



**2025 Lay Leadership Summit
Walther Christian Academy
900 Chicago Ave.
Melrose Park, IL 60160**

August 23, 2025

Sectional I Workshops 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Disciples of All Nations

**Rev. Dr. Heath Trampe, Director of Discipleship Ministry
LCMS National Mission**

At the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus commissions His church to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching – gathering the scattered and shepherding the gathered. It sounds simple, but real life can be so complicated. We wish more people would worship each week. We want our Bible studies to be better attended. We want to make a bigger impact on our community!

Leadership – Vitality – Wellness

**Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor, Managing Director, LCMS National Mission
Rev. Jonathan Manor, LCMS Director, PALS and Continuing Education**

Join this interactive session to explore and discuss how to become an effective leader who enhances the life and well-being of your congregation. Topics will include Christ-centered decision-making, conflict resolution, and building trust among members and staff. Gain insights from experienced lay volunteers and church staff leaders, Jonathan and Tiffany Manor, who now serve as leaders of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's Worker Wellness efforts.

Chairing a Congregation in Today's World

**Joe Willmann, LCEF District Vice President, LCMS Northern Illinois District
Congregational Chair, St. John, Wheaton**

The wide variety of challenges that a congregation faces often find their reflection in the challenges of chairing that same congregation. How can congregational chairs be spiritual grounded and equipped for and effective in serving in this vital role? Join Joe Willmann, the Congregational Chair at St. John, Wheaton, as he resources chairs for their great service to our Lord and His people.

Launching Inter-Cultural Ministry

Rev. Andres Valencia, St. Paul, Mt. Prospect

The nations for whom Jesus has died are in our communities and neighborhoods, but how does a local ministry make a meaningful connection that welcomes a new community to be part of the congregation's already-established community? What are the challenges and joys of having one ministry that embraces and celebrates more than one culture in its midst? Join Rev. Valencia as he and his team share their story and practical ways to begin intercultural ministry.



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Best Practices for Church Finances

**LeeAnn Acosta, Business Manager, LCMS Northern Illinois District
Carol-Joy Motisi, President, Christian Senior Ministries, Inc.**

Together we will delve into the world of church finances by sharing best practices and sound accountability principles in order to help manage the resources which God entrusted to the Church's care.

A House of Prayer for _____

Rev. James Buckman, Faith Lutheran Church, Lake Forest

In this session, participants will engage with Rev. Buckman, who launched an effective prayer walk ministry at Faith, Lake Forest. Join him as he explores the spiritual practice of prayer as seen in both the Old and New Testaments and discover how the biblical practice impacts your own congregation as well.

Faith-Based Engaging Games for Sunday School

Brian Evans, Assistant Sunday School Superintendent, Christ, Orland Park

Come learn fun and engaging ways to take the lessons you teach in Sunday School to a level where students want to learn and will keep the lessons of faith longer in their lives. Skills, facts, and strategies can be learned through games, so come find some great lessons of faith which can be applied in your Sunday School ministry starting next week!

Reaching Your "One"

Rev. David Ficken, Director, LINC Chicago

Lexi Schmidt, Associate Director, LINC Chicago

Do you ever dream of reaching people close to you and in your community who are unlikely to walk into a church on Sunday morning? Join us in discovering and defining the specific people with whom God is inviting you to share the Kingdom life. You will walk out of this session knowing your "one person" better and with clear next steps for proving real hope and help to your community – that everyone would experience the Gospel in terms they can understand from someone they know and trust.

Recruiting, Equipping, and Keeping Volunteers

Rev. Larry and Sharon Tieman, Immanuel, Crystal Lake

Many congregations suffer a shortage of volunteers—from assistance in setting up for events to key leadership roles for the church. In this workshop, speakers will share practical ways of identifying, inviting, equipping, and maintaining new volunteers for service among God's people.



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Finishing Well... Being Faithful When a Congregation Closes

**Rev. Philip Krupski, Senior Vice President for Gift Planning Service,
LCMS Foundation**

This session will focus on the need for proper care and planning when it becomes inevitable that a congregation must close. We will emphasize care for the grieving, connection of members with new ministries, and careful stewardship of financial resources, while celebrating the future positive impact for reaching people with the grace of Jesus.

Sectional II Workshops 12:50 p.m. – 1:50 p.m.

Spiritual Conversation in Today's World

**Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies, Vice President of Ministry Engagement,
Lutheran Hour Ministries**

While we rejoice when our Lord uses us to share His Good News, opening a conversation about our faith in today's world can seem daunting. Join Rev. Dr. Lakies as he guides attendees in how to connect with people in meaningful, effective ways to bring the joy of the Gospel into the lives of others.

More Than Just MY Church?

**Rev. Cory Estby, LCMS Northern Illinois District South Region Vice President
Zion, Grant Park**

Your pastor is called to shepherd your congregation (preach the Word and administer the Sacraments), but he also serves the Lord of the Church in Circuit, District, and Synod partnerships. Learn how pastor and laity can interact (play in the sandbox) with others.

Practicing Hospitality as a Congregation

Rev. Brian Davies, Lord of Glory, Grayslake

This workshop will explore practical ways your congregation can provide a warm, hospitable presence to guests.



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Christian Care in Trauma

Rev. Chris Singer, President and CEO, Lutheran Church Charities

No church is immune from the experience of trauma. It may come with an unexpected death of a congregational member or with something as all-encompassing as a natural disaster which affects the entire community. How can lay members be a source of Jesus' care in the midst of tragedy? Join Rev. Singer as he equips workshop attendees with practical ideas for being a caring ministry when trauma strikes.

Redefining "Healthy" in Church Ministry

Rev. Chad Bolosan, Messiah, Sterling

Join Pastor Chad Bolosan as he explores ways of defining the concept of "healthy" in the church: biblically, ministerially, and logically to give ministry a Christ-centered, "healthy" perspective.

Concordia Plan Services: An Overview

Nick Hall

One of the greatest ways a ministry can care for its workers is by providing for their health coverage. Join CPS's Nick Hall as he covers all the benefits CPS offers not only to care for workers when their health is in need, but to assist them in maintaining good health for their wellness and the general blessing of the ministries they serve.

Changing your Constitution to Fit Ministry Needs

**Rev. David Tostky, Secretary, LCMS Northern Illinois District
St. Peter, Joliet**

Church constitutions are guiding documents written to serve the needs of the congregation in good order. Yet, as congregations undergo changes in size and age, their constitutions can be seen as cumbersome. In this workshop, the speaker will share ways to introduce revisions to your constitution which will maintain good order while also serving the needs of the current congregation.

Whole Life Stewardship

Rev. Tom Eggebrecht, Senior Vice President, LCEF Ministry Solution

When you think of stewardship, you automatically think of... money! This session will expand your thinking about biblical stewardship and provide some ideas for implementing it in your congregation.



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Sunday School Made Easy: making the most of time, effort, and volunteers

Rev. Ben and Beth Hayter, Zion, Chebanse

Description: In this session you will find a simple way to teach Sunday school that is burn-out proof for teachers, loved by students, and effective for teaching the faith. This hands-on, Bible story-centered program is designed for teaching a wide range of grades together and does not depend on the creativity of the teachers but rather takes advantage of the creativity of the children.

UKANDU/Belize Mission

Rev. Peter Imlah, St. John, Lombard

Cathy Dugar, Executive Director, Belize Mission Society

One of the most often overlooked benefits of serving on an international mission team is the profound spiritual growth that occurs. Many participants return with a renewed and passionate relationship with Jesus. It's a transformative journey, and it stretches individuals in meaningful ways. Learn more about how witnessing the joy and contentment of those we serve often leaves a lasting impact, planting seed which continue to grow long after the trip ends. Take part in seeing how Christ-centered, ministry-building mission work can be done right in your own local ministry setting as well as in faraway places. Learn practical ways to encourage and equip members for short-term mission service.

Sectional III Workshops 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

School Revitalization Primer

Rev. Tom Eggebrecht, Senior Vice President, LCEF Ministry Solutions

In this session, we will cover the essential aspects of a successful and sustainable school ministry. Learn the basics of what it takes to build a strong foundation for your school ministry.

Small Group Leader Training

Eric Mooney, Director of Small Groups, Trinity, Tinley Park

Join this session to learn the best methods for organizing the logistics of leading a small group and successfully facilitating discussions within the group.



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Partnership Models – How We Do Ministry Together

**Rev. Kris Whitby, Assistant to the President – Mission and Ministry
LCMS Northern Illinois District**

As we face the challenges of congregational ministry, we are not alone. Neighboring congregations face similar challenges. Our Lord, who is always with us, has put us together to help each other. This session will set the scene for why we need each other at this point in history and present practical models for ministry which help congregations work together in Christ's kingdom.

The Family That Prays Together

DCE Dari Hartmann, St. Paul, Mt. Prospect

Christians are invited to talk with our loving and great God, and congregations can help foster the practice of prayer by encouraging families as they teach their children how to pray. This “make it, take it” session will equip your congregation with some simple tools to share with your families in this great task.

Church Connected: Simple Strategies for Reaching Your Community

Sarah Chang, Founder, SDG Digital Design

The digital world is no longer just a supplement to church life—it's a core part of your church's mission field. From your website to social media to streamed services, discover simple strategies to leverage technology to effectively reach your community. There will also be a Q&A to help address your church's specific tech challenges.

Set Apart to Serve

Lois Stewart, Education Executive, LCMS Northern Illinois District

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” We know that there is a great need for church workers (of all types). This sectional will share what the “Set Apart to Serve” program is. We will discuss ways to nurture the youth in your congregation to think about becoming a professional church worker.



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Congregational Lay Leaders Round Table

Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss, President, LCMS Northern Illinois District

Congregational Chairs, Chairmen of the Board of Elders, and Treasurers are invited to take part in a conversation which will give you a picture of the state of the Church-at-large and opportunities to explore common challenges and opportunities for our congregations as well as our given offices of service. You'll walk away with ideas on how best to serve in challenging times and find a connection with fellow laity who serve in your same position for mutual support.

Branding the Church in the Community

Ann Ciaccio, Director of Communications, LCMS Northern Illinois District

This workshop aims to equip congregations with a foundational understanding of branding which aligns with their Gospel mission. We will explore branding, not merely as a marketing tool, but as a reflection of a church's ethos—its character, values, and witness, shaped by Christ. Participants will learn how to communicate their church's identity with clarity and consistency, helping to strengthen connections within their communities and amplify their message of hope.

Dealing with Conflict in the Congregation

Rev. John Prohl, Assistant to the President, LCMS Northern Illinois District

Rev. Matthew Troester, St. Paul, Matteson

Conflict is often unpleasant. It is going to happen in this fallen world, even among the saints of God. Yet, how we choose to deal with conflict can lead to healing and stronger bonds. Participants will be led through effective ways of handling conflict in congregational ministry which keep the focus on Christ and the healing power of His forgiveness.