

ELS Newsletter

Lutheran Youth Honor Choir

The Lutheran Youth Honor Choir will be held June 20-24 at Bethany Lutheran College, in Mankato, Minnesota. For more information and to register, visit www.els.org/honorchoir.

Apologetics and Worldview Conference

The eighth annual Apologetics and Worldview Conference will be held June 24-25 on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota. The topic for the conference is Artificial Intelligence. For more information, visit: www.apologeticscenter.org/events.

ELS Synod Report Change

This year there is a change in convention registration: printed Synod Reports are no longer automatically provided with your registration and an electronic version will be distributed. However, you can still purchase a printed copy if you would like to have one.

Because of this change, **all delegates and pastors (including emeriti) need to register** this year and in future years. Please go to els.org/convention and look for the registration links. There is one link for pastors/teachers/delegates and another link for emeriti/professors/staff.

Please contact Elsa or Myrna with questions.

Upcoming Events

May 6 – Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Commencement

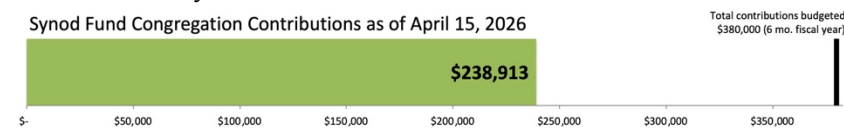
May 7 – Board of Trustees

May 8 – Bethany Lutheran College Commencement

May 29–June 1 – Triennial Convention of the Confessional

Evangelical Lutheran Conference

June 21–25 – Synod Convention



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May 2026

“God is present everywhere, but there is a world of difference between ‘God being here’ and ‘God being here *for you.*’ The Devil knows the former, but he will never experience the latter” (*Luther: Man between God and the Devil, Yale University Press, Heiko Oberman, p. 243*). Unbelievers may acknowledge the omnipresence of God just as Satan knows, but there is little to no comfort in that basic knowledge. Christians of course recognize that God is present everywhere and that is comforting to know He promises to watch over us commanding His holy angels to intervene when He wills it. But as Luther’s biographer noted “God being here *for you*” has greater comfort in our position as His dear children.

Jesus spoke this truth for us at different times and ways, but the one we most often recall is associated with His ascending “farewell” message, which we often refer to as the Great Commission. Jesus says: “Lo, I am with you always to the very end of the age.” This presence is promised through the sacred means of grace for His baptized followers. Jesus instructs the Church to teach all the baptized to observe all that He commanded them to do so that He might be present forgiving sins, bestowing life and granting salvation. This is God here for you in the most complete and comforting way possible.

So, the Church of our Lord awaits His visible return not in fear and loneliness, but with a presence that is real and intimate through water, word, bread, wine and one another. Cherish this presence, which the devil will never get to know. As you seek to fulfill your role in support of baptizing all nations more and more of your neighbors will get to experience that their same gracious God is here in this corrupt world for them as well.

Glenn R. Obenberger

Bethany Lutheran College

Bethany Lutheran College will celebrate Commencement on Friday, May 8, at 10:30 a.m. at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in downtown Mankato. Family, friends, alumni, and members of the campus community are warmly invited to join in honoring the Class of 2026 and this significant milestone in their lives.

The Honorable Paul Gunderson, a 2007 Bethany Lutheran College graduate, will deliver the commencement address, offering reflections as graduates prepare to step into the next chapter of their vocations and lives.

Tickets are not required for this event, and all are welcome to attend. For additional details, please visit the Commencement webpage at blc.edu/commencement.

Plzen, Czech Republic Extended Visit

Beginning on April 8, Pastor and Mrs. Sparley, who lived in Plzen, Czech Republic from 1991 to 1997, where he served as missionary and pastor, will be in Plzen for the rest of April and most of May. He is specifically there to monitor the religion classes of the school, specifically 3rd through 8th grade—10 sections of classes—in order to strengthen the teaching of Christian (Lutheran) doctrine. Jan will also be a part of this effort as well as observing in the younger grades, K through 2nd. This is in response to the 2025 synod convention resolution (see *Synod Report 2025*, p. 128, res. 2). Pastor Sparley will also look into the possibility of our cooperation, both in regard to the congregation and the school, with the two pastors of the Czech Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran) who have since then come to work in the area, with whom we have been in conversation for the last three years. Pastor Martin Vršický, director of the school, which has 320 students, who continues to serve both the congregation and school, will also be participating. The prayers of ELS members are requested for the success of this effort.

ELS Convention Registration

Pastors and delegates should complete registration for the ELS convention as soon as possible. The convention will be held June 21-25 in Mankato. For more information and to register, visit www.els.org/convention.

Youth Convention

The annual LYA Convention will be held in Cincinnati, Ohio July 23-26. For more information and to register, visit www.els.org/lya.

New Videos Available

A new video series, “ELS in Action” began in January. The videos can be viewed at www.els.org/elsinaction. Another series focusing on unity in the ELS also available, featuring President Glenn Obenberger and Vice President Mike Smith. View the videos at www.els.org/news-and-blog.

Colloquy

On Holy Monday, March 30, Part 1 of a Colloquy was conducted for the Rev. Kent Dethlefsen (former ELS pastor) and it was determined unanimously by the committee that he successfully completed Part 1. Part 2 was conducted on April 20 with the result that the ELS Colloquy Committee unanimously resolved that he 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.

Pastors Conference

The ELS West Coast Pastors Conference met April 22–23 at Saved by Grace Lutheran Church in Gresham, Oregon for study and fellowship.

Pictured (Back Row L to R): Pastor Andy Burmeister, Mr. Paul Manning, Pastors Samuel Gullixson, Timothy Bartels, Brad Kerkow, President Glenn Obenberger. (Front Row L to R): Pastors Robert Lawson, Jr., Joe Burkhardt, Cody Anderson, Matthew Lehne, Ed Bryant, Peter Bockoven, Roger Emmons, Steven Brockdorf. Seated: Seuss.

