

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Back to the Bible Summit Returns September 30, 2026

Lutheran Bible Translators to Host 2nd Annual Virtual Event, Adding Several In-Person Host Sites

Free virtual gathering brings 12 speakers (pastors, educators, and ministry leaders) together around a question many congregations are quietly asking: what to do when biblical fluency is declining but interest in Scripture is not?

CONCORDIA, Mo., August 10, 2026 — Lutheran Bible Translators will host the free Back to the Bible Summit on Wednesday, September 30, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Central. Now in its second year, the virtual-first gathering brings 12 pastors, educators, and ministry practitioners into three moderated panel conversations built for leaders who want practical next steps, not another diagnosis. The 2026 theme is Empowering Your Church Through Scripture.

Registration is free and open now at <https://www.LBT.org/Summit>.

“The conversation about Bible engagement usually starts with what is missing,” said Rev. Dr. Rich Rudowske, Executive Director and CEO of Lutheran Bible Translators. “We want to start somewhere else. People are often more open to Scripture than the numbers suggest, and leaders are frequently closer to a breakthrough than they realize. This Summit is a chance to sit with that possibility alongside people who are working on it every day.”

Lutheran Bible Translators has spent more than 60 years working alongside language communities so people can read and hear Scripture in the language they understand best. That work abroad has changed how the organization views and understands Bible ministry domestically.

“The questions we ask with a translation team in Southern Africa turn out to be the questions a congregation in Omaha is asking,” Rudowske said. “Can people get to the text? Do they understand it when they do? Is there anyone walking with them? Those are not international questions. They are church questions.”

Three panel conversations

The Summit is structured as three panel conversations, each anchored to a different part of the challenge.

Scripture Engagement: God Speaks At The Table looks at how people are actually encountering Scripture now, what is changing, and what remains essential.

Davis Powell, CEO and President, Seed Company

Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler, Speaker of The Lutheran Hour, Lutheran Hour Ministries

Rev. Seth Moorman, Strategy and Marketing Executive, 1517

Tyler Tollefson, Director of Student Ministry, Salem Lutheran Church, Tomball, Texas

Discipleship: God Speaks Your Language takes up discipleship as a long walk rather than a program, and how churches build cultures where people keep growing.

Dr. Bernard Bull, President, Concordia University, Nebraska

Rev. Matthew Gonzalez, Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church and Our Saviour Lutheran Church & School, Bronx, New York

Professor Shelly Schultz, Director of the DCE Program, Concordia University, St. Paul

Chris Bellanger, Twin Cities City Director, LINC Ministries

Practical Tools: God Speaks Every Language slows down the rush toward new platforms and AI-generated solutions to ask a plainer question: what actually helps people engage God's Word?

Rev. Dr. David Kim, Founder, Glocal Mission

Rev. William Fredstrom, Associate Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Seymour, Indiana

Rev. Carl Grulke, Regional Director for Southern Africa and Ethiopia, Lutheran Bible Translators

Chad Kelly, Director of Student Ministry, King of Kings, Omaha, Nebraska

New this year: gathering in person

The 2025 Summit was fully virtual. This year, in addition to the live broadcast, partner host sites will bring leaders together in person to watch and talk through what they are hearing with people in their own region.

The inaugural Summit, held in September 2025, drew 326 registrants and 217 live attendees representing more than 30 states and several countries. It was built around LBT's book *God Speaks* by Zach and Allison Zehnder, which is a 30-day Scripture engagement challenge for churches and accompanied by free resources for organizers.

Participants in 2026 will leave with a clearer read on the current moment, ideas they can test in a congregation, school, or small group next month, and free resources to hand to the people they lead. The Summit is designed for pastors, Lutheran educators, DCEs, elders, deaconesses, Bible study leaders, church and school administrators, and anyone helping others go deeper in God's Word.

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About Lutheran Bible Translators

Lutheran Bible Translators partners with local leaders and language communities so people can access and engage Scripture in the language they understand best. Through Bible translation, literacy, Scripture engagement, and capacity building, Lutheran Bible Translators helps communities encounter God's Word with clarity and confidence. Founded in 1964 and based in Concordia, Missouri, the organization works within the illumiNations alliance toward the All Access 2033 goals. More at LBT.org.

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