

The Messenger

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Studies Show the Importance of Family!

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Minnesota Association of Christian Schools

By: Alan J. Hodak

From the Washington Standard, a periodical published by the Family Research Council, comes a study that determined the 10 best states to live in if you are conservative. The study was based on the 2025 Family Structure Index that ranked all 50 states according to three criteria:

- The percentage of married adults between the ages of 25-54
- The percentage of children, aged 15-17, who live with their married parents
- The average number of lifetime births per woman

What I found fascinating was that the outcomes coincided closely with conservative political ideology in almost all states. Here are the top ten states to live in if you are a conservative:

1. Utah
2. Idaho
3. Nebraska
4. South Dakota
5. Wyoming
6. Kansas (Go Kansans!)
7. North Dakota
8. Iowa
9. Texas
10. Minnesota (probably because you are all so nice!) ☺

Among the 10 lowest states that least support conservative ideology are:

Illinois (41); Oregon (42); California (44); New York (48); and Rhode Island (50).³

Across the board, states with declining birthrates and higher percentages of children in single-parent homes (often referred to as High Family Instability) showed lower high school graduation rates, higher levels of violent crime, lower economic well-being, and higher poverty rates.



Surprisingly Minnesota, considered a purple state, made it to the top ten! The Gopher State matched the average percentage of students nationwide who attend private schools (10%). According to recent PEW research (2025), 63% of Minnesotans identify as Christian, with growing church attendance in non-denominational churches.⁴

Traditionally, amongst American Association of Christian Schools (AACS) nationally, Minnesota's number of member schools and student population ranks right in the middle, despite the fact that there are no state or federal scholarship incentive programs available for our families.

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In addition, Minnesota ranks among the top three states (tied with Colorado) with the lowest poverty rate nationwide (around 9%), while California and Louisiana are tied with the highest (17.7%).²

Minnesota is also known, politically, as a purple state because of its political division. Liberal strongholds are found in its major cities: Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Rochester, but rural areas are predominately conservative. In the 2024 presidential election, Minnesota went to DFL presidential candidate, Harris, by a smaller than expected 4.2% margin (AI overview).



As I evaluate these statistics, I realize that the root of family values comes from God's Word. God's Divine Institutions of marriage and the family help us to understand that when people hold important what God deems as important (from His word), a stronger and better overall quality of life results. And there is proof in the statistics! Our students, in AACs schools (MACS is a state chapter within the greater national organization of AACs), scored an average of 11 percentage points higher on the Grade Equivalent Scores in our annual Iowa Achievement Testing. These scores include all published scores of all private and public schools nationwide that took the April Iowa Test. The individual grades that had the highest



scores above the national average were: Kindergarten (32% higher); 9th grade (17% higher); 10th grade (20% higher); 11th grade (27% higher); and 12th grade (25% higher). Elementary and middle grades ranged anywhere from 5-20 percentage points higher than the national averages.¹

In addition, our churches and schools uphold the highest standards of God's word and continue in their mission to teach and encourage our families and students with high moral and academic standards. It is up to us to share the gospel as others observe our families and notice a difference in us. Your godly family's ministry to the secular world is the example that can draw others to the gospel, to our churches, and to our schools.

Many of the growing statistical trends in our culture help us to understand that God is still working in our nation, and He uses the family as a key biblical institution to accomplish so many of His purposes. Let us continue to strive to promote, teach, and maintain the incredible institution of the family and its example to a world that needs to see what family stability is supposed to look like.

~Pastor Alan Hodak

¹ American Association of Christian Schools (AACs) Iowa Assessment Results, 2020-2021 School Year. www.aacs.org.





(Family, continued from page 2)

- 2 Casale, Oriane. "Poverty Rates in Minnesota." MN.gov – December, 2024.
- 3 Johnson, Ben. "9 Out of 10 Best States for Families Who Are Conservative: Study." The Washington Standard, February 20, 2025.
- 4 Pew Research Center, 2025. "2023-2024 U.S. Religious Landscape Study Interactive Database." Doi:10.58094/3259-Jc-14.

MACS Teacher Convention

MACS held its first official teacher's convention at Lake Region Christian School on October 15-16, with ten MACS schools, and about 170 teachers, administrators, and pastors in attendance. Our keynote speaker was Mr. Jeff Keaton, from Renewanation Ministries. In addition, we had some 45 different seminar teaching sessions from many of our own people and from many others from Christian colleges nationwide. The staff at Lake Region did an outstanding job of welcoming everyone to their campus. We enjoyed two meals, two evening seminars, and five different teaching sessions together.

Thank you for your participation and if you did not attend, please plan on doing so in the coming years. Please mark down next year's dates for our joint MN/WI Teacher's Convention at the Dell's. The opportunities for learning are expanded with the greater numbers, and those dates are October 8-9 of 2026. The following year, the convention will also be held at the Dell's and those dates are October 7-8, 2027. Thanks for making our first ever MACS Teacher's Convention a huge hit. ~*Pastor Alan J. Hodak, MACS Executive Director*





MACS Band Festival—November 2025

On Friday, November 7, Fourth Baptist Christian School hosted the Minnesota Association of Christian Schools (MACS) Band Festival. This exciting day brought together 94 student musicians from four participating schools—Chisago, Fourth, Rosemount, and Woodcrest—for a full day of music-making, learning, and fellowship.

Our guest conductor for the day was Dr. Cassandra Bechard from the University of Northwestern-St. Paul (UNWSP). Dr. Bechard's enthusiasm, musical expertise, and Christ-centered encouragement inspired students throughout each rehearsal as they worked together to prepare for the evening concert.

The day consisted of 4 large-group rehearsals in the auditorium, sectional rehearsals where students received specialized instruction from experienced clinicians, snacks and mealtimes, a zoom call with composer Rob Romeyn, and a fun game time.

The evening concluded with a 6:30 p.m. concert, which was also livestreamed for families and friends. The combined festival band performed beautifully, showcasing the results of a full day of focused work and cooperation. Our band

repertoire included: Clouds That Sail in Heaven by Todd Stalter, All That We Are by Carol Brittin Chambers, Christmas Exultations by Rob Romeyn, and Alamo March by Karl King. The percussion section also played a song called Plastik Surgery on 5-gallon buckets. Two of our sectional coaches, Teresa Herbert (horn) and Abby Nicholson (flute), played Pastorale and Dance by Erik Ewazen which helped our students see the importance of striving for musical excellence and being a life-long musician.

Our annual MACS Festivals remind students that every talent and ability is a gift from God. We strive for our festivals to provide an opportunity for students to grow musically while using their gifts to worship and honor Him. We want our students to become life-long musicians!

We are thankful for Dr. Bechard's leadership, the dedicated directors and clinicians who shared their time and expertise, and the students who helped make the day a success. We look forward to our MACS Choir Festival next year!

~ Mr. Levi Kolwinska, MACS Band Festival Director





MACS Speech and Bible Festival

The 2025–2026 fine arts competition began with a landmark shift in tradition. For the first time, MACS hosted its annual Speech and Bible Festival in the fall. This adjustment was made to encourage greater student involvement and to align with many schools' speech classes, which are typically offered during the autumn semester.

The response was outstanding, with nine schools joining in and contributing to a vibrant day of competition. A highlight of the festival was the robust lineup of preaching and Bible teaching events. Witnessing students engage deeply with Scripture was both inspiring and affirming, as it reflects our shared commitment to preparing the next generation for service in churches and ministries.

We extend heartfelt thanks to the schools, teachers, and students whose dedication made this event such a success. The enthusiasm and participation set a strong foundation for the year ahead, and we look forward to seeing how these changes continue to enrich the festival experience. Most importantly, we celebrate the way this event helps equip students to serve faithfully in their local churches, strengthening the future of our ministries and communities. ~ *Ms. Teresa Herbert, MACS Speech & Bible Festival Director*



MCAC Varsity Soccer & Volleyball Tournament



The second year of the MCAC state tournament did not disappoint! This year, First Baptist School hosted the soccer and volleyball state tournament at the end of October and saw a record number of attendance for the weekend games.

In Tier 2 volleyball, we saw three MACS schools place with Woodcrest being the Tier 2 champ, the runner-up being Fourth Baptist, and the 3rd place finisher being St. Francis. Tier 2 soccer winners were all CAL schools. The

MACS schools had a strong showing in Tier 1 soccer with the Championship going to Prior Lake, the runner-up going to Lake Region, and the third place finisher being First Baptist. Also, Chisago finished as the Tier 1 consolation champion.

The Tier 1 volleyball championship featured a great battle between First Baptist and Community Christian with First Baptist edging out Community winning 3-1. The third place finisher went to St. Cloud of the CAL league.

Thank you to all of our MACS schools for your participation in this new league and we look forward to a great basketball season!

~*Mr. Shawn McKinney, MACS Athletic Director*



2025 MCAC State Soccer Tourney Results

Boys Soccer

Tier 1:

Champions: Prior Lake Royals

Second Place: Lake Region Hornets

Third Place: Rosemount Crusaders

Consolation (Fifth Place): Chisago Patriots



Prior Lake Royals

Tier 2:

Champions: Cambridge Warriors

Second Place: Faith Foreston

Third Place: St. Cloud Christian Warriors



Lake Region Hornets

Boys Soccer All-Tournament

First Team:

Kavan Lundblad	Chisago
Tyler Stephens	Fourth Baptist
Grant Vikander	Fourth Baptist
Soren Benson	Lake Region
Brody Kovatovich	Lake Region
Grayson Cain	Prior Lake
Silas Fritz	Prior Lake
Noah Rogers MVP	Prior Lake
Tyler Kirk	Rochester
Jon Anaya	Rosemount
Thomas Standing	Rosemount
Taivys Bolt	St. Francis
Roman Sharkavich	Woodcrest



Cambridge Christian Warriors



Soccer All-Tournament First Team



2025 MCAC State Volleyball Tourney Results

Girls Volleyball

Tier 1:

Champions: Rosemount Crusaders

Second Place: Community Christian (Willmar) Eagles

Third Place: St. Cloud Warriors

Consolation (Fifth Place): Rochester Defenders

Tier 2:

Champions: Woodcrest Warriors

Second Place: Fourth Baptist Warriors

Third Place: St. Francis Patriots



First Baptist Rosemount Crusaders



Community Christian Willmar Eagles

Girls Volleyball All-Tournament

First Team:

Margo Klaasen	Willmar
Lexie Nelson	Willmar
Lily Johnson	Foreston
Audrey Stewart	Foreston
Briella Satterblom	Rochester
Maya McKinney	Rosemount
Kiera Wynja	Rosemount
Lydia Wynja MVP	Rosemount
Adie Larsen	St. Cloud
Amelia Schluender	St. Cloud
Ayla Cross	Valley



Woodcrest Baptist Warriors



Volleyball All-Tournament First Team



Boys Soccer All-Tournament Second Team:

Gavin Estenson	Cambridge	Parker Montague	Lake Region
Layton Lundblad	Chisago	Caleb Choi	Prior Lake
Kaden Richardson	Faith Foreston	Yanik Vdovchenko	Rosemount
Caleb Reis	Fourth Baptist	Isaac Wynja	Rosemount
Caleb Neubert	Lake Region	Ezra Peterson	St. Cloud
		Grant Jensen	Woodcrest

Boys Soccer All-Conference Teams:



First Team: (pictured above)

Gavin Estenson	Cambridge	Tyler Kirk	Rochester
Kavan Lundblad	Chisago	Isaac Wynja	Rosemount
Layton Lundblad	Chisago	Jon Anaya	Rosemount
Kaden Richardson	Faith Foreston	Thomas Standing	Rosemount
Asher Zderchuk	Fourth Baptist	Andrew Hoffman	St. Francis
Caleb Reis	Fourth Baptist	Taivys Boldt	St. Francis
Grant Vikander	Fourth Baptist	Roman Sharkavich	Woodcrest
Brody Kovatovich	Lake Region		
Caleb Neubert	Lake Region		
Josiah Wagner	Lake Region		
Soren Benson	Lake Region		
Caleb Choi	Prior Lake		
Elijah Wilson	Prior Lake		
Grayson Cain	Prior Lake		
Noah Rogers	Prior Lake		



Second Team: (pictured below)

Noah Ward	Cambridge
Titus Maart	Chisago
Tyler Stephens	Fourth Baptist
Henry Davis	Lake Region
Levi Norvold	Lake Region
Luke Choi	Prior Lake
Silas Fritz	Prior Lake
Caleb Lindsay	Rosemount
Tim Zubkov	Rosemount
Yanik Vdovchenko	Rosemount
Deacon Brahs	St. Francis
Sam Mulder	Willmar
Grant Jensen	Woodcrest
Jordan Smit	Woodcrest





Girls Volleyball All-Tournament Second Team:

Grace Strom	Community	Jada McKinney	Rosemount
Megan Page	Fourth Baptist	Corielle Baumgartner	St. Cloud
Rebecca Heinze	Immanuel	Ada Rowenhorst	St. Francis

Ava Jensen
Woodcrest

Girls Volleyball All-Conference Teams:



First Team: (pictured above)

Grace Conniff	Cambridge	Ella Bowers	Valley
Audrey Stewart	Foreston	Emera Cross	Valley
Lauren Stephens	Fourth Baptist	Margo Klaasen	Willmar
Emma Heinze	Immanuel	Lexi Nelson	Willmar
Rebecca Heinze	Immanuel	Faith Westin	Willmar
Jada McKinney	Rosemount		
Maya McKinney	Rosemount		
Kiera Wynja	Rosemount		
Lydia Wynja	Rosemount		
Ellie Rolfzen	St. Cloud		
Amelia Schluender	St. Cloud		

Second Team: (pictured below)

Lilly Johnson	Foreston
Megan Page	Fourth Baptist
Rose Cudnik	Heritage
Lexi Hanson	Liberty
Anaya Wilson	Prior Lake
Briella Satterblom	Rochester
Leah Anderson	Rosemount
Ada Rowenhorst	St. Francis
Grace Strom	Willmar
Mirela Paskar	Woodcrest





Minnesota Association of Christian Schools

2026 Remaining Calendar Events

January 23-24, Friday & Saturday—Crusader Classic JH Basketball Tournament at Rosemount



February 17, Tuesday—last scheduled conference game for Basketball seeding on the 18th



February 20-21, Friday & Saturday—MCAC Varsity Playoff games—played at higher seed; Losers go to Tier II Tourney; Winners to Tier I Tourney



February 26-28, Thursday—Saturday—MCAC Girls Tier I & II Basketball Tournament at Cambridge Christian School



March 3, Tuesday—MACS JH Fine Arts Festival at Rosemount



March 5-7, Thursday—Saturday—MCAC Boys Tier I & II Basketball Tournament at Fourth Baptist Christian School



March 23, Monday—Spring Sports preseason practices may begin



April 10, Friday—MACS SH Fine Arts Festival at Fourth Baptist & MACS Annual Meeting at Fourth Baptist



May 1, Friday—Track Meet at Granite City Baptist Academy, St. Cloud



May 8-9, Friday—Saturday—MCAC Varsity Girls Soccer Tournament at TBD

May 8-9, Friday—Saturday—MCAC Varsity Boys Volleyball Tournament at TBD