

Pastor Timothy Hartwig Accepts Call to be Seminary President



Timothy Hartwig, a 2001 graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, has accepted the call from the ELS Board of Regents to be the next president of that institution. He replaces President Gaylin Schmeling, who became the seminary president in 1997. Pres. Schmeling is retiring at the end of the current academic year.

Rev. Hartwig has been pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato, Minnesota, since 2011. From 2001–2011 he was pastor of Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Lake Havasu City Arizona. In addition, Rev. Hartwig has served the synod on the Boards for Evangelism and Home Outreach and as a circuit visitor and synodical vice president. He will be installed as seminary president in June at the Synod Convention.



Installation of Phillip Lepak at Hartland and Manchester Lutheran Churches,
February 27, 2022

Upcoming Events

- April 1 – Reports due for the *Book of Reports and Memorials*
- April 26–27 – Great Lakes Pastoral Conference
- April 28–29 – West Coast Pastoral Conference
- May 9–10 – ELS Board of Regents
- May 11 – Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Commencement
- May 12 – Board of Trustees
- May 13 – Bethany Lutheran College Commencement
- May 18 – Great Plains Pastoral Conference
- June 26–30 – Synod Convention



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President's Newsletter



Office of the President

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Dear Members and Friends of the ELS:

The war in Ukraine is front and center in our news consumption these days. You may have become increasingly fearful of such threats as nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare. The work of Christ's Church may seem pointless in the face of such fears. It is not, of course. The work of the Church carries on until the very end of the world, because Satan's kingdom will never overcome her. The Christian Church in Ukraine and Russia is doing what the Church has done down through the millennia regardless of wars, pestilence, famines, etc. It preaches Christ and Him crucified to the dying world around it. Do not be discouraged in your work my fellow Christians. Read these words (vv. 10–22) from Psalm 33 and pray the Gospel-based prayer in the last verse for your strength and comfort:

The LORD wrecks the plan of the nations. He hinders the intentions of the peoples. The plan of the LORD stands forever. The intentions of his heart stand through all generations. How blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose to be his possession.

From heaven the LORD observes. He sees all the children of Adam. From his throne room he looks at all the inhabitants of earth. He alone is the one who shapes all their hearts. He understands all their deeds.

No king is saved by the great size of his army. No hero is rescued by his great strength. You cannot rely on a horse to save you. Its great strength will not deliver you.

Look, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who wait for his mercy. He will deliver their souls from death. He keeps them alive in famine.

Our souls wait for the LORD. He is our help and our shield. Yes, in him our heart rejoices, because we trust in his holy name. May your mercy, O LORD, be on us, even as we wait confidently for you.

In Jesus' name,

Glenn R. Obenberger

Ukraine Crisis Fund

Our Christian brothers and sisters in Ukraine are in need of our support. First and foremost, they need our prayers to God for peace and security. There is also a very great need for humanitarian assistance as the war continues to destroy lives and property. The ELS Board for Christian Service has established the Ukraine Crisis Fund to aid our brothers and sisters in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church and the Gift of Life program as well as other Ukrainians in need. To contribute to this fund, go to els.org/donate. Checks may be sent to ELS Ukraine Crisis Fund, 6 Browns Ct, Mankato MN 56001. The current amount collected for the Ukraine Crisis Fund exceeds \$80,000.

Update on Gift of Life in Ukraine

This is the latest news regarding the Gift of Life program in Ukraine:

Nick and Kerry Laper returned to the U.S. at the end of February directly from Egypt without being able to return first to their home in Ternopil, Ukraine. As you can imagine, they have been busy non-stop with phone calls to the Gift of Life staff in Ukraine as they assess danger levels, continued working conditions and planning for humanitarian relief.

The Board for Christian Service started a Ukraine Crisis Fund to receive offerings for humanitarian aid in Ukraine. This aid will be distributed through the efforts of some ELS members who have contact with third-parties in Poland. They, together with the contacts in Poland, are working hand-in-hand with the Gift of Life personnel to see that aid gets to those who truly need our help and are suffering much because of this war.

The Ukrainian government has notified able-bodied men that they may be called up to military service. This could affect a number of the Gift of Life workers. At the same time, the Gift of Life personnel are evaluating how they might resume some of their activities when and where it is safe to do so.

We know that God always holds his people in his hands to watch over them and bless them. We thank all of you for your prayers and support. We continue to pray that the Lord will bring these tragic events to a close and the process of healing and restoration can begin.

Rev. Thomas A. Heyn
Administrator, ELS Board for World Outreach

Convention 2022

The 2022 Synod Convention will be held on **June 26–30**. The theme will be “Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word.”

- All items for the *Book of Reports and Memorials* for the 2022 Synod Convention are due by **April 1** to the synod’s secretary.
- Please register your delegates by **April 8** so they may receive their committee assignments in advance of the convention. Information as well as the link to registration is available at <https://els.org/convention/>.

2022 Home Mission Conference

The 2022 Home Mission Conference was held in Hudson Oaks, Texas, on February 14–15 and was hosted by the mission congregation, Divine Mercy Lutheran Church, and Pastor James Kassera. Those arriving Sunday night were invited to a Super Bowl party at the Kassera home. On Monday, President



Obenberger gave an update, Dr. Brian Klebig presented on video production tips, and our Evangelism and Missions Counselor (EMC), Brad Kerkow, presented an assessment tool to gauge the mission-mindedness of a congregation. On Tuesday EMC Kerkow led a discussion on the Clifton Strengths of the missionaries, the Board for Home Outreach (BHO) chairman, Pastor Ben Wiechmann, led a round table discussion on BHO and missionary communications. The Tuesday afternoon outing included a tour of Divine Mercy’s sanctuary under construction in Weatherford and then a tour of the Dallas Cowboy’s NFL stadium in Arlington.

Welcoming New Members

On February 27, Parkland Lutheran Church conducted the Rite of Closing of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Yelm, Washington, and the Rite of Welcoming New Members to Parkland. The membership records were given to the Rev. Steven Sparley as the Circuit 12 Visitor and pastor of Parkland Lutheran Church. Our Redeemer and Parkland finalized their merger on February 26. All the Our Redeemer members were invited to transfer their membership to Parkland.

Here is a snippet of God’s grace at Our Redeemer over the past forty-four years: Our Redeemer has been served by 1 mission pastor, 5 full time pastors, and 6 vacancy pastors. According to the church records book, 218 souls have been baptized, 134 members have been confirmed in their baptismal grace, 40 couples have been married, and 30 souls have been given a Christian funeral. Our Redeemer Lutheran School has been served by no fewer than 16 teachers and 5 principals.

Pictured are those that were able to be present for the welcoming rite that day. Seven others were unable to attend.

