

**Sermon followed by Service - Nov. 2, 25 - All Saints Day - Heb. 11:32-40**

We have our list - saints who have gone home to heaven this past year.

The writer to the Hebrews has a longer list. He starts, not with Adam and Eve, but with their murdered son, Abel. He continues with names we know well and not so well - Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and more. People living by faith, looking forward to God keeping his promise. People looking forward to heaven.

Now in our lesson, the writer to the Hebrews picks up his pace. He has his list, from the time of the Judges, a time especially dark in the history of Israel. You recognize the names - Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel - men of faith, national heroes, people who knew God and so dared to stand up for God and his people. Bold and brave men of God now in heaven. That list can seem a bit intimidating.

Listen to those names again - Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel. Not only are they men of faith, national heroes, people who knew God and so dared to stand up for God and his people, what else is true of them? Shame, guilt, doubt, crimes against God and crimes against his people. But here they are, in a list of saints in heaven. Why? Not because they were great and national heroes, but through faith. They looked to God with faith in his promise - and God counted them as his. They looked to God with faith in his promise - and God counted them right, right by him, right for heaven. Think about it. God didn't define them and judge them by their worst ... or by their every day ... or even by their own personal best. God defined them and counted them as his and counted them right for heaven through faith.

We need to ask it, don't we? We need to hear it - through faith in what? Something bigger and better than - "the sun will come out tomorrow." Something bigger and better than - "live your best life now." Something bigger and better than - "You just gotta believe." No, God's promise isn't such twaddle. So, right with God through faith in what? Through faith in God's promise of a Champion to put the devil in his place. Through faith in God's promise to bless the world through Abraham and then through David. Through faith in God's promise of a King, a Deliverer, a Messiah who would deliver his people. Through faith in God's promise of a lamb who would take the place of his people. Through faith in God's promise of a sacrifice who would pay for his people.

Over the centuries, God made his promise clearer and clearer. But what was still true for everyone there on that list of Old Testament heroes of faith? **"They did not receive what had been promised."** After all they had gone through, after all they had sacrificed, they died without seeing the promise of Jesus fulfilled.

Oh, we have it so good, don't we? We have received! We get to live life with Christmas and Easter! And I should mention the cross in between, shouldn't I? Instead of having to face God with guilt and shame covering us, we get to face God knowing we have Jesus and his cross covering us. Instead of having to face life, this world, all on our own, we get to face life in this world knowing we have God's Champion to fight for us, to deliver us. Instead of having to face our future with little more than promises and hopes, we get to face our future with Easter behind us; we get to face the future knowing that we have the Jesus who rose from the dead and raised the dead and promises to raise us from the dead; yes, we get to face the future knowing we have heaven ahead of us.

What are we going to do with that?

Can I take you back to the list in our lesson? Did you notice a group of people missing in our lesson? We have heroes of faith who put their lives on the line. We have heroes of faith tortured for their faith, tortured to death because they would not recant or surrender, they would not hide or deny their life with God. We have heroes of faith jeered by the crowds, thrown into

prison, stoned, killed by the sword. We have heroes of faith living destitute, homeless, rejected by the world, living in caves. The world treated them like garbage, thought of them as less than worthless. But did you notice what God thought of them, what God thinks of them? Not that they were unworthy, but that the world was unworthy of them ... and so God took them home as precious.

Did you notice what group of people is missing in our lesson? The comfortable coach-potato Christian. The Christian comfortable with the world, fitting in with the world. The Christian comfortable living the life of the world. That's the group of people missing in our lesson.

Why? In chapter after chapter, the letter to the Hebrews is a warning against the temptation, the trap, of getting comfortable and fitting in with the world. This world is going to hell. And those fitting in comfortably with the world, they are going to hell. The writer to the Hebrews isn't comforting us to be comfortable in this world. He's showing us Jesus - how better Jesus is. He's showing us what God's people of faith have done. Why? To get us discomfited with the idea of being comfortable, to get us comfortable with the idea of being uncomfortable.

Uncomfortable - how? Determined to look to Jesus, ridding ourselves of anything, everything that would get in the way of Jesus, straining and struggling to live the life Jesus has for us - rejecting every kind of evil, growing in knowledge and wisdom, growing in faith, growing in love, growing in what we do for God, growing in what we do with God - straining and struggling to live the life Jesus has for us - even when it gets in the way of a comfortable self.

Why? Why would we live this way? Faith. Promise. Jesus. Heaven! Jesus is taking us to heaven! Amen.

November 1 & 2, 2025

**DIVINE SERVICE II**

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** it might sometimes seem that we (with Jesus) live harder lives and die harder deaths than so many who have no part with Jesus.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we are given both perspective and promise ... and so we persevere!

**OPENING HYMN**

*“For All The Saints”*  
**Hymn 880 v. 1-5**

**Hymn: 880 For All the Saints**

For all the saints who from their labors rest,  
who thee by faith before the world confessed,  
thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;  
thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;  
thou, in the darkness drear, their one true light.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Oh, may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold  
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old  
and win with them the victor’s crown of gold.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Oh, blest communion, fellowship divine!  
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;  
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,  
steals on the ear the distant triumph-song,

and hearts are brave again and arms are strong.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

#### INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

#### CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

**C: Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

**For faithless worrying and selfish pride,**

**For sins of habit and sins of choice,**

**For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,**

**I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.**

**O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.**

#### ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

#### LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O

Christ.

**C: Christ, have mercy.**

**M:** For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

**M:** Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you. **Amen.**

**HYMN**

*“For All The Saints”*

**Hymn 880 v. 6-8**

**Hymn: 880 For All the Saints**

The golden evening brightens in the west;  
soon, soon, to faithful warriors cometh rest;  
sweet is the calm of paradise the blest.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

But, lo, there breaks a yet more glorious day:  
the saints triumphant rise in bright array;  
the King of glory passes on his way.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

From earth’s wide bounds, from ocean’s farthest coast,  
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,  
singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Almighty God, you have knit your people together into one holy Church, the body of Christ our Lord. Grant us grace to follow the example of your blessed saints in lives of faith and willing service and with them at last inherit the inexpressible joys that you have prepared for those who love you; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## FIRST READING

## *Revelation 21:1-6*

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.

They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **A SAINTS TRIUMPHANT CONFESSION OF FAITH:**

### **A READING OF PROMISES FULFILLED**

M: I am resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

**C: And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. (*John 11:25-26*)**

Harry McDonald                      December 8, 2024

M: My flesh and my heart may fail,

**C: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (*Psalms 73:26*)**

Harold Zoellick      February 10, 2025

M: Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life  
C: **and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.** (*Psalm 23:6*)

Robert Zielke                      March 28, 2025

M: The Lord is my shepherd.

C: **I lack nothing.**

M: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

C: **I will fear no evil, for you are with me.**

**Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.** (*Psalm 23:1,4*)

Donald Hamil                      April 5, 2025

M: I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned;

C: **He has crossed over from death to life.** (*John 5:24*)

Wayne Murphy April 8, 2025

M: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

C: **Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness.** (*2 Timothy 4:7-8*)

Lyle Reiter                      April 30, 2025

M: Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."

C: **"Yes," says the Spirit, "They will rest from their labor."** (*Revelations 13:14*)

Philip Garberding              May 3, 2025

M: Be faithful, even to the point of death.

C: **And I will give you the crown of life.** (*Revelation 2:10*)

Allen Stueck                      May 4, 2025

M: As for me, I know that my redeemer lives, and that at the end of time he will stand over the dust.

**C: Then, even after my skin has been destroyed, nevertheless, in my own flesh**

**I will see God.** (*Job 19:25-26*)

Carol Rysso                      June 23, 2025

M: For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.

**C: So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.** (*Romans 14:7-8*)

Helen Ober                      July 9, 2025

M: As for me, I know that my redeemer lives, and that at the end of time he will stand over the dust.

**C: I myself will see him. My own eyes will see him, and not as a stranger.**

(*Job 19:25-27*)

Robert Rysso                      August 17, 2025

M: Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

**C: We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.** (*1*

*Thess.4:13-14*)

Paul Knachel                      September 7, 2025

HYMN

*“Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See”*

**Hymn 884**

### **Hymn: 884 Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See**

Lord, when your glory I shall see  
and taste your kingdom's pleasure,  
your blood my royal robe shall be,  
my joy beyond all measure!  
When I appear before your throne,  
your righteousness shall be my crown;  
with these I need not hide me.  
And there, in garments richly wrought,  
as your own bride I shall be brought,  
to stand in joy beside you.

### **SECOND READING**

*Hebrews 11:32–40*

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

The Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**CHOIR**

*“Farther Along”*

W.B. Stevens

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*2 Timothy 1:10*

Alleluia. Christ Jesus has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Alleluia.

**GOSPEL**

*Luke 6:20–23*

Looking at his disciples, he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now,  
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you,  
when they exclude you and insult you  
and reject your name as evil,  
because of the Son of Man.

“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.”

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

**Hymn of the Day: 883 Behold a Host, Arrayed in White**

Behold a host, arrayed in white,  
like thousand snow-clad mountains bright!

With palms they stand;  
who is this band  
before the throne of light?  
These are the saints of glorious fame,  
who from the great affliction came  
and in the flood  
of Jesus' blood  
are cleansed from guilt and blame.  
Now gathered in the holy place,  
their voices they in worship raise;  
their anthems rise  
where God resides,  
mid angels' songs of praise.

Despised and scorned, they sojourned here;  
but now, how glorious they appear!

Those martyrs stand,  
a priestly band,  
God's throne forever near.  
So oft in troubled days gone by,  
in anguish they would weep and sigh;  
at home above  
the God of love  
fore'er their tears shall dry.  
They now enjoy the Sabbath rest,  
the heav'nly banquet of the blest;  
the Lamb, their Lord,  
at festive board  
himself is host and guest.

O blessed saints in bright array,  
now safely home in endless day,  
    extol the Lord,  
    who with his Word  
sustained you on the way.  
The steep and narrow path you trod;  
you toiled and sowed the Word abroad;  
    rejoice and bring  
    your fruits and sing  
before the throne of God.  
Swing high your palms, lift up your song,  
yes, make it myriad voices strong!  
    Let heaven ring—  
    to Christ the King  
all praise and thanks belong!

## SERMON

### NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**OFFERING**

*If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.*



**OFFERING PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, our heavenly King, grant that the closer we draw to Judgment Day the more clearly we recognize and acknowledge your claim – your blood-bought claim on our whole lives – help us to live and give as yours!  
**Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

**M:** O Lord God, our strength, our song, and our salvation, you fulfilled your promises by the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead.

**C:** **Thanks be to God! You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**M:** In your compassion you sent Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life to rescue the lost.

**C:** **Drive out all doubt and gloom that we may delight in your glorious triumph.**

**M:** Lift our eyes heavenward to see him who lives to make intercession for the saints, and grant us confidence in the greatness of his power. Keep

before us the vision of your redeemed people standing before your throne and singing the song of victory.

**C: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive wisdom and power and honor and glory and praise.**

M: Make us instruments of your peace as we bring the good news of hope and new life to those around us. Guide us in the use of all that you have entrusted to us: our time, our talents, and our treasures.

**C: Risen Lord, live in us that we may live for you.**

M: Merciful Lord Jesus, grant healing to the sick, and strengthen the faith of the suffering and the dying. Assure them of your abiding presence, and comfort them with the hope of eternal life.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

*Silent prayer.*

M: Gracious Father, you have restored to us the joy of your salvation. With happy hearts, we come before you and say:

**C: Alleluia! Thanks be to God! Amen.**

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

#### THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

M: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

**C: We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

**C: It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he comes again in glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

Therefore with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *Sanctus***

**O holy, holy, holy  
Lord God of pow'r and might,  
Your glory, earth and heaven  
In countless ways recite.  
Hosanna! Come and save us,  
Lord God of hosts on high,  
And in your grace and mercy  
Receive our fervent cry.**

**Hosanna in the highest!  
How truly blest is he  
Who in God's name is coming  
To set his people free!  
He comes to bring salvation  
And with his blood outpoured,  
Deliver us from bondage — Hosanna, mighty Lord!**

**WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

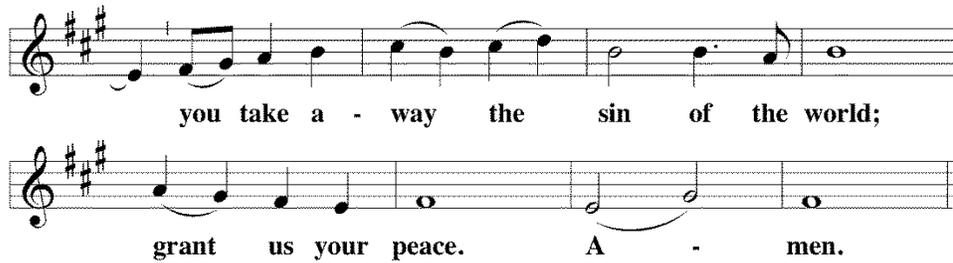
Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

### LAMB OF GOD *Agnus Dei*

The musical score is written on four staves. The first two staves are in a key with one flat (B-flat major) and a 4/4 time signature. The third and fourth staves are in a key with two sharps (D major). The lyrics are: "Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,"



**DISTRIBUTION HYMN**

*“At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing”*

**Hymn 675**

**Distribution Hymn: 675 At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing**

At the Lamb’s high feast we sing  
praise to our victorious King,  
who has washed us in the tide  
flowing from his piercèd side.

Alleluia!

Praise we him whose love divine  
gives his sacred blood for wine,  
gives his body for the feast—  
Christ the victim, Christ the priest.

Alleluia!

Where the paschal blood is poured,  
death’s dread angel sheathes the sword;  
Israel’s hosts triumphant go  
thro’ the wave that drowns the foe.

Alleluia!

Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed,  
paschal victim, paschal bread;  
with sincerity and love  
eat we manna from above.

Alleluia!

Mighty Victim from the sky,  
hell's fierce pow'rs beneath you lie.  
You have conquered in the fight,  
you have brought us life and light.

Alleluia!

Now no more can death appall,  
now no more the grave enthrall;  
you have opened paradise,  
and your saints in you shall rise.

Alleluia!

Easter triumph, Easter joy!  
This alone can sin destroy;  
from sin's pow'r, Lord, set us free,  
newborn souls in you to be.

Alleluia!

Father, who the crown shall give,  
Savior, by whose death we live,  
Spirit, guide through all our days,  
Three in One, your name we praise.

Alleluia!

#### **CLOSING PRAYER**

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### **BLESSING**

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

*“Jerusalem the*

*Golden”*

**Hymn 889**

**Hymn: 890 Jerusalem the Golden**

Jerusalem the golden,  
with milk and honey blest—  
the sight of it refreshes  
the weary and oppressed.

I know not, oh, I know not  
what joys await us there,  
what radiancy of glory,  
what bliss beyond compare.

They stand, those halls of Zion,  
all jubilant with song  
and bright with many an angel  
and all the martyr throng.  
The Prince is ever in them,  
the daylight is serene;  
the pastures of the blessed  
are ever rich and green.

There is the throne of David,  
and there, from care released,  
the shout of them that triumph,  
the song of them that feast.  
And they who with their leader  
have conquered in the fight

forever and forever  
are clad in robes of white.

O sweet and blessed country,  
the home of God's elect!  
O sweet and blessed country  
that eager hearts expect!  
In mercy, Jesus, bring us  
to that dear land of rest;  
you are with God the Father  
and Spirit ever blest.

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## **Seven new home mission starts approved**

In September WELS Board for Home Missions met and approved seven new missions toward the synodwide goal of starting 100 new missions and enhancing 75 ministries by 2033.

“With the approval of these seven new missions, we’re not just planting churches—we’re expanding the reach of the gospel where there isn’t a WELS presence,” says Mark Gabb, Home Missions administrator. “It’s also a direct step toward our synod’s goals laid out in the ‘Christ through us’ long-range strategic plan. Our goal is to expand WELS’ reach through strategic church planting so that millions more will have the opportunity to hear the gospel. We thank God for the prayers and support that make this bold outreach possible.”

The seven new mission starts include:

**Altoona, Wis.** - one of the fastest-growing communities in western Wisconsin. With a population nearing 10,000 and projected to grow, Altoona attracts people seeking a small-town feel with access to urban amenities, which are located in nearby Eau Claire, Wis. A core group from St. Mark, Eau Claire, has been active hosting community events, launching monthly devotional services, and building a growing prospect list since early 2023.

**Buffalo, N.Y.** - one of the largest metro areas in the United States without a WELS church. The target area has about 95,000 residents within a two-mile radius. A dedicated core group has begun gathering for Bible study and outreach, laying the groundwork for a new church plant.

**Naples, Fla.** - Ranked among the best places to live and retire, Naples is seeing fast growth. The district mission board and mission counselor have made multiple visits—talking with locals, meeting community leaders, and learning about the area’s needs. With strong support and a clear plan, the mission is ready to reach the many unchurched residents eager for spiritual connection.

**Olathe, Kan.** - in the southwest Kansas City metro area, has seen its population surge, and continued growth is expected. Major employers have fueled this expansion, making Olathe one of the most affordable and family-friendly cities in the nation. A dedicated core group from Mt. Olive in Overland Park, Kan., has been hosting regular Bible studies and planning meetings.

**The Sandhills, N.C.** - The Sandhills area of North Carolina is growing as retirees and young families move in. Its proximity to Fort Bragg also draws military personnel who often settle there permanently. A core group from Tree of Life, Cary, N.C., has begun outreach and canvassing, building momentum and a prospect list in a region where confessional Lutheran churches are few.

### **Seven new home mission starts approved (cont.)**

**West Richland, Wash.** - located just outside the Tri-Cities, is experiencing rapid growth. A committed core group from Southridge, Kennewick, Wash., has been working to establish a second site in West Richland since 2024. The group has already begun outreach through community service activities and fellowship events and aims to launch regular worship and ministry activities in 2025.

**Wilmington, N.C.** - one of the fastest-growing corners of North Carolina. A core group of 18 people from Ascension, Jacksonville, N.C., meets regularly for Bible study and planning. With no WELS church nearby and easy access along U.S. 17, the group is laying the foundation for a welcoming church that blends in-person and online worship, Bible instruction, and plenty of community service.

## **WELS Conference of Presidents meets**

The Conference of Presidents (COP) met Oct. 7–9 at the Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM) in Waukesha, Wis., to discuss the following areas:

- **Pastoral vacancies:** The tally of pastoral vacancies includes 148 parish vacancies and 162 total vacancies for pastor-trained men. This represents a vacancy rate of just under 12 percent. The ideal vacancy rate is 6 to 8 percent. Larger classes from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in the coming years will provide some relief for the shortage, but recruitment of candidates for the pastoral ministry needs to be emphasized in our congregations.
- **Retirement advice:** The COP will be developing written advice for called workers who are nearing retirement. Ideally, the district president will meet with these workers to help them prepare for retirement.
- **Congregation Mission Offerings:** Congregation Mission Offerings continue to be strong. The COP is thankful to congregations and members for their generous support.

[Learn more about the COP](https://forwardinchrist.net/cop-sc/) <https://forwardinchrist.net/cop-sc/>