



WELS Discipleship

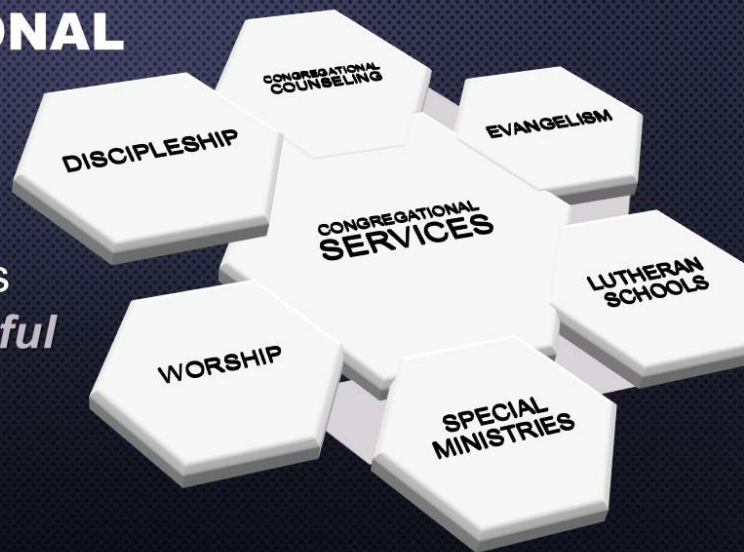
2025 synod convention supplement

“Encouraging and equipping congregations as they seek to strengthen individuals and families in their connection to Christ and their ongoing walk of faith.”

As part of Congregational Services, WELS Discipleship is cradle to casket, womb to tomb faith formation. It encompasses men, women, and children of all ages and every generation. The two key factors of a person’s life of discipleship connected to Christ are: 1. high commitment (Luke 9:23) and 2. highly relational (life and faith done in close proximity to Christ and to each other).

THE MISSION OF CONGREGATIONAL SERVICES

to **encourage** and
equip congregations
for *faithful* and *fruitful*
ministry.



Congregational Services is a group of six commissions that work together to help churches as they encounter the challenges that all Christian churches are facing in our post-Christian country. We want to help congregations increase their gospel efforts. Therefore, Congregational Services works under the Conference of Presidents.

- Congregational Services provides boots-on-the-ground counseling for congregations that request it.
- Congregational Services provides ministry resources for all WELS congregations at **welscongregationservices.net**.

Ultimately, our goal is the salvation of souls. We want all our congregations to reach new people for Christ. We also need to have a strong backbone of congregations if we want to continue to support reaching new souls through home missions and world missions.

Adults

- Marriage enrichment
- Men's & women's ministry
- Small/Growth group ministry
- Stewardship
- Elder training
- Family ministry



- Church member delinquency
- Church member integration
- College-age students
- WELS singles

Discipleship is a lifelong process of spiritual growth in all areas, vocations, and demographic groups of life. It's the life of faith that is hammered as congregations and families face challenges causing consternation and handwringing - "What do we do?"

Youth

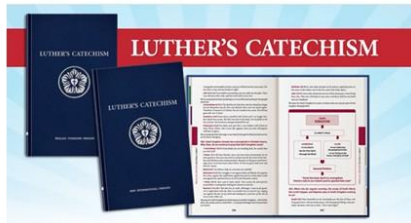
- Youth retention
- Youth leader resources
- Early childhood ministry
- Sunday school
- Confirmation
- International youth rally
- Apologetics



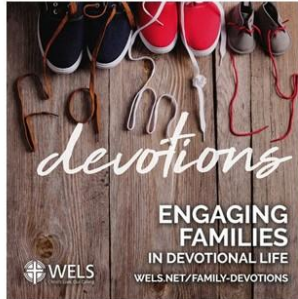
A lot of conversations during the past few years have been about challenges we are facing in youth ministry. WELS Discipleship is building resources and structures that strengthen and support younger generations in their faith.



Supporting homes



PASTOR/PARENT
PARTNERSHIP



FAMILY



MARRIAGE

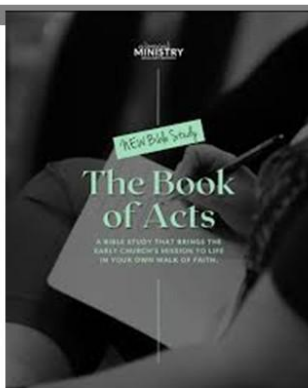
The church's role is to encourage and support the homes and lives of their members as parents, grandparents, husbands, and wives.



Supporting women



DEVOTIONS



BIBLE STUDIES

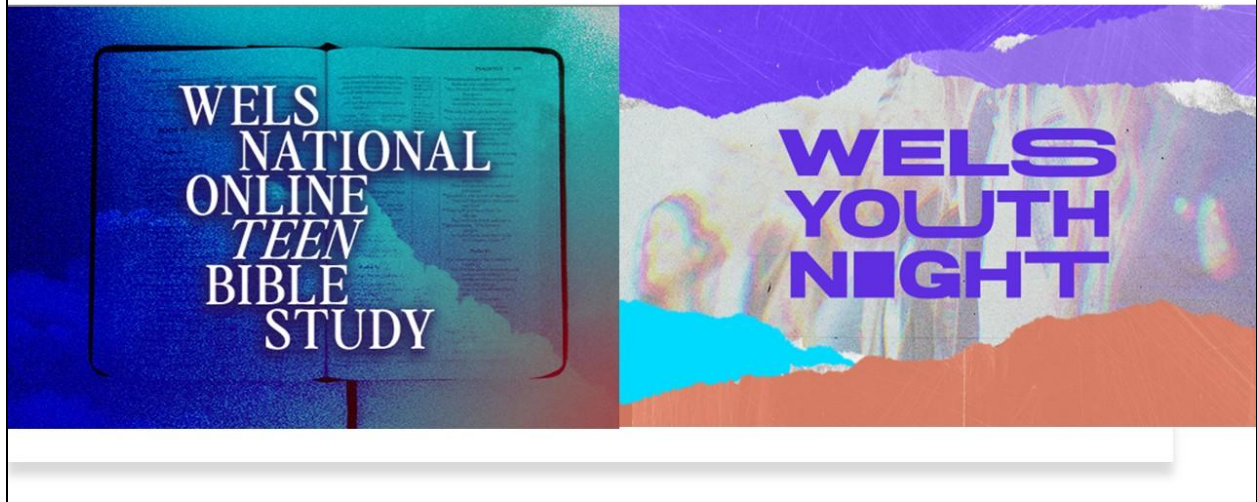


WEBINARS

Women's Ministry connects women across our synod through devotional resources, webinars on relevant topics, and guidance on using their gifts in congregational ministry.



Supporting teens



WELS Discipleship provides a number of resources to support teens.

WELS National Online Teen Bible Study connects teens across the country spiritually and relationally. Whether teens are on their phones at home or gathering in a teen group at church, this Bible study occurs four times a school year, allowing them to connect with their age group and grow in faith.

WELS Youth Night is a series of events gathering 9th-12th-graders from area churches for Bible messages, group discussions, and fellowship.




Teen resources



Apologetics: Defending the Faith is a video-based Bible study designed to help church members engage in thoughtful, loving conversations with skeptics of the Christian faith.

An Honest Conversation allows WELS teens to explore LGBTQ-related questions in a faith-based environment.




wels.net/subscribe

Teen Devotion

Year C – The Second Sunday in Lent

Open Door Policies



One truth shared: Jesus Christ is the only path to heaven for us who cannot save ourselves.

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Philippians 3:17-4:1

No Detours Allowed

When you're little, adults love asking, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Most kids fire back with big, exciting dreams—astronaut, NFL quarterback, famous gamer. But as you get older, the question starts to change.

Now, it's not just what you want to be—it's why. And too often, the answers revolve around things that only matter in this life—money, fame, success.

But here's the thing: none of that lasts.

That's why the apostle Paul's words to the Philippians hit so hard:

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:20,21).

Think about that for a second. This world? It's temporary. The culture around us chases self-interest, status, and instant gratification. But for those who follow Jesus, life is about something bigger.

If you believe in Christ, your future isn't just about what career you'll have or how much money you'll make. It's about where you're headed—heaven. And the only way there? It's not through what you do, how hard you work, or how much you achieve. It's through Jesus.

So *stand firm*. Keep your eyes on the real prize—eternity, bought and paid for by Jesus' sacrifice. Let that be the focus of your life, not just what you want to be, but *who you belong to*.

Prayer:

God, thank you for loving me even when I lose focus. Help me to remember that my true home is with you. Amen.

Weekly Teen Devotions - Subscribe at wels.net/subscribe.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

Year C – The Second Sunday in Lent
Open Door Policies

One truth shared: Jesus Christ is the only path to heaven for us who cannot save ourselves.

No Detours Allowed

Starting the Discussion: This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.

- Let's go around the circle: What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Let's discuss some of the "ups" and "downs" of the answers you gave.

Connecting: This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.

Name some differences between the teen who lives life as a child of God and to the "many (teens who) live as enemies of the cross of Christ"? (v. 18)

Digging In: Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to begin a spiritual conversation.

- Let's look again at Philippians 3:17-4:1. Who are some people in your life whose faith you admire and strive to imitate?
- What are the dangers to someone's spiritual well-being when "their mind is set on earthly things"?
- What does Paul mean when he reminds us that "our citizenship is in heaven"? (v. 2)
- How can we better "stand firm" in this world that doesn't worship or follow Jesus Christ as Savior?

Conclusion: Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.

There is no "other way" to get to heaven than Jesus. There are no detours allowed as alternative ways to be saved. Why do we need to always remember this? How can we better share this with others?

1 Teen Takeaway.

4 key components:

- *Starting the Discussion:* to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun!
- *Connecting:* a bridge to get teens thinking about the topic/text.
- *Digging:* see what Scripture says. Questions are intentionally open-ended to make it conversational.
- *Conclusion:* to wrap up the discussion and connect with real life.

You can download these teen facilitator guides at:

yfm.welsrc.net/download-yfm/the-foundation-teen-facilitator-guides-year-c24-25/



Madeknown.net is a website designed for a Christian person struggling with LGBTQ issues (be it a child, parent, grandparent, etc.). The goal is to “walk with you in faith through identity, gender, and sexuality.” We do so by providing a constantly growing library of written resources, as well as dedicated support through speaking engagements, a pastor network, and personal connections.



Welcome Home – Elder Training assists congregations when a new elder joins congregational ministry and asks, “What exactly do I do?” This series of short videos can be used individually but are best used in a group setting in which the pastor gathers with his elders and systematically (at his own pace) works through the important steppingstones of a congregation’s loving ministry to drifting members.

For this fall



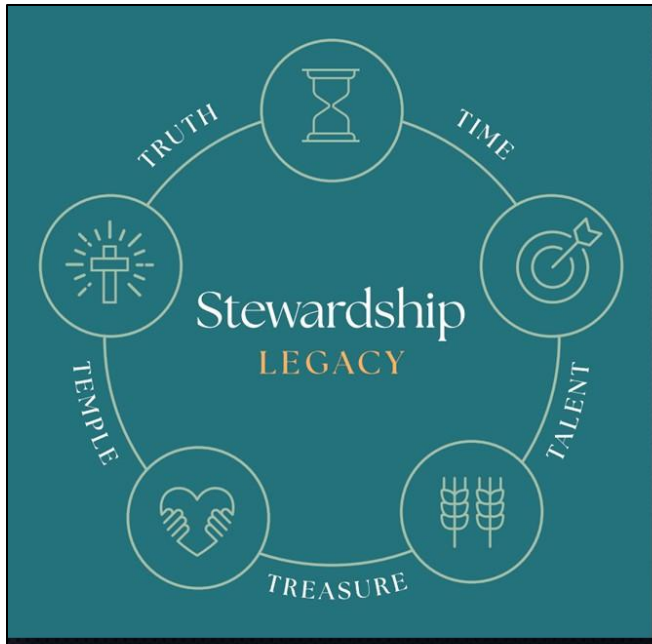
Purpose: To make members aware of their responsibility to care for missing members.

Resources:

- *Getting Started* instructions
- "Launch" and "Splash" Sunday sermons/worship helps
- 4-part Bible study (w/leader guides, slides)
- Graphics, videos

Welcome Home is a congregational initiative emphasizing the importance of church members caring for one another before they drift away. Resources include:

- a planning guide,
- promotional videos,
- worship materials,
- and more, culminating in a Welcome Home Sunday celebration.



The graphic features a teal circle with the text "Stewardship LEGACY" in the center. Surrounding this central text are six icons, each with a label: "TRUTH" (top, hourglass icon), "TIME" (top-right, target icon), "TALENT" (bottom-right, wheat stalks icon), "TREASURE" (bottom, hands holding a heart icon), "TEMPLE" (bottom-left, cross icon), and "TRUTH" (top-left, cross icon). The entire graphic is set against a dark blue background with a subtle pattern.

**Engaging
the next
generation
to live lives of
stewardship.**

welscongregationalservices.net/stewardship-legacy

The **Stewardship Legacy Series** contains congregational resources to teach everything Christ commanded to the next generation. Are we teaching them to view themselves as stewards of God's gifts? How do we encourage our people to actively live a life of stewardship?



The **Stewardship Legacy Series** centers around five “T”s: Time, Talent, Treasure, Temple, and Truth. Two of the series (Time and Truth) are already completed.

Each series includes sermon samples, Bible studies (student handout and leader guides), graphics, and worship ideas.

Beyond the TEMPLE walls:

A greater vision for the future church

Coming late
summer



Week 1 - "To a greater *responsibility*"

**church
membership**

Week 2 - "To a greater *community*"

**authentic
relationships**

Week 3 - "To a greater *well-being*"





healthy living

Week 4 - "To a greater *world*"

**a Christian view of
environment**

Soon to be released:

Temple - How do we pass on the "legacy of church" we have inherited from previous generations to future ones? This series covers the importance of church membership and people relationships as well as godly stewardship of our bodies and environment.

	A marriage “thought” in a weekly two-minute video
	A three-part marriage study/discussion with video introductions
	A congregational marriage enrichment resource
	A pre-marriage resource

WELS Discipleship has created a menu of marriage resources designed to meet couples where they are at in a busy world. By God’s grace, the goal is to deepen marital bonds. Healthy homes are predicated on healthy marriages.

For more information, visit welscongregationalservices.net/ministry-resources/wels-marriages.

Coming in 2025

- **Five-part video series** with discussion guides
- **Multiple uses:** Saturday workshop, weekend retreat, or small-group Bible study



Speak to My Heart is a video-based marriage enrichment resource centered on the redemptive love story from the book of Ruth. This study pauses at key moments for couples to reflect and apply lessons to their marriage. Adaptable for use in congregational marriage ministry.

In development

ASSESSMENT:

Digital evaluation tool

MINISTRY MODELS:

Structure Sunday School to best fit your congregational size

EQUIP:

With resources to address leadership, parents, curriculum



WELS Discipleship



Rev. Donn Dobberstein – Director of WELS Discipleship

donn.dobberstein@wels.net