



WELS DISCIPLESHIP SPRING 2018 REPORT

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A Look Back

For the better part of a decade, WELS Adult Discipleship and Youth & Family Ministry have lacked synod directors. The blessing is that it led to more ground-roots activity. The results are evident: continuation of biennial International Youth Rallies, Interactive Faith Bible studies, WELS Women Ministry, Marriage Enrichment, “TRANSFORMED” Teen resources, Kids Connection, etc. Many thanks to the hardworking commission chairmen, members, and district coordinators with their teams that continue to encourage and equip the faith of believers and congregations.

At the Present

Since both commissions already partner with each other on many levels, the Conference of Presidents recently approved the consolidation of Adult Discipleship and Youth & Family Ministry into a single commission that will operate under this mission:

“Our WELS Commission on Discipleship provides resources, encouragement and training to assist congregations as they seek to strengthen individuals and families in their connection to Christ and their ongoing walk of faith.”

The commission will work together with district coordinators to learn, prioritize, and develop a cohesive plan and strategy incorporating resources and training for Small group bible studies, apologetics, congregational youth ministry, parent-life, family devotions, Sunday School, expanding marriage ministry, etc.

The vast challenges spanning the discipling needs of demographic groups (of critical importance are youth through age 25) and diverse ministries will provide a proving ground of God’s hand of grace as he guides our future.

1. 2018 International Youth Rally

- Printed registration booklets mailed to churches and contact youth leaders, also available online at www.wels.net/2018youthrally
- *Theme:* Never Alone (Matthew 28:20)
- *Keynotes:* Pastor Dustin Blumer; Steve and Sarah Schroeder

2. Kids Connection video

- Planning in process for 24th season
- Working toward a goal of offering a “bundle subscription” with WELS Connection
- Encourage use beyond LES (example: monthly showing to Sunday school or other youth ministries)

3. WELS Women’s Ministry /Men’s Ministry

- Last WELS Women’s Facebook bible study attended by 550 women synod-wide. Next study: Monday, April 9th - “Getting Women Involved in Evangelism”. For women to join, go to [facebook.com/groups/WMStudyGSLCR](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WMStudyGSLCR).

4. Marriage Enrichment Weekends 2018-2019

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|--------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| SC District | Apr. 27-29 | San Antonio, TX | "Simply Marriage" |
| NE District | Oct. 5-7 | Breckenridge, CO | "Mysterious Marriage" |
| PNW District | Nov. 16-18 | Hood River, OR | "Simply Marriage" |
| MN District | Jan. 11-13 | Chaska, MN | "Healthy Marriage" |
| SA District | Jan. 25-27 | Chattanooga, TN | "Simply Marriage" |
| A-C District | Feb. 9-11 | Napa Valley, CA | "Healthy Marriage" |
| Canada | March (<i>tbd</i>) | Toronto, Ontario | "Simply Marriage" |
| PNW | April (<i>tbd</i>) | Anchorage, AK | "Mysterious Marriage" |

5. WELS Stewardship Survey

At the request of the Conference of Presidents, WELS Discipleship will work with WELS Christian Giving on 2019 congregational resources for stewardship. To ensure relevant and usable resources for your ministry, a survey was sent to all WELS parish pastors on Friday, April 6th, asking for input that will help shape desired resources for future programs. If you have yet to fill out the survey, it should take no more than ten minutes. Deadline for your response is **April 20**. Thank you in advance for your candid feedback.

A Look Ahead

As part of Congregational Services five-year plan to prioritize the goals of "*opening the front door*" (adding new members through outreach) and "*shutting the back door*" (preventing members from leaving their congregation and synod), the Commission on Discipleship is working to provide quality repository of resources on an online Congregational Services Resource Center (a beta version will launch in time for upcoming district conventions).

Beginning modules include:

- **"Key Mission & Ministry Challenges in the Church"** (study resources for personal, congregational, called & future leaders).
- **Stewardship**
- **Growth Groups Resources**
 - a. Organizational models to utilize groups for study, social, or service opportunities
 - b. Spiritual focus ideas
 - c. Recruiting & training
- **"INTERFAITH" Bible studies (videos & study guides)**- module for the "top 3"

Discipleship Questions & Goals on the Horizon...

- **ASSIMILATION** (not just of new members, but how do we intentionally integrate transfers, or longtime members who just aren't "connected" at all with their fellow church body members?)
- **BIBLE CLASS ATTENDANCE** (10% of communicant membership / What is a congregation's game plan for expanding spiritual growth? How do we get more people engaged in them? Lack of traction. Brothers need greater repository of resources and ideas)
- **YOUTH** (10% decline in Sunday School attendance from 2016-2017... Why? What does youth ministry look like when you only have a couple kids? What's a youth ministry look like that focuses less on attendance and more on spiritual growth? How do we lead our children to take ownership of their faith? What can we do to better bridge the 0-18 year old age group into the 18-25 year old age group where there is a sharp cliff drop? How better can kids connect with their parents and with their church in faith development and ministry service?)
- **PARENTS** (what resources do parents need to equip and encourage them to be Christian parents?)
- **APOLOGETICS RESOURCES** (interestingly, all age groups want them: middle school, high school, college, young adults, parents)
- **BIC & CATECHISM Resource-Sharing** (identifying ministry brothers with good models, practices, and materials).