

# Book of Reports and Memorials

109<sup>th</sup> Convention

of the

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

and the

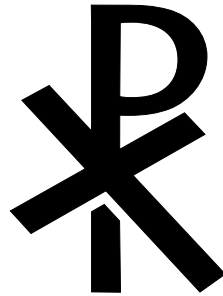
70<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of

Bethany Lutheran College, Inc.

and the

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

Lutheran Schools of America, Inc.



To be held at

BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE

Mankato, Minnesota

June 21–25, 2026

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OUR FATHER, BY WHOSE NAME ALL  
FATHERHOOD IS KNOWN

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*Essayist: Rev. Alex Ring*

*Compiled by Rev. Kyle Madson, Secretary*



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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.

The **Home Outreach Committee** and the **Elementary Education Committee** will make recommendation concerning respective salary scales for clergy and elementary school teachers.

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 23, 2026  
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, wifi 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

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

# 2026 CONVENTION PROGRAM

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

## SYNOD SUNDAY, JUNE 21

- 4:00 Synod Sunday Service (*Trinity Chapel*)  
Preacher: The Rev. Jeffrey Merseth (Princeton, Minnesota)  
Liturgist: The Rev. Samuel Gullixson (Parkland, Washington)

The offering has been designated for *Friends of Lime Creek*

- 5:00 Dinner (*College Cafeteria* -- free will donation)

Credentials/Roll Call will be gathered on Monday morning

## MONDAY, JUNE 22

- 7:30–9:00 Credentials/Roll Call  
*All pastors and delegates need to report to the Credentials Desk*
- 9:00 Opening Devotion (*Trinity Chapel*)  
Chaplain: The Rev. Samuel Gullixson (Parkland, Washington)
- 9:45 Organization of the Convention:  
Roll Call Report  
Credential Committee Report  
Official Opening of the Convention  
Pastors' Equalization Rules  
President's Message and Report  
Adoption of the Convention Program  
Welcoming of Guests
- 10:30 Nominating Ballot for the 2027 Committee on Nominations (printed ballot)
- 11:00 Organization of the Convention (continued)
- 11:30 Recess (*lunch served in the cafeteria*)
- 1:00 Scripture, Prayer & Hymn  
Anniversaries observed:  
Erwin Ekhoff—50 years  
Theodore Gullixson—50 years  
Harvey Abrahamson Sr.—40 years  
Robert Lawson Sr.—40 years  
Jonathan Madson—40 years  
William Grimm—25 years  
Timothy Hartwig—25 years  
Lawrence Wentzlaff—25 years
- 1:20 Organization of the Convention (continued)  
Credentials: Committee 3  
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
- 7:30 – 9:00 Committee meetings continue

## SATURDAY, JUNE 20

On Saturday, June 20 Lime Creek Lutheran Church will be decommissioned at a 10:30 a.m. service. Following the service, there will be a meal and then a program. Please RSVP to attend the service and meal at [FriendsofLimeCreek.org](http://FriendsofLimeCreek.org). A charter bus will be available for transportation between Mankato and Lime Creek for \$26.00 per seat. It will depart Bethany College at 9:00 AM and return after the program in the afternoon. If you plan to ride the bus, please also register for that at [FriendsofLimeCreek.org](http://FriendsofLimeCreek.org). \*

\*1:30 Bethany Auxiliary sponsored tea at the home of President & Mrs. Pfeiffer

6:00 Heritage of Hymns (Trinity Chapel)\*

7:15 Cross-stich Presentation (Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center)\*

## TUESDAY, JUNE 23

- 8:00 Committee Meetings (as necessary)
- 9:00 Opening Devotion (*Trinity Chapel*)  
Preacher: The Rev. Ben Wiechmann (Mankato, Minnesota)
- 9:30 Preliminaries:  
Minutes: Committee 5  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 9:35 Synodical Membership & reception of new members: Committee 13
- 10:00 Election of president and vice president (four-year terms)**  
*(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)*
- 11:15 Greetings & Presentations
- 11:30 Recess (*lunch served in the cafeteria*)
- 1:00 Scripture, Prayer & Hymn
- 1:05 Preliminaries:  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 1:15 Election of the 2023 Committee on Nominations [first printed ballot] †
- 1:30 Essay and Discussion: *Our Father By Whose Name All Fatherhood is Known*  
Essayist: The Rev. Alexander Ring (Port St. Lucie, Florida)
- 3:00 Coffee & Obenberger Reception
- 3:40 Doctrine Committee 6
- 4:15 Elections: Committee 2  
*(Convention Guidelines [§240] Article IX.B)*
- 4:45 Recess for the Communion Service
- 5:00 Communion Service (*Trinity Chapel*)  
Preacher: The Rev. Paul Webber (Eau Claire, Wisconsin)  
Liturgist: The Rev. Samuel Gullixson (Parkland, Washington)  
The offering has been designated for *Friends of Lime Creek*  
Deaths noted:  
Rev. Mark Rogers (1964–2025)  
Ruth Orvick (1928–2025) - wife of the late Rev. Pres. George Orvick  
Rev. Richard Fyffe (1942–2025)  
Rev. Brad Homan (1955–2025)  
Rev. Robert Carter (1928–2026)  
Yvonne Keeler (1934–2026) - wife of the Rev. Charles Keeler,

† *Subsequent ballots for the 2027 Committee on Nominations will be brought forward as and when needed.*

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

- 8:00 Opening Devotion (*Trinity Chapel*)  
Preacher: The Rev. Gene Lilienthal (Lengby, Minnesota)
- 8:30 Preliminaries:  
Minutes: Committee 5  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 8:35 Home Outreach Presentation
- 9:00 Home Outreach: Committee 9
- 9:15 Elections: Committee 2
- 9:45 Board for Lutheran Schools Presentation
- 9:50 Elementary Education: Committee 11
- 10:00 Coffee
- 10:30 Essay and Discussion: *Our Father By Whose Name All Fatherhood is Known*  
Essayist: The Rev. Alexander Ring (Port St. Lucie, Florida)
- 11:30 Recess (*lunch served in the cafeteria*)
- 1:00 Lutheran Youth Honor Choir
- 1:10 Scripture, Prayer & Hymn (Don M.) with *Founder's Day History Presentation*
- 1:30 Higher Education Presentation (*college*)
- 2:00 Higher Education Presentation (*seminary*)
- 2:10 Higher Education: Committee 8
- 2:45 Miscellaneous: Committee 14
- 3:00 Coffee
- 3:30 Preliminaries  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 3:35 World Outreach Presentation
- 4:00 World Outreach: Committee 10
- 4:30 Finances Committee 7
- 4:55 President's Message and Report Committee 1
- 5:00 Recess

5:30 Honor Choir Concert  
(Trinity Chapel) \*

7:00 Apologetics Conference  
(Trinity Chapel)\*

## THURSDAY, JUNE 25

- 8:00 Scripture, Hymn & Prayer (*Sports and Fitness Center*)
- 8:10 Preliminaries:  
Minutes: Committee 5  
Credentials: Committee 3  
Program: Committee 4
- 8:15 Parish Services Committee 12
- 8:30 Pastoral Conference Records & Resolutions: Committee 15
- 8:40 Excuses: Credentials Committee 3
- 8:45 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 25, 2026 are listed*

Ascension .....	Eau Claire, WI.....	Mike Rumphol	Jerico.....	New Hampton, IA.....	Jim Costello
Bethany .....	Ames, IA.....	Jode Edwards	Jerico.....	New Hampton, IA.....	Neil Shaffer
Bethany .....	Ames, IA.....	Michael Lauer	King of Grace.....	Golden Valley, MN.....	Tim Larson
Bethany .....	Port Orchard, WA .....	Chris Denney	King of Grace.....	Golden Valley, MN.....	Ned Silber
Bethany .....	Port Orchard, WA .....	Ricky Pasillas	Lake Mills .....	Lake Mills, IA.....	Joe Holt
Bethany .....	Princeton MN .....	Glen Hansen	Lake Mills .....	Lake Mills, IA.....	Orlan Lau
Bethany .....	Princeton MN .....	Russ Kampa	Mt. Olive .....	Mankato, MN .....	Jacob Beilke
Christ.....	Port St. Lucie, FL.....	Keith Duin	Mt. Olive .....	Mankato, MN .....	Paul Tweit
Christ.....	Port St. Lucie, FL.....	Erik Lee	Newport.....	Wisconsin Dells, WI.....	Paul Gregerson
Christ the King .....	Green Bay, WI.....	Charles Hartwig	Norseland.....	St. Peter, MN.....	Reece Boucher
Concordia .....	Eau Claire, WI.....	David Backstrom	Norseland.....	St. Peter, MN.....	Perry Lund
Concordia .....	Eau Claire, WI.....	Duane Steinhauer	Parkland.....	Tacoma, WA.....	Todd Knutson
Divine Mercy .....	Weatherford, TX .....	Leroy Green	Peace .....	North Mankato, MN.....	Greg Miller
Divine Mercy .....	Weatherford, TX .....	John Schreiber	Peace .....	North Mankato, MN.....	Daniel Mundahl
Eagle Lake.....	Eagle Lake, MN.....	Dave Ewert	Pinehurst.....	Eau Claire, WI.....	Daniel Jacobsen
Eagle Lake.....	Eagle Lake, MN.....	Robert Hanna	Redeeming Grace..	Rogers, MN.....	Ron Menough
English .....	Cottonwood, MN .....	Dustin Basel	Redeeming Grace..	Rogers, MN.....	Larry Peterson
English .....	Cottonwood, MN .....	Robert Borning	Reformation .....	Hillsboro, OR.....	Alex Anton
Faith .....	Oregon, WI.....	Mike Chritton	Reformation .....	Hillsboro, OR.....	Bill Ivers
Faith .....	Oregon, WI.....	Mick McClain	Resurrection .....	Winter Haven, FL .....	Ron Jurgenson
Faith .....	San Antonio, TX .....	Andy Cascione	Resurrection .....	Winter Haven, FL .....	Dan Weaver
Faith .....	San Antonio, TX .....	Zach Helmer	Saude .....	Lawler, IA.....	Gene Anderson
First Trinity .....	Marinette, WI.....	Gary Johnson	Saude .....	Lawler, IA.....	Rick Johnson
First Trinity .....	Marinette, WI.....	Daniel Lauth	Saved By Grace.....	Gresham, OR .....	Kirk Campbell
Good Shepherd .....	Indianola, IA .....	Loren Meyer	Saved By Grace.....	Gresham, OR .....	Jerry Herbek
Heritage .....	Apple Valley, MN .....	Lyle Fahning	St. John’s .....	Frankenmuth, MI.....	Jeremy Aiello
Heritage .....	Apple Valley, MN .....	Phil Holz	St. John’s .....	Frankenmuth, MI.....	Steve Walsh
Holton .....	Holton, MI.....	Steve Anderson	St. Paul’s.....	Portage, WI .....	Andrew White
Holton .....	Holton, MI.....	Jeff Tillman	St. Timothy .....	Lombard, IL .....	Pete Meyer
Holy Cross .....	Madison, WI .....	Rick Holz	Trinity .....	Brewster, MA.....	Paul Chamberlin
Hope.....	West Jordan, UT .....	Dale Jaech	Trinity .....	Brewster, MA.....	Warren Wenger
Immanuel.....	Audubon, MN.....	Marty Wolbaum	Trinity .....	West Bend, WI .....	Jeffrey Minzlaff
			Trinity .....	West Bend, WI .....	Ralph Seidensticker

# CONVENTION COMMITTEES

*locations indicated are those of the congregations represented*

## 1. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE AND REPORT

Rev. Michael Dale ..... Burlington, MA  
Rev. Tony Pittenger ..... Port Orchard, WA  
Jode Edwards ..... Ames, IA  
Paul Tweit ..... Mankato, MN

## 2. COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

*(elected at the 2025 convention)*

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Rev. Peter Faugstad  
Rev. Don Moldstad  
Rev. Luke Ulrich  
Rev. Paul Webber  
Mr. Dustin Basel  
Mr. Karl Bloedel  
Mr. Aaron Faugstad  
Mr. John Merseth, Jr.

## 3. CREDENTIALS

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Rev. Daniel Basel ..... Atlanta, MI  
Rev. Kurt Kluge ..... Shawano, WI  
Mr. Allen Labitzky ..... Crystal, MN

## 4. PROGRAM

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Rev. Gregory Haugen ..... Neenah, WI  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai ..... Port Orchard, WA

## 5. MINUTES

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Dr. Adam Brasich ..... West Jordan, UT  
Dr. Thomas Kuster ..... New Ulm, MN  
Mr. Larry Rude ..... Mankato, MN

## 6. DOCTRINE

Rev. Patrick Ernst\* ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Harvey Abrahamson ..... Clintonville, WI  
Rev. Karl Anderson ..... Apple Valley, MN  
Rev. Timothy Buelow ..... Lake Havasu City, AZ  
Rev. Christopher Dale ..... Port St Lucie, FL  
Rev. Cory Hahnke ..... Madison, WI  
Dr. Daniel Hartwig ..... West Bend, WI  
Rev. Erich Hoeft ..... Holton, MI  
Rev. Jesse Jacobsen ..... Port St Lucie, FL  
Rev. Shawn Kauffeld ..... Menomonie, WI  
Rev. Frederic Lams ..... Hobart, IN  
Rev. Paul Lange ..... Oconomowoc, WI  
Rev. Matthew Lehne ..... Tacoma, WA  
Rev. Matthew Luttman ..... Vero Beach, FL  
Rev. Matthew Moldstad ..... Frankenmuth, MI  
Rev. Steven Petersen ..... Palm Bay, FL

Dr. Steven Reagles ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Kenneth Schmidt ..... West Bend, WI  
Rev. William Stehr ..... Irvine, CA  
Rev. Noah Thompson ..... East Grand Forks, MN  
Rev. Randy VanMehren ..... Lakeland, FL  
Rev. James Wilson ..... Citronelle, AL  
Andy Cascione ..... San Antonio, TX  
Leroy Green ..... Weatherford, TX  
Daniel Jacobsen ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Todd Knutson ..... Tacoma, WA  
Tim Larson ..... Golden Valley, MN  
Mick McClain ..... Oregon, WI  
Larry Peterson ..... Rogers, MN  
Ralph Seidensticker ..... West Bend, WI  
Marty Wolbaum ..... Audubon, MN

## 7. FINANCES

Rev. Daniel Oberer\* ..... Rosemount, MN  
Rev. Cody Anderson ..... Klamath Falls, OR  
Rev. Daniel Basel ..... Atlanta, MI  
Rev. James Braun ..... Harwich, MA  
Rev. Christian Eisenbeis ..... Marinette, WI  
Rev. Micah Ernst ..... Eugene, MO  
Rev. Kurtis Freimuth ..... Deshler, OH  
Rev. Adolph Harstad ..... North Mankato, MN  
Rev. Jeffrey Hendrix ..... Oregon, WI  
Rev. Martin Hoesch ..... Ames, IA  
Rev. Samuel Johnson ..... Albert Lea, MN  
Rev. Max Kerr ..... Midland, MI  
Rev. Ronald Kruse ..... Allegan, MI  
Rev. Michael Lilienthal ..... Belview, MN  
Rev. Jeffery Luplow ..... Curran, MI  
Rev. Nile Merseth ..... Somerset, WI  
Rev. Thomas Rank ..... Lake Mills, IA  
Rev. Trent Saari ..... Cottage Grove, WI  
Rev. Gregory Schmidt ..... Naples, FL  
Rev. Andrew Soule ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Luke Ulrich ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Paul Webber ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Mr. James Young ..... Oconomowoc, WI  
Steve Anderson ..... Holton, MI  
Keith Duin ..... Port St. Lucie, FL  
Paul Gregerson ..... Wisconsin Dells, WI  
Charles Hartwig ..... Green Bay, WI  
Joe Holt ..... Lake Mills, IA  
Perry Lund ..... St. Peter, MN  
Greg Miller ..... North Mankato, MN  
John Schreiber ..... Weatherford, TX

## 8. HIGHER EDUCATION

Rev. Herbert Huhnerkoch\* ..... Fort Myers, FL  
Rev. Colin Anderson ..... Suttons Bay, MI  
Mr. Silas Born ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Edward Bryant ..... Washougal, WA  
Rev. Matthew Crick ..... Onalaska, WI  
Rev. Abraham Faugstad ..... Waukon, IA  
Rev. Mark Faugstad ..... Port St Lucie, FL  
Rev. Thomas Fox ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Jerome Gernander ..... Leander, TX  
Rev. David Haeuser ..... Waterloo, WI  
Rev. Thomas Heyn ..... Madison, WI  
Rev. James Kasserer ..... Weatherford, TX  
Rev. Kurt Kluge ..... Shawano, WI  
Rev. Robert Lawson ..... The Dalles, OR  
Rev. John Merseth ..... Audubon, MN  
Rev. John Petersen ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Joshua Skogen ..... Scarville, IA  
Rev. Thomas Smuda ..... Rogers City, MI  
Mr. Ben Springer ..... North Mankato, MN  
Rev. Richard Wiechmann ..... Bloomington, MN  
Mr. Craig Zibrowski ..... Mankato, MN  
Dustin Basel ..... Cottonwood, MN  
Jacob Beilke ..... Mankato, MN  
Paul Chamberlin ..... Brewster, MA  
Jim Costello ..... New Hampton, IA  
Rick Holz ..... Madison, WI  
Gary Johnson ..... Marinette, WI  
Ron Jurgenson ..... Winter Haven, FL

## 9. HOME OUTREACH

Dr. Timothy Schmeling\* ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Nathanael Abrahamson ..... Cottage Grove, WI  
Rev. Timothy Bartels ..... Gresham, OR  
Dr. Adam Brasich ..... West Jordan, UT  
Rev. Andrew Burmeister ..... Medford, OR  
*Rev. Kent Dethlefsen ..... Windsor, CA*  
Rev. Timothy Erickson ..... Dodge Center, MN  
Rev. Erik Gernander ..... Jefferson City, MO  
Rev. Theodore Gullixson ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Caleb Helmen ..... Thornton, IA  
*Rev. Christopher Johnson ..... Wausau, WI*  
Rev. Nathan Krause ..... Cottage Grove, WI  
Rev. Daniel Larson ..... Charles City, IA  
Rev. Gene Lilienthal ..... Lengby, MN  
Rev. Boyd Longshore ..... Peyton, CO  
Rev. Donald Moldstad ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Daniel Ruiz ..... San Antonio, TX  
Rev. Shawn Stafford ..... Janesville, MN  
Rev. Frederick Theiste ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Rev. David Thompson ..... North Mankato, MN  
Rev. David Jay Webber ..... Princeton, MN  
Jeremy Aiello ..... Frankenmuth, MI  
Alex Anton ..... Hillsboro, OR  
Mike Chritton ..... Oregon, WI  
Daniel Lauth ..... Marinette, WI  
Pete Meyer ..... Lombard, IL

Ned Silber ..... Golden Valley, MN  
Jeff Tillman ..... Holton, MI

## 10. WORLD OUTREACH

Rev. Timothy Zenda\* ..... Princeton, MN  
Rev. Peter Bockoven ..... Mount Vernon, WA  
Pres. Em. Dan Bruss ..... Pella, IA  
Rev. Carl Busse ..... Amherst, OH  
Rev. David Emmons ..... Lombard, IL  
Rev. Daniel Faugstad ..... Redwood Falls, MN  
Rev. Rodney Flohr ..... Cold Spring, MN  
Rev. Aaron Hamilton ..... Phoenix, AZ  
Rev. Gregory Haugen ..... Neenah, WI  
Rev. Burgess Huehn ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Dr. Brian Klebig ..... Mankato, MN  
Mr. Allen Labitzky ..... Crystal, MN  
Rev. Robert Lawson ..... Princeton, MN  
Rev. David Locklair ..... Hobart, IN  
Rev. Mark Marozick ..... Madison, WI  
Rev. Jeffery Merseth ..... Oklee, MN  
Rev. Ronald Pederson ..... Mankato, MN  
Dr. Nicholas Proksch ..... Mankato, MN  
Pres. Em. Gaylin Schmeling ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Tosten Skaaland ..... Wittenberg, WI  
Dr. Michael Smith ..... Ames, IA  
Rev. Bernt Tweit ..... Crystal, MN  
Rev. Christian Walz ..... Clara City, MN  
David Backstrom ..... Eau Claire, WI  
Kirk Campbell ..... Gresham, OR  
Russ Kampa ..... Princeton, MN  
Erik Lee ..... Port St. Lucie, FL  
Daniel Mundahl ..... North Mankato, MN  
Ricky Pasillas ..... Port Orchard, WA  
Neil Shaffer ..... New Hampton, IA  
Warren Wenger ..... Brewster, MA

## 11. ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Dr. Aaron Ferkenstad\* ..... Golden Valley, MN  
Rev. Mark Bartels ..... Madison, WI  
Rev. Joseph Burkhardt ..... Beaverton, OR  
Rev. Mark DeGarmeux ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Roger Emmons ..... Redmond, OR  
Rev. Ernest Geistfeld ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Samuel Gullixson ..... Tacoma, WA  
Rev. Peter Heyn ..... Green Bay, WI  
Rev. Roger Holtz ..... DePere, WI  
Rev. Jacob Kempfert ..... Saginaw, MI  
Rev. Brad Kerkow ..... North Mankato, MN  
Rev. Phillip Lepak ..... Hopkins, MN  
Rev. Steven Lockman ..... Petaluma, CA  
Rev. Daniel McQuality ..... Carthage, MO  
Pres. Em. Marvin Meyer ..... Brainerd, MN  
Pres. Gene Pfeifer ..... Mankato, MN  
Mr. Larry Rude ..... Mankato, MN  
Rev. Samuel Schmeling ..... Tracy, MN  
Rev. J. Kincaid Smith ..... Mankato, MN  
Dr. Erling Teigen ..... Mankato, MN

Rev. S Piet Van Kampen..... Deerfield, WI  
 Rev. Benjamin Wiechmann..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Thomas Zeller..... Pleasant Hill, MO  
 Robert Hanna..... Eagle Lake, MN  
 Zach Helmer..... San Antonio, TX  
 Bill Ivers..... Hillsboro, OR  
 Rick Johnson..... Lawler, IA  
 Orlan Lau..... Lake Mills, IA  
 Jeffrey Minzlaff..... West Bend, WI  
 Andrew White..... Portage, WI

**12. PARISH SERVICES**

Rev. Sean Scheele\*..... Waterloo, IA  
 Rev. Joseph Abrahamson..... Vesta, MN  
 Rev. Darryl Bakke..... Albert Lea, MN  
 Rev. Matthew Brooks..... Holts Summit, MO  
 Rev. Erwin Ekhoﬀ..... Minneapolis, MN  
 Rev. Craig Ferkenstad..... Mankato, MN  
*Dr. Steven Gjerde..... Wausau, WI*  
 Rev. Wayne Halvorson..... Mankato, MN  
 Pres. Timothy Hartwig..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Dale Jaech..... Taylorsville, UT  
 Rev. Charles Keeler..... Winter Haven, FL  
 Dr. Thomas Kuster..... New Ulm, MN  
 Rev. Nicholas Lilienthal..... Bowling Green, OH  
 Rev. Jonathan Madson..... Vero Beach, FL  
 Prof. Dennis Marzolf..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Kenneth Mellon..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Homer Mosley..... Olympia, WA  
 Rev. Andrew Palmquist..... Luverne, MN  
 Rev. Paul Schneider..... Midland, MI  
 Rev. John Smith..... Shawano, WI  
 Rev. Caleb Strutz..... Winter Haven, FL  
 Rev. Richard Tragasz..... Siloam Springs, AR  
*Rev. Caleb VonDeylen..... Lakewood, WA*  
 Reece Boucher..... St. Peter, MN  
*Dave Ewert..... Eagle Lake, MN*  
 Glen Hansen..... Princeton MN  
 Jerry Herbek..... Gresham, OR  
 Phil Holz..... Apple Valley, MN  
 Michael Lauer..... Ames, IA  
 Duane Steinhauer..... Eau Claire, WI  
 Steve Walsh..... Frankenmuth, MI

**13. SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP**

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Rev. Peter Faugstad..... Lawler, IA  
 Rev. Kurtis Freimuth..... Deshler, OH  
 Mr. Shu-Ting Lai..... Port Orchard, WA  
 Rev. Jonathan Madson..... Vero Beach, FL  
 Rev. S Piet Van Kampen..... Deerfield, WI  
 Chris Denney..... Port Orchard, WA

**14. MISCELLANEOUS**

Rev. Michael Muehlenhardt\*..... Cottonwood, MN  
 Mr. Steve Beilke..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Steven Brockdorf..... Hillsboro, OR

Rev. Peter Faugstad..... Lawler, IA  
 Rev. Paul Fries..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. William Grimm..... Portage, WI  
 Rev. Lloyd Harter..... Eau Claire, WI  
*Rev. Skyler Hepler..... Australia*  
 Dr. Doyle Holbird..... Eagle Lake, MN  
 Rev. Young Ha Kim..... Las Vegas, NV  
 Rev. Lee Kuhns..... Sebring, FL  
 Rev. Bruce Leonatti..... Irwin, PA  
 Rev. Joshua Mayer..... Rogers, MN  
 Rev. David Meyer..... Australia  
 Rev. Robert Otto..... Bloomer, WI  
 Rev. Alexander Ring..... Port Saint Lucie, FL  
 Rev. Glenn Smith..... Forest City, IA  
 Rev. Steve Sparley..... Tacoma, WA  
 Rev. Paul Sullivan..... Waukesha, WI  
 Rev. Lawrence Wentzlaff..... Hanska, MN  
 Rev. Paul Zager..... Flint, MI  
 Gene Anderson..... Lawler, IA  
 Robert Borning..... Cottonwood, MN  
 Chris Denney..... Port Orchard, WA  
 Lyle Fahning..... Apple Valley, MN  
 Ron Menough..... Rogers, MN  
 Loren Meyer..... Indianola, IA  
 Mike Rumphol..... Eau Claire, WI  
 Dan Weaver..... Winter Haven, FL

**15. PASTORAL CONFERENCE RECORDS AND RESOLUTIONS**

*(also assigned to an additional committee)*

Mr. Steve Beilke..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Theodore Gullixson..... Mankato, MN  
 Rev. Erich Hoeft..... Holton, MI

**16. TELLERS**

Vicar Peter Estrem  
 Rev. Caleb Strutz  
 Rev. Caleb VonDeylen  
 Rev. Matthew Lehne  
 Rev. Cody Anderson  
 Rev. Caleb Helmen  
 Rev. Max Kerr

**17. CHAPLAIN**

Rev. Samuel Gullixson..... Tacoma, WA

**18. HEAD USHERS**

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

**19. PARLIAMENTARIANS**

Rev. Craig Ferkenstad..... Mankato, MN  
 Dr. Brian Klebig..... Mankato, MN

**20. ASSISTANT SECRETARY**

Rev. Michael Lilienthal..... Belview, MN

## COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS—INELIGIBLES

Mr. Dustin Basel  
Mr. Dennis Behr  
Mr. Karl Bloedel  
Mr. Enrique Carhuayo  
Mr. Greg Costello  
Rev. Christopher Dale  
Mr. Steven DePrey  
Mr. Aaron Faugstad  
Mr. Benjamin Faugstad  
Rev. Peter Faugstad  
Rev. Paul Fries  
Rev. Theodore Gullixson  
Mr. Eric Harstad  
Rev. Peter Heyn  
Rev. Erich Hoeft  
Rev. Roger Holtz  
Rev. Jacob Kempfert  
Rev. Bradley Kerkow  
Rev. Kyle Madson  
Mr. Paul Manning  
Mr. John Merseth, Jr.  
Rev. Donald Moldstad  
Mr. David Norris  
Mr. J.T. Pedersen  
Rev. Anthony Pittenger  
Rev. Thomas Rank  
Mr. Nathan Rovey  
Mr. Niel Shaffer  
Mr. Dean Shoop  
Rev. Joshua Skogen  
Mr. Channing Smith  
Rev. Michael Smith  
Mr. David Sparley  
Rev. David Thompson  
Rev. Luke Ulrich  
Rev. David Webber  
Rev. Paul Webber  
Rev. Lawrence Wentzlaff

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

# COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

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7. Finances .....	BORAM, page 21 BORAM, page 64 BORAM, page 65 BORAM, page 79 Honsey Hall – Room 311
8. Higher Education.....	BORAM, page 27 BORAM, page 29 BORAM, page 39 Honsey Hall – Room 337
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12. Parish Services .....	BORAM, page 59 BORAM, page 61 BORAM, page 63 Honsey Hall – Room 213
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15. Pastoral Conference Records and Resolutions.....	BORAM, page 17 BORAM, page 18 BORAM, page 22 Honsey Hall – Room 237

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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

## ORDINATION AND INSTALLATIONS

On Friday, June 20, 2025, Skyler Hepler was ordained and commissioned as pastor to Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. The service took place in Trinity Chapel at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota. He was installed as Our Redeemer's pastor on Sunday, November 9, 2025.

Candidate of Theology Caleb VonDeylen was ordained and installed on July 20, 2025, at Lakewood Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lakewood, Washington. The Rev. Marc VonDeylen preached, The Rev. Steven Sparley was the ordinator, and The Rev. Matthew Lehne was the officiant. There were 11 pastors present.

Nicholas Lilienthal was installed as pastor of Abiding Word Lutheran Church in Bowling Green, Ohio on Sunday, July 6, 2025. The Rev. Paul Schneider performed the rite of installation. The Rev. Kurtis Freimuth served as liturgist.

The Rev. Patrick Ernst was commissioned as a missionary of the Board for Home Outreach on August 24, 2025 in Trinity Chapel at Bethany Lutheran College. Pastor Ernst will be serving the Peace daughter congregation in Eagle Lake, Minnesota.

The Rev. Homer Mosley was installed as interim pastor of Christ Lutheran in Sutherlin, Oregon on Saturday, September 6, 2025. The Rev. Edward Bryant performed the rite of installation. The Rev. Cody Anderson preached. The Rev. Roger Emmons served as lector, and the Rev. Andrew Burmeister served as liturgist.

The Rev. Matthew Moldstad was installed as pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Frankenmuth, Michigan on Sunday, January 4, 2026. The Rev. Paul Schneider performed the Rite of Installation, with the Rev. Jeffery Luplow preaching the sermon and the Rev. Max Kerr serving as liturgist.

On January 6, 2026, the Rev. David Jay Webber was installed as the world missions administrator for the ELS. The preacher for the service was his son-in-law, the Rev. Andrew Soule. The officiant for the installation was the Rev. Kyle Madson, the secretary of the ELS.

On Sunday, January 18, 2026, the Rev. Paul Kuehn was installed as associate pastor at Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove and Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. The liturgist was the Rev. Nathanael Abrahamson (Abiding Shepherd), the preacher was the Rev. Ben Pederson (Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minnesota, WELS), and the rite of installation was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Daniel Hartwig (circuit visitor/Trinity, West Bend, Wisconsin). The service was followed by a meal to warmly welcome The Rev. Kuehn, his wife Danielle, and their four children ranging from 2nd–11th grade.

## COLLOQUIES (COMMITTEE #13: SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP)

Separate colloquies were conducted for the Rev. Dr. Steven Gjerde and the Rev. Christopher Johnson of Zion Lutheran Church, Wausau, Wisconsin (formerly members of the LCMC) on February 23, 2026. Both of these men successfully completed Part 1 of the colloquy. Subsequently on Palm Sunday, March 29 they completed Part 2 with the result that the ELS Colloquy Committee unanimously passed these resolutions and place them before the 2026 convention:

1. Resolved that the Rev. Dr. Steven Gjerde is in agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in doctrine and practice and is recommended for permanent membership in the synod at the synod's 2026 convention.
2. Resolved that the Rev. Christopher Johnson is in agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in doctrine and practice and is recommended for permanent membership in the synod at the synod's 2026 convention.

Those who served on the Colloquy Committee were: Pres. Obenberger (Chair), Vice Pres. Smith, BLTS Pres. Hartwig, Prof. Rank (DC Chair), Dr. David Reagles (DC), the Rev. Andrew Soule and Mr. John Merseth.

On March 30, 2026 a colloquy was conducted for The Rev. Kent Dethlefsen (removed from the ELS clergy roster in 2013 in regard to matters surrounding his divorce from his wife). He successfully completed Part 1 of the colloquy. Part 2 was conducted on April 20 with the result that the ELS Colloquy Committee unanimously passed this resolution and now place it before the 2026 convention:

RESOLVED that The Rev. Kent Dethlefsen is in agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in doctrine and practice and is recommended for permanent membership in the synod at the synod's 2026 convention.

Those who served on the Colloquy Committee were: Pres. Obenberger (Chair), Vice Pres. Smith, BLTS Pres. Hartwig, Prof. Rank (DC Chair), Mr. Greg Costello (DC), the Rev. Tim Buelow and Prof. Perry Lund.

The Rev. Insub "Isaac" Paik, a formerly ordained Korean Presbyterian pastor, who over a decade ago having been exposed to the Lutheran Confessions became a pastor in the Lutheran Church – Korea. Most recently he has been pursuing his Ph.D. in Missiology Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He has contacted the ELS through the Rev. David Choi and the Rev. David Jay Webber and would like to be associated with a Confessional Lutheran church body that does not practice unionism. Based on various recommendations, a requested Colloquy into the ELS has been granted. Part 1 will be conducted on May 13. There may be more to report in an addendum to this report.

## **CONGREGATION CHARTER**

Eagle Lake Lutheran Church celebrated her Charter Sunday on December 7, 2025. The Rev. Patrick Ernst served as liturgist for the service, and the Rev. Brad Kerkow (ELS Evangelism and Missions Counselor) preached the sermon. Following the service, a photo was taken, an initial voters meeting was held to adopt the church constitution and bylaws and to elect the first officers, ceremonial charter documents were signed, and cake was served.

## **ANNIVERSARY**

On Sunday, August 24, 2025 the congregation of Bethany Lutheran Church, Luverne, Minnesota celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A festival song service was held at 10:15 a.m. ELS President Glenn Obenberger preached on John 12:1–11 with the theme: “Jesus Promises to Make Us, the Poor in spirit, Always Rich with His Presence.” The Rev. Paul Fries (former pastor) and the Rev. Ken Mellon (former vicar) read Scripture lessons and later shared remembrances. Special music and songs also were shared during the delicious meal. 80 people attended the festival service, including a daughter of the Rev. J. A. O. Preus, the first pastor of Bethany.

Bethany Lutheran Church in Port Orchard, Washington, celebrated its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Sunday September 28, 2025. President Obenberger preached for St. Michael and All Angels for the regular Sunday morning worship service. For the afternoon anniversary service, the Rev. Ed Bryant (former pastor of Bethany) preached. President Obenberger and Mr. Andrew Ronholt served as lectors (Andrew is a son of the congregation and studying for the pastoral ministry). The Rev. Pittenger conducted the service. (It should be noted that the congregation could not observe its 75<sup>th</sup> because in the fall of 2020 Washington state was still under strict COVID precautions.)

## **MEMBERSHIP REQUESTS (COMMITTEE #13: SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP)**

The Rev. Skyler Hepler a graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, has applied for membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

The Rev. Caleb VonDeylen a graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, has applied for membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

The Rev. Dr. Steven Gjerde (see note about colloquy above)

The Rev. Christopher Johnson (see note about colloquy above)

The Rev. Kent Dethlefsen (see note about colloquy above)

Eagle Lake Lutheran Church, Eagle Lake, Minnesota, as an ELS Board for Home Outreach mission has incorporated and, having subscribed to the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, is seeking to be received as an ELS congregation.

Zion Lutheran Church, Wausau, Wisconsin, having dissolved its association with the LCMC and having subscribed to the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, is seeking to be received as an ELS congregation.

## **RETIREMENTS**

The Rev. Harvey Abrahamson retired on July 1, 2025.

The Rev. Daniel Basel retired on December 31, 2025.

The Rev. Nathan Krause retired on March 1, 2026.

## **DEATHS “PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD IS THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS.” (COMMITTEE #15: PASTORAL CONFERENCE RECORDS AND RESOLUTIONS)**

On June 22, 2025, Pastor Mark Rogers (Scriptural Lutheran, Cape Girardeau, Missouri) went home to be with the Lord. Blessed be his memory.

Ruth Orvick, wife of the late Rev. George Orvick (former ELS president), died the morning of August 8, 2025, following a stroke a few weeks previously. Blessed be her memory.

Rev. Richard Fyffe has been called home to be with His Lord. On the evening of August 16, 2025, he fell asleep peacefully in Jesus with his wife Martha at his side. Blessed be his memory.

Brad Homan is in heaven. He died peacefully Saturday morning, December 20, 2025. Blessed be his memory.

Pastor Robert Carter, having been enrolled in a hospice program in November 2025, passed away just before midnight on January 3, 2026. Blessed be his memory.

Yvonne Keeler, wife of Pastor Em. Charles Keeler, entered eternal glory on Tuesday evening February 24, 2026. Blessed be her memory.

## **RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS**

The following appointments have been made by Pres. Obenberger since June 2025: Doctrine Committee – The Rev. Dr. Erling Teigen (advisory); Committee for Communication – The Rev. Daniel Oberer and Lance Schwartz; Synod Review Committee

– The Rev. Piet VanKampen (3yrs); Planning and Coordinating Committee – The Revs. Brad Kerkow & Peter Faugstad, and Mark Perlwitz & Phil Holz; and Lyle Fahning (advisory); Board of Trustees – Dave Ewert (advisory); BHO – The Rev. Timothy Erickson (advisory); Board for Youth Outreach – Jim Sundby was appointed to fill the vacated position of Chris Hoffman and Hans Bloedel (advisory); Committee on Worship – The Rev. Patrick Ernst was appointed to fill the vacated position of the Rev. James Braun and the Rev. Braun (advisory); Doctrine Committee – the Rev. Aaron Hamilton was appointed to fill the vacated position of the Rev. Jerry Gernander. Lutheran Sentinel Editor – after receiving the resignation of the Rev. James Braun as editor, the Rev. Christian Eisenbeis was appointed to be the next editor. The Committee for Communication ratified this appointment.

### **CONSTITUTION APPROVALS (COMMITTEE #13: SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP)**

King of Grace Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, Minnesota, has made some changes to its constitution asking for it to be reviewed.

Eagle Lake Lutheran Church, Eagle Lake, Minnesota, an ELS Board for Home Outreach congregation, which has applied for membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod is asking for its constitution and bylaws to be reviewed.

Zion Lutheran Church, Wausau, Wisconsin (formerly LCMC), which has applied for membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod is asking for its newly revised constitution and bylaws to be reviewed.

Christ the King Lutheran Church, Green Bay, Wisconsin, has made a couple changes to its constitution asking for it to be reviewed.

Holton Lutheran, Holton Michigan, is submitting its revised constitution for review.

### **ANNIVERSARIES OF ORDINATION (COMMITTEE #15: PASTORAL CONFERENCE RECORDS AND RESOLUTIONS)**

#### ***25 years:***

William Grimm

Timothy Hartwig

Lawrence Wentzlaff

#### ***40 years:***

Harvey Abrahamson

Robert Lawson Sr.

Jonathan Madson

#### ***50 years:***

Erwin Ekhoﬀ

Theodore Gullixson

### **CONGREGATIONS VISITED, PREACHING ENGAGEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

Since June 2025 your president has been privileged to preach in twelve of our ELS congregations and to make presentations in four ELS congregations; preached eight times in the Bethany Lutheran College Trinity Chapel, also at the LYA Convention; and visited nine ELS congregations. He made seven presentations at various rallies and circuit meetings throughout the year. Your president was honored to present an essay in Wittenberg, Germany at the LCMS International Church Relations Conference (Oct. 28–31) regarding triangular fellowship issues, especially giving testimony to our teaching and practice of prayer fellowship.

### **PASTORAL CONFERENCES ATTENDED**

The ELS President attended at least in part the Circuit #7 Pastor Conference, Saude, Iowa (Sept. 8); the ELS General Pastoral Conference, Bloomington, Minnesota (Oct. 1–3); “Hopeful, Cheerful and Undaunted” Pastor & Wife’s Retreat, Oconomowoc, WI (Feb. 3–5); Great Lakes Pastoral Conference, Midland, Michigan (Apr. 14–15); West Coast Pastor Conference, Gresham, Oregon (Apr. 22–23); Great Plains Pastoral Conference, Mankato, Minnesota (May 19–20).

### **CIRCUIT VISITORS**

The 2025 Circuit Visitors’ Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod was conducted on September 11 & 12 in Eagan, Minnesota. There were three presentations: “Counseling Skills in the Pastoral Office” by Dr. Joshua Mears; “Ceremonies that Teach; Ceremonies that Confess” by the Rev. D. Jay Webber and “Acknowledging and Cultivating Sanctified Churchmanship in Jesus’ Name” by Pres. G. Obenberger. Pastor emeritus (P. em.) was awarded to the Rev. Prof. Dennis Marzolf.

The following policy regarding extending & deliberating calls was adopted by the Circuit Visitors: *Because deliberating a divine call is often a long, stressful process for a pastor, his family and parish, receiving calls too frequently can frustrate and exhaust those involved. It is also the case that if a pastor receives and accepts a call too soon after arriving at a congregation, it may be detrimental to that parish. Therefore, the following recommendations have been given by the Circuit Visitors to guide the president in assembling the call*

*lists. While a congregation may call any pastor on the ELS clergy roster (in consultation with the president, since he may have confidential information that would preclude calling that individual at that time), the president of the synod, when assembling the call list for a congregation should not include: 1. A pastor who has been in a parish less than four years unless the president is informed of a special need. 2. A pastor who has received a call within the past six months. Additionally, because details regarding a call may be received rather efficiently thanks to digital communication, pastors are encouraged to limit their deliberations to 2–4 weeks. This will be especially helpful to congregations, in the case of a returned call, to be able to move forward with the calling process.*

## **COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATION**

The ELS Committee for Communication met quarterly following the 2025 convention. The Rev. Dan Oberer was elected chairman and Mr. David Norris secretary. The committee discussed the opportunities and challenges associated with providing information to all the members of our church body. The committee supported the idea of starting a monthly series of short videos highlighting especially the work of outreach, called “ELS in Action.” The series would begin in January of 2026 and continue for a minimum of six months, at which time the committee would review the results.

The Rev. James Braun, having suffered two significant medical events in 2025 found it necessary to resign as copy editor for the *Lutheran Sentinel*. The Rev. Christian Eisenbeis has agreed to be appointed to this position and the Committee for Communication has ratified this presidential selection. We thank Rev. Braun for his faithful service and pray for Rev. Eisenbeis as he assumes these additional duties on top of those in his other familial and professional vocations.

*The Rev. Dan Oberer, chairman*

## **AD HOC COMMITTEES**

### ***ELS Pastoral Support Committee***

The Pastoral Support Committee, comprised of the Rev. Peter Faugstad (chaplain), the Rev. Samuel Gullixson (chair), The Rev. Jesse Jacobsen, and Dr. Joshua Mears, and Mr. Mark Perlwitz (secretary and treasurer) hosted our second Pastoral Retreat on February 3–5, 2026, inviting pastors and their wives to Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, at the Redemptorist Retreat Center. We had a total of 43 people in attendance (including 20 wives). Theme this year was “*Hopeful, Cheerful, and Undaunted.*” Each day, our presentations and prayer offices/Divine Service, were themed on one of those words (ex. Tuesday/Hopeful). We thank our numerous presenters: the Rev. Michael and Anita Smith, the Rev. Timothy and Sara Buelow, Dr. Joshua Mears, the Rev. David Thompson and the Rev. Mark DeGarmeaux. The Rev. Peter Faugstad served as our chaplain this year, planning and organizing our devotional time and preaching for two of the services. Mr. Brad Hall served as cantor. Prior to the Divine Service, opportunity for Private Confession and Absolution was also available.

The ending balance, which is commended for use for the same or similar pastoral support efforts is \$27,000.

The members of the committee are honored to have been able to serve the pastors (and their wives) in hosting the 2025 and 2026 retreats. Of those who attended the retreats and filled out the surveys, roughly 95% said that the retreats were helpful and that they would consider participating again in the future. Numerous lessons were learned by the committee members along the way and the feedback surveys were beneficial in giving suggestions and presentation ideas for future retreats that would be even more helpful for participants.

*The Rev. Samuel Gullixson, chairman*

This committee is hereby dismissed at the end of the president’s term with great appreciation for its work these past years. It is recommended that another such committee be organized after the election of a new president (or perhaps placing such a committee under the supervision of the Board for Christian Service) that would continue this valuable work among our clergy. It should be noted that each member of the committee was willing to serve again, dependent on his availability.

### ***ELS-ELDK Liaison Committee***

Since recognizing fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya in 1923, a liaison committee was formed by the president to help shepherd it through its membership into the CELC. In 2025 the ELS became the ELDK’s sponsor as it sought membership into the CELC. When this hopefully becomes a reality at the CELC Convention in Zambia early June of 2026, this committee will be dismissed. The assistance that this committee has given the office of the president has been most appreciated. It has been comprised of Revs. Sean Scheele (chairman), Jay Webber (chief liaison), Christian Eisenbeis, Karl Anderson and Mr. Chris Hoffman.

## **AD HOC PRESIDENTIAL COUNCILS**

### ***Advisory Council on Secular Politics***

The Advisory Council on Secular Politics was formed in 2024 to advise the president, respective board, committee or institution whenever there may be a matter that might be judged to be “political” in nature. The committee only met online when a request

was made to render counsel and advice. This past year the president was asked by the BLC administration about the advisability of establishing a chapter of the Turning Point USA on its campus. The council's input guided the president in shaping an opinion as requested. Members of the council have been the Rev. Ed Bryant, the Rev. Paul Fries (chair), the Rev. Charles Keeler, and the Rev. Dr. Thomas Kuster. At the conclusion of the 2026 convention with the president's term ending, this advisory council will be dismissed with great appreciation for its willingness to be on call for these past two years.

### ***President's Harmony Advisory Council***

This council met almost monthly via zoom from October 2024–October 2025. We discussed the apparent disharmony among the ELS clergy. While many causes could be observed, the overriding cause was seen as a lack of trust among us, which seems to find resolution with face-to-face conversations. Through such dialogues among us we get to know each other's backgrounds and special interests especially in the pastoral ministry. While unity is always properly sought among us in keeping with our Lord's desire for His Church, we recognize that conformity in all aspects of pastoral work is not an appropriate nor reasonable goal. We will have a variety of approaches in how we serve God's people by faithfully administering the means of grace. However, we need to have ongoing fraternal discussions regarding such variety to underscore our need to trust that all such practices serve to bring Christ to His people in a unified manner. We are all committed to avoid any and all innovations that have hidden agendas which promote self over Christ. Harmony among the ELS clergy was identified as critical issue #1 by the Planning & Coordinating Committee in 2023. Therefore, the goal to address it was to raise the awareness of the disharmony among the ELS clergy and encourage a self-monitoring approach as sanctified brothers in Christ to keep it in check. It is the general opinion of the council and the president that we have sufficiently achieved this aim, removing this as a critical issue in the ELS. The office of the president has implemented plans by which we will seek to maintain and facilitate the ongoing gains of good fraternal discussions among the ELS clergy.

### **WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD (WELS)**

The WELS observed its convention marking its 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary under the theme "Christ Through Us" on the campus of the Martin Luther College, New Ulm on July 21–24, 2025. "Christ through us" is also the theme of the new long-range strategic plan for the next ten years. The convention adopted a significant change in the way that elections for synod officers (president, vice presidents, and secretary) will be conducted in the future. Instead of the current practice of delegates nominating individuals for those offices at the synod convention (currently done in the ELS), delegates will make those nominations several months prior to the convention. Once the ballot is established (based on the number of nominations), the ballot will be posted, giving delegates an opportunity to learn more about the nominees. Based on that published ballot of nominees, elections will take place during the convention at their appointed times. This new process will be implemented at the 2027 convention. It was a privilege for the president to extend greeting to our sister synod on behalf of the ELS as it celebrated 175 years of God grace.

### **ELS-WELS-LCMS INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS (COMMITTEE #6: DOCTRINE)**

Once again, this joint informal gathering met in Jacksonville, Florida, on December 8–9, 2025. This was the fourteenth annual meeting. The following presentations were given as part of an overall discussion on the what is often referred to as the "Statement of the Overseas Committee – 1961" prior to the Synodical Conference break up:

#### **ELS:**

- "The Historical Reaction of the ELS to the 'Overseas Committee Statement,'" by Michael K. Smith.
- "Statement of the Overseas Committee – Of what value is it today? Integration in 2025 – Are we where we were in 1961ff?," by Thomas Rank.

#### **LCMS**

- "Church Body Fellowship: Unity in the Church Working Together. Holding to Christ's Word Alone: Addressing the Fellowship Failures and Fiascos of Assorted Agreements, Concords, and Organizations," by Jonathan E. Shaw.
- "Fellowship in Its Necessary Context: The Doctrine of the Church and the Overseas Theses of 1961," by Jonathan G. Lange. *CTQ* 84:1-2 (January/April 2020): 101–118.
- "1929 to 1961...and Beyond – A Chronology with (some) Commentary," by Lawrence Rast.

#### **WELS**

- "The Historical Reaction of the WELS to the 'Overseas Committee Statement,'" by Joel R. Voss.
- "'Fellowship in Its Necessary Context of the Doctrine of the Church': Historical Context – Origin and Intent," by John M. Brenner.

There was a plan proposed by the four presidents of the seminaries to organize an ELS-LCMS-WELS free conference with a possible topic being "Scripture and Its Interpretation." No firm plans were made. The earliest it would happen would be 2027.

It is still the opinion of the ELS president that these informal meetings are beneficial as long as they do not shift into formal talks without prior synodical approval. We need to keep in mind our synodical statement, "Unity, Union, and Unionism." The synod adopted these theses in 1936 in response to committee negotiations between the Missouri Synod, the ULCA, and the ALC for the purpose of considering closer relations between those church bodies.

(<https://els.org/beliefs/doctrinal-statements/unity-union-and-unionism/>) Continue to be aware of what we have stated in Thesis IV and under Thesis V:

Thesis IV: “We hold that inter-synodical committees can be useful in promoting Christian fellowship only: a) when the various groups or synods have, through their public ministry of the Word, given each other evidence of an existing unity in spirit, and it remains merely to establish the fact of such unity and to arrange for some public recognition and confession of that fact; b) or where it is clear that those in error sincerely desire to know “the way of God more perfectly.” Acts 18:26.”

Under Thesis V: “When we elect a committee to be closeted in confidential negotiations with like committees from errorist bodies who will strive to gain acceptance of their false views, we have every reason to fear that we must reckon with all the wily tactics of the arch-enemy of truth. If I Peter 3:15 is cited to justify such procedure, the passage is misapplied, and, though unintentionally, made to nullify Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10, etc. Let it be noted, too, that the prospects of convincing by our testimony to the truth a committee which represents a body confirmed in error, and through it the body itself, are very, very poor indeed. Be it remembered also that the champions of false doctrine are usually satisfied if they gain for their error equal standing with the truth; hence every manner of compromise is resorted to. The danger is multiplied when, as is common, the errorists shower praises upon their opponents in order to gain their personal good will. When the champions of truth are brought to admire the errorists for their gentlemanly behavior and their fair-mindedness, and begin to think of the many able and good men and women whom they represent, then “the lust of the flesh” is near to victory.”

While it would be a joyous result of these informal discussions that they would lead to a time when each synod gives each other evidence of an existing unity. However, until such a time of a blessed discovery, formal discussion cannot be established. On the other hand, if that should occur by God’s grace, such inter-synodical discussions must avoid all secrecy and remain an open public discussion with regular updates given to the synod.

Plans are being made for another informal gathering of this group in the same location on Dec. 7 & 8, 2026.

#### **ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH & MARTIN LUTHER SCHOOL, PLZEŇ, CZECH REPUBLIC (COMMITTEE #10: WORLD OUTREACH)**

Your president along with the Rev. Steven Sparley (BWO member) did visit the Czech Republic church and school on November 1–7, 2025 as indicated last year. Visits/meetings/service attendances were made with the pastor of the mission the Rev. Martin Vršický, the non-Lutheran teacher of religion in the school – Mr. Miloš Tibitanc, the local pastor of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (ECAV) church in Plzeň – the Rev. Dominik Žbanek and various others connected with the church (lay members) and the school (teachers and administrators). It was determined that serious attention needs to be given to making a concerted effort to enhance the Gospel mission for the students in the school and for a comprehensive outreach effort by the church especially among school parents.

Some recommendations were given to the BWO at its November plenary meeting. And some of these are being planned to be implemented in 2026, especially through the extended visitations to the mission in the spring and fall of 2026 by the Rev. and Mrs. Sparley. Such things will be addressed during these visits: explore establishing a working relationship with the ECAV pastor and congregation, establish a suitable curriculum for the teaching of religion in the school with an extended system of monitoring its implementation and execution by qualified teachers. We pray that these efforts will bear much fruit for Christ’s kingdom in Plzeň and possibly beyond in the Czech Republic.

It should also be mentioned that from the president’s office it was observed already in 2021 that the amount of work to oversee the many fields of responsibility required an increase of BWO membership. Therefore, the expansion of the BWO membership as is being currently proposed receives support from your president’s perspective. Over the years it has been noted that the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), although smaller in numbers than the ELS, has had a robust foreign mission effort with currently 14 different fields and a more hands-on missiology. It appears that the ELS, especially after expanding the number serving on the BWO, would be ready to be challenged to expand its current efforts under the leadership of the new BWO Administrator, the Rev. David Jay Webber. It is believed that revitalizing our efforts in general would likely be motivated by new work such as supporting the seminary education of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya. We trust the Lord of the Church is able to do immeasurably more through us than we ask or think. Let us boldly ask our Lord for His blessings through the generosity of His people to expand our work in a more hands-on approach to His glory and welfare of His kingdom.

#### **UPDATE ON CRITICAL FINANCES OF THE ELS AND BLC (COMMITTEE #7: FINANCES)**

##### ***Regarding Res. #1, (Synod Report, 2025 page 77)***

1. ELS – The Board of Trustees requested a subcommittee to develop and propose a philosophy to help guide and direct the BoT in our Synod Fund planning to optimize both allocation of and growth of our Synod Fund. In addition, to assist the P&CC in its annual budgeting along with boards and committees, it will review the entire \$30M+ in synod funds determining what are designated/undesignated; restricted/unrestricted. The ELS is **NOT** in a critical financial situation at this time. But it is the desire that an easily understood financial picture be achieved, not only for the sake of standing boards and committees, but

also delegates at the convention. While we always desire to grow our investment funds to help fund the synod's operations, we need to have clear understanding of donor intents with undesignated funds to be used for mission by our various boards. So, while it can appear to be "deficit spending" in any given budget year, because monies donated in previous years have been put to use, the boards are honoring the donations from previous years for the purposes they were intended to be used.

2. BLC – While the current operating budget for our college appears to be generating a surplus (after cuts were made during the summer), the advancement department is actively working on new ways to expand its regular donor base.

### **INACTIVE MEMBERS (COMMITTEE #15: PASTORAL CONFERENCE RECORDS AND RESOLUTIONS)**

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: the Rev. Joseph Abrahamson and the Matthew Brooks. Both 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.

### **2027 CONVENTION PLANS**

**"The Synod Needs Just Such a School,"** Essayist: the Rev. Steven Sparley, who is a lifelong ELS member and an alum of BLC. We will observe the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our beloved institution of higher learning for the synod, Bethany Lutheran College. The theme is based on this 1927 quotation by S. C. Ylvisaker as he spoke in favor of the synod purchasing Bethany Lutheran College: "The Synod needs just such a school to gather itself around." One hundred years later in our appreciation for her we still contemplate the role of Bethany Lutheran College for the ELS and ask ourselves the existential rhetorical question posed in 2018: "The college and synod are intimately united. The college gives a visibility and identity to the synod. After its purchase, it became a rallying point without which the synod may not have survived. This relationship is yet reflected in the strong sentiments held by the synod as it elects both the members of the Board of Regents and the Board of Trustees for the college. In turn, the synod gives moorings to the college. Could either exist without the other?" (Craig Ferkenstad, *Proclaim His Wonders* [Evangelical Lutheran Synod: 2018], 225) So while BLC will commence its observance of this significant anniversary in this year, marking how in 1926 the association (74 individual synod members) formed and purchased the school, the synod will celebrate in 2027, marking how in 1927 it made the decision at its convention at Lime Creek Lutheran Church, not by an overwhelming majority, to make it the synod's school.

### **WELS PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE (PSI) GRADUATES (COMMITTEE #6: DOCTRINE)**

Vicar Rodney Rivera of Peace, Kissimmee, Florida, (ELS) has graduated from the WELS Pastoral Studies Institute program with a Bachelor of Divinity Degree in May 2026 and has been working with a group of about 15 Spanish speaking members for a few years under the supervision of the pastor. WELS ordains their graduates and are added to their clergy roster but they are restricted in only serving those in the culture/language for which they were prepared. In an effort not only to find a place for vicar Rivera, the following is proposed to implement in the ELS so that we may use these workers for the church where opportunities may arise in the future.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod will consider graduates from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) program as being eligible for a presiding office in an ELS congregation and placed in his first call through the ELS assignment committee. All subsequent calls should be conducted through the office of the ELS president. However, the following restrictions will apply:

- a. He will remain under the oversight of someone in the pastoral office within our fellowship, e.g., the local Circuit Visitor.
- b. He will be restricted to work among those who are of the culture/language for which he was trained.
- c. He will be ordained into this pastoral office as confirmation of his qualifications for the full use of the keys.
- d. He may be called upon by the parish through which he is called as a substitute for that parish's pastor in his periodic absence, but may not serve as a vacancy pastor without oversight from someone in the pastoral office within our fellowship.
- e. He will be listed on the clergy roster of the ELS with the notation that he is a PSI graduate with the above restrictions, e.g. listed under the clergy roster with - \* indicating "WELS Pastoral Studies Institute Graduate Restrictions see 2026 ELS SR, Res. # p."
- f. He shall apply for permanent membership in the ELS.
- g. He may serve on standing boards and committees of the ELS as a clergy member.
- h. He may pursue remaining on the ELS Clergy roster while removing the "PSI graduate" designation either through working directly with the ELS Seminary to become a candidate of theology upon graduation or with the ELS President under the colloquy process.

i. He will if needed be subject to the guidelines regarding disciplinary action and appeals in section #260 in the ELS Handbook. If this or an amended version is enacted, it should be assigned to the ELS Synod Review Committee to draft new guidelines for the 2027 convention to facilitate the placement of PSI graduates on the ELS Clergy Roster.

## **2025 MEMORIAL FOLLOW THROUGH (COMMITTEE #9: HOME OUTREACH)**

### ***Regarding Res. #6 ELS (Synod Report 2025, page 112)***

At the 2025 ELS Convention the memorial from Reformation Lutheran Church, Hillsboro, Oregon (SR 2025, pp. 190–191) “*Regarding Required Use of Liturgy by Supported Congregations*” was considered. It was then referred to the office of the ELS president (SR 2025, Res. #6. p. 112). No other action was taken regarding this memorial.

It should be noted that prior to the 2025 convention the president approached Reformation Lutheran Church (RLC) through its pastor to consider withdrawing this memorial. The reasons given to withdraw were based on 1. RLC not approaching ahead of time in a fraternal fashion the one synod supported congregation with its pastor, which was being accused of not using recommended liturgies; 2. RLC not fraternally approaching the BHO ahead of time through its chairman with these same concerns. RLC refused to withdraw the memorial. It is considered the best practice among us to exhaust all avenues to address such concerns among us through the appropriate persons, boards and committees before bringing them to the floor of the convention. Not following this practice has the potential of leading to unbrotherly, incendiary discussions.

In response to Res. #6 above, the president in a meeting with the BHO early in 2026, received assurance that the ELS bylaw chapter 1 is followed in BHO’s policy regarding worship in Home Missions under its supervision (see both written out below):

### **Chapter I: Liturgical Forms and Ceremonies**

In order to preserve unity in liturgical forms and ceremonies, the synod recommends to its congregations that they use the Order of Worship based on the Danish–Norwegian liturgy of 1685 and agenda of 1688, or the Common Order of Worship, as each congregation may decide.

*and*

### **BHO Worship Policy**

Theses in Answer to the Question: What is Essential to Excellence in Confessional Lutheran Christian Worship? (And, what should be our “Brand” in terms of the worship culture in our Mission congregations?)

1. Excellent Worship centers on Christ.
2. Excellent Worship serves the primary focal purpose of Law & Gospel.
3. Excellent Worship is thoroughly consistent with sound doctrine.
4. Excellent Worship preserves and highlights the distinction between Sacramental and Sacrificial Theology.
5. Excellent Worship models reverence.
6. Excellent Worship is enshrined in the Western Rite, which serves as a beacon for hurting souls and an appeal for unity in the Christian Church at large.

Since we believe these things,

1. We use the Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary as the primary liturgical resource in our missions\*, drawing additional hymns and liturgical forms from other valuable sources (including but not limited to TLH, TLHy, LW, CW:LH, and LSB.)
2. We use traditional vestments (such as the alb; cassock and surplice; stole; chasuble) to symbolize both the gospel and the yoke of the Holy Ministry.
3. We use the cross and/or crucifix to teach salvation accomplished, and the altar, font, and pulpit to teach salvation distributed, and to apply it.
4. We encourage the use of ecclesiastical art, statuary, stained glass, and careful churchly architecture to teach Biblical concepts, Bible history, and articles of faith.
5. We encourage the use of Holy Communion with greater frequency.
6. We encourage the development and use of such gifts and talents (only) as each individual pastor or missionary has for the carrying out of the Liturgy\*\*.
7. We discourage the use of video in the worship space during the Divine Service in any way that might detract from, or take precedence over, the preached and enacted Word.

\* <http://els.org/resources/worship/evangelical-lutheran-hymnary-resources/>

\* <https://hymnary.org/hymnal/ELH1996>

\* <https://www.blc.edu/comm/gargy/gargy1/ELH.html>

\*\* That is, among other things: *if you can't chant, don't chant. If you can chant, do it well, and in such a way as to enhance the Divine Service, and not detract from it or draw attention to yourself.*

If there is any domestic ELS mission congregation not following these agreed upon parameters of worship, the BHO assures the president that it will evangelically direct it through its pastor to establish or restore acceptable practices. This will be done “to preserve unity in liturgical forms and ceremonies” among us in the ELS.

*Glenn R. Obenberger, president*

## REPORT OF THE DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

*Committee #6: Doctrine*

In 1525 Martin Luther wrote *Against the Heavenly Prophets*. He directed his essay against those false prophets who claimed a direct, immediate, connection with the Holy Spirit, with the understanding that such new revelations added to and superseded the inspired Holy Scriptures. Such “prophets” are no strangers in the life of the Church in our own day. Luther’s response to these “prophets” included these words:

“Now when God sends forth his holy gospel he deals with us in a twofold manner, first outwardly, then inwardly. Outwardly he deals with us through the oral word of the gospel and through material signs, that is, baptism and the sacrament of the altar. Inwardly he deals with us through the Holy Spirit, faith, and other gifts. But whatever their measure or order the outward factors should and must precede. The inward experience follows and is affected by the outward. God has determined to give the inward to no one except through the outward. For he wants to give no one the Spirit or faith outside of the outward Word and sign instituted by him, as he says in Luke 16:29, “*Let them hear Moses and the prophets.*” Accordingly, Paul can call baptism a “*washing of regeneration*” wherein God “*richly pours out the Holy Spirit*” (Titus 3:5). And the oral gospel “*is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith*” (Roman 1:16), (LW 40, 146).

### COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The committee began the year with the following members: 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 and Vice President Michael Smith are advisory members by virtue of office. Prof. Em. Erling Teigen serves as an advisory member by appointment.

Pastor Gernander resigned his position in December. We thank him for his dedicated service to our synod through his work on our committee. Pres. Obenberger appointed Pastor Aaron Hamilton to fulfill the remainder of Pastor Gernander’s term this year.

Dr. Teigen has indicated that he will no longer serve as advisory member. We are grateful for his years of service to our committee.

The committee held regular meetings August 15, 2025; November 24, 2025; and March 13, 2026.

### WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

The committee met with representatives of the WELS Conference of Presidents Doctrine Committee in January 2026. The meeting began with the reading and discussion of the essay “Ceremonies that Teach; Ceremonies that Confess” written by Pastor D. J. Webber. We also concluded the 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 plan to continue meeting annually with the representatives of the WELS.

### INFORMAL MEETING WITH THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

For the past fourteen years, representatives from the ELS and WELS have been holding informal discussions with representatives from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). The most recent meeting occurred December 8–9, 2025, in Jacksonville, Florida. There were updates from each of the synod presidents regarding their respective synods. A large part of the meeting was dedicated to study and discussion, with various presenters, on the 1961 document: “Fellowship in Its Necessary Context of the Doctrine of the Church (Statement of the Overseas Committee).” This document represented an attempt by various church bodies to prevent the breakup of the Synodical Conference (which included the LCMS, WELS, Slovak Synod, and ELS). A key thesis is #11 as follows:

“The marks of the church are all-decisive. Everything must be referred to them. This duty is hindered by presumptuous judgments or statements concerning the faith or lack of it in individuals. It is Enthusiasm to build on subjective faith (*fides qua*) and love, for faith is hidden and love is variable. Both are in man. The means of grace are objective, solid, apprehensible.

Since these are God's own means, we must attend entirely upon them and draw from them the distinction between the orthodox church and the heterodox church.”

The topic of encouraging possible free conferences was discussed. There was discussion of the various international organizations with which the synods are involved: the International Lutheran Council (ILC) and the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC).

The ELS was represented by President G. Obenberger, Vice President M. Smith, Seminary President T. Hartwig, and Doctrine Committee chairman, T. Rank.

### **OTHER WORK**

The committee continued an on-going study of the articles of the Formula of Concord. This past year we read through Articles V (*Law and Gospel*) and Article VI (*Third Use of the Law*). The committee discussed the WELS Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI), Deliverance Ministry, the CELC, and statements on fellowship with member churches.

### **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 and their corrosive effect on Lutheran identity, 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 of sources, including theological journals, magazines, periodicals, internet materials and discussions, as well as theological essays.

*Now I will cling forever To Christ, my Savior true;  
My Lord will leave me never, What'e'er He passeth through.  
He rends death's iron chain; He breaks through sin and pain  
He shatters hell's dark thrall; I follow Him through all.*  
(ELH 341:6)

*Prof. Thomas L. Rank, chairman  
Dr. David Reagles, 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 Mr. Chris Hoffman. Pres. Glenn Obenberger serves as a non-voting advisory member. Vice Pres. Michael Smith also attended in an unofficial capacity at the beginning of 2025.

### **THE CENTER FOR APOLOGETICS & WORLDVIEWS (CAW) & GOVERNANCE**

The ELS Board on Apologetics oversees the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews (CAW) and its director. CAW is a synodical endeavor that works with our congregations, seminary, college, boards, and other entities of the synod. 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—with gentleness and respect—so Christ may be shared wisely and boldly in a growing post-Christian culture. Rev. David Thompson serves as the director of CAW. His office is located in the Tweit Hall on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College.

### **THE WORK OF CAW**

On June 19 and 20, 2025, CAW conducted the Seventh Annual Apologetics and Worldview Conference in Bethany Lutheran College's Trinity Chapel. The theme was “Unsurpassed Christian Apologists.” Presentations and presenters included: “The Legacy of John Warwick Montgomery” (trial lawyer Craig Parton); “The Legacy of C. S. Lewis” (C. S. Lewis scholar and Lutheran

theologian Dr. Joel Heck); and “The Legacy of Early Christian Apologists” (Oxford graduate and Lutheran theologian Dr. Adam Francisco). Over 160 people were in attendance, besides those livestreaming.

Rev. Dr. Benjamin Kwashi, former Anglican Nigerian Archbishop and five-year General Secretary of the conservative Global Anglican Future Conference, spoke at Bethany on October 22 on “Witness to: Persecution in Nigeria and Rejection of Scripture Within the Anglican Communion.” This event was also livestreamed.

On Nov. 3, 2025, Rev. Dr. John Bombaro presented on “The Shroud of Turin—Its Archeological and Apologetic Value.” Around 130 people attended, along with livestreaming attendees.

CAW’s Director has been teaching via livestream an apologetics course to the ten ELDK seminarians in Kenya between January 21 through May 6.

Several videos have been recorded, including a five-part series entitled “Resurrection Theories Debunked” (on the CAW website, Peace devotions website, and YouTube).

Continuing education: CAW’s director has been enrolled in the Colson Fellows program, a ten-month course that includes readings, monthly cohort meetings, attendance at online presentations, and formulating presentations. This is a course designed to further develop a biblical worldview, help with discernment, and to prepare the attendees to give a defense for Christian truth with gentleness and respect.

Since January 2025, over 50 presentations, lectures, and sermons have been given at churches, college settings, seminaries, youth gatherings, Christian day schools, and other venues on a variety of apologetics and worldview topics. Recordings, articles, and newsletters have also been produced. Dr. Doyle Holbird is also now involved in presentations. CAW’s director and board members continue to track cultural efforts that undermine Christian doctrine, Christian faith, and God’s created order.

CAW’s website ([www.apologeticscenter.org](http://www.apologeticscenter.org)) includes **Resources** (papers, essays, articles, video archives, recommended books), an **Events** page (recordings of past conferences and a list of upcoming events, conferences, presentations, studies, and preaching), a **Worldview Watch** page (with links to articles, podcasts, and videos designed to help Christian parents, pastors, teachers, youth, and congregations understand the times so the truth of Christianity and Christ can be distinguished from false worldviews), and suggestions on **How Can We Assist** for congregations, youth camps/gatherings, schools, and individuals.

This last year CAW made contributions to the *Lutheran Sentinel* and produced “Q and A Leading to Christ” articles that have been distributed as flyers to pastors and churches (also found on the website).

CAW’s newsletter currently has over 650 subscribers.

## UPCOMING APOLOGETICS & WORLDVIEW CONFERENCE: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

This conference will be held on the evening of June 24 and all day on June 25 at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN. Concerns taken up will include:

*Is AI a “giant leap for mankind” or a return to Babel? How can it be harnessed and used well? How does it impact: Christian anthropology, the Imago Dei, a liberal arts education, human relationships and interaction? And What comes next?*

### **Presentations:**

1. *AI Explained: How does it work? What can it do and not do? What are its benefits and obvious dangers?* (Rev. Jonathan Conner, LCMS)
2. *A Deeper Look (A): Anthropology, dehumanization, and AI’s impact on a Christian liberal arts education* (Rev. Dr. Adam Brasich, ELS)
3. *Deeper Look (B): Anthropology, companion bots, transhumanism, and what lies ahead* (Dr. Brandon Steenbock, WELS)

## CAW OFFERINGS FOR CONGREGATIONS, SCHOOLS, ETC.

The following presentations are available to congregations, schools, colleges, conferences, Bible study hours, youth groups, men’s groups, women’s groups, etc. (NOTE: CAW offers these presentations at no cost, though donations are welcomed):

- *The Honor of Defending Christianity: The What, Why, and How of Apologetics*
- *Identifying Deceptive Worldviews*
- *Evidence for a Young Earth*
- *Discerning Parents and Teachers*
- *The First and Highest Work of Love (Evangelism)*
- *What Happened to Jesus’ Body? (false theories on the resurrection)*
- *Three Amazing Messianic Prophecies*
- *How Christianity Is Set Apart from Other Religions*
- *How Creation and the Fall Best Explain True Reality*
- *Answers to the Problem of Evil and Suffering*
- *Being a Godly Husband and Father*

## FINANCES

CAW is self-supporting and dependent on contributions from individuals and congregations. In compliance with existing synod policies, the board and the director seek to secure funding for conferences, production of resources, office space, travel salary, etc.

<b>Cash Balance 12/31/2024:</b>	<u>\$103,661.16</u>
<b>2025 Finances:</b>	
<i>Receipts 1/01/2025 through 12/31/2025:</i>	
- Contributions/Receipts:	\$80,338.17
<i>Disbursements 1/01/2025 through 12/31/2025</i>	
- Salary, Wages, Taxes, WC Insurance, travel, webmaster, honoraria, video production, postage office, misc.:	\$53,113.30
<b>Cash Balance 12/31/2025</b>	<u>\$130,996.03</u>
<b>2026 Finances:</b>	
<i>Receipts 1/01/2026 thru 3/12/2026:</i>	
- Contributions/Receipts:	\$2,500.00
<i>Disbursements 1/01/2026 thru 3/12/2026</i>	
- Salary, Wages, Taxes, WC Insurance, travel, webmaster, honoraria, video production, postage office, misc.:	\$5,673.38
<b>Cash Balance 3/12/2026</b>	<u>\$127,822.65</u>

*The Rev. Peter Heyn, secretary*

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

*Committee #8: Higher Education*

## BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Type A members of the board during fiscal year 2025:

- The Rev. Mark Bartels - chairman; Holy Cross Lutheran Church; Madison, WI
- The Rev. Alexander Ring - secretary; Christ Lutheran Church; Port St. Lucie, FL
- The Rev. Dr. Adam Brasich - Hope Lutheran Church; West Jordan, UT
- Mr. Steven DePrey - Sun Prairie, WI; Holy Cross Lutheran Church; Madison, WI
- Mr. Aaron Faugstad - Washington DC; King of Grace Lutheran Church; Golden Valley, MN
- The Rev. Dr. Daniel Hartwig - Trinity Lutheran Church; West Bend, WI
- Dr. Joshua Mears - Lakeville, MN; Heritage Lutheran Church; Apple Valley, MN
- Mr. David Sparley - Saved by Grace Lutheran Church; Gresham, OR
- The Rev. David Thompson - vice chairman; Mount Olive Lutheran; Mankato, MN

Type B members of the board during fiscal year 2025:

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

Voting Member – Ex officio

- The Rev. Glenn Obenberger; Parkland, WA - President of the ELS

Advisory Members:

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

## **ACTION TAKEN BY THE BOARD OF REGENTS FOR BOTH BLC AND BLTS**

- A. The Board of Regents appointed The Rev. Aaron Ferkenstad; King of Grace Lutheran Church; Golden Valley MN to his second full term as a type B *member and seeks ratification of this action at the 2026 synod convention.*
- B. Approved that Bethany Lutheran College accept crypto currency donations
- C. Approved that the Board of Regents be allowed to conduct business meeting via email, with the condition that during such a meeting any board member may request the business be conducted with real-time discussion.

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

### ***Financial Action***

- A. Resolved that the spending rate of Bethany Lutheran College for fiscal year 2025 be 6.334% for scholarships and 6.334% for operations.
- B. Authorized the Finance and Audit Committee to approve the Form 990 when completed on behalf of the college and authorize Pres. Gene Pfeifer and Corporation Treasurer Daniel Mundahl to sign said report on behalf of the Corporation.
- C. Authorized Treasurer Daniel Mundahl and Stacey Dawley to solicit RFPs from other auditing firms for the 2025 audit, and after due diligence, hire a firm.
- D. Empowered the administration to achieve a balanced budget for 2025–2026 without outside resources.
- E. Passed a 45-day continuing budget resolution to fund the college at the current fiscal year 2025 level through August 11, 2025, with the following provisions:
  - a. No wage increases
  - b. No new or renewing long-term encumbrances/contracts will be entered into
  - c. All current capital projects under contract will continue as planned
  - d. Department budget allocations will be at 2025 levels
  - e. Departmental expenses beyond the normal scope of operation between May 6, 2025 and June 30, 2025 will be considered pre-paid purchases against next year's adopted budget
  - f. Activities that are not considered to be normal but would be detrimental to the safety and physical assets of the institution if ignored, or compromise the delivery of educational and/or co-curricular activities, require prior approval from the respective cabinet member and the Sr VP of Finance and Administration
  - g. Between May 6, 2025 and August 11, 2025, senior administration is directed by the Board of Regents to make operational adjustments deemed necessary in order to meet future budget objectives set by the Board of Regents.
- F. Resolved: That the first \$100,000 of mineral rights income to be applied to the 2025–26 budget.
- G. Resolved: That the Board of Regents adopt the FY2026 budget for Fund 100, Fund 115, and Fund 117 as represented. Approve the transfer of \$192,024.03 from 110 Fund to 120 Fund (Presidential Projects).
- H. Approved the Tuition and Fees for FY2027, with the exception of changing "Room Deposit" to \$300.
- I. Resolved that the wages of qualified faculty and staff be increased by one-percent, retroactive to July 1, 2025.
- J. Resolved that the college's portion of the retirement contribution be increased by one percent, retroactive to July 1, 2025.
- K. Resolved that the faculty overload pay be restored to the previous level of \$1200 per credit hour.
- L. Resolved that \$90,000 be restored to the budget to be used as Christmas gifts to qualified employees of the college.
- M. Approved the Comprehensive Campaign goal of \$40M with the understanding that investments will be needed in personnel and software improvements to achieve this mark.
- N. Resolved that the 100th Anniversary Campaign fundraising be centered around the three pillars of Provide Student Access, Enhanced Student Experience, and Sustain Bethany's Future.
- O. Resolved that Bethany Lutheran college designate future interest earnings from the Morgan Stanley savings account to be used to make future loan payments against the \$7.0M note held at Old National Bank (formerly Bremer Bank) starting July 1, 2026 until further notice.
- P. Resolved that Bethany Lutheran college transfer \$87,480 from the Mineral Rights holding account (9120-0-70506-4669) to the Spirit/Bookstore fund balance (115-0- 00000-4669) to cover the current deficit in the Spirit/Bookstore fund (Fund 64000).
- Q. Approved the Athletic Participation Fee of \$100 per semester beginning FY2026 as presented.
- R. Approved the Graduation Fee of \$150 for FY2026 as presented.
- S. Approved the 2025 Audit Report from Baker Tilly.
- T. Approved the memorandum dated December 2, 2025, outlining the Administration's plan for Bethany's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Campaign.
- U. Approved the 2026 Annual Funding Request from the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation.
- V. Approved the spending rate for FY2027 will be 6.000% for scholarships and 6.000% for operations

### ***Academic and Enrollment Action***

- A. Updated Campus Event Alcohol Guidelines were approved for use for events that wish to have alcohol served

- B. Approved the 2025-26 President's Annual Goals
- C. Approved the 2025-26 Cabinet Annual Goals
- D. Approved the list of 2025 spring graduates and the 2025-26 the mid-year graduates.
- E. Approved the Policy to Award Emeritus Status to Non-Faculty Personnel
- F. Approved the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership
- G. Approved the Theatre Minor
- H. Approved the American History Minor

***Legacies***

Acknowledged estates received in 2025:

- Odean, Marlys A.
- Rogers, Mark K.
- Wehrenberg, Eunice M.

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

- A. Approved the tuition for the 2026-2026 academic year
- B. Approved the budget for the 2026-2026 academic year
- C. Granted a sabbatical to Professor Timothy Schmeling for the Spring 2026 semester.
- D. Approved Skyler Hepler, Caleb Strutz and Caleb VonDeylen for graduation from the seminary with a degree of Master of Divinity and declared all of them eligible for calls into the ELS.

***Legacies***

Acknowledged estates received in 2025:

- Annexstad, Lois M.
- Dalchow, Wayne A.
- Hansen, Gerald D.
- Jeppesen, Ada Amelia
- Moses, Galen
- Pera, Norma R.
- Radke, Kenneth E.
- Unseth, Allan David
- Vosbeck, Claudia F.
- Werner, Paul W.

**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*

## **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 Regent 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 10, 2026, the college observed the following anniversaries:

***BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE ANNIVERSARIES OBSERVED 2026***

Andrew Krueger – Associate Professor, Business Administration .....	10 years
Alanna Lienig – Associate Professor, Education.....	10 years
Greg Lieske – Maintenance Technician.....	10 years
Benjamin Petzel – Senior Admissions Counselor.....	10 years
Renee Tatge – Registrar.....	15 years
Julie Kjeer – Dean of Faculty; Professor, Mathematics .....	25 years
Jonathan Loging – Associate Professor, Communication.....	25 years
Ann Fredrickson – Director, Coordinator, and Adjunct Faculty, Music.....	30 years
Todd Marzinske – Director, Administrative Computing and Institutional Reporting.....	30 years
Laura Matzke – Music, Instructor.....	35 years

In August 2025, the following new faculty and professional staff were installed during the opening service: Brandan Heinze, Assistant Professor, Mathematics; Isaiah Koepsell, Assistant Professor, Business Administration; Dominic Santana, Head Coach, Track & Field / Cross Country.

**BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE TO OBSERVE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY**

Bethany Lutheran College’s centennial celebration, beginning in June 2026, marks 100 years since a dedicated group of pastors and congregations secured the college’s future through personal gifts and the Lord’s blessing to purchase its land and buildings, followed by its formal establishment under the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1927. This milestone will be recognized through a two-year commemoration that reflects gratitude to God for the college’s history and the foundation on which it was built. Early preparations throughout 2026—including the launch of a centennial logo, website, and oral history projects—are building anticipation for a series of events that highlight Bethany’s history.

The celebration will unfold through a wide range of gatherings and initiatives designed to engage alumni, students, and the broader community. Signature moments include Founder’s Day recognition in June 2026, a vibrant fall season featuring reunions, fine arts performances, a campus-wide Day of Service, and regional “Bethany on the Road” events across the country. The Centennial Reunion in June 2027 will bring the Bethany community back to campus to reflect on a century of shared experiences and give thanks for the many ways the college has been blessed, followed by a closing series of community-focused events in fall 2027. Together, these efforts form a celebration grounded in both thankfulness and forward momentum—honoring the past while looking ahead with hope and confidence to the next generation.

**GRADUATES**

In December 2024, 35 students graduated, in May 2025, 108 students graduated, and in the summer of 2025, seven students graduated for a total of 150 students receiving the baccalaureate degree as part of the 26<sup>th</sup> four-year graduating class. These graduates represented each of the 25 majors at Bethany. Additionally, the third cohort of 19 students graduated receiving their Masters of Arts degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in the spring and summer of 2025.

**ENROLLMENT**

***10-year Bethany Fall Report on Attendance Statistics***

	FA2016	FA2017	FA2018	FA2019	FA2020
FT Undergraduate	514	523	593	591	633
Graduate	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
FTE	537	566	641	641	679
All Enrolled	588	655	743	742	772
# of FT ELS	87	90	88	81	81

	FA2021	FA2022	FA2023	FA2024	FA2025
FT Undergraduate	651	632	671	665	685
Graduate	15	35	48	41	31
FTE	710	721	777	769	785
All Enrolled	800	832	905	900	928
# of FT ELS	67	68	76	70	78

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 another incoming class well above 200—at 251 undergraduates and an additional 18 in January of 2026. Bethany’s total student count (including full and part-time, undergraduate and graduate enrollment) reached 928 souls in the fall of 2025.

The fall of 2025 student body included 149 full-time international undergraduate students from 35 countries. The countries with the largest enrollments were Ethiopia, Portugal, Congo, Canada, Spain, Albania, Vietnam, Netherlands, and China. Recently, Bethany has proactively engaged with trips to Vietnam encouraging families who have an appreciation for the more conservative values of a Christian college.

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.

Secular universities have now emerged from Covid and competition for domestic students is fierce. 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 over 250 full-time undergraduate students from a Confessional Lutheran background attended Bethany in fall 2025. 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. Challenges to enrollment growth, however, are increasing. These challenges include a shrinking pool of high school graduates in the Upper Midwest and in Confessional Lutheran congregations, as well as a significant reduction of financial aid through the Minnesota state grant. 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 2025.

- ELS students often graduate in fewer semesters than the average student, with several graduating each year in December. There were 75 ELS students attending Bethany in the second semester of the 2025-26 academic year.
- The number of 146 reported ELS high school students graduating in 2026 is slightly down from last year’s number of 150. Of the 146 reported ELS high school students graduating in 2026, the admissions office has received information on 129 students, but email addresses have been received for only 87.
- For this rising high school senior class that will graduate in the spring of 2027, the admissions office has received information on 128 students (out of 144 reported ELS students), with email addresses included for 78 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 on them, which has positively contributed to a noticeable recent increase in ELS students at Bethany (78 in Fall of 2025, versus a low of 67 in Fall of 2021). Again, thank you for sharing your student’s information and for connecting them with Bethany!

In the second semester of the 2025-26 academic year, Bethany’s graduate program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is serving 31 full and part-time students, 13 of which were new students who started in fall 2025. With the program now fully accredited nationally through the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), Counseling graduates from Bethany remain in very high demand. If you know of an individual with interest in developing skills as a Christian counselor, please invite them to watch the 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, every two to three years. A travel grant is available to help with costs, contact [admissions@bhc.edu](mailto:admissions@bhc.edu) to make arrangements.

A full set of Bethany promotional videos is available for you to watch and to share with your 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 support 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 schedule a visit to Bethany [bhc.edu/visit](http://bhc.edu/visit). Thank you for your thoughtfulness in doing this.

## ENGAGING STUDENTS WITH JESUS

There are two aspects to our Lord's Great Commission to His church: to "make disciples" and to teach them to observe everything He has commanded. It is a joy to see this carried out on our Bethany campus. Many who have grown up in the Christian faith are strengthened through chapel attendance and courses in religious studies. What a blessing it is for our synod to have an institution of higher education where faculty members teach through the lens of Scriptural truth for those who wish to grow deeper in their understanding across so many disciplines.

For others who come to Bethany knowing little or nothing about their Savior, this is where they are introduced to Him and His saving Word. Last fall, a student mentioned to his religion professor that the first day of class was the first time he had ever even touched a Bible. He went on to say that he now prays daily and loves knowing that God has a plan for his life.

Each year we offer a free EHV Bible to every incoming freshman enrolled in our Essentials of Christianity course, typically distributing around 120 Bibles. Thank you to those who generously donate to support this effort.

During the past academic year, six Bethany students participated in an Adult Instruction course offered at Bethany by Chaplain Don Moldstad. Other students participated in Adult Instruction classes directly through one of our local churches. As a result of this instruction, Peace Lutheran Church and Mt. Olive Lutheran Church each received new members from the student body, and the Eagle Lake Lutheran Church welcomed a Bethany student as a charter member.

For the fall semester, 71 new international students arrived on campus, most prior to the arrival of the general student body in order to become acquainted with a new country, city, and school. The International Student Office provided structured support to welcome these students and to present the Gospel message. As part of this effort, a special orientation chapel service was held to explain key themes of Christianity and to introduce students to the practice of Christian worship.

Worship on Campus: Daily chapel services on campus continue to be well attended. The campus is served by a number of talented preachers and musicians who contribute to the spiritual growth of the campus community. Evening Vespers services in the fall semester averaged between 60 and 70 attendees, with average attendance decreasing to approximately 50 during the winter months. During the Lenten season, attendance increases significantly to an average of 175 participants, in part because some faculty and staff attend with their families.

Student Groups: Each year, student-led groups form around various aspects of spiritual life. These include a men's Bible study, a women's Bible study, and a group focused on the study of Lutheran hymnody. In addition, a pre-seminary student leads a Bible study for approximately 12 to 15 members of the baseball team. Between 20 and 30 students are involved in STORM (Serving Through Outreach and Mission), which engages in mission work and humanitarian assistance. A student-led pro-life group also meets regularly under the guidance by Dr. Jennifer Kom.

Hosting Guest Speakers: During the fall of 2025, the college and seminary jointly hosted the annual *BW Teigen Reformation Lectures*, with Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux among the featured presenters. The *In Depth* series included three lectures by Dr. Jonathan Stadler of the Psychology Department, highlighting insights from his recent sabbatical research. Studio Art Prof. Jason Jaspersen partnered with Chaplain Don Moldstad to explore the life and work of Reformation-era artist Albrecht Dürer in a collaborative presentation. In addition, representatives from the WELS Friends Network offered an overview of current evangelism initiatives in various parts of Asia. The ELS Center for Apologetics and Worldviews hosted Anglican Archbishop B. Kwashi (ret) for a discussion on Christian persecution in Africa. In addition, Rev. Brad Kerkow delivered a presentation on the distinction between emotional and intellectual evangelism opportunities.

Podcasts from the BLC Studio: The BLC Studio continues to support spiritually focused programming. Dr. Benjamin Kohls, Director of Clinical Mental Health Counseling, regularly hosts a podcast in which he interviews guests on topics that intersect

with spiritual life. Students also make use of the studio to interview local theologians about challenging scriptural subjects, and Prof. Jason Jaspersen frequently addresses theological themes in his podcast, “Whistle the Feast.”

Weddings on Campus: Trinity Chapel remains an important setting for vocational and family life milestones. Chaplain Don Moldstad offers pre-marital counseling for engaged couples, and a number of weddings were held in the chapel during the past year. Many students also made use of counseling resources provided by the chaplain, other campus theologians, and Christian Family Solutions, which maintains an office on campus.

Involvement in Synod Work: Trinity Chapel hosted the commissioning and installation of Rev. Patrick Ernst as pastor of the Eagle Lake Lutheran Church and the installation of Rev. David Jay Webber as administrator of the ELS Board for World Outreach. Ordained professors preached, taught, and spoke at numerous ELS and WELS congregations during the year, assisting with Sunday preaching vacancies in Minnesota and Iowa. Prof. Tom Rank presented a paper at the ELS General Pastoral Conference in October and conducted a visit to Zion Lutheran Church, Wausau, Wisconsin, which is in the process of joining the ELS.

Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux assisted with the BLC Choir Tour and the ELS Youth Honor Choir. Dr. Brian Klebig volunteered with Branch Lutheran Schools of Haiti and presented at the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions. Prof. Shawn Stafford continued his graduate studies toward a master’s degree in philosophy and contributed significantly to the operation of our synod camps in Minnesota. Chaplain Don Moldstad spoke at the LYA Convention in Spokane, Washington; a teachers’ conference at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota; taught at two Minnesota camps; presented at a special joint gathering of WELS congregations in Goodhue, Minnesota; and conducted a marriage seminar at King of Grace Lutheran Church in Waukon, Iowa.

We remain grateful to God for the privilege of operating a college in which the “One Thing Needful” remains central to all aspects of our mission and work.

## **CURRICULAR/CO-CURRICULAR REPORT**

### ***Confessional Lutheran Identity and the Liberal Arts***

Bethany Lutheran College continues its work of serving the congregations and schools of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod by preparing students for lives of Christian service in the Church and in the world. At the same time, Bethany also provides a unique opportunity to share the truth of God’s Word with students who come from many different backgrounds, both across the United States and from around the world. In this way, the college supports the work of the synod while also serving as a mission opportunity in which many students encounter the teachings of Confessional Lutheranism during their time on campus.

Over the past academic year, the faculty have continued thoughtful conversations about what it means to carry out this work as a Confessional Lutheran liberal arts college. Building on discussions that began prior to the 2024 Evangelical Lutheran Synod Convention, faculty have continued examining how our theological identity shapes the work of teaching, scholarship, and service to students. These conversations have focused on the relationship between Confessional Lutheran theology and the historic liberal arts tradition, asking how the truths of God’s Word guide both the content we teach and the habits of mind we seek to cultivate in our students.

Faculty have also revisited foundational institutional documents, including the faculty statement “Our Common Understanding,” as part of an effort to articulate more clearly how Bethany’s mission is lived out in the classroom and across campus. These discussions have strengthened relationships across departments and have encouraged meaningful reflection about the future of Lutheran higher education. As this work continues, it has contributed to a renewed sense of unity among the faculty as we seek to carry out Bethany’s mission faithfully and thoughtfully. In many ways, this work has helped gather the faculty around a shared understanding of Bethany’s identity and purpose.

### ***Program Development and Educational Pathways***

As the faculty continues this work of clarifying Bethany’s identity and mission, the college is also exploring ways to serve students through thoughtful program development. During the past year, the faculty and Board of Regents approved the launch of a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership (MAOL) program. This graduate program is designed to prepare leaders who serve their communities and professions with integrity, wisdom, and a clear understanding of vocation. Consistent with Bethany’s mission, the program approaches leadership through the lens of Christian vocation, emphasizing service, responsibility, and faithfulness to God’s Word. The program is currently awaiting approval from the Higher Learning Commission before it can officially launch.

Faculty and administrators have also been exploring ways to provide flexible educational pathways for new audiences, such as for adult learners. These conversations include the possibility of reduced-credit programming and other formats that enable both college-aged students and working adults to benefit from Bethany’s academic strengths while balancing personal, family, and professional responsibilities. Through these efforts, Bethany seeks to gather new learners into a community shaped by Christian teaching and the liberal arts.

The college continues to invest in existing programs as well. Nursing remains an area of particular strength, with encouraging enrollment trends among both transfer students and incoming freshmen. In addition, following collaborative discussions between

the administration and faculty departments, and upon the recommendation of the faculty and approval by the Board of Regents at their February 2026 meeting, minors in both Theater and American History were restored.

### ***Service to the Community***

Bethany's mission is lived out not only through classroom instruction but also through service to the surrounding community. One example of this is the Bethany Literacy Clinic, which continues to expand its service to children in our community who need additional support in reading.

Through the work of Bethany's Education program and dedicated faculty leadership, the clinic now serves approximately 75 students weekly through structured reading interventions held in Memorial Library. These interventions provide individualized support designed to strengthen foundational literacy skills and help students gain confidence in their reading ability.

The clinic's continued growth has been made possible in part through a partnership with the imagineOne, a local book publisher, whose generous support has helped expand services and reach more students and families. This work not only benefits the children being served but also provides valuable practical experience for Bethany students preparing for careers in education. Through this work, Bethany students have the opportunity to serve families in the Mankato community while reflecting the Christian care and service that flow from the Gospel and gathering the surrounding community into the life of the college.

Bethany's involvement with My Place, a Mankato after school center that provides programming for elementary-aged children from low-income homes, is another example of ways Bethany students provide service to the community. Students in the psychology major, under the direction of their professors, volunteer their time and talents each semester letting their lights of faith shine while gaining valuable experience interacting with children from impoverished backgrounds.

### ***Vocation in Many Forms***

Highlighted in a Bethany Magazine, the college has also seen encouraging growth in its internship program and the work of the Career Development Center. These efforts help students connect their academic studies with meaningful opportunities for service in their professions and communities.

Internships and career preparation are intentionally framed within the doctrine of vocation, emphasizing that Christians serve God not only within the Church but also through faithful work in the many callings of everyday life. Through this work, students are encouraged to see their studies, their professions, and their service to others as expressions of faithful Christian vocation. For many students who come to Bethany from outside Lutheran backgrounds, this understanding of vocation provides a meaningful introduction to the way Confessional Lutheran theology shapes both faith and daily life.

The college also regularly highlights the work of faculty through a communication titled, "Amid the Trees." Articles can be found at [www.blc.edu/amid-the-trees/](http://www.blc.edu/amid-the-trees/). The share examples of the many ways Bethany faculty serve both in and outside of the classroom—through scholarship, passion projects, service to the Church, and engagement with the community. These stories provide a helpful window into the daily work of the faculty and the many ways Bethany's mission is carried out.

### ***New and Future Faculty***

None of this work would be possible without the faithful service of Bethany's faculty. This past year we welcomed two new faculty members to our academic community:

- Brandan Heinze, Assistant Professor of Mathematics
- Julie Huisken, Assistant Professor of Nursing

Both have quickly become valued members of the Bethany faculty and bring expertise and enthusiasm to their respective programs.

Bethany is also intentionally working to develop future faculty from among its own graduates and supporters. This effort reflects a desire to cultivate scholars who understand and embrace Bethany's mission as a Confessional Lutheran liberal arts college. Over time, we hope this initiative will provide a strong pipeline of faculty who are both academically prepared and deeply committed to the mission of the college and the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

### ***Forming Faithful Counselors: Program Receives Accreditation***

Bethany Lutheran college has received a meaningful blessing as its Clinical Mental Health Counseling master's program has earned accreditation from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). This recognition affirms that the program meets high national standards in both academic preparation and supervised clinical training. It also reflects Bethany's continued commitment to preparing students for lives of service, grounded in a Christ-centered understanding of care for others. Through this program, students are equipped not only with professional skills, but also with a compassionate perspective shaped by the Gospel.

This accreditation strengthens the path for graduates to serve effectively in communities where the need for wise and caring counselors continues to grow. It supports licensure opportunities, enhances credibility with employers, and opens doors for further professional development. Most importantly, it prepares graduates to walk alongside individuals and families in times of struggle, offering guidance, hope, and care. In this way, Bethany's program continues its mission of forming graduates who are ready to serve both church and society with knowledge, integrity, and Christian love.

### ***Bethany Students Earn National Recognition in Media Arts***

Students at Bethany Lutheran College received seven national awards at the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts, a highly competitive event that includes submissions from colleges and universities across the country.

The awards span multiple categories—including animation, narrative film, and promotional media—and reflect both the creativity and technical skill of Bethany's students. Their work was recognized alongside that of students from much larger institutions, highlighting the strength of Bethany's media arts program.

This achievement speaks to the dedication of the students and the guidance of faculty who help them develop their craft. Through hands-on experience and thoughtful storytelling, students are prepared to communicate effectively in a variety of professional settings.

As Bethany continues its mission of providing a Christ-centered education, accomplishments like these demonstrate how students are being equipped to use their talents with purpose and excellence in their future vocations.

### ***Closing***

As Bethany continues its work, the faculty remain committed to the college's two-fold purposes to engage students with the Savior, Jesus, and in preparing students for lives of service in their families, church, and society. The past year has been marked by meaningful conversations among the faculty, continued service to the surrounding community, and thoughtful exploration of ways to extend Bethany's mission to new audiences.

In many ways, this past year has been one of gathering. The Lord has continued to gather faculty around a shared understanding of Bethany's identity as a Confessional Lutheran liberal arts college. He has gathered students from across the country and around the world into a learning community shaped by His Word. Through efforts such as the Literacy Clinic and the work of the Career Development Center, Bethany students are also being sent out to serve others in their various callings.

We give thanks for the Lord's continued blessings on the work of Bethany Lutheran College and for the opportunity to serve the congregations and schools of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod while also sharing the teachings of Confessional Lutheranism with many who encounter them here for the first time.

## **RESIDENTIAL LIFE ON CAMPUS**

Bethany continues to be blessed with on-campus housing facilities operating at or near capacity. The number of students living on campus in the fall of 2025 was 419. By comparison, the average fall housing number from 2012-17 was 354 while the most recent five years has averaged 426. Another interesting observation is the gender balance of students living on campus. Historically, this split has been about 55% women to 45% men. Over the past three years, however, that balance has been almost 50/50, and this past fall, we actually housed 15 more men on campus than women (217 men / 202 women).

Now in our fourth year of requiring only first-year students to live on-campus, we still have about two-thirds of our student body living in our residence halls. During the 2025-26 academic year, 62% of our students lived in on-campus housing, a percentage similar to what the college had traditionally seen under the former two-year requirement (the average percent of students living on campus under the two-year requirement was 67.6%, with a range of 62% to 72%).

The Student Affairs division monitors both housing policies and facility usage to best meet the needs of today's college student and Bethany's increased on-campus student population. Student Affairs also maintains a list of future renovations for consideration along with anticipated timelines for implementation. For example, realizing that clean and updated bathrooms have a high impact on residential student satisfaction, the college has conducted several updates in the past few years to keep our group bathrooms fresh. During the summer of 2024, the college invested significantly into complete renovation of the group bathrooms on Anderson Hall's 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors. In 2025, the college updated all group bathrooms in Teigen Hall including the installation of solid surface countertops and enhanced lighting.

Residential students are surveyed annually to collect information related to satisfaction with living accommodations, staffing, and the identification of other residential needs.

## **RETENTION**

The college pays focused attention on retaining the students it has recruited. Bethany's first-year retention rates have averaged 75.4% (median 74%) over the previous five years. This past year, the percentage of first-year students who started in the fall of 2024 and returned in the fall of 2025 was 73%, up one point from the year prior.

While classes are in session, the Student Success Committee 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 administrators have several survey instruments to collect information intending to enhance student retention and success. All new students enrolled in Freshman Seminar courses complete a New Student Survey during the fall semester inquiring on their adjustment to college, perceptions of Bethany now that they are here, and how their realized experiences at Bethany have aligned with their expectations. Feedback from these instruments have been overwhelmingly positive, and specific action

items extracted from the data have been implemented in areas such as freshman seminar instruction and new student orientation programming. The fall semester of 2025 was the second year that the four Freshman Seminar instructors also conducted individual one-on-one meetings with each new student enrolled (for fall 2025, that was 201 new first-year freshman students). These meetings have proved extremely valuable in getting to better know the students in our classes and adding anecdotal information to the New Student Survey data collected from them just two weeks prior.

### **BETHANY GRADUATION RATES**

Bethany's focus on retention has positively influenced increased graduation rates. Four-year graduation rates (with the exception of two anomalies during COVID-19 due to fifth year athletic extensions granted by the NCAA) have steadily increased 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 2021 and graduating in 2025 was 53%.

### **BETHANY FINANCES**

In the spring of 2023, the college developed and adopted a five-year balanced budget plan for the undergraduate program. The forecast included a six-lever approach to achieve this goal:

1. Increase enrollment growth through targeted investments in programs that demonstrate opportunity;
2. Increase net tuition revenue per student by \$1,000 per year;
3. Increase fundraising for the Bethany Fund by \$50,000 per year;
4. Fixed annual support from the ELS at \$220,000 or more per a year;
5. Increase base support from the Schwan Foundation of \$200,000 per year; and
6. As necessary, budget adjustments and other cost containment measures.

While not all the levers are working as fully as we would like, the undergraduate program will achieve three consecutive years of balanced, and even surplus, budgets through June of 2026 (FY24 - \$327,000 / FY25 - \$246,000 / FY 2026 - \$140,000). As the college looks at the two remaining years of our five-year budget forecast model, Bethany is hopeful it will continue to have a positive balance in the undergraduate program and auxiliary enterprise funds.

For the 2025-26 fiscal year ending on June 30, 2026, as of March 25, 2026, the college is projecting a positive balance in the undergraduate fund of \$140,000, and a \$174,00 surplus in the auxiliary enterprise fund; while the graduate program will have a loss of \$144,000 due to lower than projected enrollment. In the current budget forecast for FY2027, the undergraduate program budget is anticipated to break even despite an estimated \$500,000 loss in the MN State Grant award package, and auxiliary enterprise fund is forecasted to have a profit of \$100,000. Meanwhile, we anticipate a loss of \$236,000 in the graduate program. This is due to another year of anticipated lower enrollment, as well as the impact of startup costs for the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership program and additional staffing to help market all graduate programs.

In response to the 2025 synod convention's request for more transparency in the reporting of Bethany's financial budgeting, please find included at the end of the college report a budget outcome report for fiscal year 2024-25 and a projected budget outcome for fiscal year 2025-26. Also included is a dashboard as of March, 2026 highlighting college resources (reserve funds and permanently restricted endowment) and campus debt.

We thank our gracious God for His blessings upon the college in providing us the resources to turn around our undergraduate budget challenges. Yet, as is described above, the need for increased and ongoing financial support from all Bethany constituents and supporting groups remains very important. With the decline in Minnesota State Grant support, free college tuition at public institutions through the NorthStar Promise program, and both fewer students and reduced interest among young people in attending four-year college, challenges continue and the need for prayers and financial support for Bethany Lutheran College is energetically encouraged to sustain our mission to provide a Christian liberal arts education focused on the "One Thing Needful"—the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. As a private institution, the college relies on donations from alumni and friends to support academics, financial aid, and building initiatives. Such support will continue to enable the college to fulfill its charge to provide an education that serves both the mind and the soul. May God continue to send blessings and resources upon Bethany Lutheran College so we may continue to carry out this vital mission.

### **PHYSICAL PLANT**

During the summer of 2025, Bethany received a grant to remodel and update the nursing lab to meet new teaching standards and to accommodate an increase in enrollment within the nursing program. Annually, Bethany spends \$370,000 to \$400,000 on general repairs and maintenance around the campus. In the summer of 2026, Bethany will consider upgrading the area around the Old Main colonnade, potentially add new wayward signing around campus, and continue cosmetic improvements in both Gullixson (flooring) and Anderson Halls (lounge furniture).

## GRANTS

Financial support from a variety of grants continues to aid the mission of the college. Bethany again received a generous grant from the Schwan Foundation to enhance our student services, programmatic offerings, and physical facilities. In total, Bethany received from the Schwan Foundation \$3,444,300 in CY2025. We are thankful for the Foundation's generous support.

Bethany is also grateful for the continued support of Thrivent Financial. During calendar year 2025, the college received \$13,528 as a result of the Thrivent Choice Program, up 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 90+ years. Members of the Bethany Auxiliary from throughout the Upper Midwest met on the Bethany campus on September 22, 2025, and \$15,800 in project funding was selected and voted as approved. We are grateful for this consistent support from the Bethany Auxiliary. The projects chosen for support in 2025-26 were the following:

### Standing Projects

Dorothy Theiste Scholarship Fund - \$3,000

- Three student scholars received \$9,350 in aid for the 2025-26 academic year

Choir and Band Tour Fund - \$2,500

### New Projects

Music Department – French horn - \$2,000

Safety Committee – AED machine parts - \$1,550

International Student Office – food tasting event - \$1,200

Clay Target Team - national tournament fees - \$1,200

Speech and Debate Team – tournament expenses - \$1,000

Fine Arts Department – camera equipment - \$1,000

Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program – CAPS conference registration - \$1,000

Study Abroad Office – travel kits - \$500

Spanish Department – cultural film nights - \$450

Visual Arts – portable white boards - \$400

The Bethany Auxiliary meets annually the fourth Monday in September. Their next meeting on the Bethany campus is scheduled for September 28, 2026.

## CONCLUSION

Based on this annual report, I believe you will agree with me that while challenges exist, our gracious God 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*

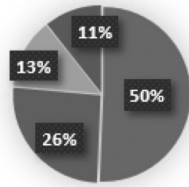
**BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE - BUDGET OUTCOME BY FUND**

	ENDING JUNE 30, 2025	PROJECTED JUNE 30, 2026
<b>UNDERGRADUATE FUND</b>		
Tuition, Fees & Govt Grants	\$ 18,512,730.00	\$ 19,675,396.00
Unfunded Scholarship	\$ (8,283,748.00)	\$ (8,962,283.00)
Endowed Scholarship	\$ 1,700,555.00	\$ 1,912,000.00
Contributions	\$ 921,879.00	\$ 885,000.00
ELS Subsidy	\$ 255,552.00	\$ 175,000.00
Schwan Foundation	\$ 1,632,000.00	\$ 1,937,800.00
Endowment for Operations	\$ 886,424.00	\$ 523,450.00
Other Sources	\$ 568,334.00	\$ 688,388.00
<b>Total Undergraduate Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 16,193,726.00</b>	<b>\$ 16,834,751.00</b>
Academic Affairs	\$ 5,214,390.00	\$ 5,123,136.00
Student Affairs	\$ 4,725,189.00	\$ 5,185,438.00
Institutional Support	\$ 3,898,649.00	\$ 4,018,204.00
Operation and Main.	\$ 2,109,258.00	\$ 2,367,500.00
<b>Total Undergraduate Expense</b>	<b>\$ 15,947,486.00</b>	<b>\$ 16,694,278.00</b>
<b>Profit/Loss Undergraduate</b>	<b>\$ 246,240.00</b>	<b>\$ 140,473.00</b>
<b>AUXILIARY ENTERPRISE FUND</b>		
Residential Halls	\$ 1,865,032	\$ 1,923,281
Unfunded Scholarship Residential Hall	\$ (529,000)	\$ (535,000)
Dining Service	\$ 1,633,414	\$ 1,765,568
Unfunded Scholarship - Dining Service	\$ (446,000)	\$ (424,700)
Spirit Store	\$ 188,367	\$ 186,600
<b>Total Auxiliary Enterprise Fund Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 2,711,813</b>	<b>\$ 2,915,749</b>
Resident Halls	\$ 1,044,422	\$ 1,194,368
Dining Service	\$ 1,312,712	\$ 1,345,560
Spirit Store	\$ 206,626	\$ 201,635
KTV (ended on June 30, 2025)	\$ 45,924	\$ -
<b>Total Auxiliary Enterprise Fund Expense</b>	<b>\$ 2,609,684</b>	<b>\$ 2,741,563</b>
<b>Profit / Loss Auxiliary Enterprise</b>	<b>\$ 102,129</b>	<b>\$ 174,186</b>
<b>GRADUATE PROGRAM</b>		
Clinical Mental Health Counseling		
Tuition	\$ 504,691.00	\$ 349,632.00
Fees	\$ 7,039.00	\$ 5,700.00
Contributions	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -
<b>Total Graduate Program Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 513,730.00</b>	<b>\$ 355,332.00</b>
Personnel	\$ 420,167.00	\$ 425,040.00
Operational	\$ 23,186.00	\$ 38,300.00
Departmental	\$ 39,366.00	\$ 36,100.00
<b>Total Graduate Program Expense</b>	<b>\$ 482,719.00</b>	<b>\$ 499,440.00</b>
<b>Profit / Loss Graduate Program</b>	<b>\$ 31,011.00</b>	<b>\$ (144,108.00)</b>

\*requested as separate page

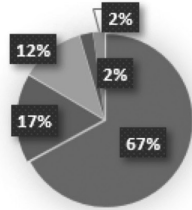
**BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE – RESOUC E and DEBT REPORT  
March 2026**

**Cash / Liquid Assets**



\$ 7,877,357	- Admin Mgt Preferred Savings Account
\$ 4,000,000	- Certificate of Deposits
\$ 2,013,640	- Admin Mgt Low Volatility Investments
\$ 1,658,781	- Unrestricted Cash in Bank
<b>\$ 15,549,778</b>	- Unrestricted Cash Balance
\$ (6,220,515)	- State MN 90-day Operating Balance
<b>\$ 9,329,263</b>	- Cash / Liquid Assets

**Perm. Restricted Endow.**



\$ 27,371,631	- Historical Endowment Value - Scholarships
\$ 6,724,098	- Restricted Endow
\$ 4,862,401	- Unallocated Gains
\$ 994,652	- Other Scholar. Investment
\$ 877,175	- Due from other funds
<b>\$ 40,829,957</b>	

**Debt By Projects**



\$ 10,057,955	- Total BAC debt balance
\$ 7,441,255	- Total MH / HH debt balance
\$ 2,842,500	- Total Soccer debt balance
<b>\$ 20,341,710</b>	

\*requested as separate page

## REPORT OF BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*Committee #8: Higher Education*

The world is ravaged by war and conflict. Nations war against nations. Husbands and wives are in conflict. Siblings are divided against each other. Our hearts too are at war. We hate the actions of our hands, the words of our mouths and the evil desires of our hearts. We know that we deserve God’s judgement and it troubles us. We long for peace! Peace between men. But more deeply, peace with God. What is written is true: *“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of a herald, who proclaims peace and preaches good news, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God is king!’”* (Isaiah 52:7 EHV)

We long for peace and God provides. We love God’s heralds who are sent to proclaim the good news of peace that our sins are forgiven through Jesus the Christ. Jesus has secured our peace by battling against the devil, the world, and sin. He conquered them by living a holy life and dying an innocent death in our place. Through His life and death, we have peace with God because our sins are forgiven and we have a perfect righteousness imputed to us. Let your heart be at peace. Your sins are forgiven.

Paul cites the Isaiah passage above in connection with the sending out heralds by the New Testament church: And how can they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, *“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news of peace, who preach the gospel of good things!”* (Romans 10:15 EHV) Your seminary prepares men to be called and sent out to proclaim Christ’s peace as

pastors. God has heard our prayers and the hearts of men are being stirred with the desire to reach the troubled and dying with the peace-giving Word of the Gospel. We long for peace and God provides through Jesus.

## 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 2025–26 school year: Adolph Harstad, Brian Klebig, Nicholas Proksch, Gaylin Schmeling, Timothy Schmeling, and Timothy Hartwig. Dr. Proksch leads our 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, Pres. em. G. Schmeling taught homiletics, and the Rev. A. Harstad taught Old Testament exegesis. President Hartwig taught pastoral theology, dogmatics, and other practical courses.

## ENROLLMENT

There were ten students enrolled at the seminary in the 2025–26 academic year. It breaks down as follows: 5 juniors, 1 middler, 3 seniors, and 1 vicar.

## VICAR

Peter Estrem served as vicar at Divine Mercy Lutheran Church, Weatherford, Texas.

## 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 Jeff Enderle and Pastor Patrick Ernst. 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	2026 Projection	2025 Projection
2026	1	4
2027	3	2
2028	5	1
2029	6	1

## ACTIVITIES

**Bjarne Wollan Teigen Reformation Lectures:** The 2025 Bjarne Wollan Teigen Reformation Lectures were held October 30–31, 2025. The theme was “Luther’s Great Treatises of 1525: Not by My Own Reason or Strength”:

1. Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments, Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Austin, TX;
2. How Christians Should Regard Moses, Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN; and
3. The Bondage of the Will, Dr. Keith Wessel, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

**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 4–5, 2026. The seminar was extremely informative for our students. The last two years the visit has been extended by a day to allow BLTS student to attend WLS classes for the day. This has allowed for greater interaction between the student bodies.

**Senior Recognition Dinner:** This event was held on the evening of April 27, 2026. This is always a pleasant and relaxing evening for the students and staff.

**Vicar Workshop:** Our annual vicar workshop was held on Wednesday, May 6, 2026. The returning vicar reported on certain phases of his vicarage. 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 6, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. in Trinity Chapel. The Rev. Brad Kerkow served as the preacher, and Pres. Timothy Hartwig served as liturgist. The following graduated

from the seminary with a Master of Divinity degree: Peter Estrem. The vicars assigned at this service were Adam Hoeft, Arthur Langhorst, Graham Parsons, and Noah Schleusener.

### **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/lcq](http://www.blts.edu/lcq).

### **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; Julian G. 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; Grace Weston OH; 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; Kaschner Family; 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; Glenn and Rebecca Lussky; 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; Our Savior's Lutheran (Amherst Junction, Wisconsin); 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; 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**

Rev. Ben Wiechmann (chairman) \*  
Rev. Sam Gullixson (vice chairman and chaplain)  
Rev. Luke Ulrich (secretary)  
Rev. Noah Thompson (missionary care coordinator)  
Rev. Kurtis Freimuth (outreach strategy coordinator)  
Rev. Tim Erickson (advisory as-needed, cross-cultural ministry coordinator)  
Mr. Jeremy Merseeth (property management coordinator) \*  
Mr. Mark Perlwitz (site selection coordinator)  
Mr. Neil Shaffer (resource and communication coordinator)  
Mr. Dean Shoop (financial coordinator) \*  
\* - also serve on the Board of Trustees / Board for Home Outreach Subcommittee

### ***Ex-officio members***

Rev. Glenn Obenberger (synod president)  
Mr. Paul Fries (communication director)  
Rev. Brad Kerkow (evangelism and missions counselor)

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Following the conclusion of our synodical strategic plan, the Board for Home Outreach (BHO) recognized the need for a clear framework to guide its work over the next five years. To assist in this effort, the BHO invited *Grace in Action* to lead the board through a strategic planning process in February of this year.

This work resulted in a refreshed Vision/Traction Organizer (VTO), which now serves as a guide for the board's work in the coming years. The purpose of this tool is to help the board maintain focus on long-term goals while also identifying the priorities that require immediate attention.

The process led to the creation of several key targets we are aiming to reach by 2031:

1. Establish five new home missions while also supporting several ministry enhancements and revitalization efforts.
2. Encourage at least fifteen ELS congregations to complete the Everyone Outreach workshop in order to strengthen a culture of outreach within our churches.
3. Expand collaboration with Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, including regular mission trips for seminarians and a formalized three-year training cycle in which the BHO conducts outreach seminars for students.

The implementation of this process has improved our stewardship of time and resources. By increasing efficiency and accountability, the board has reduced the frequency of meetings, along with the associated travel and administrative costs, while continuing to carry out the work entrusted to us.

The BHO encourages other synod boards, as well as individual congregations, to consider this process as well. It has proven helpful in clarifying goals and guiding our work as we seek to be faithful stewards of the gifts entrusted to us in carrying out Christ's commission.

## **APPOINTMENT OF TYPE B MEMBER**

The board has appointed Rev. Ben Wiechmann to a three-year term as a Type B member. The board seeks ratification of this appointment at the 2026 Synod Convention.

## **EVANGELISM-MISSIONS COUNSELOR**

Rev. Brad Kerkow continues to be a tremendous blessing to the congregations of our synod through his dedicated service as Evangelism and Missions Counselor. Pastor Kerkow is truly a God-given servant whose gifts in sharing the Gospel, strategic planning, and encouraging others have been indispensable to our work. With a deep commitment to Christ's Great Commission, he has equipped and encouraged both our home missionaries and established congregations to carry the message of salvation into their communities with clarity and love. Through his counsel, leadership, and personal encouragement, he has strengthened the mission efforts of the ELS in countless ways, and we are deeply grateful for his faithful and highly valued service.

Rev. Kerkow continues to serve in support of every ELS congregation. If your congregation could benefit from assistance with strategic planning, evangelism workshops, or outreach initiatives, please reach out to him.

## CONGREGATIONAL COUNSELOR

The Congregational Counselor role was established to assist ELS congregations facing significant challenges as they discern a faithful and sustainable path forward. Working in coordination with circuit visitors and utilizing tools adapted for our synod, this position helps local leadership identify opportunities for redevelopment, merger, or other transitions.

Pastor Ed Bryant retired from this position in February 2026, and we express deep gratitude to God for his service. Remarkably, most of the three-year goals for this position were achieved in time that Pastor Bryant served in the role, which was barely more than a single year. His tireless efforts, experience, and wisdom laid essential groundwork for this important work.

Rev. Larry Wentzlaff has accepted the part-time, temporary call to serve in this position moving forward. He is well known throughout our synod, having previously served as Evangelism and Missions Counselor. We are confident that the Lord will bless his work among us. We thank God for providing both the funding and the servant for this vital effort. Congregations seeking assistance or wishing to learn more about this work are encouraged to contact Rev. Wentzlaff.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONGREGATIONS

A major aspect of the Board for Home Outreach's work is equipping existing congregations to share the Gospel effectively. To support this effort, the board provides a variety of resources and tools designed to help congregations engage their communities with the message of Christ. Financial assistance is also available for select outreach initiatives, enabling congregations to expand their evangelism efforts. We encourage congregations to make use of these opportunities and partner with the BHO in spreading the Good News.

**Everyone Outreach:** Everyone Outreach is a program designed to help congregations cultivate a stronger culture of evangelism. The process begins with a one-day workshop led by a trained facilitator. Congregations interested in hosting a workshop are encouraged to contact our Evangelism and Missions Counselor, Rev. Brad Kerkow

**Do You Have a Pastor? Campaign:** The "Do You Have a Pastor?" campaign is a simple, non-intrusive outreach initiative built around a caring question members can ask friends who are facing significant life events. Congregations can access contact cards, door hangers, and promotional videos to support this effort.

**Project Support Application:** Through the Project Support program, the Board for Home Outreach provides guidance and financial assistance for specific congregational outreach projects. Congregations are encouraged to review these opportunities, and apply for funding, on the ELS website.

**Online Resources:** There are several outreach and evangelism resources accessible through the ELS website. These resources are intended to equip congregations with effective tools for sharing the Gospel within their communities.

If you would like more information on these, or any other, resources, please contact the Evangelism and Missions Counselor or other members of the board.

## HOME MISSION UPDATES

**Divine Mercy Lutheran Church, Weatherford, TX:** The Rev. James Kasserer serves Divine Mercy, currently working alongside vicar Peter Estrem. In 2025, the mission averaged 52 in Sunday attendance and grew to 73 total souls.

Rev. Kasserer and Divine Mercy report that the Vicar-in-Mission program continues to be an immense blessing. Weatherford's outreach opportunities and continued growth provide an excellent training ground for vicars to serve outside the Midwest, gaining experience in a culturally diverse region with strong lay leadership and an active mission focus. Training a vicar encourages a healthy re-evaluation of ministry for the pastor, while the congregation benefits as the vicar's unique interests often bring in new visitors who might not otherwise be reached. The presence of a vicar also helps the membership maintain an outreach mindset rather than sliding into maintenance, ensuring the mission remains focused on the plentiful harvest in Texas.

We mourn with hope along with the Kasserer family following the passing of their son, Japheth, at the age of 18. In the midst of such sorrow, we find our comfort in the victory of Christ's resurrection and the certain hope of a reunion in glory. Blessed be Japheth's memory among us!

**Hope Lutheran Church, Leander, TX :** The Rev. Jerome Gernander has been serving Hope since June of 2022. The congregation averaged 43 in Sunday attendance for 2025 with 105 total souls.

Hope Lutheran is currently facing significant financial challenges. In 2020, during the uncertainty of the COVID pandemic, the congregation experienced a transition in missionaries. An extended vacancy followed as the Board for Home Outreach continued calling men to serve in this role. During that time, the congregation experienced a noticeable decline in average Sunday attendance and overall membership.

Hope has been blessed with a beautiful church facility and grounds, and the congregation continues to receive faithful pastoral care. Home Missionary, Rev. Gernander faithfully proclaims God's Word and administers the Sacraments, and the congregation remains committed to the work of the Gospel in its community. At the same time, the financial realities facing the congregation are significant, as the costs of maintaining the ministry and property are currently outpacing the congregation's present levels of giving and growth.

The Board for Home Outreach is actively working with the missionary and the congregation to explore strategies and possible paths forward. Through prayer, careful planning, and continued support, we trust that the Lord will guide the congregation as it seeks to carry out its mission in the years ahead, and we ask for your continued prayers and support as well.

**Hope Lutheran Church, Farmington, MN:** Hope Lutheran Church is served by the Rev. Dan Oberer. The congregation averaged 70 in Sunday attendance for 2025 and numbers 141 souls.

The congregation continues to demonstrate strong momentum and a maturing mission heart. This was highlighted this past year by a record-breaking Christmas Eve service in which 120 people heard the Christmas Gospel. Hope remains deeply embedded in the Farmington community, actively engaging neighbors, building new relationships, and engaging their neighbors with Jesus. As the congregation moves toward greater stability, they are focused on strengthening their internal leadership to support this growth. We thank God for the steady progress and the dedicated service of Rev. Oberer and the lay leadership at Hope as they continue to proclaim Christ and Him crucified.

**Eagle Lake Lutheran Church, Eagle Lake, MN:** In response to the Board for Home Outreach's encouragement to explore the establishment of daughter congregations, Peace Lutheran Church, North Mankato began a new ministry effort in nearby Eagle Lake. This mission began as a daughter congregation, with a core group gathering regularly for worship and fellowship, being served by Peace's pastors.

Once this foundation was established, the Board for Home Outreach assumed responsibility for the mission and began calling for an exploratory missionary to serve the growing group. By God's grace, Patrick Ernst accepted the call and was installed as Exploratory Home Missionary in August 2025.

Since its launch in late 2024, the mission has experienced encouraging growth. By the end of 2025, average Sunday attendance had reached 68, with 94 souls connected to the congregation. The group currently meets at Eagle Lake City Hall while actively engaging in outreach efforts and community events.

On December 7, the congregation celebrated its Charter Sunday and formally organized as Eagle Lake Lutheran Church, now existing as an independent congregation separate from Peace Lutheran. As attendance continues to grow, working with the board, the congregation has begun researching land opportunities in Eagle Lake, as their current meeting space is nearing capacity.

We give thanks to God for providing a faithful missionary and a dedicated group of members who are supporting and building up this newest mission of our synod.

**King of Grace Lutheran Church, Waukon, IA:** King of Grace continues to be served by Abraham Faugstad. The congregation is now in the fourth year of its partnership with the Board for Home Outreach, and as the congregation has grown, the level of synodical subsidy has decreased and is now minimal.

In 2025, the congregation averaged 44 in Sunday worship attendance, with 57 total souls connected to the congregation. We thank God for the steady work being done through Word and Sacrament in Waukon and pray that the Lord will continue to bless this mission as it grows in strength and stability.

## **REVITALIZATION OF ASCENSION AND PINEHURST LUTHERAN CHURCHES**

The Board for Home Outreach has committed to a four-year revitalization effort for Ascension and Pinehurst Lutheran Churches in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, supported by a total subsidy of \$250,000. Rev. Lloyd Harter has been bi-vocational, serving these congregations part-time as pastor, while also teaching full-time in the public school system. Beginning in the summer of 2026, Pastor Harter will transition to serving both congregations full-time as pastor and missionary.

## **COLLABORATION WITH BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**Outreach Seminar and Mission Trip:** The Board for Home Outreach continues to recognize the importance of partnering with Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (BLTS) in fostering a mission-minded spirit in the next generation of our synod's pastors. At the request of the seminary, the BHO has begun conducting an annual Outreach Seminar for students, designed around a three-year instructional cycle.

This past year the seminar was paired with a canvassing trip to Divine Mercy Lutheran Church in Weatherford, Texas. Students spent time canvassing the surrounding community on behalf of the home mission, providing the congregation with valuable local contacts while also giving the students practical, on-the-ground experience in mission work.

The BHO also presented this Outreach Seminar to Circuit 9 at its Winkel. The board would be glad to offer this training to other circuits as well. Circuits interested in hosting a seminar are encouraged to contact the BHO.

**Vicar in Mission:** The Vicar in Mission program aims to provide seminary students with valuable experience in their vicar year by serving in a growing, mission-minded congregation. The board continues to see great value in this program and promotes it both among our home missions and among established congregations with unique outreach opportunities. This year, the BHO partnered with three congregations to request vicar placements.

**Divine Mercy Lutheran Church, Weatherford, TX:** The board continues to fully subsidize a vicar for Divine Mercy if one is assigned. This arrangement allows the vicar to gain practical experience in a mission setting under the direction of experienced home missionary, Rev. James Kassera.

**Concordia, Eau Claire, WI and the Eau Claire Revitalization:** The board has entered a partnership with Concordia Lutheran Church, where Pastor Paul Webber serves. Through a shared-cost arrangement, a vicar is being requested to serve primarily at Concordia, but also part-time at Ascension and Pinehurst to enhance the efforts of revitalization in those congregations.

**Faith Lutheran Church, Oregon, WI:** The board is also subsidizing a vicar, if assigned, at Faith Lutheran Church in Oregon, Wisconsin, served by Pastor Jeff Hendrix. The addition of a vicar will allow them to act on identified outreach opportunities while providing the vicar with ministry experience in a growing congregation with a new school.

### SALARY SCALE FOR HOME MISSIONARIES

To set the salaries for our home missionaries, the board continues to use the WELS Compensation Guidelines, including all benefits, for the Home Missionary Total Compensation Package for 2026 (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 of 50% of 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: 0-15 years: 3 Sundays plus 25 days; 16+ years: 4 Sundays plus 30 days.

### SUBSIDIES AND PROJECTS

	2024	2025	Jan - June 2026	FY 2027
	Actual	Actual	Projection	Projection
Divine Mercy - Weatherford TX	\$156,667	\$156,000	\$78,000	\$156,000
Eagle Lake - Eagle Lake, MN	\$ -	\$ -	\$47,000	\$115,200
Grace - Redmond OR	\$6,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Hope - Farmington MN	\$38,000	\$24,000	\$18,000	\$30,000
Hope - Leander TX	\$144,000	\$144,000	\$72,000	\$144,000
King of Grace - Waukon IA	\$18,667	\$12,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Ascension - Eau Claire WI	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$70,000
Living Water - San Angelo TX	\$62,988	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$426,322	\$336,000	\$218,000	\$518,200
<b>Grant Funding</b>				
Eagle Lake Lutheran, MN	\$24,278	\$77,770	\$ -	\$ -
Parkland, WA	\$22,500	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Peace Devotions	\$18,947	\$18,626	\$9,000	\$22,000
Vicar in Mission	\$20,355	\$21,700	\$ -	\$41,000

### THANK YOU

The Board for Home Outreach wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the congregations and members of our synod for their ongoing support and prayers. We are particularly thankful for the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation and its Grant Fund as well as other generous donors whose contributions have substantially bolstered our evangelism and outreach programs. We also thank the Board of Trustees, the synod President’s office, our Communication Director, and our Planned Giving Counselor for their partnership and wisdom. Most importantly, we thank our Triune God for the faithful servants, missionaries, vicars, and laypeople alike, who labor in the harvest fields to bring the light of the Gospel to the lost.

We ask for your continued prayers that the Lord of the harvest would bless our collective efforts, that through the Spirit’s work in Word and Sacrament, that many more souls would be brought into His eternal kingdom.

*The Rev. Ben Wiechmann, chairman*

# REPORT OF THE BOARD FOR WORLD OUTREACH

*Committee #10: World Outreach*

## INTRODUCTION

The Board for World Outreach is comprised of the following persons, organized according to the following committees—Asia Committee: Chairman Justin Marthaler, Dan Browning, Jacob Kempfert; Europe/Australia Committee: Chairman John Petersen, Matt Lukasek, Steven Sparley; South America Committee: Chairman Timothy Bartels, Enrique Carhuayo, Daniel Ruiz. Officers of the board as a whole are Chairman Ruiz, Vice-chairman Marthaler, and Secretary Kempfert. The undersigned was installed as the new World Outreach Administrator on Epiphany Day, January 6, 2026, succeeding Thomas Heyn who had served in that capacity through the end of December 2025.

Since my installation I have visited fields in India, Australia, and South Korea. My call from the Board for World Outreach asked me to concentrate on developing opportunities for continuing theological education for the pastors and others with whom we work. This has been seen as a need both by the BWO and by the young church bodies we serve. Theological conferences in Peru and Australia are currently being planned, and greater participation on the part of ELS pastors in the seminary program in India, and in an annual pastors' conference for the Indian pastors, are likewise currently in the works. Efforts are being made also to develop relationships with all the pastors in the various churches with which we work, and whose ministries we support, as we seek to find new and helpful ways to encourage and assist the pastors and their elected synodical leaders in the maturation and development of their churches and church bodies.

The BWO has been reevaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of its structure and methods, in consultation with the *Grace in Action* organization. The work of the BWO is expanding. More attention and a deeper involvement, are needed in the various fields that we serve. As a result of this reevaluation, and in view of these needs, the BWO is asking that the convention increase the number of members of the board, from 9 to 13, with two of the new members being Type A members and two of them being Type B members. We furthermore believe that the administrator's work could be carried out more efficiently if we were able to hire a part-time administrative assistant (who might also work with the Board for Apologetics and the Apologetics Center Director, and the Board for Home Outreach and the Evangelism and Missions Counselor). The board is therefore exploring ways in which this might be done.

As the BWO prepares itself to move forward in its work with a more streamlined organization and greater clarity of purpose, we also believe that divine providence has brought to us yet another church body, the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya, with whom we can cooperate in fulfilling the Great Commission on behalf of the synod. We are accordingly asking the convention to approve adding Kenya as an additional official ELS mission field. A gathering of pastors who later organized the ELDK sought out the ELS several years ago, asking for help in training new pastors and in increasing their own theological knowledge. With the use of the internet, and with volunteer teachers and presenters from the ELS, much has been achieved for our Kenyan brethren in these ways over the years. And we believe that much more can be achieved for God's kingdom as we develop a closer relationship with the ELDK via the BWO.

The ELDK is one of many examples of Lutheran churches that were originally established through the labors of missionaries from Lutheran churches in European and North American that now belong to the Lutheran World Federation. But in recent decades these "mother" churches have slipped into much error in their doctrinal and moral teaching, and the "daughter" churches cannot go along with this. So they are separating themselves from these historic associations. These churches are looking for new friends and partners among conservative Lutheran churches with whom they can work with a clear conscience, in their desire to be faithful to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

The Lutheran World Federation is, in effect, falling apart. This is seen also in the several breakaway churches that have been forming in the historically Lutheran lands of northern Europe in recent years. This is, in our time, a worldwide phenomenon. Several of the dissenting groups have found their way to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for support and assistance. Some have found their way to our sister church, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The ELDK is the one that has found its way to us, so that we can do our part as we continue to help and encourage them.

Churches like ours, which adhere to the authority of Scripture and to the sound doctrine of the Lutheran Reformation, are noticed by those in other places in the world who yearn for this saving truth. We cannot hide our lamp under a bushel basket! This is also one of the reasons why the BWO is beginning the process of considering how the Evangelical Lutheran Synod can become a missionary-sending synod once again. A small beginning has been made in Australia, where ELS Pastor Skyler Hepler was installed at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church near Brisbane on November 9, 2026, under a joint call from the congregation and the BWO. We pray that God will open more doors, and provide means, for a renewal of something that used to be very important to the ELS. The members of our synod in earlier times joyfully supported and prayed for the synod missionaries who lived and worked in Peru and Chile, and the Thoughts of Faith missionaries who lived and worked in Ukraine and Czechia. May the Lord of the

church make it possible for us to send out new missionaries to new places, in his name and according to his will. Quoting the Large Catechism,

*We pray that His name may be so praised through God's holy Word and a Christian life that we who have accepted it may abide and daily grow in it, and that it may gain approval and acceptance among other people. We pray that it may go forth with power throughout the world. We pray that many may find entrance into the kingdom of grace, be made partakers of redemption, and be led to it by the Holy Spirit, so that we may all together remain forever in the one kingdom now begun.*

And finally, I wish to thank my predecessor, Rev. Thomas Heyn, for his nine years of service as World Outreach Administrator, and for his assistance in my transition to this position. I have seen the great affection in which he is held by the pastors and members of the churches served by the BWO, as they have wished him well in his retirement, and as they have thanked him for all he has done for them on our synod's behalf through these years. We likewise wish him well and thank him.

*The Rev. David Jay Webber, World Outreach - administrator*

## **EUROPE COMMITTEE**

Thoughts of Faith, which is now also called the Europe Committee of the ELS Board for World Outreach, had its beginning in the late 1970s, when former ELS pastor, the late Rev. 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 the Martin Luther School in the city of Pilsen, Czechia. The congregation's worship attendance is now very low, with often under ten people gathering for Sunday services. Pastor Martin Vrsecky conducts the worship just one Sunday per month, owing to his very busy schedule as the chief financial officer and director of Martin Luther School. However, on those Sundays when the children of Martin Luther School sing choir selections, the attendance is usually between 60-80. We thank God that families hear His Word on those occasions.

In addition, the school children have the opportunity to hear God's word in the weekly chapel services, and in their religion classes on a regular basis. We are happy to provide these experiences but are desiring to assure that the students have the best possible presentation of the Gospel, especially in their class work. For this reason, Rev. Steven Sparley, a former missionary in Pilsen and currently a BWO Europe Committee member, has been asked to spend several weeks there this spring, with plans to visit again early next Fall. His task is to examine the school's religion curriculum for each grade level, to assist Martin Vrsecky with conducting the services, and exploring possible opportunities to reach out to past congregation members. We pray for God's blessing on these efforts.

Each summer members of the school staff—including some years when they are joined by students and teachers from Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wisconsin—provide a week of Vacation Bible School for local and neighborhood children. This past summer it was held in July, with 15-20 children attending. On the Sunday following the VBS, the worship service was visited by several of the children and their families.

The church and school (with an enrollment of around 350) are blessed to be located in a landmark building which survived the bombing of Pilsen during World War II. It was renovated over 25 years ago, and from time-to-time certain repairs and improvements are carried out, particularly in the school portion of the building.

During the past year the BWO Europe Committee has been exploring various options which may have an impact on the future of our mission work in Pilsen. In the meantime, we request prayers for God's continued 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 were eager 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 five congregations, served by six pastors. Four of the clergymen are serving in bi-vocational ministries, receiving a small stipend from the BWO through general or Latvia-designated donations.

Pastor Ilars Plume serves as the full-time pastor for the congregation in the town of Kekava. He reports that his congregation currently has 74 members, with an average of 28 communicants each Sunday. Pastor Uldis Fandjevs serves the church in Ozolneicki, another suburb of the capital city of Riga. Both congregations worship in very attractive church buildings which were constructed 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 semi-retired surgeon, and Pastor Sildegs has been teaching seminary classes. An additional major project for Dr. Sildegs over the past few years has been the production of a new Latvian language hymn book which is now in use among the congregations. God willing, it will serve the CLCL, and probably other Latvian churches, for many years to come.

The congregation in the city of Jelgava is served by Pastor Ivo Sildegs. Under his leadership the church is continuing to work on remodeling projects for the very old building that is its home. Having received a generous gift from a Latvian-American businessman during the past year, the members are 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.

In recent years a Bible Camp has been held for the young people of the CLCL at a location in the countryside north of Riga, lasting five days. This provides opportunities for learning and building the bonds of Christian fellowship.

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 it may attract students and share the Gospel with them. In the meantime, the pastors and the members of the CLCL have been diligent in identifying potential candidates to serve in the pastoral ministry. Currently two men are receiving seminary instruction from the Latvian pastors, as well as from visiting professors and pastors from Germany and the United States. It's estimated that their training will conclude within the next two years, when they will be in a position to succeed pastors who are anticipating retirement from full time ministry. It is 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.

Despite the troubles that Satan places in the way, and the threats and the dangers of the current war in Ukraine expanding to other places, the Europe Committee remains optimistic about the future for our partners 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, Europe Committee - chairman*

## **GIFT OF LIFE, UKRAINE**

### ***A Message of Faith and Resilience***

As we look back on 2025, the International Charitable Foundation "Gift of Life" (ICF GoL) remains a steadfast beacon of Gospel hope in a nation weary from years of conflict. Grounded in our Lutheran identity and driven by the Great Commission, our mission continues to be the preservation of life and the proclamation of the Word. In a year marked by both profound tragedy and miraculous opportunities for service, we thank the Lord for His divine protection and for the privilege of serving as the mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) in Ukraine.

### ***Ukraine in 2025: A Landscape of Crisis and Hope***

The year 2025 has seen no reprieve for the people of Ukraine. The humanitarian situation remains critical as the war continues to exert a devastating toll on the civilian population. Displacement figures have reached a plateau of persistent crisis, with over 3.5 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and millions more remaining as refugees abroad.

On November 19, 2025, our home base of Ternopil suffered a catastrophic missile and drone attack. The strike targeted civilian areas, resulting in significant structural damage to residential buildings and infrastructure. Tragically, the attack claimed the lives of approximately 40 people, including children, and left more than 90 others wounded. This event serves as a sobering reminder of the constant vulnerability of the people we serve. The epicenter of the attack was located in close proximity to the storage and deployment site of our Medical Clinics on Wheels (MCOW). Because the strike occurred before the start of the working day none of our staff members were at the site, and all were spared from injury. While the ground shook and windows were shattered in the vicinity, our mobile units remained operational. This providential protection allowed us to resume our mission almost immediately, providing comfort and care to a community in deep shock.

### ***Mission Outreach: Proclaiming the Source of Peace***

At its core, Gift of Life is not merely a social service provider; it is a mission of the Church. Our primary objective remains the preaching and distribution of God's Word across Ukraine. Every bottle of water provided, every medical check-up performed, and every gift of warm clothing is accompanied by the life-giving message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

In 2025 our team intensified its educational and spiritual outreach through the dedicated efforts of Lutheran pastors and our Gift of Life Pro-Life Center consultants. Together, they ensure that the Truth of Scripture is integrated into every facet of our service:

- 510 Bible Lessons were conducted throughout the year.
- 2,753 Total Attendees participated in these sessions.
- 745 New Seekers joined our Bible studies for the first time.

The majority of these participants are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from regions completely leveled by the war—souls who have lost their homes, their livelihoods, and often their loved ones. By working hand-in-hand, our pastors and consultants testify to these grieving families that there is a path to genuine comfort. Through the preaching of the Gospel, we point them toward the only source of true peace: our Lord Jesus Christ.

In 2025 we distributed approximately 5,000 pieces of Christian literature. This included Bibles, New Testaments, and Martin Luther's Small Catechism, as well as children's Christian books and coloring pages. These materials were sent to the frontlines and into the hands of pregnant women, the elderly, and children relocated to safer regions.

This year we successfully relaunched our official website: [giftoflife.org.ua](http://giftoflife.org.ua). The site has been redesigned to emphasize our Lutheran identity. It serves as a digital mission field where visitors can:

- Submit prayer requests.
- Request information about Lutheran doctrine.
- Learn about the foundational tenets of faith and our connection to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Furthermore, with the addition of a dedicated Social media manager to our team, our social media presence on Facebook (@ICFGIFTOFLIFE) and Instagram (@gift\_of\_life\_ua) has seen record engagement. Through high-quality video content and daily interactions, we are using these platforms as modern tools for evangelization.

### ***Medical Clinic on Wheels (MCOW): Healing Body and Soul***

The MCOW program faced significant logistical hurdles in 2025 due to fluctuating safety zones. Despite the risks, we expanded our reach to four new locations, including two critical areas in Central Ukraine near active combat zones.

Our medical team—comprised of two family physicians, three dentists, and a Registrar-Deaconess—treated over 4,000 patients this year. The presence of our Registrar-Deaconess is vital. While patients wait for medical or dental care, she leads Bible lessons for adults and engages children in Christian activities.

Every patient leaves our clinic not only with improved physical health but with the “Small Catechism” or a New Testament in hand. We pray that as their physical pain is eased, their hearts are healed by the Good News of the Gospel.

### ***Lutheran Pro-Life Centers: Protecting the Unborn and the Vulnerable***

Gift of Life operates four Pro-Life Centers: in Ternopil, Kremenets, and two districts in Kyiv. In 2025, these centers saw a total of 11,634 visitors. Our centers provide a holistic approach to the sanctity of life:

- 148 Educational Presentations were delivered in schools and medical universities, focusing on the biblical value of life and the dangers of abortion.
- 251 “School of Motherhood” sessions helped prepare expecting parents.
- 2,278 Crisis Consultations were provided to women facing unplanned pregnancies, those struggling with Post-Abortion Syndrome, or those in extreme poverty.

In the current climate, these centers have also evolved into humanitarian hubs. They are safe havens where anyone in need can find psychological support, material aid, and spiritual guidance.

### ***Humanitarian Impact: Serving the “Least of These”***

The demand for material aid in Ukraine is growing exponentially as the economy remains strained by the war. In 2025 our humanitarian efforts were focused on the most vulnerable: pregnant women, large families, IDPs, and the elderly. Key Achievements in 2025:

Nutrition and Hygiene: Distributed over 2,000 cans of baby formula, along with thousands of diapers, hygiene kits, and essential medications.

Medical Support: Fully repaired and delivered an ambulance to a community in the Sumy region, which faces near-constant shelling of its civilian infrastructure.

Eldercare: Provided essential food supplies to a nursing home in the village of Kolyndyany.

Special Needs Support: Purchased vitamins and musical instruments for a specialized boarding school serving children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other mental disabilities.

### ***Conclusion and Future Outlook***

The year 2025 has proven that while the darkness of war is great, the Light of the World is greater. As we look toward 2026, our vision is to deepen and diversify our evangelistic reach, ensuring the Gospel reaches as many souls as possible. Our strategic goals for the coming year include:

Digital Evangelism: Expanding our online presence to engage a younger generation and those isolated by the conflict.  
 Geographic Expansion: We pray for an improved security situation that will allow our medical team to reach the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine, where the need is most acute.  
 Psychosocial Support: Expanding our counseling programs to specifically address the deep trauma of families shattered by the war.

Infrastructure Renewal: A critical priority is the modernization of our medical equipment. Most of our current tools are over 20 years old and nearing the end of their functional life; updating this technology is essential to maintain the high standard of care our mission represents.

We are profoundly grateful to all our brothers and sisters in the ELS for their steadfast financial and prayerful support. Together, we are not just saving lives. We are sharing the promise of Eternal Life. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” — John 1:5

*Dmytro Maksymenko, Gift of Life - director*

**ASIA COMMITTEE**

***India***

2025 was a difficult time for the ministry in India. For many years, the BWO partnered with two distinct yet loosely associated church bodies in India. One was the Lutheran Mission of Salvation—Hyderabad (LMSH) in the south-central Indian state of Telangana. LMSH also supported, with ELS funds, ministry in Jabalpur, a Hindu-speaking area in north central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. Unfortunately, we received several concerning whistleblower reports about LMSH pastoral leadership. In response, the board hired an India-based firm skilled at conducting investigations. The investigation corroborated many of the whistleblower reports which led the board to reach the sad conclusion that we are no longer able to use these channels and methods in providing financial support, as we have lost confidence in the leadership of LMSH.

As a consequence of this action, our support to the Jabalpur group has been impacted as well as many village churches and orphanages in the Hyderabad area. The committee has been pursuing ways to reconnect with individuals and congregations in the Hyderabad region that were not involved in any wrongdoing and wish to be part of a confessional Lutheran church. It will take time to reestablish trust and communication, but we pray that the Lord will open doors for the Gospel in this region of India.

Despite these difficulties in Hyderabad, we remain fully confident in the leadership and operation of the Rajahmundry-based Lutheran Mission of Salvation—India (LMSI). LMSI consists of 96 congregations throughout the state of Andhra Pradesh, where the primary language is Telugu and 89% of the population is Hindu. Pastor Kalyan Gollapalli serves as president of LMSI. 12 ordained pastors, 83 gospel workers, and 50 Bible women support the work of the Gospel. The gospel workers are men in various stages of theological training, and the Bible women provide support to other women, especially in situations where it may be culturally out of place for a man to provide spiritual care. Ten men are studying in the seminary program. The seminarians meet five days each month, and the program can take upwards of five years as the men also work and have other responsibilities.

LMSI also oversees Grace and Truth Lutheran Cornerstone English Medium School (GTLC EMS) in Rajahmundry, a thriving school with 130 students in Pre-K to 10th grade. Children have the opportunity to learn God’s word while receiving a quality education with 100% of students passing their required exams.

Earlier this year, BWO Administrator Jay Webber, former administrator Thomas Heyn, and Pastor Jacob Kempfert of the Asia Committee visited India as part of our normal annual visit. Both Pastor Webber and Pastor Kempfert provided seminary instruction. The BWO is investigating opportunities to provide more teaching opportunities through videoconferencing technology.

We thank the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation for their continued support and the many faithful ELS donors who have contributed to the work in India. The board strives to be faithful stewards of the resources entrusted to us so the Gospel message can be spread far and wide. Please continue to pray for your Indian brothers and sisters in Christ and the continued spread of the Gospel throughout India.

***Parochial Report for Lutheran Mission of Salvation – India***

Number of congregations	Total Members	Total Baptized	Confirmed Members
96	8,518	8,076	146

**India Financial Report - 2025**

Category	Income	Expense	Notes
Congregation Contributions	11,212		
Organization Contributions	51,262		
Individual Gifts	21,383		
Schwan Grant	198,000		
Cross-stich	12,600		
Personnel Support		145,400	Wage support for pastors, Gospel workers, and Bible women
Congregational Support			
Education & Training		13,639	Seminary training
Outreach & Evangelism		15,000	Youth rally and health fair
Administrative Expenses		43,395	Audit and investigation expenses
Special Projects		32,843	Orphan support
<i>Total</i>	<i>294,457</i>	<i>235,277</i>	

**South Korea**

The BWO is excited about the opportunities arising in South Korea, especially with Mandarin-speaking pastors living in Korea who have a desire to share the gospel as confessional Lutherans.

The BWO partners with two congregations in Seoul that are part of Korea Jesus Lutheran Mission – the long-established Seoul Lutheran Church and the mission startup Great Light Lutheran Church. Seoul Lutheran’s pastor is Dr. Sung Gyo (Sam) Choi. The congregation recently celebrated its 20-year anniversary with a 26 week project to hand write the Bible. Fifty-one members hand wrote 69 different sections of the Bible. In recent years Seoul Lutheran Church has been struggling with declining membership and financial difficulties. The BWO has provided assistance to the congregation while they work on a recovery plan called *Spiritual Restoration*. The plan encourages members to worship in person, to dedicate specific time for prayer each day, to read through the entire Bible each year, and most importantly to reach out neighbors and friends with the Gospel message and invite them to church with a special focus on quarterly “Invitation Sundays.” Services at Seoul Lutheran are in Korean.

The mission congregation Great Light Lutheran Church is led by Pastor Cui Jinfeng, known to many in our synod from his years in our Bethany Lutheran Seminary as David Choi. Pr. David Choi gathered many of the members through a “Language Café,” which appealed to Koreans looking to increase their English language skills. This was paired with an English-language Bible study on Thursday nights. The Language Café has been replaced by a Tuesday night ladies’ group meeting. Once a month, Lauren Christman of Friends Network leads that group in a Bible Study. We appreciate the help we have received from Friends Network volunteers such as Ms. Christman and previously Doug Tabor.

Great Light Lutheran is centrally located in Seoul, near Seoul Station, a central transportation hub for all of Korea. The congregation currently utilizes space at the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Asia headquarters. As membership and worship participation grow, Great Light will outgrow the FCA space. Seoul real estate is expensive, so the BWO has been considering how to best assist Great Light as the Lord continues to bless the congregation. Services at Great Light at the present time are in English.

Pr. David Choi, whose native language is Mandarin, is actively connecting with various other pastors. He remains in contact with Jae Woo (JW) Kim, who recently retired from full time ministry. He was serving the small Hope Anyang congregation, but that has closed with Pr. Kim’s retirement. He continues to communicate with pastors Young Chil Choi, Daniel Kim, and Isaac Paik, about their interest in confessional Lutheran teachings. Another promising prospect is Eli Park, a young man studying for the ministry.

Another outreach opportunity of Pr. David Choi is the Public Reading of Scripture. This is a gathering where the Bible is read aloud by a leader. Pr. David Choi has been asked to lead the Mandarin group. While the readings themselves are not interactive, being the reader allows him opportunities to connect with individuals who may want to learn more about the powerful words they have heard. Pr. David Choi has also been asked to teach a class on Luther’s Small Catechism for Asia Lutheran Seminary.

The BWO continues to pray for our brothers and sisters in South Korea. We are thankful for the opportunities we are seeing and thank the donors and Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation for their continued support of the Gospel in Korea.

**Parochial Report for Korea Jesus Lutheran Mission**

Congregation	Attendance Range	Baptized Members	Confirmed Members	New Baptisms	New Confirmations
Seoul Lutheran Church	30-35	82	82	1	1
Great Light Lutheran Church	12-22	20	12	1	2

**South Korea - Financial Report 2025**

Category	Income	Expense	Notes
Congregation Contributions	3,673		
Organization Contributions	37,577		
Individual Gifts	1,170		
Schwan Grant	30,000		
Personnel Support		40,991	Wage support for pastors
Congregational Support		60,100	Rent assistance
Education & Training			
Outreach & Evangelism			
Administrative Expenses		6	Misc. fee
Special Projects			
<i>Total</i>	<i>72,420</i>	<i>101,097</i>	

*Mr. Justin Marthaler, Asia Committee - chairman*

**SOUTH AMERICA COMMITTEE**

Our Lord said, “The harvest is plentiful in the laborers are few. pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the harvest.” One of the primary goals of the BWO South America fields is to support the training of and fraternal spirit of laborers for the Lord’s harvest.

**Peru**

**Churches:** The churches are members of the Sinodo Evangelico Luterano del Peru (SELP). There are 5 churches in the city of Lima. One of them meets in the Lima seminary building and another in the Lima school, Martin Lutero. The other three churches are in typical Lima barrios. North of Lima along the coast is the Chimbote congregation. It is unique among the SELP churches in that it has several members who have, or have retired from, professional careers. To the east and north is a church located in the Andes World Heritage site of Cajamarca. There have been a few mountain churches in another area of the Andes, the Ancash region, but are not currently served by SELP pastors (see the end of this report: “Challenges and Opportunity”). There are 3 jungle community churches. Typically, the whole community is connected to the church. The communities have many children.

**New Church Construction:** In recent years funds were given to the Cajamarca church to buy property and build a church. The church currently meets in an event salon owned by one of the members. However, a viable plan for outreach in the Cajamarca community did not materialize. As a result, the funds donated for a Cajamarca site are being repurposed for the relocation of the Chimbote church. The Chimbote church has property in the adjacent and developing Nuevo Chimbote community. It has plans to relocate to the Nuevo Chimbote site in order to expand its outreach. The plans for the sanctuary are to fit the current size of the congregation with the option to add on should the congregation’s outreach experience numerical growth. Architectural plans have been submitted and a contractor employed.

**Clergy Roster:** Three long-standing vicars were ordained in September of 2025. Of the newly ordained pastors, two of them are nearing retirement and serve their families in house churches and the other is younger bi-vocational and substitute preaches where needed. With the addition of the three newly ordained pastors it brings the number of active SELP pastors to 12. Five of the other pastors serve established Lima churches in typical economically poor Peruvian barrios. One of the pastors serves Chimbote and Cajamarca. Three seminary students effectively serve as pastors to the three jungle community churches. The SELP has one

retired pastor. All of the pastors/seminarians get some wages from ELS support. The SELP has two seminary graduates not actively serving and are in talks with one of them to work towards ordination.

**Seminary:** The SELP has a seminary building in Lima. A concerning issue is that there have been no seminary students studying at the Lima seminary for several years. A bright spot is that the SELP has nine jungle seminary students. The students travel from the jungle communities by foot and crude river boats to the jungle city Yurimaguas. The Rev. Segundo Gutierrez (SELP president) and the Rev. Andres Robles (SELP treasurer) serve as seminary professors for the jungle students.

**Schools:** There are two schools operated by the SELP. One is called Martin Lutero and is in Lima. It is a K-6th grade school. As recently as two years ago, the school had plans to add a third story to be able to enroll an increasing student body. Funds were given to realize the project. As reported to the 2025 convention, though, the school suffered extortion demands from a Venezuelan criminal gang with threats of bodily harm. The enrolled student body went from 138 at the beginning of the 2025 school year to 107 at the end of the school year. Due to lack of tuition payments, the school funds were depleted by the end of the 2025 school year, which affected the school's ability to pay teachers' wages and other expenses. There was significant concern that the school would have to close due to the extortion and related threats. At the time of writing this report, though, the Peruvians report that they are hopeful. A new law and order Peruvian president seem to have quelled the Venezuelan gang extortion. In addition to that, the enrollment for the school year beginning in March has been better than average. The South America Committee thanks God for the hopeful turn of events and prays that Martin Lutero may keep its doors open, to teach the children the Christian faith and develop future leaders for the Peruvian church.

The other school is Luis Terry located in the jungle community of Luis Terry. It is a K-12 school. Because it is far removed from Lima, it has not fallen under the same troubles as Martin Lutero has. However, children in the jungle communities are often undernourished. When the children are undernourished, the government requires the community school to provide nourishment. If the school cannot provide nourishment, the government will assume control of the school. The Peruvian leadership is providing the necessary nourishment through gifts given to the SELP from ELS donors, including CrossStitch. The Board for World Outreach thanks the ELS donors and CrossStitch for their support.

**Challenge and Opportunity:** Three former pastors, who were removed from the SELP clergy roster for cause in past years, have tried to organize a few other disaffected pastors of the SELP. They have slandered the SELP leadership and have tried to usurp authority from the Peruvian leadership. The SAC received word from the Peruvian leadership that the group led by these former and unrepentant pastors reached out to the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) for support. They accused the SELP leadership of abandoning and isolating them. Some of those who made the accusation of being isolated are in the Andes region of Ancash. The truth of the matter is that there has been little to no contact between the SELP clergy and the Ancash region. Some of that has to do with cultural differences as well as long-standing unresolved history between the groups.

As a result, the South America Committee reached out to the LCMS Regional Director for Latin America, the Rev. Ted Krey. During the discussion, the Rev. Ted Krey clarified that the LCMS has no intention of interfering with the ELS work in Peru. Rather, he expressed a desire to help the SELP by making an offer, on behalf of the Luther Academy organization, to fund a conference for the benefit of the ELSP. The conference would consist of Matins and Vespers (conducted by ELSP pastors), a theological course, and informal conversation. The purpose of the conference would be to encourage a fraternal spirit among SELP clergy. The conference would be held at the Lima seminary. Invited participants would include SELP clergy and seminary students, disaffected and/or former SELP clergy (but not including the impenitent former pastors), a theological teacher of the BWO-SAC choosing, 2 representatives from the BWO, and Chilean clergy/seminary students. The SAC is deeply thankful to Pastor Krey and the Luther Academy for their generous and gracious offer. The SAC, at the time of this writing, is working on planning for the conference. It is believed that such a conference can be a significant step for strengthening the fraternal spirit of the SELP.

*Peru Parochial Report:*

<b>Church</b>	<b>Bap'd</b>	<b>Comm.</b>	<b>Av.Att.</b>	<b>Bapt. Child/Adult</b>	<b>Conf. Child/Adult</b>	<b>Wedd.</b>	<b>Bur.</b>
Chimbote	45	30	40	2/0	0/2	1	2
Cajamarca	20	7	17	1/0			
Martin Lutero	25	15	25	2/2	2/2	1	
Dios Es Mi Rey	25	9	20	2/0	2/0	1	
Reynoso	20	17	19	2/0	1/0		
Jesus Pan de Vida	25	22	25	2/0	1		
Jesús Redentor	30	20	28	3/0	0/1		
Luz del Mundo	40	25	40	7/0	1		
Nueva Chazuta	30	20	27	5/0	1		
Taiwan	30	20	30	4/0			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>30/2</b>	<b>5/5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	

<b>Parochial Schools</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>
Martin Lutero	6	107
Luis Terry	3	25

<b>Classes taught</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
Parochial staff religious education - 2/month	5
Jungle seminary - 1 week sessions/bimonthly	7

*Peru Financial Report For 2025*

INCOME: SYNOD & JUNGLE

Total Synod	\$61,100.00	
Total Jungle	\$57,140.00	
Total Synod and Jungle	\$118,240.00	
<b>SEMINARY &amp; MISSION</b>		
Total Seminary	\$24,700.00	
Total Mission	\$24,000.00	
Total Seminary and Mission	\$48,700.00	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>\$166,940.00</b>

EXPENSES:

**SYNOD & JUNGLE**

**SYNOD**

Pastors Wages	23,269.62	
Evangelism	10,004.23	
Administrative Wages	2,413.87	
Building Utilities	4,110.01	
Building Upgrades	0.00	
Social Help	20,602.17	
Printing	0.00	
Petty Cash	3,052.14	
<b>TOTAL SYNOD</b>		<b>\$63,452.03</b>

**JUNGLE**

Tarapoto Seminary	2,765.76	
Seminary Student Travel	2,692.85	
Louis Terry	0.00	
Professor Wages	13,285.63	
Pastors Wages	9,335.52	
Tax Payments	0.00	
Social Help	10,214.34	
Nutrition for Students	2,763.32	
Evangelism Trips	1,122.32	
Segundo Travel	1,725.65	
Andres Travel	603.33	
Louis Terry, Taiwan y Nueva Chazuta Travel	641.49	
<b>TOTAL JUNGLE</b>		<b>\$45,150.21</b>

<b>TOTAL SYNOD &amp; JUNGLE</b>		<b>\$108,602.24</b>
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**SEMINARY AND MISSION**

**SEMINARY**

Professor Wages	7,014.61	
Vicar Wages	6,899.05	
Materials	6,400.81	
Travel (Hotel, Miles, Food etc...)	4,232.87	
<b>TOTAL SEMINARY</b>		<b>24,547.33</b>

MISSION		
Cesar Fees	5,957.19	
Sunat Returns	977.67	
Administrative Wages	5,957.19	
Paperwork	1,695.63	
Travel	0.00	
Women's Study	2,656.03	
Tickets - Procedures	0.00	
Jungle Support	1,464.16	
Annual Balance	0.00	
Pastors & Vicars Meetings Support	1,486.43	
Jesus Redentor Water & Electricity	1,468.02	
Chimbote Land Procedures	1,835.14	
Food Support	1,151.50	
TOTAL MISSION		\$24,648.96
TOTAL SEMINARY AND MISSION		\$49,196.29
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$157,798.53	
EXCESS		\$9,140.47

### *Chile*

**Unidos por la Fe, Linares:** Due to negative influences from outside the ELS mission efforts, the Chilean leadership is sadly having to close the Linares' church, Unidos Por La Fe, and to sell its property and building. In order to sell the property to a buyer with a bank loan, the building must be "regularized," that is, properly documented and filed with the municipality. The Chileans plan to use the proceeds from the sale for expansion in the Santiago urban area. The Rev. Mario Galvez continues to serve the few that remain of the Linares congregation virtually and with monthly trips for pastoral services.

**Familia de Dios, Santiago:** Pastor Galvez conducts a productive ministry at Familia de Dios. He offers advanced classes for leaders, evangelists and seminarians. The advanced level classes include the seminary level students as well as women. The women are learning to be evangelists, working with women and children. One of the goals with the training of seminary level students/evangelists is to be able to plant preaching stations in the greater Santiago area.

**Social Media Outreach:** Sunday services at Familia de Dios are live-streamed. Wednesday services are digitized and downloaded on social media. Weekly devotions are also digitized and downloaded on social media. The goal of the Chilean leadership is to get the message of the Lutheran Church to as many as possible via the internet and possibly connect with some face-to-face in Chile.

### *Chile Parochial Report:*

<b>Church</b>	<b>Bap'd</b>	<b>Comm.</b>	<b>Av.Att.</b>	<b>Bapt.</b>	<b>Conf.</b>	<b>Wedd.</b>	<b>Bur.</b>
				Child/Adult	Child/Adult		
Familia de Dios	41	25	25	2/1	0/5	0	1
Unidos por la Fe	5	3	12	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	46	28	2/1	0/5	0	1	

### **Classes taught**

	<b>Number of students</b>
Advanced Instruction/Evangelism 2/week	16
Seminary Level Beginners 1/week	5
Advanced Seminary Level (Vicar) 2/week.	1
Adult Confirmation 1/week	3
Youth Confirmation 1/week	2

### *Chile 2025 Financial Report*

INCOME	\$54,145.80
EXPENSES / PERSONAL SUPPORT	
Pastor's salary	32,400.00
CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT	
Church property maintenance: (Linares, Santiago)	0

PUBLIC SERVICES	
Internet	843,42
Electricity (Covered by Iglesias)	0
Water: (Covered by Iglesias)	0
Municipal Garbage Removal	198.46
Zoom	160,00
Hosting	183,00
Lic. Office	104,00
Domain.cl	20.00
Final Cut Pro (Video Editing)	0
Worship materials (PPT. prepared by pastor)	0
EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
Costs of seminar or pastoral training (Made by Pastor Mario)	0
Catechism and secular education programs (Dictated and prepared by Pastor Mario)	0
Tuition or student scholarships	0
Teaching materials (translation costs)	912.20
OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM	
Transportation for evangelization	6,063.19
Brochures, Diplomas, advertising, other	2,812.20
Media, radio	0
ONLINE DISTRIBUTION	
Web master: (II semester)	1.098,00
Public events or missionary trips	0
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	
Office supplies: (Pastor cost)	0
COMMUNICATION	
(Telephone/Internet) (Pastor Cost)	0
BANK OR LEGAL FEES	
Accountant's Fee	1,013.14
Attorney's Fee	2,542.01
SPECIAL PROJECTS	
Construction projects	0
Relief or humanitarian aid	2,844.50
Activities within the church	2,343.41
UNIQUE LOCAL NEEDS	
Transfer of church belongings to Linares	526.77
Certified sale expenses for Linares property	987.94
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$55,052.25
DEFICIT	(\$906.45)

**Summary:** The South America Committee is thankful for whatever support and prayers the ELS can give our Peruvian and Chilean fields as they labor in the Lord's harvest—to bring the Gospel to many.

*The Rev. Tim Bartels, South America Committee - chairman*

# 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” (Eph 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. Aaron Kreuter, Rev. Chris Dale (chair), Mr. Todd Knutson, Rev. Josh Skogen, Rev. Paul Lange, Rev. Michael Dale (secretary), Mr. Nathan Rovey, Mr. Jacob Beilke, and Mr. Shu-Ting Lai (Secretary for Schools). Dr. Carrie Pfeifer (Bethany Lutheran College Ed. Dept.) 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 at Parkland: Tacoma, WA (April 2026), Lakewood: Lakewood, WA (April 2026).

## BOARD MEETINGS SINCE LAST CONVENTION

September 29-30, 2025 at ELS Headquarters (Mankato, MN)

January 11-12, 2026 at Parkland Lutheran Church and School, Parkland, Washington

## 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.

## UPCOMING NATIONAL ELS TEACHER CONFERENCE 2026

The National ELS Teachers' Conference is scheduled for July 13-16, 2026 at Flagler College in St. Augustine, FL. A grant was requested and approved through the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation with the goal of making the conference affordable for congregations and teachers. ELS schools are encouraged to make every effort to have their teachers and administrators attend. Thank you to Kurtis and Andrea Freimuth for all of their work in planning this conference.

## BLS GRANT DISBURSEMENTS

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

### *School Subsidy Grants*

**Gloria Dei, Saginaw, MI**, 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, WI**, for further building updates - \$15,000 approved in 2024, to be dispersed at \$7,500 (2024), and \$7,500 (2025)

**Faith, Oregon, WI**, for Sursum Corda Classical Hybrid School - Requested \$50,000 in 2024, board approved \$6000 (2024), and \$6000 (2025), and \$6000 (2026).

**Peace, Kissimmee, FL**, for school improvements - \$50,000 approved in 2025, to be dispersed at \$20,000 (2025), \$15,000 (2026), \$15,000 (2027).

**Bethany, Port Orchard, WA**, for school improvement (staging) - \$9,951 approved and disbursed in 2026.

**Parkland, Parkland, WA**, for website and social media development - \$4,000 approved and disbursed in January 2026.

### ***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 of 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.

### ***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 second recipient of these funds was Miss Chloe Madson, who student-taught at Christ Lutheran School in Port St. Lucie, FL. After graduating BLC with her ELS teacher certification, she was assigned to teach at Holy Cross Lutheran School in Madison, Wisconsin.

### ***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.

### ***Bethany Lutheran College Teacher Mentoring Program***

The board is working with the education department at Bethany Lutheran College to develop a program to mentor teachers assigned from BLC to ELS schools. This program is currently in the planning stage.

### ***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.

## **SCHOOL CLOSING**

Trinity Lutheran School in West Bend, WI closed at the end of the 2025-2026 school year. We give glory God for the many years that Trinity was able to proclaim the Gospel to the families of their congregation and community through their school ministry.

## **TEACHER ANNIVERSARIES**

Katie Krug (Holy Cross) - 10 years  
Amanda Schulz (Holy Cross) - 10 years  
Pam Starkenburg (Holy Cross) - 25 years  
Linda Perry (Parkland) - 40 years

## **TEACHER INSTALLATIONS**

The board has been notified that the following teachers have been installed prior to or during the 2025-26 school year:  
Jamie Chambers (Cornerstone)  
Ashley Grangroth (King of Grace)  
Sarah Hartwig (Trinity)  
Sue Schachtschneider (Trinity)  
Chloe Madson (Holy Cross)  
Shelly Wolski (Holy Cross)

## **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 22, 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.

*The Rev. Chris Dale, chairman  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai, secretary*

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

*Committee #12: Parish Services*

### **MEMBERS**

Members of the Board: the Rev. Joshua Mayer (chairman), the Rev. Jeff Hendrix (secretary), the Rev. Tony Pittenger, Mr. Jim Sundby, Mr. Ben Faugstad, Mr. Dan Gertz, and the Rev. Abraham Faugstad; with Mr. Hans Bloedel serving as an advisory member.

### **LUTHERAN YOUTH ASSOCIATION (LYA)**

**2025:** LYA 2025 was held July 24-27 in Spokane, WA, under the theme of “Sanctified.” 181 youth and 65 adults participated. BYO members Mr. Jim Sundby and Rev. Tony Pittenger were directors.

**2026:** LYA 2026 is planned for July 23-26 for Cincinnati, OH, and will include a visit both to the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter, along with two Keynotes on the truth of creation from BLC Science professors Dr. Doyle Holbird and Prof. Chad Heins. The theme will be: “In the Beginning... בְּרֵאשִׁית”. Rev. Abraham Faugstad and Mr. Chris Hoffman are co-directors.

**2027:** LYA 2027 will be at BLC to coincide with BLC’s 100th anniversary. Theme: “A City Set on a Hill.”

### **MEMORIAL: LUTHERAN YOUTH HONOR CHOIR**

Honor Choir Camp, run independently by BLC music professors in the past, has been under the direction of BYO as the Lutheran Youth Honor Choir, with some assistance from the Worship Committee. Our board at its January meeting adopted this memorial:

*Whereas,* The 2022 Synod Convention directed Bethany Lutheran College to match the Board for Youth Outreach’s financial commitment to support Honor Choir, and,

*Whereas,* This was established as a temporary solution to ensure the continuation of honor choir, and,

*Whereas,* Both the purview to run camps of the synod and encourage our synod youth to enroll at Bethany Lutheran College falls under the BYO, and,

*Whereas,* Honor Choir directly supports and advances the synod’s commitment to forming its youth in faithful Lutheran worship, doctrine, and service within the life of the Church, as well as being an excellent feeder to Bethany Lutheran College, and,

*Whereas,* Honor Choir (formerly known as the Choral Union) has had a rich history as a youth synod function of the ELS since the reorganization of the Norwegian Synod, therefore,

Be it resolved, That the BYO assumes full responsibility for continuing the operation of Honor Choir

Be it resolved, That Bethany Lutheran College be thanked for its years of matching support for Honor Choir

### **LUTHERAN YOUTH HONOR CHOIR**

Lutheran Honor Choir supports many indispensable goals of our synod, chiefly the furthering the proclamation of the Gospel through song. Many of the participants of the Honor Choir go on to attend BLC. Board member and music professor Benjamin Faugstad does the majority of the planning.

**2025:** Honor Choir attendance was about the same number as last year (30). The Honor Choir concert in the chapel, encouragingly, had a full audience.

**2026:** Honor Choir is taking place during Synod Convention, June 20-24. Information is at [ELS.org/honorchoir](https://ELS.org/honorchoir).

## SUMMER CAMPS

We continue to be more intentional about supporting our summer camps, and in return encouraging them to support Lutheran education (HS, College, Seminary, etc.). Support is up to \$10/camper, based on the previous year's camp attendance as reflected in the synod report.

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

Held at Millersylvania State Park. Director: Tim Schershell

**2025:** Children served: 103. Theme: "The Jungle, following Christ in the wild"

**2026:** July 5-12. (\$425) Theme: "Survivor"

ELS Camp Grant dispersed: \$1,030

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

Camp Indianhead received a grant from the BYO last year to add another week of camp. Held at Lutheran Island Camp and at Camp Omega, Waterville, MN, Hennig, MN. Directors: The Rev. Shawn Stafford, and the Rev. Josh Mayer. [campindianhead.com](mailto:campindianhead.com)  
[info@campindianhead.com](mailto:info@campindianhead.com)

**2025:** Children served: 159.

**2026:** High School: July 5-10 for ages 14-17; Classic Camp: July 12-17 for ages 10-13 (Tiered pricing: Tier C: \$450 / Tier B: \$530 / Tier A: \$640). Theme: "Citizens of Heaven"

ELS Camp Grant dispersed: \$1,590, in addition to a \$5,000 grant to help begin a second week of Camp Indianhead.

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

Superintendent: Austin Miller (WELS); Camp Coordinator: Mari Miller (WELS). Spiritual Oversight: the Rev. Eric Hoeft.  
[CampLor-Ray.org](http://CampLor-Ray.org)

**2025:** Children served: 102

**2026:** 1st-3rd grade: July 5th-8th – 1st-3rd grade; July 12th-17th – 4th-6th grade; July 19th-24th – 7th-9th grade. (\$275-\$400) Theme: "Proverbs 27:17 — Friends in Faith"

ELS Camp Grant dispersed: \$1,020

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

Held at Camp LuWiSiMo, Wild Rose, WI. Director: The Rev. Nate Abrahamson. [Camprise.org](http://Camprise.org)

**2025:** Children served: 78. Theme: "BeLoved"

**2026:** 5th-10th grade: July 5-10 (\$490/\$520). Theme: "New Vibe"

ELS Camp Grant dispersed: \$780

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

Held at Wildcat Lake, Bremerton, WA. Director: Amy Sharrett

**2025:** Children served: 50. Theme: "After God's Own Heart"

**2026:** July 11-16 (\$TBD). Theme: *Undecided*

ELS Camp Grant dispersed: \$500

***New Family Camp:*** The BYO set aside \$1000 to pilot a family camp, possibly at Lutherhaven.

## 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.

To-date this year, we have given grants to the Norseland/Norwegian Grove parish who hosted a youth event with 5 congregations and approximately 35 youth; Redeeming Grace Lutheran Church for hosting a youth nerf event with 40 youth in attendance; Bethany, Port Orchard who hosted a youth event with 28 youth from 4 congregations; and Abiding Shepherd, who hosted a youth event with 36 youth in attendance from 5 congregations.

## 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. The BYO awarded \$1,500 to five ELS West Lutheran High School students from King of Grace who went on a mission trip to Idaho with Truth in Love ministries (WELS). The names of the students were passed along to the seminary (for male participants) and to BLC for consideration for becoming ELS teachers or pastors).

## REGIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The Ad-Hoc Sunday School committee a few years ago exposed the challenges of educating youth in most congregations and found that the duty would best reside in the home. We are looking into ways to try to encourage and train families to catechize their children. \$2500 has been set aside as seed money and is available to circuits in the ELS to host a family education seminar or retreat.

## BLC - BYO PARTNERSHIP IN CONNECTING GRADUATES WITH ELS CHURCHES

BYO is often asked by BLC for information on youth to connect them with the college. BYO is looking into ways to partner with BLC in connecting BLC graduates with ELS churches as they go out seeking a community in which to live, work, and attend church. We have offered to have a pastor from BYO be a guest speaker for the Senior Seminar, have a booth or presence at the B4U Leave Event, and to provide printed materials with a QR code linking to a church directory in the diploma/graduation packet.

## ADVISORY POSITION ADDED

BYO added an advisory position at its fall meeting, with the individual to be appointed by the synod president for a 3-year term. Hans Bloedel was appointed, with the hope he can assist the board with media outreach.

## PUBLICATIONS & VIDEOS

A series of Instagram/Facebook devotion videos called “Midsummer with Matthew” was published this past summer, and a series on the 24 chapters of Luke during Advent. We look into using more media in the future for outreach.

@Lutheran Youth Association on YouTube; @ELSYouth on Instagram.

*The Rev. Jeff Hendrix, secretary*

# REPORT OF THE BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

*Committee #12: Parish Services*

## MEMBERS

The ELS Board for Christian Service currently consists of the following members: Mr. Denny Behr; Mr. Kirk Campbell, the Rev. Erich Hoeft, (chairman); the Rev. James Kassera, (secretary); and Mr. Robert Reid. The board met three times during the past year, holding regular meetings in June, October, and February of the 2025–2026 year.

## 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 may also choose to include staff members in their term life coverage. 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	\$50k of coverage
65 through 69	\$32.5k of coverage
70 and above	25k of coverage

## WORLD NEEDS FUND

The balance of the World Needs Fund as of December 31, 2025, was \$52,320. Through the Mother’s Day offering and other donations, the fund receives gifts from both individuals and congregations. During 2025, the fund received total donations of \$5,416, of which \$650 came from congregations and \$4,766 from individuals.

The board approved disbursements of \$3,012 in 2025 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!

Anyone aware of a person or organization that may benefit from assistance is encouraged to complete the board’s application for aid. The form is available online in PDF format at: <http://www.els.org/serving/administration/>. 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	<b>Individuals</b>
\$5,000 - \$10,000	<b>Congregations &amp; organizations</b>
\$5,000 - \$10,000	<b>World Relief</b>

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

## **UKRAINE CRISIS FUND**

The Ukrainian Crisis Fund balance, as of December 31, 2025, is at \$145,289. Two disbursements were made in 2025: \$5,400 to the people of Kremenets, Ukraine through the Gift of Life in the form of 6 food kits for six months. Also, \$3,300 was given to Gift of Life to purchase Maternity Kits, New Testaments, and Luther's Small Catechisms. In February 2026, \$20,000 was wired to support the work of Gift of Life, as the effects of the war are now being strongly felt in Ternopil, where electricity outages can last up to 18 hours per day. These funds were used to purchase two generators to power the mobile clinics so medical services continue. Thank you to the individuals and congregations of the synod for their generosity.

## **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. 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 prepare for retirement, the board strongly encourages the pastors and teachers of our synod to enroll in the Shepherd Plan. As of January 2024, the 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 2025, the synod matched congregational funding of pastors' and teachers' pensions up to \$300 for all pastors and full-time teachers and \$150 for half-time teachers. Total support payments were \$43,500 for the year. Funding for July 2025 - June 2026 will remain the same.

## **WIDOWS' SUBSIDIES**

We are currently supporting 9 widows of our pastors with payments of \$340 per month. Total support payments for 2025 were \$34,680. The convention approved an increase in the subsidy to \$360 per month, effective July 1, 2026. An anonymous donor provided funding to start this subsidy increase January 1, 2026.

It is our prayer that this adjustment will serve as a tangible expression of the synod's continued care, gratitude, and remembrance for our widows and for the faithful service of their husbands to the Church. While no gift can fully express our thanks or replace what has been lost, we want them to know that they remain in our prayers and in the hearts of their brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the synod.

## **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 client information remains confidential, the board is informed of the number of opened and ongoing cases. In 2025, the board provided 76 hours of counseling services for a total of 17 clients, 4 of which are currently active in the program. We have spent \$5,840 this past year providing those services. Currently the number of sessions is 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 Evangelical Lutheran Synod president 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 CFS web site: <https://www.christianfamilysolutions.org>, or call CFS 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.

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 BLC Bookstore, to individuals upon request (not to exceed 3 per request).

On February 16, 2026, the board sponsored the Lutheran Military Ministry Conference. An invitation was sent to the LMSG, the WELS, and the LMCS asking them to send representatives to our informal conference. The purpose of this gathering was to meet one another, become familiar with the military ministries each institution serves, and to offer encouragement and mutual support for the benefit of Lutheran service members and their families. While we all came from distinct synodical backgrounds, we shared a common concern for those who serve—and this conference provided an opportunity to explore how that concern is lived out in each of our ministries.

## **ELS MILITARY MONUMENT PROJECT**

The location of the new monument is next to 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 to the board. We have insured the monument for a total of \$538 in 2025. 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 be found at [els.org](http://els.org).

The board is thankful to many people whose donations helped to complete the monument and continue its upkeep, 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.

*The Rev. Erich Hoeft, chairman*

# **REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON WORSHIP**

*Committee #12: Parish Services*

## **MEMBERS & MEETINGS**

Members of the committee during the past year were Mr. John Baumann, the Rev. James Braun, Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux, the Rev. Peter Faugstad, and Dr. Eric Harstad. Reverend Braun resigned his position in October and was appointed by the synod president to serve in an advisory role. The Rev. Patrick Ernst was appointed by the president to serve until the 2026 synod convention. The committee held one meeting in person on September 30, 2025, along with seven meetings via Zoom on November 15, January 10, January 31, February 8, February 21, March 14, and April 11.

## **ELH REPRINT**

When the committee began the process of reprinting the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (ELH) in 2024, we became aware of the need to renew agreements with the owners of copyrighted material in the hymnbook. This process has taken much longer than expected, and we apologize that copies of the ELH are not currently available. The committee will complete this work and order a reprint of the book as soon as possible.

## **ELH SUPPLEMENT**

The committee is making good progress toward the production of a Supplement to the ELH. We have reviewed every hymn suggestion forwarded to the committee, and we are grateful for the interest of so many in the project. The committee is currently working to finalize a list of hymns for the Supplement and also refine the texts and melodies of those hymns as needed. We plan to produce a resource of around 125 hymns, with select Psalms, short orders of service, and the revised text of the ELS Catechism in the front part of the book. A small selection of these hymns will be previewed at the Heritage of Hymns program during synod convention.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

As part of the synod's strategic plan, the committee was tasked with producing "Excellence in Worship" notes. This series of notes answers the question, "How Do We Worship?" by considering the connection between our physical body and spiritual

worship. These notes are available at [els.org/worship/general-worship-resources/](https://els.org/worship/general-worship-resources/). We encourage their use as bulletin inserts or for Bible Classes. The work of the committee toward our other strategic plan objectives is detailed in the strategic plan report later in this book.

## WORSHIP RESOURCES

The committee has made many resources available on the synod website and continues to add more at [els.org/worship/](https://els.org/worship/). The congregations of our synod that do not have a regular organist are encouraged to review the resources available at the “Music for Liturgy and Hymns” page: [els.org/worship/music-for-liturgy-and-hymns/](https://els.org/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. The Rev. Paul Webber ([paul.webber@blc.edu](mailto:paul.webber@blc.edu)) has developed a system for using these audio files and has assisted several ELS pastors with getting it set up.

Another option for music accompaniment is through the “Substitute Organist Service” (S.O.S.) from Church Music Solutions: [churchmusicsolutions.com/](https://churchmusicsolutions.com/). Several ELS pastors and congregations have used this service. The Rev. James Braun ([jaymbee@mac.com](mailto:jaymbee@mac.com)) would be happy to give input about setup and use.

## HERITAGE OF HYMNS

A Heritage of Hymns program was held during the synod convention on June 16, 2025. Prof. Dennis Marzolf and Rebecca DeGarmeaux presented on “Remembering the Marriage of Martin Luther and Katherine von Bora (June 13, 1525).” An archive of past programs is available at [els.org/worship/general-worship-resources/heritage-of-hymns/](https://els.org/worship/general-worship-resources/heritage-of-hymns/).

The Heritage of Hymns program at the upcoming synod convention will preview a selection of hymns that will be included in the new ELH Supplement.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

The committee is working on an altar book for the ELH. This book will expand on the resources already available at [els.org/worship/evangelical-lutheran-hymnary-resources/elh-altar-book-resources/](https://els.org/worship/evangelical-lutheran-hymnary-resources/elh-altar-book-resources/).

The committee requested \$3,000 from the synod budget in 2026 to cover general expenses. Grant money given to the committee in 2023 is earmarked for special projects.

*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—2026 CONVENTION

Cash Balance on Hand 4/1/2025		\$ 3,796.02
Receipts 4/1/2025 through 4/01/2026:		
Assessments Received of \$20,033.00 Assessed	\$19,137.00	
Interest Income	\$ 1.10	
Total Receipts		\$19,138.10
Total Cash Available	\$22,934.12	
Disbursements 4/1/2025 through 4/1/2026:		
Air Fares and Mileage	\$15,275.09	
Printing, Postage, checks, etc.	\$ 14.60	
Total Disbursements		\$15,289.69
Cash Balance on Hand 4/1/2026		\$7,644.43

1. Delegates that register at the convention and turn in airfare expenses and/or trip mileage is to be 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.)

*Mr. Shaun Grabow, equalizer*

## **REPORT OF THE PLANNING AND COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

*Committee #7: Finances*

### **MEMBERS**

The Planning and Coordinating Committee consists of the president, two clergy, and two laymen. The two clergy and two lay members are appointed by the president and approved by the Board of Trustees. The vice-president and secretary of the synod serve as advisory members. The committee is supported by advisory members consisting of synodical workers and others as appropriate.

In 2026, President Obenberger appointed and the Trustees approved the following members: Rev. Bradley Kerkow (committee chair), Rev. Peter Faugstad, Mr. Mark Perlwitz (committee secretary) and Mr. Philip Holz. The committee advisory members include the Rev. Michael Smith (synod vice president), the Rev. Kyle Madson (synod secretary), and Mr. Lyle Fahning. The committee is also supported by *Grace-in-Action* Executive Director, Dr. Todd Russ.

### **MEETINGS**

The committee initially met on September 16, 2025 after the appointments were approved by the Board of Trustees. The committee continues to meet monthly in virtual meetings. The focus of these meetings is to continue to mature the revised strategic planning and strategically-aligned budgeting processes as well as complete our assigned work of proposing these plans and budgets. The committee also continues to identify opportunities within our synod to improve our collective effectiveness and efficiency which further enables the synod's ministry objectives.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

At the 2021 convention, the synod adopted a five-year strategic plan "Tell of Jesus and His Love" (Synod Report 2021, p. 191), which is now completed. A new strategic plan and vision will be developed in a phased approach using the new processes the P&CC has developed. The P&CC is proposing a five-year plan and vision (yet to be announced). The 2026 strategic plan and budget features the following key areas of focus:

#### ***2026 Objectives***

- Continue to improve internal processes so that prioritized planning and budgeting align to support a unified vision
- Three to four specific big-vision goals
- Completing the action plans associated with the 2025 critical issues; synodical financial health and communications/Marketing

At the 2027 convention more details for related objectives and action plans will be presented and will also identify fundraising approaches to support these strategic goals.

The new strategic planning philosophy is to make the plan responsive (dynamic) as new opportunities and challenges emerge. Any recommended changes will be proposed at future conventions for adoption.

## BUDGET

The P&CC remains responsible for working with the boards to develop a synodical budget for each fiscal year and present that at the annual convention. The P&CC created a Finance Subcommittee to continue the work of the previous Strategic Planning Committee (SPC).

The focus of the Financial Subcommittee is to: clarify the synod's financial status and the donor-defined restrictions on non-endowment funds; review the types of financial reporting metrics employed; and develop the FY27 synodical budget proposal. The subcommittee also plans to work with the Board of Trustees to develop appropriate financial strategies that support financial decision-making.

The FY27 fiscal year is the first full-year budget since the synod's adoption of a July to June fiscal year. The proposed FY27 budget projects a total revenue of \$2,864,963 and a total expense of \$3,582,541 resulting in a Net Income/(Loss) of (\$717,578).

The synod has significant endowments and donated funds that exceed \$25M. A portion of these funds may have been donated in the past without restrictions and may be available to address recent fiscal year net losses. The P&CC continues to work with the Board of Trustees, the ELS Foundation and others to clarify our current financial status and to assess fund restrictions.

## CURRENT AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The P&CC continues to detail the long-range strategic plan and will propose updates to the 2027 synod convention. The committee will continue to identify additional opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency throughout the synod.

Finally, the committee continues to monitor the progress of the 2025 critical issues regarding the theme of Communications/Marketing. This work has led to a re-invigorated synodical Committee for Communication which has developed a new communication plan and has added new committee members to perform this important work.

*Mr. Mark Perlwitz, secretary*

### Evangelical Lutheran Synod

#### Budget to Actual Income & Expense Comparison

	Budget CY 2024	Actual CY 2024	Revised Budget CY 2025	PreAuditor's Review Actual CY 2025	Jan-June Budget 2026	Budget FY 2027
<b>Beginning Fund Balances</b>	\$ 6,329,096	\$ 6,329,096	\$ 6,643,177	\$ 6,643,177	\$ 8,214,111	\$ 7,882,493
Reclassification of fund balances		\$ (53,343)				
<b>Income</b>						
Congregations	\$ 860,000	\$ 811,082	\$ 900,000	\$ 801,958	\$ 380,000	\$ 835,000
Congregations designated	\$ 31,300	\$ 52,022	\$ 63,300	\$ 93,209	\$ 21,400	\$ 47,000
Cross-stitch	\$ 25,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 14,600	\$ -	\$ 20,000
Endowment Funding	\$ 396,720	\$ 329,232	\$ 340,211	\$ 452,552	\$ 202,418	\$ 464,688
Estates	\$ -	\$ 255,096	\$ 2,500	\$ 305,668	\$ -	\$ -
Grants & Helpings Hands	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 72,500	\$ 24,565	\$ -	\$ 15,000
Individual Gifts	\$ 302,000	\$ 492,825	\$ 416,622	\$ 484,644	\$ 110,850	\$ 394,450
Investments	\$ 53,040	\$ 249,606	\$ 130,040	\$ 306,285	\$ 56,000	\$ 125,000
Mission Advancement Project (MAP)	\$ 355,000	\$ 353,900	\$ 355,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,750	\$ 104	\$ 11,250	\$ 14	\$ 5,466	\$ -
Organization Giving	\$ 38,500	\$ 35,452	\$ 42,500	\$ 205,327	\$ 16,000	\$ 36,500
Publications Sales/Subscriptions	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,854	\$ 35,000	\$ 36,790	\$ 16,000	\$ 39,900
Registration /Fees/Rent	\$ 50,000	\$ 96,716	\$ 75,250	\$ 106,474	\$ 35,625	\$ 122,425
Salary Reimbursement	\$ 27,600	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Schwan Foundation	\$ 356,500	\$ 258,750	\$ 460,000	\$ 762,000	\$ 382,500	\$ 765,000
<b>TOTAL Income</b>	\$ 2,538,410	\$ 3,010,639	\$ 2,929,173	\$ 3,594,086	\$ 1,226,259	\$ 2,864,963
<b>Expenditures</b>						
Bethany Lutheran College	\$ 275,000	\$ 268,052	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 175,000
Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary	\$ 31,500	\$ 30,041	\$ 31,500	\$ 31,500	\$ -	\$ 31,500
Board for Christian Service	\$ 55,840	\$ 82,405	\$ 109,250	\$ 84,243	\$ 63,500	\$ 102,820
Board for Home Outreach	\$ 656,493	\$ 608,957	\$ 776,372	\$ 579,612	\$ 312,639	\$ 737,135
Board for Lutheran Schools	\$ 49,030	\$ 55,356	\$ 77,000	\$ 136,714	\$ 39,850	\$ 86,600
Board for World Outreach	\$ 693,750	\$ 679,625	\$ 880,366	\$ 754,025	\$ 432,478	\$ 898,707
Board for Youth Outreach	\$ 91,300	\$ 82,009	\$ 97,542	\$ 160,145	\$ 20,920	\$ 119,290
Synod General Fund	\$ 896,473	\$ 824,947	\$ 849,862	\$ 777,095	\$ 469,930	\$ 1,010,711
Thoughts of Faith	\$ 401,700	\$ 366,617	\$ 370,764	\$ 361,834	\$ 168,560	\$ 420,778
<b>TOTAL Expenditures</b>	\$ 3,151,086	\$ 2,998,010	\$ 3,442,656	\$ 3,135,168	\$ 1,557,877	\$ 3,582,541
<b>* Net Income/(Loss) before Unrealized Gains/(Losses)</b>	\$ (612,676)	\$ 12,630	\$ (513,483)	\$ 458,918	\$ (331,618)	\$ (717,578)
Unrealized Gains/(Losses)		\$ 354,794		\$ 1,112,017		
<b>Net Income/(Loss) after Unrealized Gains/(Losses)</b>	\$ (612,676)	\$ 367,424	\$ (513,483)	\$ 1,570,934	\$ (331,618)	\$ (717,578)
<b>Ending Fund Balances</b>	\$ 5,716,420	\$ 6,643,177	\$ 6,129,694	\$ 8,214,111	\$ 7,882,493	\$ 7,164,915

\* Net losses are covered by Fund Balances

**2026 FINAL REPORT ON PROGRESS ON THE FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

Prepared by Dr. Michael K. Smith, ELS Vice President

*(Bold italics indicate an update from the 2025 Synod Report.)*

**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 a plan to conduct visitations by 2025 using alternates visitors as necessary. 2. Visitations were encouraged at the 2022 CV Conference. 3. Pastor Paul Schneider has been appointed as mentor and monitor of accomplishing a visit at every ELS congregation by 2026. 4. The BHO is working to establish a visitation triage team to work with Circuit Visitors for congregations that are at or below critical mass.
b. Every congregation pursuing excellence in worship.  Committee on Worship*	Worship Committee sending out periodically “Excellence in Worship” notes.	2026  Committee on Worship: <b><i>The committee has prepared “Excellence in Worship” notes and which are available on the synod website.</i></b>

	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. 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. 4. 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: 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.
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: 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.
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: Website is updated as materials are received from BHO.
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: 1. "Do You Have a Pastor?" campaign has been rolled out and is available to congregations. 2. The board has partnered with "Everyone Outreach" of the WELS – highly recommended and available to all ELS congregations.
f. Every congregation seeking service opportunities in the community. Board for Home Outreach* Board for Christian Service†	Discover the local niche (e.g., Jesus Cares Ministry, Care Facility Ministry).	2026 Board for Home Outreach: 1. A list of community service opportunities has been created and will be made available shortly. 2. A congregational self-assessment has been created and will be made available shortly.
g. Encourage congregations to make their Bible studies and devotions available online. Communication Director* President†	Some of these can be put out on our synod website, others, locally.	2026 Communication Director: Website and separate repository are ready. Awaiting clarification on which individual/board is responsible to review and choose studies for inclusion.

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

<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 align="center">2025</p> <p>Board for Lutheran Schools:          Members of the board will meet with members of the BHO in February 2025 to discuss the feasibility of a cooperative project involving a school choice school start in combination with a mission congregation.          The board has been in contact with the following congregations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Our Saviour – Lake Havasu City, AZ: Still potential here. More exploratory work is necessary. However, school choice in Arizona continues to flourish as a new parent-driven educational option.</li> <li>2) Faith – Oregon, WI: 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.</li> <li>3) Gloria Dei – Saginaw, MI: Grant for \$40,000 from the board was approved in January 2023. The congregation continues to make successful progress as they carry out their strategic plan for an early learning center start up in 2025.</li> <li>4) Faith – San Antonio, TX: The board has contacted the congregation but the congregation needs to pay off its mortgage before proceeding.</li> <li>5) Our Savior – Lakeland, FL: Currently in vacancy. No progress to report.</li> </ol>
<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 align="center">2025</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach:          A harvest strategy has been developed, presented, and is available for use.</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 was elected at the 2023 convention. Rev. David Thompson now serves as the director of the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews.</p> <p>Board for Youth Outreach: LYA themes and keynotes “Created,” “Justified,” and “Sanctified” <b>have had as strong apologetic emphasis, teaching how each article impacts the Christian’s identity in this world.</b></p> <p>Camp <b>Indianhead and Camp Rise utilize</b> games such as “Romans and Christians” <b>to teach and reinforce basic apologetic skills among our youth.</b></p> <p>\$1200 has been approved by the BYO to fund the transition from Young Branches material from magazine into video format more accessible to Gen Z youth.</p> <p>Board of Regents: 1. The Center for Apologetics and Worldviews has been established. 2. Sponsoring the “In-Depth Series” of lectures on campus that helps Bethany students navigate current topics affecting today’s Christians. <b>Nine “In-Depth” lectures were held in the previous 12 months.</b></p> <p>Doctrine: Published a series of articles in the <i>Lutheran Sentinel</i>.</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. <b>“Roots of the Vine” – a total of 40 congregations were identified to contact and/or visit for the 2025-2026 academic year. Congregations are becoming more receptive to having BLC visit with updates and student participation in their services when possible. (BLC annual goal)</b></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. College President has developed a “President’s Advisory Council” consisting of alumni and friends of BLC. (2022-27 Strategic Plan)</li> <li>6. A Board of Regents quarterly newsletter is being sent to all ELS clergy informing them of decisions made at Regents’ meetings and inviting input. <b>At the 2025 synod convention, the pastors were urged to share this newsletter with their congregations.</b></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:</p> <p>The president is raising awareness of “Our College” as he makes visits around the synod. <b>He highlighted BLC in his presidential addresses from 2021-2025. Since synod congregations and individuals have increased their annual contributions to BLC in 2025, we have achieved awareness of our college. The plan is to continue.</b></p>
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	<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) – Don Moldstad, Tom Rank, Shawn Stafford, <b>Mark Degarmeaux, and Brian Klebig</b> have preached and/or led Bible studies at congregations near the campus and beyond.</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>Pres. Pfeifer made his annual presentation about BLC to the ELS General Pastoral Conference in October 2025.</b></li> <li>3. <b>The critical mutual role of support that exists between the ELS and Bethany was highlighted before, during, and after the 2025 synod convention.</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. A very conscious effort was made to publicize the solidly confessional Lutheran flavor of Bethany.</li> <li>7. The BLC recruitment staff continues to be very intentional about attempting to set up group visits to area WELS/ELS high schools.</li> <li>8. Recruitment efforts are being made to further highlight the fine arts.</li> <li><b>9. Don Moldstad taught VBS at Mt. Olive – Mankato in 2025.</b></li> <li><b>10. Shawn Stafford served as director of Camp Indianhead south in 2025.</b></li> </ol>
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	<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. 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.</li> <li><b>6. <i>The critical mutual role of support that exists between the ELS and Bethany was highlighted before, during, and after the 2025 synod convention.</i></b></li> <li><b>7. <i>An additional \$50,000 was donated to the Bethany Annual Fund during the 2025 synod convention, indicating strong synodical support for 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 style="text-align: center;">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. 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.</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. Still needed. Lack of time and funding stand in the way of this process getting completed.</li> <li>4. 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 half-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.</li> <li>5. 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).</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 style="text-align: center;">2022</p> <p>Board for Lutheran Schools:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The board continues to be available to support ELS homeschool families through our Homeschool Liaison, Pastor Josh Skogen.</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: center;">2022</p> <p>President: “Lutherans Unplucked” podcast developed <i>but put on hold due to health issues for the producer.</i> <i>Through our PC&amp;C we are making sure monthly videos are being produced to inform.</i></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: center;">2021–26</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach: 1. The EMC continues to work with individual congregations. The BHO continues to investigate and communicate information and resources to congregations. 2. “Everyone Outreach” program is available to any ELS congregation and is highly recommended.</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: center;">2021–26</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach: 1. “We’re Glad You Asked About...” brochures have been updated for content. Graphic design is being updated and they will be available digitally. 2. Spanish version of “Peace Devotions” is available. 3. Christmas and Easter postcards are made available to the synod through the EMC. 4. Other personal witnessing tools and resources are available on the ELS web site. 5. Some of this work is now being carried out by the Board for World Outreach. Board for World Outreach: Always searching for suitable materials for translation and dissemination among our mission fields. Some have been accomplished and others are being considered.</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: center;">2023</p> <p>President: 1. “One Little Word” monthly videos are being produced. “Lutherans Unplucked” podcast on various topics is in production. 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. This has been done on the “About Us” page on the BLC website. 3. <i>President has delivered an essay on our theological position on Christian fellowship to an international Lutheran church body gathering.</i> Board for Youth Outreach: 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.</p>

**4. Establish and support synod missions at home and abroad.**

<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 align="center">2021–26</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invested heavily in creating a program for congregational self-assessment leading toward potential revitalization by calling Rev. Ed Bryant as the Congregational Counselor.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>3. Actively creating and pursuing congregational partnerships (cross-cultural ministry at existing ELS congregation, daughtering congregations, preaching stations)</li> <li>4. Two new ministries complete; in the process of calling an exploratory home missionary for a new start.</li> <li>5. Unlimited opportunities to begin missions and ministries hampered by limited funding.</li> </ol> <p>Board for World Outreach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>3. The LMSI district in Rajahmundry is seeking assistance and support in the creation of a new congregation and church facility.</li> </ol>
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**5. Endeavor to increase the efficiency and productivity of our synod's boards.**

<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 align="center">2021–26</p> <p>Board for Home Outreach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>2. The board continues to seek better understanding of the process of applying for grants and funding from a variety of funding sources.</li> <li>3. The board received a \$20,000 grant from the Bolick Foundation (a new grant entity).</li> </ol> <p>Board for World Outreach: The board is in the early stages of working with Grace in Action to develop a new strategic plan.</p> <p>Board for Youth Outreach: The board decided not to make use of MLI (Grace in Action) training. However, principles from the program have been applied to the board to improve workflow and board structure. The board has been organized into four subcommittees to carry out the work assigned to it by the synod.</p>
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<p>b. Continually consult the guidelines of the ELS Handbook, respectively.</p>	<p>At each opening session following convention, note the guidelines.</p>	<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> <p>Board for Youth Outreach: 1. The board has conducted a study of its duties in the synod handbook and has reorganized to carry out these duties more effectively. 2. The synod handbook will be reviewed annually to ensure subcommittees are effectively carrying out the assigned duties. 3. <b><i>The board has included a review of synod guidelines in its fall meetings to ensure work and planning aligns with synod directives and strategic planning.</i></b></p>
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Key: \* Primary Responsibility  
† Secondary Responsibility  
^ Tertiary Responsibility

## REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

*Committee #7: Finances*

### MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Trustees consists of nine trustees. At the 2025 synod convention, one long-standing member of the Board, Mr. Denny Behr, kept his name from reelection. The Board of Trustees, on behalf of the synod, extends deep appreciation and thanks to Command Master Chief Behr for his many years of service to the synod on this board. Mr. Todd Eckberg was elected at the 2025 convention to fill the lay vacancy on the board.

Serving on the board in 2025 were: Mr. Dennis Behr (outgoing), Mr. Tod Eckberg (elected), the Rev. Phillip Lepak, the Rev. Jonathan Madson, the Rev. Kyle Madson (secretary), Mr. Paul Mielbrecht, the Rev. Glenn Obenberger (chairman), Mr. J.T. Pedersen, Mr. Channing Smith, and the Rev. S. Piet VanKampen. By virtue of office, the synod’s vice president, the Rev. Michael Smith, serves as an advisory member to the board. Mr. Dave Ewert was appointed again to serve as an advisory member as well.

The Rev. Keith Boheim, long-time Executive Director of the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation, has served as an integral advisory consultant to the Trustees as well. Rev. Boheim retired from his directorship in 2025. The Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast, also a long-standing member of the Schwan Foundation board, has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the Foundation. Rev. Rast is now serving as the advisory consultant to the ELS board of Trustees. The trustees are very grateful for this continued partnership and the continuity afforded in the Rev. Rast’s Executive Directorship appointment.

#### ***Board Subcommittee Members:***

Members serving on the *Board of Regents-Board of Trustees Subcommittee* were: Mr. J.T. Pedersen, the Rev. Jonathan Madson, and Mr. Paul Mielbrecht. Mr. David Ewert also serves as a liaison from the Board of Trustees to the Board of Regents.

Members serving on the *Board of Trustees-Home Outreach Subcommittee* were: Mr. Dennis Behr, the Rev. Phillip Lepak, and Mr. Chan Smith. The Rev. M. Smith was appointed to replace Mr. Behr’s vacancy here.

Members serving on the *Board of Trustees-World Outreach Subcommittee* were: the Rev. Jonathan Madson the Rev. Michael Smith, and the Rev. S.Piet VanKampen. Mr. Tod Eckberg was appointed to replace the Rev. Michael Smith here.

Members serving on the *Board of Trustees Compensation Committee* were: Mr. Paul Mielbrecht, Mr. J.T. Pedersen, and the Rev. S. Piet VanKampen.

Members serving on the *ELS Foundation Investment Committee* were: Mr. Channing Smith, Mr. J.T. Pedersen, Mr. Mark Olsen, Mr. Jeff Younge. Mr. Dave Ewert was also appointed as advisor to this committee.

According to the resolution from last year's 2025 convention, the reorganized *ELS Planning and Coordinating Committee* was constituted of, "the president... two clergy and two lay members appointed by the president and approved by the board of Trustees" (2025 Synod Report; p.148). With instruction from a few trusted advisors, presidential appointments to the P&CC and approved by the Trustees were:

	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Lay</b>	
2-year term:	Rev. Brad Kerkow	Mr. Mark Perlwitz	(2027)
1-year term:	Rev. Peter Faugstad	Mr. Phil Holz	(2026)

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That these appointments be ratified by the synod convention. (see *Guidelines for the Planning and Coordinating Committee; Art. I.A* as amended in the 2025 convention).

The synod vice president & synod secretary also serve as advisory members. The committee is supported by synodical workers and others as appropriate (see *Guidelines for the Planning and Coordinating Committee; Art. I.A* as amended in the 2025 convention).

## MEETINGS

During the 2025 calendar year, the Board of Trustees held regular meetings on February 13, May 8, August 14, and November 12. Specially called virtual meetings convened in January, March, July, October, and November of 2025 as well.

## STAFF

The Treasurer (Mrs. Myrna Meunier) and Giving Counselor (Mr. Paul Manning) serve under the direction of the board and report regularly. Both Myrna and Paul continue to serve faithfully and demonstrate daily their diligence to their appointed work and their devotion to the well-being of the synod at large. Our ELS is blessed to have servants with such high acumen and ethics working on our behalf.

The Communication Director (the Rev. Paul Fries – reporting to synod president) and the Evangelism-Missions Counselor (the Rev. Brad Kerkow – reporting to the BHO) both continue to serve faithfully and effectively in their respective calls.

The Rev. Ed Bryant recently retired from his call as Congregational Counselor. Rev. Larry Wentzlaff has accepted the part-time, temporary call to serve in this position moving forward. He is well known throughout our synod, having previously served as Evangelism and Missions Counselor.

The Rev. Thomas Heyn recently retired from his years of service as World Outreach Administrator. The Rev. David Jay Webber accepted the call to serve as the synod's new World Outreach Administrator (reporting to the *BWO*). Rev. Webber has already hit the ground running making field visits to multiple continents in just his first few months of service.

The Director for the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews (the Rev. David Thompson – reporting to the Board on Apologetics ) continues his faithful work: teaching, preaching and presenting with ample opportunities to make a good confession in our own congregations, those in our wider fellowship and beyond that scope as well.

The Executive Assistant to the synod and seminary presidents respectively is Elsa Ferkenstad. Elsa functions so efficiently, effectively and unassumingly that her contributions could easily go unnoticed. But her talented work and her tireless efforts serve both presidents exceptionally well. She also provides invaluable auxiliary support to the other synod officers and countless others as well. Our synod is immeasurably blessed by her service.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

## POINT OF EMPHASIS

With the convention's reorganizing of the synod's Planning & Coordinating Committee in 2025, the trustees have devoted themselves to evaluating and refreshing their working relationship with the P&CC in order to be the most efficient and effective stewards of synod, college and foundation assets as is possible. Our synod treasurer, synod giving counselor, as well as members of the P&CC are playing crucial roles in this ongoing cooperative reassessment. A major focal point of this effort has been and continues to be the development and adoption of a synod fund philosophy that will coordinate strategic saving and strategic spending while prioritizing asset growth for future ministry.

## FINANCES

The Board of Trustees oversees the operation of the synodical finances and budget. As of November of 2024, the administration of the financial accounts of the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews (CAW) has been transferred from Bethany Lutheran College to the Evangelical Lutheran synod.

### ***Congregation Funding***

The synod received \$801,958 of financial support in 2025 as designated congregation giving. Praise the Lord! This amount did fall short of the 2025 approved budget of \$900,000 (see *2024 Synod Report p. 173 Res. #2*). To restate that in different terms, as the 2024 Synod Convention, we approved the budget of \$900,000, and as individual congregations in 2025 we provided \$801,958. We must close the financial gap between our budget and our actual giving as we move forward.

On a very positive note, the generosity of our individual members and contributing organizations provided \$185,124 in gifts—helping us to exceed the individual and organizational budgeted portion by *more* than \$100K. This overwhelming positive response allowed the synod to meet its overall 2025 budget. We were blessed with a gift providing a challenge grant as we closed out our budget year. Our ELS members responded positively to the challenge.

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

The synod is dependent upon the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation for financial support of its programs and wishes to express continued gratitude to the Foundation for its generous aid.

In 2025, the Foundation provided \$765,000 of their target allocation of support to the ELS. The ELS requested and was granted support in the following areas: Board for World Outreach: \$346,000, Board for Home Outreach: \$341,000, Board for Lutheran Schools: \$59,000 and Planning & Coordinating Committee for \$19,000.

Additional special project support was given to the Board for Home Outreach of \$66,000 to support Divine Mercy, Weatherford TX; \$25,000 for a vehicle in India through the Board for World Outreach; \$15,000 for an exploratory mission trip to Australia; and \$17,500 for our Pastoral Support Committee.

The ELS would also like to formally thank Rev. Keith Boheim for his years of dedicated service as the Executive Director of the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation. He retired at the end of 2025. We welcome Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast, Jr. as the new Executive Director.

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

The synod gratefully acknowledges the receipt of proceeds from the following estates from January 1, 2025–December 31, 2025

Louise Huber Estate	\$23,750.23
Ruth Moore	\$75,974.86
Martin A. Robinson Trust	\$33,100.00
Mark K. Rogers	\$58,123.23
L. Peter Sauer	\$2,450.67
Clara Sennhenn	\$30,438.02
Audrey Tessmer	\$72,069.63

### ***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 synod convention.

## **PROPERTIES**

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

### ***Loans***

**Hope Lutheran – Farmington, MN loan:** With healthy cooperation between the BoT\_BHO subcommittee and the Hope Lutheran Church leadership, the trustees resolved the following regarding a loan that originated in 2017 and accrued interest since that time:

RESOLVED that: All accrued interest will be forgiven and the loan will revert back to the original value of \$660,145; No new interest will be added to this loan; quarterly loan payments will be made on an annual basis and will escalate in value every five years until the loan is paid in full in 2054; The Hope Lutheran Church Council and the Board of Home Outreach will review Hope’s progress annually with respect to the agreed upon terms and timing.

**Ascension Evangelical Lutheran – Eau Claire, WI – church extension loan:** With very encouraging *revitalization* efforts underway in the parish, the trustees granted the following:

RESOLVED that the Evangelical Lutheran Synod lend Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church (1500 Peterson Ave, Eau Claire, WI 54708) from the Church Extension Fund up to \$100,000 for a renovation loan for a term of 10 years at 2.75% interest.

**Hope Lutheran Church – West Jordan, UT - church extension loan:** With very thoughtful consideration paid to comparatively high housing costs (in relation to most other ELS parish communities), and with a substantial majority of parsonage construction costs already in hand, the trustees were happy to grant the following church extension fund loan for the construction of a new parsonage at Hope with the following terms:

RESOLVED that the Evangelical Lutheran Synod lend Hope Lutheran Church – West Jordan, UT from the Church Extension Fund up to \$175,000 for a new parsonage build at 4.00% interest with 20-year amortization—interest payments beginning one month after the last draw.

As of December 31, 2025 our synod treasurer happily reported that all loans receivable were current.

### ***The 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. Mike Muehlenhardt (secretary), the Rev. Craig Ferkenstad (asst. archivist), the Rev. Ted Gullixson (archivist), synod President Glenn Obenberger (ex-officio) and the Rev. Shawn Stafford. The committee regularly hears reports from the Synod Archivist Ted Gullixson, Ottesen Museum Director, Mrs. Rebecca DeGarmeaux, and ELS Historical Society chairman, Mr. Neil Shaffer.

### ***ELS Archives***

The synod archives exist to support ELS congregations by preserving and maintaining not only the history of the synod, but also the history of the ELS pastors and congregations. ELS Archivist, the Rev. Theodore Gullixson, was serving a vacancy in Kissimmee, Florida from July 2025 through May 2026 and was not involved in daily work. The Rev. Craig Ferkenstad and Teresa Ferkenstad continued working on projects at the archives. During the year, the ELS Archives has received some correspondence by O.H. Aaberg, H.M. Tjernagel, and Bjug Harstad; papers from free conferences in the Norwegian Synod; and documents from Rev. A.V. Kuster. The Archives has rendered assistance to a number of people who were looking for information and to some congregations who were celebrating anniversaries.

Indexes to the Archive collections can be accessed on the synod website, including a link to order the recently published “Evangelical Lutheran Synod Congregations and Pastors: Historical Register, 1918-2023.”

Congregations and pastors are reminded to submit documents of historical interest to the archives. A suggested “retention guide” can be accessed on the archives tab of the synod website.

### ***Ottesen Museum***

Over the past year, the ELS’s Ottesen Museum hosted a record 218 guests including confirmation classes, Bethany Lutheran College and seminary students, Christmas open house guests and visitors during Synod Convention and the Reformation Lectures. The annual Christmas open house, with theme “Christmas in the Collection” was held on December 9, highlighting Christmas decorations that have been donated to the museum over the years. Friends of the museum continue to donate items of synodical interest to the collection. Museum Director, Becky DeGarmeaux, is working on cataloging the entire collection and providing better storage containers for the items not on display. The museum has an active Facebook page which continues to gain new followers and a regular column in the ELS Historical Society’s newsletter, *Oak Leaves*. The museum also has a freshly updated website which can be accessed directly from the synod’s website.

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

The ELS Historical Board consists of chairman, Mr. Neil Shaffer; vice-chairman, the Rev. Michael Lilienthal; treasurer, Mr. Larry Rude; secretary, Ms. Marie Aaberg; Mrs. Julie Faugstad; Mrs. Cheryl Heiliger; ELS president, the Rev. Glenn Obenberger; ELS secretary, the Rev. Kyle Madson; ELS archivist, the Rev. Ted Gullixson; *Oak Leaves* editor, the Rev. Timothy Erickson; and Ottesen Museum director, Mrs. Rebecca DeGarmeaux.

The annual meeting of the ELS Historical Society was held at Lee Theater of the Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center at Bethany Lutheran College on Sunday, June 15, 2025. The theme of the program was “The First Decade of ELS Growth.” The presenter was the Rev. Paul Webber.

## **STEWARDSHIP (REPORTING FROM ELS GIVING COUNSELOR)**

### ***Congregational Giving***

The financial support provided by our congregations is essential to our synod’s ability to proclaim the Gospel message. It is more than administrative support and is the necessary funding required to do this work through all of our boards: Trustees, Home Outreach, World Outreach, Youth Outreach, Lutheran Schools, and Christian Service; and our committees: Doctrine, Worship, Planning and Coordinating Committee, Synod Review and Strategic Planning; and our schools: Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. The support from our congregations is critical to the synod and our work would not be possible without these gifts! The synod received \$801,958 of financial support in 2025 as designated congregation giving. Praise the Lord! This amount did fall short of the 2025 approved budget of \$900,000. To restate that in different terms, as the 2024 Synod Convention, we approved the budget of \$900,000, and as individual congregations in 2025 we provided \$801,958. We must close the financial gap between our budget and our actual giving as we move forward. A positive note to consider, and that

we should be thankful for is that our actual congregational giving in 2025 of \$801,958 was almost equivalent (just over 1%) to our actual congregational giving in 2024 of \$811,082. Our ELS congregations remain generous in their giving.

The number of congregations that increased their giving in 2025 fell from the number that increased their giving in 2024. Of all our congregations, 35% (40 congregations) increased their giving in 2025 as compared to 48% (or 56) of our congregations in 2024. We pray for the 41% (or 47 congregations) that reduced their congregational giving in 2025 as compared to the 36% (or 42) of our congregations that needed to reduce their giving in 2024. We also pray for the 22 congregations that did not give in 2025. We thank all ELS member congregations for their generous support of our synod.

As we move through 2026 and prepare for our congregational budgets in 2027; please consider the following: Our overall congregational giving has not kept pace with inflation over the past 10 years. \$1 in 2015 is equivalent in purchasing power to about \$1.33 today, an increase of \$0.33 over 10 years. If our congregational giving had kept pace with inflation, we would have received an estimated \$992,910 of congregational support in 2025. As a congregation, please consider increasing your giving to help keep pace with the increasing cost of operating the synod. Also, as a congregation I ask that you simply prayerfully consider the amount you are giving to the synod through congregational giving and that it is discussed in a meaningful way within whatever budgeting process you follow.

### ***Current Giving and The Importance of Individual Gifts***

The 2025 approved budgeted for Individual and Organizational giving was \$80,000 for undesignated gifts. The generosity of our members provided \$185,124 of gifts. This was such a blessing. This positive amount exceeding the budget made up for the deficit to the budget of the congregational giving. This overwhelming positive response allowed the synod to meet its budget plan. We were blessed with a gift providing a challenge grant as we closed out our budget year. Our ELS members responded positively to the challenge.

### ***Supporting The Work of Our Boards and Committees***

As the ELS Giving Counselor, I spend a significant amount of my time supporting our boards: Trustees, Home Outreach, World Outreach, Youth Outreach, Lutheran Schools, and Christian Service; and our committees: Doctrine, Worship, Planning and Coordinating Committee, Synod Review and Strategic Planning; and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. By staying in tune with their needs, I am able to help encourage and direct financial support toward their work and ensure that, through the generosity of others, they have the financial resources to do their work. As new projects and challenges present themselves, in my role I am able to remove financial hurdles.

### ***Visiting Our Congregations***

This is an important part of the Giving Counselor's role. Although these visits do not include preaching, they can include bible studies for the congregation or leadership on stewardship. Visits may comprise of worshiping and simply thanking the congregation for their support and making myself available to our members as needed. Often times I am asked to facilitate discussions on stewardship, answer questions about synod finances and report how congregational gifts are used. In 2025 I have begun working with congregations on larger financial campaigns such as capital projects and am looking forward to reporting on their progress in 2026. In all the work that I do on behalf of the synod, I pray I can help our members find the joy of giving. In 2025, 31 congregations were visited and directly supported through the Giving Counselors office.

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

We urge all 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 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. These options are best reviewed and considered on a person basis to meet your stewardship needs. Strategic use of estate and planned giving can have a long lasting positive impact on our congregations and our synod.

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

The priority of acknowledging and thanking all of our donors as we received gifts continued through 2025. Systems have been reviewed and revised to ensure that all gifts, regardless of the amount are received and acknowledge with the thankfulness they deserve. Various appeal letters and now some electronic requests have been utilized. As we move forward, the appeals will be focused on supporting our synod needs with undesignated gifts so financial support may be directed to the greatest needs of the synod. We pray that all gifts are given cheerfully and out of love for our Lord.

### ***Personal Thanks***

The 2025 synodical stewardship report marks the second full year I have served as the ELS Giving Counselor. The transition from Rev. Dan Basil continues and the second year in this role continues to be a year of learning. Thank you to President Obenberger for his leadership; Rev. Paul Fries as the ELS Communications Director for his continued professional support; and Rev. Brad Kerkow, our ELS Evangelism and Mission Counselor for his encouragement. Continued thanks to Rev. Daniel Basel as he offers guidance and supports the work of this office in an advisory role even beyond his retirement. Internal support from the business office of receiving and recording the many gifts is critical to our success and the work of Elsa Ferkenstad and Myrna Meunier is much appreciated leading this effort. Finally, in serving our Lord and the ELS, I am humbled by the generosity of our members. Thank you all for your gifts to the ELS and for glorifying our Lord through them!

*Mr. Paul Manning, ELS Giving Counselor*

### **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. Chan Smith, Mr. J.T. Pedersen, Mr. Jeff Younge, and Mr. Dave Ewert (advisory). 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 most responsible and mission-minded use of the income from those investments.

As of December 31, 2025 the financial position of Evangelical Lutheran Synod funds (including the ELS Foundation) is summarized as follows:

<b>STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION</b>	<b>EVANGELICAL</b>		
<i>(pre-auditor review)</i>		<b>LUTHERAN</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Evangelical Lutheran Synod</b>	<b>SYNOD</b>	<b>SYNOD</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>December 31, 2025</b>	<b>FUNDS</b>	<b>FOUNDATION</b>	<b>FUNDS</b>
Cash	\$1,063,912	\$1,019,589	\$2,083,501
LACE	\$0	\$699,000	\$699,000
Other Assets	\$2,513,064	\$1,119,642	\$3,632,705
Investment management accounts	\$11,238,593	\$16,679,608	\$27,918,201
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$14,815,569</b>	<b>\$19,517,839</b>	<b>\$34,333,407</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$511,741</b>	<b>\$444,451</b>	<b>\$956,193</b>
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$14,303,827</b>	<b>\$19,073,387</b>	<b>\$33,377,214</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$14,815,569</b>	<b>\$19,517,839</b>	<b>\$34,333,407</b>

For the fiscal year 2027, the distribution percentage from the endowments is set at 4.0%. 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).

A face-to-face meeting of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Regents was held February 10, 2026. The trustees receive reports from the college and seminary at each quarterly 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. Kyle Madson, secretary*

## COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

### ELECTION PROCEDURE (GENERAL SYNODICAL GUIDELINES, ARTICLE V. B-C)

*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. (See Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 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, 2 Clergy

2026

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

2027

Mr. J.T. Pedersen  
Mr. Channing Smith

2028

Mr. Tod Eckberg  
Rev. Piet Van Kampen

*By virtue of office:*

Rev. Glenn Obenberger  
(2026)

Rev. Kyle Madson (2028)

*Advisory:* vice-president

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

Dr. Jode Edwards - Age: 56. Home Congregation: Bethany, Ames, IA. Years in ELS: 22. Education & Vocation: Ph.D. in Plant Breeding. Research geneticist for USDA Agricultural Research Service. Qualifications for Office: Has served as congregational treasurer and chairman.

Mr. Joel Meyer - Age: 63. Home Congregation: Gloria Dei, Cold Spring, MN. Years in ELS: 30. Education & Vocation: Bethany Lutheran College - A.A. 1982; Mankato State University - B.A. Ed. 1985; University of Minnesota - M.A. Ed. 1995. Former High School math teacher. Business owner and operator. Qualifications for Office: Member of the Papa Murphy's Franchise Advisory Board.

#### **Lay (1-year):**

Mr. Steve Anderson - Age: 65. Home Congregation: Holton Lutheran Church, Holton, MI. Years in ELS: 65. Education & Vocation: Certified CPA. Career in business with many years of service in the church. Qualifications for Office: Served on the Planning and Coordinating committee until the previous committee was dissolved in 2025.

Mr. John Merseith Jr. - Age: 49. Home Congregation: Norseland Lutheran Church. Years in the ELS: 49. Education & Vocation: AA Bethany Lutheran College. Further studies at Mankato State University. Owner at Unique Designs Construction, 18 years as Technical Director at Bethany Lutheran College Theatre Department. Qualifications for Office: 5 terms as Delegate to the ELS synod convention, synod board for Stewardship, Congregational service(Multiple churches) Trustees, Chairman, Deacons, Board for Stewardship.

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

Rev. Jon Madson - Age: 70. Home Congregation: Grace Lutheran, Vero Beach, FL. Years as ELS Pastor: 40. Education & Vocation: A.A. Bethany Lutheran College 1976; B.S. Mankato State University 1978; M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary 1986. Qualifications for Office: Served on ELS Youth Board for many years. Present member of the Board of Trustees for the last 15 years. Circuit Visitor.

Rev. Dan Basel - Age: 70. Home Congregation: Faith Lutheran, Hillman, MI. Years as ELS Pastor: 37. Education & Vocation: A.A. Bethany College. B.A. Minnesota State University. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. Qualifications for Office: Previously served as giving counselor for the synod. Serves as an advisor to the ELS Foundation Investment Committee.

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

Rev. Glenn Obenberger - Age: 71. Home Congregation: Parkland Lutheran, Tacoma, WA. Years as an ELS Pastor: 42. Education & Vocation: Graduated from Bethany Lutheran College in 1977, Mankato State University 1980, and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary 1983. Qualifications for Office: Served on the ELS Board for Home Missions; Circuit Visitor; ELS Vice President 22.5 years; ELS President 5.5 years.

Rev. Bernt Tweit - Age: 54. Home Congregation: King of Grace, Golden Valley, MN. Years as an ELS Pastor: 27. Education & Vocation: A.A. Bethany College. B.A. Minnesota State University. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. Qualifications for Office: Previously a member of the Board for Youth Outreach. Has served as pastor at two of the larger congregations in the synod.

**BOARD OF REGENTS OF BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE AND BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

3 positions: 1 lay, 2 clergy or lay

*Type A members*

2026

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

2027

Mr. Steven DePrey  
Mr. Aaron Faugstad  
Mr. David Sparley

2028

Dr. Adam Brasich  
Dr. Daniel Hartwig  
Rev. David Thompson

*Type B members\**

2026

Rev. Aaron Ferkenstad

2027

Mr. Timothy Roemhildt\*

2028

Mr. John Scott\*

*By virtue of office:*

The Rev. Glenn Obenberger, president

**Lay (3-year):**

Dr. Josh Mears - Age: 43. Home Congregation: Heritage Lutheran, Apple Valley, MN. Years in ELS: 18. Education & Vocation: Psy.D.- Clinical Psychology, M.A. Counseling Psychology, B.A. Psychology (Bethany 05). Qualifications for Office: Several terms as a member of the Board of Regents.

Dr. David Reagles - Age: 37. Home Congregation: Mount Olive, Mankato, MN. Years in ELS: 37. Education & Vocation: B.A. in History; Bethany Lutheran College, 2011. M.A. in the History of Christianity, Wheaton College, 2013. Ph.D. in History and Culture, Drew University, 2018. Qualifications for Office: Former History professor at Bethany College. Currently the Head of School at Mankato Christian Academy.

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

Rev. Alex Ring - Age: 61. Home Congregation: Christ Lutheran, Port St Lucie, FL. Years as an ELS Pastor: 34. Education & Vocation: A.A. Bethany Lutheran College. Mankato State: Elementary Ed. M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Seminary. Qualifications for Office: Served on synod Board for Youth, Board for Schools and as Secretary of Schools. Has served on the Bethany Board of Regents since 2019.

Rev. Paul Webber - Age: 39. Home Congregation: Concordia, Eau Claire, WI. Years as an ELS Pastor: 12. Education & Vocation: Bethany Lutheran College - B.A. History 2009; Bethany Seminary - M.Div. 2013; Institute of Lutheran Theology - S.T.M. 2023. Qualifications for Office: Served on the President's Harmony Council.

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

Rev. Mark Bartels - Age: 66. Home Congregation: Holy Cross, Madison, WI. Years as an ELS Pastor: 38. Education & Vocation: M.Div. Bethany Seminary. M.A. Philosophy Purdue University. Qualifications for Office: Many terms as a member of the Board of Regents.

Rev. Matt Moldstad - Age: 44. Home Congregation: Peace Lutheran Church, North Mankato, MN. Years as an ELS Pastor: 15. Education & Vocation: B.A. Bethany Lutheran College. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. Qualifications for Office: Has served as a pastor of several larger ELS congregations.

## DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

2 positions: 2 clergy

2026  
Rev. Jerome Gernander  
Dr. Timothy Schmeling

2027  
Mr. Greg Costello  
Rev. Thomas Rank

2028  
Dr. David Reagles  
Rev. David Jay Webber

*By virtue of office:*  
seminary president

*Advisory:* ELS vice president

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Aaron Hamilton - Age: 54. *Home Congregation:* Redeemer Lutheran, Scottsdale, AZ. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 28. *Education & Vocation:* Bethany Seminary 1998. Currently an S.T.M. student at the Institute of Lutheran Theology. *Qualifications for Office:* Youth Board and Board for Home Outreach. Appointed to fill a vacancy on the Doctrine Committee.

Rev. Jesse Jacobsen - Age: 54. *Home Congregation:* Christ, Port St. Lucie, FL. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 28. *Education & Vocation:* Bachelor of Arts (1995): Northwestern College, Watertown, WI Masters of Divinity (1998): Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, MN. Masters of Sacred Theology (2024): Institute of Lutheran Theology, Brookings, SD. *Qualifications for Office:* Previously served on the ELS Board for Lutheran Schools.

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Dr. Timothy Schmeling - Age: 49. *Home Congregation:* Peace, North Mankato, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 18. *Education & Vocation:* M.Div. Bethany Seminary. Ph.D. Concordia Seminary St. Louis. Th.M. St. John's University. *Qualifications for Office:* Current member of the doctrine committee. Professor at Bethany Seminary. Published author and guest lecturer.

Rev. Theodore Gullixson - Age: 79. *Home Congregation:* Mount Olive, Mankato, MN *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 50. *Education & Vocation:* AA Bethany Lutheran College, BA University of Minnesota, M.Div Bethany Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* 19 years as the editor of the Lutheran Sentinel. Currently a member of the Synod Review Committee.

## BOARD ON APOLOGETICS

2 Positions: 1 lay, 1 clergy or lay

2026  
Rev. Shawn Stafford  
Mr. Donald Klemen

2027  
Rev. Peter Heyn

2028  
Mr. Chris Hoffman  
Dr. Doyle Holbird

*Advisory:* president

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Donald Klemen - Age: 37. *Home Congregation:* Peace Lutheran, Deshler, OH. *Years in ELS:* 8. *Education & Vocation:* B.S. in Oceanography from United States Naval Academy. *Qualifications for Office:* 1 term served on the Board on Apologetics. Has made multiple visits to the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter. Has an interest in researching and reading scientific articles and papers to help build a strong Lutheran worldview.

Mr. Peter Bloedel - Age: 58. *Home Congregation:* Mount Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 40. *Education & Vocation:* M.A. in Theater Arts. Professor at Bethany College for many years. *Qualifications for Office:* Strong interest in apologetics. Presenter at the LYA convention.

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

Rev. Shawn Stafford - Age: 52. *Home Congregation:* Eagle Lake Lutheran, Eagle Lake, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 26. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Liberal Arts from Bethany Lutheran College; B.A. History and Ancient Studies from St. Olaf College; M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary; M.A. in Philosophy with a concentration in Christian Wisdom (in progress) Holy Apostles. Bethany College religion professor. *Qualifications for Office:* Currently serving as the co-chair for the Board on Apologetics.

Rev. Andrew Soule - Age: 36. *Home Congregation:* Mt. Olive Lutheran, Mankato, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 10. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. History Bethany Lutheran College. M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. in the area of Church History through Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. *Qualifications for Office:* Has completed numerous doctorate level courses that pertain to the area of history, philosophy, and apologetics.

## BOARD FOR HOME OUTREACH

2 Positions: 1 lay, 1 clergy or lay

### *Type A members*

2026

Rev. Samuel Gullixson  
Mr. Mark Perlwitz

2027

Mr. Neil Shaffer  
Mr. Dean Shoop  
Rev. Luke Ulrich

2028

Rev. Kurtis Freimuth  
Rev. Noah Thompson

### *Type B members\**

2026

Rev. Benjamin Wiechmann

2027

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2028

Mr. Jeremy Merseth

*Advisory:* Evangelism and  
Missions Counselor

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

Rev. Sam Gullixson - Age: 45. *Home Congregation:* Parkland, Tacoma, WA. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 15. *Education & Vocation:* M.Div., Bethany Seminary 2010. *Qualifications for Office:* Current member of the Board for Home Outreach. Has served as the pastor of a small rural congregation and a larger urban congregation.

Rev. Dr. Nick Proksch - Age: 41. *Home Congregation:* Mt. Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 16. *Education & Vocation:* Ph.D., Concordia Seminary; M.Div. Bethany Lutheran. Professor at Bethany Seminary, teaching courses in evangelism. *Qualifications for Office:* Former pastor of a mission congregation.

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

Mr. Mark Perlwitz - Age: 65. *Home Congregation:* Pilgrim, Waterloo, IA. *Years in ELS:* 25. *Education & Vocation:* B.S. in Electrical Engineering, MBA. Retired Aerospace Engineering project manager. *Qualifications for Office:* Currently a member of the Board for Home Outreach, serving as the site selection coordinator. Has also served on other synod boards and committees.

Mr. Jon Basel - Age: 34. *Home Congregation:* Mt. Olive Lutheran, Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 30. *Education & Vocation:* Member of the Evangelism Committee at Mt Olive. *Qualifications for Office:* Previously served as outreach coordinator for the church and the school. Initiated the "Connect Groups" program.

## BOARD FOR WORLD OUTREACH

2 Positions: 1 clergy, 1 clergy or lay

### *Type A members*

2026

Rev. John Petersen  
Rev. Steven Sparley

2027

Mr. Enrique Carhuayo  
Rev. Jacob Kempfert

2028

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

### *Type B members\**

2026

Mr. Dan Browning

2027

Rev. Timothy Bartels

2028

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

Rev. John Petersen - Age: 69. *Home Congregation:* Mount Olive, Mankato MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 41. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. UW-Eau Claire. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Incumbent member of the Board for World Outreach.

Rev. Dr. Brian Klebig - Age: 45. *Home Congregation:* Mount Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 16. *Education & Vocation:* Ph.D., Michigan State; M.Div., Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary; M.A., University of Central Florida; B.A., Bethany Lutheran College; Professor of Communication at BLC and BLTS. *Qualifications for Office:* Board member for Branch Schools of Haiti; Board member for Christ in Media Institute; teaches for the Kenya seminary.

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

Rev. Steven Sparley - Age: 74. *Home Congregation:* Parkland, Tacoma WA. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 42. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany College. B.A. University of Minnesota. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. Postgraduate studies in Ancient Studies at University of Minnesota Grad School. *Qualifications for Office:* Former missionary with Thoughts of Faith. Incumbent member of the Board for World Outreach.

Rev. Sean Scheele - Age: 40. *Home Congregation:* Pilgrim Lutheran, Waterloo IA & Faith Lutheran, Parkersburg IA. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 5. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Applied Theology (California Baptist University), M.A. Religious Studies (Phoenix Seminary), M.Div. (Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary). *Qualifications for Office:* Received missionary training during undergraduate studies at California Baptist University, both academically and practically. Has served on missionary teams to India, Rwanda, Ghana and in the middle east. Served as the chairman of the Kenya Liaison Committee for the ELS.

## BOARD FOR YOUTH OUTREACH

2 Positions: 1 clergy, 1 lay (The lay position was vacated and filled by appointment)

2026  
Rev. Abraham Faugstad  
Mr. Chris Hoffman

2027  
Mr. Benjamin Faugstad  
Rev. Tony Pittenger

2028  
Rev. Jeff Hendrix  
Rev. Josh Mayer  
Mr. Dan Gerdts

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Abe Faugstad - Age: 30. *Home Congregation:* Kingdom of Grace, Waukon, IA, & Trinity Lutheran Church, Calmar, IA. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 4. *Education & Vocation:* Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota, B.A. in Chemistry and a minor in Mathematics May 2017. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary M.Div. May 2022. *Qualifications for Office:* Counselor at Camp Indianhead, Resident Assistant at Bethany Lutheran College, Resident Assistant at the Beacon (WELS Campus ministry at MSU), Board of Youth Outreach (October, 2024–Present).

Rev. Nate Abrahamson - Age: 40. *Home Congregation:* Abiding Shepherd Lutheran, Cottage Grove, WI. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 14. *Education & Vocation:* Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary 2012. *Qualifications for Office:* Served on the President's Harmony Advisory Council. Has served as the Director of Camp Rise (formerly known as Camp Indianhead-WI) since 2015. Has organized and led a weekly youth ministry for 20 years (2006-2011 CROSSED Youth Ministry at Peace Lutheran, North Mankato. 2011-Current E.P.I.C. Youth Ministry at Abiding Shepherd). Served on ELS Sunday School committee. Organized 15+ area teen retreats.

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Jim Sundby - Age: 55. *Home Congregation:* Parkland Lutheran, Tacoma, WA. *Years in ELS:* 55. *Education & Vocation:* A.A., Bethany Lutheran College, B.A., Pacific Lutheran University. Currently an elder at Parkland. *Qualifications for Office:* Has also served as Sunday School Superintendent. Has served a partial term on the Board for youth outreach in the past. Appointed to the Board to fill a vacancy in 2025.

## BOARD FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

3 Positions: 2 lay, 1 clergy or lay

2026  
Rev. Michael Dale  
Mr. Todd Knutson  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai

2027  
Rev. Christopher Dale  
Mr. Nathan Rovey  
Rev. Joshua Skogen

2028  
Mr. Jacob Beilke  
Mr. Aaron Kreuter  
Rev. Paul Lange

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

### Lay-Teacher (3-year):

Mr. Shu-ting Lai - Age: 51. *Home Congregation:* Bethany Lutheran: Port Orchard, WA. *Years in ELS:* 37. *Education & Vocation:* Bachelor of Arts: Pacific Lutheran University (Tacoma, WA Synod Certification: Martin Luther College (New Ulm, MN) Master of Arts: Concordia University (Seward, NE) Current Principal and Teacher and Bethany Lutheran School (Port Orchard, WA) Current Secretary for Schools of the ELS and member of the Board for Lutheran Schools. *Qualifications for Office:* 29 years of experience teaching in ELS and WELS schools.

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Todd Knutson - Age: 61. *Home Congregation:* Parkland, Tacoma, WA. *Years in ELS:* 34. *Education & Vocation:* B.S. Electrical Engineering, Iowa State University; Commander, US Navy (Retired); Supervisory Mechanical Engineer, US Navy, Bremerton, WA. *Qualifications for Office:* Chairman and previously Vice Chairman, Board of Christian Education at Parkland; Served 12 years as congregation delegate to Evergreen Lutheran High School Association.

Mr. Karl Bloedel - Age: 70. *Home Congregation:* Scarville Synod, Scarville, IA. *Years in ELS:* 54. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany College. Career in construction. *Qualifications for Office:* Appointed member of the synod review committee.

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

Rev. Mike Dale - Age: 55. *Home Congregation:* Pinewood Lutheran, Burlington, MA. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 24. *Education & Vocation:* Bachelor of Arts in Music. Served as the pastor at a church that had a school for 22 years. *Qualifications for Office:* Current member of the board for Lutheran Schools.

Rev. Matt Moldstad - Age: 44. *Home Congregation:* St John's, Frankenmuth, MI. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 15. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Bethany Lutheran College. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. Has served as a pastor of several larger ELS congregations.

## BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

2 Positions: 1 clergy, 1 lay

2026

Mr. Kirk Campbell  
Rev. James Kassera

2027

Mr. Dennis Behr  
Rev. Erich Hoefl

2028

Mr. Robert Reid

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. James Kassera - Age: 42. Home Congregation: Divine Mercy Lutheran, Weatherford, TX. Years as an ELS Pastor: 15. Education & Vocation: B.A. Psychology Bethany Lutheran College. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. Three terms on the Board for Christian Service. Qualifications for Office: Recently involved with the church building project at Divine Mercy. Has served two terms as alternate visitor for circuit 10.

Rev. Roger Emmons - Age: 58 Home Congregation: Grace, Redmond, OR. Years as an ELS Pastor: 5. Education & Vocation: MLC seminary certification 2017, Troy State University B.A. Human Resource Management 2004. Qualifications for Office: 29 years military, retired as a 1st Sargent. Board of directors for the military support Group.

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Kirk Campbell—Age: 58. Home Congregation: Saved by Grace, Gresham, OR. Years in ELS: 48. Education & Vocation: Retired US Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer after serving 22 years in US Coast Guard: Second in command of two Coast Guard Units, Federal Law Enforcement Officer, Hazmat and oil response member, Truck Driver, Under Way Deck Officer for 4 Coast Guard Cutters; B.S. Psychology, Portland State University (2016); High School Substitute Teacher, 2017-present. Qualifications for Office: Trustee at Saved by Grace, 8 years.

## COMMITTEE ON WORSHIP

3 Positions: 2 clergy, 1 lay (A clergy position was filled by appointment for an unexpired term)

2026

Mr. John Baumann  
Rev. Mark DeGarmeaux

2027

Rev. James Braun  
Dr. Eric Harstad

2028

Rev. Peter Faugstad

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Mark DeGarmeaux - Age: 68. Home Congregation: Mt Olive, Mankato, MN. Years as an ELS Pastor: 42. Education & Vocation: M.Div. Bethany, S.T.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Editor of the Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary. Formerly chaplain at Bethany College. Currently a Bethany professor, teaching in languages, music, and theology. Qualifications for Office: Has served on the committee on worship for many years.

Rev. Rob Lawson Jr. - Age: 51. Home Congregation: Bethany, The Dalles, OR & Concordia, Hood River, OR. Years as an ELS Pastor: 14. Education & Vocation: M.Div. Bethany Seminary. B.A. Organ Performance. Minnesota State. Expert on the history and practice of Lutheran Liturgy. Qualifications for Office: Has collaborated in the past with the worship committee on projects.

### Clergy (1-year):

Rev. Patrick Ernst - Age: 31. Home Congregation: Eagle Lake Lutheran, Eagle Lake, MN. Years as an ELS Pastor: 6. Education & Vocation: 2015 Graduate of Bethany Lutheran College (including semester abroad at Freie Universität; Berlin, Germany); 2019 Graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. Qualifications for Office: 10+ years of experience as organist and accompanist; fluency in German; experience translating hymns.

Rev. Paul Webber - Age: 39. Home Congregation: Concordia, Eau Claire, WI. Years as an ELS Pastor: 12. Education & Vocation: Bethany Lutheran College - B.A. History 2009; Bethany Seminary - M.Div. 2013; Institute of Lutheran Theology - S.T.M. 2023. Qualifications for Office: Served on the President's Harmony Council. Has previously worked with the worship committee on digital worship resources.

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. John Baumann—Age: 48. Home Congregation: Mt. Olive, Mankato, MN. Years in ELS: 27. Education & Vocation: Bachelor of Music: Organ Performance. Church organist for 30 years for various WELS/ELS churches in southern MN. Qualifications for Office: Have a deep appreciation for the tradition of hymnody and liturgy within the synod. Synod positions: Worship Committee (currently on 2nd consecutive term), Nominations Committee

Mr. Matthew Sulzle— Age: 40. *Home Congregation:* Scarville, Scarville, IA. *Years in ELS:* 17. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. in Music from Bethany Lutheran College (2008); Work in residential remodeling with Bloedel Builders. *Qualifications for Office:* Served as organist for numerous years for ELS churches in north central IA; Experience writing four-part choral music; Great interest in the history of the Church and its liturgy. Several years spent serving as chairman of the Scarville Lutheran School board.

## COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATION

1 Position: 1 Clergy or Lay

*Elected Positions*  
2026

Mr. Philip Wels

2027  
Mr. David Norris

*Appointed by the  
synod president*  
2026

Rev. Daniel Oberer  
Mr. Lance Schwartz

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

Mr. Matthias Leyrer - Age: 37. *Home Congregation:* Mount Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 19. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Communication from Bethany Lutheran College. Works in graphic design. *Qualifications for Office:* Copywriter; Marketer.

Mr. Ben Lundsten - Age: 38. *Home Congregation:* Peace Lutheran Church, North Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 13. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. in Media Arts, Emphasis Film & Design, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN 2020. Media Arts instructor at Bethany Lutheran College. Currently finishing Master of Fine Arts degree in film and television with an emphasis in digital storytelling. *Qualifications for Office:* Spiritual Leadership Committee member, Peace Lutheran Church. Footnotes Trauma Foundation, Board member

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

Mr. Phil Wels - Age: 38. *Home Congregation:* Peace, North Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 13. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. in Communication from BLC (2009). *Qualifications for Office:* Serves on ELS Committee for Communication. Produces Peace Devotions for the ELS.

Mr. Kurt Shrader - Age: 41. *Home Congregation:* Mount Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 12. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Business Administration Southeast Technical Institute. B.A. Communications Bethany College. M.A. Film and Television Production Savanna College of Art and Design. *Qualifications for Office:* Producer and director of commercials and live events.

## EQUALIZATION COMMITTEE

1 Position: 1 lay

2026  
Mr. Shaun Grabow

2027  
Rev. Roger Holtz

2028  
Mr. Seth Ferkenstad

### Lay (3-year):

Mr. Shaun Grabow— Age: 59. *Congregation:* Norwegian Grove, Gaylord, MN. *Years in ELS:* 31. *Education & Vocation:* 2 year accounting certificate; Investment Principal Accountant at Allianz Life Insurance Company. *Qualifications for Office:* Career in accounting; Served as Treasurer for Norwegian Grove Lutheran Church; Equalization Committee.

Mr. Dustin Basel - Age: 45. *Home Congregation:* English Lutheran, Cottonwood, MN. *Years in ELS:* 45. *Education & Vocation:* BA Science, Associates degree in registered nursing. *Qualifications for Office:* Has served on the board of elders and as a trustee at his congregation.

## BOARD OF APPEALS

6 Positions: 3 clergy, 3 lay

### Clergy (3-year):

Rev. Ken Mellon - Age: 71. *Home Congregation:* Peace, North Mankato, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 42. *Education & Vocation:* M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Former member of; Board for Home Outreach, Board for Evangelism, Board for Schools.

Rev. Glenn Obenberger - Age: 71. *Home Congregation:* Parkland Lutheran, Tacoma, WA. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 42. *Education & Vocation:* Graduated from Bethany Lutheran College in 1977, Mankato State University 1980, and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary 1983. *Qualifications for Office:* Served on the ELS Board for Home Missions; Circuit Visitor; ELS Vice President 22.5 years; ELS President 5.5 years.

**Clergy (3-year):**

Rev. Christian Eisenbeis - Age: 46. *Home Congregation:* First Trinity, Marinette, WI. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 14. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Russian University of MN 2000. M.A. Slavic Languages University of Chicago 2002. M.Div. Bethany Seminary 2009. *Qualifications for Office:* Established a support group for parents of autistic children called "The Thorn Bush" as a ministry of Grace Lutheran to the community.

2026

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

Rev. Craig Ferkenstad - Age: 71. *Home Congregation:* Eagle Lake Lutheran, Eagle Lake, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 45. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany Lutheran College. B.S. Luther College (Decorah, Iowa). M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Previously the secretary of the synod for many terms.

2027

Rev. Timothy Erickson\*  
Rev. Peter Faugstad\*  
Dr. Joshua Mears\*  
Mr. Jeremy Merseth  
Rev. Alex Ring\*  
Rev. Bernt Tweit

**Clergy (3-year):**

Rev. Tom Rank - Age: 68. *Home Congregation:* Scarville Synod, Scarville, IA. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 41. *Education & Vocation:* M.Div. Bethany Seminary. S.T.M. Concordia Seminary Fort Wayne. Religion Professor at Bethany College. *Qualifications for Office:* Member of the Doctrine Committee.

Rev. Luke Ulrich - Age: 43. *Home Congregation:* Mount Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 17. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Bethany College 2005. M.Div. Bethany Seminary 2009. *Qualifications for Office:* Member of the Board for Home Outreach.

2028

Rev. Mark Bartels\*  
Rev. Mark Faugstad\*  
Rev. Aaron Ferkenstad\*  
Rev. Samuel Gullixson\*  
Mr. Dan Johnson\*  
Mr. Nathan Rovey

**Lay (3-year):**

Mr. Karl Bloedel - Age: 70. *Home Congregation:* Scarville Synod, Scarville, IA. *Years in ELS:* 54. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany College. Career in construction. *Qualifications for Office:* Appointed member of the synod review committee.

Mr. David Backstrom - Age: 80. *Home congregation:* Concordia, Eau Claire, WI. *Years in ELS:* 37. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Sociology University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire. 37 years in law enforcement, retiring as the chief of the University University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Police department. Vietnam Veteran. *Qualifications for Office:* Member of the board of elders at Concordia, Eau Claire.

**Lay (3-year):**

Mr. Andrew Overn - Age: 61. *Home Congregation:* Mount Olive, Mankato, MN. *Years in ELS:* 35. *Education & Vocation:* Master of Fine Arts, Savannah College of Art and Design. Professor at Bethany college. *Qualifications for Office:* Previously elected to Board of Appeals.

Mr. Chad Hoyard - Age: 54. *Home Congregation:* Concordia, Eau Claire, WI. *Years in ELS:* 54. *Education & Vocation:* Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from UW Eau Claire. Worked 29 years at the Eau Claire Police Department retiring as a Deputy Chief of Police in December of 2024. *Qualifications for Office:* President of Concordia, Eau Claire.

**Lay (3-year):**

Mr. Neil Shafer - Age: 59. *Home Congregation:* Jerico Lutheran, Hampton, IA. *Years in ELS:* 59. *Education & Vocation:* Watershed Project Coordinator at Howard Soil & Water Conservation District 25 years. Retired Dairy Farmer 40 years. *Qualifications for Office:* Member of ELS BHO 4 years; Jerico Church Trustee 32 years & Treasurer 8 years.

Mr. Chris Hoffman - Age: 58. *Home Congregation:* Hope, West Jordan, UT. *Years in ELS:* 28. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. in criminal justice from the University of Utah. Career in law enforcement, including several years working in the office of the attorney general of the state of Utah. Currently a member of the Board on Apologetics. *Qualifications for Office:* Previously a member of the Board for Youth Outreach.

## SYNOD REVIEW COMMITTEE

1 Position: 1 lay

<i>Elected Positions</i>	<b>Lay (3-year):</b>
<u>2026</u> Mr. James Flantz	<u>Mr. James Flantz</u> - Age: 75. <i>Home Congregation:</i> Norwegian Grove, Gaylord, MN. <i>Years in ELS:</i> 45. <i>Education &amp; Vocation:</i> Mankato Vocational Technical College in Agriculture Production; Retired from farming. <i>Qualifications for Office:</i> Synod Convention delegate several times; Served on Deacons, Trustees, and Cemetery Board of church; Served on Minnesota Valley Lutheran Board of Trustees.
<u>2027</u> Rev. Theodore Gullixson	<u>Dr. Ben Springer</u> - Age: 43. <i>Home Congregation:</i> Mount Olive, Mankato, MN. <i>Years in ELS:</i> 3. <i>Education &amp; Vocation:</i> B.A. Elementary Education MLC. M.A. Educational Technology MLC. Ph.D. Educational Leadership Concordia Chicago. Currently the principal at Cornerstone Lutheran School in Mankato. <i>Qualifications for Office:</i> 15 years teaching; 4 years assistant principal; 7 years principal; completing Ph. D. in Educational Leadership (2024).
<u>2028</u> --	
<i>Appointed by the synod president</i>	
<u>2026</u> Mr. Karl Bloedel	
<u>2027</u> Rev. Craig Ferkenstad	
<u>2028</u> Rev. S. Piet Van Kampen	

## CIRCUIT VISITORS AND ALTERNATES

*With the realignment of circuits, some congregations have been moved into another circuit and some circuit numbers have changed. The circuit realignment can be found on p. 35 of Synod Report 2025.*

Circuit 1  
Rev. Mark Faugstad  
Alt. Rev. Jonathan Madson

Circuit 2  
Rev. James Braun  
Alt. Rev. Michael Dale

Circuit 3  
Rev. Paul Schneider  
Alt. Rev. Jeffery Luplow

### **Circuit 1 (Florida)**

Rev. Jesse Jacobsen - Age: 54. *Home Congregation:* Christ, Port St. Lucie, FL. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 28. *Education & Vocation:* Bachelor of Arts (1995): Northwestern College, Watertown, WI Masters of Divinity (1998): Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, MN. Masters of Sacred Theology (2024): Institute of Lutheran Theology, Brookings, SD. *Qualifications for Office:* Previously served on the ELS Board for Lutheran Schools.

Rev. Jon Madson (Alt) - Age: 70. *Home Congregation:* Grace Lutheran, Vero Beach, FL. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 40. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany Lutheran College 1976; B.S. Mankato State University 1978; M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary 1986. *Qualifications for Office:* Served on ELS Youth Board for many years. Present member of the Board of Trustees for the last 15 years. Circuit Visitor.

### **Circuit 2 (Massachusetts)**

Rev. James Braun - Age: 65. *Home Congregation:* Trinity, Brewster, MA. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 36. *Education & Vocation:* UW-Milwaukee; Bethany Lutheran College; Mankato State University; Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Circuit 12 Alternate Visitor; Circuit 12 Visitor; Circuit 2 Alternate Visitor; Worship Committee; Communications Committee; Assistant to the Communications Director.

Rev. Mike Dale (Alt) - Age: 55. *Home Congregation:* Pinewood Lutheran, Burlington, MA. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 24. *Education & Vocation:* Bachelor of Arts in Music. Served as the pastor at a church that had a school for 22 years. *Qualifications for Office:* Current member of the board for Lutheran Schools.

### **Circuit 3 (Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania)**

Rev. Paul Schneider - Age: 79. *Home Congregation:* Holy Scripture, Midland, MI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 53. *Education & Vocation:* Graduated from Mankato State University; Bethany Seminary (1973). *Qualifications for Office:* Youth Board; Mission Board; Faith Mission Society; Stewardship Board; Thoughts of Faith; BWO; Board of Trustees; Circuit 3 Visitor.

Rev. Jeff Luplow (Alt) - Age: 64. *Home Congregations:* Faith, Hillman and Trinity, Rogers City, MI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 14. *Education & Vocation:* Northwestern College, Watertown, WI; Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI. *Qualifications for Office:* 23 total years as pastor in ELS and WELS; Circuit 3 Alternate Visitor.

*Previously:*

Circuit 4

Rev. David Locklair  
Alt. Rev. David Emmons

Circuit 5

Rev. Daniel Hartwig  
Alt. Rev. Nate Abrahamson

*these congregations now  
combined into circuit 4*

**Circuit 4 (Southeast Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana)**

Rev. Dr. Dan Hartwig - Age: 43. *Home Congregation:* Trinity, West Bend, WI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 16. *Education & Vocation:* Ph.D. in theological studies from the Graduate Theological Foundation (2022); M.Div. from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (2010); B.A. from Bethany Lutheran College (2006). *Qualifications for Office:* Serves as the circuit visitor for the southern Wisconsin circuit.

Rev. Nate Abrahamson (Alt) - Age: 40. *Home Congregation:* Abiding Shepherd Lutheran, Cottage Grove, WI. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 14. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Bethany Lutheran College (2008); M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Seminary (2012). *Qualifications for Office:* Served on the President's Harmony Advisory Council; alternate visitor for the southern Wisconsin circuit.

**Circuit 5 (North-Central Wisconsin)**

Rev. Christian Eisenbeis - Age: 46. *Home Congregation:* First Trinity, Marinette, WI. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 14. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Russian University of MN 2000. M.A. Slavic Languages University of Chicago 2002. M.Div. Bethany Seminary 2009. *Qualifications for Office:* Established a support group for parents of autistic children called "The Thorn Bush" as a ministry of Grace Lutheran to the community.

Rev. Kurt Kluge (Alt) - Age: 62. *Home Congregation:* St. Martin, Shawano, WI. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 24. *Education & Vocation:* Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (2002). *Qualifications for Office:* Secretary of Circuit 6 for 12 years; Board of Stewardship; Served as temporary alternate circuit visitor.

*Previously:*

Circuit 6

Rev. Robert Otto  
Alt. Rev. Kurt Kluge

**Circuit 6 (Northern Minnesota)**

Rev. Gene Lilienthal—Age: 67. *Home Congregations:* Our Savior's, Bagley and St. Paul, Lengby, MN. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 31. *Education & Vocation:* B.S. Biblical Languages/Outdoor Ed. at Concordia College, St. Paul; M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Circuit 8 Alternate Visitor.

Rev. Noah Thompson—Age: 36. *Home Congregation:* River Heights, East Grand Forks, MN. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 8. *Education & Vocation:* Majored in Biology with a Minor in Chemistry at Bethany Lutheran College; M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

*Previously:*

Circuit 8

Rev. John Merseth, Sr.  
Alt. Rev. Gene Lilienthal

**Circuit 7 (Minnesota Cities, Western Wisconsin)**

Rev. Bernt Tveit - Age: 54. *Home Congregation:* King of Grace, Golden Valley, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 27. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany College. B.A. Minnesota State University. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Previously a member of the Board for Youth Outreach. Has served as pastor at two of the larger congregations in the synod.

Rev. Paul Webber - Age: 39. *Home Congregation:* Concordia, Eau Claire, WI. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 12. *Education & Vocation:* Bethany Lutheran College - B.A. History 2009; Bethany Seminary - M.Div. 2013; Institute of Lutheran Theology - S.T.M. 2023. *Qualifications for Office:* Served on the President's Harmony Council; previously served as alternate visitor for circuit 11.

*Previously:*

Circuit 9

Rev. Aaron Ferkenstad  
Alt. Rev. Michael Muehlenhardt

**Circuit 8 (Southern and Western Minnesota)**

Rev. Ken Mellon - Age: 71. *Home Congregation:* Peace, North Mankato, MN. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 42. *Education & Vocation:* M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Former member of Board for Home Outreach, Board for Evangelism, Board for Schools.

Rev. Michael Muehlenhardt (Alt) - Age: 69. *Home Congregation:* English, Cottonwood, MN. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 18. *Education & Vocation:* Graduate of Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Currently Alternate Visitor for Circuit 9; President of Mission Advancement Project; Committee for Archives and History.

*these congregations now split  
into circuits 7 and 8*

### **Circuit 9 (Iowa, South-Central Minnesota)**

Previously:  
Circuit 7  
Rev. Peter Faugstad  
Alt. Rev. Joshua Skogen

Rev. Josh Skogen— Age: 46. *Home Congregations:* Scarville and Center, Scarville, IA. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 16. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany Lutheran College; B.S. Southwest Minnesota State University; M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Board for Lutheran Schools; Board of Appeals; Circuit 4 Visitor; Circuit 7 Alternate Visitor.

Rev. Peter Faugstad— Age: 44. *Home Congregations:* Saude, Lawler, Jerico and Redeemer, New Hampton, IA. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 17. *Education:* B.A. Bethany Lutheran College; M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Committee on Worship; Planning & Coordinating Committee; Board of Appeals; Pastoral Support Committee; Circuit 7 Visitor.

### **Circuit 10 (Missouri, Texas)**

Circuit 10  
Rev. Micah Ernst  
Alt. Rev. James Kasser

Rev. Micah Ernst— Age: 68. *Home Congregations:* Peace, Jefferson City, MO. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 38. *Education & Vocation:* Bethany Lutheran College (1983); Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary 1 year; Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (1988). *Qualifications for Office:* Synod Convention usher; Circuit 10 Visitor.

Rev. James Kasser (Alt) - Age: 42. *Home Congregation:* Divine Mercy Lutheran, Weatherford, TX. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 15. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Psychology Bethany Lutheran College. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. *Qualifications for Office:* Three terms on the Board for Christian Service; has served two terms as alternate visitor for circuit 10.

### **Circuit 11 (Utah, Arizona, California)**

Circuit 11  
Rev. Timothy Buelow  
Alt. Rev. Aaron Hamilton

Rev. Aaron Hamilton - Age: 54. *Home Congregation:* Redeemer Lutheran, Scottsdale, AZ. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 28. *Education & Vocation:* Bethany Seminary 1998. Currently an S.T.M. student at the Institute of Lutheran Theology. *Qualifications for Office:* Youth Board and Board for Home Outreach. Appointed to fill a vacancy on the Doctrine Committee.

Rev. Dr. Adam Brasich (Alt) - Age: 37. *Home Congregation:* Hope Lutheran Church, West Jordan, Utah. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 5. *Education:* A.B. Wabash College (2011); M.A. American religious history, Florida State University (2013); Ph.D. American religious history, Florida State University (2017); M.Div. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (2021). *Qualifications for Office:* Served in numerous positions as a lay person in a WELS mission congregation in Florida.

### **Circuit 12 (Oregon, Washington)**

Circuit 12  
Rev. Steven Sparley  
Alt. Rev. Edward Bryant

Rev. Steven Sparley - Age: 74. *Home Congregation:* Parkland, Tacoma WA. *Years as an ELS Pastor:* 42. *Education & Vocation:* A.A. Bethany College. B.A. University of Minnesota. M.Div. Bethany Seminary. Postgraduate studies in Ancient Studies at University of Minnesota Grad School. *Qualifications for Office:* Former missionary with Thoughts of Faith. Incumbent member of the Board for World Outreach.

Rev. Ed Bryant (Alt) - Age: 75. *Home Congregation:* Saved by Grace, Gresham, OR. *Years as ELS Pastor:* 53. *Education & Vocation:* B.A. Western Washington University; B.Th. Martin Luther Institute of Sacred Studies, Detroit; M.A. Pacific Lutheran University. *Qualifications for Office:* Served on Board of Regents, Bethany Lutheran College & Seminary; Circuit 4 Visitor; Circuit 12 Alternate Visitor.

# REPORT OF THE SYNOD REVIEW COMMITTEE

*Committee #14 Miscellaneous*

## **MEMBERS & MEETINGS**

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 serves as an advisory member. Since the 2025 synod convention, the committee has met three times.

## **WORK**

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

This year, the committee was given the task of reviewing a small number of resolutions passed by the 2025 synod convention. The resolutions in question either contained substantial changes from the recommendations of standing boards or included elements that would have been impossible for the standing board to fully execute. While recognizing the difficulty caused by these resolutions, the committee found the resolutions in order, settling upon two major points in making this decision.

The synod convention has the final say. The synod's articles of incorporation, constitution, and bylaws entrust the organizing and directing of synodical affairs to the synod convention (ELS Articles of Incorporation, Article VII; Constitution of the ELS, Chapter III, IV, and V; ELS Bylaws, Chapter 5, par. 1). The synod convention, therefore, governs the work of the synod's officers, standing boards, and committees, reviewing their completed work and giving direction to their future efforts. So, the convention has the right to amend the recommendations of standing boards and committees. The convention also has the right to seek outside input or ignore said input in making its decisions.

Once a convention has adjourned, its business is concluded. No one can go back and change a duly passed resolution. Resolutions are expected to be carried out as completely as possible. Officers, board or committee members, or administrators who object to certain convention resolutions may bring attention to those objections in their report to the next convention.

Ultimately, it is incumbent upon convention delegates to read, study and examine resolutions prior to passage to ensure that they are proper, and to amend them or vote them down if they are improper. The committee acknowledges that future difficulties may be avoided if delegates can more faithfully perform their due diligence with regard to proposed resolutions.

The following item is presented as a suggested change to the ELS Guidelines. The proposed deletion is lined through.

Amend Section 230: Guidelines for Visitors, Article II, B.:

WHEREAS, Circuit Visitors now meet annually in September,

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Guidelines for Visitors, Section 230, Article II, B. be amended as follows:

“Since the visitors are responsible to the president of the synod, it is their duty to make a full report of all their activity as visitors to the president in March of each year.”

*The Rev. Theodore G. Gullixson, secretary*

# 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?**”

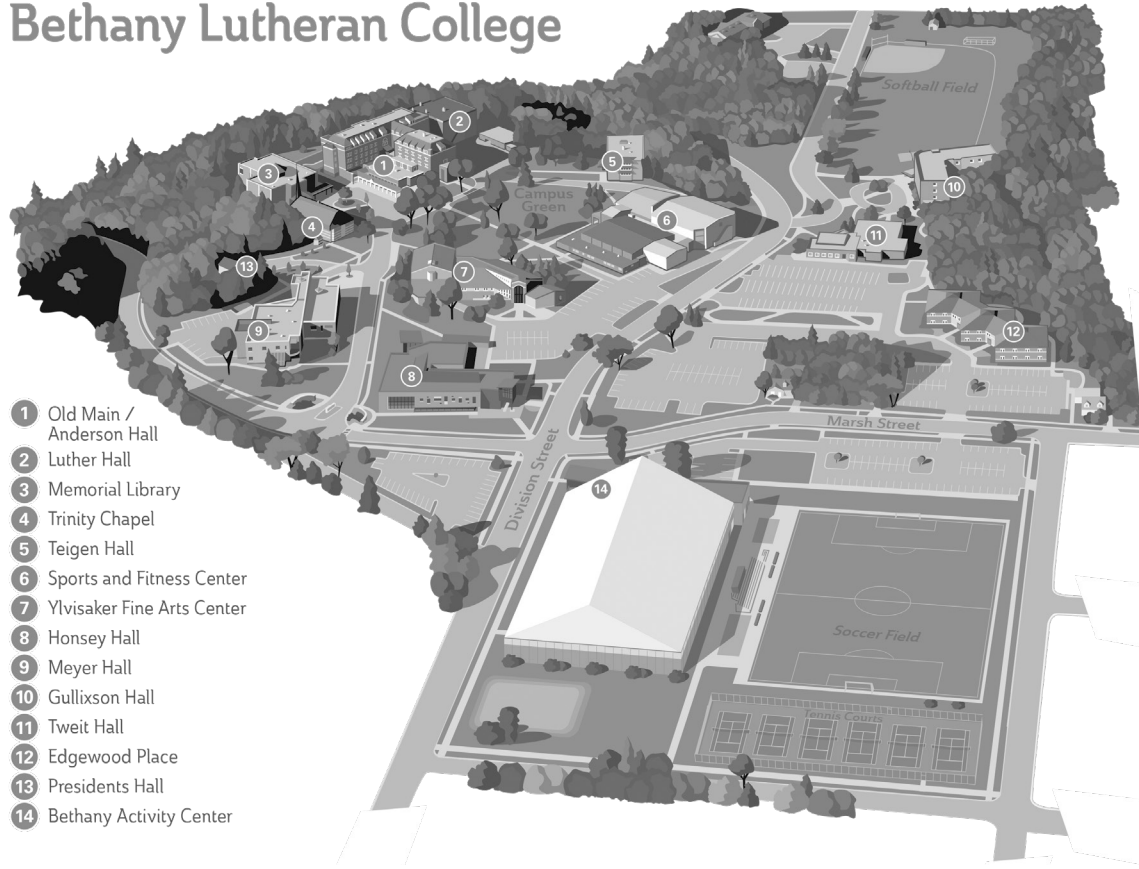
NOTE that discussion at this point **must be confined to whether or not to stop speaking on the current issue and instead start speaking about the proposed substitute**. There should be **NO DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE** at this point, because the assembly has not yet agreed to place it on 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.

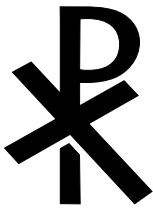


# Bethany Lutheran College



- 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 21–25, 2026 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*.