

ELS Newsletter

The ELS Assignment Committee:

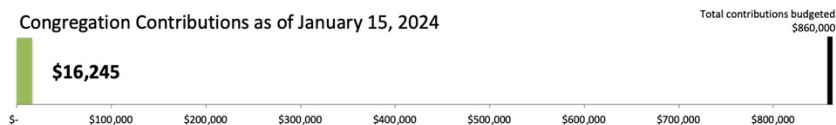
This committee will meet on **April 18, 2024**. This spring we should have one candidate of theology from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary to be placed in his first call on May 8. We should also have three vicars to be placed under the supervision of one of our pastors in the parish for the coming school year. If there are ELS congregations seeking either a candidate or a vicar, please submit requests soon (**deadline Feb. 29, 2024**). A candidate request should be sent to the office of the synod president (a blank call with the usual supporting documents including cover letter, salary and benefits package—at least according to the home missionary scale see Synod Report 2023, Res. #5, pp. 101-02, should all be sent with a formal request from your calling body). A vicar request should be sent to the office of the BLTS president.

Statistical Reporting

Statistical reports for 2023 are due February 15. You can complete the reporting form online: els.org/statistics. **Board and committee secretaries** also are reminded that any corrections or additions to the “Addresses of Board and Committee Members” as it is printed in the *Synod Report* also should be submitted at this time.

Upcoming Events

February 1 – Committee for Archives and History
February 6–7 – Board of Trustees
February 9 – Planning & Coordinating Committee
February 13 – Board for Christian Service



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February 2024

Dear Members and Friends of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod,

The season of Lent, a season of sorrow over sin and repentance begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14. I pray that your penitential season will be marked with the same personal observations of David in Ps. 32 and 51. While we recognize our faith to be a gift from God, so is our penitence. God is at work pressing down upon us, even at times causing us to be physically afflicted by our deeply felt grief over our many offenses: those both the grievously major and almost unnoticeably minor in the eyes of the world.

David took note of this gracious working of our Lord while he was struggling with denial over his offenses and so he confessed “when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me” (32: 3–4a).

While we observe this “40 day” season of reflective anticipation, we have a reprieve, if you will, on the Sundays throughout Lent. So, as we anticipate the glad messages of Good Friday through Easter, we are given a preview during those Sundays in Lent, which themselves are not devoid of such good news for us. Again, consider David’s inspired words: “Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that You have broken rejoice.” (51: 8) You will find in your divine services the liberal absolution spoken over you in words and distributed to you in the Sacrament. Your Lord desires that you live in the joy of your forgiveness, life and salvation even in the midst of your seasons of sorrow-filled repentance.

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered in the name of Jesus.

God bless you once again with a salutary observance this Lententide, to His glory and your everlasting welfare!

Glenn Obenberger

ELS, LCMS, WELS Representatives Meet:

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

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

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

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

was reelected to a three-year term in 2023, and President Mark Schroeder of WELS was reelected to a four-year term in 2023.

Appointments:

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

January 2024 *Clearly Caring* (The official publication of Christian Life Resources):

Once again, Rev. Robert Fleischmann (National Director of CLR) has an encouraging, thought provoking and edifying article in regard to what seems to be a disheartening response in our nation to the Supreme Court's decision in 2022 overturning the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. I would recommend that you receive this publication regularly so that you might stay informed, energized for action and support. christianliferesources.com

Year-End Blessings

The final numbers for 2023 are in (subject to review)! Thank you to all our congregations and their members for keeping the work we do together in their prayers and supported through their offerings.

As of the final tally on January 10th, we have received a total of \$880,353.46 from your congregations. That enables our ELS to support Bethany Lutheran College with an additional \$40,353 above other allocations. So thank you, this will help keep the mission of both the ELS and BLC moving forward.

– Rev. Dan Basel, Giving Counselor