



Thank you for your interest in requesting a pastor candidate through the Assignment Committee of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod. Your request for a graduate from our WELS seminary speaks to your confidence in the excellence of our ministerial training system.

The candidates who have come through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary are presenting themselves for service in the church. They are well-trained in different disciplines, have earned their Master of Divinity degree, and are gifted by the Lord of the Church with talents and abilities that will serve well in different ministry settings. They offer themselves in service to the Lord Jesus and his Church, saying, "Here am I. Send me!"

Not every candidate is a fit for every call, and not every call is a fit for a given candidate. The Assignment Committee works together harmoniously, seeking to match the unique gifts of each candidate with the needs of the calling bodies requesting candidates. The Assignment Committee takes this responsibility very seriously and implores the aid and guidance of the Holy Spirit in carrying out this task. Calls may be left unfilled because suitable candidates are unavailable to fill them. Candidates may remain unassigned because there are no calls that fit their unique gifts and abilities. This may occur regardless of the number of candidates and calls available.

In today's calling environment, the number of call requests surpasses the number of candidates available to fill them. This inevitably means that some requests will go unfilled. Calling bodies requesting candidates should be aware of the strong possibility that their request might not result in a candidate being assigned. Calling bodies should be prepared with backup plans in place to cover ministry needs, in the event that they do not receive a graduate.

Salary and benefits

As congregations come to the assignment committee for a pastor, the Conference of Presidents wishes to underscore that it considers synod code to be a reasonable wage. This includes benefits such as VEBA (medical and disability insurance), pension, housing, half of Social Security, and mileage. Calling bodies not presently at code should present a plan to the district president that will bring the salary to the level of synod code within three years and provide an annual report regarding their progress.

Please use the online compensation calculation tool at www.wels.net/cwcompcalc to calculate the annual salary for your new pastor. The online calculator is self-explanatory, and most questions are answered by clicking the information icon next to each field.

Moving costs

Moving costs should be included in the congregation's planning. Under the provisions of the tax bill passed by Congress in 2017, moving expenses are typically no longer tax deductible. This means that any payment from the congregation either to or on behalf of an employee to cover moving expenses is counted as taxable income. In order to help called workers absorb this tax hit, synod compensation now calls for a one-time addendum to the called worker's compensation. The add-on amount is a percentage of the moving cost and is calculated at 27.3% for ministers of the gospel. The amount is paid to the called worker as compensation in the year the tax liability is incurred.

Pastor mentoring

We are strongly committed to the success of our graduates, so a new graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will be assigned a mentor. Congregations that are assigned a pastor will be asked to contribute **\$1500 annually for three years** to enable their pastor to participate in the Pastor Partners Mentoring Program. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary invoices congregations for the cost of this mentoring program.

Your next steps (Please note that to open the linked documents, you may need to press "Ctrl" when hovering over the link.)

- 1) Complete your assignment request online at www.wels.net/callrequest (blue button: "Fill out the form"). We do need you to please complete this step, even if you have been calling from the field. A WELS Cloud

account is needed for this; if you need help accessing your or your congregation's account, please follow this [WELS Cloud link](#). District President Zank will receive notification of your request; he may contact you for additional information. (Note: To ensure that your submitted form has been correctly processed, it would be good to notify President Zank through an email, indicating that you have submitted a request for a graduate assignment.)

- a. There are four tabs to complete – all fields marked with a red asterisk are required.
 - b. **Calling and serving body:** When calling a pastor to serve in a congregation, the calling and serving body will be the same.
 - c. For the "Type of Call" field, use Assignment.
 - d. **In the "Call meeting date" field, enter 5/21/2026.**
 - e. Compensation using the [compensation calculator](#) is a critical component of your request.
 - f. If you begin work on a graduate assignment request, you can save it and return to finish it later. To save your request so that you can return and complete it later, click on the "Save" button in the upper right on the form. To return to your form go [here](#).
 - g. To finalize your request and notify your district president, click on the "Submit" button in the upper right on the form. This will save your request and send an automatic notification your district president.
- 2) Complete a call form, filling in all fields EXCEPT the candidate's name. (Pastor Zank will complete that field in the event a candidate is assigned.) **Please be sure to sign your call document.** Assignments will not be made without a signed call document in hand. Download call forms [here](#).
 - 3) Write a cover letter to the candidate, including details about your congregation, your community, special opportunities, and so on. Make sure the letter includes contact information for key individuals in the congregation. Sample letters are available [here](#).
 - 4) Complete this [form](#) to provide guidance to the assignment committee.

You may prepare a call packet with additional information of interest about your congregation and community, but this is not required. The four items discussed above are required.

Final thoughts

If your congregation is presently calling from the field and you would like to request a graduate should a call not be accepted, please submit a request on time. It is preferred to have you withdraw a request from consideration should a call be accepted, rather than have you submit a late request.

If your pastor receives a call by mid-April, and if you would consider seeking a graduate to replace him if he accepted that call, be aware of the possible need to call for a voters' meeting to approve a request for a graduate. It is recommended that you complete a request for a graduate and withdraw that request if your pastor declines the call. If you do not think you would apply for a graduate, then there is no need to do this.

Assignment schedule

This year's assignment schedule is as follows:

- **Tuesday, April 28, 2026 – Deadline for submitting pastor assignment requests.** Changes to the deadline may only be accommodated through consultation with your district president.
- **Friday, May 8, 2026 –**Deadline for physical or digital call packets to reach your district president. (See corresponding mailing address below.)
- **Tuesday/Wednesday, May 19-20, 2026 –** The Assignment Committee meets at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to assign pastor candidates.

Please have your primary point of contact remain close to his cell phone on this day in case your district president needs additional information regarding your request.

If your assignment request cannot be filled, your district president will contact you no later than Friday evening to inform you that you will not be receiving a candidate.

- **Wednesday, May 20, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. CDT** – The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary vicar call service will be held in the gymnasium. Visit the website www.wls.edu for more information and to watch the livestream.
- **Thursday, May 21, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. CDT** – The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary call service will be held in the gymnasium. Visit the website www.wls.edu for more information and to watch the livestream.
- **Friday, May 22, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. CDT** – The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduation service will be held in the gymnasium and livestreamed.

Following the call services, candidates assigned into ministry will meet with the president of the district into which they are assigned to receive call packets and have a brief orientation to prepare them to transition into their ministry.

Please send your call packet to your district president via the method below so that it arrives **by May 8, 2026**.

Electronic packets preferred; send to: nwdp@wels.net (please copy carissa.priewe@wels.net)

If you choose to send a physical call packet, please send it to:

Mount Olive Lutheran Church
ATTN: Rev Joel Zank
930 E Florida Ave
Appleton, WI 54911

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me or my administrative assistant, Carissa Priewe, with any questions; we are happy to assist.

In our Lenten Lord Jesus,

Pastor Joel Zank