lack of funds. The present Scholarship Endowment Funds are:

Rev. Theodore and Melvina Aaberg; Merle Aasen; Otto and Dorothy Abrams; Herman and Evelyn Anderson; Joey and Trisha Anderson; Keith G. Anderson; John, Ethel and Rodney Arends; Robert, Flora and Charlotte F. Becker; Howard and Marion Benzing; Edmund Bolstad; Kenneth and Audrey Bolstad; Gregory C. and Susan D. Bovid; Bruss Family; Nora Buffington; Larry and Jane Carlovsky; Arthur O. Carlsen; Glenn and Dorothy Collins; Mabel Dahlgren; Allen and Susan Daniels; Davis-Nelson; Robert and Betty Diesing; Rev. Martin J. Doepel; Roger and Lois Dohrmann; Stuart Dorr; John Dukleth Memorial; Isabelle Ebmeier; Keith and Claudia Eisberg; George and Dorothy Feil; Ole Martin Fjar; Friends of Seminary; Good Shepherd; Howard and Jeanette (Hovland) Gulbrandson; Donald and Opal Hackbarth; Albert S. Hammer; Paul and Cordia Hasz; Hoiland Family; Lyle and Debby Hoverson; Lenwick and Glenna Hoyord; Roger and JoAnn Keske; Brian Koch; Ewald and Verda Kohlmeyer; Jens, Jerome and Laverne Kvam; Ernest W. Larsen; Albin Levorson; George O. Lillegard; Harold and Ellen Loe; Lorentz Book; Gwenn and Sigfred Lysne; Juul B. Madson Memorial Fund for Excellence in New Testament Greek; Norman A. Madson Sr.; Lyle and Rosella Manthe; Rev. William and Jean McMurdie; Clarence E. and June Labb Miller; Rev. John A. Moldstad, Jr.; Moldstad/Fick Family; Joe and Peggy Moll; Julius F. Mundschenk; Rev. Richard and Hazel Newgard; George Nygaard; Arleta M. Olson; Ordal; George and Ruth Orvick; Rev. Milton H. Otto; Kenneth and Violet Peter; Lenora Peters; Pres. Wilhelm and Naomi Petersen; Emil and Martha Peterson; Timothy and Gail Peterson; Richard and Florence Rado; Chauncey and Enanda Reinertson; Roland and Lois Reinholtz; Richland Lutheran Church; Merrill and Dorothy Rope; Ronald and Gay Rose; Herbert, Linette, and Grace Sahnaw; Edna May Scherzer-Getz; Eugene and Bertha Schiller; Gaylin and Rebecca Schmeling; Barbara Schneider Memorial; John and DeLores Seime; LeRoy and Patricia Simonson; Robert and Madelyn Soule; St. Mark's Lutheran Memorial; Rev. Alhert and Clara Strand; Thomas Stueck; Calhoun and Jean Sumrall; Timothy and Nancy Thiele; Gerald and Gwen Tjernagel; Rev. Milton E. and Delphine Sonstegard Tweit Student Support; Jim and Juanita Walberg; Walker-Schneider; William and Eunice Wehrenberg; Gerhard and Lois Weseloh; Patty Jo Weseloh; Whipple; Wayne and Esther Wiechmann; James and Carol Williams.

There is also a general Scholarship Fund to which individuals and organizations donate during the year and which is also used to render assistance to students in need.

### **SEMINARY ENDOWMENT FUND**

A Seminary Endowment Fund has been established to be used for seminary needs. We want this fund to grow over the years and therefore we encourage our people to remember it. A bequest would certainly be an appropriate way to perpetuate the work of the seminary as it carries out its task of training pastors to proclaim the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

*The Rev. Timothy Hartwig, president*



# REPORT OF THE BOARD FOR HOME OUTREACH

*Committee #9: Home Outreach*

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD**

The following members comprise the board: Rev. Ben Wiechmann, Chairman;\* Rev. Christian Eisenbeis, Vice Chairman and Chaplain; Rev. Luke Ulrich, Secretary; Rev. Timothy Erickson, Cross-Cultural Ministry Coordinator; Rev. Rodney Flohr, Missionary Care Coordinator; Mr. Mark Perlwitz, Site Selection Coordinator; Mr. Dean Shoop, Financial Coordinator;\*\* Mr. Channing Smith, Property Management Coordinator;\* Rev. Aaron Hamilton, Resource Coordinator; and Mr. Neil Shaffer, Outreach Strategy Coordinator. Rev. Brad Kerkow serves as the Evangelism and Missions Counselor (EMC) for the board and synod. Mrs. Myrna Meunier serves as an advisory member to the board.

\* also serve on the Board of Trustees / Board for Home Outreach Subcommittee.

\*\* specially appointed, non-voting member who also serves on the Board of Trustees/ Board for Home Outreach Subcommittee

## **STANDING FIRM AND ADAPTING**

We are privileged to proclaim the unchanging Word which tells us of the love of our unchanging God to a changing world. We recognize that the culture and mentality of our nation has changed, creating barriers and stumbling blocks for outreach. The rapidly rising costs of everything from groceries to construction supplies means that starting a new home mission is also much more expensive than it used to be. It also means that current home missions are requiring subsidy for longer than has been typical. Despite all of this, God has blessed us with His power-filled message of love and redemption and has promised that when that Word goes out, it will not return to Him empty (Isaiah 55:11). We are grateful to God for providing faithful proclaimers of that Word in our home missions and throughout the churches of our synod. We are excited and optimistic about the work that God is doing in the hearts of our members and the communities in which that gospel is being preached. We continue to adapt our strategies and methods to engage the lost, while standing firmly on the truth, purity, and power of the Word of God.

To accomplish this, the BHO encourages existing congregations to consider partnering with the board to start new preaching stations or secondary campuses, establishing daughter congregations, endeavoring into a cross-cultural outreach ministry, or thinking about the unique opportunities a congregation has to engage their community with Jesus. The board welcomes requests, proposals, ideas, and input from the pastors and lay leaders of our synod as we identify new ways to bring the same gospel to those who need to hear it.

## **HOME MISSION SEMINAR**

The BHO hosted a Home Mission Seminar at the newly constructed Divine Mercy Lutheran Church in Weatherford, Texas in January of 2024. Rev. Daniel Hartwig and Brad Price (President and CEO of the Lutheran Military Support Group) made keynote presentations. It was a great opportunity for our home missionaries to sit down with the members of the BHO face-to-face, and for the members of the board to worship with the members of Divine Mercy. We are grateful for a grant from the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation which covered much of the expense.

## **EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS COUNSELOR**

The Evangelism and Missions Counselor, the Rev. Brad Kerkow, has continued to be a blessing for our board and synod. His work is an integral piece of how the BHO operates and we rely on him heavily for communication and interaction with our home missions and with the rest of the congregations in our synod.

Rev. Kerkow continues to support our home missions, communicating with the missionaries regularly, providing guidance in outreach, evangelism, strategic planning, and the development of a mission congregation. He also offers this support to all our ELS congregations. If your congregation needs assistance with strategic planning, evangelism, or outreach ideas, please contact Rev. Kerkow.

## **PROGRESS ON DIRECTION FROM LAST YEAR'S CONVENTION**

At the 2023 convention, the BHO was directed to “charge the EMC to work with existing boards and personnel, especially the circuit visitors and alternate visitors to focus church visitations on those congregation most in need of and likely to benefit from such counseling and visitations.”

On September 13, 2023, the EMC and chairman presented initial ideas and thoughts to the ELS Circuit Visitor's Conference held in Eagan, Minnesota. Later that month, the EMC, chairman, and Mark Perlwitz traveled to Waukesha, Wisconsin to meet with the WELS Congregational Counseling Coordinator, the Rev. Jonathan Hein. We received invaluable information and

resources from work that the WELS has been conducting in this area for several years already. We are grateful for Rev. Hein's generosity in sharing his time, experience, and expertise.

The conclusion drawn from these meetings, along with data collected from the Commission on Congregations at Critical Mass, was that this issue required more attention and man-hours than were currently available to the circuit visitors, alternate visitors, EMC, and BHO.

The BHO, along with help from Paul Manning, submitted a grant request to the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation to cover the cost of calling a part-time clergy to work as the ELS Congregational Counselor. We are grateful that in April of this year, the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation approved the Project Fund Grant request of \$100,000. We expect this work to take more than one year, so we are hopeful to continue funding this through budgeted funds as well as future grants.

The congregational counselor will be working specifically with congregations at critical mass. Using the various tools and programs provided by Rev. Hein and adapted for our ELS, he will help congregations identify a path towards redevelopment, merger, closure, or perseverance in reduced circumstances. The BHO will begin calling for this position in the second quarter of 2024.

## MISCELLANEOUS PROJECTS

The members of the BHO are concurrently working on several other projects including: Do You Have a Pastor Outreach Campaign; working with Board for Lutheran Schools to formulate a harvest strategy for non-member students; reviewing, updating, and digitizing ELS evangelism brochures; investigating and utilizing the WELS Hispanic Outreach to People in the United States (HOPUS) program; producing an abridged version of Good News for You in Spanish; and working towards the goal of establishing and supporting six new missions/ministries by 2026 including 1-2 new starts.

## HOME MISSION UPDATES

There are four congregations in which the BHO has issued a joint call along with the congregation. These are Divine Mercy, Weatherford; Hope, Leander; Hope, Farmington; and Living Water, San Angelo. In addition, there were two congregations to which the BHO provided a subsidy for specific outreach efforts and programs in 2023. These were Grace, Redmond and King of Grace, Waukon. The BHO is also partnering with Parkland Lutheran, Tacoma to subsidize the cost of adding an additional called worker to start a second campus. Below is a brief update on each of these congregations.

**Divine Mercy Lutheran Church, Weatherford, Texas:** The Rev. James Kasser serves Divine Mercy. After many years of work, the congregation has been enjoying the blessing of their new building which was dedicated on August 14, 2022. In 2023 they improved their outdoor space adding a large picnic pavilion and playground. We are appreciative of their hospitality in hosting our 2024 Home Mission Seminar. The congregation numbers 62 baptized members.

**Hope Lutheran Church, Leander, Texas:** The Rev. Jerome Gernander has been serving Hope since June 2022. After settling in, becoming acquainted with the members, and focusing on in-reach, the congregation is now working with Grace in Action to form a cohesive strategy to reach out to their community as they continue to proclaim the gospel. The congregation numbers 100 baptized members.

**Hope Lutheran Church, Farmington, Minnesota:** Hope is served by the Rev. Dan Oberer. The congregation's efforts to engage their community with the gospel have been blessed recently with the addition of several new families and the baptisms of their young children. The congregation numbers 153 baptized members.

**Living Water Lutheran Church, San Angelo, Texas:** The Rev. Peter Heyn served as missionary in San Angelo throughout 2023. In April 2024, Rev. Heyn accepted a call to serve as pastor at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Green Bay, Wisconsin. The board will be working with the congregation on next steps. The congregation numbers 39 baptized members.

**Grace Lutheran Church, Redmond, Oregon:** Grace Lutheran Church is served by Rev. Roger Emmons. This congregation is in central Oregon and worships in a Seventh Day Adventist building. The congregation numbers 42 baptized members.

**King of Grace Lutheran Church, Waukon, Iowa & Trinity Lutheran Church, Calmar, Iowa:** The BHO is providing subsidy assistance for a total of three years to revitalize these existing congregations. They are served by Rev. Abraham Faugstad. The congregations number 51 baptized members.

**Parkland Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Washington:** In response to the BHO's encouragement last year, Parkland proposed a partnership with the board to open a second campus of their congregation in an area that they have identified as one that is ripe with mission potential. The BHO is subsidizing a portion of the cost of calling an additional pastor to serve their current congregation and provide the manpower necessary to start their second campus. The BHO rejoices at this partnership in the gospel and in the desire of this congregation to reach out to the lost. They are currently in the calling process.

## SALARY SCALE FOR HOME MISSIONARIES

The board has decided to continue using the WELS Compensation Guidelines, including all benefits, for the Home Missionary Total Compensation Package (The compensation calculator can be found at <https://cwcompcalc.wels.net>). Base Salary uses Column G of the WELS Compensation Salary Matrix and no additional compensation for "Additional Responsibilities" identified by the calculator.

In addition, car allowance is paid per mile for actual miles driven based on the Internal Revenue Service business rate. The WELS VEBA Plan 3 High Deductible Health Care Plan (HDHCP) will be provided. An annual contribution to a Health Savings Account in the amount equivalent to the medical deductible for Plan 3 (Individual plan) will be provided to the called worker to partially offset the costs of the HDHCP. Vacation time allotted: 0-5 years: 2 Sundays plus 20 days; 6-15 years: 3 Sundays plus 25 days; 16+ years: 4 Sundays plus 30 days.

While this specifically pertains to our home missionaries, the board understands that many congregations use this as guidance in deciding on compensation for their own pastors. If any congregations have questions on how to use the WELS Compensation Guidelines, the BHO has prepared additional resources to help. Please reach out to any member of the board and they can provide you with these resources.

#### **OPERATING BUDGET — 2024**

Please refer to the audited financial report submitted by the synod treasurer for actual home outreach expenditures for 2023.

Budgeted Income	\$322,000
Foundation Allocation for BHO	\$144,557
Subsidies:	
Divine Mercy, Weatherford	\$130,133
Grace, Redmond	\$13,329
Hope, Farmington	\$40,689
Hope, Leander	\$152,231
King of Grace, Waukon	\$19,643
Living Water, San Angelo	<u>\$69,100</u>
Total Subsidies	\$425,125
EMC	\$109,339
EMC Travel and Expenses	\$64,478
Board Meeting Travel	\$20,000
Peace Devotions	\$30,000
Newsletter	\$10,000
Office Expenses	\$4,216
Advertising Support	<u>\$3,335</u>
Total Budgeted Expenditures	\$666,493
Anticipated Deficit	<u>-\$199,936</u>

#### **THANK YOU**

We thank God that He has caused various individuals, congregations, and other organizations to continue to contribute special gifts toward our home outreach efforts. While congregational contributions cover a majority of the budget for the home outreach programs, the remainder of the money needed to fund the program comes from special gifts, the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation, estates, earned and accumulated interest, and home outreach reserve funds.

Please pray that the Lord of the harvest will continue to send out laborers and that they would have many opportunities to proclaim Jesus as the Savior of sinners.

*The Rev. Ben Wiechmann, chairman*

## **REPORT OF THE BOARD FOR WORLD OUTREACH**

*Committee #10: World Outreach*

*“And [pray] for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ... that ... I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”* Ephesians 6:19, 20.

Paul asked that the Ephesian Christians pray for his gospel outreach ministry. To this day, many Christian missionaries and pastors request the same prayer. The Board for World Outreach (BWO) of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod asks our members to do the same.

The BWO is that arm of the synod which oversees, assists, and supports the synod's world outreach efforts. It directly supports and assists with gospel outreach in eight different fields in four parts of the world: South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. As these fields grow, we rejoice to see them embrace biblical Lutheran theology and to share their faith in situations that are often difficult, and perhaps even dangerous. We pray that God continues to bless these fields as we, and they, continue to make known the name of Jesus throughout the world.

## **BOARD ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL**

The BWO consists of nine members, each member serving on one or more of four committees. The South America committee is responsible for ELS-supported work in Peru and Chile. The members of this committee are Pastors Timothy Bartels and Daniel Ruiz and Mr. Enrique Carhuayo. The Asia committee is responsible for ELS-supported work in India and Korea. The members of this committee are Pastor Steven Sparley, Mr. Daniel Browning, chairman of the BWO, and Mr. Justin Marthaler. The Europe committee is responsible for ELS-supported work in Czechia, Latvia and the Gift of Life program in Ukraine. The members of this committee are Pastors John Petersen and Timothy Buelow and Mr. Matthew Lukasek. The Australia committee is new this year. Pastors Timothy Bartels and Timothy Buelow and Mr. Justin Marthaler serve on this committee. The Rev. Thomas Heyn serves as BWO administrator. We thank Mrs. Myrna Meunier, the ELS business manager, for her invaluable work in overseeing the finances of the board and getting the many transfers to the fields that are required each month.

The BWO meets in plenary session in Mankato several times a year. The board and/or committees also meet online multiple times per year as needed. The board continues to develop a goal-setting and long-range planning process to review our work and to plan for the future.

## **COMMUNICATIONS AND FUNDRAISING**

To promote our synod's world outreach efforts, we distribute two publications. *Mission News/Helping Hands* focuses on mission work in South America (Peru and Chile) and Asia (India and South Korea). *Thoughts of Faith Newsletter* covers work being done in Europe (Czechia, Latvia, and the Gift of Life program in Ukraine.) We especially encourage the pastors of our synod to assure these newsletters are distributed in their congregations and we thank you for your help in promoting our world outreach work. The BWO promotes world mission outreach also through articles in the *Lutheran Sentinel*. We continue to look for more ways to inform ELS members of the work being done in the various foreign fields.

Cross-stitch is a network of various ELS women's organizations. Regional mission rallies are held, usually in the fall, where the women of our congregations meet for worship, fellowship, and presentations to learn what their support is accomplishing in world and home missions. It has been especially helpful in supporting programs that care for orphans as well as programs that support education for young women, where, in some countries, their education is often neglected.

More information on these and other programs can be found at [tof.org](http://tof.org) (Thoughts of Faith) and [els.org/world-outreach/](http://els.org/world-outreach/). Updates are found at [facebook.com/ELSWorldOutreach](https://facebook.com/ELSWorldOutreach).

## **THANK YOU**

During the past year many individual donors, congregations, and foundations have provided much needed support for our ELS world outreach efforts. Special grants have been given by the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation as well as the Antioch Foundation and the Niles Foundation. We thank all donors for their generous gifts to assist in reaching out to our world with the precious Word of God.

May God continue to grant his blessings on our efforts to share the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world so that many may be blessed and share in the salvation won by Jesus.

*The Rev. Thomas A. Heyn, administrator, ELS Board for World Outreach*

## **SOUTH AMERICA COMMITTEE**

Our work to bring the gospel to South America includes the geographically diverse country of Peru and the long narrow Andes spine backed Chile. This report will begin with Peru and conclude with Chile.

### ***Peru***

*Clergy:* There are five pastors. Historically, those ordained earliest by the ELS missionaries were paid full salary. Those ordained later in the mission's history receive some salary from the ELS BWO, but largely support themselves from secular work. Most of the five largely support themselves from secular work. That significantly impacts how much time they can devote to the ministry in a developing country. With only a handful of middle aged and older pastors, the Peruvians recognize the need for future pastors. The reality of the work is tremendous in travel and time.

*Vicars:* There are four vicars. They are long-standing vicars. The vicars support themselves by secular work. They do get remuneration from the mission for travel and other incidentals. Three of them help serve congregations and one of them is the religion teacher at Martín Lutero school. The Martín Lutero vicar receives a salary from the school.

*Seminary:* The seminary is located in Lima. Currently there are no students in the seminary program, however, the seminary faculty is currently mentoring the long-time vicars. The South America committee has encouraged the Peruvian leadership to follow through and ordain the long-time vicars. In addition to mentoring the vicars, the seminary is teaching courses by extension in the jungle city of Tarapoto. Students from the jungle communities make a long trip by foot, by river, and by bus to Tarapoto.

*Schools:* The Sínodo Luterano Evangélico del Perú [SELP] has two schools. Martín Lutero is located in the capital city of Lima. They teach grades elementary through middle school. The South American Committee is sad to report that Jesús Redentor is now longer holding classes. The former school administrator did not get matters in order for the school year. Because of updated facility requirements, the school will be unable to reopen. Martín Lutero has met the new government requirements, has 176 students, and is thriving and growing. In order to meet the request to enroll more students, the school is working towards adding an additional floor. It has solicited ELS funding to realize the additional floor. The school in Luis Terry is located in the jungle communities. It teaches grades elementary through high school. It, too, is doing well.

*Congregations:* There are nine congregations. The attendance averages from 10 to 50 in the various congregations.

There are five congregations in the greater Lima area. One of the five congregations holds services weekly at the Lima seminary. The other congregations are spread throughout Lima. Three are served by bi-vocational pastors. The others are served by vicars.

There are several congregations in the Andes mountains. They are served by the Rev. Fidel Convercio, who is nearing retirement age. The churches are somewhat isolated from the rest of the synod. The South America Committee [SAC] continues to encourage the Peruvian leadership to make regular visits and offer support to the Rev. Convercio.

Another congregation is located in the coastal city of Chimbote. It is served by the Rev. Segundo Gutiérrez. The congregation is unique among our Peruvian churches in that it is made up of many white-collar workers, eager to use their gifts for outreach. The congregation has purchased land in Nuevo Chimbote in order to relocate to an area ideal for outreach. However, the COVID-19 lockdown has significantly impeded progress to realize the building of the church.

Further to the north, in the Andes mountains, is a congregation in Cajamarca. Cajamarca is a World Heritage site because of its Inca ruins and history. The congregation in Cajamarca is also served by the Rev. Gutiérrez. The congregation meets in a family member's home but has hopes to buy property and build a church. Funding remains an issue.

There are three churches in the jungle communities among the Shawi indigenous people: Louis Terry, Taiwan, and Nueva Chazuta. Each of the community congregations averages about 15 in attendance for church services. The Revs. Segundo Gutiérrez and Andrés Robles visit the jungle communities several times a year and teach in the jungle extension seminary. The rest of the time the communities are served by the jungle seminary students and its one pastor. There is an opportunity for Louis Terry to do evangelism in a nearby community.

Finally, there is possible Academia Cristo [AC] outreach. The BWO is discussing with the Peruvians the possibility of making contact with and doing outreach to AC groups that have gathered within Peru. For more information on AC see the Chile report below.

## ***Chile***

*Clergy:* Chile has one ordained pastor, the Rev. Mario Gálvez. It was reported a year ago that a joint call was issued to him between the Board for World Outreach and the Chilean National Church, which he accepted. The joint call directs the Rev. Gálvez to continue with the full-time work of caring for Chile's congregations, of serving as president of the Chilean National Church, of training future leaders and pastors, of serving as a missionary-at-large in Chile.

*Seminary Students:* Chile has one seminary student, Sergio. Sergio completed an online Bible institute conducted by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's [WELS] Academia Cristo. AC is an online Spanish speaking website that teaches Lutheran doctrine, identifies leaders and mentors them in planting congregations. Having successfully completed AC courses, Sergio was qualified to enroll in the online seminary conducted by Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional [ICWI]. This seminary is taught exclusively by national pastors from the WELS Latin America missions. The ICWI is a non-geographical Spanish-speaking synod begun by ordained clergy from WELS Latin America missions with the support of AC. Sergio is also being mentored by the Rev. Gálvez.

*Outreach through Academia Cristo:* The online based AC can reach anywhere in the Spanish speaking world. As a result, it has reached a number of people throughout Chile. AC has asked the Rev. Gálvez to teach some of its courses and to assist with outreach in Chile. Some of the AC groups that have gathered in Chile have the potential of being prospective churches of the Chilean church. One of the matters under consideration by the BWO concerns students called "sembradores" (in English, "sowers"). When an AC student successfully reaches a certain level in the courses he can begin gathering groups. The "sembrador" teaches the group Christian doctrine under the supervision of an AC mentor, gathers the group for services at which he plays sermons from AC, leads in hymn singing, etc. One of the questions that has arisen is the following: Since the groups are remote, can the sembradores preside at the sacrament of the altar? AC together with ICWI has considered this an emergency matter and resolved to give the sembradores temporary calls to administer the sacrament as long as they are on and remain in the ministry



track. In summary: The BWO has approved of the Rev. Mario Galvez' participation as a teacher in AC. When it becomes a matter of the sembradores administering the sacrament the BWO advises the Rev. Galvez to follow the ELS practices.

*Congregations:* The BWO is sad to report that two congregations in greater Santiago have had their doors closed. Two former vicars had been serving the congregations, but neither were dedicated to the work. The congregations they served dwindled to one or two people. The properties became vacant; and were likely going to be inhabited by squatters. As a result, it became necessary to sell the properties. The proceeds from the sales are going to be used for planting a future church.

The Chilean church has a congregation in the Santiago community of La Cisterna. The congregation has been blessed with a new church facility located near a major metro stop. Another congregation is located approximately 200 miles south of Santiago in the city of Linares. It has been blessed with a visible church facility. Both the La Cisterna and Linares attractive church buildings and sites were made possible by donors from the United States. Both of the congregations are served by the Rev. Mario Gálvez. He spends two thirds of his time at the La Cisterna congregation and a third of the month at the Linares congregation. The Rev. Gálvez has the support of seminary student Sergio at the Linares congregation.

*Kingdom Workers:* Kingdom Workers are no longer connected with the Linares congregation. Jon and Elise Gross moved to Ecuador to do video work for AC. The remaining Kingdom Worker has gone on to do her own humanitarian outreach in the Linares area.

*Conclusion:* Please keep these two mission fields in your prayers, asking that God bless their work, reach out to new prospective members and congregations, and prepare workers for the future in order that the Means of Grace ministry may flourish and grow among these brothers and sisters in Christ.

*The Rev. Daniel Ruiz, member, South America Committee*

## **ASIA COMMITTEE**

### ***India***

The Lutheran Mission of Salvation – India (LMSI) a mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) is primarily funded through the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation as well as an increasing number of individual donors. We are also grateful to the Women's Mission Societies in the various circuits of the ELS, who have taken a special interest in the orphanages, widows' homes, and schools of the LMSI for a number of years and continue to do so.

The LMSI is divided into three districts: Hyderabad in south central India, Rajahmundry in the southeast, and Jabalpur in the north central. The language of our more than 200 congregations in Hyderabad and Rajahmundry is Telugu, and Hindi in the much smaller Jabalpur district. Of the over 24,000 members of the LMSI, there are more than 10,000 of them in each of the Rajahmundry and Hyderabad districts.

The expansion of St. Peter's Lutheran Church on the west side of Hyderabad was recently completed and dedicated on January 18, 2024. The new sanctuary on the third floor is much larger than the old one and has made it possible to convert the former sanctuary space on the second floor into classroom and meeting room space.

The congregations of the Hyderabad and Rajahmundry districts have been served by thirteen ordained national pastors for the last several years. However, in January of 2024 a new cohort of pastors completed its studies and was ordained. Seven were ordained on January 15 at Good Shepherd in Rajahmundry and six on January 18 at the newly completed St. Peter's in Hyderabad. They have already taken up their new duties.

In addition to the ordained pastors there are about 250 Gospel Workers, and several dozen Bible Women. The Gospel Workers are men in various stages of pastoral training. A new cohort of twenty-four Gospel Workers will begin seminary training in June forming the next group eligible for ordination. Seminary training, which is of necessity conducted on a part-time basis since the men also work, lasts five years or more, depending on the time each candidate can devote to his studies. Limitation in the number of seminarians is due to limited funding. The Bible Women serve the more than 300 children in the 19 orphanages of the LMSI and in door-to-door outreach visitation, especially in the villages, since it would not be appropriate in the culture for a man to do so.

Each district holds monthly workshops for ongoing training of both Gospel Workers and Bible Women. The lessons are for the most part practical, and include catechetical training, hymns, liturgy, and gospel proclamation. It is also beneficial for the pastors who teach them to have the opportunity to improve their teaching skills.

It should be noted that the LMSI operates three day-schools, nursery through the equivalent of our 12th grade, where in addition to their regular studies students daily learn about their Savior Jesus Christ and study the Small Catechism. There are more than 300 students enrolled in the schools, many of whom come from non-member families.

The president of the Hyderabad district is Pastor Solomon Mamidi and of the Rajahmundry district Pastor Kalyan Gollapalli. Mr. Vijay Sidney administers the smaller Jabalpur district. The Rev. Thomas Heyn, the BWO Administrator, and one of the three members of the Asia Committee visit India annually to review with the presidents and pastors the work of the mission as a whole and set goals for outreach and worker training, discuss and prioritize capital projects, and deal with any difficult issues that

arise. One of the thornier issues in recent years is the increasing scrutiny of all non-Indian subcontinent religions by the Indian government and their relationship to foreign church bodies and organizations. Many new and complicated rules have been added.

By the grace of God, the LMSI continues to grow even as the level of funding provided by the ELS has been declining. This makes for often difficult decisions! The board is very grateful to the many who have donated and continue to donate to work in India. You are making a difference, an eternal difference, in the lives of many people, your brothers and sisters in India, who are very grateful for the support and prayers you provide.

### ***Korea***

The BWO continues to watch for developments and, especially, opportunities to proclaim the gospel in the countries of east Asia. Seoul Lutheran Church on the east side of the South Korean capital is the base of our efforts there. The congregation's pastor is Dr. Sung Gyu Choi. Dr. Choi was instrumental in hosting the convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) in May of 2023, which brought together churches of our fellowship from all over the world in Seoul.

Pastor Cui Jinfeng, known to many in our synod from his years in our Bethany Lutheran Seminary as David Choi, took up his duties in Seoul two and a half years ago, starting his work assisting Dr. Choi. He now is working with the Rev. Jae Woong Kim, pastor of Hee Mang (Hope) Lutheran Church in Anyang, a large suburb on the west side of Seoul and with Young Chul Choi, who himself works with a number of Chinese speaking ethnic Korean groups in the central part of Seoul.

Additionally, Pastor David Choi has begun a "Language Café," which serves as an outreach tool to the many younger adults who are studying other languages. He is helped in this by Mr. Doug Tabor, an American working with the Friends Network.

Rev. Heyn and one of the three members of the BWO Asia Committee meet annually in country with the three Korean pastors to review the work of the church and mission in South Korea and, we pray, beyond.

The BWO continues to pray for the people and pastors of the South Korean church who also are our brothers and sisters in Christ as they worship the Triune God with us and go about the work of bringing the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ to more and more people.

*The Rev. Steven R. Sparley, chairman, Asia Committee*

## **EUROPE COMMITTEE**

Sadly, the war in Ukraine is now in its third year. We continue to pray that God would protect those who are suffering from their neighbor's aggression, and that He would bring about peace for both sides in the conflict, so that the bombings and missile attacks and armed combat may soon come to an end.

Thoughts of Faith, which is now under the ELS Board for World Outreach, had its beginning in the late 1970s, when former ELS pastor, John Shep, began gospel radio broadcasts to the people of Ukraine. When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, the Lord opened the way for Thoughts of Faith to begin mission work, not only in Ukraine, but also in the Czech Republic and in Latvia.

In these uncertain and dangerous times both in Europe and around the world, we give thanks to God that we are able to assist in serving the people of those countries with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. We thank Him also for the faithful help provided by many supporters in our Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In particular, we give our gracious Lord thanks and praise for the continued generous funding provided by the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation.

### ***Czechia***

The Board for World Outreach, continues to assist in the work of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Martin Luther School, in the city of Pilsen. The year 2023 was a difficult year for our mission in Czechia. Former pastor Petr Krakora resigned for cause from the public ministry, ending his work with the St. Paul's congregation and Martin Luther School. His departure from the ministry has brought about a particular struggle for the congregation. The worship attendance is now very low, with often under ten gathered for worship. A major supporter, after many years of providing generous support, is no longer interested in sustaining our work with the congregation and school.

At this point, the Europe Committee is conferring with CELC Europe adviser, WELS missionary and professor Luke Wolfgramm about our future efforts. Rev. Wolfgramm serves also as a professor at the ELK seminary in Leipzig, Germany and makes periodic visits to Pilsen. We thank him, and we remain grateful for the pastoral care being provided by Martin Vrsecky, who now oversees the congregation as well as serving as the Chief Financial Officer and Director of the school.

Above all we praise God that despite the difficulty of the past year, Martin Luther School continues to grow and at this time numbers over 300 students from Kindergarten through ninth grade. The students attend weekly chapel services and take religion classes, learning about Jesus Christ and His salvation.

Our church and school are blessed to be located in a landmark building which survived the bombing of Pilsen during WWII. It was renovated over 25 years ago, and is now undergoing certain improvements, particularly in the school portion of the building. In the past year significant repairs were done on the roof of the building which houses both our church and school. Pastor Vrsecky writes, "In 2023 Martin Luther School in Pilsen completed the reconstruction of its roof and windows. The construction work

was done during the summer vacations of 2022 and 2023. The cost of the materials and labor were close to \$140,000. This was paid from the parents' fees which were saved for this purpose over the past decade. The new roof should serve at least 25 years. We are thankful for this wonderful blessing.”

We pray God's further guidance and blessing for the Czech mission, that according to His will, the church and school may be sustained and thrive as they share the Good News of Jesus Christ and the salvation He has won for the whole world, including the people of Czechia.

### *Latvia*

The Confessional Lutheran Church of Latvia, (CLCL) is made up of pastors and congregants who want to remain fully faithful to the doctrines of Holy Scripture, as taught by the historic, confessional Lutheran Church. Its formation began in the early 1990s, when Bethany Lutheran College professors Erling Teigen and the late Mark Harstad made frequent trips to Latvia for the purpose of lecturing and preaching, conducting seminary level classes and speaking at retreats, especially among college age students who wanted to learn more about the Lutheran Confessions. As a result of their work and contacts, several pastors serving in the large national church decided to gather for the purpose of fellowship and the publishing of a newsletter, featuring theological articles.

Today, the CLCL consists of six congregations, served by seven pastors. Five of the clergymen are serving in bi-vocational ministries, receiving a small stipend from the BWO through general or Latvia directed donations.

Pastor Ilars Plume serves as the full-time pastor to the congregation in the town of Kekava. And, Pastor Uldis Fandjevs serves the church in Ozolnieki, another suburb of the large, capital city of Riga. Both of those congregations worship in very attractive church buildings, erected within the past 20 years with the generous assistance of American friends and supporters.

The CLCL also has a congregation which worships in the Old Town neighborhood in Riga. Served by Pastors Gundars Bakulis and Ugis Sildegs, it enjoys a steady attendance, and draws some students from the nearby university. Both pastors are bi-vocational. Pastor Bakulis is a surgeon, and Pastor Sildegs has been overseeing the Latvian Lutheran, a well-regarded online theological journal. A major project for Dr. Sildegs over the past few years has been the production of a new Latvian language hymn book. God willing, it will serve the CLCL and probably other Latvian churches, for many years to come.

The congregation in the city of Jelgava has been working for a couple years on the renovation of their old and rather decrepit building, and by God's grace, they have transformed it into an attractive and vibrant worship space. Under the leadership of their Pastor, Ivo Sildegs, the congregation is continuing to work on remodeling projects and is now in a better position to reach out to their neighbors with the precious word of life. They too are very thankful for the support that has been received from various Thoughts of Faith donors.

The CLCL maintains the hope of starting a new congregation in a village near Riga which currently has no churches of any kind. Much of the support for this project would come from the existing membership of the nearby Kekava and Ozolnieki congregations, as well as the other members of the CLCL.

A plan remains in place to begin an apologetics and outreach center in Old Town Riga, not far from the nearby university, with the hope that they may attract students and share the gospel with them.

The pastors and the members are diligent in identifying potential candidates to serve in the pastoral ministry. Doctor Ugis Sildegs writes, “We are blessed with four seminary students. Although all of them are bi-vocational and extremely busy, they have successfully studied dogmatics, church history, Luther's texts and confessional writings, as well as apologetics. Our church is looking forward to continuing the training of these talented and faithful future pastors.” Also assisting Dr. Sildegs in the work of instruction are pastors Plume and Fandjevs. It's our prayer that the Lord will bless these classes, and that the students may be led to serve as part of the next generation of CLCL pastors.

The Europe Committee is thankful that onsite visits have been resumed, now that the COVID-19 pandemic has lessened, and we pray that this better health climate may be prolonged.

Despite the troubles Satan places in the way, and the threats and the dangers of the current war expanding, the committee remains optimistic about the future for our fellow congregations in Europe. It requests prayers and support for these pastors and church members living in the changing economies and cultures of Czechia and Latvia.

*The Rev. John Petersen, chairman, Europe Committee*

### **GIFT OF LIFE UKRAINE, THE INTERNATIONAL CHARITABLE FUND “GIFT OF LIFE”**

War fatigue in Ukraine creates cracks in the culture (and infrastructure) causing disillusionment with life. Living in “interesting times” is not necessarily a blessing. Daily there is a funeral procession as a fallen soldier is returned to Ternopil for burial. Pedestrians stop and kneel. All vehicles stop, occupants exit and also kneel or cover the heart with hand. A stark reality of war. Air alerts increase, sometimes several hours. Conscription of men between the ages of 25-60 years (including clergymen) is ongoing. The stress from disruption of daily life activities with school children going to shelters for the duration of an air alert, fear of conscription, and the unknown is taking its toll. Displaced persons continue to re-locate in the West, their faces etched with trauma, gait mechanized and unsure. Seems it will get worse. Amidst sorrow and uncertainty, we hold to the joy of our resurrected Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



Gift of Life International Charitable Fund continues to be a beacon of HOPE. Opportunities for evangelism have increased. Counselors take courses to assist those traumatized by re-location, loss of spouse, son or daughter, children unable to speak or behavioral problems, many have lost their homes and belongings. Young women, in the throes of emotion, find themselves pregnant with boyfriends/spouses on the frontlines. Crisis pregnancy increases. Many displaced women arrive pregnant with children, needing accommodation, inability to work, children often compromised from war trauma having difficulty assimilating into a new environment. Gift of Life (GoL) looks for new ways to assist at this crucial time. Funds from the Ukraine Crisis Fund have helped provide food, hygiene products, maternity kits for pregnant women, medications, pre-natal vitamins and much more. Rather than storing supplies in centers, gift certificates (store vouchers) are now provided through counselors to clients after Bible study or church attendance.

### ***Medical Clinic on Wheels (MCOW):***

During 2023, MCOW visited 13 sites (4 new). The number of patients examined in the medical bus: 4,399. The dental bus examined: 4,534. Medical reform laws make it mandatory to have a family doctor (including for the displaced). This has impacted on the number of medical clients examined in Ternopil. However, this gave GoL opportunity to serve volunteers from other countries arriving to fight alongside the Ukrainian army who required physicals, blood typing, blood work, EKGs and dental care as a prerequisite for acceptance. They were thankful for English Bibles and other literature to take with them to the front. Please keep them in your prayers. Demand for medical services remains high in the villages/communities located outside of Ternopil. Traumatized by war, people need God's Word more than ever. ULC Deaconess Ludmila Voichunas, takes every opportunity to proclaim the "good news of salvation." Many children happily accept books from the Multi-Language Publication Bible Series as gifts and are taught Bible lessons using Betty Lukens Flannelgraph. Parents and children leave with Bible story coloring pages and an invitation to visit the ULC church and attend Bible studies via Zoom or Facebook online streaming. GoL hired two new Family Doctors to replace two pediatricians who retired and a dentist to fill the vacancy of Dr. Slavic Marku who lost his life on the frontline. Material aid in the form of clothing and other is disbursed through the Deaconess to those in need. Much attention has been focused on maintaining the mechanical condition of buses and other GoL vehicles. MCOW is set, weather permitting, to resume its traveling schedule in Ternopil Region (and close-by regions) April 8, 2024.

### ***Lutheran Pro-Life Centers (LPLC)***

In 2023, LPLC activity increased from 2022. Various educational institutions and Women's Centers renewed requests for counselors online, as well as at their establishments. Art therapy classes have been found to be instrumental during crisis pregnancies and among those traumatized by war. Despite air alert disruptions, presentations bring Christian values and the word of God. Praise God! Christian witness is provided at all counseling sessions, presentations, and programs. A counselor was hired for the Kyiv Left Bank center and it reopened. 4,974 people attended pro-life presentations by GoL counselors at various institutions throughout Ukraine. 1,061 attended programs conducted in the life centers. 1,610 counseling sessions were given. 66 babies and 6 adults were baptized, some in the Lutheran faith. Bishop Horpynchuk and Pastor Roman Andrusiv (Kremenets and Ternopil) of the ULC continue conducting Bible classes with Life Center clients. Recently, due to conscription concerns, Pastor Andrusiv found travel in Ternopil too risky. The decision was made to have Ternopil Center join Bible studies in Kremenets online via Zoom and Facebook streaming. The numbers of online participants for centers have increased dramatically this year (with displaced persons joining).

Funding from Ukraine Crisis Fund donors has allowed us to support pregnant women in crisis situations. Women are referred to a Christian gynecologist for ultrasounds, further psychological counseling and medical treatment. Women who have recently given birth, have low income, or a spouse in the war also receive much-needed assistance with children's clothing, toys, school supplies for older children along with maternity and hygiene kits. Material aid is dispensed at MCOW, LPLC's, orphanages and children's shelters accompanied by Christian witness. GoL administration maintains relations with various humanitarian headquarters, hospitals and schools in the city, working cooperatively assisting in employment avenues and other.

### ***Support and Technical Staff***

Support and technical staff consist of Accountant Mariya, who undertakes administrative responsibilities in our absence from Ukraine, Manager and Technical Staff/Drivers maintain the operations of Gift of Life. Recently a new administrative assistant/manager, Katia, was hired while manager Christina is on maternity leave. Christina has agreed to work closely with Katia in the upcoming months. Over the years, loyalty to the mission, and insights/observations have been instrumental to the ongoing operations of the organization. As you are aware, we intend to retire in the upcoming months. However, the mission and its ability to continue are important. It is our intent, if God wills, to leave the organization in good hands. The American couple interested in replacing us declined (expected and understandable). We ask that you keep GoL in prayer as we search for counterparts. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

GoL, to God's glory, has saved its usual hundreds of children from abortion and improved the lives of thousands through dental and medical services—all the while proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. We thank the many who contribute financially

and pray for this extraordinary mission which we are privileged to be part of. A special thank you from GoL to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Board for World Outreach, Thoughts of Faith, and the Europe Committee for their leadership and support.

*Nicholas and Kerry Laper, administrators, Gift of Life, Ternopil, Ukraine*

## **AUSTRALIA**

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church [ORLC], Petrie, Queensland, Australia, began reaching out to the ELS in 2020 asking for a mentoring relationship to help with some congregational concerns. By 2023, Our Redeemer requested “the BWO to be an accountability partner ... and [ORLC be] made an official mission of the ELS supervised under the Board for World Outreach” (*Synod Report 2023* page 111). The synod officially took up that request in June of 2023 giving the duties, as requested, to the BWO. The BWO has since created a subcommittee, the Australia committee [AUS] to work directly with ORLC. The committee learned in December of 2023 that Pastor Daniel Finn resigned his call for personal reasons.

That began a series of virtual meetings between AUS and ORLC. One of the first steps in these meetings was to encourage ORLC to call the Rev. David Meyer as a vacancy pastor. (He is on the ELS clergy roster and is a member of ORLC.) The Rev. David Meyer accepted the call to be the vacancy pastor. The second step has been to extend a full-time call for a pastor. A call list was requested by AUS from President Obenberger and presented to ORLC. At the time of this writing, one call has been extended to the Rev. Nathanael Abrahamson. The call is a joint call between ORLC and the BWO. As a joint call, the BWO more directly takes on the “accountability partnership” and “supervisory” role requested by ORLC. And ORLC is pledging to provide full financial support for their pastor.

Note: The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod [WELS] is beginning mission work among Chinese immigrants in nearby Brisbane. There has been a large emigration from east Asia to Australia. WELS missionaries will be working with this community. We anticipate that their families may make ORLC their home church where they worship and participate.

Please keep Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in your prayers during this transitional phase, asking God both to bless them with a pastor to faithfully serve them and with their outreach efforts.

*The Rev. Timothy Bartels, chairman, Australia Committee*

# **REPORT OF THE BOARD FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOLS**

*Committee #11: Elementary Education*

## **PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

The schools of the ELS aspire to assist families in bringing up their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). To this end we serve to produce students with clear understandings of both their citizenship in heaven and on earth. We want our students to know Jesus as their Savior from sin and death, and as the lens through which all of scripture is to be understood and we want them to understand that God calls them to make use of their talents in their Christian vocation. We believe an education founded in the liberal arts is best suited to help students discover and explore their talents and how they can best be used in service to God and neighbor.

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

The board serves to support the schools of the ELS using the insights of pastors, professional educators, and laymen from the various geographical areas of the synod. Currently the board is served by the following members: Mr. Chris Poetter, the Rev. Chris Dale (chair), the Rev. Michael Dale (secretary), Mr. Todd Knutson, the Rev. Josh Skogen, Mr. Ken Meyer (Treasurer), Mr. Nathan Rovey, the Rev. Jesse Jacobsen, and Mr. Shu-Ting Lai (Secretary for Schools). Dr. Carrie Pfeifer (Bethany Lutheran College Education Department.) serves the board as an advisory member.

## **ELS SECRETARY FOR SCHOOLS**

The ELS Secretary for Schools, Shu-Ting Lai, oversees the work of ELS schools by providing call lists, managing the continuing education grant program, and providing guidance and support. He reports to the Board for Lutheran Schools at their semi-annual meetings. Since our last synod convention, the Secretary for Schools performed school visits Scarville (Scarville, Iowa), Trinity (West Bend, Wisconsin) and Holy Cross (Madison, Wisconsin).

The board resolved to seek funding to expand the role of the Secretary of Schools to a half-time position by 2025, to handle the increase of work anticipated as more students graduate from the BLC education program with ELS Teacher Certification. This expansion in role continues to be under review.

## MEETINGS

Since the last synod convention, the board met:

October 2-3 at Scarville Lutheran Church & School (Scarville, Iowa) and ELS offices (Mankato, Minnesota)

January 22-23 at Trinity Lutheran Church & School (West Bend, Wisconsin)

## SUGGESTED ELS TEACHER SALARY SCALE

At the 2021 synod convention, the use of the WELS Teacher Compensation guidelines for ELS schools was approved. These guidelines can be found at <https://cwcompcalc.wels.net>. The Secretary for Schools is available to assist congregations with this process.

## NATIONAL ELS TEACHER CONFERENCE 2023

The board held the 2023 ELS National Teacher Conference July 17-20 in the Philadelphia area. The conference was a great success and many of the participants expressed excitement about attending future conferences. A generous grant from the Marvin M. Schwan Chairitable Foundation helped to keep the conference affordable for congregations and teachers. The success of the conference was due to the hard work of many individuals, primarily Pastor Kurtis Freimuth and Mrs. Andrea Freimuth with support from the other committee members, Pastor Alex Ring and Mr. Shu-Ting Lai. Special thanks also to Peace Lutheran Church (WELS) in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania for hosting our daily meetings. Pastor Kurtis Freimuth, Mr. Chris Poetter, and Mrs. Ann Poetter have begun the work for the 2026 ELS National Teacher Conference that is currently planned to be held in the St. Augustine, Florida area. More information will be coming to principals and schools when available.

## GRANT DISBURSEMENTS

The Board for Lutheran Schools supports various initiatives by disbursing most of its funds to ELS teachers and schools in the following ways:

### *School Subsidy Grants*

**Gloria Dei, Saginaw, Michigan**, for the development of an early learning center — \$40,000 approved in 2023, to be dispersed at \$15,000 (2023), \$12,500 (2024), and \$12,500 (2025)

**Holy Trinity, Okauchee, Wisconsin**, for further building updates — \$15,000 approved in 2024, to be dispersed at \$7,500 (2024), and \$7,500 (2025)

**Faith, Oregon, Wisconsin**, for Sursum Corda Classical Hybrid School — Requested \$50,000 in 2024, board approved \$6000 (2024), and \$6000 (2025), and will evaluate success of the project before deciding on further disbursements.

**Lakewood, Lakewood, Washington**, for security fencing to increase campus safety — \$10,000 approved in 2023 and disbursed immediately.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION GRANTS FOR TEACHERS

The board is pleased to offer grants in the amount of \$600/year to teachers serving ELS schools. These grants are intended to help defray costs associated with continuing education. Teachers need only submit the application and receipt for continuing education to the board through the Secretary for Schools at [principal@bethanyles.com](mailto:principal@bethanyles.com). To support this important program financially, please include “Teacher Incentive Program” with your gift to the ELS.

## COURSE DEVELOPMENT GRANT FOR BETHANY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

In 2024, the Bethany Lutheran College Education Department requested \$3,600 to support the development of online religion courses for post-baccalaureate students seeking ELS teacher certification. The request was approved, and the funds have been distributed.

## TRAVEL GRANTS FOR BLC ELS TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDENTS

### *Travel Grants for BLC ELS Teacher Certification Students*

The BLS supports future ELS teachers who are training at BLC by providing a travel grant for student teaching opportunities outside of the state of Minnesota. The first recipient of these funds was Miss Audrey Amiling, who student taught at Christ Lutheran School in Port St. Lucie, Florida. After graduating BLC with her ELS teacher certification, she accepted a call to teach at Parkland Lutheran School in Tacoma, Washington.

### ***Bethany Lutheran College Teacher Incentive Program Grants***

Recognizing the need for BLC-trained teachers in our ELS schools, in 2018, the board resolved to set aside \$15,000 as seed money for a new program to incentivize BLC Education students to teach in our ELS schools. The program will cover the cost of the student's religion textbooks while taking courses in the BLC ELS Teacher Certification Program as well as offer a \$1000 bonus after completion of each of the first four years teaching in an ELS school.

We thank God that since its inception, this program has received continued support from individuals and congregations throughout the ELS. It is our hope that such support will continue to grow throughout the coming years.

### **ELS HOMESCHOOL ASSOCIATION GRANTS**

The Board for Lutheran Schools has, in the past, supported the Lutheran Homeschool Association in their endeavors. Pastor Josh Skogen serves as the Board for Lutheran Schools liaison to this organization.

### **TEACHER ANNIVERSARY**

Aaron Olmanson (King of Grace) - 25 years

### **TEACHER RETIREMENTS**

Connie Davis (Parkland)

Jolene McClung (Parkland)

### **TEACHER INSTALLATIONS**

The board has been notified that the following teachers have been installed prior to or during the 2023-24 school year:

Christopher Arndt (Holy Cross)

Haley Arndt (Holy Cross)

Mandy Endorf (King of Grace)

Katie Krug (Kids' Crossing)

Lisa Lai (Bethany)

Cianna Larson (Lakewood)

Anthony Navarro (Mount Olive)

Ann Poetter (Peace)

Chris Poetter (Peace)

Susan Schachtschneider (Trinity)

Patricia Scheers (Peace)

Emma Schneck (Parkland)

Emily Shoop (King of Grace)

Sarah Strom (Mount Olive)

May the Lord continue to bless their work.

### **LUTHERAN SENTINEL SERIES ON EDUCATION**

Thanks to Pastor Josh Skogen and Kyle Madson for their work planning and publishing the current *Lutheran Sentinel* series based on Christian education in the ELS. This year-long series focuses our ELS on the important role that Christian education plays in our story, past, present, and future.

### **ELS SCHOOLS AS MISSION FIELDS**

The board encourages congregations to continue to make use of the school ministry as a mission arm of the congregation. Many resources are available through our synod and the WELS. Schools are encouraged to contact the Secretary for Schools for assistance in this area.

### **SCHOOL VISITATION ENCOURAGEMENT**

The board encourages every ELS school to request a visit from a neighboring ELS principal, the Secretary for Schools, or a member of the education faculty at Bethany Lutheran College. Grant disbursements to schools are contingent upon the requesting school hosting a school visitation. Principals are encouraged to contact the Secretary for Schools for help in setting up a school visitation.

### **PRINCIPAL MEETING**

There will be a meeting for all ELS principals on Monday, June 17, during synod convention lunch recess. All principals are encouraged to meet Pastor Chris Dale and Mr. Shu-Ting Lai at the convention stage as soon as the convention breaks for lunch.

## RESOLUTION TO THE 2024 ELS CONVENTION

The Board for Lutheran Schools recommends adoption of the following resolution by the synod:  
Whereas, The Evangelical Lutheran Synod's doctrinal statement *The Public Ministry of the Word* states: "Those in this office [the Public Ministry of the Word] by virtue of God's call through the church perform their duties on behalf of the church and in the name and in the stead of Christ," and,  
Whereas, "Those who possess divine calls are serving in the Public Ministry of the Word in either a narrower or a wider sense," and,  
Whereas, The call extended to any teacher or educator in an ELS school always includes a fundamental responsibility to publicly present and represent the Word of God in the course of all educational and administrative functions, therefore,  
Be it resolved, That all called workers serving ELS schools in the teaching ministry, for IRS purposes, be classified as "Ministers of the Gospel" by virtue of their divine call, and furthermore be eligible to receive clergy tax benefits including the parsonage allowance and to participate in the synod's 403(b)(9) plan.

*The Rev. Chris Dale, chairman  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai, Secretary for Schools*

# REPORT OF THE BOARD FOR YOUTH OUTREACH

*Committee #12: Parish Services*

Members of the board: the Rev. Kyle Madson (Chairman), the Rev. Jeff Hendrix (Secretary), the Rev. Tony Pittenger, Mr. Jim Sundby, Mr. Ben Faugstad, and Mr. Chris Hoffman.

## LUTHERAN YOUTH ASSOCIATION (LYA)

**2023:** The Lutheran Youth Association Convention was held July 27-30, 2023 at Bethany Lutheran College, with 186 participants (teens and leaders). The theme was "Created," based on Genesis 1:27, exploring God's good and unique creations of man and woman, and featured keynote speaker Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary President Rev. Timothy Hartwig. Ben Faugstad and Kyle Madson served as directors.

**2024:** The Lutheran Youth Association Convention is scheduled for July 25-28, 2024 at Concordia University Chicago. The theme will be "Justified." Prof. Pete Bloedel and the Rev. David Locklair will serve as keynote speakers. A service trip during the convention for some youth is being planned with St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Lombard, Illinois, which is also serving as our "host" congregation, although the daily offices and Divine Service will all take place at the chapel at Concordia University Chicago. Space for presentations and tables is being offered, and we again will try to encourage youth to consider our own BLC as much as possible. The director is Jeff Hendrix. The Late Registration fee (after June 1) is \$300. Information is available at ELS.org/LYA.

**2025:** The LYA theme for 2025 will be "Created," completing our three year apologetic series on the three articles of the Apostles' Creed.

## LUTHERAN YOUTH HONOR CHOIR

Honor Choir Camp, run independently by Bethany Lutheran College music professors in the past, is now under the direction of Board for Youth Outreach (BYO) as the Lutheran Youth Honor Choir, with the assistance of the Worship Committee. This is a prestigious confessional Lutheran choir which students are privileged to attend.

**2023:** 19 participants.

**2024:** Honor Choir is taking place during Synod Convention, June 15-19.

A \$300 scholarship was available to each area Lutheran high school to incentivize the privilege of two students to be a part of Honor Choir. BYO and BLC each are subsidizing \$3000 of the total cost, with registration (at \$225) making up the rest. Information is at ELS.org/honorchoir.

## SUMMER CAMPS

The Board for Youth Outreach is attempting to be more intentional about supporting our summer camps, and in return encouraging them to support Lutheran education (high school, college, seminary, etc.). Camp Indianhead and Camp Rise for years have both invited a BLC representative to speak to the campers. We are looking for ways to encourage the others to think about how they can promote Lutheran education.



### ***Camp 4 Star, Washington***

Held at Millersylvania State Park. Director: Tim Sherschell

**2023:** Children served: 112

**2024:** July 7-13 (\$300).

Theme: Undecided.

### ***Camp Indianhead, Minnesota***

Held at Lutheran Island Camp, Hennig, Minnesota. Directors: The Rev. Shawn Stafford, and the Rev. Josh Mayer.  
Facebook.com/CampIndianheadMN.

**2023:** Children served: 120.

**2024:** July 7-12 (\$400).

Theme: "Numbered"

### ***Camp Lor-Ray, Twin Lake, Michigan***

Superintendent: Director, vacant. Mari Stegman (WELS) camp coordinator. CampLor-Ray.org

**2023:** Children served: 145

**2024:** 1st-3rd grade: June 30-July 2 (\$199/\$175); 4th-6th grade: July 7-12; 7th-9th grade: July 14-19 (\$299/\$275).

Theme: "Fix Your Eyes On Jesus"

### ***Camp Lutherhaven, Washington***

Held at Wildcat Lake, Bremerton, Washington. Directors: Alan Nesselth, Kris Nieland.

**2023:** Children served: 55.

**2024:** July 7-12 (\$135).

Theme: "The Fruit of the Spirit"

### ***Camp Rise, Wisconsin***

Held at Camp LuWiSiMo, Wild Rose, Wisconsin. Director: The Rev. Nate Abrahamson. Camprise.org

**2023:** Children served: 68.

**2024:** 5th-10th grade: July 7-12 (\$430/\$460).

Theme: "BeLoved"

## **ELS SUMMER CAMP GRANT**

A change this year in Summer Camp Grant allotment: BYO will offer ELS Summer Camps *up to* \$10 /camper (dependent upon availability, to be reviewed by BYO annually) based on the previous year's camp attendance as reflected in the *Synod Report*, upon request. To receive a disbursement the camp must demonstrate: a) that there are at least two or more ELS congregations participating, b) the camp demonstrates how the funds will be used to support Christian education and/or youth leadership training, c) that there is promotion of Bethany Lutheran College and/or Lutheran High Schools of our fellowship, and d) that the request for camp stipend is sent to the BYO chairman no later than June 1st each year with the secretary copied.

## **ELS YOUTH RETREAT GRANT**

The BYO will reimburse expenses incurred by our congregations hosting youth retreats and activities. Retreats are to include youth from at least two congregations and are to include devotions or Biblical study. Retreats with 24 youth or less are eligible for reimbursement for expenses up to \$250. Retreats with 25 or more youth are eligible for reimbursement for expenses up to \$500. Inquiries and applications are to be made through the congregation's pastor to the BYO chairman with the secretary copied.

## **ELS YOUTH MISSIONARY ("HUGH BROOKS") FUND**

The Hugh Brooks mission fund assists ELS teens and college students with financial help to participate in mission work within our fellowship. Youth leaders and parents or teens should reach out to the Board for Youth Outreach through their congregational pastor with ideas for participating in mission work. Here are some things we've done in the past:

- The Hugh Brooks Fund has supported college students who traveled to canvass for a new mission in Texas
- The Hugh Brooks Fund has supported teens who work with Kingdom Workers supporting churches do outreach
- The Hugh Brooks Fund has supported a teenager who has helped with a mission in Vietnam

## **PUBLICATIONS AND VIDEOS**

Catechetical Study Kits have been produced based on the upcoming LYA convention theme, for pastors/youth leaders to study with their youth before LYA.



*Cling to the Cross* devotion books are available as a free resource from the Bethany Bookstore for Pastors to give to their confirmands.

Some videos for youth are available on the LYA – Lutheran Youth Association YouTube Channel. Short Reels are shared on the LYA Instagram channel @ELSYouth.

### **APOLOGETICS / PLANNING / COORDINATING COMMITTEE GOALS FOR BYO**

In fulfillment of the directives from the ELS Planning and Coordinating Committee (*Synod Report 2022*) that the BYO consider “developing an apologetic companion to the catechism,” and “produce materials to assist in making a clear confession of Christian truth in a post-Christian culture” we intend to produce videos based on the Catechism which will have a great emphasis on the gospel for each one. Here are the planned subjects:

1. Ten Commandments: Natural Law – Is there really a “right” and “wrong”?
2. Creed: How do we know God exists?
3. Lord’s Prayer: Is praying simply an excuse for inaction?
4. Baptism: Is Baptism merely a universal sign for washing or is it something more?
5. Keys: Forgiveness – Who can tell me I’m forgiven?
6. Lord’s Supper: Real Presence – What if it really is true?

Now richly to my waiting heart,  
O Thou, my God, deign to impart  
The grace of love undying.  
In Thy blest body let me be,  
E’en as the branch is in the tree,  
Thy life my life supplying. (ELH 167 v. 3)

*The Rev. Jeff Hendrix, secretary*

## **REPORT OF THE BOARD ON APOLOGETICS**

*Committee #6: Doctrine*

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Board members include Dr. Doyle Holbird (chairman), Prof. Shawn Stafford (vice chairman), Pastor Peter Heyn (secretary), Mr. Donald Kleman (treasurer), and Prof. Allen Quist. Pres. Glenn Obenberger serves as a non-voting advisory member. Others welcomed and who attend in an advisory capacity include Vice President Michael Smith and seminary President Timothy Hartwig.

### **THE CENTER FOR APOLOGETICS AND WORLDVIEWS**

The board oversees the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews (CAW). The board and CAW endeavor to promote the Biblical understanding of evidence for the truth of Christianity and critique competing worldviews to fortify Christians in biblical truth and to prepare them to answer questions and objections—a with gentleness and respect—so Christ may be shared wisely and boldly in these post-Christian days. Dr. Ryan MacPherson served as CAW’s director until August of 2023 when he stepped down in order to serve as the academic dean of Luther Classical College. In October, the board called the Rev. David Thompson who accepted the call and was installed on February 4, 2024.

### **THE EFFORTS AND WORK OF CAW**

CAW has a new website: <https://apologeticscenter.org/>. It includes resources (papers, essays, articles, video archives of past conferences, other video recordings), information on upcoming conferences, and how CAW can assist congregations, schools, home schools, colleges, retreats (recommending and offering presenters, Bible studies, preaching, etc.).

On June 21-22, 2023, CAW sponsored the Fifth Annual Apologetics and Worldview Conference at Bethany Lutheran College. The theme was “A Culture of Deception? Equipping Christians with Truth & Love in Tumultuous Times.” The Rev. David Jay Webber (ELS), the Rev. Paul Dare (LCMS), and Mr. Joshua Nelson (WELS) were the presenters.

CAW promoted the 2023 *Biblical Worldview Conference—Chicago* on November 4, held at St. Timothy Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lombard, Illinois. The theme was “For Such a Time as This—Discernment, Boldness, & Compassion.” Presenters

included Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller (“*The Theology of Pronouns*”), Dr. Jennifer Kom (“*Gender Solid Parenting*”), Pastor John Bombaro (“*Christian Witness & Your LGBTQ Friends and Family*”), and Mr. Joshua Nelson (“*Confronting Modern Heresies in Schools and Elsewhere*”).

On June 20 after the synod convention this year, the Sixth Annual Apologetics and Worldview Conference will be held at Bethany Lutheran College (10:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m., free admission). The theme “Defending the Gospel of God—The Apologetics of Jesus, Paul, and the Historical Reliability of the New Testament Records” will include three presentations: “*Defending the Historical Reliability of the Gospels*” (Dr. Adam Francisco, LCMS), “*Understanding and Applying the Apologetics of Paul*” (Prof. Luke Thompson, WELS), and “*Understanding and Applying the Apologetics of Jesus*” (Rev. David Thompson, ELS).

CAW continues to produce “Q and A Leading to Christ” articles that are distributed as flyers to pastors and churches. Thirty-one articles have been written so far with more forthcoming. For an archive of all the articles/flyers, visit <https://apologeticscenter.org/resources/>. CAW also continues to write and help with articles for the *Lutheran Sentinel*.

The director of CAW and board members continue to track cultural efforts that undermine Christian doctrine, Christian faith, and God’s created order. Examples include new teacher certification standards (referred to as “PELSB” in Minnesota) and the recent Minnesota Human Rights Act. These efforts are largely directed at youth and children. The Bethany administration is also monitoring and assessing these matters.

**FUTURE EFFORTS AND WORK OF CAW**

The board approved the following five-year vision for CAW:

- Develop easy-to-learn apologetic approaches for Christians and congregations for evangelism and the defense of the faith.
- Produce apologetics and worldview materials for children and youth for use in Christian schools, home schools, and family devotions.
- Establish regional conferences beyond Mankato and assist in planning conferences requested by congregations, schools, and colleges.
- Maintain a list of presenters and their topics for congregations, schools, colleges, and conferences.
- Develop a podcast that will include commentaries and interviews on pertinent apologetics and worldview issues.
- Raise sufficient funds to support a full-time CAW director and its ongoing work, eventually establishing an endowment for CAW.

The director of CAW has his office on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College. CAW works with the college and seminary but is not an entity of either. CAW is under the jurisdiction of the Board on Apologetics and is therefore a synodical endeavor.

**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

CAW is self-supporting. In compliance with existing synod policies, the board and the director seek to secure funding for CAW conferences, production of resources, office space, salary, etc.—while maintaining communication with the Giving Counselor of the synod and the Advancement Director of the college.

Cash Balance on 4/1/2023	\$59,887.66
Receipts 4/1/2023 through 4/1/2024:	
Donations Received:	\$37,071.80
Total Receipts:	\$37,071.80
Disbursements 4/1/2023 through 4/1/2024:	
Salary, Wages, Taxes:	\$11,275.73
Miscellaneous:	\$9,630.54
(honoraria, mileage, video production, postage etc.)	
Total Disbursements	\$21,282.61
Cash Balance on Hand 4/1/2024	\$75, 676.85

*The Rev. Peter Heyn, secretary*

# REPORT OF THE BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

*Committee #12: Parish Services*

The ELS Board for Christian Service currently consists of the following personnel: Mr. Denny Behr; Mr. Kirk Campell, the Rev. Erich Hoefl, chair; the Rev. James Kassera, secretary; and Mr. Robert Reid. The board met three times in the past year, with regular meetings in June, October, and February.

## **TERM LIFE INSURANCE**

The synod carries term life insurance through the synod's group life policy through MetLife. This policy is on all called workers "actively at work." "Actively at work" is defined in the policy as: working in the usual course of business; a minimum of 30 hours per week. Congregations, at their option, can include staff in their term coverage as well. Currently our congregations reimburse the premium costs of that term life insurance to the synod. We would like to thank the congregations of our synod for their continued financial support of this program.

Through Age 64	\$50,000 of coverage
65 through 69	\$32,500 of coverage
70 and above	25,000 of coverage

## **WORLD NEEDS FUND**

The balance of the World Needs Fund as of December 31, 2023 is \$35,830.14. Through the Mother's Day offering and other donations, the fund receives gifts from individuals and congregations. The World Needs Fund received donations totaling \$3,762.25 from congregations and \$3,434.86 from individuals.

The board approved disbursements of \$3,700.00 in 2023 for various world relief and group/individual special needs requests.

The board thanks all the individuals and congregations who donate toward relief in these areas for their generosity and encourage them to continue to do so. We praise our heavenly Father for the blessings He has showered on His people!

If anyone knows of any person or organization that the ELS Board for Christian Service can help, they should let the board know by filling out the board's application for assistance. The form is available online in PDF format at: <http://www.els.org>. Note that the rest of the board's guidelines for assistance can be found there as well.

The board follows these recommended limits on assistance, as published in the 2008 *Synod Report*:

\$0 - \$2,000	Individuals
\$5,000 - \$10,000	Congregations & organizations
\$5,000 - \$10,000	World Relief

Please note that the Board for Christian Service can adjust these amounts as need and situations arise.

## **PENSION PLAN/RETIREMENT BENEFITS**

In order to address the future retirement needs of our synod's called workers, the synod has set up an IRS-compliant, third-party-administered 403(b) plan. Together with the WELS, the ELS participates in the Shepherd Plan Solution through the Hahn Financial Group, Inc. and Retirement Plan Consultants, LLC. In addition to encouraging called workers to plan for their retirements, the board strongly encourages the pastors and teachers of our synod to enroll in the Shepherd Plan. As of January 2024, the ELS Board of Trustees recommended and the Board for Christian Service has decided that all matching funds provided by the synod can only be deposited into an account in the Shepherd Plan through Hahn Financial Group.

In 2023 the synod matched congregational funding of pastors' and teachers' pensions up to \$300 for all pastors and full-time teachers and \$150 for part time teachers. Total support payments were \$37,700 for the year. Funding for 2024 will remain the same.

## **WIDOWS' SUBSIDIES**

We are currently supporting eight widows with payments of \$340 per month. Total support payments for 2023 was \$37,400.00. The amount of subsidy will remain the same in 2024.

## **CALLED WORKER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CWAP)**

The synod contracts with Christian Family Solutions, a church-related organization of the WELS, to offer in person, internet-based, or phone-based counseling services to the synod called workers and their immediate family members. While all information about clients is kept confidential, the board was informed of opened and on-going cases. In 2023, the board provided 125.5 hours of counseling services for a total of 25 clients, 10 of which are currently active in the program. We have spent \$9,600.00 this past year providing those services. Currently the number of sessions will be limited to six. However, if long-term support is necessary,

the counselor and individual will explore appropriate local resources to help meet that need. If no local resources are available, an additional six sessions may be requested. The request for additional sessions should be made directly to the president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod by Christian Family Solutions and authorization for the additional sessions must be transmitted from the president's office to Christian Family Solutions.

This service is not meant to replace the circuit visitor in his capacity as counselor, but rather to supplement the circuit visitor. In fact, for most matters, the board still encourages the pastors of the ELS to make use of their circuit visitor in this area. At the same time, the board realizes that there may be some non-ministry, family-related issues that are better handled by a counselor than by a circuit visitor. Also, a circuit visitor may, after meeting with an individual, feel the need to refer him or her to a professional counselor. Now the circuit visitor can refer people in the certain knowledge that he is referring to counselors who are of the same Christian fellowship and who share a Christian, confessional Lutheran worldview.

The board would also like to encourage individual ELS congregations to examine the practical costs and benefits of the Member Assistance Program from WLCFS for their own use. Every congregation at some point will have a family in crisis or an individual who has gone through a traumatic event. For a relatively small cost, a church can offer professional, Christian counseling to all of its members. For more information, please search online at the Christian Family web site: <https://www.christianfamilysolutions.org>, or call Christian Family Solutions at 1-800-438-1772.

### **SUPPORTING OUR MILITARY PERSONNEL**

The board, in partnership with Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG), shares Christian fellowship and support to veterans and their families. To that end, the board has added a page to the synod's website [els.org/resources/military](https://els.org/resources/military).

A project of the LMSG, known as the *Christian Service Members' Handbook*, is a book of prayers, scripture readings, hymns, Luther's Small Catechism, and devotional material geared for service men and women. The board has elected to make these books available, free of charge, through the Bethany Lutheran College Bookstore, to individuals upon request (not to exceed three per request).

### **ELS MILITARY MONUMENT PROJECT**

The location of the new monument is next to Milton Tweit Hall, east of Division Street. It was dedicated on June 20, 2023, at the synod convention. Having finished its work, the board's established ad hoc committee has handed over the supervision of the remaining funds for monument care. In efforts to support the monument's upkeep, the board encourages individuals or groups to purchase additional pavers. Donation level details for pavers, benches and service pillars can found at [els.org](https://els.org).

The board is thankful to many people whose donations helped to complete the monument, to Bethany Professor Jason Jaspersen, for designing the monument and sculpting the two warrior figures, and to people over the years who served on or assisted the monument committee.

### **PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS MEMORIAL RESPONSE**

A memorial was presented to the 2022 synod convention regarding persecution of Christians in the United States as follows: "Be It Resolved, That the synod establish a committee to investigate contingencies to help those who have lost livelihoods due to persecution so that they can provide for their needs, including but not limited to job networking, legal aid, and a fund for temporary financial relief" (*Synod Report 2022*, page 158). The action on this memorial was to refer it to the office of the president (*ibid.* page 122). The office of the president in turn, referred it to the Board for Christian Service.

After investigation of this endeavor, the board has agreed to work with individuals who have been affected by Christian persecution on a case-by-case basis. It was also determined that job-networking and legal aid is beyond the ability of the board's resources and manpower. The board suggests that the local congregation would have a better idea on how to aid these individuals in their communities.

*The Rev. Erich Hoefl, chairman*

# REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON WORSHIP

*Committee #12: Parish Services*

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Members of the committee during the past year were Mr. John Baumann, Pastor James Braun (secretary), Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux, Pastor Peter Faugstad (chairman), and Dr. Eric Harstad. The committee held two meetings in person on October 3, 2023, and February 8, 2024, along with four meetings via Zoom on October 21, November 25, January 20, and April 20.

## ELH SUPPLEMENT

The committee is making progress toward a Supplement to the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (ELH). Hymn submissions from the 1913 *Lutheran Hymnary* and the 1941 *Lutheran Hymnal* were requested last year, and the committee worked through a number of selections. Committee members also reviewed hymns from other Lutheran hymnbooks, including *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal* (Ohio, 1908), *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (LCMS, 1912), *American Lutheran Hymnal* (Ohio, 1930), *Concordia Hymnal* (Augsburg, 1932/1960), *Australian Lutheran Hymn Book* (1922/1925), *Lutheran Hymnal* (Australia, 1973) and its *Supplement* (1987).

Since the publication of the ELH in 1996, some significant translation efforts of German and Scandinavian hymns have also been done. A translation of all the hymn texts in C. F. W. Walther's Hymnal was published in 2012 by Matthew Carver. Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux has also completed initial translations of all the hymns from the old Norwegian Synod hymnbooks (*Salmebog*, 1874/1903) and Landstad's Hymnal (1870). These sources will provide a number of Lutheran hymns for our use that were not in English until now.

The committee also now invites submissions of other hymns for consideration. These may be hymns from published sources other than the ones mentioned above, or they may be original hymns. The committee's general criteria for evaluating these hymns are:

**View of God and Man**—Does the hymn clearly present the Triune God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and us as sinners in need of salvation? Does the hymn properly distinguish between Law and Gospel, emphasizing what God does for us, more than what we do for God? Does the hymn show a proper view of vocation—our life of love and service toward God and neighbor out of thankfulness for God's grace?

**Christ-Centered**—Does the hymn focus on what Jesus accomplished for our salvation through His perfect life (active obedience), His innocent death (passive obedience), and His resurrection from the dead?

**Means of Grace**—Does the hymn indicate how salvation is distributed by the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace (the gospel in word and sacrament)? Or is the impression given that we must do something to receive God's grace?

**Language of the Bible**—Is biblical terminology used in the hymn, including pictures and examples from the Old and New Testaments? If words are taken directly from the Bible (like the Psalms), are they applied in the manner outlined above (Christ-centered, Means of Grace, etc.)?

**Pairing of Melody and Text**—Does the melody serve the text, or does it overpower or distract from the text? Is it fit for congregational singing, or would professional musicians/singers be required to perform it?

**Good Poetry**—Does the poetry flow well using proper meter and solid rhyme schemes? Does it use interesting vocabulary and clear language?

Please send any hymn submissions to [pastorfaugstad@gmail.com](mailto:pastorfaugstad@gmail.com) by the end of August 2024. All submissions are appreciated and will be considered by the committee. With a planned collection of around one hundred hymns in the supplement, the committee intends to bring forward the hymns that best fit the criteria outlined above. The committee also hopes to maximize the affordability and usefulness of the supplement by prioritizing hymns in the public domain, or hymns for which free use is granted or minimal compensation is required. If suggested hymns requiring significant royalties are not included in the supplement, they can be secured for congregational use through One License.

Besides the hymns, the committee is looking at including liturgies and other materials in the front part of the supplement. Currently being considered are the 2023 ELS revision of the *Small Catechism*, select Psalms and prayers, services of the hours, an order for Sunday School, a wedding service order, and a funeral service order.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

The committee continues to work on its strategic plan items. The "Excellence in Worship" notes (objective 1) will be distributed when ready. For worship music resources (objective 2), Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux published *Every Sunday Organist*, Vol. 1, in 2023. This collection of hymn accompaniment and prelude music is intended for beginner-level organists and pianists. A second volume is planned for completion in 2024. For workshops enhancing the presentation of liturgical worship (objective 3), members of



the committee are ready to make presentations on historic Lutheran worship and to conduct workshops for organists and choir directors by request. Congregations are invited to contact the members of the committee to schedule these presentations and workshops.

## **HERITAGE OF HYMNS**

A Heritage of Hymns program was held on June 19, 2023. Pastor James Braun led a study of Luther's 1523 *Formula Missae*, called "The Mass 'Unplugged'." John Baumann provided organ accompaniment.

A Heritage of Hymns program will be held again at the upcoming convention. The topic is the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Lutheran hymnbooks.

## **rites for Ordination & Installation**

The committee has prepared rites for Ordination to the Holy Ministry and Installation of a Parish Pastor. The "ELH Ordination & Installation" file containing both these rites can be downloaded from the synod website: <https://els.org/worship/evangelical-lutheran-hymnary-resources/elh-altar-book-resources/>. These rites especially draw from agenda books that have long been used in our synod—*The Lutheran Agenda* (Concordia Publishing, 1940s), *The Liturgical Service of the Lutheran Church* (Augsburg Publishing, 1922), and *Altar Book with Scripture Lessons and Collects* (Augsburg Publishing, 1915).

## **HYMN SELECTION PLANS**

For congregations that utilize the Three-Year Lectionary from *Christian Worship* or from the *Lutheran Service Book*, hymns from the ELH were selected to coincide with these readings. Hymns for Years A, B, and C are available: <https://els.org/worship/evangelical-lutheran-hymnary-resources/elh-hymn-selection-plans/>. We thank Pastor Jerry Gernander for his work on this project. The synod website has a calendar for viewing these selections, and it also includes listings for the Historic Lectionary and saint days: <https://els.org/worship/general-worship-resources/lectionary-calendar/>.

## **ELH MUSIC & SUBSTITUTE ORGANIST SERVICE**

The committee encourages congregations to promote keyboard training among their members. One way to do this is by offering to pay some or all of the cost for organ or piano lessons. For beginner-level keyboardists, Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux has compiled a resource called "ELH Made Easier" with simplified settings for Rites 1 & 2 and simpler settings of some of the tougher hymns in the ELH: <https://els.org/resources/worship/evangelical-lutheran-hymnary-resources/>.

When no accompanist is available, online audio resources are available for both liturgy and hymns. For congregations desiring to compile audio for liturgy and hymns on their own, helpful resources are available on our synod website: <https://els.org/resources/worship/music-for-liturgy-and-hymns/>. The "ELH Hymn Recordings" link connects to a page with audio for the copyright-free melodies of the ELH. The "ELH Liturgy Recordings" link provides downloadable files for Rites 1, 2, and 3 of the ELH along with Matins and Vespers. Pastor Paul Webber ([paul.webber@blc.edu](mailto:paul.webber@blc.edu)) has developed a system for using these audio files and would be glad to answer any questions about setup and to offer suggestions for equipment.

The most streamlined music option for congregations without accompanists is the "Substitute Organist Service" (S.O.S.) from Church Music Solutions. S.O.S. utilizes an online interface where orders of service, hymns, preludes, offertories, and postludes can be compiled. The complete service is delivered to an iPad or other tablet, which plays the music through a speaker system or compatible organ. The posted rates are \$45 per service for more than twelve services a year and \$65 per service for fewer than twelve services a year. But this organization is willing to work with any congregation that needs to have a reduced rate in order to utilize this service. For more information, go to <http://churchmusicsolutions.com/>. Several ELS pastors and congregations have used this service, including Pastor James Braun ([jaymbee@mac.com](mailto:jaymbee@mac.com)), who would be happy to give input about setup and use.

## **BUDGET**

The committee received a grant of \$100,000 in 2023 to use for special projects that promote the doctrine and practice of historic Lutheran worship. Suggested projects include a hard-copy altar book for the ELH, a text-only pocket-sized ELH, and videos and workshops on historic Lutheran worship.

The committee operates with a synod budget of less than \$5,000 each year.

*The Rev. Peter Faugstad, chairman*



# REPORT OF THE LAYMEN'S DELEGATES EQUALIZATION FUND COMMITTEE

*Committee #7: Finances*

The purpose of the Laymen's Delegates Equalization Fund is to help defray the transportation costs of the laymen delegates. Each congregation needs to carry out its responsibility by responding with a check to the fund after being invoiced, so that the committee may provide the best possible service to the laymen delegates.

## STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS - 2024 CONVENTION

Cash Balance on Hand 4/1/2023 2,259.28

Receipts 4/1/2023 through 4/01/2024:

Assessments Received of \$18,258.00 Assessed	\$18,027.00
Interest Income	<u>\$.51</u>
Total Receipts	<u>\$18,027.51</u>
Total Cash Available	\$20,286.79

Disbursements 4/1/2023 through 4/1/2024:

Air Fares and Mileage	\$19,001.27
Printing, Postage, checks, etc.	<u>\$ 72.39</u>
Total Disbursements	<u>\$19,073.66</u>
Cash Balance on Hand 4/1/2024	\$ <u>1,213.13</u>

1. Delegates that register at the convention and turn in airfare expenses and/or trip mileage is reimbursed for those expenses. (If flying please turn in airfare expenses and not round-trip mileage.)
2. Delegates are encouraged to ride together, whenever possible to reduce the travel costs.
3. Mileage payments are made at the rate of \$.25 per mile for one round trip to any layman delegate who drives his own car or \$.40 per mile if accompanied by a second delegate or a pastor. Bus fares and shuttle services are also acceptable. Car rental costs are not reimbursed but mileage to or from the airport are reimbursable. Mileage from the point of departure are reimbursed at the lesser of the mileage rate or the cost of an airline ticket, up to a maximum of \$600.00 per delegate, as determined by the Equalization Committee.
4. The Chairman is to receive \$.25 per mile or actual expenses; whichever was less, out of the fund to cover his costs of attending the convention. (Note: If chairman was a delegate he is reimbursed according to rules for delegates.)

*Keith Wiederhoeft, equalizer, pro temp*

# REPORT OF THE PLANNING AND COORDINATING COMMITTEE

*Committee #7: Finances*

## MEMBERSHIP

The Planning and Coordinating Committee consists of the three officers of the synod, the chairmen of the Board for Christian Service, the Doctrine Committee, the Board for Education, the Board for Home Outreach, the Board of Regents, the Board for

World Outreach, the Committee on Worship, the Board for Youth Outreach, and three (3) laymen elected by the synod at its convention. The president and the secretary of the synod serve as the chairman and secretary of the committee. The treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod serves as an advisor.

## MEETING

The committee held a virtual meeting on November 29, 2023 and a meeting in Mankato, Minnesota on February 15, 2024.

## BUDGET

Last year, the convention adopted the report of the Board of Trustees who approved the Planning & Coordinating Committee's recommendation that 2023 congregation contributions over \$840,000 be designated for the operations of Bethany Lutheran College.

The Planning & Coordinating Committee recommends the budget for 2025 as it is printed in Appendix A including \$900,000 in congregation contributions.

## PLANNING

At the 2021 convention, the synod adopted a five-year strategic plan "Tell of Jesus and His Love" (*Synod Report 2021*, page 191). The synod's vice-president has been tasked with tracking the progress of this plan which is reviewed by the Planning & Coordinating Committee at its February meeting. It is as it is printed in Appendix B with the progress. ***Bold italics*** indicate an update from the 2023 *Synod Report*.

To assist the committee in the vital work of planning during the next three years, the board authorized the synod's president to appoint a three-year ad-hoc task force committee to develop a strategic planning and budgeting process that can be adjusted on an regular basis as the needs of the synod change. The committee consists of: Mr. Lyle Fanning, the Rev. Brad Kerkow (chairman), the Rev. Daniel Ruiz, and the Rev. Greg Schmidt. If effective, this may become a permanent committee and involve a adjustment to the Planning and Coordinating Committee.

The following resolution is recommended for adoption by the convention; the proposed addition is underlined.

### ***Reallocation of the Approved Synodical Budget to Respond to Emerging Critical Issues***

*WHEREAS, The ELS Handbook guidelines direct the Planning & Coordinating Committee (P&CC) with performing strategic planning. However, the updates to the strategic plan are not reviewed and approved by the synod convention until typically seven months after the proposed changes have been finalized, and,*

*WHEREAS, When the synod's strategic plan revision is approved, it typically is assigned to a synod board(s) where that board creates a strategic action plan to achieve the higher-level strategic plan objective. The assigned board then estimates the budgetary impact of implementing the strategic action plan into the following year's budget request that is presented to the synod convention for approval. This results in a 19-month delay from the initial identification of a need to modify the synod's strategic direction to the point where the plan is funded and work begins, and,*

*WHEREAS, The P&CC reported to the 2023 synod convention that the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was formed and will develop and implement Strategic Planning and Strategic Budgeting processes, and,*

*WHEREAS, The Strategic Planning Committee created by the Planning & Coordinating Committee is recommending a revision to the Guidelines for the Planning and Coordinating Committee to enable dynamic strategic planning and strategic budgeting processes, and,*

*WHEREAS, A key aspect in implementing dynamic strategic planning and budgeting processes is the ability to realign the financial plan (budget) as a result of an emerging critical or strategic issue, or respond to financial challenges, and,*

*WHEREAS, The P&CC has accepted the SPC recommendation and is also recommending the following addition to the guidelines, therefore,*

*BE IT RESOLVED, That the guidelines for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod be amended as follows: Section 370: Guidelines for the Planning and Coordinating Committee, Article V.A (Synodical Budget Operations).*

*4. In the event that the Planning and Coordinating Committee identifies an emerging critical issue impacting the strategic priorities of the synod, that the Planning and Coordinating Committee has authority to reallocate unexpended portions of the adopted synodical budget to fund actions necessary to address a critical issue.*

*The Rev. Glenn Obenberger, chairman  
The Rev. Craig Ferkenstad, secretary*

## APPENDIX A

### Evangelical Lutheran Synod

#### Budget to Actual Income & Expense Comparison

	Budget 2022	Actual 2022	Budget 2023	Actual 2023	Budget 2024	Budget 2025
<b>Beginning Fund Balances</b>	7,001,784.00	7,001,784.00	5,133,295.51	5,133,295.51	6,343,264.24	5,730,588.24
Reclassification of fund balances		(794,887.00)				
		6,206,897.00				
<b>Income</b>						
Congregations	820,000.00	895,787.00	840,000.00	880,353.00	860,000.00	900,000.00
Congregations designated	10,500.00	394,578.00	20,400.00	144,058.00	31,300.00	63,300.00
Cross-stitch	-	30,000.00	-	31,000.00	25,000.00	25,000.00
Endowment Funding	368,271.00	455,757.00	529,755.00	319,156.00	396,720.00	573,219.00
Grants	-	-	-	-	-	72,500.00
Helping Hands/FMS	14,580.00	14,170.00	14,700.00	-	-	-
Individual Gifts	227,000.00	424,306.00	271,500.00	425,539.00	302,000.00	416,622.00
Investments	35,500.00	143,102.00	135,500.00	181,020.00	53,040.00	130,040.00
MAP	325,790.00	355,000.00	329,600.00	355,000.00	355,000.00	355,000.00
Estates		43,432.00		184,862.00		2,500.00
Miscellaneous	3,350.00	9,574.00	2,850.00	2,015.00	2,750.00	11,250.00
Organization Giving	31,890.00	31,957.00	32,400.00	87,132.00	38,500.00	42,500.00
Publications Sales/Subscriptions	40,000.00	44,384.00	40,000.00	39,880.00	40,000.00	35,000.00
Registration /Fees	50,000.00	37,300.00	50,000.00	58,056.00	50,000.00	75,250.00
Salary Reimbursement	26,000.00		27,600.00		27,600.00	
Schwan Foundation	440,000.00	347,250.00	410,000.00	161,500.00	356,500.00	460,000.00
<b>TOTAL Income</b>	<b>2,392,881.00</b>	<b>3,226,597.00</b>	<b>2,704,305.00</b>	<b>2,869,571.00</b>	<b>2,538,410.00</b>	<b>3,162,181.00</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>						
Bethany Lutheran College	275,000.00	350,787.02	275,000.00	275,000.00	275,000.00	300,000.00
Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary	31,500.00	31,500.00	31,500.00	27,642.95	31,500.00	31,500.00
Board for Christian Service	59,245.00	89,390.47	54,245.00	95,949.11	55,840.00	109,250.00
Board for Home Outreach	706,940.00	645,500.00	725,424.00	734,260.00	656,493.00	776,372.00
Board for Lutheran Schools	30,800.00	86,069.00	52,050.00	56,685.00	49,030.00	77,000.00
Board for World Outreach	782,399.00	825,693.00	808,179.00	864,161.40	693,750.00	880,366.00
Board for Youth Outreach	84,700.00	71,895.00	79,700.00	88,202.00	91,300.00	97,542.00
Synod General Fund	790,909.00	879,403.00	908,353.00	860,499.00	896,473.00	889,862.00
Thoughts of Faith	270,000.00	268,115.00	340,000.00	335,562.00	401,700.00	370,764.00
<b>TOTAL Expenditures</b>	<b>3,031,493.00</b>	<b>3,248,352.49</b>	<b>3,274,451.00</b>	<b>3,337,961.46</b>	<b>3,151,086.00</b>	<b>3,532,656.00</b>
<b>Net Income/(Loss) before Unrealized Gains/(Losses)</b>	<b>(638,612.00)</b>	<b>(21,755.49)</b>	<b>(570,146.00)</b>	<b>(468,390.46)</b>	<b>(612,676.00)</b>	<b>(370,475.00)</b>
Unrealized Gains/(Losses)		(1,051,846.00)		693,320.00		
<b>Net Income/(Loss) after Unrealized Gains/(Losses)</b>		<b>(1,073,601.49)</b>		<b>224,929.54</b>	<b>(612,676.00)</b>	<b>(370,475.00)</b>
Transfer Family of God Net Balance of Building Sale to Board of Home Outreach				130,540.34		
Reclass Anniversary Fund to Board of Home Outreach				854,498.85		
<b>Ending Fund Balances</b>	<b>6,363,172.00</b>	<b>5,133,295.51</b>	<b>4,563,149.51</b>	<b>6,343,264.24</b>	<b>5,730,588.24</b>	<b>5,360,113.24</b>
Use of Reserved Fund Balances	638,612.00	(1,073,601.49)	570,146.00	-	612,676.00	370,475.00

## APPENDIX B

### Tell of Jesus and His love.

“Go home to your people, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how He had mercy on you.”  
(Mark 5:19)

1. Every congregation, in Christian love, enhance their focus on reaching the lost.
2. Equip the next generation through Christ-centered education.
3. Develop and disseminate evangelism resources for home and world outreach.
4. Establish and support synod missions at home and abroad.
5. Endeavor to increase the efficiency and productivity of our synod's boards.

### Tell of Jesus and His Love.

“Go home to your people, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how He had mercy on you.”  
(Mark 5:19)

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	COMPLETION DATE / PROGRESS
<b>1. Every congregation, in Christian love, enhance their focus on reaching the lost.</b>		
a. Every congregation and pastor pursuing excellence in preaching and teaching, applying Law and Gospel appropriate to each text. Circuit Visitors*	Circuit Visitors define excellence in preaching and teaching and develop critique form.	2023 Circuit Visitors: 1. A form has been developed and adopted for use in 2021. 2. A definition of excellence in preaching and teaching was completed in 2022.
	Circuit Visitors promote sermon critiques throughout the synod and every congregation receives at least one visitation.	2025 Circuit Visitors: 1. Circuit Visitors were tasked to promote sermon critiquing in winkels and circuit Pastor Conferences in 2021 and report in 2022. It is expected that the Circuit Visitors will develop plan to conduct visitations by 2025 using alternates visitors as necessary. 2. Visitations were encouraged at the 2022 CV Conference. 3. <b><i>Pastor Paul Schneider has been appointed as mentor and monitor of accomplishing a visit at every ELS congregation by 2026.</i></b> 4. <b><i>The BHO is working to establish a visitation triage team to work with Circuit Visitors for congregations that are at or below critical mass.</i></b>
b. Every congregation pursuing excellence in worship. Committee on Worship*	Worship Committee sending out periodically “Excellence in Worship” notes.	2024 Committee on Worship: The committee is working on “Excellence in Worship” notes and will distribute them when ready.
	Worship Committee encouraging excellence in worship music, including the promotion of, and possible grants for, the use of the “Substitute Organist Service” from Church Music Solutions.	2026 Committee on Worship: 1. Recordings of the liturgies and hymns of the Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary are available at <a href="https://els.org/resources/worship/music-for-liturgy-and-hymns/">https://els.org/resources/worship/music-for-liturgy-and-hymns/</a> . The ELH liturgy recordings for Rite 1, Rite 2, Rite 3, Matins, and Vespers were recently remade by John Baumann. 2. Updated information about the “Substitute Organist Service” is provided each year in the report to the convention, and the cost of the service is negotiable for smaller congregations. Subsidies for “Substitute Organist Service” will not be offered due to price negotiability. 3. <b><i>Hymn accompaniment and prelude music resources have been compiled by Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux for use by organists and pianists, and more resources are being developed.</i></b> 4. <b><i>Church choir resources are being developed and will be available soon.</i></b> 5. The Worship Committee hosts a “Heritage of Hymns” event at each convention featuring historic music and hymnody from Lutheran composers and authors.

	Worship Committee offering workshops for ELS congregations and pastors to encourage ways to enhance the presentation of liturgical worship in a constant effort to achieve excellence in this vital part of congregational life. (Point of reference: 2011 “Report of the Committee on Evangelical Lutheran Synod Worship”).	2026 Committee on Worship: <i>Members of the Worship Committee are ready to make presentations on historic Lutheran worship and to conduct workshops for organists and choir directors by request. Congregations are invited to contact the members of the committee to schedule these presentations and workshops.</i>
c. Every congregation praying for missions at home and abroad. President* Communication Director†	One prayer per month.	2021 President: The Communication Director, in consultation with the Evangelism-Missions Counselor and the Board for World Outreach Administrator, began providing these prayers for divine services in December 2021, alternating monthly between home and world missions. Communication Director: <i>Prayers are sent each month when received from the Evangelism-Missions Counselor and the BWO Administrator. The prayers are also included in the President’s newsletter. (QUESTION from PF: Is this to be ongoing?)</i>
d. Every congregation growing in Christian stewardship.		
i. Localized projects that circuits can adopt and support.	List ideas under “resources” on synod website.	2023 --
ii. Synod-wide database of laity talents and skills.	Create this via Giving Counselor’s Office.	2025 --
iii. Clearinghouse of ideas for equipping members for kingdom service. Giving Counselor* Board for Home Outreach* President† Communication Director^	Add to webpage.	2025 Board for Home Outreach: Currently updating the synod’s webpage with community service opportunities. Communication Director: <i>Website is updated as materials are received from BHO.</i>
e. Every congregation developing a plan for outreach to the whole community. Board for Home Outreach*	Each circuit make this a focus.	2026 Board for Home Outreach: <i>1. “Do You Have a Pastor?” campaign is in development (printed material available; videos in production). 2. Written feedback from congregations who have gone through the program is being collected.</i>

<p>f. Every congregation seeking service opportunities in the community. Board for Home Outreach* Board for Christian Service†</p>	<p>Discover the local niche (e.g., Jesus Cares Ministry, Care Facility Ministry).</p>	<p>2026 Board for Home Outreach: <b>1. A list of community service opportunities has been created and will be made available shortly.</b> <b>2. A congregational self-assessment has been created and will be made available shortly.</b></p>
<p>g. Encourage congregations to make their Bible studies and devotions available online. Communication Director* President†</p>	<p>Some of these can be put out on our synod website, others, locally.</p>	<p>2026 Communication Director: <b>Website and separate repository are ready. Awaiting clarification on which individual/board is responsible to review and choose studies for inclusion.</b></p>

## 2. Equip the next generation through Christ-centered education.

<b>2. Equip the next generation through Christ-centered education.</b>		
<p>a. Support congregations in the development of schools. Board for Lutheran Schools* Board of Trustees† Board for Home Outreach†</p>	<p>Target certain congregations for development of a school.</p>	<p>2025 Board for Lutheran Schools: The board is in contact with the following congregations: 1) Our Saviour – Lake Havasu City, AZ: <b>Still potential here. More exploratory work is necessary. However, school choice in Arizona continues to flourish as a new parent-driven educational option.</b> 2) Faith – Oregon, WI: <b>In 2023, the board requested a more developed business plan from Faith, Oregon, which we received prior to our Jan. 2024 meeting. After review, we funded a portion of their request over CY 2024 &amp; 2025, at which time we will review their progress and decide on further disbursements.</b> 3) Gloria Dei – Saginaw, MI: Grant for \$40,000 from the board was approved in January 2023. <b>The congregation continues to make successful progress as they carry out their strategic plan for an early learning center start up in 2025.</b> 4) Faith – San Antonio, TX: The board has contacted the congregation but the congregation needs to pay off its mortgage before proceeding. 5) Our Savior – Lakeland, FL: <b>Currently in vacancy. No progress to report.</b></p>
<p>b. Develop strategies to reach our unchurched school families. Board for Lutheran Schools* Board for Home Outreach†</p>	<p>Use of the Harvest Strategy (WELS).</p>	<p>2025 Board for Lutheran Schools: The BHO sent a representative to the BLS meeting in October 2022 to share its harvest strategy for congregations with schools. The BLS recommends giving the BHO the primary responsibility for this work. <b>Board for Home Outreach: A harvest strategy has been developed alongside the BLS. The strategy will be presented to the principals at the 2024 synod convention and will be made available online as well.</b></p>



<p>c. Help instill a Christian worldview among our membership and the succeeding generations.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">President* Board for Youth Outreach* Doctrine Committee† Ad Hoc Committee on Apologetics^ Board of Regents^</p>	<p>Implementing a “center” for college, seminary, and synod at BLC campus. Enhancing the use of apologetics at our annual LYA conventions.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">2024</p> <p>President: The Apologetics Board was established at the 2022 convention and <i>was elected at the 2023 convention.</i></p> <p>Board for Youth Outreach: <b><i>Subcommittee working on content, scope, and production of six apologetic videos (one relating to each of the six chief parts of the Small Catechism). Production will be coordinated with BLC media arts. Funding is being sought through the Bolick Foundation.</i></b></p> <p>Board of Regents: 1. Funding is still being sought to establish the Apologetics chair. 2. Sponsoring the “In-Depth Series” of lectures on campus that helps Bethany students navigate current topics affecting today’s Christians.</p> <p>Doctrine: <b><i>Publishing a series of articles in the Lutheran Sentinel.</i></b></p>
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<p>d. Promote the close connection between the synod and the “One Thing Needful” at Bethany Lutheran College within every congregation and school of the synod.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Board of Regents* President†</p>	<p>The college will increase its visibility within the congregations and schools of the synod (e.g., congregation visits, presentations from faculty members, clergy-faculty led Bible studies).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2021–26</p> <p>Board of Regents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The college president annually addresses the ELS convention delegates to promote the strong ties between the College and its synod. (College president’s goals presented to the Board of Regents)</li> <li>2. “Roots of the Vine” program is being rolled out in the congregations of the ELS through Sunday congregational visits by BLC representatives. (BLC annual goal)</li> <li>3. “Ministry Mindset” program launched by the BLC Education department in which BLC education majors receive encouragement from BLC education graduates and principals about serving in ELS schools. (BLC Education Department)</li> <li>4. Bethany employees will continue to be encouraged, as they are able, to use their gifts and talents in beneficial ways in ELS congregations and the community. (2022-27 Strategic Plan).</li> <li><b>5. College President has developed a “President’s Advisory Council” consisting of alumni and friends of BLC. (2022-27 Strategic Plan)</b></li> <li>6. Expand BLC communication to the ELS, community and constituents through the gifts and talents among our faculty, staff and administration. (2022-27 Strategic Plan)</li> <li>7. Annually hosting the Bethany Auxiliary on campus, from whom the College receives significant support. (BLC Advancement Office)</li> <li>8. A program goal to develop a Viking-to-Viking mentoring program to expand alumni engagement.</li> <li>9. An enrollment program to develop campus-wide visit experience for Lutheran High School partners and develop a template and process for K-12 summer program.</li> </ol> <p>President: <i>The president is raising awareness of “Our College” as he makes visits around the synod.</i></p>
	<p>Accept invitations for faculty presentations, clergy-led Bible studies, etc.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2021–26</p> <p>Board of Regents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BLC faculty present programs for ELS members and BLC students through the College “In Depth” series. (2022-27 Strategic Plan)</li> <li>2. BLC clergy serve as guest preachers in ELS congregations as invited. (2022-27 Strategic Plan) – <b><i>Don Moldstad, Tom Rank, and Shawn Stafford have preached and/or led Bible studies at congregations near the campus and beyond.</i></b></li> <li>3. BLC updates provided to ELS congregations by BLC representatives during Sunday morning presentations. (BLC Annual Goal)</li> </ol>

	<p>Contact every pastor of the ELS seeking input as to about how to strengthen the importance of the college within the congregations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2021–26</p> <p>Board of Regents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As part of the “Roots of the Vine” program, BLC representatives reach out to ELS pastors to discuss close ties and support with Bethany and offer to make Bethany presentations in their congregations. (2022-27 Strategic Plan)</li> <li>2. <b><i>Pres. Pfeifer and Bruce Gratz have reached their annual goals.</i></b></li> </ol>
	<p>Discuss with pastors how the college can support the congregations of the synod (e.g. continued religious instruction of members, training of musicians, etc.).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2021–26</p> <p>Board of Regents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Roots of the Vine” discussions with pastors and congregation Church Councils include conversations regarding both how the congregations can support Bethany, and how Bethany supports the work of the congregations through its alumni as lay leaders in their congregations and called workers as ELS pastors and teachers. (BLC Annual Goal)</li> <li>2. In the future, online teaching may assist Bethany in developing a broader, non-traditional student body that needs flexibility in their learning. (2022-27 Strategic Plan)</li> </ol>
	<p>Seek to increase the percentage of ELS students attending BLC.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2021–26</p> <p>Board of Regents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The college president regularly addresses this issue with our board and desires to understand how more ELS eligible students take advantage of BLC. (College president’s goals presented to the Board of Regents)</li> <li>2. The college president annually addresses the ELS convention delegates to promote the strong ties between the college and its synod. (College President’s goals presented to the Board of Regents)</li> <li>3. The college has added and continues to consider adding majors that fit well with the needs of future ELS students. Examples are the additions of nursing, special education, engineering, computer science, legal studies, and criminal justice. A new emphasis area within the business administration major currently under consideration is agri-business (BLC Annual Goal)</li> <li>4. The Bethany Admissions department continues to provide financial and structural support so that ELS middle school and confirmation aged students from all ELS schools and congregations may visit at Bethany every 2-3 years. Bethany covers the cost for meals, and some hotel and logistical costs to help make this happen. We also engage with ELS principals regularly in order to keep this as a priority (BLC Admissions Strategy)</li> <li>5. The college provides an ELS Tuition Discount. (BLC Admissions Strategy)</li> <li>6. <b><i>A very conscious effort was made to publicize the solidly confessional Lutheran flavor of Bethany. The number of confessional Lutheran students grew by 40+ for the 2023-2024 academic year.</i></b></li> </ol>

	<p>Raise the importance of BLC in the way that we function as a synod.</p>	<p>Board of Regents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The college president annually addresses the ELS convention delegates to promote the strong ties between the college and its synod. (College President's goals presented to the Board of Regents)</li> <li>2. The "Roots of the Vine" program is being rolled out in the congregations of the ELS through Sunday congregational visits by BLC representatives. (BLC Annual Goal)</li> <li>3. "Ministry Mindset" program launched by the BLC Education department in which BLC education majors receive encouragement from BLC education graduates and principals about serving in ELS schools. (BLC Education Department)</li> <li>4. Bethany employees will continue to be encouraged, as they are able, to use their gifts and talents in beneficial ways in ELS congregations and the community. (2022-27 Strategic Plan)</li> <li>5. <b><i>Recent cuts in some majors and minors have heightened the synod's awareness of the need for maintaining a Christian liberal arts education at Bethany, the importance of Bethany to our synod, and the critical need to support Bethany.</i></b></li> </ol>
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<p>e. Position the ELS to take advantage in states that offer school choice. Board for Lutheran Schools*</p>	<p>Florida is a model for this concept (Step Up Program).</p>	<p>2026</p> <p>Board for Lutheran Schools:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A congregation was approached with a proposal, but it declined for the 2022 calendar year. <i>This congregation was approached again in 2023 and interest seems to be growing for a school start. The board will hold its January meeting at their site in 2025 in the hopes of continuing to build interest for the project.</i></li> <li>2. More work is necessary to create a template for churches which would help to predict feasibility in their individual locations.</li> <li>3. A meeting was held with the Evangelism-Missions Counselor, Brad Kerkow, in January 2023 to discuss the creation of the template and how the Board for Home Outreach and Board for Lutheran Schools might work together on future projects in Florida—follow up with EMC will happen periodically as template work is completed. <i>Still needed. Lack of time and funding stand in the way of this process getting completed.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Over the past several years the board has prayerfully partnered with the BLC Education Department in efforts to increase enrollment in our ELS Teacher Certification Track. The Lord has blessed these efforts and the BLC Education Department now reports that 22 students will graduate as ELS Certified Teachers over the next 4 years. With this in mind, at its Jan. 2024 meeting the board resolved to attempt to increase our funding for the Secretary of Schools position beginning in CY 2025, taking it from a 1 day/month (not adequate time to compete current work) position to a ½-time position. This would afford the SoS and the board the opportunity to work effectively with congregations on the development of schools. A preliminary job description has been created by the board.</i></li> <li>5. <i>The board at its Jan. 2024 meeting discussed the opportunity that the growing school choice movement throughout the United States offers our ELS in terms of our increased ability to reach the lost, by starting schools as mission projects and as revitalization projects within current congregations. The board desires further collaboration with the BHO to take advantage of this opportunity to seek and save the lost through school/mission starts in school choice states in the very near future (Luke 19:10).</i></li> </ol>
<p>f. Work with home schooling groups. Board for Lutheran Schools*</p>	<p>Support an annual event; give ideas on curricular matters.</p>	<p>2022</p> <p>Board for Lutheran Schools:</p> <p><i>The board renewed its commitment to assist ELS homeschool groups by approving a school subsidy grant to Faith-Oregon, WI for assistance in starting Sursum Corda Classical Academy, a hybrid model school serving homeschool families.</i></p>

<b>3. Develop and disseminate evangelism resources for home and world outreach.</b>		
<p>a. Develop a strategy for effective communication from the synod and to the world. President* Communication Director† Committee for Communication^</p>	<p>“Learn About Jesus” communication rejuvenated.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">2022</p> <p>President: —The Communication Director is working with Pastor Luke Ulrich from the Board for Home Outreach to review this program and possibly replace it with something comparable.</p> <p>Communication Director: —Due to the demands of producing a truly effective site (learnaboutjesus.com), it would be best not to pursue this objective.</p>
<p>b. Educate the members of ELS in their roles in evangelism and outreach. Board for Home Outreach*</p>	<p>Accept invitations to present at parishes.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">2021–26</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach: <b><i>The EMC continues to work individually with congregations. The board continues to communicate available information and resources to congregations at annual synod conventions.</i></b></p>
<p>c. Produce evangelism and apologetic resources. Board for Home Outreach* Doctrine Committee† Board for World Outreach^</p>	<p>Look both to the Doctrine Committee and Board for Home Outreach for producing materials in their specific purviews.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">2021–26</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach: <b><i>1. “We’re Glad You Asked About...” brochures have been updated for content. Graphic design is being updated and they will be available digitally.</i></b> <b><i>2. Spanish version of “Peace Devotions” has been created. Funding is being sought for publication.</i></b> <b><i>3. Christmas and Easter postcards are made available to the synod through the EMC.</i></b> <b><i>4. Other personal witnessing tools and resources are being researched and made available through the ELS web site.</i></b> <b><i>5. Some of this work will now be taken over by the Board for Apologetics.</i></b></p> <p>Board for World Outreach: <b><i>Always searching for suitable materials for translation and dissemination among our mission fields. Some have been accomplished and others are being considered.</i></b></p>
<p>d. Produce materials to assist in making a clear confession of Christian truth in a post-Christian culture. President* Board for Youth Outreach* Doctrine Committee† Ad Hoc Committee on Apologetics^ Board of Regents^ (See structure for 2 c, above)</p>	<p>Disseminate selected materials through the BLC chaplain’s office and Religion Department.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">2023</p> <p>President: 1. “One Little Word” monthly videos are being produced. A monthly podcast on various topics is planned (pending funding approval). 2. The president has been encouraging BLC administration to add a very pointed and clear confession of what we believe, teach, and confess at our college to its website. <b><i>This has been done on the “About Us” page on the BLC website.</i></b></p> <p>Board for Youth Outreach: <b><i>Subcommittee working on content, scope, and production of six apologetic videos (one relating to each of the six chief parts of the Small Catechism). Production will be coordinated with BLC media arts. Funding is being sought through the Bolick Foundation.</i></b></p>



<b>4. Establish and support synod missions at home and abroad.</b>		
<p>Board for Home Outreach* Board for World Outreach*</p>	<p>i. BHO begin six new missions/ministries in a five-year span. ii. BWO, per the guidelines, locate and establish world mission field(s) (<i>Synod Report</i> 2019, page 101 Resolution 8).</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">2021–26</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach: 1. Defined a new process for revitalization of current congregations. 2. Received grant money from the Schwan Foundation to engage four congregations with Grace in Action strategic planning to take the next step in their ministry. 3. Actively creating and pursuing congregational partnerships (cross-cultural ministry at existing ELS congregation, daughtering congregations, preaching stations) <b>4. Two of six new missions or ministries completed; no new starts.</b></p> <p>Board for World Outreach: <b>1. The long-held strategy of establishing mission outreach in greater Seoul, South Korea among the Chinese-Korean (Mandarin speaking) diaspora is starting to take on real form and substance with the initial and evolving efforts of Pastor David Choi.</b> <b>2. Work has started more closely with the Australia mission field, currently centered around Our Redeemer in Brisbane. The board is assisting with calling a pastor.</b> <b>3. The LMSI district in Rajahmundry is seeking assistance and support in the creation of a new congregation and church facility.</b></p>
<b>5. Endeavor to increase the efficiency and productivity of our synod’s boards.</b>		
<p>a. Make use of Ministry Leadership Institute (MLI) for specific boards/entities (e.g., Board for World Outreach, Board for Home Outreach, Board for Lutheran Schools, Board for Youth Outreach).</p>	<p>Initiate as boards see fit and assess its effectiveness.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">2021–26</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach: 1. Grant money received from the Schwan Foundation to engage four congregations with Grace in Action strategic planning to take the next step in their ministry. <b>2. The board continues to seek better understanding of the process of applying for grants and funding from a variety of funding sources.</b> <b>3. The board received a \$20,000 grant from the Bolick Foundation (a new grant entity).</b></p> <p>Board for World Outreach: <b>The board has recently decided to re-visit the applicability of MLI offerings for board and mission field management.</b></p> <p>Board for Youth Outreach: The board will evaluate the MLI program and determine if it will utilize the MLI training.</p>

b. Continually consult the guidelines of the ELS Handbook, respectively.	At each opening session following convention, note the guidelines.	<p style="text-align: right;">2021–26</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach: The administrator and board periodically review the synod’s Handbook and the board’s own handbook to be sure it is following the relevant guidelines. When necessary, amendments and updates are suggested so the guidelines fit the current situation as well as anticipated future situations. The board, as suggested, will consult the handbooks at its first meeting after synod conventions</p>
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Key: \* Primary Responsibility  
† Secondary Responsibility

## REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

*Committee #7: Finances*

### MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Trustees consists of nine trustees. Serving on the board are: Mr. Dennis Behr, Mr. David Ewert, the Rev. Craig Ferkenstad, the Rev. Phillip Lepak, the Rev. Jonathan Madson, Mr. Paul Mielbrecht, the Rev. Glenn Obenberger, Mr. J.T. Pedersen, and the Rev. S. Piet VanKampen. The synod’s vice president, the Rev. Michael Smith served as an advisory member to the board. The Rev. Keith Boheim represents the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation as an advisory consultant.

The president of the synod and the secretary of the synod also serve as the chairman and secretary of the Board of Trustees.

Mr. David Ewert has served on the board for seventeen years. The Rev. Craig Ferkenstad has served for twenty-eight years. Both are declining renomination at this convention.

### MEETINGS

The Board of Trustees has met since the last convention for regular meetings on August 16, November 16, February 6–7. The board also will meet in May. An electronic polling was held on January 7–8. Videoconference meetings were held on January 22 and April 15.

Members serving on the Board of Regents-Board of Trustees Subcommittee are Mr. David Ewert, the Rev. Jonathan Madson, and Mr. Paul Mielbrecht. Members serving on the Board of Trustees-Home Outreach Subcommittee are Mr. Dennis Behr, Mr. David Ewert, and the Rev. Phillip Lepak. Members serving on the Board of Trustees-World Outreach Subcommittee are the Rev. Jonathan Madson the Rev Michael Smith, and the Rev. S.Piet VanKampen. Mr. David Ewert also serves as a liaison from the Board of Trustees to the Board of Regents.

### STAFF

The treasurer and giving counselor serve under the direction of the board and report regularly. The Rev. Daniel Basel retired from the office of giving counselor on January 31, 2024 after seventeen years of service. Mr. Paul Manning began his work as the giving counselor on November 1, 2023.

In May 2023, Myrna Meunier was assigned the functions of the treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod; as such the position of Business Administrator was eliminated. The Synod Review Committee will recommended appropriate guidelines changes necessitated by this appointment to this convention

The Communication Director also reports directly to the synod’s president. The Evangelism-Missions Counselor is accountable to the Board for Home Outreach and the World Outreach Administrator is accountable to the Board for World Outreach. The Director for the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews reports to the Board on Apologetics.

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

As the Board of Trustees of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the board is entrusted with the “general management and control of this corporation” between meetings of the synod (ELS *Articles of Incorporation*, Article VIII) and is especially concerned about the physical properties and fiscal responsibilities of the synod.

## FINANCES

The Board of Trustees oversees the operation of the synodical finances and budget. Management of all Donor Advised funds was transferred from the ELS Foundation to the WELS Foundation in June 2023.

### ***Congregation Funding***

In 2023, congregation offerings exceeded the adopted congregation contribution goal of \$840,000. Congregation contributions in 2023 totaled: \$880,353. In adopting the 2023 report of the Board of Trustees, the synod also endorsed the recommendation that congregation contributions in excess of \$840,000 be designated for the operations of Bethany Lutheran College (*Synod Report* 2023, page 149).

During this past year, the closure of two congregations has provided financial gifts:

Grace Lutheran Church (Weston, Ohio) for circuit visitors' work (\$20,000), Bethany Lutheran College, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, and other congregations.

Our Savior's Lutheran Church (Amherst Junction, Wisconsin) to Board for Home Outreach (\$50,000), Bethany Lutheran College, and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

### ***Missions Advancement Project, Inc.***

The Missions Advancement Project (M.A.P.) has a Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Trustees of the ELS to provide financial support for the synod. Current members are the Rev Michael Muehlenhardt (chairman), Mr. David Ewert (treasurer), Mr. Marlin Goebel, the Rev. John Petersen, and Mr. Ronald Younge.

For the years 2024, M.A.P. made funding requests to the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation. Approval has been received for the following which is identical to the previous year's grants.

Peru	\$ 18,620
Chile	17,380
India/LMSI	146,000
MAP - administrative	30,000
Gift of Life / Thoughts of Faith:	
Gift of Life	118,000
Czech Republic	10,000
Latvia	<u>15,000</u>
Total	\$355,000

### ***Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation***

The synod is dependent upon the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation for maintenance of its programs, and continues to be grateful to the Foundation for its level of general support. To supplement the 2023 budget, the Foundation set a targeted "base grant" of \$410,000. This was awarded as \$389,000 in Program Funds to assist with programs within the general budget of the synod. Special project grants and project funds also were awarded:

Pastoral Renewal/Support	\$ 38,500	Board of Trustees
Home Mission Conference	13,000	Board for Home Outreach

An extraordinary grant of \$50,000 was also received for synod building maintenance.

In past years, the Foundation has granted (1) Program Funds to assist with programs within the general synod budget, (2) Special Project Grants beyond the general budget which were not to exceed a total annual designation, and (3) Project Funds for larger programs beyond the funding set aside for the synod.

Beginning in 2024, the Foundation will continue with only:

- Regular Annual Grants (base grant), and
- Project Funds.

The Regular Annual Grant will be based upon previous grants made, expected needs, and other factors such as unique opportunities or challenges. No beneficiary should assume that grant levels will automatically remain the same from year to year nor that funds given for one purpose in any given year will automatically be continued in the following year.

In addition, all beneficiaries of the foundation have the option of applying for Project Funds which are for larger programs beyond the funding that is set aside for the synod. There is no guarantee of funding for these projects.

Each beneficiary is expected to self-evaluate the requests that it is planning to make each year, both as to the effectiveness of previous grants as well as to current opportunities that may be different or new and adjust all requests accordingly. For example, funds for a project or program that has run its cycle of effectiveness should not be requested "just because" that project or program has been funded in the past.

To assist with its self-evaluation, the following questions are provided by the Foundation:

- What are the challenges and opportunities facing your organization?
- How have past grants of the Foundation been used?

c) What differences have the grants made your beneficiary organization—for strengthening its confessional theological position and for its long-term viability?

d) How can the Foundation best work with your organization to meet future needs/opportunities/challenges?

Requests for grants are considered upon a favorable recommendation submitted through the ELS Board of Trustees and received and evaluated by the Foundation throughout the year. Each beneficiary must apply for grants by making a grant request that explains the nature of the project, the purposes/goals, and how the effectiveness will be evaluated and measured.

### ***Expenditures***

Audited numbers were not available at the time of this report but the “actual expenditures” will be included in the Consolidated Financial Statement of the synod audit and the supplemental information presented during the convention.

### ***Wills and Estates***

The synod gratefully acknowledges the receipt of proceeds from the following estates (March 1, 2022 to February 28, 2023):

Esther Faugstad	\$2,162.08
DuWayne Gremel	\$64,318.74
Arline Hildebrandt	\$1,280.49
Paul Hirschmann	\$4,892.57
Gloria A. Johnson	\$32,615.52
Grant Seydel	\$95,000.00
Martin A. Robinson trust	\$32,000.00

## **PROPERTIES**

The board serves as custodians of the synod’s property and is responsible for any financial obligations of the synod.

### ***Property***

The property at Fort Mohave, Arizona was sold in May 2023. After expenses, the synod received \$610,838 which was used to repay the loan to the synod and the loan with LACE. The remaining \$130,540 was designated to the work of the Board for Home Outreach.

Lincoln, Illinois sold in May 2023 for \$30,000. After the loan has been repaid, the synod received \$6,965.

### ***Archives and History***

The following report is submitted by Shawn D. Stafford, secretary of the ELS Committee for Archives and History.

The Committee for Archives and History functions under the direction of the Board of Trustees, which appoints members to the committee. The committee oversees the work of the Synod Archives, the Ottesen Museum, and the ELS Historical Society. Committee members include the Rev. John Petersen (chairman), the Rev. Shawn Stafford (secretary), the Rev. Craig Ferkenstad, the Rev. Ted Gullixson (archivist), Synod President Glenn Obenberger (ex-officio), and the Rev. Mike Muhlenhardt. The committee regularly hears reports from the Synod Archivist Ted Gullixson, Ottesen Museum Director Rebecca DeGarmeaux. An officer of the ELS Historical Society is also to report to each meeting. The committee met in September 2023 and February 2024.

Over a century ago, Olaf M. Norlie compiled *Norsk Lutherske Menigheter i Amerika*, *Norsk Lutherske Prester i Amerika*, *School Calendar*, and an unpublished fourth volume of prominent Norwegians. These volumes contained biographical and historical information regarding Norwegian American pastors and congregations during the years 1843–1916. Drawing upon her extensive research and detailed spreadsheets, Elsa Ferkenstad, Executive Assistant to the ELS president and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary president, has produced a three hundred-page book entitled *Evangelical Lutheran Synod Congregations and Pastors: A Historic Register, 1918–2023*. It includes all the pastors, congregations, and teachers that have been part of the reorganized synod since its founding, with photographs in black and white. This book is being published under the auspices of the ELS Committee on Archives and History, and may be printed on demand from Lulu, at a cost of \$30 plus shipping.

### ***ELS Archives***

The ELS archives has provided archival assistance to Mt. Olive Lutheran in Mankato for its centennial and to Heritage Lutheran for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to two ELS pastors for conference papers, to one pastor for a *Lutheran Sentinel* article, and to Susan Willems from the WELS archives on the “Bethany Indian Mission” of the Norwegian Synod. Special collections on documents on “Church Fellowship” and “Church and Ministry” have been developed. Donations in the past year to the archives have included fifty-three bound books of Peru mission correspondence from 1968 to 1979 from Rev. Theodore Kuster and documents and sermons from Rev. Dr. Erling Teigen. Archived materials available include a general book collection printed and online, a pamphlet index printed and online, an “Index to the Archives” printed and online, and many other lists on the [els.org/archives](http://els.org/archives) website. A series of six brochures was prepared for distribution: on the general *Importance of Preserving History*, *the ELS Archives*, *the Ottesen Museum*, a brief *ELS History*, the *Retention Guide* from the ELS archives website, and *Planning Your Congregation’s Anniversary*.

### ***Ottesen Museum***

The ELS Ottesen Museum has received 186 visitors in the past year, including confirmation classes, ELS youth from LYA, and seminary students, and Christmas open house guests. The annual Christmas open house was held on December 5, with theme “Scandinavian Christmas Hymns.” There were thirty-seven visitors to the open house. Appraisers visited the museum to evaluate rare and valuable objects, such as some Gausta paintings, a cradle, and a dress from China. Final recommendations and values are forthcoming, and a couple paintings may be restored.

### ***ELS Historical Society***

The ELS Historical Society Board consists of chairman, Rev. Michael Lilienthal; treasurer Marge Lillo; secretary, Marie Aaberg; Rev. Andrew Soule; Julie Faugstad; Neil Shaffer; ELS president, Rev. Glenn Obenberger; ELS secretary, Rev. Craig Ferkenstad, and ELS Archivist, Rev. Ted Gullixson.

The annual meeting of the ELS Historical Society was held in the Sigurd K. Lee Theater of the Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center at Bethany Lutheran College on Sunday, June 18, 2023. The theme of the program was “They Are Not Dead But Sleeping” and included three presentations on funeral practices throughout the history of the ELS. Speakers included Tom Langseth from the Parkland congregation in Tacoma, Washington, Rev. Peter Faugstad of the Saude and Jerico congregations, and Rev. Dr. Erling Teigen. Editorship of the *Oak Leaves* newsletter has been passed to Rev. Timothy Erickson.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

The 2023 synodical stewardship report marks the last full year Rev. Daniel Basel served as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod’s giving counselor. President Obenberger presented him with a commemorative plaque recognizing his seventeen years of service as the ELS Giving Counselor and also thanked his wife Lisa for her support over the years. The Lord has blessed us through his service. Rev. Basel was installed as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Hillman, Michigan and Trinity Lutheran Church, Rogers City, Michigan on February 4, 2024. This report reflects his work on behalf of the synod and its churches to teach and promote Christian Giving, but is submitted by Paul Manning, the current ELS Giving Counselor.

### ***Congregational Giving***

We thank all ELS member congregations for their generous support of our synod. The financial support provided is essential to our synod’s ability to function administratively, and also to share the gospel message through all of our boards and schools: Home Outreach, World Outreach, Youth Outreach, Lutheran Schools, Christian Service, Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. Thank you to the congregations that participated in synodical giving Sunday. This serves mostly as a reminder of our annual goal and the important role the congregations play. The synod received \$880,353 of financial support in 2023 as designated congregation giving. Praise the Lord!

### ***Current Giving and its Importance***

The current giving received for our ELS ministries provides for a significant part of the funding during the fiscal year in which it is needed. Synod members are encouraged to first support their congregations as needed and then prayerfully consider supporting the ELS ministries. The boards of Home Outreach, World Outreach, Youth Outreach, Lutheran Schools, and Christian Service received in support from individuals a total of \$663,450 in 2023. Thank you for glorifying our Lord with your support!

### ***Preaching and Teaching in Our Congregations***

Rev. Basel was able to preach in fifteen congregations and share many more presentations and Bible studies as members throughout our synod had the opportunity to be encouraged and guided in Christian giving. Teaching Christian stewardship practices continued year-round as materials utilized in presentations were also available on our website and in our synod churches.

### ***Estate Planning and Planned Giving***

We urge our brothers and sisters in Christ to remember our Lord’s work in their wills and as beneficiary designations. In faith we confess that God is the owner of all we have and all we are. It is he who blessed us through our labors and faithful stewardship. We are responsible for managing what God has entrusted to us in life as well as in death. He has given us the privilege, opportunity and the joy of expressing our love for him and those we love through our estate plans. There are many important resources available to plan your stewardship, including Estate Planning Brochures and A Guide for Preparing Your Will available through the giving counselor. There are many financial vehicles that can be used to support ministry and make tax wise decisions. There are several options, depending on what is best for you, including: Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) that remain a major portion of our synod giving, Charitable Gift Annuities, Donor Advised Funds, Endowments and Charitable Trusts.

### ***Solicitation and Stewardship of Donors***

Multiple appeal letters were distributed throughout the year and it was our goal to recognize all gifts. This was a team effort that could only have been accomplished with the work and support of the synod staff team Elsa Ferkenstad and Myrna Meunier as well



as key volunteer support of Mary Born, Margaret Gullixson and Lois Johnson. Thank you for your stewardship of your time and talents!

#### ***Giving Counselor Transition and 2024***

Rev. Basel spent time overseeing the transition of his role to Paul Manning, who began working as the giving counselor in November 2023. Mr. Manning is our synod's third person in this role and the first layman. The purpose of the giving counselor will remain to glorify God through wise use and disposition of material blessings that our Lord has placed into our hands. However, the new year will need to bring new strategies as we transition from clergy to lay leadership. We thank the Lord for the blessings he has showered upon our synod through his servant Rev. Basel in 2023 and we pray the Lord blesses this transition in 2024.

#### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD FOUNDATION, INC.**

As the Board of Trustees of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Foundation, Inc., the assets of the foundation are managed and controlled by the board (*Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Foundation*, Article II.A). The president, vice president, secretary and treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod serve as the officers of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Foundation. The annual meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Foundation is held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod Foundation Investment Committee consists of four members elected to two-year terms by the Board of Trustees. During this past year, the committee has consisted of: Mr. David Ewert, Mr. Mark Olsen, Mr. J.T. Pedersen, and Mr. Jeff Younge. The committee meets concurrently with the quarterly meetings of the Board of Trustees to consider and make recommendations regarding the investment of the synod's assets and the use of the income from those investments.

As of December 31, 2023 the ELS foundation consisted of \$22,376,188. The rate of return for all investments for the calendar year 2023 was 14.06%. It is important to realize that most of the funds in the foundation are designated funds or endowments and are not readily available for general synod expenses.

For the year 2024, the distribution percentage from the endowments will be 3.0%.

An accounting is found in the "Financial Statements and Supplementary information."

#### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE, INC.**

The annual meeting of the Bethany Lutheran College, Inc. is held concurrently with the annual meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. At this meeting, BLC, Inc. elects the "Evangelical Lutheran Synod Board of Regents" and also the "Board of Trustees of Bethany Lutheran College, Inc."

As the Board of Trustees of Bethany Lutheran College, Inc., the trustees "govern Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary with respect to the property. All other matters of trusteeship and governance are assigned to the Board of Regents" (*Guidelines for the Board of Trustees of Bethany Lutheran College, Inc.*, Article III, Preamble). The report to the corporation is assigned to the Board of Regents.

A joint meeting was held between the Board of Trustees and the Board of Regents on February 6, 2024. The trustees also receive reports from the college and seminary at each meeting.

#### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE LUTHERAN SCHOOLS OF AMERICA, INC.**

Membership in the Lutheran Schools of America (LSA), Inc. is identical to membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The sole duty of the Board of Trustees is to manage the Lutheran Schools of America Fund. The day-by-day operations managed by the Board for Lutheran Schools. This year's convention also serves as the annual meeting of the Lutheran Schools of America.

*The Rev. Glenn Obenberger, chairman  
The Rev. Craig Ferkenstad, secretary*



# REPORT OF THE SYNOD REVIEW COMMITTEE

*Committee #14 Miscellaneous*

The members of the Synod Review Committee are the Rev. S. Piet Van Kampen, chairman; Mr. Karl Bloedel; the Rev. Craig Ferkenstad; the Rev. Theodore Gullixson, secretary; and Mr. James Flantz. President Glenn Obenberger served as an advisory member. Since the 2023 synod convention, the committee has met four times.

The Board of Trustees brought two items to the attention of the committee where the ELS guidelines needed to be corrected. Since these items have been in the guidelines for many years, yet are not accurate, changes were made to the guidelines as follows:

- a) Concerning the Board for Christian Service, Article 3, C:
  2. The synod ~~Business Administrator~~ treasurer will be the administrator of the contribution plan.
  3. Should the ~~Business Administrator~~ treasurer meet with challenges or conflicts that require arbitration, all arbitration is to be done by the Board for Christian Service.

- b) Concerning the ELS Foundation Bylaws, Article II, C:

“The president, vice president, and secretary ~~and treasurer~~ of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod shall be the officers of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Foundation.”

The Synod Review Committee also provided clarification to Pres. Obenberger on various issues by letter.

The following items are presented as suggested changes to the ELS Guidelines. The proposed additions are underlined.

## 1) Synodical Stewardship.

*Change the requirements for the ELS Giving Counselor, as authorized by the 2022 convention (Synod Report 2022, page 161, resolution 4)*

### **Section 310, Guidelines for the Board of Trustees, Article V:**

- A. The Board of Trustees shall engage or call a Giving Counselor who shall be responsible to the board and under the supervision of the synod president.
- B. The Giving Counselor....
  2. The candidate is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod clergy, or one who is willing to join the synod. He needs to possess skills in preaching public speaking, writing and human relations. He must have understanding of fund-raising, financial planning and insurance related issues, or be willing to be trained in these essentials.

## 2) Treasurer.

*Amend the following guidelines that deal with the office of Synod Treasurer, as assigned by the Board of Trustees:*

### **A) Section 310, Guidelines for the Board of Trustees, Article VII:**

- D. The position of synod treasurer shall be appointed by the Board of Trustees who shall establish the salary and benefits of the position and review the performance and remuneration on an annual basis. He ~~is an advisory member of the Board of Trustees and~~ shall be responsible for the accurate recording of the receipt and disbursement of all synodical funds and shall function under the direction of the Board of Trustees. He shall give such bond for the faithful performance of his duties as the board may direct.

### **B) Section 341, Guidelines for the Board for Home Outreach), Article I, A:**

4. The Evangelism and Missions Counselor (see Article IV) ~~and the synod treasurer~~ shall serve as advisory members an advisory member of the board.

### **C) Section 345. Guidelines for the Board for World Outreach, Article I, C:**

4. The duties of the treasurer will be administered by the office of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Treasurer. ~~He or his representative shall serve as an advisor to the board.~~

### **D) Section 370, Guidelines for the Planning and Coordinating Committee), Article I:**

- A. The membership shall consist of the officers of the synod, .... ~~The treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod shall be an advisor.~~

## 3) Board for World Outreach

*Amend the Board for World Outreach guidelines to allow for “Type B” members (Synod Report 2023, page 112, resolution 1). The Board for World Outreach also recommended that the number of Type B members be changed from three to two, to be consistent with the Board for Home Outreach guidelines:*

**Section 345, Guidelines for the Board for World Outreach Article I.A:**

A. The board shall consist of nine members, who shall be elected by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod meeting in convention (see Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Chapter V, Paragraph 1.d). Three members shall be clergy, three members shall be lay and three members shall be either clergy or lay. The terms of office shall be staggered and each shall be for three years.

**A. Membership**

1. The Board for World Outreach shall consist of nine members: seven Type A and two Type B (see Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Chapter V, Paragraph 1.d). Type A membership shall be made up of not more than four nor fewer than three clergymen. Type B membership shall be made up of at least one clergyman. These members shall be elected at the regular meeting of the corporation (Type A), and appointed by the board and ratified by the convention (Type B).
2. Type A members shall be elected for three-year staggered terms by the voting members of the corporation at an annual meeting.
3. Type B members shall be appointed by the board for a term of three years. Appointees shall be ratified at the next annual convention of the corporation and shall begin to serve upon such ratification. No Type B member shall serve more than two consecutive full terms. Members may be appointed and ratified as the initial terms expire.

It is recommended that these Board for World Outreach guidelines be fully implemented at the 2025 synod convention.

*The Rev. Theodore G. Gullixson, secretary*

## MEMORIALS

### MANDATORY USE OF LITURGY BY SUPPORTED CONGREGATIONS

*Committee #9: Home Outreach*

- WHEREAS, Use of the liturgy is part and parcel of Lutheran worship, and,  
 WHEREAS, The Lutheran church self-consciously identifies as preserving the customary forms of worship, and,  
 WHEREAS, There is great benefit to uniformity of worship, and,  
 WHEREAS, The customary approved liturgies offer ample variety within acceptable limits, and,  
 WHEREAS, Changing the order of the elements of the liturgy changes what the services confesses, teaches, and conveys, and,  
 WHEREAS, Congregations that support the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod expect customary, approved, orthodox services to be conducted as noted in the synod bylaws, therefore,  
 A. BE IT RESOLVED, That synodical worship services be conducted according to the customary, approved, orthodox liturgies, and,  
 B. BE IT RESOLVED, That all congregations receiving support from synod be they foreign or domestic missions, or other classification are required to conduct all services according to customary, approved, orthodox liturgies as noted in the synod bylaws, and,  
 C. BE IT RESOLVED, That the understanding of customary, approved, orthodox liturgy includes the normal order of the elements of the liturgy.

*Reformation Lutheran Church  
Hillsboro, Oregon*

### COMMENDING EVERY SUNDAY COMMUNION

*Committee #6: Doctrine*

- WHEREAS, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper "for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:27), and,  
 WHEREAS, The Lord's Supper enables us to love as we are loved, which is indicated by Jesus in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give you so that you love one another," Luther's "Christian Questions and Their Answers" assert in the answer to question #18 "Why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?" "...That I may also learn of Him to love God and my neighbor (ELH p.39), and Luther's post communion collect implores, "...that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through [Jesus' body and blood] in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another," ELH p. 83), and,  
 WHEREAS, Jesus indicated that His people are to celebrate the Lord's Supper often (1 Corinthians 11:25), and,

WHEREAS, As often as we eat and drink in the Lord's Supper we, "Show the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26), and,  
WHEREAS, It is the responsibility of the church to make the Lord's Supper available (Matthew 24:45, 46; Luke 12:42, 43), and,  
WHEREAS, Our Lutheran fathers self-consciously defended their valuing the Lord's Supper by stating, "Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the Mass, for the Mass is retained by us and celebrated with the highest reverence" (AC Article XXIV, *ELH* p. 16). And further, "We hold one Communion every holy day, and on other days it is given to those who ask for it" (ibid, p. 17), and also the apology states, "In our churches, mass is celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals when the sacrament is offered to those who wish for it after they have been examined and absolved" (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV, Tappert page 249), and,  
WHEREAS, Offering the Lord's Supper does not compel anyone to receive it, while not offering it prevents everyone from receiving it, therefore,  
BE IT RESOLVED, That the ELS commends to all our congregations the blessings of Every-Lord's Day communion

*Reformation Lutheran Church  
Hillsboro, Oregon*

## **CHRISTIAN MORAL LEGISLATION**

*Committee #6: Doctrine*

WHEREAS, We are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16), and,  
WHEREAS, Our government is "Of, by, and for the people," and,  
WHEREAS, If Christian morality is not legislated, other "morality" will be, and,  
WHEREAS, Immoral legislation has been promoted and passed, and continues to be promoted and passed (e.g. abortion on demand, and various laws that include keeping information from parents), and,  
WHEREAS, Some of that legislation undermines the basic tenets of Biblical morality, and,  
WHEREAS, The more that morality decays in our nation, the more the church and Christians are and will be persecuted, and,  
WHEREAS, Most people have civil law as their moral standard, and,  
WHEREAS, When civil law is closer to Biblical morality, it is easier for the church to convince people of the verity of God's word, therefore,  
A. BE IT RESOLVED, That the ELS seek out and work together with like minded Christians to craft and promote bills on federal and state levels to defend and promote biblical morality, and,  
B. BE IT RESOLVED, That the ELS begin this effort with the WELS, LCMS, and CLC, and,  
C. BE IT RESOLVED, That if no efforts already exist in this regard, that the ELS take the initiative to establish such efforts.

*Reformation Lutheran Church  
Hillsboro, Oregon*

## **BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE**

*Committee #8: Higher Education*

WHEREAS, Due to the depletion of the reserve funds, the Bethany Lutheran College administration and Board of Regents have been put in the difficult situation of making significant cuts in the college's expenses, and,  
WHEREAS, The 2023 convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod directed the Board of Regents to "take the actions necessary to ensure the continuing solvency of our college, and ... maintain Bethany's identity as a Christian liberal arts college," and,  
WHEREAS, The Board of Regents opted for a plan that, while giving Bethany a chance at solvency, drastically erodes Bethany's identity as a liberal arts college, and,  
WHEREAS, A liberal arts education, briefly, is the traditional education of western civilization that gives students the knowledge and skills to reason well, the affections to pursue what is good, true, and beautiful, and the eloquence and courage to speak these things, and,  
WHEREAS, A liberal arts education requires a robust humanities focus as well as scholarship in those fields within the humanities, and,  
WHEREAS, The programs that have been cut are central to a liberal arts education (history, philosophy, languages, fine arts), and,  
WHEREAS, The Bethany humanities department in "Liberal Education: An Essay," 2001, states that the liberal arts' usefulness is "indirect, long-term, and immeasurable by empirical standards," but "Under pressures exerted upon it by pop-cultural forces beyond its control, the liberal arts colleges are becoming increasingly anxious to contribute to society in the way society measures contribution" (i.e. financially), and such pressures have been evident in the Board of Regents' decision, and,

WHEREAS, Liberal arts education is well-suited to promote the training of Christian virtue, scholarship in Christian knowledge, and eloquence in sharing the Christian faith in a dark world, and,  
WHEREAS, The growing interest in classical education and homeschooling shows that there is a growing market for colleges that are serious about the liberal arts, therefore,  
A. BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Regents restore the cut programs and find other solutions that do not take away from Bethany's liberal arts identity, and,  
B. BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Regents and Administration reexamine what it means to be a liberal arts college in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and report their findings to the 2025 ELS convention.

*Scarville Lutheran Church  
Scarville, Iowa*

*Bethany Lutheran Church  
Princeton, Minnesota*

*Norseland Lutheran Church  
St. Peter, Minnesota*

## **BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS AND MARKETING**

*Committee #8: Higher Education*

WHEREAS, Bethany Lutheran College is a confessional Lutheran college whose motto is "The One Thing Needful," and,  
WHEREAS, The "Bethany. Values. Me" marketing program gives no indication of the college's confessional Lutheran college identity, but is instead man-centered, and,  
WHEREAS, Bethany Lutheran College is the visible center of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (*Handbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, Guidelines for Bethany Lutheran College, 1.A), therefore,  
BE IT RESOLVED, That Bethany Lutheran College admissions and marketing boldly present the college, publicly and privately, as a confessional Lutheran college.

*Scarville Lutheran Church  
Scarville, Iowa*

*Bethany Lutheran Church  
Princeton, Minnesota*

*Norseland Lutheran Church  
St. Peter, Minnesota*

## **THE LIBERAL ARTS AT THE HEART OF LUTHERAN EDUCATION**

*Committee #8: Higher Education*

WHEREAS, "The Flavor of the ELS"<sup>1</sup> report rightly identifies a Christ-centered commitment to the liberal arts as fundamental to the culture of our church body, and,  
WHEREAS, The Christian liberal arts formed the root system of Christian education from the early church to the present, and was essential for the onset of the Lutheran Reformation, and,

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1 "The Flavor of the ELS," *Book of Reports and Memorials: 105th Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the 66th Annual Meeting of Bethany Lutheran College, Inc. and the 7th Annual Meeting of Lutheran Schools of America, Inc.*, (2022), 22-23.  
[https://els.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022\\_BORAM.pdf](https://els.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022_BORAM.pdf).

- WHEREAS, The Christian liberal arts do not merely constitute the historic trajectory of Christian education, but they also serve to maintain Christian orthodoxy, for, as Martin Luther says in his Letter to the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany, “it is a wicked plot of the devil” when the liberal arts and the study of languages “decline and pass away,” and,
- WHEREAS, The Christian liberal arts has defined the ethos of Bethany throughout her entire history, and this theological-philosophical vision was articulated by luminaries such as S. C. Ylvisaker, B. W. Teigen,<sup>2</sup> and Norman Holte,<sup>3</sup> and is reflected in part in the “Our Common Understanding”<sup>4</sup> document, and,
- WHEREAS, This includes training young men and women to grow in knowledge of their Savior by opening access to foundational knowledge, by focusing on fundamental questions, by providing a broad perspective and, chiefly, by instilling a particular frame of mind that is “inspired by a perpetual sense of wonderment,” that is “filled with a love of knowledge for its own sake,” and which cultivates students who are “committed to universal intellectual standards of thought,” “zealous for what is true and good,” and “oriented to service of God and humankind,”<sup>5</sup> and,
- WHEREAS, Programs in theater, history, philosophy, etc. . . . have excelled at reflecting, preserving, instilling, and promoting these goals through the lens of confessional Lutheranism, and,
- WHEREAS, A zealous desire to be good stewards of financial resources entrusted to the college has unfortunately led to cuts of these core liberal arts programs that embody the ELS’s historic vision for Christian education, and,
- WHEREAS, Other Christian institutions of higher learning have found success against larger trends by embracing their historic values and their niche within a larger community, and,
- WHEREAS, While gaining marketable skills and getting a job are certainly benefits of a liberal arts education, those goods must ultimately be pursued in service to cultivating the “lofty individual characteristics,” habits, and behaviors that the Christian liberal arts aspire towards, therefore,
- A. BE IT RESOLVED, That Bethany Lutheran College at all levels recommit itself, through systematic study, programming, and training, to the Christian liberal arts ethos that has defined and sustained its integrity for nearly a century, and,
- B. BE IT RESOLVED, That Bethany Lutheran College administration and Board of Regents reaffirm the intrinsic value of those programs and courses that were cut, and consider how they may, in partnership with the Bethany faculty, reestablish those programs in the future in a sustainable manner, and,
- C. BE IT RESOLVED, That Bethany Lutheran College recommit itself to rightly ordering the goals of career and money under the more fundamental goods of growing in love for God and developing pious character and godly habits for the good of His church, so that its students and graduates are salt and light in our unsavory and dark world, and,
- D. BE IT RESOLVED, That while recognizing and remaining sensitive to financial exigency, the Bethany Lutheran College Board of Regents and administration continue to consider ways to preserve endowed chairs so that Christian scholarship may continue to be realized and supported, and,
- E. BE IT RESOLVED, That Bethany Lutheran College administration, faculty, and staff make a renewed effort to study and put into purposeful practice in all courses, programs, and extracurriculars and co-curriculars the ideals laid out in the “Our Common Understanding” document, so that the liberal arts ethos is strengthened and preserved across campus at every level for generations to come, and,
- F. BE IT RESOLVED, That Bethany Lutheran College prayerfully consider how it may better promote and share its philosophical-theological vision of the Christian Liberal arts that has defined the college’s essence throughout its history and that is communicated in part in the “Our Common Understanding” document, and that this vision also be used to inform appropriate aspects of Bethany’s marketing, and,
- G. BE IT RESOLVED, That Bethany Lutheran College administration report on their activities in response to this memorial at the 2025 synod convention.

*Mt. Olive Lutheran Church  
Mankato, Minnesota*

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2 See, for example, Bjarne W. Teigen, “Sermon Preached at the Fiftieth Anniversary of Bethany Lutheran College, and Thirtieth Anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (1977),” *Telling the Next Generation*, 264 ff.

3 See, for example, Norman S. Holte, “A Christian Liberal Arts Education (1981),” *Telling the Next Generation*, 274 ff.

4 “The Liberal Arts: Our Common Understanding,” *Bethany Lutheran College Faculty Handbook*, 2022–2023, Appendix C.

5 “Our Common Understanding.”



# MEMORIAL TO THE 2024 EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD CONVENTION

*Committee #8: Higher Education*

WHEREAS, Colossians 2:8 (ESV) states: “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ,” and,

WHEREAS, In April of 2023 Minnesota’s Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) released their new “Standards for Effective Practice,” and,

WHEREAS, These new K-12 public school teacher licensing standards have been officially adopted by the state of Minnesota, and,

WHEREAS, These new licensing standards require participating Minnesota institutions of higher education, in order for students to obtain state teaching licensure, must instruct education majors to follow the doctrine of “equity.” This requirement is stated as follows:

... the teacher demonstrates the ability to create opportunities for students to learn about power, privilege, intersectionality, and systemic oppression in the context of various communities and empowers learners to be agents of social change to promote equity.<sup>6</sup>

That is, education major students must be taught to practice and teach equity in the public schools where they are employed, and,

WHEREAS, The term “equity” is defined as follows:

Equity is not the same as “equality.” “Equality” means equal opportunity, but “equity” means equal outcomes. “Equity” means the same as the slogan of Karl Marx: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” That is, “equity” requires socialism. “Equity” also requires discrimination against whites and Asians to level the playing field.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, Leviticus 19:15, states, “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great but judge your neighbor fairly.” The same doctrine is stated in James 2:9 and in Exodus 23:3. Therefore, the PELSB requirement of teaching and practicing equity is morally wrong because it requires discrimination against certain classes of people, and is also contrary to Scripture, and,

WHEREAS, The PELSB standards require participating colleges to instruct their students in “White Supremacy,” and,

WHEREAS, White supremacy is the doctrine that all whites are inherently racist. (But non-whites are not racist.) White supremacy alleges that the reason whites are more successful than nonwhites is because they are constantly exploiting nonwhites. The PELSB standards require adherence to white supremacy with statements like this:

C. The teacher understands how ethnocentrism, eurocentrism, deficit-based teaching, and white supremacy undermine pedagogical equity.<sup>8</sup>

White supremacy assumes that all people are divided into two racial groups: whites (the oppressor class) and nonwhites (the oppressed class). The PELSB standards assume that all racial disparities are the result of discrimination by whites against nonwhites, though there is no evidence to that effect.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the standards make repeated use of words like “bias,” “discrimination,” and “prejudice.”

Scripture, in contrast, says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) The PELSB doctrine of white supremacy is not only demonstrably false, it is also destructive and contrary to Scripture, and,

WHEREAS, The PELSB standards require licensed teachers to incorporate the State Academic Standards into all their classes. The standards say:

The teacher creates or adapts lessons, unit plans, learning experiences, and aligned assessments based on Minnesota’s academic standards.”<sup>10</sup>

While this sounds innocent enough, it’s not—the reason being that the Minnesota Department of Education is loading up its academic standards with the doctrines of “equity,” “white supremacy,” and “intersectionality,” and those doctrines can be expected to expand. Matthew 10:16 states: “Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Jesus said this in the context of our being vulnerable to the trickery of evil people. It clearly applies here, and,

WHEREAS, The PELSB standards require participating colleges and teacher candidates to “affirm” transgenderism.

Transgenderism is highlighted by PELSB. It is a myth. No one can change genders. If a person is conceived a male, no number of hormones or surgery can change that fact. Every cell in that person’s brain will always be male. Every cell in that person’s body will always be male. A person can impersonate the other gender, but he or she cannot change genders, and,

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6 PELSB “Standards of Effective Practice,” 4,H, emphasis added.

7 Defining the Terms of Cultural Marxism, Quist, 2023

8 Op cit. PELSB 8,C, emphasis added.

9 Op cit. Quist, 2023

10 Ibid. 4,C.



WHEREAS, Transgenderism is totally irrational. PELSB is obsessed with transgenderism because it is the ultimate act of rebellion against God. God himself made each of us male or female. Those who are in total rebellion against God won't accept the reality that God designed them from conception to be who they are. They want to decide what they are themselves. They have succumbed to the oldest temptation known to man, namely: "You will be like God," (Genesis 3:5), and,

WHEREAS, The PELSB standards require participating colleges and teacher candidates to "affirm" homosexuality and other sexual deviations. Homosexuality, also, goes back to creation. When God created a woman, He brought her to the man, and they became "one flesh." God's plan is for sexual union between one man and one woman in marriage. Anything else is morally wrong, and,

WHEREAS, When schools at any level include instruction in these PELSB doctrines, the academic achievement of its students declines,<sup>11</sup> and,

WHEREAS, The PELSB standards are a clear violation of the First Amendment, Free Exercise Clause, of the U.S. Constitution, and,

WHEREAS, The Upper Midwest Law Center would like Bethany Lutheran College to be a plaintiff in a legal challenge to the constitutionality of the PELSB standards, therefore,

A. BE IT RESOLVED, That the Upper Midwest Law Center be allowed to make a fifteen-minute presentation on the floor of the 2024 synodical convention to explain its proposal (the center is a reputable nonprofit that works pro bono), and,

B. BE IT RESOLVED, That forty-five minutes at the 2024 synod convention be set aside for discussion of how best to deal with the PELSB standards, and,

C. BE IT RESOLVED, That ELS members who oppose Bethany's adoption of the PELSB standards and related standards be allowed up to fifteen minutes on the synod floor during the 2024 synod convention to explain their position and answer questions or objections, and those who support Bethany's adoption of the PELSB standards also be allowed up to fifteen minutes to support their position.

*Norseland Lutheran Church  
St. Peter, Minnesota*

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11 "Hostile Takeover of Education," Quist, 2023

# COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

## ELECTION PROCEDURE (GENERAL SYNODICAL GUIDELINES, ARTICLE V)

Unless stated otherwise in the Constitution, its Bylaws, or these guidelines, a simple majority (a vote of fifty percent plus one) shall determine the decision of any election. Should an election end in a tie, the chairman may vote to break the tie or he may order another vote (Bylaws, Chapter IV, Paragraph 2). If there is no majority, another vote of the same nominees will be taken for as many as three additional times. If there is no majority after the fourth ballot, a motion from the floor may request that those names with less than five percent of the total vote be removed from the next ballot. If that motion is defeated, an election using the original candidates will be continued.

Current Elected Members

Nominees

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND WISCONSIN CORPORATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

3 positions: 2 lay, 1 clergy or lay

2024

Mr. David Ewert  
Rev. Craig Ferkenstad  
Mr. J.T. Pedersen

2025

Mr. Dennis Behr  
Rev. Piet Van Kampen

2026

Rev. Phillip Lepak  
Rev. Jonathan Madson  
Mr. Paul Mielbrecht  
Rev. Glenn Obenberger

Advisory: vice-president,  
treasurer

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. J. T. Pedersen—Home: Chanhassen, MN. Age: 39. Congregation: King of Grace, Golden Valley, MN. Years in ELS: 14. Education & Vocation: Bachelor's Degree – Finance (Florida Gulf Coast University); MBA – University of St. Thomas (St. Paul, MN); Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at Collins Electrical, St. Paul, MN. Qualifications for Office: Board of Trustees for the St. Paul Electrical Workers Defined Benefit Pension Fund; Member, Vice Chairman of Board of Directors for Chapel Hill Academy. ELS Board of Trustees. Incumbent: 1-year term.

Mr. Steve Anderson - Home: Holton MI. Age: 64. Congregation: Holton, Holton, MI. Years in ELS: 64. Education & Vocation: Has over 40 years of experience in various local congregation positions (Chairman, Treasurer, Sunday School Superintendent, Principal, Building Committee). Serves as Plant Controller at Anderson Global since 2021; Plant Controller at Schlumberger 2018 to 2021; Director of Controlling at SAF-Holland 1994 to 2018. Served in private manufacturing companies with responsibilities in ERP Systems, External Audits, Tax, Manufacturing costing, monthly and annual reporting, budgeting, and long-range forecasting. Has an accounting background and has passed the CPA exam.

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Steven Molnau—Home: Lafayette, MN. Age: 75. Congregation: Norseland, St. Peter, MN. Years in ELS: 20. Education & Vocation: Served in U.S. Army from 1968-1970; Dairy & Crop Farmer from 1970-1996; Crop Farmer from 1970-present. Qualifications for Office: Served on several farm boards including Treasurer of DHIA, a 65 farmer-member group; served on the Minnesota State Registered Guernsey Board; served six years as a school board member at St. John's Lutheran School in Chaska, MN; served as a Trustee, a Deacon, head Usher, and now Treasurer at Norseland.

Mr. Channing Smith—Home: Farmington, MN. Age: 57. Congregation: Heritage, Apple Valley, MN. Years in ELS: 57. Education & Vocation: Associate degree-Bethany Lutheran College, Bachelor of Science – Mankato State, small business owner (35 years). Qualifications for Office: Congregational president and several previous board positions at Heritage Lutheran over the past 30 years. Serves on the Board for Home Outreach as the home mission property management coordinator.

**BOARD OF REGENTS OF BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE AND BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, TYPE A MEMBERS**

3 positions: 2 lay, 1 clergy or lay

*Type A members*

2024

Mr. Lyle Fahning  
Mr. James Minor  
Mr. David Sparley

2025

Rev. Erwin Ekhoﬀ  
Mr. Mark Madson  
Rev. David Thompson

2026

Rev. Mark Bartels  
Dr. Joshua Mears  
Rev. Alex Ring

*Type B members\**

2024

Mr. Timothy Roemhildt

2025

Mr. John Scott

2026

Rev. Aaron Ferkenstad

*By virtue of office:*

Rev. Glenn Obenberger,  
president

**Lay (3-year):**

Mr. David Sparley—*Home:* Tigard, OR. *Age:* 43. *Congregation:* Saved by Grace Lutheran, Gresham, OR. *Years in ELS:* 43. *Education & Vocation:* Bethany Lutheran College BA - Business Administration; AA - Liberal Arts. Manager, Customer Revenue - Portland General Electric, Supervisor; Customer Care – Orbitz.com; Loan Officer – CitiFinancial. *Qualifications for Office:* 10 + years of management experience; experience leading, planning and supporting large scale project/initiatives; experience with strategic design, planning and implementation; performance management experience; experience coaching/mentoring individual contributors and leaders. *Incumbent:* 1 term.

Mr. Steven DePrey – *Home:* Sun Prairie, WI. *Age:* 57. *Congregation:* Holy Cross Lutheran Church Madison, WI. *Years in ELS:* 27. *Education & Vocation:* Bachelor of Arts Degree; Owner of DePrey Company which is a manufacturer’s representative agency; skilled in negotiation, business planning, market planning, advertising, and sales; Bachelor of Science focused in business administration/marketing from UW Green Bay. *Qualifications for Office:* Congregational offices held: President, Elder, Building Committee Chairman, Lakeside Lutheran High School General Board.

**Lay (3-year):**

Mr. Philip Holz—*Home:* Dundas, MN. *Age:* 35. *Congregation:* Heritage, Apple Valley, MN. *Years in ELS:* 12. *Education & Vocation:* Trained in accounting and finance; previously licensed as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA); serves as the President and part owner of Storm Equipment. *Qualifications for Office:* Currently serving as Treasurer of Heritage Lutheran Church; currently serving on the Board of Elders at Heritage Lutheran Church; significant leadership background with accounting/finance emphasis; attended Bethany Lutheran College for part of my collegiate career and am a strong advocate for the college.

Mr. Aaron Faugstad—*Home:* Saint Paul, MN. *Age:* 29. *Congregation:* King of Grace, Golden Valley, MN. *Years in ELS:* 29. *Education & Vocation:* Education: BA in History from Bethany Lutheran College; MA in International Affairs from George Washington University. Employed as a management consultant and non-profit executive. *Qualifications for Office:* Experience in business development, marketing, fundraising, strategic planning, and leadership for non-profit organizations.

**Clergy/Lay (3-year):**

Mr. Kurt Shrader—*Home:* Mankato, MN. *Age:* 39. *Congregation:* Mount Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 9. *Education & Vocation:* Education: MA Film & Television Production - Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, GA; BA Communication - Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN; AAS Business Administration - Southeast Technical Institute, Sioux Falls, SD. Self-employed video producer & engineer. *Qualifications for Office:* Experience with and knowledge of multiple Lutheran synods, ELS, WELS, LCMS, CLC, LCR; Produced advertising for multiple large companies; Production Studio at Bethany Lutheran College. While employment at BLC, I began a project visiting area Lutheran high schools to run student workshops, & connect with high school media instructors. Served as an Elder at Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR (LCMS); Substitute Teacher, Scarville Lutheran School.

Mr. Karl Bloedel—*Home:* Lake Mills, IA. *Age:* 67. *Congregation:* Scarville Lutheran, Scarville, IA. *Years in ELS:* 54. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany Lutheran College; Carpenter/contractor since 1978. *Qualifications for Office:* Managed Karl Bloedel Construction; Church secretary then vice president; Synod Nomination Committee; Synod Review Committee.

## DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

2 positions: 1 clergy, 1 lay

2024

Mr. Greg Costello  
Rev. Thomas Rank

2025

Dr. David Reagles  
Rev. David Jay Webber

2026

Rev. Jerome Gernander  
Dr. Timothy Schmeling

*By virtue of office:*  
seminary president

*Advisory:* vice president

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Thomas Rank—*Home:* Lake Mills, IA. *Age:* 66. *Congregation:* Scarville Synod Lutheran Church Scarville, IA. *Years in ELS:* 38. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany Lutheran College; B.A. University of Minnesota; M. Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary; STM from Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN. *Qualifications for Office:* 33 years as pastor in the ELS; 3 terms on ELS Board for Evangelism; alternate visitor for Circuit #7; served on ELS Doctrine Committee since 2002; professor Religious Studies at Bethany Lutheran College, 2018-present. *Incumbent:* 7 terms.

Rev. Patrick Ernst—*Home:* Frankenmuth, MI. *Age:* 30. *Congregation:* St. John's Lutheran Church, Frankenmuth, MI. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 4. *Education & Vocation:* 2010-2011 PSEO (high school dual credit) work at Martin Luther College; 2015 Graduate of Bethany Lutheran College (including semester abroad at Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany); M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Pursuing PhD in Theological Studies at Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne; Completed MDiv thesis at BLTS that dealt in depth with doctrinal and ethical issues in liberal Lutheran theology; Studied and taught congregationally on theological and worship trends in modern American evangelicalism; appointed to write a paper on the doctrine of church fellowship for the 2024 ELS General Pastoral Conference.

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Greg Costello—*Home:* North Mankato, MN. *Age:* 68. *Congregation:* Mt. Olive, Mankato MN. *Years in ELS:* 54. *Education & Vocation:* Retired controller from Bethany Lutheran College. *Qualifications for Office:* Current Treasurer of Mt. Olive Church and School; past treasurer and member of the Board of Directors at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School. Has previously served on the Publications Committee and currently serves on the Doctrine Committee. *Incumbent:* 2 terms.

Mr. Glen Hansen—*Home:* Princeton, MN. *Age:* 70. *Congregation:* Bethany, Princeton, MN. *Years in ELS:* 70. *Vocation:* Retired from Crystal Cabinet Works, Inc., Princeton, MN; part-time school bus driver. *Qualifications for office:* Serves on the Board of Elders and has been Chairman of the congregation for many years; ELS— Board for Education & Youth; Home Mission Board; Synod Board of Appeals; and has served as a Synod Delegate for many years.

## BOARD FOR HOME OUTREACH

2 positions: 1 lay, 1 clergy or lay

*Type A members*

2024

Mr. Neil Shaffer  
Rev. Luke Ulrich

2025

Rev. Timothy Erickson  
Rev. Aaron Hamilton  
Mr. Channing Smith

2026

Rev. Samuel Gullixson  
Mr. Mark Perlwitz

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Neil Shaffer—*Home:* Lime Springs, IA. *Age:* 57. *Congregation:* Jerico, New Hampton, IA. *Years in ELS:* 57. *Education & Vocation:* Dairy Farmer (retired); Environmental Specialist, USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service/Howard Soil and Water Conservation District. *Qualifications for Office:* Congregational Trustee; Treasurer; serves on the ELS Board for Home Outreach. *Incumbent:* 1 term.

Mr. Dean Shoop—*Home:* Mankato, MN. *Age:* 68. *Congregation:* Mt. Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 43. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany Lutheran College; B.S. from Augsburg College; M.B.A. Minnesota State-Mankato; Retired from teaching at Bethany Lutheran College-38 years-Business Professor. *Qualifications for Office:* Former member of Board of Christian Service; Serves as an advisory member of the Board for Home Outreach as the financial coordinator.

*Type B members\**

2024  
Rev. Christian Eisenbeis

2025  
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2026  
Rev. Benjamin Wiechmann

*Advisory:* Evangelism and  
Missions Counselor,  
treasurer

**Clergy/Lay (3-year):**

Rev. Luke Ulrich—*Home:* Mankato, MN. *Age:* 41. *Congregation:* Mt. Olive Lutheran Church & School. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 14. *Education:* B.A. Bethany Lutheran College, M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Served on the Board of Home Outreach for 6 years; Served as Outreach Strategist for BHO; currently serving as BHO Secretary; served on the Commission on Congregations at Critical Mass Ad Hoc Committee; previously on the Rural Ad Hoc Committee on Rural Revitalization; served as Circuit 9 Circuit Visitor from 2022 to 2023. Oversees a very active Outreach/Evangelism program at Mt. Olive. Grew up in a Home-Mission setting in southern California. *Incumbent:* 2 terms.

Rev. Noah Thompson—*Home:* Grand Forks, MN. *Age:* 33. *Congregation:* River Heights, Grand Forks MN. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 5. *Education:* M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, MN (2018); B.A. Chemistry, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN (2013). *Qualifications for Office:* Taught as an adjunct professor at Bethany Lutheran College in final year at BLTS; Started and helped organize the hosting of a homeschool co-op at River Heights Lutheran.

**BOARD FOR WORLD OUTREACH**

3 positions: 3 clergy or lay

2024  
Rev. Timothy Bartels  
Rev. Timothy Buelow  
Mr. Enrique Carhuayo

2025  
Mr. Matt Lukasek  
Mr. Justin Marthaler  
Rev. Daniel Ruiz

2026  
Mr. Dan Browning  
Rev. John Petersen  
Rev. Steven Sparley

*Advisory:* treasurer

**Clergy/Lay (3-year):**

Rev. Timothy Bartels—*Home:* Gresham, OR. *Age:* 66. *Congregation:* Saved by Grace, Gresham, OR. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 39. *Education:* Bachelor of Open Studies; M.Div. *Qualifications for Office:* Served as missionary in Chile from 1994-1998; Worked with the ELS mission team, teaching the catechism in Spanish to all ages, conducting Spanish services, participating in council meetings, planting churches in the greater Santiago area, teaching pre-seminary classes and working with Chilean legal matters. Learned Spanish while living in Chile, became fluent, and maintains a level of fluency to date. Served seven years on the Board for World Outreach. Has developed relationships with the men in the field by participating in two different field trips to Peru and one to Chile. Became familiar with mission work throughout Latin America by participating in a regional CELC. Serves on the BWO South America and Australia committees. *Incumbent:* 2 terms.

Rev. Kurtis Freimuth—*Home:* Deshler, OH. *Age:* 42. *Congregation:* Peace, Deshler, OH. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 8. *Education:* B.S. Elementary Education, Valparaiso University (2004); M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (2017). *Qualifications for Office:* Former Lutheran school teacher who became a pastor and has an avid interest in outreach; has planned several mission trips for his congregation. In 2022, traveled to Thailand for a 10-day mission trip and shared the Gospel with orphans and the orphanage staff. In 2024, he co-planned a trip with the Friends Network to South Korea. He continues to read about outreach strategies and attends outreach conferences to identify best practices and techniques. He has previously served on the Board for Lutheran Schools.

**Clergy/Lay (3-year):**

Rev. Timothy Buelow—*Home:* Lake Havasu City, AZ. *Age:* 63. *Congregation:* Our Saviour, Lake Havasu City, AZ. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 15. *Education:* M.Div. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1987); German M.A. Program from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (1984); B.A. from Northwestern College; Biblicum Institute, Sweden (1984-1985). *Qualifications for Office:* Serves on the Board for World Outreach (2011-present); Vice-President of the CELS; serves at the Circuit Visitor for Circuit 11, previously served as the Assistant Circuit Visitor for Circuit 10. *Incumbent:* 3 terms.

Rev. Jacob Kempfert—*Home:* Saginaw, MI. *Age:* 39. *Congregation:* Gloria Dei – Saginaw, MI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 4. *Education:* Bachelor of Arts-English from Bethany Lutheran College; Master of Arts-Literature & Fiction Writing from the University of Maine – Orono; M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Teaching Assistant, College Composition – University of Maine; English Teacher – Seongdeok Elementary School, Gangneung-si, Gangwon-do, South Korea; English Teacher – Gangueng Boys’ Middle School, Gangneung-si, Gangwon-do, South Korea; English & Electives Teacher; “Improving Student Communication Skills,” Paper presented at EPIK (English Programs in Korea) Teaching Conference, Gangneung-si, Gangwon-do, South Korea; Evangelism Event Planning Committee, International Lutheran Church, Seoul, South Korea; Adjunct Professor at Bethany Lutheran College; Intro to Christianity instructor for Nepalese students



– Bethany Lutheran College Presenter for the 2024 Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya Pastors’ Conference – “Issues in Eschatology” and “Lutheran Martyrs in the Reformation Era”.

**Clergy/Lay (3-year):**

Mr. Enrique Carhuayo—*Home:* Kissimmee, FL *Congregation:* Peace, Kissimmee, FL. *Vocation:* Owner and operator of a small business. *Qualifications for Office:* Enrique is a native of Peru where Spanish was his first language. *Incumbent:* 1 term.

Mr. Chris Hoffman—*Home:* Holladay, UT. *Age:* 56. *Congregation:* Hope, West Jordan, UT. *Years in ELS:* 16. *Education & Vocation:* A.S. and B.A. in Criminal Justice from Columbia College; 35 Years in Law Enforcement and Criminal Investigations including work as a Special Agent with the Utah Attorney General’s Office and three other law enforcement agencies; currently serves as a School Resource Sergeant with the Granite School District Police Department. *Qualifications for Office:* Serving his third term on the Board for Youth Outreach and co-director for the LYA conference in Utah in 2022; Organized and funded mission trip to Uganda in 2018 after being in contact with local churches.

**BOARD FOR YOUTH OUTREACH**

2 positions: 1 clergy, 1 lay

2024

Mr. Benjamin Faugstad  
Rev. Anthony Pittenger

**Clergy (3-year):**

Rev. Tony Pittenger—*Home:* Port Orchard, WA. *Age:* 56. *Congregation:* Bethany, Port Orchard, WA. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 28. *Education:* Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato State University; M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Seminary; Associate Pastor. *Qualifications for Office:* Has served for over 20+ years on the Board for Youth Outreach.—*Incumbent:* 6 terms.

2025

Rev. Jeff Hendrix  
Rev. Josh Mayer  
Mr. James Sundby

Rev. James Kassera —*Home:* Weatherford, TX. *Age:* 39. *Congregation:* Divine Mercy, Weatherford, TX. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 13. *Education: Education & Vocation:* BA – Psychology from Bethany Lutheran College; M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Father of 5 children, the oldest of which are entering the teens years and attending national youth gatherings. Served as Co-director of Camp Indianhead, MN from 2015-2017. In this role he managed the finances, created logos and promotional materials, and developed activities and schedules. Regularly attends the national youth conventions (LYA); serving as presenter, preacher, and/or group leader. In his community, James has volunteered as a coach for various youth sports organizations, gaining experience in working with youth and families from a wide range of cultures and religious experience.

2026

Mr. Chris Hoffman  
Rev. Kyle Madson

**Lay (3-year):**

Mr. Benjamin Faugstad - —*Home:* Mankato, MN. *Age:* 39. *Congregation:* Mt. Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 39. *Education & Vocation:* Master of Science in Teaching and Learning, Minnesota State University, Mankato, MN; Bachelor of Arts in Music, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN. *Vocation:* Associate Professor of Music, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN. *Qualifications for Office:* ELS Board for Youth Outreach, 2013-present; Lutheran Youth Honor Choir Coordinator, 2023-present; ELS Board for Youth Outreach convention co-director, 2023, 2021, 2019; Chairman of the Mt. Olive Church Council, 2022-2023; Vice Chairman of the Mt. Olive Church Council and liaison to the Mt. Olive Board of Education, 2021-2022; Youth Group Co-Leader at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, 2020-2022; Trustee of the Scarville Synod Lutheran Church, 2017-2018; ELS Convention Delegate from the Scarville Synod Lutheran Church, 2008-2017; Youth Leader at Scarville Synod Lutheran Church, 2008-2016; Sunday School Superintendent at Scarville Synod Lutheran Church, 2008-2009. *Incumbent:* 3 terms.

Mr. Joe Ringen—*Home:* Crystal, MN. *Age:* 33. *Congregation:* King of Grace, Golden Valley, MN. *Years in ELS:* 33. *Education:* B.A. Music, Bethany Lutheran College (2012); M.B.A. Management, Strayer University (2018); *Vocation:* Serves as a claims Support Manager for Western National Mutual Insurance, Edina, MN.; specializes in team management, employee training, group cohesion, and networking with other organizations. *Qualifications for Office:* Director of the Board of Youth at King of Grace: activity planning, hosting guest speakers, and budgeting; Chaperone to LYA Convention.



## BOARD FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

3 positions: 1 clergy, 1 lay, 1 clergy or lay

2024

Rev. Christopher Dale  
Mr. Nathan Rovey  
Rev. Joshua Skogen

2025

Rev. Jesse Jacobsen  
Mr. Kenneth Meyer  
Mr. Chris Poetter

2026

Rev. Michael Dale  
Mr. Todd Knutson  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai

*Advisory:* Coordinator  
of Education of Bethany  
Lutheran College,  
ELS treasurer

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Christopher Dale—*Home:* Port St. Lucie, FL. *Age:* 47. *Congregation:* Christ, Port St. Lucie. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 20. *Education:* A.A., Bethany Lutheran College; B.A. Mankato State University; M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary; M.S. MLC Education Administration (In Progress); serves as the assistant pastor at Christ Lutheran church. *Qualifications for Office:* Assistant Pastor and Principle at Christ Lutheran School in Port St. Lucie, Florida; previously served on the Committee for Communications, currently is the chairman for the Board for Lutheran Schools, proposed and led the startup of Christ Lutheran School, a school choice model Classical Lutheran K-12 school at Christ Lutheran Church in Port St. Lucie, Florida. *Incumbent:* 3 terms.

Rev. Jacob Kempfert—*Home:* Saginaw. *Age:* 39. *Congregations:* Gloria Dei, Saginaw, MI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 4. *Education:* Bachelor of Arts-English, Bethany Lutheran College; Master of Arts, Literature & Fiction Writing, University of Maine – Orono; M.Div., Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Teaching Assistant, College Composition – University of Maine; English Teacher – Seongdeok Elementary School, Gangneung-si, Gangwon-do, South Korea; English Teacher – Gangnueng Boys’ Middle School, Gangneung-si, Gangwon-do, South Korea; English & Electives Teacher; Theatre Director – Big Heart International Christian High School, Yongin-si, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea; “Improving Student Communication Skills,” Paper presented at EPIK (English Programs in Korea) Teaching Conference, Gangneung-si, Gangwon-do, South Korea; Evangelism Event Planning Committee, International Lutheran Church, Seoul, South Korea; Adjunct Professor, College Composition & Intro to Fiction – Bethany Lutheran College; Intro to Christianity instructor for Nepalese students – Bethany Lutheran College Presenter for the 2024 Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya Pastors’ Conference – “Issues in Eschatology” and “Lutheran Martyrs in the Reformation Era”.

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Nathan Rovey—*Home:* Parker, AZ. *Age:* 55. *Congregation:* Our Saviour, Lake Havasu City, AZ. *Years in ELS:* 41. *Education & Vocation:* Education: B.S. in Agronomy with Agricultural Business Curriculum University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ. Self-employed at Rolanco Farms. Our family has produced cotton, alfalfa, small grains, and various vegetable on 3500 acres of irrigated farmland since 1968. *Qualifications for Office:* Has served his congregational as an Elder; Secretary; President; School Board Member; School Board Chair; ELS Board for Lutheran Schools. Has also served on various federal, state, university and private boards and committees. *Incumbent:* 3 terms.

Mr. Aaron Kreuter—*Home:* Plymouth, MN. *Age:* 38. *Congregation:* King of Grace, Golden Valley, MN. *Years in ELS:* 8. *Education & Vocation:* University of MN – Business Administration; University of MN Law School. Employed as the in-house attorney for Transportation Funding Group, Inc. *Qualifications for Office:* Parent of two children in Lutheran schools.

### Clergy/Lay (3-year):

Rev. Josh Skogen—*Home:* Scarville, IA. *Age:* 43. *Congregations:* Scarville and Center, Scarville, IA. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 13. *Education:* A.A. from Bethany Lutheran College; B.S. Mathematics Education from Southwest Minnesota State University; M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Served as the principal and a teacher at Scarville Lutheran School, Circuit 7 Alternate Visitor, Board of Appeals, Board for Lutheran Schools. *Incumbent:* 1 term.

Rev. Paul Lange—*Home:* Oconomowoc, WI. *Age:* 58. *Congregations:* Holy Trinity, Oconomowoc, WI, Abiding Word, Bowling Green, OH. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 10. *Education:* Bachelor of Science in Education - Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Certification – Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN. M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Lutheran Elementary School Teacher and Principal (1988-2009), ELS Pastor, previously served on the Board for Lutheran Schools.

## BOARD ON APOLOGETICS

1 position: 1 clergy or lay

2024

Rev. Peter Heyn

2025

Dr. Doyle Holbird  
Mr. Allen Quist

2026

Rev. Shawn Stafford  
Mr. Donald Kleman

*Advisory:* president

### Clergy/Lay (3-year):

Rev. Peter Heyn—*Home:* Green Bay, WI. *Age:* 43. *Congregation:* Christ the King, Green Bay, WI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 12. *Education:* University of Wisconsin-Madison (double major - Secondary Education & History) (2004); M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (2012). *Qualifications for Office:* Have served as a home missionary in San Angelo Texas; served as a substitute teacher in Madison Metropolitan School District; led church trips to the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter Apologetic Centers in Kentucky; Served as spiritual advisor for Circuit 1 Women's Mission Society; Researched, wrote, and presented a paper on "Ministering to Millennials" at 2018 ELS General Pastoral Conference; Served as secretary for Board for Apologetics 2023-2024. Possesses a working proficiency in the Spanish language. *Incumbent:* 1 term.

Rev. Paul Webber—*Home:* Eau Claire, WI. *Age:* 37. *Congregations:* Concordia, Eau Claire, WI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 10. *Education:* B.A., Bethany Lutheran College; M.Div., Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary; S.T.M., Institute of Lutheran Theology. *Qualifications for Office:* Post-graduate study focused on the relationship between the scriptures and apologetics; contributed to the Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary Altar Book; implemented the digital Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary hymn system.

## BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

2 positions: 1 clergy, 1 lay

2024

Mr. Dennis Behr  
Rev. Erich Hoeft

2025

Mr. Robert Reid

2026

Mr. Kirk Campbell  
Rev. James Kassera

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Erich Hoeft—*Home:* Holton, MI. *Age:* 49. *Congregation:* Holton, Holton, MI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 20. *Education:* AA Degree from Bethany Lutheran College; BA in Music Performance (minor in Humanities) from MSU, Mankato, MN; MDiv Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary; currently serve as Pastor of Holton Evangelical Lutheran Church. *Qualifications for Office:* Has served on the Board for Christian Service. *Incumbent:* 4 terms.

Rev. Andrew Burmeister—*Home:* Medford, OR. *Age:* 62. *Congregation:* Our Savior, Grants Pass and Faith, Medford, OR. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 18. *Education:* M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary – Theology; M.S. – Comp. Sci. EE from Univ. of Southern California; B.A.-Mathematics from St. Mary's Univ. of MN – CS, Physics. *Qualifications for Office:* ELS pastor, college professor and educator 6 years including Bethany Lutheran College; International experience [pastor in AUS 7 yrs. and NZ]; software development and research 15 yrs.; experience on professional and civic boards.

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Dennis Behr—*Home:* Madison, WI. *Congregation:* Faith Evangelical Lutheran, Oregon, WI. *Education & Vocation:* Wisconsin Public Broadcasting (32 yrs.) retired as Administrator Engineering & Operations Division Military: US Naval Aircrewmn, USS Wasp (4 yrs. sub hunter), USS Eisenhower, Aircraft Carrier Reserve Unit (5 yrs.) retired as Command Master Chief. *Qualifications for Office:* Congregation Positions: President; Vice President; Elder; Trustee; Planning Committee; Member - Outreach Committee; Synod Positions: Planning & Coordinating Committee (3 terms member) Committee for Integrating Technology (2 terms Chair) Bethany Lutheran College (2 yrs. member) Self Study Review Committee, Board of Trustees (4 terms member), Board of Christian Service (3 terms member). *Incumbent:* 3 terms.

Mr. James Bina—*Home:* Minnetonka, MN. *Age:* 76. *Congregation:* King of Grace, Golden Valley, MN. *Years in ELS:* 52. *Education & Vocation:* B.S. in History from University of Minnesota; American Institute of Property and Liability Underwriters (C.P.C.U). 47-year career as an independent insurance agent and President/Principal of Horizon Agency, Inc. *Qualifications for Office:* Congregational Director of Trustees.

## COMMITTEE ON WORSHIP

2 positions: 1 clergy, 1 lay

2024

Rev. James Braun  
Mr. Eric Harstad

2025

Rev. Peter Faugstad

2026

Mr. John Baumann  
Rev. Mark DeGarmeaux

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. James Braun—*Home:* Harwich, MA. *Age:* 63. *Congregation:* Trinity, Brewster, MA. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 34. *Education:* UW-Milwaukee; BLC; Mankato State University; Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Congregations served: Christ Lutheran Church, Klamath Falls, Oregon; Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Yelm, Washington; Trinity Lutheran Church, Brewster, Massachusetts. Chairman, Circuit 12 Pastors' Conference, Board Member of The Emmaus Conference. Program Committee - General Pastoral Conference. Synod Boards and Committees: Board for Publications, Committee on Worship, Planning and Coordinating Committee, Communications Committee, Alternate Circuit Visitor/Circuit Visitor; Church Choir Director 1990-2008; 2014-Present. Also a member of the Board for 4 Corners Mission Society. *Incumbent:* 3 terms.

Rev. Paul Webber—*Home:* Eau Claire, WI. *Age:* 37. *Congregations:* Concordia, Eau Claire, WI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 10. *Education:* B.A., Bethany Lutheran College, 2009, M.Div., Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2013, S.T.M., Institute of Lutheran Theology, 2023. *Qualifications for Office:* Contributed to the Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary Altar Book; implemented the digital Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary hymn system.

### Lay (3-year):

Dr. Eric Harstad—*Home:* Mankato, MN. *Age:* 48. *Congregation:* Peace, North Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 30. *Education & Vocation:* Education: AA Bethany Lutheran College 1995, BM Music Education St. Olaf College 1997, MM Choral Conducting MN State University, Mankato 2000, DMA Choral Conducting University of Nebraska-Lincoln 2017. Employed as a music teacher at Bethany Lutheran College; *Qualifications for Office:* Interest in Christian education. Interested in concert and church music. Interested in selection of church music that serves well within the context of liturgical worship. *Incumbent:* 1 term.

Mr. Matthew Sulzle—*Home:* Lake Mills, IA. *Age:* 37. *Congregation:* Scarville Lutheran, Scarville, IA. *Years in ELS:* 15. *Education & Vocation:* Education: BA in Music from Bethany Lutheran College. Employed as a carpenter for Bloedel Builders. *Qualifications for Office:* Has a strong interest in the traditional music and liturgy of the church and also in Christian education. Has taught Sunday School for many years, attended two conventions of the Consortium for Classical Lutheran Education, and am currently serving as the chairman of the board for Scarville Lutheran School.

## COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATION

1 position: 1 clergy or lay

### Elected Positions:

2024

Mr. Philip Wels

2025

Mr. David Norris

### Appointed Positions:

2024

Rev. James Braun  
Mr. Lance Schwartz

### Clergy/Lay (2-year):

Mr. Philip Wels—*Home:* Mankato, MN. *Age:* 37. *Congregation:* Peace, North Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 11. *Education & Vocation:* BA in Communication from Bethany Lutheran College. I work as a videographer and video editor. *Qualifications for Office:* Produced Peace Devotions for the ELS; have worked with many churches on video projects and streaming systems. I serve on the Gospel Outreach board at Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato, MN for several years now. *Incumbent:* 1 term.

Mr. Curtis Bull—*Home:* San Antonio, TX. *Age:* 50. *Congregation:* Faith Lutheran, San Antonio, TX. *Years in ELS:* 50. *Education & Vocation:* Service Manager and Information Technology (IT) professional working for a local family-owned Managed Service Provider (MSP). Significant customer service and training experience. *Qualifications for Office:* Serves as an Elder; past secretary; treasurer; vice-president; president; trustee.

## EQUALIZATION COMMITTEE:

1 position: 1 clergy

2024

Rev. Roger Holtz

2025

Mr. William Anderson

2026

Mr. Shaun Grabow

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Roger Holtz —*Home:* Kaukauna, WI. *Age:* 67. *Congregations:* Christ the King, Green Bay, WI (vacancy). *Years as ELS Pastor:* 30. *Education:* B.S. in Education – University of Nebraska, M.Div., Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Serves as the Chief Financial Officer for Water Works 4 U, Inc; Treasurer of various congregations with schools, principal and teacher, administrator of Trinity Ev. Lutheran Preschool. *Incumbent:* 3 terms.

## PLANNING AND COORDINATING COMMITTEE

1 position: 1 lay

### Lay (3-year):

Officers of the synod  
Chairman of:  
Board of Regents  
Doctrine Committee  
Board for Home Outreach  
Board for World Outreach  
Board for Youth Outreach  
Board for Lutheran Schools  
Board for Christian Service  
Committee on Worship

Mr. James Bonnell — *Home:* Phoenix, AZ, *Age:* 73. *Congregation:* Redeemer, Scottsdale, AZ. *Years in ELS:* 23. *Education & Vocation:* University Degree in Computer Science; Retired from Microsoft after 19 years Consulting Services; Managed Major Consulting Engagement for the West Region; computer sales and consulting services for 38 years. *Qualifications for Office:* Managed Major Contract negotiations, planning and coordination's. Managed budgeting and profitability. Managed consultant and technical services organizations. *Incumbent:* 1 term.

Mr. Steve Anderson - *Home:* Holton MI. *Age:* 64. *Congregation:* Holton, Holton, MI. *Years in ELS:* 64. *Education & Vocation:* – Has over 40 years of experience in various local congregation positions (Chairman, Treasurer, Sunday School Superintendent, Principal, Building Committee). Employment: Serves as Plant Controller at Anderson Global since 2021, Plant Controller at Schlumberger 2018 to 2021, Director of Controlling at SAF-Holland 1994 to 2018. Served in private manufacturing companies with responsibilities in ERP Systems, External Audits, Tax, Manufacturing costing, monthly and annual reporting, budgeting, and long-range forecasting. Has an accounting background and has passed the CPA exam.

2024

Mr. James Bonnell

2025

Mr. Ronald Younge

2026

Mr. Bill Bohning

*Advisory:* treasurer

## BOARD OF APPEALS

6 positions: 4 clergy, 2 lay

2024

Rev. Timothy Erickson  
Rev. Peter Faugstad  
Mr. Glen Hansen\*  
Rev. Paul Lange\*  
Dr. Joshua Mears  
Rev. Alex Ring

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Timothy Erickson – *Home:* Dodge Center, MN. *Age:* 73. *Congregations:* St. Paul's, North Hollywood, CA; Wayfarers' Chapel, Ventura, CA; Holy Cross, Madison, WI; Saude and Jerico, Chickasaw County, IA; Peru and Chile foreign mission fields. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 45. *Education:* B.A. from Bethany Lutheran College; M.Div., Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Currently serves on the Board for Home Outreach. *Incumbent* – 1 term.

Rev. Paul Schneider —*Home:* Midland, MI. *Age:* 77. *Congregations:* Holy Scripture, Midland, MI, St. Martin, Shawano, WI, and St. Paul's in Clintonville, WI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 40. *Education:* Graduate from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Has previously serviced on Youth Board; Home Mission Board; Stewardship Board; Thoughts of Faith Chairman; Board of Trustees, Board for World Outreach; Circuit Visitor; still serving after 42 years in that position in Circuit # 3.

2025

Rev. Mark Bartels  
Rev. Mark Faugstad  
Rev. Aaron Ferkenstad  
Rev. Samuel Gullixson  
Mr. Dan Johnson  
Mr. Paul Tweit

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Peter Faugstad —*Home:* Lawler, IA. *Age:* 42. *Congregations:* Jerico and Redeemer, New Hampton, IA, and previously at Parkland Lutheran in Parkland, WA. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 14. *Education:* B.A. from Bethany Lutheran College; M.Div., Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Circuit 7 Visitor, 2023-present; Committee on Worship chairman,

2026

Mr. Karl Bloedel  
Rev. Tom Heyn\*  
Mr. Andrew Overn  
Mr. Neil Shaffer  
Rev. Joshua Skogen\*  
Rev. Steve Sparley\*



2015-present; Centennial Committee, 2014-2018; Historical Society Board, 2015-2018, Board of Appeals, 2020-present. *Incumbent*: 1 term.

Rev. Cory D. Hahnke—*Home*: Madison, WI. *Age*: 51. *Congregation*: Grace & Our Saviour's. *Years in ELS*: 25. *Education & Vocation*: Northwestern Preparatory school; B.A., Northwestern College; M.Div., Bethany Theological Seminary; Church Health: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Counseling, Military Counseling – Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary; Caring for Veterans: Camp Ripley MN. *Qualifications for Office*: 6 years on The Board for Evangelism, Chairman of the first Veterans Ad Hoc Committee.

**Clergy (3-year):**

Rev. Alex Ring—*Home*: Port St. Lucie, FL. *Age*: 59. *Congregation*: Christ Lutheran, Port St. Lucie, FL. *Years in ELS*: 31. *Education & Vocation*: A.A. Bethany Lutheran College; B.A. Elementary Education - University of Minnesota; M. Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office*: Previously served on the Praesidium's Committee on the Ministry, Board for Education and Youth, Board for Lutheran Schools of America, ELS Board for Schools, ELS Secretary of Schools, alternate visitor for Circuit #12; and currently serves on the Board of Regents.

Rev. Michael Muehlenhardt—*Home*: Cottonwood, MN. *Age*: 67. *Congregation*: English, Cottonwood, MN. *Years as ELS Pastor*: 16. *Education*: Graduate of Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office*: ELS Missions Advancement Project (MAP) Board president, Circuit 9 alternate visitor, member of Committee for Archives & History.

**Clergy (3-year):**

Rev. Bernt Tweit—*Home*: Crystal, MN. *Age*: 52. *Congregations*: King of Grace, Golden Valley, MN. *Years as ELS Pastor*: 25. *Education*: B.A. from Bethany Lutheran College; M.Div., Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office*: Served on the Board for Youth Outreach for 21 years and as a Circuit Visitor for 2 years. Has previously served on the Board of Appeals. *Incumbent*: 1 term.

Rev. Michael Dale—*Home*: Burlington, MA. *Age*: 54. *Congregation*: Pinewood, MA. *Years as ELS Pastor*: 21. *Education*: M.Div. - Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, MN; B.A. in Music – Mankato State University; A.A. - Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN. *Qualifications for Office*: Has served as a parish pastor and has served for several terms as secretary of the Board for Lutheran Schools, and as a Circuit Visitor.

**Lay (3-year):**

Dr. Joshua Mears—*Home*: Lakeville, MN. *Age*: 41. *Congregation*: Heritage, Apple Valley, MN. *Years in ELS*: 19. *Education & Vocation*: Doctorate in Clinical Psychology; Master's in Christian Counseling; Bachelor's in Psychology- Bethany 2005; Christian Psychologist- Owner and Clinical Director at Mears Psychological LLC, "The Soul's Apothecary." *Qualifications for Office*: ELS Board for Youth; ELS Board of Regents for Bethany Lutheran College; Youth Director at Heritage- 17 years; Board of Elders at Heritage- 15 years; Church Council at Heritage, Chairman of Spiritual Oversight, Vice President; Christian Psychologist- formerly with Christian Family Solutions. *Incumbent*: 2 terms.

Mr. Tod Eckberg—*Home*: Golden Valley, MN. *Age*: 64. *Congregation*: King of Grace, Golden Valley, MN. *Years in ELS*: 40+. *Education & Vocation*: Bethany Lutheran College, A.A. Mankato State University B.S. Earth Science. *Qualifications for Office*: King of Grace School Board, 15 years; West Lutheran High School (WELS) Board of Regents 15 years; Buildings and Grounds Chair 8 years.

**Lay (3-year):**

Mr. Karl Bloedel—*Home*: Lake Mills, IA. *Age*: 67. *Congregation*: Scarville, Scarville, IA. *Years in ELS*: 54. *Education & Vocation*: A.A. Bethany Lutheran College; Carpenter/contractor since 1978. *Qualifications for Office*: Managed Karl Bloedel Construction; Church secretary then vice president; Synod Nomination Committee; Synod Review Committee.

Mr. Jeremy Merseth—*Home*: Mankato, MN. *Age*: 44. *Congregation*: Mt. Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS*: 41. *Education & Vocation*: Graduated High school; General contractor; Served as a building and maintenance supervisor for 21 Headstart facilities; certified "Aging in Place" specialist; certified playground inspector. *Qualifications for Office*: Has served in his local congregation on the

Board of Trustees; Outreach; Education; Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School board of Directors; Minnesota Valley Lutheran property and transportation; and the ELS Nominations committee.

## SYNOD REVIEW COMMITTEE

1 position: 1 clergy

### Elected Positions:

2024

Rev. Theodore Gullixson

2025

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2026

Mr. James Flantz

### Appointed Positions:

2024

Rev. Craig Ferkenstad

2025

Rev. S. Piet Van Kampen

2026

Mr. Karl Bloedel

### **Clergy (3-year):**

Rev. Ted Gullixson - *Home:* Mankato, MN. *Age:* 77. *Congregation:* Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Mankato, MN. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 48. *Education:* 1965 Graduate from Bethany Lutheran High School, 1967 Graduate from Bethany Lutheran College, 1969 Graduate from University of Minnesota, 1976 Graduate from Bethany Lutheran Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Editor of the Lutheran Sentinel (1995-2014), Member of the Synod Review Committee (2014 to present), ELS Archivist (2015 to present). *Incumbent:* 3-terms.

Rev. Mike Muehlenhardt - *Home:* Cottonwood, MN. *Age:* 67. *Congregation:* English Lutheran Church, Cottonwood, MN. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 16. *Education:* B.A. from Bethany Lutheran College, M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* ELS Missions Advancement Project (MAP) Board president, Circuit 9 alternate visitor, member of Committee for Archives & History.

## CIRCUIT VISITORS AND ALTERNATES

2 clergy positions per circuit

### Circuit 1

Rev. Michael Dale  
Alt. Rev. Mark Faugstad

### **Circuit 1 Visitor:**

Rev. Mark Faugstad—*Home:* Port St. Lucie, FL. *Age:* 59. *Congregation:* Christ, Port St. Lucie, FL. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 12. *Education:* Graduated from Bethany Lutheran College (2006); Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (2010); Currently serves as a teacher at Christ Lutheran School and assistant pastor at Christ Lutheran Church. *Qualifications for Office:* Served as Alternate Visitor, Circuit 8; Currently Circuit 1 Visitor.

### **Circuit 1 Alternate:**

Rev. Jonathan Madson— *Home:* Sebring, FL. *Age:* 68. *Congregation:* New Life Lutheran, Sebring, FL. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 38. *Education:* A.A. from Bethany Lutheran College; M.S. from Mankato State University; M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary; ELS elementary school teacher – 2 years. *Qualifications for Office:* Served as the Circuit visitor in Circuit 5 of the ELS for several years.

### Circuit 2

Rev. Thomas Fox  
Alt. Rev. James Braun

### **Circuit 2 Visitor:**

Rev. James Braun—*Home:* Harwich, MA. *Age:* 63. *Congregation:* Trinity, Brewster, MA. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 34. *Education:* UW-Milwaukee; BLC; Mankato State University; Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Circuit 12 Alternate Visitor; Circuit 12 Visitor; Circuit 2 Alternate Visitor.

### **Circuit 2 Alternate:**

Rev. Michael Dale — *Home:* Burlington, MA. *Age:* 54. *Congregation:* Pinewood, MA. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 21. *Education:* M.Div. - Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, MN; B.A. in Music – Mankato State University; A.A. - Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN. *Qualifications for Office:* Has served as a parish pastor and has served for several terms as secretary of the Board For Lutheran Schools, and as a Circuit Visitor.



Circuit 4

Rev. David Thompson  
Alt. Rev. David Locklair

**Circuit 4 Alternate:**

Rev. David Emmons — *Home:* Lombard, IL. *Age:* 58. *Congregation:* St. Timothy, Lombard, IL. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 9. *Education:* Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.); Masters of Divinity (M.Div.). *Qualifications for Office:* Has served as a parish pastor for 18 years.

# A PRIMER ON PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

The synod conducts its business on the basis of “Parliamentary procedure” or “Roberts Rules of Order,” a traditional set of rules for various kinds of assemblies. The objectives of this procedure are to insure the smooth conduct of business and protect the rights of both the majority and the minority; **the majority rules and the minority has a right to be heard.**

Most procedures are very simple.

- For a decision to come before the assembly, it must be in the form of a motion. This may come from a committee (a committee report is a seconded motion) or a member of the assembly.
- No individual can make a motion unless recognized by the chair. The member will ordinarily make the motion at the microphone.
- In order for the motion to be considered it must be supported (seconded) by one other member of the assembly. In our proceedings, we permit the second to be called from the floor. Following the second, the chair calls for discussion. Only a few motions are not debatable.
- When the list of speakers is exhausted, or the assembly terminates discussion, the chair calls for a vote.
- In the course of discussion of a motion, any member of the assembly can propose an amendment. If seconded, the assembly decides whether or not to accept the amendment. If it is accepted, the discussion is on the amended motion. If the amendment is defeated, the discussion returns to a discussion of the main motion (as it was before amended).
- In the discussion of any motion, the speaker, after being recognized by the chair, is expected to state first whether he favors or opposes the motion before making his speech.
- Speakers are expected to address the chairman, not the assembly or any individual in the assembly.

*As the convention conducts its business, two procedures have in the past proved prone to misunderstanding and confusion. In the interest of a common understanding and efficiency, proper procedure for each of these situations is laid out below.*

## ENDING DEBATE (“CALLING THE QUESTION”)

Ideally, everyone who wishes to speak to an issue has the opportunity to do so, and the chair should try to see that this is the case. Sometimes, when debate has gone on for a while and speakers seem to be repeating points already made, the assembly can bring debate to a close and move to a vote even though there is still a list of speakers who want the floor. *Ending debate should be a rare occurrence, and always done in an orderly fashion.*

First, note that it is not orderly for a member of the assembly to shout “Question” in an attempt to end debate. The Chair will not recognize such an action as a motion to end debate. It is only a signal that some in the assembly are getting impatient. The Chair may ask, “Are there any more speakers?” If there are, they should be given their opportunity to speak, even if someone shouted “Question.”

*Here is the proper way to end debate before all speakers who wish to speak have had a chance to do so.*

*Discussion on “resolution x” has gone on a long time, and speakers are starting to be repetitive.*

Member who wishes to end debate is recognized by Chair (might involve waiting a turn on the speaker list).

Member says, **“I move to end debate.”**

*[The member may not give a speech and then move to end debate. This must be the only thing the member says.]*

[The member may use traditional language: **“I move the previous question.”** Saying **“I call the question”** is understood, although it is not proper parliamentary language. Saying **“I move to end debate”** is most clear.]

Anyone in the assembly may **second** the motion.

**Chair: “It is moved and seconded that we end debate on this question and vote immediately. This motion cannot be discussed and requires a two-thirds majority to pass. A “yes” vote means you wish to end the debate and vote on [resolution x.] A “no” vote means that you want debate on [resolution x] to continue. All in favor of ending debate and voting immediately please raise your hand. (tellers count) Those opposed to ending debate and voting immediately raise your hand. (tellers count)”**

NOTE: this is NOT a vote on [resolution x], but only a decision whether or not to vote immediately on [resolution x] with no more debate.

If the motion passes, the Chair immediately presents [resolution x] for a vote. If the motion fails, speakers may continue to discuss [resolution x].

## AMENDMENT BY REPLACEMENT (“SUBSTITUTE MOTIONS”)

Removing a motion from the floor by replacing it with an entirely new motion is a procedure which, while permissible, should be used only rarely and with great care for the following reasons:

- It easily becomes a confusing procedure, and confusion leads to frustration and unhappiness in the assembly.
- It subverts due process, since the motion on the floor has gone through examination, discussion and approval by a floor committee, while the substitute has not.
- The assembly has the motion on the floor before them in print, while often the proposed substitute is only read orally.
- Often a proposed substitute motion merely reverses the intent of the motion on the floor. Rather than proposing a substitute motion, the same effect can be achieved more easily and with less confusion by simply voting down the motion on the floor. [In cases like this, the Chair has the right to rule the proposed substitute motion out of order.]

For these reasons, “substitute motions” should be discouraged. It is more fair, clear, and straightforward to oppose a motion by simply speaking and voting against it, instead of by trying to substitute another motion for it.

*If a “substitute motion” is proposed, the following is the procedure:*

The proposed new motion should be carefully crafted in advance by its supporters. Nothing is more confusing than trying to adjust the wording of a proposed substitute motion on the convention floor before it is even officially before the assembly.

The member who wishes to propose the substitute motion is recognized by Chair (might involve waiting a turn on the speaker list).

The member says, **“I move that we replace the motion before us with the following motion.”** He then distributes printed copies of the proposed substitute motion, and reads it.  
 [This motion means, **“I move that we discard the motion we have been discussing, and instead discuss the new motion that I am presenting.”**]

Anyone in the assembly may **second** the motion.

NOTE that making the motion to substitute **DOES NOT place the substitute before the assembly for discussion.** The assembly must first decide by vote whether or not it wishes to stop discussing the motion on the floor, and instead start discussing the proposed substitute. That is to say, only if the motion to replace is passed is the proposed substitute motion before the assembly for discussion.

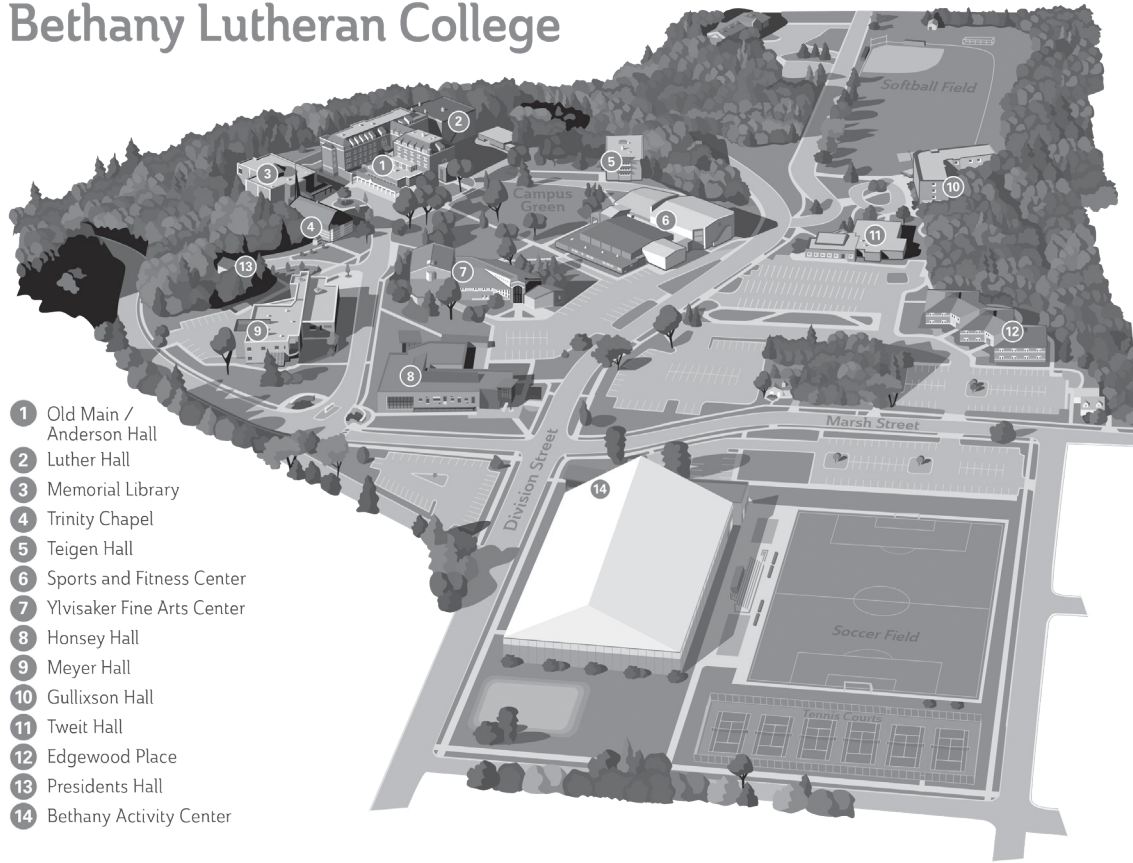
Chair: **“It has been moved and seconded that we discard [*resolution x, the one currently on the floor*] and instead discuss [*the proposed substitute*]. A “yes” vote means we will stop discussing [*resolution x*] and instead start discussing [*the proposed substitute*]. A “no” vote means we will continue discussing [*resolution x*]. Is there any discussion?”**

NOTE that discussion at this point **must be confined to whether or not to stop speaking on the current issue and instead start speaking about the proposed substitute.** There should be **NO DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE** at this point, because the assembly has not yet agreed to place it on the floor. While this might be a difficult distinction to maintain, the Chair must try hard to maintain it. The proposed substitute motion should not be discussed before the assembly decides by its vote to discuss it.

When discussion ends, the Chair says, **“We are ready to vote on the motion to replace the motion on the floor. A majority vote is needed to pass this motion. All in favor of discussing [*the proposed substitute*] say aye. All in favor of continuing to discuss [*resolution x*] say no.”**

If the motion passes, the item currently under discussion [*resolution x*] disappears, and instead the substitute is on the floor for discussion and an eventual vote. NOTE that successfully substituting one motion for another does not mean the proposed substitute motion is passed. It is now only before the assembly for discussion. It must be passed by a separate vote.

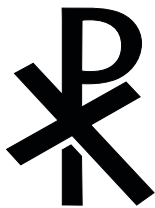
# Bethany Lutheran College



- 1 Old Main / Anderson Hall
- 2 Luther Hall
- 3 Memorial Library
- 4 Trinity Chapel
- 5 Teigen Hall
- 6 Sports and Fitness Center
- 7 Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center
- 8 Honsey Hall
- 9 Meyer Hall
- 10 Gullixson Hall
- 11 Tweit Hall
- 12 Edgewood Place
- 13 Presidents Hall
- 14 Bethany Activity Center



Duplicate or Cut



## DELEGATE'S CREDENTIALS

*(Please type or print clearly)*

Delegates are to present these credentials, in person, to the Credentials Committee upon arrival at the convention (**do not mail in advance**):

This is to certify that: \_\_\_\_\_

Delegate Name

has been elected by \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Congregation

Church Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Church City & State

to serve as its representative at the Annual Convention of the *Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, to be held to June 16–20, 2024 in Mankato, Minnesota, at Bethany Lutheran College

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary of the congregation's voters' assembly

Check one of the following:

The above delegate has been assigned to a committee in the *Book of Reports and Memorials*.

The above delegate has not been assigned to a committee in the *Book of Reports and Memorials*.