



It's All About Jesus – Synod Every Member Visit Plan

TO: District presidents, circuit pastors, and all WELS pastors
FROM: The Task Force on WELS Every Member Visits (EMV)

Dear brothers in Christ's service,

The synod in convention adopted the 2017 long-range plan which included wording about an every member visit:

In order to reach an annual fiscal budget of \$38 million in 2017, plans will be put in motion that will rely solely on the grace of God and his promises of undeserved love through Christ Jesus and will be applied to the hearts of God's people through a carefully organized every member visit for every member of the WELS. The plans will offer specifics on how to do that in every congregation of the WELS—tailored for small, middle-sized, and large congregations. The plans will feature materials that will be brief but pointedly directing all to the “why” of joyful and generous financial stewardship—the cross and empty tomb of Jesus—and will include the “how to” of joyful and generous financial stewardship through a percentage of income offered, through special gifts (a possible special offering for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation), and through planned and deferred giving (estate planning).

Principles

- Only the Holy Spirit through the means of grace creates God-pleasing fruits of faith, including joyful, generous management of finances.
- This is not a plan forced on you by synod administration. This every member visit is a synod convention resolution resulting from the adoption of the 2017 long-range plan in 2011.
- District presidents will commit this to all circuit pastors for implementation.
- Circuit pastors will lovingly and evangelically work with all pastors to make this EMV a reality.
- This is not difficult, nor will it be a burden for pastors. Rather, it is a joy for pastors and congregational leaders to share the joy which comes only from Jesus.
- The visits will be made on active members (those who attend worship once/month or more).
- The pastor is involved in the visits. He will choose and train congregational leaders. The active members of the congregation will be organized so that the pastor(s) and leaders carry out this EMV over a span of two weekends.
- The materials and the visits will be simple-to-use and to-the-point.

Purpose

The purpose of the EMV is for every WELS congregation to have ongoing stewardship of finances training in place and, by Jesus' love, to inspire joy in the hearts of every WELS member to participate in that training. The EMV is NOT about money or asking for money—“It's All About Jesus.”

Goals

- The focus for the EMV is on Jesus, “to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (Ephesians 3:18). His undeserved love for us is the reason and the motivation behind our entire Christian life of worship, growing spiritually, witnessing, loving, serving, praying, and giving.
- All pastors and congregations will participate. (We realize that many congregations already are planning a means of grace-focused EMV. God be praised! Go for it.)
- The goal of the EMV is twofold—1) all WELS congregations will have a regularly scheduled stewardship training course (see below), 2) all active WELS members will enroll in such a course. (We realize that many congregations already have in place regular “stewardship of finances” training. God be praised! Use this EMV to promote that and enroll more people.)
- The EMV is intended to “jump start” a change in WELS on the management of money by leading all participants into the congregation’s regularly scheduled stewardship of finances training course.
- Over the next several years, our prayer is that WELS’ average giving will rise from 2.6 percent to 5.2 percent, so that the synod and its members are known as a Christ-centered, Bible-believing, and generous people. (We realize that many congregations and individual members have been growing and “excel in the grace of giving.” God be praised! Use this EMV to underscore the blessings God has worked in your midst.)

Timetable

- The Conference of Presidents adopted the plan for carrying out a synodwide EMV, calling on pastors and congregational leaders to implement it in the fall of 2012 or spring of 2013.
- District presidents will introduce this at the 2012 district conventions and commit this to all circuit pastors.
- June, 2012 – *Together* article; start monthly e-bulletin board promos
- June-August, 2012 – circuit pastors meet with pastors for planning the implementation of the EMV and a regularly scheduled stewardship training course in each congregation
- July, 2012 – Ministry of Christian Giving’s *An Encouraging Word* e-newsletter
- August, 2012 – *En Cristo* e-newsletter
- September, 2012 – *Forward in Christ*
- Other publicity as needed

Materials

- EMV packets are being provided by WELS Ministry of Christian Giving to all congregations in each district by direction of the district president—either mailed directly or distributed through circuit pastors. The EMV materials are also available on the Ministry of Christian Giving page on Connect. The packet includes:
 - This EMV plan
 - Instructions—a “how-to” guide on making this happen in a congregation, no matter what the size. Includes phone/e-mail dialogue for setting up the visits.
 - DVD—provides information, motivation regarding the program. Congregations that subscribe to *WELS Connection* can also find the EMV video in the “Congregational Resources” section of the DVD through August 2013.
 - EMV Bible Study (leader’s guide and handout)—the story of Zacchaeus. The landscape, 11x8.5” handout template includes two, two-sided 5.5x8.5” handouts.

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- Stewardship Bible Study (leader’s guide and handout)—a follow-up, two-lesson Bible study titled “The Joy of Giving” can be used to lead people into the congregation’s regularly scheduled stewardship of finances training course
 - For ongoing stewardship of finances training the following are suggested: *Heart in Focus* or *Stewardship* by J. Ziesemer. The instructions sheet provides details of where to find these resources.

EMV’s place among other synod programs

Besides the every member visit, the synod will also be providing other stewardship-related materials to congregations for use in 12-13. These include year three of the four-year stewardship program “Christ’s Love, Our Calling” (CLOC), focused on finances, and the latest Walking Together worship service. Here is how the every member visit, the stewardship program, and Walking Together fit overall if you choose to use all three:

- The every member visit is the highest priority.
- If the every member visit is done in fall, the CLOC stewardship program can be done in spring or vice versa.
- Walking Together is a one-time worship service celebrating our work together, under God, as a synod. This year the focus will be on the goals to expand ministry under the synod’s long-range plan. While the service could be held at any time, it might fit best near the end of the every member visit period if members were made aware of how the every member visit is a component of the long-range plan.

Questions or comments?

Please contact WELS Ministry of Christian Giving for assistance or to share your comments. Phone: 800-827-5482 (Milwaukee area: 414-256-3209) or e-mail: mcg@wels.net.