



Our calling

Communication Services exists to assist the Conference of Presidents in communicating the mission of WELS to the members of the synod. It is responsible for the clear and consistent communication of the synod's mission from the synod's national office and for exploring, supporting, and expediting innovative media

usage and shared communication for WELS ministries and congregations. It is also responsible for reviewing and authorizing all new communications originating in the synod's national office. The staff consists of five full-time equivalents and one part-time.

Our current situation

The Communication Services staff is focused on working on the synod's major communication initiatives. The most important initiative is to coordinate the various WELS communications platforms so that they have a single, recognizable look and feel. The department's goal is also to layer key communications to address key topics simultaneously across main communication channels. The goal of Communication Services is to work with each area of ministry to identify their priorities—and then to communicate these priorities to laypeople and called workers alike through this cross-promotion, multi-platform strategy.

Forward in Christ, WELS' official monthly magazine with a print run of more than 36,000, provides its readers with inspirational and informative articles focused on God's grace as well devotions, Bible studies, and synod news items. Many of the magazine's stories are posted on the wels.net website and on our social media platforms to reach a broader member and unchurched audience. If you would like to become a subscriber, contact Northwestern Publishing House at 1-800-662-6093, ext. 5613; nphperiodicals@nph.wels.net or order online at nph.net/fic.

WELS Connection, the monthly video viewed in nearly nine hundred congregations, is entering its 31st year of providing stories that highlight the important work happening as a result of our Congregation Mission Offerings. Northwestern Publishing House handles the subscription process and offers two annual subscription rates: \$95 for the downloadable version and \$105 for a DVD that is mailed three times per year. The monthly video is also posted on wels.net and the WELS Facebook page the month after it is viewed by the local congregations, further expanding the audience reached of these stories.

WELS Connection Close-up, the print companion piece to the video presentation, has a print run of 130,000 per month and showcases an area of ministry each month and presents to our members an actionable opportunity and response.

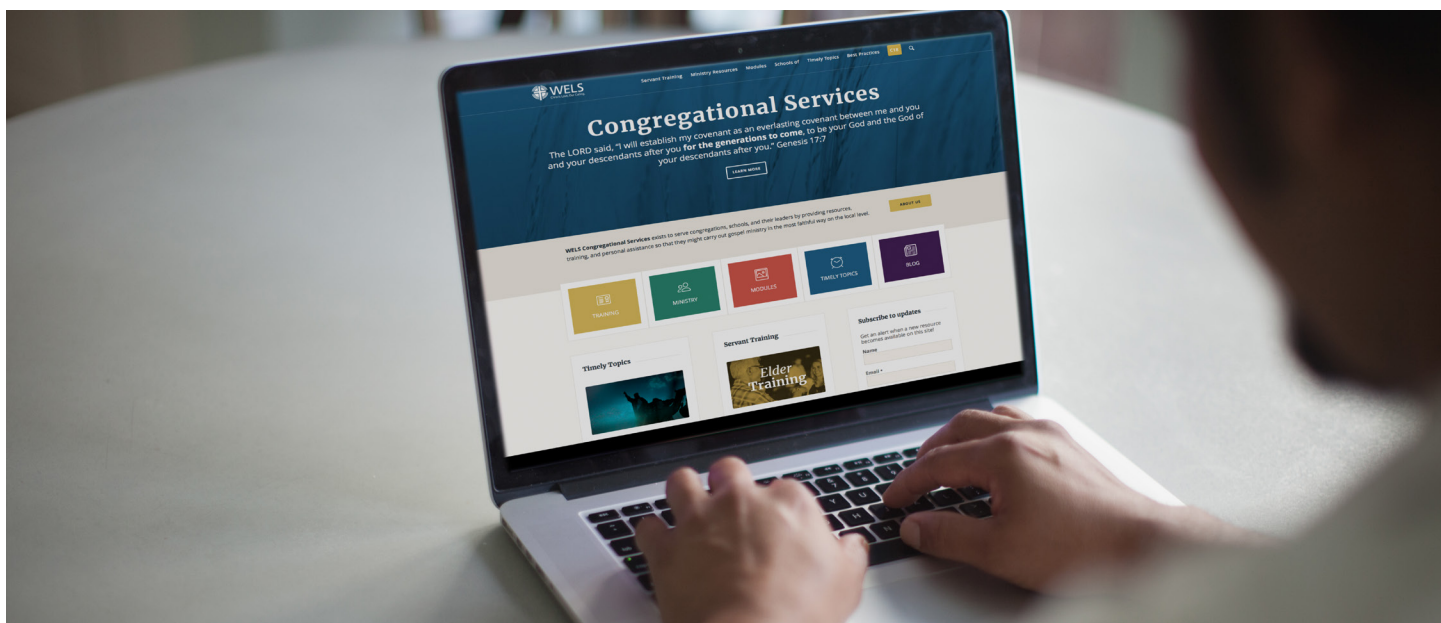
Together, a bi-weekly e-newsletter, is e-mailed to more than 9,000 subscribers the first and third Tuesday of each month. The stories are posted on wels.net and more than three hundred congregations also use the print version as a bulletin insert. This newsletter reports on the news and events within our synod that every WELS member should know. Our *Together* subscribers also receive a bi-weekly *Together* video update. Each video highlights an interesting synod news item that features an interview with a newsmaker.

The synod's official website, wels.net, continues to provide timely content for both synod members and non-members who want to learn more about WELS and what we believe as confessional Lutherans. The annual number of page views continues to remain strong at more than 3 million. About 31 percent of users are new visitors, with unique users totaling more than 436,000. One-third access the site via a mobile device and we offer a WELS mobile app which has been downloaded more than 20,000 times.

Communication Services remains committed and able to continue developing content for all other essential internal communication tools, including *Book of Reports and Memorials*, convention delegate's booklet, *Report to the Twelve Districts, Proceedings*—the official record of each synod convention, live streaming major WELS events, and video reporting of synod convention proceedings.

Here is a list of recently completed projects:

- In October, *Forward in Christ* (FIC) magazine created a special Reformation issue featuring a keepsake insert that included a timeline on the development of Lutheranism. We mailed every congregation that is not an FIC subscriber (500+) a complimentary copy with a letter from Rev. John Braun encouraging them to become new FIC subscribers.



- The **WELS Visitor Center** located in the lower level of the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry continues to draw our members to the synod headquarters. During the past 12 months we have conducted 52 tours including more than 1,000 visitors. The visitor center includes a visual timeline of WELS' history as well as informational kiosks on areas of ministry. Guests watch a video highlighting WELS mission and ministry and receive a tour of the Center for Mission and Ministry. This new welcome center allows us to introduce visitors to our synod's history and to educate our members on the important work the Lord allows WELS to accomplish through his grace.
- Last year Communication Services created all promotional print items and did multiple stories in *Together* for the **Church Extension Fund Special Rates campaign** to attract new investors. During a six-month period the campaign added \$18 million in new investments and dozens of new investors.
- **Interactive Faith online Bible studies** are held twice per year. Led by a pastor or professor, these one-hour studies are broadcast live via the WELS Livestream page of wels.net. Many congregations gather as a group for the Wednesday night study; other WELS members connect online as couples or individuals. Postcards, posters, and worship folder inserts are created and mailed to every congregation to promote the Bible studies.
- Communication Services provides monthly digital display graphics for churches and schools to inform members of WELS events and programs supported by their Congregation Mission Offerings. This **Ministry Media Kit** is e-mailed to every congregation the first week of each month.

A look ahead

The synod's long-range plan states:

Worldwide Identity as Confessional Lutherans

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 and the 175th anniversary of WELS in 2025, we are engaging Christian leaders around the world to join with confessional Lutherans in North America and beyond so that by 2025 the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) will be more widely known as a confessional Lutheran church body firmly founded on the Holy Scriptures and joyfully partnering to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ in Word and sacrament to as many people as possible around the globe.

What you will recognize

- WELS materials will present the gospel with remarkable clarity as an authentic voice of the confessional evangelical Lutheran church.

What may look new

- Existing Christian church bodies around the world will be training their pastors and other called workers with WELS materials and personnel in order to become authentic Lutherans.

To accomplish these goals, the following major initiatives are planned for the next year of the biennium:

- Creative Services Coordinator Briana Lambrecht is designing the new **Congregational Services website** under Rev. Jon Hein's direction. The video content for the new website is in production using the studio in the lower level of the Center for Mission and Ministry and the Boettcher-Trinklein studios in Cedarburg, Wis.

- The **2018 WELS International Youth Rally** will be held this summer at Bowling Green State University in Ohio under the theme Never Alone. Nearly 2,000 young people will gather for workshops on relationships, social networking, dealing with temptations, finding ways to serve at home and abroad, and making decisions beyond high school. Communication Services created a logo for the event along with the layout and design for all print materials including a promotional booklet, poster, and bulletin insert.
 - Thousands of WELS members continue to attend the **WELS Night at Miller Park** baseball game every summer. This annual event is a chance to meet WELS members throughout the Midwest in a casual setting while promoting our synod to the greater Milwaukee area. The date for the 5th annual WELS Night at Miller Park event is Fri., Aug. 3, 2018.
 - Social media is an ever increasing communications platform and tool to reach our members on a consistent almost daily basis. Our Facebook page, [facebook.com/wesluthernans](https://www.facebook.com/wesluthernans) has experienced a 100% increase in “likes” to our page in the past year with more than 75,000 followers. We post 2-3 content items daily to encourage
- more interaction and sharing from our followers. We also have an Instagram account, [@wesluthernans](https://www.instagram.com/wesluthernans), with more than 3,000 followers and a Twitter account and Vimeo channel. We use social media as a communications and marketing tool for the all-synod conferences and events. It is a great way for parents, family, and friends of the participants to keep up-to-date on events happening in their synod.
- ***Your gifts, God’s blessings: An annual report to our members*** is distributed to every WELS congregation each January, and a copy was included in the Ministry of Christian Giving annual statement to each synod donor. Free print versions of the report are available from Northwestern Publishing House. You may access the online version at wels.net/annualreport. Christian giving counselors are provided a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes the information in the annual report.
 - Content needed for the next Ministry of Christian Giving annual individual donor campaign featuring Congregational Services is nearing completion. The campaign theme is **“For Generations to Come”** and will be available this fall.

