



# Pacific Northwest DISTRICT

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

**District President**  
**Rev. John W. Steinbrenner**  
13278 W. Fig Street  
Boise, ID 83713  
(208) 375-3992 office  
(208) 921-4748 cell/text  
[pnwdp@wels.net](mailto:pnwdp@wels.net)

**First Vice President**  
**Rev. Daniel F. Lange**  
30405 Blaine Ave.  
Black Diamond, WA 98010  
(253) 740-7326 cell/text  
[pastorlange@lightoflife.us](mailto:pastorlange@lightoflife.us)

**Second Vice President**  
**Rev. Geoffrey C. Cortright**  
8111 Laval Pl.  
Vancouver, BC V5S 4B1  
(604) 910-3236 cell/text  
[geoffcortright@gmail.com](mailto:geoffcortright@gmail.com)

**Secretary**  
**Mr. Ryan J. Schmeling**  
6626 Radiance Blvd E  
Fife, WA 98424  
(715) 220-1442 cell/text  
[rschmeling@elhs.org](mailto:rschmeling@elhs.org)



## District President's Update Fall Pastor-Teacher Conferences (ACPaT) Shepherd of the Hills LC, Anchorage, AK October 30-31, 2023

Dear Fellow Gospel Servants in the Pacific Northwest,

Psalm 103:1-5 *"Praise the LORD, my soul;*

*all my inmost being, praise his holy name.  
Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits —  
who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,  
who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,  
who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."*

Redeemed, restored, and forgiven, we are loved and satisfied with good things from our Savior-God. Thank you for praising God's name and joining to share in the work of proclaiming the gospel in your churches, schools and communities throughout the Pacific Northwest.

## Congregational Work

WELS delegates gathered at MLS in Saginaw, MI, for the **2023 synod convention**. Celebrating under the theme *"Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown"* delegates discussed and adopted the synod's two-year ministry financial plan (budget), declared fellowship with churches from Uganda (Obadiah Lutheran Synod) and Latin America (Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional), and ratified several bylaw changes (timing of appeals). The full **2023 Proceedings** are located at <https://welsconvention.net/> where one can find all reports, floor committee resolutions, minutes and much more. One printed copy of the Proceedings is being mailed to each WELS congregation and all convention delegates. These booklets were scheduled to arrive by now (October).

Some still ask about the **Lutheran Leadership Conference** materials. These can still be found at <https://lutheranleadership.com/2023-conference-materials/>

*† Bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington †*

The COP extended a call to Rev. Michael Hatzung to serve as a **Christian giving counselor in a half-time** retirement call. The COP always considers the pastoral shortage balanced with the position's work when trying to fill these vacancies. This time, for a full-time vacant Christian giving counselor position, we are **trying to call a qualified layman** rather than a pastor. A notice for nominations was issue last week.

**We rejoice** that through two-thirds of 2023, **CMO gifts** from God's people across WELS was \$14.54M, a little higher than gifts for the same period last year. We thank the Lord for continuing to move his people to generously support Christ's gospel work through our synod. To this end, please take note of the following **deadlines** and share them with your church admins and councils:

- the deadline to remit **CMO gifts for 2023 is Monday, January 8, 2024.**
- the deadline for **submitting 2024 CMO subscriptions is February 2, 2024** (platform is open now).
- the deadline for **submitting 2023 Stats is February 2, 2024** (please don't wait to the last minute).

**Mergers and Closings** – the COP talked again about how congregations can assist our church body when they find themselves near a church in our fellowship, and both could be amply served by one pastor, that they kindly consider merging/closing. After considering all the mission and ministry issues, such a decision could be a loving act of kingdom stewardship.

Last year I shared the idea of a **triennial calendar for synod events** that might make the rhythm of planning big conferences (Conv., Wor., Educ., Youth) more efficient while spreading out the intervening years' district events. The concept is still floating, but perhaps losing traction (my opinion). Pros and cons are still being discussed.

### Doctrinal Statements

The COP doctrine subcommittee continues to study and lead discussions of the restatement of the synod's doctrinal statement on the **roles of men and women.**

The 2023 Synod Convention asked the COP to provide a pastoral brief on **critical race theory and justice.** Such a document is intended to provide everyone with biblical, evangelical, and pastoral guidance on this subject matter. It was agreed to appoint a committee of those who study and deal with this topic regularly. The hope is to have some initial material available prior to 2024 District Conventions next summer.

### Called Worker Information

Much of the COP Called Worker Cmt.'s recent work regarding **ministry certification** centered on **Early Childhood.** Teaching ministry certification is available to and encouraged for all early childhood teachers, called or hired. A distinction is to be noted for local certification (state, local congregation only) and synod-wide certification (able to be called anywhere). Finally, the Early Childhood Ministry Task Force is working toward producing a **resource document for ECE** leaders, boards, district coordinators and district presidents to build awareness and offer strategies on how to efficiently run an ECE program while meeting the needs of staff, parents, and children.

Per the Synod Convention, the COP approved the formation of one **Ministry Recruitment Task Force** to work with BME. The goal is to

WELS 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	150	162

*† Bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington †*

have data and ideas to report to the 2024 District Conventions and, ultimately, to increase the number of candidates for the public ministry. Meanwhile, we will continue to pray for workers and trust God to provide.

Currently, aside from internal growth plans, our WELS schools in the **PNW** have **0 teacher vacancies**. However, the teacher calling window has just opened (Sunday, October 15, 2023 – Monday, April 15, 2024). Some of our teachers have already received calls to serve elsewhere. There are **0 pastoral vacancies in the PNW** at present as well. Pastor Paul Krueger just accepted his call to the new mission start in Idaho Falls, Idaho (Christ Alone LC) and Pastor Ben Schmudlach was just installed at Grace LC in Kenai, AK, Oct. 25. Like our teachers, a few PNW pastors are holding other calls. Per our recent practice, the COP will observe a **pastor call hiatus** from mid-December to Jan. 10 to allow for seasonal focus and rest from deliberations for both pastors and congregations.

**District Worker Changes since October P-T Conferences 2022** (please share corrections with me)

11.26.22	Teacher Vincent West-Hallwas to St. Paul LS in S. Haven, MI, Princ. – Gr. 5-8
12.2.22	Teacher Kristine M. Job to Holy Trinity LS in Des Moines, WA – Kindergarten
1.22.23	Teacher Josh Roth to St. Paul LS in Livonia, MI, Principal
1.22.23	Teacher Stephanie Roth to St. Paul LS in Livonia, MI, Gr. 3
1.28.23	Teacher Sara Lange to Holy Trinity LS in Des Moines, WA – Gr. 5
4.2.23	Teacher Kelly West, renewed prov. call to teach Gr. 1, 1 yr., St. Matthew LS Spokane, WA
4.15.23	Pastor Benjamin Phelps (Associate) to St. Matthew LC in Marathon, WI
4.15.23	Teacher Molly Phelps (Daycare, ECM Teacher) to St. Matthew LS in Marathon, WI
4.15.23	Pastor Michael Borgwardt to Beautiful Savior LC in Everett, WA
4.17.23	Retired Pastor Mark Kock to Divine Peace LC, Renton, WA; Retirem. 1 yr.
4.21.23	Teacher Dyllan Jensen to Faith LS in Tacoma, WA (Principal, Gr. 7-8)
4.21.23	Teacher Elizabeth Jensen to Faith LS in Tacoma, WA (Gr. 1)
5.13.23	MLC – Teacher Jonah Plocher to CtK LS in Bremerton, WA (PTP, Gr. 5-6 Departm)
5.13.23	MLC – Teacher Amanda Kant to CtK LS in Bremerton, WA (Gr. 7-8 Departm)
5.13.23	MLC – Teacher Benjamin Washburn to Holy Trinity LS in Des Moines, WA (Upper, SSt.)
5.13.23	MLC – Teacher Avery Broyles to St. Matthew LS in Spokane, WA (Gr. 3)
5.25.23	WLS – Pastor Joel Hopper to St. Paul’s LC in Tacoma, WA
5.25.23	WLS – Pastor Matthew Swanson to Immanuel LC in Salem, OR
6.2.23	Teacher Stephanie Wetzel to Messiah ECM in Nampa, ID (1 yr., less than ½ time)
6.4.23	Teacher Kaylee Swanson to Immanuel LS in Salem, OR (Gr. 4-5)
7.8.23	Pastor Dan Kramer to Crown of Life LC in New Orleans, LA
8.20.23	Pastor Tao Nguyen to Peace in Jesus LC in Boise, ID (Vietnamese)
8.6.23	Pastor Benjamin Schmudlach to Grace LC in Kenai, AK

**District Worker Appointments**

Pastor Paul Bourman to the Distr. Mission Bd., accepted
Pastor Justin Gran to Circuit Pastor of the Idaho Circuit, accepted
Pastor Erich Neumann to Distr. Evangelism Coordinator, accepted
Teacher Joe Schmudlach to Distr. Nominating Cmt., Cascades Conf., accepted
Teacher Justin Eternick to Distr. Bd. of Appeals, accepted
Pastor Chris Royce to Distr. Constitution Cmt., accepted
Pastor Bart Brauer to Distr. Constitution Cmt., accepted
Pastor Aaron West to Distr. Constitution Cmt., accepted

**† Bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington †**

## Reminders for Pastors and Teachers - **WELS Cloud Information for Called Workers and Schools**

Please make sure the information in your WELS Cloud (<http://cloud.wels.net/me>) **Profile** and **Self-Assessment** forms is current. Teachers should update these forms at least annually (or more often if circumstances warrant). These forms build your Personal Biography and are essential for WELS benefits and call purposes. Personal Biographies are not editable but can be viewed under **Reports** in your WELS Cloud dashboard. School Principals and ECM Directors should also update the **School Information Form** annually. Contact [support@wels.net](mailto:support@wels.net) or (414) 259-4357 for WELS Cloud account log-in assistance. [Lutheranschools@wels.net](mailto:Lutheranschools@wels.net) can answer any questions about completing WELS Cloud forms.

**Resource Information for Teachers and Schools** - Information for a variety of resources, including contacts, newsletters, devotions, statistics, and more are available in the General Documents folder on the publicly available Lutheran Schools Resource Center (<http://cls.welsrc.net>). For assistance or questions please contact [lutheranschools@wels.net](mailto:lutheranschools@wels.net).

## Important WELS and PNW Dates-Events

Oct. 18-20, 2023	Fall P-T Conference, Centralia, WA, Cascade Conference
Oct. 19, 2023	Principals' Meeting (at Conference)
Oct. 29-31, 2023	Joint Reformation / ACPaT at Shepherd of the Hills, Anchorage, AK, Alaska Confer.
Jan. 2-5, 2024	Winter COP Meetings
Jan. 26, 2024	Principals' Meeting, Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA
Feb. 6-8, 2024	Pastors-Missionaries' Conference at Faith, Anchorage, AK
Mar. 14-15, 2024	Spring Teachers' Conference at Christ the King, Bremerton, WA
April 3-5, 2024	Spring COP Meetings
April 26-28, 2024	Annual Men's Retreat, Ft. Worden St. Pk., Port Townsend, WA
May 16-17, 2024	MLC Assignment Meetings, New Ulm, MN
May 18, 2024	MLC Commencement and Call Services, New Ulm, MN
May 21, 2024	WLS Assignment Meetings, Mequon, WI
May 22, 2024	WLS Vicar Call Service, Mequon, WI
May 23, 2024	WLS Vicar Call Service, Mequon, WI
May 24, 2024	WLS Graduation, Mequon, WI
June 1, 2024	Evergreen LHS Graduation, Tacoma, WA
<i>(each year following ELHS grad.: in even years – Distr. Conv. is the next T-W; in odd years – Cont. Educ. Wk. is the next wk.)</i>	
June 4-5, 2024	PNW 54 <sup>th</sup> Biennial District Convention, Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA
June 25-28, 2024	WELS National Youth Rally, Ft. Collins, CO
Oct. 8-11, 2024	Fall COP Meetings
Oct. 28-29, 2024	ACPaT at Christ LC, Juneau, AK

District Web: [welspnw.weebly.com](http://welspnw.weebly.com) District Admin Ass't, Deb Arstein – [deb.arstein@cochoise.org](mailto:deb.arstein@cochoise.org)  
District Secretary and Treasurer - [rschmeling@elhs.org](mailto:rschmeling@elhs.org)

May God continue to bless your labors in his kingdom!

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



**† Bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington †**