

2024 Lutheran School Administrators Conference

Speaker Information

Keynote Speakers



Sanft, Jim - President and CEO of Concordia Plan Services

Jim Sanft has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Concordia Plan Services since 2008. Joining CPS in 1999, Sanft served in a variety of leadership roles including Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

In 2022 Sanft was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Concordia University, Nebraska. He also holds a M.S. in Mathematics and Statistics from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and a B.S. in Education from Concordia University, Nebraska.

Sanft is a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries and a Member of the American Academy of Actuaries and worked as an actuary in the group insurance and employee benefit field for over 10 years prior to joining CPS.

An active leader in the church benefits community, Jim serves as Chair of the Church Alliance, a coalition of his peers from nearly 40 church benefit programs, including mainline and evangelical Protestant denominations, branches of Judaism, and Catholic dioceses, schools, and institutions. This work frequently takes Sanft to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of Congress, regulators, and other officials to discuss issues and concerns of church benefit plans. He previously served on the Board of Directors of the Church Benefits Association and on the Policy Board of Directors of the American Benefits Council as the Church Alliance representative.

Jim and his wife Janell are blessed with three sons and daughters-in-law, along with two incredible grandsons! They make their home in Columbia, Illinois and are members of Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in St. Louis, Missouri. Jim enjoys traveling and hiking with Janell, golfing with his sons and sharing their love for Manchester United soccer and Nebraska Cornhusker football.



Dunlap, Ryan - Certified Leadership Coach. Chief Conflict Officer and Founder of Conflictish

With more than 20 years of combined law enforcement, ministry, and executive leadership experience, Ryan Dunlap is an internationally recognized conflict management coach and trainer.

He is a Certified Leadership Coach as well as the founder and Chief Conflict Officer at Conflictish, a conflict strategy firm dedicated to helping leaders improve how they lead themselves and others through conflict. He is the creator of The Real Tact Model™,

custom framework for developing conflict competence. To date, he's coached leaders around the globe and in several industries including biotech, government, nonprofit, faith-based, healthcare, pharma, education, food & beverage, and commercial construction, among others.

He is a decorated law enforcement veteran with 14 years of experience in various roles including the prestigious Special Victims Unit as a sex crimes detective and member of the Child Abduction Response Team. In addition, he is a former SWAT hostage negotiator and crisis intervention officer.

Ryan has served as an expert advisor to state governments, including an appointment to the Georgia Sexual Assault Response Team State Expert Committee and the Tennessee Human Trafficking Advisory Council.

Ryan currently serves as an adjunct instructor for the University at Buffalo in the School of Management. He previously served as an adjunct instructor for Oglethorpe University and held appointments to several boards including the Board of Directors for WTCI-PBS Chattanooga and The Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce.



Senske, Kurt - Founder/Principal At CEO-Board Services

Dr. Kurt Senske is the Founder and Principal of CEO-Board Services, a consulting firm that specializes in working with mission-oriented organizational leaders and boards around issues of governance, strategy, organizational structure, succession planning, coaching, and mergers and acquisitions.

For the past 23 years Dr. Kurt Senske served as Chief Executive Officer of Upbring (formerly Lutheran Social Services of the South), a multi-faceted, multi-state, social service agency. At

Upbring, Dr. Senske has been responsible for more than quadrupling the size of the agency and steering the once-troubled agency back to financial strength.

Dr. Senske's extensive board service includes having served as Chair of the Board of Directors of Thrivent Financial, a Fortune 500 financial services organization. He currently serves as Chairman of Thrivent Charitable and Lutheran Hour Ministries.

A gifted public speaker, Dr. Senske has been a guest columnist on a variety of issues for newspapers and magazines as well as a regular commentator on television and radio. He has also been the featured speaker at numerous conferences and webinars.

Dr. Senske and his wife Laurie live in Austin, Texas and are the proud parents of their daughter Sydney and son-in-law Cody."



Swaner, Lynn - President at Cardus, U.S.

In this role, she serves as a member of the Cardus executive team, oversees Cardus' education portfolio in the US, and provides strategic support for the work of Comment, Cardus' flagship journal of public theology for the common good. Prior to joining Cardus in early 2024, Dr. Swaner held the position of the Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer at the Association of Christian

Schools International (ACSI), and continues to serve as an ACSI Senior Fellow.

Dr. Swaner is the editor or lead author of numerous books, including *Future Ready: Innovative Missions and Models in Christian Education*; *Flourishing Together: A Christian Vision for Students, Educators, and Schools*; and *MindShift: Catalyzing Change in Christian Education*. Her research has appeared in publications including the *International Journal of Educational Development*, *Eton Journal for Innovation and Research in Education*, and *Liberal Education*. She holds a doctorate in organizational leadership from Teachers College, Columbia University, and previously served as a professor of education and a Christian school leader in New York.



Muehler, Craig - Director, LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

Chaplain Craig Muehler, a retired U.S. Navy captain, serves as the director of the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces. He began serving in that position in August 2014 after retiring as deputy chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps, where he served from 2011-14.

As director of LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces, he is the chief liaison to the more than 160 LCMS chaplains serving in all branches of the military active and reserve, and the Civil Air Patrol. A native of Springfield, Ill., Muehler grew up in South Dakota and Missouri. He received his bachelor's degree from Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Ill., in 1984 and his Master of Divinity from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1988. He earned his Master of Theology in Pastoral Counseling from Trinity International University in Deerfield, Ill., in 2001.

In 1986, he was commissioned as an ensign in the U.S. Navy theological student program and attended the Naval Chaplaincy School and Center. After his ordination in 1988, he became part of the Navy Chaplain Corps, serving as a chaplain in the reserve while also leading St. John's Lutheran Church in McClusky, N.D., as its pastor. Muehler was called to active duty in 1991 and served in the Western Pacific, Illinois, Hawaii, Texas, North Carolina, Haiti, California, Japan, and Washington DC.

Muehler's decorations include the Legion of Merit (two), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (two), the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (two), the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (two), the Joint Meritorious Unit Award and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Commendation.

Muehler and his wife, Kristen, have four children; Seth, Jesse, Faith and Hope."

Worship Leader



Rev. Travis Hartjen – serves at the Grove Church, Bartonville, TX.

Travis was born and raised in Rockford, IL. Pastor Travis graduated from Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska where he studied Theology and Youth Ministry. He has served as a DCE/Youth Minister at Trinity Lutheran in Houston and Redeemer Lutheran, Austin, Texas. Travis then studied Church Planting at Concordia

Seminary, St. Louis. In 2010, Travis and his family helped plant the church Tangible Grace in Allen, Texas and served as their pastor for eight years. He is now planting and pastoring the Grove Church in the Northlake/Argyle/Lantana area. His wife Tara teaches at Argyle ISD and they have four kids, two in college and two in High School. Along with church planting, Travis has had the opportunity to speak at Youth and District Conferences across the nation. He is a huge Green Bay Packer fan (don't hold that against him) and loves to share the life of Jesus in relevant, and at times, humorous ways.

Sectional Speakers

Black, Dave	Teacher at Lutheran High School, Parker, CO
Braun, Cole	CEO, Lutheran High School Association Greater Milwaukee
Brown, Dan	Lutheran Church Extension Fund
Campbell, Tom	Lutheran Church Extension Fund
Campey, Paul	Partner at Resolve Consulting Group
Coughlan, Charlene	Twist Creative
DeBoer, Darryl	Director of Teaching for Transformation at Center for Advancement of Christian Education
Gerdes, Drew	Assistant Professor of Education at Concordia University Nebraska
Haun, Cheryl	Missouri District Early Childhood Consultant
Jones, Beth	Human Resources at Concordia Plan Services
Klein, Amy	Financial Educator at Concordia Plan Services
Knoepfel, Aimee	Director, Amazing Grace Early Learning Center, Oxford, FL
Kurth, Tim	Lutheran Church Extension Fund
Locke, Andy	Director of Advancement at Lutheran High School Association Greater Milwaukee
Meineke, Hannah	Assistant Professor of Education at Concordia University Texas
Page, Brian	Retirement Solutions Consultant at Concordia Plan Services
Pingel, Jim	Dean at CUWAA School of Education
Seefeld, Sam	Principal at Trinity Freistadt, WI
Senske Kurt	Founder/Principal At CEO-Board Services
Smith, Leslie	Director at Principal 360, Powered by CLEF
Steinmann, Chris	Superintendent & CEO at Cleveland Lutheran High School
Waugh, Mike	Head of Schools at Lutheran High School Association Greater Milwaukee
Wrege Tom	Principal at Zion Lutheran School, Georgetown, TX