

2022 Report to the Twelve Districts

WELS Commission on Discipleship

Our Calling

What is a “disciple?” Simply, it is a believer responding to Christ’s invitation, “Come, follow me.”

The WELS Commission on Discipleship exists to strengthen the connect of God’s people to Christ and to one another. To that end, our mission is **“to provide resources, encouragement, and training to assist congregations and their ongoing walk of faith.”** Because that walk of faith spans the totality of life, our calling encompasses ministry to all members of the Christian family in their unique callings: men and women, young children, teens, college-age and young adults, singles, parents, marriage spouses, etc.



At the Present

Marriage and Family Resources

Studies have shown there is a correlation between what happens in the homes of our members and congregational health. Every week, Commission on Discipleship provides a variety of resources in support of that important goal including:

- Regular **WELS Family Devotions** – published three times a week and including age-appropriate discussion questions, the 400-500 word devotions are meant to strengthen the family as parents engage their children in God’s Word and prayer. Congregations are encouraged to download them to their websites, share on their social media, or print for church/school families.
- **Marriage Moments** – sent out every Monday, these 2-minute videos strengthen the marital connect between husbands and wives—just a single thought from God’s Word to deepen their marital relationship. Christian homes benefit greatly when Christ is part of a couple’

Youth Ministry

2022 WELS Youth Rally – For almost fifty years, thousands of youth and youth leaders have gathered every other year from across our church body in a large-scale event that connects them to Christ and each other. This summer’s rally is June 28 through July 1, 2022, at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN. It will include daily worship opportunities, multiple keynotes to attend, twenty-eight workshops offering something of interest for everyone, great food, recreation, and service opportunities. Some of the rally workshops will then be developed into online youth ministry resources and made available this fall to all congregations at www.welscongregationalservices.net.

For the past six years, **“Transformed” Teen Devotions** reach high school believers weekly at a critically-important age of life. Beginning this year, a **Teen Facilitator Guide** provides study helps for youth leaders to engage teens in a deeper

conversation of Scripture that connects with real life. The resource is part of a broader menu of *The Foundation* resources on WELS Congregational Services website at <https://welscongregationalservices.net/the-foundation/>.

WELS National Leadership Conference - Plans are being made to invite teens and young adults to attend the upcoming Leadership Conference this coming January 16-18, 2023, in Chicago. The message is clear: our church body values younger generations in the body of Christ and sees their inclusion as an opportunity for encouragement and training. More information will be forthcoming mid-summer.

Women's Ministry

"Won to be One" is the theme of the WELS Women's Ministry Conference at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, WI on July 21-23, 2022. Women from all walks of life are invited to attend in six different keynotes and chose from dozens of breakout groups. The conference will identify barriers of our disattached, fragmented culture that get in the way of unity. Then, with a focus on the book of Ephesians, cultivate the richness of grace and unity to stand firm in the face of conflict, and extend grace in our everyday relationships. <https://wels.net/event/2022-wels-womens-ministry-conference/>

Every congregation have women who are eager to grow in the Word and desire to share it with others but want to better balance knowing Scripture well enough to teach. **Equip Women to Teach the Word** is an online training module for congregations that want to encourage and prepare women to serve as faithful teachers of God's Word in different ministry settings. <https://welscongregationalservices.net/equip-women-to-teach/#toggle-id-1>

For more information, including how to subscribe to their bi-monthly newsletter, Advent by Candlelight resources, and an online *"Heirs Together"* Bible class starting this fall, go to <https://wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/womens-ministry/>.

A Look Ahead

The Commission on Discipleship is at various stages of development on a wide variety of programs and resources to address urgent and immediate congregation needs or long-standing ministry challenges.

Congregational Marriage Resources – A variety of online modules will be available beginning this fall including:

- A new set of *Marriage Maintenance* Bible studies. Each study comes with a short lead-in video that sets up the topic followed by an activity to put it into practice. The resource asks for a couple's commitment of time to further their conversation based on God's Word (study) and for direct marriage application (personal discussion).
- *Marriage Enrichment Module* – **"Keys to a Lasting Marriage"** is a 3-part biblical, practical, interactive marriage resource facilitated by a pastor/staff minister/or strong lay leader church leader(s). Each part has a student sheet, leader guide and an accompanying PowerPoint. Its use is flexible to local ministry needs (inreach & outreach) and church calendar (3-hour marriage workshop, three weekly/monthly sessions, or three sessions spread out over a weekend retreat).
- *Pre-Marriage* – Incorporating Marriage Moment videos, this pre-marriage course covers topical and biblical areas of marriage for use by the pastor with a couple or in a small group setting.

Small Group Ministry - Pulse surveys show that many church members lack a strong connect to their church and to each other. This module will share several ways to approach using small groups and step-by-step instructions how churches can arrange for small groups in their ministry setting for better congregational connectedness and member care.

Youth Night – One of the effects of COVID-19 is the loss of momentum in youth ministry at the local congregational level. The goal of Youth Night is to bring together youth and youth leaders from area congregations in a two-hour evening event that encourages shared faith and fun in a larger setting. A Youth Night template with an accompanying kit of resources (planning guide, event coordination, youth involvement) will be ready by this fall.

Stewardship – What is an active church member? According to Barna Research, it is a person who goes to church once a month. Once a month. In a culture where God is diminished and self is promoted, will an hour a month sufficiently combat the rest of the 671 monthly hours lived in a post-biblical world? What are the key areas of “time” which may be sorely out of sync because of our culture? How does a stewardship of time trickle down into healthier faith and life?

This fall, a worship/Bible study series will double-down on God’s priorities for the critical asset called “TIME.”

Sunday school module - Help congregations assess their struggling Sunday school ministry and provide examples of various approaches to revitalize youth ministry.

Human Sexuality/Identity Task Force – Our church and school ministries will increasingly encounter an ideology and culture causing gender/identity confusion. Church members, students, called workers, faculties, and church leaders face a wide-range of struggles associated with it. How do we help them? How is it cloaked in Christian love? This task force brings together experienced called workers and lay leaders in key areas (counseling, classroom, church and school leaders, legal consultation) to clothe firm beliefs in Christian love and with resources that will support and equip called workers, faculties, and families.

It is truly a challenging yet exciting time for strengthening disciples in their following of Christ! May God bless our plan for him and our service to his people!

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