



WELS NATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON

LUTHERAN LEADERSHIP

JANUARY 16–18, 2023
HILTON CHICAGO

WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership is for all people—men and women, called workers and laity, young and old—who are passionate about the mission of Christ's Church. Through a series of keynotes, breakout sessions, panel discussions, and collaborative opportunities, attendees will receive encouragement and edification as they seek to do all they can with the gospel.

LUTHERANLEADERSHIP.COM



Choosing WNCLL Presentations

Hello, brothers and sisters.

There will be 50+ presentations at the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership (WNCLL). We understand it might be hard to read through their descriptions online and keep them straight in your head. So, our hope is that this document helps as you decide which presentations you would like to attend. You can print this and mark it up. Then, when you go to register, you will know exactly which presentations you are picking.

Allow me to explain the differences between the presentations, the various types of breakouts that we have offered, and ways your congregation might maximize what it takes from the WNCLL.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

The WNCLL has five keynote presentations, held on the first and last day of the conference. These keynotes are intended for every attendee. They deal with a variety of “big-picture” strategic and cultural topics and address challenges that virtually every congregation is facing. To maximize engagement, the WNCLL steering committee has attempted to structure these keynotes to have different presentation styles: single presenter, tag-team presenters, group activity, TED talk-style, etc.

Please note that some of the keynotes have corresponding breakout sessions where you can explore that topic a bit more if you so desire.

BREAKOUT PRESENTATIONS

There are 47 breakout presentations. Attendees choose their top five in the registration form. We ask you to provide three alternative choices, in the event that a top-five choice has reached capacity.

The breakouts are narrower in scope. Some are niche, applicable only to certain congregations or individuals. And the breakouts fall into a number of categories.

- Some of the breakouts are very tactical in nature, sharing “best practices” in various congregational ministry areas: discipleship, evangelism, worship, school and early childhood ministry, stewardship, etc.
- Some of the breakouts are designed to provide church leadership training and development. They aim at helping church leaders strive for better planning (both long and short range), better plan management, and better governance.
- Some of the breakouts focus on how to exercise Lutheran leadership and provide a Christian witness in the world *outside* of church. These are designed to help encourage and guide Lutherans as they seek to live out their calling in their secular place of work or as they engage with unchurched friends and neighbors.
- Some of the breakouts are mostly devotional in nature. They will fix our eyes firmly on the one true Leader of the Church and give us the strength and courage that comes from his promises.

BREAKOUT PRESENTATION “TRACKS”

As you read through the breakout presentation descriptions, you will note some crossover. This is by design. It is easy to construct a breakout presentation track that allows a congregation or individual to dig into a topic extensively. Here are five examples.

Example A – PLANNING & OPERATIONS

An individual wants to focus on improving congregational planning and operations. There are multiple breakouts that deal with that topic. That individual might choose the following breakouts:

- 8. Creating a Congregational Communications Plan*
- 14. Effective Mission-Driven Meetings*
- 21. Leadership Skills Used in Industry and Ministry*
- 26. Moving the Needle – What Matters in Ministry*
- 29. Plan, Execute, Evaluate*

Example B – LEADERSHIP & TEAM DEVELOPMENT

A congregation wants to focus on identifying leaders, building them up for ministry, and creating a strong culture of partnership and ownership among congregational leaders. The participants from that church might choose the following:

- 11. Culture Shifting – How to Make It Happen*
- 17. Force-Multiplied Lutheran Leadership*
- 20. Leadership Matters – How to Identify and Develop Leaders*
- 36. Strengthening Your Ministry Teams*
- 40. The Relationship Between Lay Leaders and Called Workers*

Example C – SCHOOL & ECM MINISTRY

Church and school leaders want to produce a long-range plan for elementary education that uses the school for outreach while remaining economically viable. They might choose to attend:

- 28. Opening Minds to Closing the Funding Gap – Financial Sustainability in Our Schools*
- 34. Safeguarding Our Schools*
- 38. The Least of These – Implementing Child Protection Policies*
- 42. They're Here! Now What? – Connecting School and ECM Families to Your Church*
- 43. Tools and Guidance in Times of School Teacher and Leader Vacancies*

Example D – WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

An individual or congregation knows they want to make better use of the gifts and skills of women in biblically appropriate ways. They might consider attending:

- 4. Balancing Our Roles in Family and Church*
- 15. Empowering Your Members to Serve*
- 23. Living in Godly Wisdom – The Pressure on Women to Have It All*
- 32. Rethinking Congregational Governance*
- 33. Rethinking Congregational Partnership – Men and Women in Mission*

Example E – YOUTH RETENTION

An individual is extremely concerned about the stream of youth and young adults leaving the congregation. He or she wants to think through how to attempt to stem this tide and reach out to the younger generation. There are multiple breakouts on that topic:

- 1. All Aboard! A Congregational Approach to Youth Ministry*
- 9. Critical Theory – the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*
- 18. Intergenerational Ministry That Works*
- 46. Who Am I? – The Crisis Among Teens Today*
- 47. An Honest Conversation with WELS Teens – Panel Discussion*

You get the picture.

- If you want to really focus on evangelism and outreach, there are eight breakouts that pertain to that.
- If you want to study and improve upon what happens in your church's worship, there are five breakouts that touch on that.
- Do you need to focus on financial stewardship, perhaps even hold a capital campaign, in order to fund a building expansion? There are breakouts on all of that.
- Are you burnt-out or depressed, making it a struggle to carry out all your God-given vocations? There are a half-dozen breakouts that could provide spiritual and emotional encouragement.

The point? You can certainly pick and choose from the breakouts however you desire. You could look at five very diverse topics. However, the breakouts have been designed so that if you or your congregation wants to focus intensely on one area of ministry, you can easily do so.

CONGREGATIONAL DELEGATIONS

Precisely because the breakouts cover such a wide variety of topics, some congregations might choose to send a delegation: someone who will attend all the worship breakouts, someone to attend the leadership development breakouts, still another to attend the school-related breakouts, etc.

With a congregational delegation, when the conference is over, there is a "critical mass" of congregational members who can discuss the bigger strategic issues covered in the keynotes. But there are also individual leaders who have new tactical ideas for their area of ministry. One WNCLL 2020 attendee wrote the following on their exit survey: "We had a group of six come from my church. What we learned will definitely shape our next ministry plan." (The WNCLL website outlines rebates that will be provided to congregations that pay to send three or more attendees.)

WHY SO MANY?

It is a lot of presentations. But every congregation is different—different challenges, different people, different priorities. The WNCLL steering committee wanted to make the conference something that is beneficial for every congregation and/or individual.

Last time I had a few people say to me, "It was hard to sit through that many presentations. Maybe there was too much." Our view is that as long as people are going to invest the time and finances to travel to this conference, we are going to pack those forty-eight hours as full as possible. But attendees are entirely free to do what is most comfortable to them. If you attend every keynote and breakout, that's ten presentations. If you want to attend eight or nine instead, that is totally fine. I promise we will not have the conference police come and knock on the door of your hotel room.

IN SUMMARY

We put in a lot of time planning the 2023 WNCLL, because we wanted it to be as valuable as possible to you, your congregation, and your ministry efforts. To maximize on that, it will help to do some planning of your own, charting the course of your time at the conference. I pray this document helps you to that end.

I am so looking forward to seeing you in Chicago!

Your servant in Christ,

Rev. Jonathan Hein

Coordinator, WELS Congregational Services

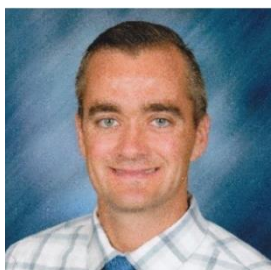
BREAKOUT - 1

All Aboard! A Congregational Approach to Youth Ministry

Who in the congregation is responsible for youth ministry? The pastor? A talented lay leader? A church board or committee? A teacher or staff minister? What if the answer were "all of the above"? A congregational approach to youth ministry intentionally incorporates youth activity and service into as many facets of congregational life as possible. Young people have the potential to enhance just about every avenue of ministry in a congregation or school when given the opportunity, and the blessings they bring can extend far beyond young people and their families!

In this session we describe a congregational approach to youth ministry developed at St. John's in Wauwatosa and discuss the impact a vibrant youth ministry can have on other areas of congregational life like outreach, community service, and the relationship between a church and school. Other topics of discussion include identifying and recruiting lay leaders who have the gifts for youth ministry, suggestions for incorporating youth activity into different facets of ministry, funding youth ministry, and a general template for building a youth ministry program that has a strong focus on service in the church. We conclude with a variety of other practical suggestions and resources for enhancing youth ministry in many different settings.

Rev. Kyle Bitter



Pastor Kyle Bitter served at St. John's in Wauwatosa from 2013-2022, when he accepted a call to teach religion and foreign language at Luther Preparatory School. During his time at St. John's, Pastor Bitter oversaw community outreach, worship and music, and youth/young adult ministries as well as teaching religion and coaching at St. John's Lutheran School. In his free time, he enjoys running, cycling, music, and various home improvement projects.

Mrs. Dana Leyrer



Mrs. Dana Leyrer has served as a K5 teacher at St. John's in Wauwatosa since 2000. Prior to that she taught kindergarten at Atonement Lutheran in Milwaukee. At St. John's, Dana has been involved with youth ministry since the program began in 2014. Her four children have participated in youth ministry as teens, and Dana has served as a chaperone on six mission trips to three different destinations. Dana also coordinates numerous school programs that connect with youth ministry in different ways.

BREAKOUT - 2

Panel Discussion: All Things Christian Worship

The new *Christian Worship* hymnal is the result of approximately a decade of work. A multitude of committees—hymns, psalms, rites, Scripture, technology, etc.—brought together over ninety individuals with different areas of expertise. These worship leaders have provided our church body not just with a hymnal, but a large suite of carefully curated worship resources: a complete psalter, new altar book and agenda, commentaries on the Propers, devotional materials. There are also powerful tech resources: *Christian Worship: Service Builder* and *Christian Worship: Musician's Resource*. The prayer is that this assortment of resources allows every congregation to carry out Lutheran worship with excellence, regardless of their setting (e.g., new mission start or 150-year-old church) and situation (e.g., multiple musicians or none).

Due to *Christian Worship* being new and to the volume of resources that were shared, you and your congregation may still have questions. In this presentation, you will have the opportunity to bring those questions to a panel consisting of leaders of the Hymnal Project. Some of your questions may be practical. Others may be philosophical. All are welcome! The panel will demonstrate how *Christian Worship* is designed to foster joyful unity in worship, prayer, and praise. Participants will also have a chance to learn from each other, not only from the panel.

All members of the panel are pastors who served on the hymnal project's Executive Committee, joined by NPH's Jeremy Bakken.

- Michael Schultz was the hymnal project director. Last June he began serving in a new call at Faith, Tallahassee, Fla.
- Jonathan Bauer did much of the research on modern songs to include and wrote the chapter on worship and outreach for the forthcoming *Christian Worship: Foundations*. He also authored *Commentary on the Propers Year C*. He serves at Good News, Mt. Horeb, Wis.
- Caleb Bassett chaired the project's Technology Committee which steered development of the *Service Builder* program and the *Musician's Resource*. He serves at Redeemer, Fallbrook, Calif.
- Jon Schroeder chaired the project's Scripture Committee, responsible for the new lectionary and its supporting liturgical elements. He also authored *Commentary on the Propers Year A*. He serves at Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga.
- Bryan Gerlach is director of the Commission on Worship.
- Jeremy Bakken is Director of Worship and Sacred Music, Curricula at NPH. He served on the project's Hymnody Committee.



BREAKOUT - 3

Ask and You Shall Receive: Fundraising for Your Ministry

For many Christian leaders, asking for money is among the least favorite aspects of their work. Cultural norms of privacy around money create headwinds to cultivating the spiritual gift of generosity. At the same time, the United States has an unprecedented culture of philanthropy. So, why is this so difficult?

In this dynamic session, Josh Birkholz, international fundraising leader and author, who has also served several WELS affiliated ministries as a volunteer, will try to make it easier. Expect practical tips supported by research and experience to raise money for important work and to care for your donor community.

Mr. Josh Birkholz



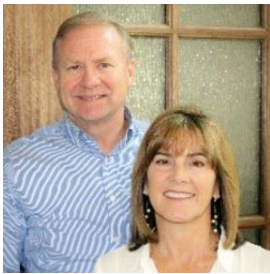
Josh Birkholz is the CEO of BWF, an international fundraising company providing consulting, services, and technology to leading nonprofits, universities, and healthcare centers around the globe. He is the author of the books, *Fundraising Analytics* (Wiley 2008) and *Benefactors* (Wiley 2022). He is the chair of the Board of the Giving USA Foundation. He is an instructor at the Rice University Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership. He is an elder at Bloomington Living Hope Lutheran Church, Vice Chair of the Kingdom Workers board, and a donor to several WELS affiliated ministries. He makes his home in the Twin Cities area with his wife, Tracy, and three daughters.

BREAKOUT - 4

Balancing Our Roles in Family and Church

Church leaders and their spouses have a unique challenge that requires constant prayer, effort, and attention. They serve their own families and the greater people of God. Both vocations involve people, lots of them! It's intense and every decision has great ramifications for human beings who are the apple of God's eye. In this workshop, Mary and Don will discuss the core values every church leader must follow in order to be a blessing in both family and church. With gospel promises and principles we can be a light shining in a dark place that doesn't burn out while we hold out the light of life to for others near and far.

Rev. Don and Mary Patterson



Pastor Don Patterson has served Holy Word Lutheran Church in Austin, Tex. for over 30 years. In those years he has mentored 23 vicars, two staff ministers and many lay leaders. He has written *Bible Basics* and *Rising with Jesus* (a 365-day devotional). He and his wife, Mary, have led marriage retreats across America and in Sweden. He has spoken at leadership conferences, men's and women's retreats as well as pastor and teacher conferences. In the north Austin area, he has been instrumental in planting six new WELS congregations. He currently serves as the district president of the South-Central District of the WELS. He and Mary have raised four boys who are active lay leaders in their own WELS congregations. They have five grandchildren. Don's hobbies include raising beef cattle, hunting, and biking. His greatest passion is to teach God's word and watch the light go on in people's hearts for the word of truth found there. Mary has been a residential realtor for more than 20 years. She loves exercise, biking, and landscaping. She organized and led women's retreats for 12 years and loves to share her personal prayers with hurting saints. Together, Don and Mary host weekly small groups and Don has a daily Facebook Live video devotional watched by friends all over the world.

BREAKOUT - 5

Building a Foundation to Reach Your Community

Our schools, churches, and ministries grow only with God's blessing. As we seek to reach more people, many opportunities present themselves to aid our earthly efforts: marketing plans, branding (and rebranding), strategic planning, social media, new websites, Google ads, enrollment funnels, demographic studies, program development, retention strategies, open houses, community networking... to name just a few.

How do you know where to start? What are the best uses of your ministry's precious resources... and your precious time? And which items are really necessary to reach more people?

This presentation will:

1. Break down the six foundational needs of reaching people in your community.
2. Prioritize those needs to guide decisions and resource allocation.
3. Identify the concrete steps to meet each foundational need.

Participants will walk away with a clear understanding of where to start, what to spend, and how to build a strong foundation for reaching their communities.

Mrs. Dana Kirchoff



As a strategic growth consultant, Dana Kirchoff helps organizations reach more people with their missions. Before starting her own consulting firm, Dana spent seven years with Divine Savior Ministries in Doral, Fla., first as Director of Communications and then as Vice President of Marketing and Growth. While she was there, the ministry grew from one campus to a multi-ministry organization with five campuses.

Dana now consults with ministries all over the country. She helps them take concrete steps to reach their unique communities through strategic planning, community research, brand development, and marketing. Her clients are primarily schools, churches, and ministries in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Dana lives in Appleton, Wis. with her husband Ryan, a teacher at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, and two children, Campbell and Ezra.

BREAKOUT - 6

Christian Giving Now and for the Future

God's gifted people, motivated by Christ's love, overflow in generous giving when we understand the different ways to offer gifts according to our abilities and interests. This presentation gives pastors and church leaders options and resources for helping WELS members with their regular, special, and legacy gifts. Topics will include biblical principles, how offerings are used for ministry, technology and vendors for weekly offerings, gifts of assets, planned gifts, and practical resources. There will also be time for group discussion and idea sharing. Rev. Kurt Lueneburg and Mr. Adam Goede have a combined 35 years of experience with WELS Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG).

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg



In fall 2005, after 21 years of serving congregations in Memphis, Tenn., and Cannon Falls, Minn., Kurt started serving as a WELS Christian giving counselor in the Minnesota and Nebraska districts. In January 2013 he began serving as WELS' director of Christian Giving. As a counselor, Kurt greatly enjoyed the opportunity to meet God's gifted people, hear their faith stories, and nurture them in our Lord Jesus Christ. He felt it was a blessing to see the Spirit compel them to bring thank offerings to our Father who graciously gives all of us one blessing after another in Christ. Now as director he is privileged to encourage Christian giving through a team of Christian giving counselors and support staff, and to assist district presidents, circuit pastors, and Ministry of Christian Giving district chairmen as they help congregations grow their mission offerings. All

to God's glory and by his grace! Kurt and his wife, Susan Ann, live in Ixonia, Wis., and worship at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Watertown, Wis.

Mr. Adam Goede



Adam attended one of our synod's ministerial education high schools, Luther Preparatory School, and received his bachelor of arts in communicative arts from Wisconsin Lutheran College. He was blessed to do an internship with WELS that led to a part-time job at Northwestern Publishing House while in college, and then to a position as supervisor in the Ministry of Christian Giving office in 2004. In the Christian Giving office his primary role is producing communications aimed at encouraging Christian giving. As he's worked with Ministry of Christian Giving to encourage others with Scripture, he's enjoyed his own spiritual growth—learning to trust in God for all things so that he can joyfully use his possessions to love others and share the good news of Jesus. He and his wife, Stephanie, have four children and live in

Milwaukee, Wis. They attend St. John's Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa, Wis.

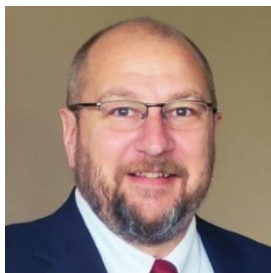
Congregation at the Crossroads: Five Questions for a Challenged Church

Everyone knows that overall church membership has been in decline for a half-century. Now think of how that translates into the reality for individual congregations. Many churches are contracting to a size which challenges their existence. In one decade, the number of WELS congregations that average 50 or fewer in worship has grown from 27% to 45%. Currently, almost 200 WELS churches have 25 or fewer people in worship on an average weekend. The reality is that each year more and more church leaders are asking questions like: How long can we hold on? Should we see if another church will share their pastor part-time? Can we find a retired pastor who will serve us? What happens if we close?

Generally, those not the right questions. They confuse the means and the end. In the Church, the end is the glory of Jesus Christ and the execution of the mission he gave—to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth. Congregations and their ministry efforts are the means to that end. When a congregation comes to an existential crossroads, the correct questions are ones about mission, not survival.

In this breakout discussion, we will walk through five questions challenged congregations need to prayerfully consider. There are zero preconceived notions of what will result as congregations answer these five questions for themselves. It will vary from location to location. Some congregations may decide to redevelop their ministry efforts. Others may decide it makes more sense to merge with another congregation in some fashion. Still others may elect to close, thanking God for the many years he gave to the congregation, but believing it now wisest to put their human and financial resources into other gospel efforts. These churches will make very different decisions. However, the decisions will have something in common. They will all be made to the glory of God, precisely because the congregation asked the right questions.

Rev. Jonathan Hein



Jonathan is a 1997 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Upon graduation, he was assigned to a home mission in the Charleston, S.C. area. In his twenty years there, he helped start two congregations. He has served as chairman of the South Atlantic District Mission Board as well as a member of the Executive Committee of WELS Board for Home Missions. In 2014 he was called to be the director of WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling. In that capacity, he works with congregations and schools to assess and plan gospel ministry efforts. In 2017, his duties expanded to include serving as coordinator of the six commissions that make up WELS Congregational Services: Congregational Counseling, Discipleship, Evangelism, Lutheran Schools, Special Ministries, and Worship. Jonathan is married to Rebecca, who teaches in their home congregation in Waukesha, Wis. They have two sons, Caleb, who works in finance, and Joshua, who serves in our nation's Air Force.

BREAKOUT - 8

Creating a Congregational Communications Plan

The Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw said, “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” In many congregations, leaders think the bulletin blurb or verbal announcement after worship are enough to get the needed information out there. The question is, was the information actually received? Generally not. So there is only an illusion that communication has taken place. That’s a problem. Many other challenges congregations face—from a lack of volunteerism to a general apathy about ministry—stems from poor communication.

Good communication takes careful planning and hard work. It requires a plan that follows all the rules and utilizes all the tools of good communication. In this breakout, that’s exactly what we’ll discuss. Participants will learn the best ways to communicate with different groups. They will walk away with an understanding of how they can create a system for effective communication within their congregation.

Mrs. Wendy Kuschel



As a former TV and radio news anchor, reporter, and producer, Wendy is St. Mark Ministries’ Senior Communications Coordinator. Her duties include managing their website, writing the weekly e-newsletter and press releases, overseeing video production (writing of scripts and fronting videos), and creating content for their social media platforms. When she is not communicating behind the scenes for St. Mark, she is singing with the praise band, coaching cheerleading, or home raising her 3 young daughters with husband Kurt.

BREAKOUT - 9

Critical Theory: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

What is a Christian to make of our current culture? It seems like the world has gone crazy! Itching ears (2 Peter 4:3) seem to believe anything no matter how absurd. We are as polarized as ever, and the threats to stability seem to grow by the minute. It is tempting to become tribal and fall into an "us versus them" attitude, but this is a spirit of timidity (2 Timothy 1:7). This breakout session will explore some of the philosophical underpinnings of our current culture, especially critical theory. We recognize that most movements have some truth to them, but every movement is flawed because we are sinful humans. Therefore, we will discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly of our current culture with charity and repentant humility. We will explore these questions with this goal: to declare the gospel as clearly as possible to people of every tribe, language, people, and nation (Revelation 5:9) because only the gospel has the power to save and change hearts (Romans 1:16-17).

Rev. Dr. Michael Berg



Rev. Dr. Michael Berg teaches theology at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee, Wis. where he teaches courses on Worship, Apologetics, Martin Luther, World Religions, and Christ and Culture. He is the author of *Vocation: The Setting for Human Flourishing* (1517), *The Baptismal Life* (NPH), and an upcoming volume on Worship from 1517. Mike is married to Amanda who teaches at St. Philip's Lutheran School in Milwaukee. They have three daughters: Abigail (a sophomore at WLC), Noelle (a junior at WLHS), and Sophia (an 8th grader at St. Philip's).

Cross-cultural / Multi-cultural / Intercultural: Which One Works for You?

As ethnic minorities grow in number around our congregations, we often ask the question: What can we do to share the Gospel with them? This presentation—geared towards any member in the congregation—will help you identify which one of the three tracks you put your train on to get out into the mission field and share the Gospel. Do you have questions about ethnic minority ministry in your congregation? This presentation will equip you with the questions you can ask to find the answers that will best suit your ministry.

Rev. Timothy Flunker



Pastor Timothy Flunker has experienced all three realities in ethnic minority ministry. He lived and worked cross-culturally in Puerto Rico and Mexico. He worked multi-culturally in Phoenix, Ariz., Garden Grove, Calif. and rural Wis. He has also pioneered intercultural ministry in Yakima, Wash., Waukegan, Ill. and Detroit, Mich. His role as the Hispanic outreach consultant for the Board for Home Missions has him helping congregations who are missions as well as self-supporting congregations ask the right questions so that they can find the answers for their ministry.

BREAKOUT - 11

Culture Shifting – How to Make It Happen

Your congregation, like any organization, has a culture. It can either help or hurt you as you go about the work in your ministry. You get that, and you want to change your congregation's culture. But you've got a lot of questions:

- What's it going take to make that happen?
- Who does what?
- How do we get started?

Organizational culture is changed collectively, one person at a time. That means culture change is both an individual and a team sport! In this breakout, Kurt will lead an exercise to help you explore what that means and then go over five culture-shaping principles to help you plan and start your organization's culture-shifting journey.

Five Principles of Culture Change

1. Know the Journey
2. Leader Led
3. Watch the Bs, Change the Ts
4. Ensure Critical Mass
5. Evaluate Artifacts

Mr. Kurt Nitz



For more than 20 years, Kurt Nitz has been leading culture transformations that enable organizations to achieve previously unattainable results. He currently works as a consultant focused on organizational culture shaping and has facilitated culture workshops worldwide, including in the US, Italy, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Malaysia.

Kurt is the co-developer of the *Everyone Outreach* program recently launched by the WELS Commission on Evangelism.

Kurt currently serves on the WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling and the WELS Long Range Planning Committee. He and his wife Kristin are members of Christ Our Savior Lutheran in

Rockford, Mich.

BREAKOUT - 12

Depression and the Church Leader

Mental health challenges are on the rise. Being a church leader doesn't mean you are immune. Some studies have indicated that the rate of depression for clergy is close to double the rate in the average population. Sin and its consequences impact our physical, spiritual, and emotional lives. Pastor (and depression-sufferer) Luke Italiano from Amazing Grace Lutheran in Florence, Ky. will discuss what it's like to be a church leader with depression. He will be joined by Dan Nommensen of Christian Family Solutions, the WELS-affiliated agency for Christian counseling.

You will hear firsthand how a leader in the church can be impacted, recognize the lies of depression, and appreciate how joy can once again be experienced in ministry. Dan and Pastor Italiano will describe important resources available for leaders and those they serve. You will learn how to get started on a grace-based approach to encouraging and loving people who struggle with mental health and wellness.

This breakout is not just for church leaders who might be struggling with some level of depression. It is for church leaders who want to learn how to help others with depression, so that we can heed St. Paul's direction. "Encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Rev. Luke Italiano



Rev. Luke Italiano has served as a pastor for eleven years, serving at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Kenosha, Wis., and currently serving at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in Florence, Ky. He graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 2011. He was diagnosed with clinical depression in 2014. Since then he has presented on depression in church leadership and written about suffering with depression and finding hope in Christ. He currently lives in Kentucky with his wife and an insanity of children. (A group of children is called an insanity. Trust me.)

Mr. Dan Nommensen



Dan Nommensen joined Christian Family Solutions in 1999. He received his BA from Wisconsin Lutheran College and his MA in Counseling Psychology from Trinity International University. Dan has provided mental health services for called workers and has been involved in developing and presenting numerous educational presentations/programs on topics related to called worker care.

He is currently the director of Community and Congregational Services. Dan is a licensed professional counselor in Wisconsin and Minnesota. He is a nationally certified counselor, a board certified telemental health provider, and a board certified professional Christian counselor. He is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors and the

Employee Assistance Professionals Association.

BREAKOUT - 13

Doing Good to All People: The Crucial Role of Compassion Ministry in a Congregation's Plans to Reach the Community

For many years Christian congregations almost universally enjoyed a good reputation in their communities. People tended to view the church as beneficial, an institution that does a lot of good. As fewer and fewer people claim to be Christians, that's changing. More and more people see the church as irrelevant or even harmful. Too many today view Christians not as loving, caring people you can trust, but as annoying, preachy, judgmental hypocrites.

Did we do this to ourselves? Is it possible that we have been so concerned with contending for the truth that we have neglected loving people in need? Have we been so focused on carrying out the Great Commission that we have forgotten Jesus' encouragement to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the prisoners? The mission of the church is clear: Preach the Word. Proclaim the gospel to all creation. How does showing compassion to those in need fit in with that mission? How might it even serve the mission of making disciples?

In this presentation we will discuss the theology of compassion ministry and how it can serve the mission of the church. We'll also explore examples and best practices for carrying out an active ministry of compassion in a local community. Participants will leave this sectional with ideas and encouragement for implementing or improving compassion ministry in their congregations.

Rev. Dan Sims



Dan Sims is a 1997 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Upon graduation, he was assigned to Risen Savior, a new mission in McFarland, Wis. In 2002, he accepted the call to serve Zion in Columbus, Wis. While at Zion, he also served as the secretary of the Western Wisconsin District. In 2016, he moved to Manitowoc, Wis where he served as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church. In 2020, he accepted the call to be the first pastor to serve as director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief. Pastor Sims also served on the executive committee of the WELS Hymnal project.

Dan has been married to his wife Jennifer for 26 years. God has blessed them with three children: Marcus, George, and Josie. He enjoys camping, hiking, reading, cooking, movies, music, Formula 1 racing, and spending time with family and friends.

Rev. Ryan Kolander



Ryan Kolander is a 2016 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Before graduation, he served in various mission settings both in the US and abroad. In 2016, he was assigned to Palabra de Vida in Detroit, Mich. As he works with the gospel in a diverse community, he's noticed the incredible impact that acts of compassion have on connecting with people. In 2022, he served as an essayist for the WLS Symposium on Compassion Ministry.

Effective, Mission-Driven Meetings

How long do your church meetings last? (In many congregations, two to three hours is normal.) When you walk out of those meetings, do you feel you accomplished anything substantial? Or does it sometimes feel like you're talking about the same issues month after month? Do meeting participants do anything between meetings, or does it seem like your committees and ministry teams meet and talk and not a whole lot else? The Lord calls us to steward all the resources he has provided us. That includes time. Is the time your congregation spends in meetings good stewardship? If your congregation struggles to get people to fill various committees and ministry teams, might it be because they think it is poor stewardship of their time to be involved in a poorly run operation?

In this presentation, we will see that for meetings to be worthwhile, they need to help a congregation fulfill its mission. The primary focus of this workshop will be on the Church Council or Operation Meeting, but the general principles discussed could be applied in various settings: committees, teams, ministry groups, etc. We will share sample agendas and consider what needs to be included in an agenda (and what doesn't) to make a meeting effective. We will discuss what needs to be reported (and what doesn't). We will see how, ultimately, the best meetings are simply plan management, which implies there is a good plan in place.

The prayer is that after this presentation, you will have some idea how to run meetings in such a way that they're done much more quickly and everyone leaves knowing what they have to do before the next meeting, allowing your ministry plan to get traction.

Rev. Justin Cloute



Pastor Justin Cloute had the privilege of serving a smaller mission congregation (Living Savior) in Missoula, Mont. for 16 years before moving to St. Luke's in Watertown, Wis., where he has been blessed to serve a larger congregation for four years. He also served on the WELS Campus Ministry Committee for eight years and is currently a member of the Institute for Lutheran Apologetics. He and his wife Rachel have four children and enjoy skiing, biking, and hiking. In his spare time Pastor Cloute loves consuming podcasts and racing mountain bikes.

Mr. Sean Young



Mr. Sean Young has been an active congregational member of the WELS since his adult confirmation in March of 1983. He has been working within the field of operational management in the public and private sectors with entities that are both for and non-profit for twenty-five plus years. He currently has the privilege of serving as a council member at St. Luke's in Watertown, Wis., where he has been blessed to work alongside a solid group of lay leaders as we stand together with Rev. Cloute and Rev. Redfield to share the good news of Jesus in Dodge and Jefferson Counties. He and his wife Kirsten have two grown children who live in NYC and Park Ridge, Ill. In his spare time Sean appreciates spending time playing cribbage with his bride.

Empowering Your Members to Serve

In our love for Christ and our appreciation for the gift of salvation, we want our congregations to do all they can with the gospel. But “all they can” means our churches cannot just rely on pastors, staff ministers, and teachers to do ministry. (This becomes especially true at this time of high vacancies.) Our congregations need church leaders to “equip [God’s] people for works of service, so the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12).

This workshop is designed for anyone who would like to see their church doing all the gospel ministry they can by empowering members to serve. It lays out a system where church leaders are not the only the doers of ministry. Instead, church leaders are responsible for engaging, equipping, and empowering members for ministry. (If it’s everyone’s responsibility, we know it’s really no one’s responsibility.)

In our time together, we will look at how Jesus developed disciples for ministry. Come explore time and talent stewardship in this interactive workshop. You will learn how to build an engaging, equipping, and empowering long-term, sustainable system that adds value to all your people as they live out their faith, both inside and outside the walls of your church. You will walk away from this breakout with three clear next steps and hopefully find a friend who can walk alongside you in the process. (God didn’t design us to do ministry alone.)

Lori Lorig



Lori Lorig is the passionate leader of the Faith Unleashed Consulting Team and has been activating volunteers for over thirty-five years. She served as the Coordinator of Member Ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church in Crete, Ill. from 2008 until 2015 where she first built the sustainable Member Ministry system. In 2015 Trinity was worshipping 400 each week and 399 members were actively engaged in ministry.

In 2017, with the encouragement of her husband and pastor, Lori started Faith Unleashed Consulting which serves WELS congregations, schools, and individuals through online and in-person workshops. Her signature service is an eighteen month consulting process that assists churches in designing and building a customizable system to engage, equip, and empower members. This process includes training a Member Ministry Coordinator. The coordinator serves alongside pastor(s) as the “Human Resource Coordinator.” Faith Unleashed works across the country with mission congregations to large churches adapting to sizes and needs.

Every Member Evangelism: How to Encourage and Equip People in the Pews to Reach the Lost

The American religious culture is radically changing right before our eyes. For the first two centuries of America's history, most people had experience with and interest in attending church. This is no longer the case. Today, the majority of Americans have no affiliation with any church. Many have almost no experience with church, apart from attending a wedding or funeral. Church is less and less part of people's past. They are less and less interested in it being part of their future. Studies show that most Americans do not trust churches or clergy like they once did. This is especially true in younger generations. One third of Americans under the age of thirty believe churches do more harm than good.

What does this mean for how WELS congregations attempt to evangelize the lost in their communities? It means corporate outreach efforts—congregational advertising, mailings, etc.—will be less impactful. We are promoting things—a church home, Christian programs—that fewer and fewer are seeking. Therefore, in a post-Christian nation, personal witnessing will be of paramount importance. While fewer Americans are interested in formal religion, they are still interested in exploring spiritual matters with people they know and trust. Almost eighty percent of unchurched people say they would welcome having a conversation with a Christian friend about spiritual matters. Over half of unchurched people say they would seriously consider accepting an invitation from a friend to visit church.

Our congregations will still use tools like social media to get the message “out there.” But it will be even more important that the people in the pews are encouraged and equipped to connect their unchurched friends and marshal the army of saints sitting in its pews to carry out this critical task. How do we spur our members to build relationships with unchurched neighbors? In this breakout, we will discuss why personal witnessing, and not corporate outreach, has to be the foundation of our congregational evangelism efforts. And we will look at simple ways congregations can prepare their people to be the salt and light Christ has said we are.

Rev. Eric Roecker



Eric Roecker is a 1998 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Upon graduation, he was assigned to serve Resurrection Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach, Va. where he served until 2013. While in Virginia, he served as the Adult Discipleship coordinator for the North Atlantic District and later as the district's second-vice president. In 2013 he moved to Menomonee Falls, Wis. to serve as the pastor of Pilgrim Lutheran Church. In August of 2018 he began serving as the director of the WELS Commission on Evangelism.

Eric has been married to his wife, Mary, for twenty-four years. They are blessed to be the parents of a nineteen-year-old son, Rees, and a seventeen-year-old daughter, Riley. He enjoys spending time with his family, travel, reading, and playing golf.

Force-Multiplied Lutheran Leadership

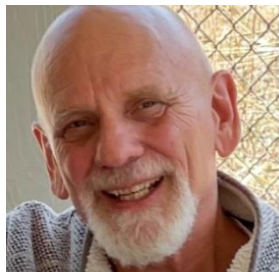
Though enjoying many new and exciting mission opportunities, our church body is facing a shortage of pastors and teachers. This current reality does not require us to lower our expectations in terms of our congregations' outreach.

The leadership of Christ Lutheran Church in Big Bend has expanded their outreach efforts by drawing on distinctively Lutheran concepts. By training and challenging the church's membership, the congregation is enjoying a "force-multiplied" ministry. Think of "force-multiplied" as $1 + 1 = 10$. This breakout session will provide participants with the opportunity to assess their stewardship of the ministry of the Church.

The ministry of the Church is the public preaching of the gospel. We will discuss how the current shortage of pastoral leadership allows for the development and platforming of lay leadership in a way that directly expands efforts to share the gospel. Mr. Chuck Ulland and Prof. E. Allen Sorum will provide illustrations and applications of a force multiplied ministry model for participants to consider.

If your congregation wants to expand your ministry efforts, it doesn't necessarily mean you need to expand the number of called workers at your church. Force-multiplied Lutheran leadership is a model any congregation can utilize.

Prof. E. Allen Sorum



E. Allen Sorum graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1983. He served as pastor of Garden Homes Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wis. for twenty-one years. For the last eighteen years, Sorum has served on the Pastoral Studies Institute and as a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Sorum earned the STM from our seminary (1995) and a DMin in Urban Missions from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pa. (1996). Leadership development has been an important pursuit and concern for all of Sorum's ministry. Sorum is also serving as a part-time outreach pastor at his home congregation, Christ Lutheran in Big Bend, Wis.

Mr. Chuck Ulland



Chuck Ulland is a small business owner with thirty plus years of business management experience. Chuck has a BS from Minnesota State University (1985) and Executive MBA from University of Wisconsin Milwaukee (1998). Chuck serves with many other Christ Lutheran leaders on the church and school's harvest strategy. In a ten-month span, the Lord blessed that strategy with sixteen adult confirmations and sixteen baptisms. Chuck is married to Jodi. Both are actively involved with community canvassing, special event volunteering, and teaching Christ's Adult Bible Information Class. This BIC is a presentation of Luther's Small Catechism. Chuck serves on church council, and Jodi volunteers as the administrator for the church database.

Intergenerational Ministry That Works

64% of Generation Z are leaving the church. They'll be gone by the end of high school. Millennial stats historically show the same. Every generation in the church is overcome with concern. What will this mean for the future? What will become of our children and our children's children?

Intergenerational ministry that works is key. In fact, it's a nonnegotiable. Connecting the generations in meaningful gospel engagement and life changing purpose is a critical component to the retention of every generation in Christ both statistically 70%+ and biblically (Titus 2:1-8).

What's your church doing about that? Like the vast majority of congregations, the desire is there, but the ministry isn't. So, what does intergenerational ministry look like—the kind that works? And can it happen at my church? Encouraging answers to these and many more questions are given in this breakout session designed for all ages, all people, and all churches big or small.

Rev. Bill Monday



Pastor Bill Monday is a 2004 graduate of WLS, originally from Cincinnati, Ohio. He served as pastor at Faith, Excelsior, Minn. for over a decade and presently serves as pastor of Family Discipleship at 922 Ministries in Appleton, Wis. Having served as the chairman for both the Minnesota and Wisconsin commissions on Youth and Family Discipleship, he has immersed himself in some of the best resources and practices for family and intergenerational discipleship. He also serves as an adviser for Reclamation, a ministry which focuses on biblical encouragement for all who struggle with same sex attraction or transgender issues.

Bill is married to Lori (Waltz) Monday of Houston, Tex. for over 23 years now. God has blessed them with four children ages 12-19: Isabel, Luther, Zoe, and Aaron. They enjoy time as a family binge watching things like the *Office*, *Psych*, or *Stranger Things*, talking about God in formal devotions or informal conversation, listening to shared mixes on Spotify, and playing games on Jackbox TV. They also like to work out, being fans of Crossfit.

Leadership in a World That Does Not Recognize Jesus

We all experience firsthand the world that we live and work in—a world that does not recognize Jesus as Lord of all creation; a world that does not acknowledge the saving work of Jesus, saving work that has rescued us from our sins and through faith promises eternity with him in heaven. And that is just the beginning. We live in a world that is still governed by the words of our Lord God in Genesis 3 to put hostility between those of the world and those who put their trust in Jesus. And we can sure feel that hostility. It is not easy. It is not fun. And it perplexes us when we try to understand what we may have done wrong to earn such treatment... perplexes until we return to God's Word and lean on Jesus instead of our own understanding.

In such a world that is openly hostile to Jesus and his followers, how are we to be effective leaders in our vocation, that station in life the Lord has assigned to us? How are we to honor our Lord with our decisions, plans, strategy, and approach when these can turn those we collaborate with against us? We all hold tight to the promise of our place being secure in the kingdom that is coming. But how do we have confidence to lead in our world when so many openly criticize what we stand for?

In this presentation, thoughts and experiences will be shared which will provide some leadership guidance in how to approach such situations and reflections that point us back to Jesus, our strength in time of need. This side of eternity there are no remedies to end such difficulties, however, we can draw lessons from God's Word and apply them as we put our faith into action in our vocation and life.

Mr. Steve Hansen



Steve Hansen is a business executive, engineering leader, and technical innovator in the medical and industrial x-ray device industry with the demonstrated ability to generate organizational vision, transform into executable plans, build and inspire team support, and deliver new and exciting commercial products.

Steve has held numerous leadership roles with increasing responsibilities including President of Nikon X-Tek Systems, Ltd. (UK), Chief Executive Officer (CEO) & Chief Technical Officer (CTO) at Tribogenics, Inc., Vice President of Research & Development and Chief Operations Officer (COO) at Oraya Therapeutics, Inc., and Vice President of Research & Development at Xofig microTube.

Previously, Steve spent 15 years at GE Medical System in various roles of technical and organizational leadership including Manager, Global X-Ray Source Engineering, and Manager, Technical Development—Emerging Markets.

A technical expert in x-ray source design, production, and commercialization, Steve has over 35 U.S. patents related to x-ray source technology and the use of x-radiation in diagnostic and therapeutic applications. Steve holds foundational green-field patents in x-ray generation and has founded a company to grow this technology. Steve has a master of science and bachelor of science in Materials Engineering from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Has been awarded the GE Dushman Award and was named the UW-Milwaukee College of Engineering and Applied Science alumni of the year. Steve has numerous performance awards and has publications on electronic thin-films.

Steve is the President of Gloria Dei in Belmont Calif. and has served as the Arizona-California district lay representative on the Synodical Council since 2012.

Leadership Matters: How to Identify and Develop Leaders to Multiple Ministry

Leadership matters. A sports team might be loaded with talented players. That team will badly underachieve if the coaches don't exercise good leadership. A company might produce a great product. With poor leadership, that company can still go bankrupt. Leadership matters. This is true in our congregations too. The Lord of the Church has called on church leaders to steward all the resources he has provided: the spiritual gifts of our members, the skills of our called workers, the offerings members provide, the precious commodity of volunteer hours. This requires leadership. Leadership matters.

Leadership has been described as the ability to influence others. In the world, leadership can be exercised by coercion and compulsion. Jesus says, "Not so with you" (Matthew 20:26). In his Church, leaders influence others through humble, loving service—the same way Christ served us. Church leaders, by encouragement and example, elicit the desire of members to pursue the noble mission Christ has given to believers. That's influence. That's leadership. And leadership matters.

This is a big miss in many of our congregations. Surveys show about ninety percent of WELS' lay leaders receive no training for whatever responsibility to which they were elected or appointed. Councilmen, elders, committee members, school boards – individuals are just dropped into the role, without a lot of explanation of how that role operates, without any discussion of the spiritual character God would have church leaders demonstrate. This will not do. Leadership matters.

In this breakout, participants will look at the importance, not just of identifying potential leaders, but providing the organizational and spiritual training needed to lead in Christ's church. You will walk away with some practical ideas of how to fill congregational positions of responsibility, not just with warm bodies, but with individuals who are full of the Spirit and wisdom.

Prof. David Scharf



David Scharf served as a parish pastor at Immanuel in Greenville, Wis., and as coordinator for the Northern Wisconsin District Evangelism Commission from 2005-2016. He now serves as a professor of Theology at Martin Luther College. He is a member of the Institute for Worship and Outreach and chairman of the Commission on Congregational Counseling. A graduate of Luther Preparatory School (1996), Martin Luther College (2000), and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (2005), Dave and his wife Beth (nee Koelpin), have six children ages 9-20.

Leadership Skills Used in Industry and Ministry

Certain leadership skills that are found in industry can also be applied to Lutheran congregations. In the space industry there is a saying: “Test Like You Fly.” This means you want to test a spacecraft in a way that replicates as much as possible what the spacecraft will experience once in space. Yet, it is understood that even when testing in this manner, engineers and pilots must take a “leap of faith” that the spacecraft will function like planned once in space.

As stated in the Gospel of St. Matthew, the Great Commission gives the Church a focus. We are to proclaim the gospel to the faithful, to pursue the straying, and to attempt to reach the lost. We plan our best ministry efforts. But then there is a “leap of faith.” We pray that our plans would work out as we hoped. But our trust is in the Holy Spirit to use our efforts to carry out his perfect will.

This breakout session will dive deeper into certain leadership skills and abilities that are developed and matured in industry but can also be used for Christ’s glory in gospel ministry.

- **Communication:** As in industry, communication is key in leading a congregation. This session will discuss techniques and examples on communication with the goal of building and strengthening relationships.
- **Quick Decisions:** Empowering people to make decisions at the level work is being performed increases the speed in which a decision is made. Empowering and equipping congregational members to do ministry in their communities and congregations and serve one another without requesting guidance or permission from church leaders is powerful.
- **Servant Attitude and Humble Heart:** Leaders that foster humility and a servant attitude, both in industry and congregations, demonstrate that they value others, seek to understand other points of view, see themselves as a work in progress, and are open to new ideas.

Mr. Chip Woods



Chip has over thirty years experience in the space industry working with Lockheed Martin. The majority of his career focused on the human spaceflight industry. In 2006 Chip was a key participant in Lockheed Martin winning the NASA Orion project, a multi-billion-dollar development contract to replace the Space Shuttle. In 2019 Chip led a team to secure the Orion Production contract to support NASA’s vision of building multiple Orion spacecraft to establish deep space human exploration architecture on the moon.

Chip has a unique set of leadership, technical, and business skills, gained through formal education (industrial engineering and masters of business administration) and hands-on experience. The space industry recently nominated Chip for the 2022 Rotary National Award for Space Achievement (RNASA). The Stellar award is recognized as a national award across all human spaceflight industry as the best of the best.

Chip has also served in many leadership roles at the WELS corporate level as well as his home congregation Zion Lutheran Church and School in Denver Colo. Since 2020, Chip has represented the Nebraska District as layman on the Synodical Council. In addition, Chip is currently serving as vice president to over three-hundred communicant members at his home congregation. In 2007 through 2015 Chip was elected president at Zion Lutheran Church and School where he led many initiatives. Chip also served as Zion’s treasurer from 2016 through 2018.

Light in the Darkness: Engaging the Unchurched through Community Involvement

In an increasingly secular world, how do we establish relationships and build bridges with the unchurched in our communities? Where is the common ground for us—the Church—and the 21st-century unbeliever? Increasingly so, for many it is no longer children's ministries or programs held on our church campus.

This workshop builds upon a vital outreach concept for us to grasp in our post-Christian nation. Churches need to be thinking less about “What do we need to do to get all those people out there into here (church)?” and more about “What do we need to do to get all these people in here (believers in the church) out there (into the world)?”

Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). This workshop will talk about innovative ways to do just that. We will explore partnering with local (secular) non-profits and volunteering in the community as a means to express the love of Christ, as well as to expand our FRAN (friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors) network. We will discuss how to better develop relationships with the unchurched and unbelieving in the community and build bridges for the gospel. One beautiful aspect of this strategy is that any church can utilize it, regardless of size. This approach is just as applicable to the group of five as to the group of five hundred.

Rev. Matt Vogt



Pastor Matt Vogt has been blessed to serve in the mission field his entire ministry. Called to start a new church (Water of Life) in Las Vegas in 1997, Matt served there for over 20 years. His ministry in Las Vegas included daughtering a second congregation in northwest Las Vegas, training pastors for and assisting in starting both a Korean ministry and an African immigrant/refugee ministry, starting a preschool/kindergarten ministry, and founding a new world mission field in Liberia. Matt currently serves as a WELS Mission Counselor, working with five districts and around 70 mission fields/congregations. His wife, Kelli, and their two boys, Noah and Caleb, still call Las Vegas home.

Living in Godly Wisdom: The Pressure on Women to “Have It All”

Google “Women can have it all.” The results are all over the place. Some cheer the notion. “*Today’s woman can be a wife, mother, and successful businesswoman!*” Others dismiss the concept as an overwhelming, pressure-packed myth. So, which is it?

In the closing epilogue to the book of Proverbs, the “woman of noble character” is described as one who is a loving and supportive wife, a dedicated mother, a thriving business owner, and a humanitarian. Yet, Proverbs 31 is not meant to induce a heavy dose of guilt. It is meant to bring wisdom for godly living and to share a delightful reminder of grace. With glimpses of Jesus, you can see what it looks like as a woman lives for his glory. Proverbs 31 is like a scrapbook with slowly turning pages. Each verse shapes your thinking as this godly woman reminisces on her faith, relationships, and opportunities. You see her love and serve and lead, and you want to follow her example. You want to encourage women as they seek wisdom to live by faith in all the vocations to which God has called them.

In this beautiful chapter, God isn’t showing you how to “do it all.” He is building your trust in his plan for your life. No hidden messages. No secret codes. This is wisdom sheathed in grace. God’s image. His priorities. His blessing. And his forgiveness. Learn about the life Jesus lived for you. Listen to his wisdom for your life.

Ultimately, the goal of this presentation is to help women think through how to maintain a Christ-centered balance in a world that is screaming, “*You can have it all! You should do it all!*” Therefore, certainly, this presentation speaks to women. However, it is also a presentation for any church leaders who want additional insight into how they might better encourage women in their various responsibilities and roles.

Mrs. Naomi Schmidt



Naomi Schmidt is an author, Bible study teacher and encourager. She has published several Bible study books: *Ruth: Living in God's unfailing faithfulness*, *Philippians: Living in the joy of Christ*, and *Proverbs 31: Living in Godly Wisdom*. She is also a contributing author to *In God's Orchard* and the WELS Discipleship curriculum, *Equip Women to Teach the Word*.

Many of her devotions, prayers, and Advent by Candlelight services are available on wels.net/women. She has served on the WELS Women's Ministry Executive Board since 2008. Naomi has been blessed with godly teachers and Christian friends that have deepened her love for God's Word. She teaches women's Bible study, serves to encourage women, and speaks at retreats and events. She enjoys meeting women and lingering over coffee with an open Bible. Naomi and her retired husband have been married over 40 years and enjoy 8 grandchildren which are a constant reminder of God's goodness!

Making It Real: Intentional Strategies for Modeling Gospel-Centered Unity

Dr. Joan Prince and Pastor Ken Fisher continue the conversation around modeling gospel-centered unity with intentional strategies for moving from concepts to reality. Dr. Prince brings years of global diversity experiences from her role as a university executive and consultant. Pastor Fisher offers his real-life experiences helping WELS organizations embrace the benefits of diversity. Together they will offer practical methods to create a sense of belonging for any community in the gospel.

Dr. Joan Prince



Dr. Joan Prince, a life-long member of St. Philip's, Milwaukee, Wis., and a graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran High School, grew up in the poorest zip code in Wisconsin and has become a global advocate for diversity. She recently retired as vice chancellor for Global Inclusion and Engagement at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. During her tenure at the university, Dr. Prince was also called to serve as the United States ambassador to the United Nations, where she occupied the US Chair in the General Assembly, delivering policy statements and traveling world-wide as an advocate for the inclusion of all people in working on global solutions for life's challenges, including racial and religious tolerance. Prior to her work at the university, Dr. Prince, a hematologist by trade, was the laboratory director of a five-hospital health care

system in the greater Milwaukee area. She holds a doctorate degree in medical science education, master's degree in Clinical Laboratory Medicine, and bachelor's degree in medical technology. Dr. Prince continues to live her faith by serving on several boards and commissions and is the incoming chair of the Siebert Lutheran Foundation board in Wisconsin.

Rev. Dr. Kenneth Fisher



Rev. Dr. Kenneth Fisher is the president of Wisconsin Lutheran High School in Milwaukee, Wis., where he has served since 2011. Prior to his move into administration at the high school, he served 12 years at Risen Savior in Milwaukee. At Risen Savior, he helped lead the congregation's effort to reach cross-culturally into its local setting growing from a monocultural ministry into a multi-ethnic congregation. This involved leading the congregation through several mission and vision planning processes that committed the congregation to reflect the diversity of the community in its membership. He graduated from Northwestern College in 1988 and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1993. He completed his Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Leadership and Ministry Management from Trinity International University in Deerfield, Ill. in 2018. His doctoral project studied the benefits of multi-ethnic diversity from a

majority culture perspective. He also serves on the board of Asia Lutheran Seminary and several other boards. His wife, Kimberly, is the principal of the east campus at Christ-St. Peter Lutheran School. They enjoy entertaining, cooking, and global travel. They consider one of their greatest joys being grandparents to Lucyana (age 10) and Ezekiel (age 8) Bravo.

Marrying Truth and Love: Preparing For and Speaking about LGBTQIA+

What do I say? Where do I turn? What do I do? How do I even figure out what questions I have?

Whether you're a parent, a friend, a pastor, a teacher, or a school administrator, you have probably asked questions like this when it comes to LGBTQIA+ issues. So many of us are trying to figure out what to do for the individuals we care about who are struggling. Other church leaders among us are trying to figure out how to care for and protect the church and school that we love. Whether speaking to individuals or administering schools and churches, we seek to marry truth and love so that the two will not suffer an ugly divorce.

Our time in this session will not be able to probe the depths of the issue or answer every individual situation that is weighing on your mind and heart. Nor will we be able to address every individual threat to your ministries. However, God-willing, you will come away with foundational biblical truths and tips for how to share them in love. And you will have an initial list of some proactive steps that ministries can take to prepare for situations that might come, so that you can get the discussions of how to handle those situations going.

Rev. Greg Lyon



Pastor Greg Lyon has been serving as a campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran College since 2015. In his role at WLC, he spends a good portion of his time offering pastoral care to individual students. He is concluding a masters of sacred theology from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary with an emphasis on pastoral care and is pursuing a masters of counseling through Bethany Lutheran College. He has completed a certificate in trauma counseling through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In addition to pastoral counseling, Pastor Lyon has been involved in writing statements and has assisted in crafting policies specifically related to LGBTQIA+ challenges. He is currently co-chairing the WELS synodical task force on gender identity. He is also a contributing author for *Forward in Christ* and an Everyone Outreach facilitator.

He is a 2010 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and has been happily married to Amy (Moll) since 2006. Together they have three children: Samuel (2011), Elliana (2012) and Addison (2016).

Moving the Needle: What Matters (and What Doesn't) in Ministry

If you've ever driven a performance automobile, you know what happens when you step on the gas. The engine roars, the RPMs surge, and the car speeds off the line with squealing tires. Every needle on the dashboard moves quickly into the red.

Once upon a time it felt like Christianity in American was redlining. Not anymore. Cultural norms are no longer normal. Cultural mores are no longer moral. You worship at your Lutheran parish. The chapel isn't nearly as full as it used to be. Our congregations are stuck in neutral; we're revving the engine—we're preaching the Gospel. Why aren't we going anywhere?

What moves the needle in a congregation? This breakout will spend time evaluating methods and forms of the past, noting that when it comes to congregational performance we're not driving grandpa's Model T. The modern congregation has all the bells and whistles of a Tesla. Maybe that's the problem. We focus on features like premium sound (worship wars), the backup camera (traditionalism), and platinum trim (institutionalism). But we seem to have forgotten how to put it in gear.

Few topics are more important to Lutheran leaders than congregational health. Whether you think your parish is a jalopy fit for scrap or a timeless classic that needs some TLC, you'll want to attend. Learn and discuss what ministry and forms of ministry are worth our focus and attention, and which others amount to little more than pious activism. Moving the needle means more than just revving the engine. It means putting it in gear and driving it somewhere.

Rev. Adam Mueller



Adam Mueller is a 1998 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. After tutoring at Michigan Lutheran Seminary for two years, he was assigned to a mission restart in Kokomo, Ind. During his twelve years, he also helped start missions in Lafayette and Greenwood, Ind. In 2012 he accepted a call to serve Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.

Besides parish ministry, Adam has served in various roles on the district level including evangelism coordinator and circuit pastor. On the synodical level, he has served on translation review teams, Commission on Congregational Counseling, and as Hymnal Introduction Program director. Several times he has presented essays for various synodical gatherings.

Adam has been married to his wife, Amy for twenty-one years. They have three children in elementary school. He enjoys hiking, playing golf, congregational renewal, statistics, big picture ideas, business, and investing.

Not Just True, But Also Good

The challenge facing our churches may no longer be the question, “Is Christianity true?” but “Is Christianity good?” The claims and demands of the Scripture often strike people as not only implausible, but oppressive. “Even if these things are true,” people reason, “they are not good.”

The response to such a challenge is not to make the church more fun, more entertaining, or more convenient, but to root out flawed assumptions embedded in our approach to ministry and to lean into the deep implications of Christian theology that we overlook in a technologically-driven and consumer-oriented culture.

This breakout session will offer analysis of significant cultural challenges facing Lutheran churches as well as a roadmap and toolkit for leaders who seek to organize ministry around key themes, important objectives, and refreshing practices that will move churches toward the goal of embodying not only the truth, but also the good.

Rev. Caleb Bassett



Rev. Caleb R. Bassett serves as pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Fallbrook, Calif. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the WELS Hymnal Project and chairman of the project's Technology Subcommittee. He has been a frequent guest panelist on The White Horse Inn, a nationally syndicated radio program and podcast on theology and culture. He is a fellow of the International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism, and Human Rights in Strasbourg, France and a member of the WELS Institute for Lutheran Apologetics.

Opening Minds to Closing the Funding Gap: Financial Sustainability in Our Schools

In previous generations WELS Lutheran elementary schools operated with low (or even no) tuition. Today, that has become challenging, for multiple reasons. First, the cost of education has risen. In 2002, WELS adopted compensation guidelines to catch called workers' wages up to inflation. Add in the rising cost of health insurance, liability insurance, and facility maintenance. Second, in some of our schools, as membership declined so did enrollment. Economy of scale was lost, further driving up per pupil cost. In many congregations, the percent of total offerings that is used to subsidize the school has grown exponentially. This raises an important question. Is this sustainable? If a congregation does not have a long-term financial sustainability plan, how does that risk the ministry of Lutheran elementary education?

In this presentation we will explore some best practices for addressing the financial sustainability of your WELS school. Participants will identify paradigms to overcome the challenges, discuss change management theory, and investigate sound financial strategies for education. Participants will leave this sectional with a plan of action to become the best possible stewards of the resources God has provided so that their school can thrive.

Mr. Paul Patterson



Paul Patterson serves as the Associate Director for WELS Lutheran Schools and the Executive Director of WELS School Accreditation. In the past, he has served as a teacher and principal in a rural, a suburban, and an urban WELS school. He graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College, received his teaching license through Wisconsin Lutheran College, earned a master of education degree from Cardinal Stritch University, and completed the Business Certificate for School Leaders from Milwaukee School of Engineering.

Plan, Execute, Evaluate: Implementing an Integrated Outreach Plan in Your Congregation

We pray our congregation would reach more people for Christ. But the reality is then we often hope that will happen naturally. It generally does not work that way. Members may be moved by the gospel to serve Christ. Without planning how to train and encourage those motivated members, they are not likely to engage in personal witnessing. The prospect couple may love that your preschool teaches their children about Jesus. Without a plan on how to encourage that couple, they are unlikely to visit your church on their own. It rarely works that way. So, it's good we pray that we would reach more people for Christ. But let our prayer be followed with careful planning, execution of that plan, and subsequent evaluation of our efforts.

In this breakout, we will discuss how to develop and execute a plan that builds a culture of outreach in your congregation, that encourages personal evangelism, and that implements harvest strategies across your congregational ministries. Come and engage in a discussion of a broad array of outreach efforts and their implementation in school and church. We will talk about building plans that integrate multiple ministries, utilize media, emphasize lay involvement, and empower the church to share in Christ's mission to call the elect to faith through the Gospel.

Rev. Jonathan Schroeder



Pastor Jonathan Schroeder was called as a church planter for the mission at Faith, in Sharpsburg, Ga. in 2001, and has served there since its founding. The Spirit has grown the church to over 600 members through adult confirmations. The preschool at Faith has over 100 enrolled and is a consistent source of new worship visitors and adult instruction attendees.

Pastor Schroeder also serves as the chairman of the Board for World Missions, the first vice president of the South Atlantic District, and the co-moderator of the Institute of Worship and Outreach. Past service includes 12 years as pastor at large on the Synodical Council (Ministry Committee chair), and member of the Hymnal Committee (Scripture Committee chair). Pastor Schroeder is the editor of the *Commentary on the Propers* volumes for the new hymnal.

Preaching for the Unchurched: Remembering the Non-Member Audience

St. Paul ask the believers in the church at Corinth to think about what they do if they are gathered for worship and “an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in...” (1 Corinthians 14:24). So, Paul tells those believers to *expect* that “non-members” will show up and to *think through* what happens in worship because of that fact.

In our WELS congregations, we hope to increasingly have “unbelievers and inquirers” visiting our worship at the invitation of a Christian friend. Over half of unchurched people say they would seriously consider accepting an invitation from a trusted friend to visit church. So, imagine WELS members take this all to heart and begin regularly inviting unchurched neighbors and family members to worship. Some of them actually show up! Now what?

What would you want the preacher to keep in mind as he preaches to these guests for the first time? Preachers, how should the presence of visitors impact your sermon preparation and proclamation? How deep can (or should?) a sermon go with listeners who know little about the Bible?

The reality is that our sermons will strive to keep two audiences in mind—church members and non-members. This presentation will especially wrestle with keeping the non-member audience in mind, but the encouragement shared will also edify the members too. Church members and preachers alike can benefit in this presentation as they seek to grow wise toward outsiders and make the most of every preaching opportunity.

Prof. Joel Russow



Joel Russow is a 2010 graduate Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Upon graduation, he was assigned to serve Faith Lutheran Church in Tallahassee, Fla. where he served until early 2022. While in Florida, he also served as discipleship coordinator for the South Atlantic District and as circuit pastor of the Gulf Coast Circuit. In January of 2022, he began serving as professor of Pastoral Theology and Systematic Theology at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He also earned a second master's degree in 2022 (STM from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) and is currently pursuing a degree in clinical mental health counseling.

Joel has been married to his wife, Jill, for fifteen years. They are blessed to have four children: Jude (13), Elijah (11), Rachel (9), and Isaiah (6). The Russows love sports, traveling, camping, and good cheesecake.

Renewing Expectations of Church Membership: The Post-COVID Challenge

Everyone who studies church culture believes that COVID-19 has changed American Christianity forever. Across the country, churches leaned heavily into technology to share the gospel. In ways it was a blessing, allowing many churches to reach more people than ever. However, it also created something new: virtual membership. Congregations have members who prefer to worship at home when they want. It no longer is because of health concerns. It is simply because they like the convenience. Approximately eighty percent of congregations have a lower worship attendance today than prior to COVID. This presents a challenge for shepherding work. A concerned friend or church elder calls on a member who hasn't been in church for months. The person replies, "It's okay. I'm watching the service at home." How do you respond?

In this breakout, we will explore how congregations can lovingly and evangelically communicate expectations for church members and their connection to the means of grace. We will look at best practices for member care in the post-COVID world. We will see how we can use technology to serve those who miss church because they are home-bound or work on weekends, without letting technology become an excuse for other members to totally avoid the assembly of the saints. We will look at how to develop a shepherding program that pursues the straying sheep lovingly, promptly, and systematically. Finally, we will talk about when church leaders simply must acknowledge that someone is not going to return to active membership and what to do in those situations.

Are you still having trouble getting members back to regular contact with Word and sacrament? This breakout helps you think through how to approach that challenge with the zeal and the love that the Spirit provides.

Rev. Donn Dobberstein



Since growing up in Lutheran parsonages throughout the Midwest, Donn served mission parishes in Topeka, Kans. and Port Orange, Fla. for twenty-two years. Additionally, he served on the Nebraska District Mission Board and South Atlantic District Evangelism Commission. In 2004, he was appointed to the WELS Commission on Evangelism and served as chairman from 2007-2017. He has presented for the WELS Schools of Outreach, Telling the Next Generation workshops, and past National Conferences on Worship and the Arts. In November 2017, he accepted the call to be director of WELS Discipleship (a merger of adult discipleship and youth and family ministry). Donn is married to Beth, an art teacher in the Palmyra-Eagle, Wis. school district where they live. They have four children.

Rethinking Congregational Governance

Here are two common challenges that relate to congregational governance.

First, many WELS congregations report having consistent trouble filling all the elected positions required by their current church constitution and bylaws. Year after year, it devolves into a hunt, not so much for people who are qualified, but warm bodies. Or congregations end up having the same people serve indefinitely just to meet constitutional requirements, which can lead to burnout or a status quo entrenchment of ideas.

A second challenge is that WELS women often feel they have no way to share thoughts about congregational ministry. In pulse surveys of over 3000 WELS women, when asked if “I am able to play a role in the decision-making process in this congregation,” about eighty percent either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree. That percentage is even higher when the question is asked of single women. While church constitutions often stipulate that the views of single women are to be heard and shared by the board of elders, in reality, it rarely happens.

For these reasons, many WELS congregations are rethinking the organizational structure and governance model of their church. These new models uphold and reinforce the biblical head/helper principles. But they also create biblically appropriate way to plan, conduct, and assess ministry that involves a much broader swath of membership. This includes the creation of more service-oriented ministry teams open to men and women, carefully crafted position descriptions that allow congregations to better utilize the broad range of gifts God has provided to women, and more use of open forums that allow all members to share ideas for and provide assessment of current ministry efforts.

What do we see in these congregations? There are more people excited to be involved in the mission of the Church and greater sense of ownership in the congregation’s ministry. There is broader consensus about the direction of the congregation. Volunteerism increases enabling greater utilization and focus of each person’s God-given gifts and abilities. The divine design of what it means to be ‘male’ and ‘female’ is honored and God’s created order and interdependence between the genders is better realized.

Rev. Jay Zahn



Jay is a 2000 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He has served mission congregations in South Carolina and Florida. As of January 2022, he's been serving as executive pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Waukesha, Wis. Leading the reorganization of the congregation has been a major focus of his initial work at Trinity. Jay has been married to his wife, Jessie, for 25 years. God has blessed them with two children, a twenty-three-year-old son, Micah, and an eighteen-year-old daughter, Susannah.

Mrs. Haley Meier



Haley is a 2006 graduate of Carroll College. She is a critical care nurse at Waukesha Memorial Hospital and teaches in the lab at Carroll University. Haley has been serving as Parent Council President for the last five years at Trinity Lutheran School in Waukesha, Wis. She also serves on Trinity Lutheran Church's stewardship committee for the last four years. Encouraging males and females of all ages in generous giving of time, talents, and treasures is something Haley is passionate about. Haley has been married for 15 years to her husband, Joel Meier. God has blessed them with three children: Colton - 12, Emmitt - 10, Lily - 6.

Rethinking Congregational Partnership: Men and Women Working Together in Christ's Mission

God is too creative to make carbon copies. Each individual is uniquely gifted. When these differences are rightly aligned, a congregation functions well. Differing viewpoints allow for better-informed decisions. Utilizing different skill sets allows an organization to better accomplish its mission. What a blessing that God has made us different. However, our cognitive and emotional differences, if not understood, can lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding.

A good partnership avoids this breakdown by each person striving to understand how the other thinks. They learn to recognize the value of perspective and expertise others bring to a discussion. It's the same in a congregation. Workers need to understand how their individual strengths intersect and communicate in a way that is properly understood. The lay leader with a God-blessed, strategic mind needs to understand his well-intentioned analysis of a ministry effort may come across to others as being critical. The pastor or principal with God-given visionary-type leadership skills needs to understand that, if they don't communicate correctly, they may be perceived as oblivious to current challenges.

The need to understand one another becomes all the more important as men and women work together in ministry. Since God designed the genders to be beautifully complementary, it means generally men and women look at things from different angles. They have different thoughts about what to prioritize and how to solve problems.

Churches often approach ministry by dividing the genders: men serve on this group; women serve on that group. Certainly, there are instances where this is necessary to uphold scriptural principles. However, there are also many gospel ministry efforts where those complimentary gifts are best used together. How can we set these partnerships up to succeed? What would be helpful to know and understand to best make use of each other's gifts? What can be done to avoid miscommunication and misunderstanding?

This practical presentation talks about how to better align the unique gifts of men and women within gospel ministry by answering these questions and sharing tips from leaders and team members serving together.

NOTE: This presentation can stand alone. However, it is also meant to be a partner presentation to the *Rethinking Church Governance* breakout. That breakout discusses ways congregations can define ministry teams and committees to allow for both men and women to serve together on them.

Rev. Ben Kratz



A 2003 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Ben has served at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Birmingham, Ala., his entire ministry. He also currently serves as a pastoral advisor to WELS Women's Ministry, as the South Atlantic District's worship coordinator, as the chairman of the South Atlantic Called Worker Conference Planning Team, and as a chaplain for the Shelby County Sheriff's Office. Ben and his beautiful bride, Emily, have seven children.

Dawn Schulz



Dawn graduated in 1996 from Martin Luther College. She taught grade school and tutored at Michigan Lutheran Seminary before moving to Canada with her husband to plant a church. There she ran her piano studio, raised her family, and served on various worship, outreach and women's ministry teams. She currently serves as chairwoman for WELS Womens Ministry. In 2017 her husband was called to Delray Beach, Fla. Here Dawn oversees the shared systems and resources as campus coordinator for Divine Savior Church. Dawn has been married to Joel Schulz for 25 years. They love talking, playing games, watching soccer, and traveling with their children, Jonah and his wife, Tatum, Elijah, and Moira.

Safeguarding Our Schools: A Panel Discussion

It's not if you get sued; it's when you'll get sued. Do you have policies and handbooks up to date? Have you talked through crisis management? When do you call a lawyer?

In our changing world, it's critical to position our schools for success while minimizing potential lawsuits. This panel discussion includes a lawyer, a former early childhood director and adjunct instructor of MLC's graduate school, and a former elementary principal and current director of our Lutheran Schools. It's intended for all levels of children's ministries, from infant through high school. The target audience is board members, lay and called leaders, and pastors.

Topics to be discussed include: handbooks, policies, harassment, discrimination, expulsions, and more.

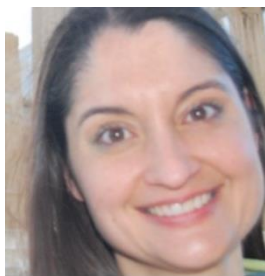
Panelists

Christopher Lambrecht is a life-long WELS member and attorney from Elm Grove, Wis. He has a passion for assisting WELS school to help them avoid litigation and minimize exposure.

Rachel Burgess is an MLC graduate of 2002(B.S.) and 2011(M.S.) Starting as a 16-year-old preschool aide in Houston, Tex., she has 20+ years of service in preschools and childcare centers in four states (Texas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin). She currently teaches six early childhood continuing education courses for MLC, including the Educational Administration Graduate Studies course EDU5324 Legal and Ethical Issues in Early Childhood.

Dave Gartner currently serves as the principal at West Lutheran High School in the Twin Cities. He's had experience with lawyers, trainings, and compliance issues and has developed a strong understanding of ingredients all schools need to have in place.

Jim Rademan spent three decades as a principal in the Lutheran elementary school and now serves as director of WELS Lutheran Schools. He's seen a wide range of examples of schools and their readiness for challenge or litigation.



Second-Career Ministry: Serving the Same God in a Different Way

It has been called “The Great Resignation.” Others call it “The Big Quit.” Starting in early 2021, Americans began walking away from their jobs in record numbers. This has happened in virtually every labor field: health care, hospitality service, law enforcement, education, supply chain management. Some are quitting to look for better opportunities. Some are quitting because of increased challenges in their field. The bottom line: historic numbers of Americans are changing careers.

Has changing careers crossed your mind? If so, have you considered full-time ministry? Have you considered that serving your Savior publicly within a congregation—as a pastor, a teacher, or staff minister—might be your next career? Lutherans cherish the Doctrine of Vocation. The Lord calls this one to be a farmer and that one to be a pastor. As both strive to carry out those callings faithfully, they give God equal glory. However, it is also true that throughout history God has called individuals to switch careers. Elisha was a farmer until God called him to be a prophet, Elijah’s successor. Peter served God as a faithful fisherman until Jesus called Peter to fish for men. Likewise, WELS has many men and women who went into gospel ministry as their second career. In some cases, at first, it seemed like a silly proposition to them—too big a change, too much of a challenge. But with God, nothing is too big. Nothing is too challenging.

If changing careers has even crossed your mind, this breakout presentation is for you. Pastor David Rosenau, whose first career was in law enforcement but now serves as a parish pastor, will walk you through the considerations. He will help you ask yourself the right questions. He will share the joys of choosing ministry as your next career. And you will learn the options and the processes for pivoting to full-time gospel ministry, where you will serve the same God in a very different way.

Rev. David Rosenau



During the five years he worked as an apprentice mortician and funeral director, David Rosenau thought he knew what he was going to do for the rest of his life. Until he started a career at a sheriff’s department. After working a little more than a year as a deputy in the jail, he was transferred and promoted to detective to work in a narcotics and vice unit. After almost seven years in the unit he was promoted to Det. Sergeant and transferred to the detective bureau working homicide and violent crime.

From hearing and reading God’s Word he knew the Lord guides all things. But he did not know how God was working in all things all along to prepare him to be the pastor that God is using him to be today. David has been shepherding the saints at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Leesburg, Fla. and reaching out to the surrounding communities since August of 2009. God has blessed David and his wife, Susan with five children and two grandchildren, and he is convinced that now, by God’s grace, he knows what he will be doing for the rest of his life.

Strengthening Your Ministry Teams

The Lord's work is far too important to let something like inadequate teamwork stand in the way. The devil wants Christian teams to fail, but when teamwork is strong, ministry can advance more powerfully and enjoyably. This session will explore ways to enhance teamwork through The Five Essentials of a Ministry Team: Trust, Positive Conflict, Commitment, Accountability, and Attention to Results.

Rev. Don Sutton



Pastor Sutton presently serves as leader of Grace in Action. He has been a parish pastor since 1979 serving both missions and large established congregations. Until his retirement from parish ministry in 2021, he served as ministry coordinator at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in New Ulm, Minn. In addition to his role as a parish pastor, he has been a leader at the circuit, district, and synodical levels. Pastor Sutton not only has a passion for ministry, but also for planning and helping leaders to be the best that they can be to God's glory as they lead fellow Christians in carrying out the Great Commission. His specialties are leadership, strategic planning, team building, and Clifton Strengths coaching.

Stretching Your Worship Within Lutheran Parameters

We Lutherans often tend to take a different view on things. What, for instance, are the distinctive aims, actions, and aesthetics of Lutheran worship? We often speak of principles of Lutheran worship. Are we inclined to think of these principles as scriptural signposts that help us in congregational life? Or are we tempted to view our principles as strictures that hinder a vibrant congregational life? A principled approach to worship comes with a significant possible pitfall: That our worship becomes stayed or stagnant. Is there, every now and then, a little bit of truth to the critique of Lutheran worship, “It’s the same thing every week!”

This workshop will encourage your congregation to spot that which is stagnant and then stretch your worship life. Where are you at? What might you leave behind? What are your next steps forward? Where is your congregation at? *...in terms of liturgy?* What should be your next step be in enriching your orders of service? *...in the singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs?* What are 12-24 musical stretches for your people to learn next year? (Resources from *Christian Worship* will be demonstrated.) *...in terms of contact with your community?* Do we conduct worship in a way that welcomes the unchurched? How might we stretch ourselves to be a more warm and welcoming congregation? *...in the use of your facility?* Does your physical structure help or hinder your worship and outreach? *...in your application of Lutheran worship principles in your specific setting?* We need to constantly strive to be more Gospel-centered, rooted, and relevant.

The goal is to keep you and your congregation stretching toward a life of worship that exchanges parish ruts for Lutheran riches! We seek to give God our best in worship. God’s people and our communities will be blessed as a result. Attendees will bring home a list of “deliverables” that can be implemented in their specific contexts.

Prof. Aaron Christie



Aaron began taking piano lessons in the fifth grade. Most expected Aaron to pursue a career in music. Instead, he chose to pursue the pastoral ministry. But music has remained a passion. While at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served on the worship committee, was student director of the Seminary Chorus, and regularly played for morning chapel services.

Aaron graduated from the seminary in 1997 and was assigned to be associate pastor at Faith in Antioch, Ill. At Faith, he served as pastor for Worship and Adult Education, directed the Senior Choir, and regularly played organ. While serving at Faith, Prof. Christie earned a Master of Church Music degree from Concordia University in Mequon, Wis. In 2010, Aaron accepted a call to Trinity in Waukesha, Wis., where his responsibilities included administration, a Lutheran

elementary school, adult discipleship, and worship. In that last capacity, he planned worship that spanned a wide spectrum of musical styles. Worship at Trinity deliberately seeks to include “treasures old” as well as “treasures new” without categorizing services according to niche musical styles. At least once a month, all weekend services are led by Trinity’s liturgical ensemble *Trinitas*, that includes piano, guitars, keyboard, instruments, percussion, and soloists. In the summer of 2020, Aaron accepted the call to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to serve as dean of chapel and professor of worship and homiletics.

Prof. Christie serves the church at large as a regular presenter for WELS Schools of Worship Enrichment, member of WELS Commission on Worship, member of WELS Institute for Worship and Outreach, chairman of the Hymns Committee for *Christian Worship*, and as guest preacher and essayist for local, district, and national conferences and conventions.

Aaron is married to Kristin, who teaches kindergarten at Salem in Milwaukee, Wis. The Christies have three grown children. Karl and Peter are enrolled at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Their daughter Anna attends Wisconsin Lutheran College. In his free time, Prof. Christie enjoys travel, reading, cooking, and fishing.

The Least of These: Implementing Child Protection Policies, Personal Safety Education, and other Reforms to Keep Safe the Children God has Entrusted to our Churches and Schools

According to the Centers for Disease Control, one out of four girls and one out of six boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18. More than one out of four children will be beaten to the point of injury and 13% will witness their mother beaten. One out of ten will be denied food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or other necessities of life for periods of time during their childhood. Maltreated children are not only impacted physically and emotionally, but also spiritually with many victims losing their faith. Even those who retain their faith often leave church—with one study finding that 10% of Protestants below the age of 35 having left the church because they don't believe the Christian community is committed to keeping children safe.

Although these facts are well known, most Christian churches and schools lack child protection policies and training or, if they have training and policies, it falls well below what child abuse experts recommend. This is true even though widespread child sexual abuse scandals in Catholic and Protestant communities have resulted in the church paying billions of dollars in civil lawsuits.

This workshop provides an overview of best practices for implementing training and policies for called workers, volunteers, children, and parents. The speaker argues that God expects us to care for the “least of these” (Matthew 25:40) and that it is sinful to wait until a child is abused in our churches or schools before we implement appropriate policies and training. The speaker also argues policies should be developed in collaboration with child abuse experts who are focused on protecting children from abuse, as opposed to lawyers and insurance companies who focus more on limiting liability.

Victor Vieth



Victor Vieth is a former child abuse prosecutor who went on to direct the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse. He currently serves as chief program officer for Education & Research at Zero Abuse Project. In this capacity, he provides training and technical assistance to child abuse prosecutors throughout the United States. Over the course of his 35-year career in child protection, Mr. Vieth has implemented significant policy reforms in the field of child protection. As a result of these efforts, the United States Department of Justice presented him with the Victim Rights Legend Award in 2021.

Mr. Vieth has worked with Christian and Jewish communities around the world to improve the response of faith communities to the sin of child abuse. He serves on the board of directors of GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment) and is current board chair of Sacred Spaces, which works to address abuse in Jewish communities. Mr. Vieth is part of the WELS special ministry on child abuse, Freedom for the Captives, and teaches the annual child abuse module at Martin Luther College. He has published numerous theological works on the subject of child abuse including a book entitled *On this Rock: A Call to Center the Christian Response to Child Abuse on the Life and Words of Jesus*.

The Possibility and Power of Small Group Ministry

Every single WELS church has small groups—smaller segments of members that come together outside of worship. It might be four men who meet for a breakfast Bible study or six women who get together once a month for fellowship. The question is not, “Should our church have small groups?” You already do, at least informally. Therefore, the real question for Lutheran leaders to ask: “How can these groups be organized for gospel ministry?”

The answer to that question is broader. WELS congregations are increasingly incorporating small groups into their ministry plan. They fall across a broad spectrum. On one end of the spectrum, some congregations use small groups simply as an additional Bible study opportunity. On the other end of the spectrum, there are congregations who utilize small groups as the primary means of knitting members together in Christian community, providing the mutual encouragement, support, and accountability that every believer needs.

Small groups are especially important for congregations seeking to retain and gain young adult members. That is a demographic that is desperately seeking the vibrant, transparent, relational setting that a small group can offer. The reality is that quality, Christ-centered small groups might very well be the most effective way to disciple young adults... and maybe even *all* adults.

This session will include practical discussion on how to start up a vibrant small group ministry program. This will include what to look for in potential small group leaders and how to train those leaders. We will also discuss how to incorporate a small groups schedule into the life of your church. (Another upside to small-group ministry is it can actually make ministry planning easier.) Finally, we will discuss how to develop good materials that generate synergy between your worship services, studies, and the fellowship life of the congregation.

Within an hour, you will go from being unconvinced about the importance of small groups to being excited in competent in running a small group ministry at your congregation.

Rev. James Hein



James Hein began his pastoral ministry in 2008 at Resurrection in Rochester, Minn. In his seven years there, through a focused effort on small group ministry, the Lord flipped the demographics of the congregation, with Millennials replacing Baby Boomers as the largest segment of active membership. In 2015, James accepted to call to serve as lead pastor at St. Marcus in Milwaukee, Wis. He and his wife Adrian are intensely passionate about urban gospel work—embracing ethnic diversity, exploring modern technology in church, and navigating the post-Christian cultural climate.

The Relationship Between Lay Leaders and Called Workers

Lay Leader. Called Worker. It's fascinating how we describe the people who serve side-by-side in God's kingdom. Those terms almost suggest that in the church lay people set the direction, and then they call and pay others to do the work of ministry. Is that really what God intended? Is it wrong if the called person is the "leader" and the layperson is the "worker"? In God's eyes, what even makes one a "worker" or a "leader"?

Satan wants to hinder gospel ministry. One way he attempts to do this is by using questions about leadership to sour relationships between called workers and lay leaders. Unfortunately, this is not a rare challenge. What's the cause? Is it a misunderstanding of respective responsibilities? Is it unrealistic expectations? Is it simply a sinful power grab? And are there preventative measures that can be taken to avoid such conflict?

Mr. John Fowler and Rev. Charles Westra have served the Lord of the Church together in a number of capacities. Both belong to and serve the same congregation in Tennessee. Both serve on WELS Synodical Council—Mr. Fowler as the chairman of the Finance Committee and Pastor Westra as the chairman of the Ministry Committee. So, in multiple capacities, they have provided each other mutual encouragement and support. In this breakout, they will discuss the relationship between lay leaders and called workers. They will talk about what pastors appreciate in lay leaders, and what lay leaders cherish about their called workers. Most importantly, they will share thoughts and tools for strengthening the vital ministry partnership between these two groups.

Mr. John Fowler



John Fowler is the vice president of North American Field Service with STERIS Corporation and has 27 years of varied leadership experience with General Electric, CompuCom and STERIS Corporation. He serves as church president at Christ our Savior in Columbia, Tenn. Additionally, he serves on WELS Synodical Council, which is responsible for managing the activities of the synod that are determined by the synod in convention. John and his wife Sarah have three children and currently reside in Franklin, Tenn.

Rev. Charles Westra



Pastor Chuck Westra started Christ Our Savior in Columbia, Tenn., which by God's grace and through Pastor Westra's leadership has grown from a small mission into a large congregation. Additionally, Pastor Westra serves as the district president for WELS South Atlantic District. He has previously served as the chairman for WELS Board for Home Missions. Chuck and his wife Debra have four children.

There Is a Time to Build

Are your ministry needs pushing the limits of your physical facilities? What needs to be considered when contemplating a building project? Where do you start? This presentation will discuss how to organize and prepare a congregation for a successful building program while avoiding some potential pitfalls. Topics that will be touched upon include:

- Ministry Needs
- Building Committee
- Finance Committee
- Architectural Selection
- Builder Selection
- Land Selection
- Building Approvals
- Site Approvals
- The Design Process
- The Construction Process
- Project Delivery Options
- Budgets
- Financing

This presentation will be geared towards congregational leaders and pastors and is designed to help them navigate a building project successfully.

Mr. Tom Schermerhorn



Tom Schermerhorn is a registered professional engineer and architect in thirty states. He has over 45 years of experience in the architectural, engineering, and construction industry. His experience includes working with nearly 75 WELS and ELS congregations on various building projects. Projects include everything from sanctuaries, fellowship halls, gathering spaces, schools, and site development. This includes new projects, additions, and alterations.

Tom's congregational ministry experience includes serving on the board of elders, youth discipleship board and president of Faith Lutheran Congregation in Fond du Lac, Wis. He also serves as chairman for the Winnebago Lutheran Academy (WLA) New Campus Committee and on the Capital Campaign Committee for WLA. Additionally, Tom serves as the Northern Wisconsin Representative to the Synodical Council where he sits on the Finance Committee, Account Oversight Committee, and the Capital Projects Committee for the synod.

Tom has been blessed to serve on building committees for both Faith Lutheran Church and WLA and work with numerous congregations as they plan facilities to serve their ministry. This experience helps him appreciate how a project works from all perspectives.

They're Here! Now What? *Connecting School and ECM Families to Your Church*

They're here! They're coming! Now what?

In recent years, interest in private education has skyrocketed. Many of our Lutheran schools and early childhood ministries (ECMs) have welcomed a significant number of new families. Large numbers of these families have little or no connection to a church. What an opportunity this has provided for mission work in our own backyard!

However, connecting to these prospect families and then connecting them with the Word takes intensive effort. Without that effort, most of these families will be content to have a purely transactional relationship with your congregation. They give you money; you give their child a good education. They want nothing more. It will not cross these parents' mind to consider having their household join your church. They do not see the benefit. Thus, the Word proclaimed to the children in the classroom is not echoed in the home.

In this presentation, we will discuss strategies that help build relationships with those prospect families, relationships that can lead to opportunities to share the gospel with both the children and their parents. This is our goal: "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD" (Psalm 78:4).

This presentation is for any congregation that has or is considering an elementary school or early childhood ministry. These strategies have roles for everyone in congregational leadership: pastors, principals, ECM directors, church leaders, teachers, and supportive church members.

Mrs. Cindi Holman



Cindi Holman serves as the WELS National Coordinator for Early Childhood Ministries. Her role includes supporting and encouraging congregations who have or are considering an early childhood ministry and those who serve in them. Cindi has a masters degree in early childhood education and a passion for young children and for helping schools and early childhood ministries share the gospel. One of her favorite responsibilities is assisting with the *Telling the Next Generation: Utilizing Our Schools for Outreach* workshops.

BREAKOUT - 43

Tools and Guidance in Times of Teacher and Leader Vacancies

WELS schools and early childhood ministries continue to operate, and many are enjoying growth at a time of high school leader and teacher vacancies. How are schools filling their leadership void? How are schools operating while being short a teacher or more? This sectional will provide both tools and guidance for dealing with teacher and leader vacancies. We'll also look at school conditions where teacher and leader attrition is low and examples of high attrition. We'll discuss what we've learned from the data and steps congregations can take in not only recruitment, but also retention of teachers.

Mr. Jim Rademan



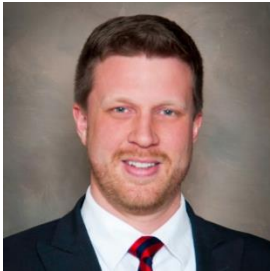
Jim served for thirty-one years as an elementary school teacher and principal in schools ranging from one room to 250 students. Since 2013 he's served WELS as part of the Commission on Lutheran Schools team. Jim has visited schools in all of our districts and has worked with veteran and aspiring school leaders. He's also become very familiar with other religious school systems through his accreditation work, and by serving as a board member for the Council on America Private Education.

Transformational Discipleship: A Holistic Rethinking of Discipleship Ministries

Most Christians experience a season of “going through the motions.” They can dominate the “Bible” category on Jeopardy, but that same faith fails to breathe in their everyday lives. What if there was a way to better connect a Christian’s head with their heart? What if church discipleship was as much about “knowing” as reawakening zeal and passion? What if we could guide every Christian towards his or her purpose and mission inside their Great Commission calling? That’s what Transformational Discipleship (TD) is all about.

TD is a process, not a program. It seeks to help believers understand how God has designed them to fit into his kingdom while walking alongside (and lifting up) others. This breakout session will introduce the concepts of TD to help orient better discipleship efforts within your congregation. We will discuss what’s working (or not working) in traditional discipleship efforts and guide participants towards a holistic rethinking of their discipleship ministries. God-willing, participants will identify toward clear discipleship targets in their congregation and walk away with a next step for rethinking the discipleship happening in their ministry context.

Rev. Ben Workentine



Ben has been a pastor for eight years, but his love for God’s people, especially those new to the faith, goes back much farther than that: to the foreign mission fields to which his father was called. His passion has always been to share Jesus with people who have no idea who he is. He now serves as Discipleship Pastor and Green Bay Campus Pastor at St. Mark Ministries. In his official capacities, he focuses his time on mentoring and small groups. Ben and Laura have been working together for two years on Transformational Discipleship. He and his wife, Kim, met during Ben’s internship year and have been married for eight years. Together they raise their two sons, Ezekiel (7) and Mav (2).

Mrs. Laura Albers



Laura began her career using her BS in Human Biology and Chemistry teaching high school science in the public school system. Completing Transformational Discipleship herself fostered her strong belief in the value of the process, and she then became the project manager of the TD ministry for St. Mark Ministries. She continues to use her MS in Curriculum and Instruction background to improve discipleship efforts in the church. Laura’s full-time job is caring for her three daughters with her husband, Mark.

What's Big Starts Small: Six Threats to the Great Faith God Wants to Grow in You

God's Word is a seed.

Jesus' metaphor explains so much about our lives of faith. Why do we often feel spiritually stuck despite our daily prayers, morning devotions, and Sunday services? Why does the Word seem to work miracles one day and seem to do nothing the next? Are we doing something wrong? Are you?

Jesus knows. In the parable of the sower, the story that gets more words in Scripture than any other that Jesus told, our Savior warned us about the six specific threats to great faith—pride, pain, worries, wealth, wanting, and not waiting—six ways that the devil, the world, and our flesh prevent the Word from working as God wants. At the same time, Jesus' story promises power and grace to all of us who long for the message to bless us in big and unexpected ways.

This presentation, based off the recently released book *What's Big Starts Small*, will help you identify the specific threats to your faith and, with the Spirit's help, protect God's Word until it grows into the harvest that our Sower in heaven always intended.

Rev. Mike Novotny



Mike Novotny pours his Jesus-based joy into his ministry as a pastor at The CORE (Appleton, Wis.) and as the lead speaker for *Time of Grace*, a global media ministry that connects people to God through television, print, and digital resources. Unafraid to bring grace and truth to the toughest topics of our time, he has written numerous books, including *3 Words That Will Change Your Life*, *Gay & God*, *How to Heal*, *Sexpectations*, and *No Fear Year*. Mike lives with his wife, Kim, and their two daughters, Brooklyn and Maya; runs long distances; and plays soccer with other middle-aged men whose best days are long behind them.

“Who Am I?” – The Crisis Among Teens Today

The pressures, challenges, and real-life problems that teens experience today could not have been foreseen by previous generations. These many problems often overwhelm teens with all kinds of feelings: of being unloved, worthless, guilty, anxious, lonely, and more. To fight this, we will look to establish and root our identity in Christ through the facts of God’s Word instead of personal feelings.

The presentation will offer real life counseling suggestions to those who work with, teach, pastor, or lead teens. Along with exploring the identity crisis among teens, this session will also offer suggestions for how to encourage teens to activate and involve them in ministry. The information for this session comes from careful research and intimate knowledge of teen life over years of ministry.

Rev. Dr. Phil Huebner



Rev. Dr. Phil Huebner was assigned from the Seminary to start a new mission church in Palm Coast, Fla., where he served for nine years. Since 2016 he has served as the campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. He received a second masters degree from our Seminary in 2016 and his Doctorate in Ministry in Missions and Culture in 2019 from Concordia Theological Seminary. His entire ministry to date has seen emphases in outreach, children, teens, and families. In his free time, he loves to travel and read and research more on the topics of families and teens. He is married to Becky, and they have two children, Noah (15) and Gwen (12).

An Honest Conversation with WELS Teens

It happens in many congregations. Members notice that the church is “greying.” They recognize that a fair number of younger members drop out of church not too long after confirmation. And so someone says, “If we want to reach younger people today, we need to...” Why do they think that would help? How do they know that? Have they actually talked to such “younger people”? A huge strategic mistake organizations make is assuming they know what their intended audience is thinking. Organizations, including churches, need to actually listen to the people they are trying to reach.

That is exactly what we are going to do in this breakout. It will bring together a panel of younger WELS members who serve as leaders in their schools and among their young peers. We will hear their thoughts about life, church, and ministry. We will ask them some key questions.

- What is the greatest challenge to your faith as a teen today?
- What do you wish adults knew about you and other teens?
- Why do you think so many young people are leaving the church?
- How do you think churches can better utilize teens and young adults in their congregations?
- What is your vision for serving the Church in the future?

We will listen to the thoughts of these fellow believers so that we might plan how to better retain young WELS members and to better reach out to unchurched and unbelieving teens with the gospel.

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