



# Pacific Northwest DISTRICT

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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## District President's Update

### Missionaries' Conference at Cross of Christ in N. Nampa, Idaho February 7-9, 2023

Dear Fellow Servants in the Pacific Northwest,

Data will come out soon summarizing synod wide CMO commitments and the statistics that were submitted. The deadline for both was this past weekend. Thanks be to God for giving his people the willingness and the means to support the WELS' worldwide gospel ministry so generously. And thanks to all our pastors who assisted in meeting this deadline. I believe we hit 100% with our PNW CMO subscriptions and all but one or two with our stats. Thank you... and thanks to Chris Ewings for his gospel encouragement in gathering this info.

Thanks to those who organized (CS) and presented at the Lutheran Leadership Conference. Thanks also to those who attended from the PNW. There was a very respectable representation from our district. Clearly, the distance from the PNW to Chicago presented attendance challenges for many. For those unable to attend, please find the conference materials at <https://lutheranleadership.com/2023-conference-materials/>

Planning for the 2023 synod convention is underway (July 31-Aug. 3 at MLS in Saginaw, MI). The convention theme will be "Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown." The essayist for the convention will be DP Phil Hirsch. 1<sup>st</sup> VP Jim Huebner will preach at the opening service. The convention will discuss and adopt the synod's two-year ministry financial plan (budget), recognize and declare fellowship with churches from Uganda and Latin America. Several bylaw changes will be considered (timing of appeals), and reports will be shared by areas of ministry and synod entities.

A committee will soon be appointed to plan for the 2025 celebration of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the synod's founding in 1850.

The COP was informed by Christian Family Solutions of the growing need for Christian counselors. Further discussion will take place on how this might be accomplished.

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At their March meeting, the COP will continue the study and discussion of the restatement of the synod's doctrinal statement on the roles of men and women.

The COP reviewed the number of vacancies for pastor-trained positions. That number continues to grow, reminding us of the need not only for increased recruitment of young men but also of the need for men serving in other careers to consider the pastoral ministry as a second career.

A loving reminder to all our pastors, especially those who work with the confirmation and high school students in our churches. Don't forget to hold out MLC as a nice option for teen musicians, actors and student-athletes. Many times, a high school graduate won't know for certain where they would like to attend college. Pointing students to MLC for their gen-eds while enjoying extra-curriculars can be an option to some. The Holy Spirit can use Christian friends and Christian education to draw young adults to his full-time kingdom service as pastors and teachers. In our recruiting efforts for MLC we don't want to leave any stone unturned when it comes to finding young people with the potential for ministry. While we go about our work, let's identify and encourage sons and daughters who could be future workers in God's harvest fields.

Pastors Year	Vacant Parish Positions	Total Pastoral Vacancies
2013	45	55
2014	55	64
2015	62	77
2016	85	98
2017	98	115
2018	106	121
2019	107	128
2020	122	136
2021	113	136
2022	141	156
2023	157	174

The COP called Mr. Sean Young to serve as a Christian giving counselor for the Northern Wisconsin District and Mr. Terry Helton to serve as a Christian giving counselor for the Michigan and North Atlantic Districts. Sean Young returned his call. The COP will soon re-issue this call as well as extend calls for replacing Jim Behringer (Special Ministries) and John Hartwig (European Chaplain).

In the 2022 RTTD, there was a paragraph under the COP Report that addressed *Retaining the Lutheran character of our worship* as it pertained to our prayerful efforts of opening 100 missions in 10 years. The COP chairman summarized that he doesn't want the "Lutheran character of our worship to be lost or eroded." COP, Sem and BHM personnel would meet to discuss characteristics "while at the same time upholding the Christian freedom that we enjoy." Our seminary and the BHM would work to "provide assistance to new missions" accordingly.

Reactions at district conventions varied. Some were positive and supportive. Others asked questions and discussed it. Our own PNW District was the only one to submit a memorial to the COP, written by Floor Cmt. #1 and adopted on June 8, 2022. In short, the memorial asked if the characteristics, principles and applications could be shared and that they "avoid legalistic requirements" for our new missions.

The COP discussed this topic again in their October meeting. The PNW memorial was also shared. It was agreed at that time, that the chairman of the ad hoc committee would provide a summary once all the participants could meet again and finalize things. Over the past week I asked for an update. This update won't vary much from their conclusion. There is no desire or intent to mandate worship styles. At the very most, there is and will continue to be an encouragement to maintain the Lutheran character of our worship (broad parameters) without a legalistic approach. The desire is that the gospel is proclaimed clearly, and the sacraments are rightly administered.

Practically then, things that are not so Lutheran would be written confessions of sins that aren't so clear or absolutions that are sloppy at best and in rare circumstances, not doctrinal. Helping mission planters, who lack

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the personal gifts or resources, to identify easy-to-sing, Christ-centered hymns with instrumentation other than an organ would be another goal of the committee. Mentors and coaches are being discussed. Are there role models available across the spectrum who have thought through the “what’s and why’s” of Lutheran worship? Do some vicars return to Sem with a predetermined mindset, “I like the way that guy does worship so I’m going to automatically do it that way?” Do seniors leave for their first assignment thinking, “This worked well (whatever they define as well) for that mission planter in their state and community, so I’ll adopt that style in my state and community?” Or do pastor-missionaries determine what’s best within the local context of their own call, state, and community *after* they get there and learn the history, core, and community – together with what they’ve been taught? Using Christian freedom, even denying our personal preferences when deemed wise for the gospel’s sake, is a Lutheran characteristic (ironically, a concern in the PNW memorial).

So that worship in our new missions can retain Lutheran character then, the committee foresees:

- Possibly providing additional, simple, scriptural resources where small missions might otherwise struggle to find them (or create them on their own).
- Hoping to expand mission planter coaches whose practices are a bit more varied.
- Continuing to train our pastors to understand and respect the history of Lutheran worship.
- Always understanding that what serves well in Mequon won’t necessarily serve well in Memphis.
- Reminding each other that while worship practices are matters of adiaphora, not all adiaphora are wise, loving, and beneficial. A pastor’s personal preferences might also need to be “checked at the door.”

We pray that all our pastors, especially inexperienced mission starters, carry their Sem training with them and then discuss these and all issues with their circuit brothers, circuit pastors and district presidents. Mission planters will want to listen to their mission counselors also (and coaches if applicable). They have experience and stand ready to offer balanced encouragement. If we honor and incorporate these attitudes and practices, the hope is that we will retain the Lutheran character of our worship, so the gospel is clearly proclaimed to all.

This serves as the COP’s final answer to the PNW District regarding their June 2022 memorial. Once the committee ties a bow on their work, they may offer a written summary, perhaps even in the upcoming BORAM. I will also forward information, materials, or updates when I receive them. Thank you.

To the topic of continuing education and spiritual growth, the Pacific Northwest District is hosting two upcoming opportunities for pastors. Both have been sent to your inbox in the past 24 hours. The Annual Men’s Retreat at Fort Warden St. Pk. in Port Townsend, WA (Apr. 21-23, 2023) will study and discuss Lutheran Apologetics. Prof. Mark Paustian will lead this retreat. The biennial Grow in Grace week will be held with pastors and teachers together at Evergreen LHS in Tacoma, WA (June 12-15, 2023). 2-day and 4-day registrations (pastors) are available to accommodate schedules. Dr. Wade Johnston will lead a study of Galatians and then Romans. Please see both brochures for further information, registration and congregational sharing. Questions can be directed to Andy Schwartz (Men’s) and Daniel Lange (Summer Qt.). All pastors are encouraged to attend.

## **District Vacancies**

### 4 PNW Pastor Vacancies

- Immanuel LC in Salem, OR (Caleb Schultz, holding)
- Beautiful Savior LC, Everett, WA (Jeremy Cares, holding)
- St. Paul LC, Tacoma, WA (Kenneth Rodrigue, holding)
- TILM, Nampa, ID, Spanish Pastor-Missionary (Chris Ewings, holding)
- *Holding calls elsewhere: Aaron West to Victory LC in Lexington, KY;  
Brad Snyder to Pilgrim LC in Minneapolis, MN*

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## 5 PNW Teacher Vacancies

- Faith LS in Tacoma, WA (Principal, Gr. 7-8, Michael Paulsen, holding)
- Immanuel LS in Salem, OR (Gr. 4-5, Athletics, John Kaesmeyer, holding)
- St. Matthew LS in Spokane, WA (Gr. 3, Tech, Benton Witte, holding)
- Christ the King LS in Bremerton, WA (Gr. 5-6, calling Feb. 12)
- Christ the King LS in Bremerton, WA (Gr. 7-8, calling Feb. 12)
- *Holding calls elsewhere: Jacob Biebert to Trinity LS in Marinette, WI (Principal)*
- *Accepting since Fall Report: Vinny West-Hallwas and Josh & Stephanie Roth all to Michigan Kristine Job (Kind.) and Sara Lange (Gr. 5) to Holy Trinity LS, Des Moines, WA*

## **Upcoming Events**

February 7-9, 2023	PNW Missionaries' Conference, Cross of Christ, N. Nampa, ID
March 16-17, 2023	Spring Teachers' Conference, Grace, Portland, OR
March 27-30, 2023	Spring COP Meetings
April 21-23, 2023	Annual Men's Retreat at Fort Warden State Pk., Port Townsend, WA
May 11-12, 2023	MLC Assignment Meetings, New Ulm, MN
May 13, 2023	MLC Commencement and Call Services, New Ulm, MN
May 23-24, 2023	WLS Assignment Meetings, Mequon, WI
May 25, 2023	WLS Call Service
May 26, 2023	WLS Graduation
June 3, 2023	Evergreen LHS Graduation, Tacoma, WA
June 12-15, 2023	Continuing Education Week, ELHS, Tacoma, WA
July 31-Aug. 3, 2023	WELS Synod Convention, MLS, Saginaw, MI
Oct. 3-6, 2023	Fall COP Meetings
Oct. 18-20, 2023	Fall P-T Conference, Centralia, WA, Cascade Conference
Oct.-Nov.??, 2023	ACPAT at ??????, Alaska Conference
Jan. 7-11, 2024	Winter COP Meetings
Jan.-Feb.??, 2024	Missionaries' Conference at ????????

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May God continue to bless your labors in his kingdom!

*Serving our Savior Together,  
Pastor John W. Steinbrenner,  
PNW District President*



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