

July 2025

Dear Lay Leader,

Greetings in the name of Jesus from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon. At the end of May, we had the privilege of seeing another graduating class assigned into the pastoral ministry of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

This next year will mark 10 years since your pastor graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. We are encouraging your congregation to mark this anniversary by making it possible for your pastor, and his wife, if married, to attend a ministry retreat organized by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This retreat (**Renewed in Grace**) will be held Wednesday, April 8, through Friday, April 10, 2026, in San Antonio, Texas.

This retreat is part of a comprehensive effort (along with a mentoring program and formal and informal continuing education opportunities) by your synod to strengthen and encourage those serving us in pastoral ministry. Investing in the growth and encouragement of our pastors is an investment in ongoing gospel ministry, both for your congregation and for our church body.

Here are comments from pastors and wives who attended the Celebration of Ministry retreats in previous years:

“I so enjoyed the opportunity to study the word of God with my brothers in the ministry. During the free time we caught up with each other and had meaningful ministry discussions.”

“This ministry retreat was truly a well-organized and wonderful experience!”

“The time we spent together was so appreciated and invaluable as encouragement among the brothers and their wives.”

“The balance of agenda time, fellowship time, and couple time was just right for us. We were refreshed in many ways.”

We realize that the cost of this retreat is a considerable factor for congregations to consider. While final costs for the 2026 retreat will depend on finalizing contracts with our vendors, we hope to keep the costs comparable to previous years' retreats. Here are the estimated costs:

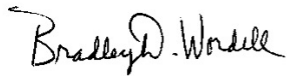
	Individual	Couple
Two nights at the Drury Hotel (including taxes and fees)	\$416	\$416
Retreat registration (after January 2026, registration increases)	\$199	\$399
Travel/airfare	\$350	\$700

As far as covering the costs, some congregations have simply put the cost into their budget. Others have used a door offering. Still others have made the congregation aware of the opportunity and allowed members to respond with special gifts. Do what is wise in your situation. In the past, many congregations have gone above and beyond by gifting their pastor with *the time and encouragement* to stay an extra day or two in San Antonio (at the pastor's expense). Please consider doing that.

Online registration will open in October, and we will send out further information to your pastor as that time approaches. We urge the leaders of your congregation to begin discussing this opportunity to support your pastor's ministry. It is our prayer that with your congregation's support, your pastor, and his wife, if married, will be among those who gather in San Antonio next year. Join us in praying that this retreat will be a blessing and an encouragement to the pastors and wives who attend, and in turn a blessing to the people they serve.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or our event coordinator, Kim Workentine, at [Kimberly.Workentine@wisluthsem.org](mailto:Kimberly.Workentine@wisluthsem.org).

In Him,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bradley D. Wordell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professor Brad Wordell  
Grow in Grace Director  
[Bradley.Wordell@wls.edu](mailto:Bradley.Wordell@wls.edu)