



# The Beacon Online

February 14, 2025/ Vol. 6 / No. 6

## The Beacon Online is the communication source for the SELC District.

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## Annual Congregational Statistics Due February 28, 2025

Each congregation must submit your congregational statistics to the Synod by February 28, 2025. The Synod is asking for these because of the reasons stated below.

1. The Synod wants to know how our congregations are doing and how best to work for their benefit and on their behalf.
2. The Synod needs to be able to contact leadership by up-to-date emails to facilitate their governance of the Synod. This was **demonstrated** to be of key importance in the recent congregational referendum and will be increasingly so as we move toward and through convention.
3. The Bylaws expect it (1.3.4.3) and require the Secretary (3.3.3.2 [e]), District Presidents (4.4.8), and Circuit Visitors (5.2.3 [h]) to urge it, consistent with an objective of the original 1847 Constitution of the Synod (Ch. IV 13).
4. The practice goes hand in hand with good pastoral/congregational record-keeping in general. If this is being done, filing statistics shouldn't be hard. We are aware of serious shortcomings in this area in many parishes of the Synod. This needs to be addressed, and this is a start.



## Spring 2025 Vicarage and Call documents Deadline is **February 28, 2025**

The deadline for all **vicarage and call docs for Spring 2025** placements must be received in the District Office no later than **February 28, 2025** to ensure that they are ready for submission to the Synod in time. Please contact Patti at the District office with any questions at [selc.lcms@gmail.com](mailto:selc.lcms@gmail.com) or 610-965-3265, press 6.



## Upcoming Conference - Forming the Next Generation of Pastors

A conference is being held from May 2 - 4, 2025 that is focused on assisting young men considering a vocation in the ministry and pastors/parents who want to learn more about the ministry for their families. Any students, families and pastors in your congregation are encouraged to join us. Below is the website with more information to learn more about this conference.

<https://www.zionwg.org/event-list>

**THE MAIER CONFERENCE**

MAY 2-4, 2025  
ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH WINTER GARDEN, FL  
[HTTPS://WWW.ZIONWG.ORG/EVENT-LIST](https://www.zionwg.org/event-list)

**Forming The Next Generation of Lutheran Pastors**

Rev. Willie Grills      Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz      Rev. Andrew Preus

THE MAIER CONFERENCE IS A THREE DAY CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG MEN CONFIRMED IN THE CHURCH WHO WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT A VOCATION IN THE HOLY MINISTRY.



## Navigating Bioethics with Pastoral Insight through Biblical Lens

Virtual Continuing Education Course Offered in Spring 2025

Bioethical dilemmas present complex challenges for pastors and other church leaders, requiring a response grounded in Scripture. To help equip them to navigate these critical issues, **Concordia Seminary, St. Louis** (CSL) and **Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis.** (CUW) are offering a six-week virtual continuing education course, "Life and Death: A Confessional Framework for Pastoral Bioethics." This course will cover essential bioethical topics, such as gender dysphoria, abortion, physician-assisted suicide and more, all viewed through a biblical lens.

The course will be taught via Zoom from 4-5:15 p.m. (CT) Tuesdays, April 29 through June 3, 2025. Each session will include 45 minutes of presentation by the primary speaker, 15 minutes of response from the secondary speaker and 15 minutes of open discussion.

### Meet the presenters

- Dr. Kevin Voss, professor emeritus of Philosophy and former director of the Concordia Center for Bioethics at Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis. With decades of experience in bioethics and pastoral care ministry, Voss blends his unique expertise in reproductive counseling and end-of-life care with a passion for addressing bioethical issues from a Lutheran theological perspective.
- **Dr. Robert Weise**, professor emeritus of Practical Theology and the former Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis Chair in Pastoral Ministry and the Life Sciences from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Weise served on the faculty for over two decades and made significant contributions to the fields of bioethics, human sexuality and genetics, both through his academic work and as a frequent speaker and author.

"We are thrilled to announce that Dr. Kevin Voss and Dr. Robert Weise will collaborate to teach this bioethics course. Both men have been discussing these topics long before they became mainstream or trending. The content they will present is unique and cannot be found anywhere else, especially not in the way they will teach it," said Erika Petsch, director of Continuing Education at Concordia Seminary.

### Course Overview

Over six sessions, this series will address critical bioethical topics, equipping pastors and church leaders with the knowledge and confidence to respond to life-and-death issues in a compassionate, biblically grounded manner. Drawing on decades of expertise, Voss and Weise will guide attendees in navigating diverse worldviews through the lens of Lutheran doctrine. Course units include:

- Gender Dysphoria: "Human Sexual Identity: Mask Uncovered—Adam and Eve Are AWOL" by Dr. Robert Weise
- Abortion: "Abortion: Ripping Off the Bandage!" by Dr. Kevin Voss
- Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) Part I: "Where God's Word Meets ART: Children – Begotten or Made?" by Dr. Robert Weise
- End-of-Life Problems: "Caring for Loved Ones at Life's End" by Dr. Kevin Voss
- Physician-Assisted Suicide: "If Not Legal in Your State, It Likely Will Be!" by Dr. Kevin Voss
- Genetic ART Part II: "Children by Design: Setting Limits?" by Dr. Robert Weise

### Registration and details

This virtual series is open to anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of bioethical issues from a biblical perspective. This course equips church leaders with practical tools for providing compassionate guidance to individuals and families. Register by April 25, 2025, via the **CUW website**. The registration fee is \$99, which includes one Continuing Education Unit (CEU).

## **Veterans of the Cross Gathering**

All retired lay and rostered workers who have served in LCMS are invited to attend. Dr. Dale A Meyer, former Lutheran Hour Speaker and St. Louis Seminary President is the keynote speaker. The theme is "He Restores My Soul". There will be lots of fellowship, singing, and flocking together to enjoy a new look at Psalm 23. Devotion leaders include Dr. Peter Meier, Rev. Tom Zehnder, Rev. Gerhard Michael, Deaconess Liz Borth, and Rev. Ron Engel. It is being held at St. Stephen Christian Retreat and Conference Center in beautiful Titusville, Florida near the Space Center.

[Click here](#) for more information





## Sacrificial Love

Dr. Todd Biermann

This message addresses the topic of LOVE! It will help you prepare for and celebrate this day in a godly way. As a couple of great resources to expand on this theme, you can check out my book [Handing Out Life](#) and the free ["Worldview" material as part of my Life in God's Way](#) series.

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Ephesians 5:32*

Valentine's Day makes us think of romance and starry-eyed feelings of love. That's what's popular in cards or memes for the day. It's been that way since I was a child. I remember when I was in third grade back in Oxford, Nebraska. We all made little Valentines out of red and white paper. We wrote things like "I love you like candy!" or "Roses are red, violets are blue, I'd like you to take me, to visit the zoo." Pretty deep for a third grader, I know. We then gave these to our classmates and, of course, to Mom.

But, that's not what God would have us think about regarding love. In Ephesians 5:31, Paul quotes what the Father said of marriage in Eden and what Jesus repeated as He spoke against divorce in Matthew 19:5. This passage highlights three essential aspects of love as God intended.

The first part of godly love is self-sacrifice. To leave mother and father is to sacrifice their protective care. It means giving up your own selfish comfort to go care for another person. Ouch! That's hard to do. Doesn't sound like the happy feelings I normally have around Valentine's Day...when I relish receiving and devouring a box of chocolates.

Thankfully, Jesus forgives our tendency toward selfishness over godly love. As the perfect Bridegroom, Jesus modeled sacrificial love. He left the comfort of heaven with His Father to come and live for us, suffer for us, die for us...and rise for us. Baptized into His name, we receive the wonderful blessing of His self-sacrificing love. Strengthened by that love, we sacrifice the sentimentality of Valentine's Day to love as He first loved us. Instead of asking for what we want, we can show them the sacrificial love of Jesus. Maybe take them to the zoo, even if you don't really like it. Now THAT'S true love.

Our dear Bridegroom, Jesus, forgive our selfish ways and lead us to your way of sacrificial love. Amen.



## Family Bible Journey Podcast

In our New Testament episodes, we follow Jesus through the middle of John's gospel. Jesus teaches important lessons about what it means to be blind or deaf. Then He goes on to teach a powerful lesson about His resurrection power as He raises His dear friend Lazarus from the dead! Listen to the podcast at [familybiblejourney.com](http://familybiblejourney.com) or on your favorite podcast app!



Join the journey  
of journaling through the Bible.



## New Concordia Chicago Scholarship

As of this week, Concordia Chicago (CUC) has instituted a new policy, the Prepared to Serve Church Professional Scholarship. What this new policy means is that all students enrolled in church-work programs will be able to study for no more than \$5,000/year, not even factoring in district scholarships or other outside scholarships. This will significantly lift financial burdens for students, and make it much more feasible to enter church-work programs at CUC. This also makes CUC one of the most affordable options for students in our Synod.





**COMMITTED TO HELPING YOU**

# PURSUE GOD'S CALL

## PREPARED TO SERVE: CHURCH PROFESSIONAL GUARANTEE

Beginning in Fall 2025, if you're a new, incoming student enrolled full time in one of our church professional programs, your tuition and mandatory fees won't exceed \$5,000 per academic year. You can also stack external scholarships from LCMS districts and congregations, as well as other private entities, for greater savings. This makes our **CHURCH PROFESSIONAL GUARANTEE** one of the most affordable pathways within the Concordia University System.

Eligible programs include:

- Lutheran Teacher Education
- Director of Christian Education
- Deaconess
- Pre-Seminary
- Classical Lutheran Educator
- Director of Parish Music

Thanks to the generosity of donors who believe in the importance of church vocations, this guarantee makes a Christ-centered education more accessible, exemplifying CUC's commitment in preparing you to serve. Whether you're just starting your journey or continuing your studies, we're here to help you prepare for a life of purpose and service to God and His people.



**TAKE THE NEXT STEP: LEARN MORE!**

### OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION

877-282-4422 | [Admission@CUChicago.edu](mailto:Admission@CUChicago.edu) | [CUChicago.edu/admission](http://CUChicago.edu/admission)

[@CUC\\_admission](#) [X@CUChicago](#) [ConcordiaUniversityChicago](#)

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- LCMS freshmen or transfer students pursuing a church professional major who meet CUC admission requirements.
- Available to new, incoming students starting in Fall 2025; currently enrolled students are not eligible, with the exception of a one-semester allowance for those adding a church professional program.
- Must complete a FAFSA.
- International students are not eligible.

### ADDITIONAL DETAILS:

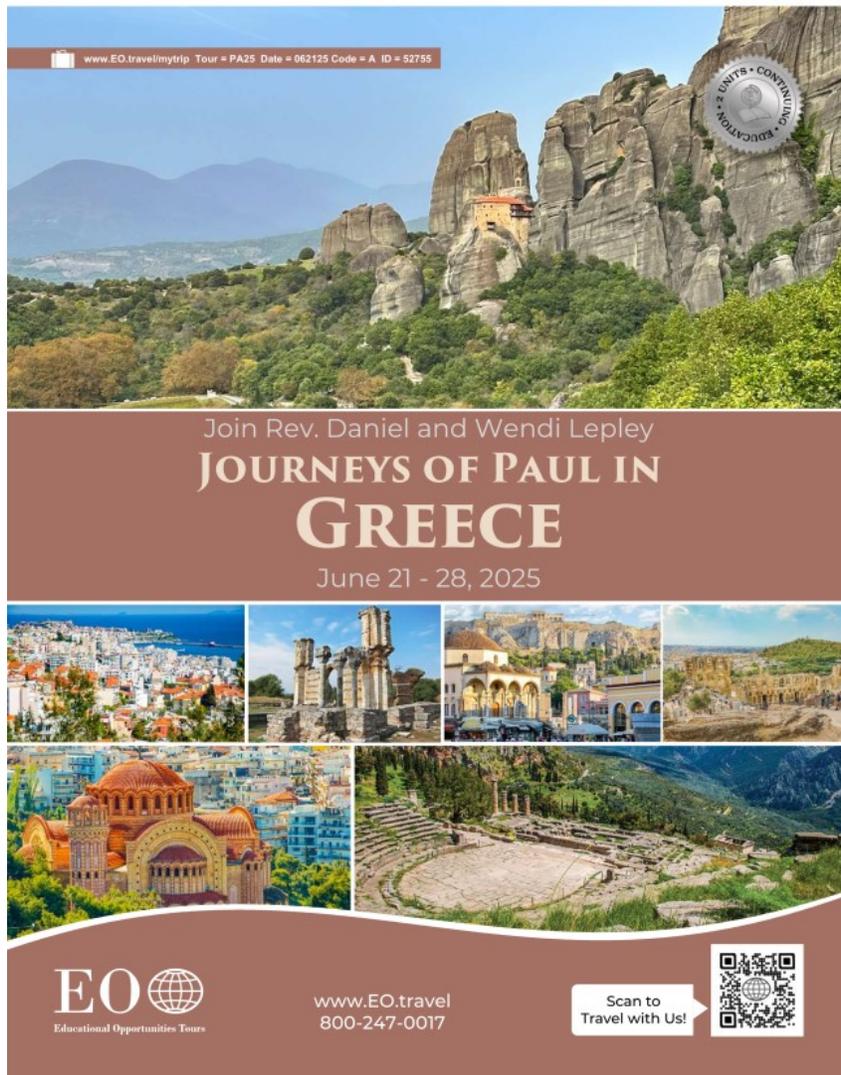
- Tuition and mandatory fees will not exceed \$5,000 annually, renewable for up to four years with satisfactory academic progress.
- External scholarships from LCMS districts, congregations and private entities may stack, further reducing costs (up to cost of attendance).
- Room, board and additional fees (e.g., parking) are not included.



# Greece 2025 Trip June 21 - 28, 2025 Optional cruise June 27 - July 1

Want to go to Greece this summer on a Journeys of Saint Paul tour? It's not too late to register for our trip! Feel free to join our Zoom on [February 24th at 8:00 PM EST](#) to learn more. You can also check out our brochure at <https://www.eo.travelwithus.com/tours/pa25062125a52755#eotours> Email [pastorlepley@gmail.com](mailto:pastorlepley@gmail.com) if you'd like to be added to our mailing list for future meetings, or for help registering for our trip!

The link to the call on February 24th is <https://zoom.us/j/91410659114>



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Join Rev. Daniel and Wendi Lepley  
**JOURNEYS OF PAUL IN  
GREECE**  
June 21 - 28, 2025

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## St. Luke's Travel Group 2025

The St. Luke's travel group led by the Lois and Pastor Wally Arp, is excited to announce "Highlights of Norway and Sweden" *including visits to* Bergen, Sognefjord Cruise, Lillehammer, Oslo, Stockholm and more! Twelve days, July 5-16, 2025. [View the brochure](#). Email tour or travel questions to: [Travel@SLLCS.org](mailto:Travel@SLLCS.org)



### Highlights of Norway and Sweden

*including visits to: Bergen, Sognefjord Cruise, Lillehammer, Oslo, Stockholm and more!*

**12 Days ~ July 5 - 16, 2025**

**Tour Coordinators -**

**Rev. Dr. Wally & Lois Arp / Debbie & John Shahinian**

Email tour or travel questions to: [travel@SLLCS.org](mailto:travel@SLLCS.org)

St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Oviedo, Florida



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## **LWML Women's Bible Study February 20, 2025**

LWML Woman's Bible Study - Thursday, February 20th at 10:30 am EST and this month is "God Sees Our Story - Therefore Rejoice!" the second one in the Winter edition of the LWQ on pages 18-19. The link to the zoom session is below.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/  
j/84746607019pwd=V2t5a1BPQjFnUzJGRzRiS1ZVVVJsQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84746607019?pwd=V2t5a1BPQjFnUzJGRzRiS1ZVVVJsQT09)



### **Prayer Requests**

**Rev. Brian Roberts**, Orlando, FL. Please pray for him to regain the weight he has lost and to regain his strength as he faces continued health struggles.

**Rev. John Telloni**, St. John in Massillon, OH as he is working and continuing to regain

his strength as he has returned to work.

**Rev. Tom Soltis**, Parma, OH for God's loving care.

**Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Ballas**, Parma, OH. Please keep them in your prayers.

**Rev. Alan Mercer** in Galloway, NJ for his ongoing health struggles.

**Rev. Kevin Duff**, Hilton Head, SC, formerly a Pastor at Faith *Viera*, who is recovering from brain surgery. Please pray for his wife, his young family, and his caregivers as they determine his plan of care.

**Rev. Stephen Bocklage**, Bel Air, MD, who is recovering from a fall. Please pray for his healing and recovery.

**Megan Skelton** in Oviedo, FL Please continue to pray for her and her doctors to find pain relief solutions for her jaw pain and severe headaches following her surgery.

**Laura Bergmann**, Munster, IN, please pray for her as she injured her knee and is receiving inpatient treatment to help with her recovery.

**Nita Huffines**, St. Louis, MO, wife of Rev. Warren Huffines who is five-year survivor of colon cancer, has begun a new round of treatments. Please pray for her as she receives her treatment.

**Daniel McLean**, Oviedo, FL, who has stage 4 cancer and is receiving treatment. Please keep him his wife Emily, Deaconess at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Oviedo, and their children in your prayers.

*If you have people you would like to be included in the prayer list, please send the information to [selc.lcms@gmail.com](mailto:selc.lcms@gmail.com) or call the District Office at 610-965-3265 and press 6.*



## Free Ukrainian Resources for Sharing the Gospel

The Lutheran Heritage Foundation (a recognized service organization of the LCMS) has just gotten a huge shipment of books carrying two FREE new resources available in Ukrainian, including the classic children's Bible storybook *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories* and *Best of Portals of Prayer*. These materials are available to any LCMS church, mission or individual who wants to share the Good News with their Ukrainian-speaking neighbors. To order, send an email to [info@LHFmissions.org](mailto:info@LHFmissions.org) or call the LHF office at (800)554-0723.





## Closing Thoughts

### Prayerful Waiting on Our Loving Lord

Rev. Ken Ballas, EM

Pan-biblical examples of tirelessly patient "**human waiters**" include two relatively unknown yet deeply faithful, hope-filled believers at either end of our blessed Lord's earthly life, namely, aged devout widow, Anna, and Joseph of Arimathea, boldly generous member of Jerusalem's Sanhedrin. Both were privileged to see their (and our) Savior with their own eyes; both also bore unique witness to Israel's anointed long-awaited Messianic Christ (see Luke 2:38, 23:50).

Bended knees, folded hands, bowed heads – these familiar postures of prayer are still found in today's increasingly secular world without necessarily identifying one as being a Christian by such external acts of piety or imagined "heart-to-heart talks" with a deity of one own's making unknowingly or irreverently sadly regarded as "*The Man Upstairs*." Devotees of such common-place modern "spiritual religiosity" may even display a Christian cross if only as one of many *good-luck charms* with little or no hint of any former worshipful relationship with the One who graciously reveals Himself as the world's sinless Brother-Savior in the person of God the Father's incarnate crucified and risen Son. Conceivably well-intended car bumper stickers stating, "Prayer Changes Things!" may also be "wide of the mark" as, in reality, only God is both Author *and* Finisher of every good and perfectly lasting gift (James 1:17).

While "non-stop bombarding" throne of grace with petitions is occasionally understandably appropriate, there are countless instances when "silent listening" or "biblical waiting" is also to be considered. Sometimes prayer becomes a two-way "give and take" process reminiscent of Israel's mercurial patriarch Jacob's "wrestling with God" (Genesis 32). Then as now, in addition to serving as a reminder of the potentially limitless availability of our Creator-Redeemer God to hear our prayers, our ascended Lord's apostle Paul's advice to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) is best understood *contextually* as remembering in prayer congregational lay or clerical servant-leaders as we all need one another. Regardless of the church size, including our smaller congregations, we all need and should constantly intercede for one another!

Because the sinless Christ stands at the end of a long line of sinners (Matthew 1), it is not surprising that Jesus Himself spent so much of His earthly ministry praying to His Heavenly Father in our behalf even from His self-appointed cross (see John 17) and the events of Maundy Thursday hours before His necessary substitutionary death preceded by institution of His Holy Supper and deep anguish of soul in Gethsemane and voluntary sacrificial death on Calvary's cross.

Being that none of us in this world consistently always knows what is best for all concerned (there may even be times when we are our own worst enemy), I have found it helpful to think or pray, "Lord, if my present course of action is in the slightest dishonoring of You and Your will, please correct me wherever I may be mistaken!" Thus God-pleasing effective praying is not necessarily the result of how much time we spend responding to His gracious repeated invitations to call upon our gracious God's frequent invitation to us to call upon Him also entails the pan-biblical concept of patiently and

trustingly waiting on the most helpful answer to the Lord's promises. Ponder whether an amazingly "loaded" passage like Psalm 50:15 is a command, invitation, prediction, Gospel promise or all of the above.

Additional relevant passages include (lest we forget!) our Lord's Prayer as we most of us were already instructed: Psalm 27:14; 121; 130; 150; Isaiah 25:9; 65:24 (Before they call, I will answer! How great is that!) Matthew 6; Luke 11; 18:9-14; Acts 2:42; Romans 8:26f.; 1 Corinthians 1:7; James 5:16; 2 Peter 3:9,15a; Revelation 22:20. Learning in faith patiently to wait for Him, He also waited for us to be born



## **SELC District - A District Without Borders**

***Showing Everyone Life in Christ, by Showing Everyone Love in Christ***

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