

Report to the Twelve Districts

May 2016

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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President's message

In the name of Jesus—the one who was, who is, and who is to come.

As delegates gather for district conventions this summer, they are faced with several important responsibilities. First, they will receive reports about all areas of the synod's work. Leadership groups, boards, commissions, committees, and schools will describe in some detail the work that has been done since the synod convention in the summer of 2015. Their reports will tell of the progress that has been made in their areas, the tasks that have been accomplished, and the decisions made. They will also point with openness and honesty to the times when human effort and decisions did not produce the results that were hoped and prayed for. Yet, no matter whether the news is good or bad, they will see in all things the hand of a gracious God who has kept his promise to make all things work together for the good of those who love him and for the accomplishing of his purpose. Delegates will review that work, evaluate the progress, and take note of the challenges that remain.

It's important to look back on what has been done because it reminds us of the many ways in which God graciously works through us. In spite of our own human weaknesses and failings, he sees to it that the gospel is preached, the message is proclaimed, and souls are saved. And he reminds us of the amazing privilege that he has given to us to be workers in his harvest field.

The delegates will also have their attention directed forward to the work before us. They will hear of challenges and opportunities in mission fields at home and abroad. They will review the ways in which our ministerial education schools are continually making adjustments in their program and curriculum to meet the changing needs of the church. They will be given a glimpse of plans that are being made to strengthen congregations as they carry out their mission in an increasingly godless and changing culture. They will be informed of efforts to equip those now serving as called workers with all that they will need to do their work faithfully. As plans are reviewed, the delegates will have an opportunity to provide input and direction for the next meeting of the synod convention in 2017.

In 2 Samuel 7, King David found himself at a time when he was looking back on the blessings God had given him and looking forward to the challenges still before him. After years of battle, the Ark of the Covenant had finally been brought to Jerusalem. The Lord let it be known that a temple would be built for him, but David would not be the one to build it. But God gave to David some amazing promises. God would give the nation of Israel peace and rest from its enemies. God would bless David with an unequalled reputation and with unrivaled power. The Lord would see to it that the temple would be built by Solomon. And most important, the Lord repeated the promise of an eternal king, the Savior, who would come from David's line. God assured him, "I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom forever." It was at that point, overcome with humble awe and thanks, that David responded, "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?"

That's a question that we can and should be asking when we reflect on God's blessings of the past and his promises for the future. "Who are we, LORD, that you have brought us thus far?" We ask that question because we know that we are nothing but poor, miserable sinners. We know that we deserve nothing from God but his anger and eternal punishment. We know that on our own we can do nothing for him or for his glory. Who are we? We know all too well.

But there is another answer to that question. Who are we? We are redeemed children of God. We have been adopted into his family through faith in Jesus. We are people who have been called to belong to a gracious and forgiving God. And more than that, and just as amazing, is that we are people who have been called to be his messengers, his witnesses, his workers.

As delegates meet for district conventions, they will ask the question that David asked. And, marveling as David did, we will hear God answer. He will answer that question at the foot of the cross and at the door of an open, empty tomb. And when he answers, we will believe. We will trust. And we will commit ourselves to remaining faithful to his Word, to cherishing our great heritage, and to proclaiming all of the things we have seen and heard.

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

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For more information, visit wels.net.

Congregation and District Ministry

The Congregation and District Ministry portion of the synod's ministry financial plan (budget) includes the Conference of Presidents (COP) and all entities overseen by the COP. These include:

Conference of Presidents

- Regular and special meetings of the Conference of Presidents and the Assignment Committee
- Travel and other expenses related to the district presidents' work
- Pastoral assistants provided to the congregations served by the district presidents
- Partial cost of the vicar program

Support Committee

Grants and assistance provided to needy retired called workers and their spouses

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

- Regular meetings of the commission
- Travel expenses related to inter-church relations
- Annual support for the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC)
- Financial support for sister church bodies as appropriate

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

Coordination of efforts to help called workers grow in faith, knowledge, and skill

Translation Liaison Committee

Evaluation of major Bible translations and communication with their editors and publishers, including suggestions for improvements to translations

Ministry of Christian Giving

- Administration and staff salaries and office expenses
- Salaries and travel expenses for Christian giving counselors
- Expenses of counselor training and consultation
- Cost of promotions and appeals

Communication Services

- *WELS Connection*, *WELS Connection Close-up*, "Together," partial funding for *Forward in Christ* editorial staff, *WELS Annual Report*
- *Book of Reports and Memorials*, *Report to the Twelve Districts*, *Proceedings*
- Content production and management of WELS' web presence, including wels.net and social media outlets
- Graphic design services to all areas of ministry
- Coordination of public responses and communications of the synod

Synod Nominating Committee

Selection of nominees for convention elections

Congregation and Ministry Support Group

- Commission on Worship
- Commission on Evangelism
- Commission on Special Ministries
- Commission on Lutheran Schools
- Commission on Youth and Family Ministry

- Commission on Adult Discipleship
- Commission on Congregational Counseling

Synod convention

District ministries and functions

- Costs related to the functions of the districts, district praesidia, and circuit pastors
- District conventions and other meetings
- District committees

Conference of Presidents

The Conference of Presidents (COP) is composed of the 12 district presidents, elected by their respective districts, as well as the synod president and the two synod vice presidents, all of whom are elected by the synod convention. The synod president serves as the chairman of the COP. The synod secretary, also elected by the synod in convention, serves as a non-voting advisory member of the COP.

The COP meets in person three times annually for regular meetings and monthly between meetings via teleconference. The COP also meets twice in May in its role as the Assignment Committee of the synod.

The Conference of Presidents is responsible for the following areas:

- Supervising, maintaining, and strengthening biblical doctrine and practice
- Overseeing the calling process by providing calling bodies with call lists for pastors, teachers, and staff ministers as well as counsel and advice pertaining to the divine call
- Serving as the Assignment Committee to assign graduates of Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to their first calls into the public ministry
- Working with congregations, often through circuit pastors, to care and provide for the physical and spiritual needs of called workers and their families and to help address issues between congregations and their called workers
- Encouraging congregations and individuals in their financial support of the synod, primarily through Congregation Mission Offerings
- Overseeing the work of the Ministry of Christian Giving, Communication Services, and the Congregation and Ministry Support Group
- Promoting the synod's mission and ministry in the districts
- Promoting the general welfare of the synod
- Providing counsel to the synod president as he carries out his responsibilities

The COP spends significant time at each meeting discussing specific questions of doctrine and practice and from time to time issues formal statements and guidelines in these areas. The COP also addresses practical issues that affect congregations and called workers. The group functions primarily as a "conference," with district presidents and the synod presidium conferring with each other, both seeking and offering advice for the good of the synod and its people.

"One in Christ" special offering

With the recommendation of the COP, the 2015 synod convention authorized the "One in Christ" special offering. The offering began last fall with the goal of completely eliminating the remaining \$4.7 million synodical debt by the end of June 2016. As of May 3, nearly \$2 million has been received. We are thankful for the offerings received to date and appreciate the many congregations and individuals who have participated. Since a large number of congregations have not yet completed the gathering of funds, and since the offering will run through the end of June 2016, we remain optimistic that we will reach our goal. It should be noted that budgetary payments toward the debt are also continuing and will also help to reach the goal.

Financial assistance for students at Martin Luther College

Student debt and the cost of education for graduates of Martin Luther College continue to be a concern in the synod, and the COP shares these concerns. Martin Luther College (MLC) has begun to address this issue in a number of ways. MLC has proposed a new program to increase funds available for student assistance. The Congregational Partnership Grant Program is being tested on a limited basis. Through this program, MLC provides matching funds, up to \$1,000, for tuition assistance provided by congregations to their students who attend MLC. In most cases this assistance would be in addition to any other financial assistance the student might receive. Care will be taken to communicate to congregations that such grants should be over and above their normal Congregation Mission Offering. The COP expressed support for this pilot program and will receive an update on its effectiveness and benefits.

Readers in corporate worship

The COP has been asked to address questions of whether it is proper for a woman to serve as a reader during

congregational worship services. A pastoral brief is being prepared to provide answers to those questions and guidance to congregations as they discuss this issue.

Women in administration

The COP is currently seeking to address questions regarding the various ways that women can serve in administrative positions without violating the headship principle of Scripture. A COP committee has been working on a document that reviews the principles and presents several case studies. The COP has asked the directors of the Commission on Lutheran Schools to develop a study guide to help congregations as they consider how women can faithfully use their time and talents in the church while upholding scriptural principles. The case studies and study guide will be made available when completed.

Fellowship study

In response to questions, the COP devoted much time to a study of how fellowship principles affect such things as school enrollment and participation in school events, especially on the high school level. This study was made available in 2015 and is serving as the basis of discussion among the governing bodies and faculties of the area Lutheran high schools and prep schools. The COP welcomes questions and feedback on the study guide.

Congregational constitutions

The COP has discussed instances in which some congregations have adopted bylaws that create a structure in which there is no provision for a voters' assembly and in which decision-making is delegated to a small group of appointed and self-perpetuating leaders (referred to as an "executive council" or something similar). After thorough discussion, the COP adopted the following resolution:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| WHEREAS | 1) the rise of different forms of church governance has increased; including, for example, governance by an executive council without any provision for voters' meetings or voters' assemblies; and |
| WHEREAS | 2) there is concern whether or not it is proper and/or wise for an executive council to be the body that elects or appoints its own successors, is responsible for extending calls, and carries out church discipline on behalf of the entire congregation; and |
| WHEREAS | 3) the Bible does not specify the form of congregational governance; and |
| WHEREAS | 4) the WELS Constitution Committee has declined the COP invitation to write an alternative "Model Constitution" to the one already in place, and has expressed the opinion that it is best for church discipline and the extension of calls to be handled by a voters' assembly; and |
| WHEREAS | 5) it is wise to have "checks and balances" in place when great power and authority are entrusted to a few members, such as in the case of an executive council; and |
| WHEREAS | 6) it is considered wise to have some degree of uniformity from congregation to congregation; therefore be it |
| <u>Resolved,</u> | a) that the COP and the district constitution committees remain flexible and demonstrate respect for Christian liberty when reviewing/approving constitutions and bylaws; and be it further |
| <u>Resolved,</u> | b) that district constitution committees not approve constitutions/bylaws that do not include voters' assemblies; and be it further |
| <u>Resolved,</u> | c) that district presidents work evangelically with congregations that do not have constitutions that include voters' assemblies to encourage them to have voters' assemblies; and be it finally |
| <u>Resolved,</u> | d) that each district president provide a copy of this resolution to the chairman of his respective district constitution committee. |

Staff ministry program guidelines

The position of staff minister has existed in our synod for many years. Even though there is a program for training and certifying staff ministers at Martin Luther College, some congregations have called staff ministers who have not been thoroughly trained and have not been synod certified. There is a growing concern on the part of the COP that existing policies governing the staff ministry program have not been consistently followed in a number of ways. According to the policy of the COP, uncertified staff ministers are to receive only provisional, one-year calls that can be renewed if the worker is making progress toward certification. Uncertified staff ministers are also not eligible to be called to

other congregations. In spite of those policies, some uncertified staff ministers have been called permanently (instead of the one-year provisional calls), and some have been called to other congregations. The COP believes that the staff ministry program needs to be administered more consistently in a way that maintains good order and in a manner that provides assurance that those who are considered to be a part of our roster of called workers are sufficiently trained and prepared for the work they do. With that in mind, the COP has updated and adopted the policies and procedures governing the staff ministry program of the synod.

Staff ministry program guidelines

Adopted March 31, 2016

1. **Staff ministers** are individuals who have been called to serve in a focused and clearly defined form of means of grace ministry, whether full time or part time.
2. All individuals listed in the 2016 synod Yearbook as staff ministers will continue to be listed in the Yearbook at least until June 1, 2022. (See #4 and #5)
3. Uncertified staff ministers are those who have not received synodical staff ministry certification and have not been trained as pastors or synodically certified as teachers. This group of staff ministers will be grandfathered and designated in the Yearbook with an asterisk. Grandfathered staff ministers will continue to be eligible for participation in the pension program, provided they serve for 20 hours per week or more.
4. Uncertified staff ministers listed in the 2016 synod Yearbook will be required to attain synod certification by June 1, 2022. After June 1, 2022, those who have not attained synod certification may continue in the position to which they have been called, but they will no longer be listed as called workers in the synod Yearbook and will no longer be eligible to participate in the synod pension program. They will be referred to as **congregational assistants**. (See #8) Uncertified staff ministers who lose their called worker status in this way will still be vested in the synod pension program based on the number of years they have served. Calling bodies may provide congregational assistants with other forms of retirement benefits (such as a 401k or 403b plan) in lieu of the synod pension program.
5. Staff ministers who are not involved in means of grace ministry but who are listed in the 2016 Yearbook will continue to be listed in the Yearbook. If they have not attained certification by June 1, 2022, they will be removed from the synod Yearbook. They will not, however, be removed from the Yearbook simply because they are not directly involved in means of grace ministry.
6. Beginning May 1, 2016, workers *added* to the synodical called worker roster as staff ministers shall include only those who:
 - are involved directly in means of grace ministry;
 - are synodically certified as staff ministers after recommendation from Martin Luther College or have been trained as WELS pastors or synodically certified as teachers; and
 - are serving in a staff ministry call.Individuals who do not meet the criteria described above and who begin service after May 1, 2016, will not be listed in the synod Yearbook.
7. Individuals not involved directly in means of grace ministry are to be hired rather than called.
8. Individuals who have not been certified as staff ministers are sometimes called by their own congregations, federations of congregations, or parasynodical organizations to carry out some type of means of grace ministry. Beginning May 1, 2016, such workers will be referred to as **congregational assistants**. The term congregational assistant will refer to those who have completed or are enrolled in the Congregational Assistant Program (CAP) of MLC, as well as those who are trained locally for local service even though they are not enrolled in the formal CAP program of MLC. Congregational assistants will not be listed in the synod Yearbook as called workers, cannot be called to other congregations, and will not be eligible for participation in the synod's pension program. District president participation and approval is not required when congregational assistants are called. A congregational assistant who enrolls in the staff ministry program at Martin Luther College will become a staff minister upon synodical certification. Once certification is received, the individual will be listed in the synod Yearbook as a staff minister and be eligible to participate in the synod pension program.
9. Those not trained as pastors or synodically certified as teachers who are called to serve in the synod's Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) will be listed in the Yearbook as staff ministers,

- whether certified or not. If they are not certified, they will receive provisional one-year calls until certification is attained. MCG counselors trained as pastors or synodically certified as teachers are already synod certified and will be listed in the Yearbook in the pastor or teacher categories.
10. Only certified staff ministers are eligible for calls to another congregation or place of service. Grandfathered uncertified staff ministers are not eligible for a call to another congregation or place of service even on a provisional basis; they may serve only in the place where they are currently serving. Once they attain synod certification, they become eligible for call to another congregation or place of service.
 11. The Conference of Presidents is responsible for setting the standards for synod certification and for certifying called workers. Martin Luther College is responsible for providing a program that enables candidates to meet those standards and for recommending candidates for certification.
 12. Based on input from Martin Luther College, the synod's database will track and indicate whether or not staff ministers are certified or uncertified, thus indicating whether or not they are eligible for calls to another congregation or place of service. District presidents will be responsible for ensuring that only certified staff ministers are used on staff ministry call lists. The call lists will continue to be drawn up by the staff ministry office of Martin Luther College.
 13. All call lists for staff ministry positions must be requested through the appropriate district president. No staff ministry call may be extended without district president participation and approval.
 14. Only those individuals listed in the synod Yearbook as called workers (pastors, teachers, staff ministers) are eligible to participate in the pension program.
 15. Staff ministers, whether certified or uncertified, are normally not permitted to preach in a worship service, although they may lead devotions in smaller gatherings such as committees, school assemblies, or congregational organizations.

Ministry of Christian Giving review

The Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) serves under the COP to encourage individuals and congregations to provide financial support for the mission and ministry of the synod. The MCG has been working faithfully to accomplish this and has been demonstrating its value to the synod for many years. In order to be assured that the Ministry of Christian Giving is as effective and efficient as possible, the COP has planned for a thorough review of the mission, structure, and procedures of the MCG. A special committee has been appointed to carry out this study. Results of the review, together with any recommendations for changes, are expected late in 2016. The COP will receive the report and weigh any recommendations that are presented to it. Any decisions will be reported to the 2017 synod convention.

Calls issued by the COP

- Ministry of Christian Giving counselors: Mr. Kenneth Dierks, Pastor Kevin Hundley
- Commission on Congregational Counseling director: Pastor Jonathan Hein (call made permanent)
- Civilian chaplain in Europe: Pastor Richard Miller

Appointments

- Chairman, Called Worker Care Committee of Special Ministries: Mr. Kurt Holzhueter
- Chairman, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Committee of Special Ministries: Mr. Thomas Heuer
- Publication Coordinating Commission: Pastor Bryan Gerlach, Teacher Thomas Plitzuweit, Pastor Bruce McKenney
- *Forward in Christ* writers: Pastor Joel Seifert, Pastor Andrew Schroer, Pastor Daniel Habben
- *Forward in Christ* reviewer: Prof. Bill Tackmier
- COP representative to the SC: Pastor Joel Zank
- Commission on Youth and Family Ministry: Pastor Andrew Schwartz, Pastor Andrew Schroer
- Commission on Adult Discipleship: Pastor Jonathan Bergemann, Pastor John Vieths, Prof. Ross Stelljes (advisory MLC), Pastor Daniel Schroeder (advisory NPH)
- Ministry of Christian Giving Review Committee: Pastor Jonathan Kolander (chairman), Pastor Joel Voss, Pastor Kenneth Frey, Pastor Michael Otterstatter, and Mr. Paul Dettman

Mid-year assignments

The following mid-year graduates of Martin Luther College were assigned to their first place of service:

- Daniel Koch, staff minister, St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis. (6-month assignment)

- Katelyn Malley, Grade 4, Peace (ELS), Kissimmee, Fla. (6-month assignment)
- Tarah Steinbrenner, Grades 1-2, Our Savior, Peridot, Ariz. (6-month assignment)
- Ju Yeon (Gabby) Moon, Grades 1-2, Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio (6-month assignment)
- Jeremy Maas, Middle grades, St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis. (18-month assignment)

Lutheran Military Support Group

The COP was informed of the establishment of a new parasynodical organization designed to provide help, encouragement, and support to WELS military members and their families. While not directly under the administration of the synod, the new group works closely with the WELS Military Services Committee of the Commission on Special Ministries. The COP expressed its support for this new group and its efforts.

VEBA

The COP received a thorough report on the current state and future challenges of the WELS VEBA health plan. There are many benefits that result when congregations participate in the plan. Since the WELS VEBA plan covers all workers at the same cost, the cost of insurance does not become an issue that interferes with the call process. Even though the WELS VEBA plan may be more expensive for younger workers, it is also less expensive for older workers. The COP urged the VEBA Commission to continue the current practice of not charging a higher premium for older workers. The COP was not in favor of making participation in VEBA mandatory, but it will continue to encourage congregations to participate in the plan for all called workers.

The COP also conducted a survey of all congregations to determine how health insurance is currently being provided in congregations and schools. The COP will use the results of the survey to guide it as it advises and encourages congregations in the area of health insurance for called workers.

Calling of teachers

The COP has determined that teaching positions in early childhood programs should be called positions, rather than hired, since the teacher is involved in means of grace ministry on behalf of the congregation. As called workers, they must be members of the congregation or of a congregation in our WELS fellowship. Assistants or helpers who are not involved in teaching may be hired rather than called and are not necessarily required to be of our fellowship.

The COP also reaffirmed its position that anyone serving as a teacher in WELS be called rather than hired and that those who are called to teach are always members of a WELS congregation or a congregation in fellowship with WELS.

Improving delegate selection process

In keeping with a recommendation of the Ad Hoc Commission 2 approved by the synod convention, the COP is exploring ways to improve the process of preparing and equipping delegates to the synod convention. The COP asked the synod president and the director of communications to propose ways to accomplish this. The proposal is expected to be submitted to the COP in early fall of 2016.

Director for Youth and Family Ministry and Adult Discipleship

The COP is responsible for overseeing the various commissions of the Congregation and Ministry Support Group. Two of the commissions (Adult Discipleship and Youth and Family Ministry) do not have a director, which has hindered their work and limited the scope of their efforts.

The 2015 convention passed a resolution asking that the position of director of Youth and Family Ministry be added to the list of unfunded programs and that the filling of this position be given a high priority. After consultation with both commissions, the COP was convinced that if and when such a position becomes possible, the person called should serve a dual role as director of both Youth and Family Ministry and Adult Discipleship. The possibility of combining the two commissions into one that serves families (both youth and adults) will be considered. The COP forwarded a request to the Synodical Council to move this position higher in priority on the Unfunded Priority List (see p. 60 for more details).

Military Chaplaincy Study Committee

In 2015 the COP appointed a special committee to study and review the long-standing WELS view of the military chaplaincy and to determine whether current U.S. Army Chaplaincy Regulations have changed sufficiently to allow WELS participation. The committee, chaired by Prof. James Danell, has met periodically over the past year to review the current policies of the Army Chaplaincy Corps Activities. The committee has identified a number of inconsistencies in chaplaincy regulations, which has raised questions on whether the regulations have in fact

changed enough to allow participation without compromising our doctrine. The committee will continue its work. If it concludes that it is possible for WELS to participate under the current regulations, it would then address the question, "Is participation wise?"

Ministry of Christian Giving partnership with WELS Missions

In recent years the Ministry of Christian Giving has assisted with funding various campaigns that focused on gifts from individuals to support various WELS ministries (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School). WELS World and Home Missions have asked that such an effort be carried out on behalf of missions in 2016–17. The COP approved this request.

Bylaw revision

The COP is recommending to the 2017 convention the following bylaw change in an effort to clarify current wording:

Section 6.48

Calling Procedure [for ministerial education schools]:

(c) All pastors, male professors, male teachers, congregations, and voting members of congregations shall be entitled to nominate a candidate or candidates within 20 days from the date of publication of the vacancy. The calling board may issue a request for additional candidates at any time.

COP membership change

Pastor Earle Treptow, who had served as the president of the Nebraska District, accepted a call to serve as professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Pastor Phil Hirsch, first vice president of the Nebraska District, is serving as the interim district president until the district convention in June. In his capacity as interim district president, Pastor Hirsch serves as a member of the COP.

Pastor Treptow had also served as one of the three COP representatives on the Synodical Council. Pastor Joel Zank, president of the Northern Wisconsin District, was elected by the COP to replace him.

The COP invites all members of the synod to thank Pastor Treptow for his faithful service and to pray that God would bless him in his new calling.

Rev. Mark Schroeder, reporter

Rev. Mark Schroeder, president and chairman
Rev. James Huebner, first vice president
Rev. Joel Voss, second vice president
Rev. Jon Buchholz, Arizona-California District
Rev. Charles Degner, Minnesota District
Rev. Douglas Free, Dakota-Montana District
Rev. John Guse, South Atlantic District
Rev. Phil Hirsch, Nebraska District
Rev. Donald Patterson, South Central District
Rev. Herbert Prah, Western Wisconsin District
Rev. David Rutschow, Southeastern Wisconsin District
Rev. John Seifert, Michigan District
Rev. John Steinbrenner, Pacific Northwest District
Rev. Donald Tollefson, North Atlantic District
Rev. Joel Zank, Northern Wisconsin District

Advisory:

Rev. Robert Pasbrig, secretary

WELS Support Committee

Our calling

“Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone” (Psalm 71:9). Our synod wants to be an answer to this prayer. The WELS Support Committee has been established by the synod to carry out Christ’s love for the faithful servants of the church who are now retired but do not have the financial resources to meet normal living expenses. The committee works to identify those individuals and/or their surviving spouses who have needs and provide them with the level of financial support that allows them to live with dignity and in reasonable comfort. Requests for support need to be made and approved in order for assistance to be provided. Application forms are used to determine the level of need when requests are made.

The following considerations affect the financial assistance the Support Committee provides:

- The fund is not an entitlement program.
- The fund is not an extension of the synod’s pension plan. The financial assistance received is a charitable gift from the synod to those in need.
- The fund is not established to provide temporary assistance for those who resigned from the ministry.
- The fund does not grant financial assistance to those who need assisted living and nursing home care.
- The fund is not intended to be the main source of income. Assets and other means of income are expected to be used first, with Support Committee income supplementing those resources.

Our current situation

The committee is composed of five district first vice presidents of WELS. The first vice president in every district is the contact person for the Support Committee. The Support Committee looks to local pastors, circuit pastors, and district officers to be alert to possible circumstances of need on the part of retired called workers and their surviving spouses living in their district. These pastors inform the retired called worker/spouse needing help of the possibility of receiving financial assistance from the Support Committee and, if needed, communicate this situation also to the chairman of the Support Committee. In 2015 there were 29 family units throughout the synod receiving support. The amount budgeted to provide support for these family units was an expenditure of \$250,000 for the year. Sometimes during the course of a year new requests are made to the Support Committee. We thank our Lord for enabling our synod to take care of all those who needed assistance in 2015.

A look ahead

The Support Committee continues to provide assistance to retired called workers and/or their surviving spouses as long as synod finances make it possible. At the beginning of 2016 there were 25 family units receiving support, calling for a monthly expenditure of \$16,795 and an annual budget for approving requests of \$201,540. The Support Committee budget is no longer able to cover the cost for subscriptions to *Forward in Christ*, *Meditations*, and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. The Support Committee thanks Northwestern Publishing House for covering the costs of these subscriptions in 2016 to provide support recipients with the periodicals requested.

Rev. Mark Johnston, reporter

Rev. Mark Johnston, chairman

Rev. Steven Degner

Rev. Michael Jensen

Rev. Joel Leyrer

Rev. Donald Sutton

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

Our calling

The Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee (CECW) exists to coordinate the various efforts in our synod that seek to help called workers to grow in faith, knowledge, and skill in order to carry out the unique vocations (callings) God has given to each. Helping them grow in those callings includes not only assisting them toward “professional growth” in their public ministry callings but also encouraging them in their growth in their royal priestly vocations (their callings as spouse, parent, member of a congregation and synod, etc.).

The CECW also seeks to underline why such growth is important. Growth for our called workers is certainly not about self-centered goals (merely advancing their career, gaining recognition, or increasing compensation). Growth for our called workers is all about growing in the gospel for themselves and growing in being a clearer glimpse of God’s mercy wherever God has called them to represent him (at home, at church, and in the community). As our synodical theme reminds us, letting Christ’s love be ever more clearly seen is what our calling is all about.

Our current situation

Continuing education for teachers and staff ministers

It is impossible to identify all the ways that WELS called teachers continue their education because they do so through a plethora of methods and agencies. Our report is limited to synod-sponsored continuing education offerings and participation, but these show substantial growth.

Martin Luther College

In the past year Martin Luther College (MLC) has worked with various synodical entities to develop courses and programs that meet the needs of the synod. Examples include early childhood courses, an evangelism certificate, a geriatric and elder care course, an American Sign Language course, and a graduate degree for WELS principals and early childhood directors.

Continuing education services are provided through a variety of formats such as workshops, courses, in-services, and webinars using both online or face-to-face (satellite and on-campus) delivery. Costs range from \$20 (webinars) to \$300 (graduate credit). Highlights include:

- Master of Science in Education (instruction, leadership, educational technology, special education)
- Master of Science in Educational Administration (principal, early childhood director)
- Certificates (evangelism, mentoring, chaplain, online teaching, educational technology)
- Early Childhood
- Mentor Training
- Special Education
- Educational Technology
- Synod Certification
- Post-baccalaureate Licensure
- Special Ministries

Overall, MLC Graduate Studies/Continuing Education 2014–15 course enrollments totaled 1,400, representing 980 different people. This compares to 1,180 course enrollments (894 individuals) in the 2013–14 school year. There is a growing commitment by called workers and their congregations and schools to invest in gospel ministry through continuing education—a blessing not only to our called workers but also to those they serve! Factors like the synod’s New Teacher Induction program and state teaching license renewal processes begin the habits of reflection and continual growth early in teachers’ careers.

Commission on Lutheran Schools

The Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) guides and assists congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening WELS schools. As such it

provides many avenues for teacher and school leader continuing education, including the National Leadership Conference, Leadership Candidate Training, Early Childhood Ministry Educator devotions, and Pilot School Training for instructional supervision and ministry development plans. The National School Leadership Conference in June 2015 was attended by more than 400 school leaders and teachers.

New Teacher Induction

In 2015 New Teacher Induction (NTI) expanded into all 12 districts with 101 trained mentors serving more than 130 beginning teachers. Since 2012 NTI has grown from 36 mentors working with 72 beginning teachers, and more growth is projected in the coming years. The work of training mentors and supporting new teachers is made possible by each beginning teacher's calling body contributing \$1,000 for each of the program's two years.

Principal and early childhood director training

School leadership training has received special focus. Together, MLC and the Commission on Lutheran Schools provide a full range of support for principals and early childhood directors.

Leadership Candidate Training—Veteran teachers are paired with mentor principals and early childhood directors for a one-year cohort of learning and experiences designed to move teachers into a future leadership role in a WELS school.

Principal and Director Apprentice Mentoring—Teacher candidates, newly assigned to serve as apprentice principals or directors, are provided an instructional mentor who provides on-the-job instruction in school administration and two years of instructional mentoring. Following the two-year mentoring and training, the apprentice fully assumes the role of principal or director at his or her school.

Principal Training Program—A pilot program in which teacher candidates receive a three-year assignment under the tutelage of a veteran principal who provides instructional mentoring and developmental principal coaching. After taking on many leadership duties in the third year, the teacher goes back to the Assignment Committee for an assignment to a different school needing a principal.

Master of Science in Education—Leadership emphasis—Existing teachers gain both leadership and instructional skills in core areas.

Master of Science in Educational Administration—The synod's first accredited administrative degree with tracks for both Lutheran principals and early childhood directors. Through practical training, graduates fully meet the WELS principal and early childhood director standards.

WELS Technology

In addition to their weekly podcasts providing helpful tips to pastors and teachers, WELS Technology sponsored the WELSTech Conference. It was attended by 250 people and featured 100 workshops and three keynote sessions.

Continuing education for pastors

Many things reported elsewhere in *Report to the Twelve Districts* provide rich opportunities for pastors to be growing in faith and in all their unique vocations. For instance, so much of what is offered by the various units of the Congregation and Ministry Support Group provide rich opportunities for pastors to grow.

However, when it comes to those whose primary focus is encouraging our pastors to grow, a considerable part of that work has been entrusted to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). The seminary has always understood that its single purpose given to it by the synod (preparing faithful confessional Lutheran pastors) has two critical elements. The initial task is to prepare young (and at times, not so young) men to enter the pastoral ministry. However, the equally critical parallel task is to assist those already in the parish ministry to continue to grow in all their callings for the sake of their souls and the souls they serve.

In order to underline a renewed emphasis on that task of encouraging and supporting the growth of current pastors, in 2010 the seminary established Grow in Grace. Here are the vision and mission of Grow in Grace:

Vision: Pastors value Grow in Grace's partnership for lifelong growth in all their callings.

Mission: Grow in Grace connects pastors to gospel-focused resources for growth in all their callings and to gospel-filled encouragers to support that growth.

Under God's blessing, Grow in Grace seeks to reach that vision and accomplish its mission under four broad goals. Following are the four goals with a brief summary of the current situation under each goal.

Events and courses

Grow in Grace seeks to deliver Christ-centered, accessible, and ministry impacting events and courses in the four theological disciplines.

A revised Master of Sacred Theology (STM) program was put in place in the summer of 2015. The revision provides opportunity for pastors to pursue core and elective courses in nine distinct areas of study that were designed to meet the unique gifts of each pastor and the unique needs of his calling body. This allows pastors the opportunity to dig more deeply into specific areas of theology than was possible during the necessarily broader focus of their years of study for entering pastoral ministry. Pastors can also design their own course of study by pursuing directed projects in consultation with a chosen seminary professor. Just as previously, pastors who do not wish to pursue the full STM (32 credits) can pick and choose from any of the courses that meet their interests, gifts, or the needs of their calling body.

The seminary's offerings of workshops and courses continue to move from what was once exclusively or primarily an on-campus delivery system to multiple presentations and courses being offered at satellite locations around the country as well as courses being offered online. Here are some attendance numbers from the most recently completed fiscal year (2014–15) in regard to the various events and courses offered through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary:

- 292 called workers attended the seminary's annual fall symposium;
- 54 pastors enrolled in online classes;
- 9 pastors attended classes during the seminary's annual Winterim;
- 49 called workers attended on-campus courses during Summer Quarter;
- 136 called workers attended 7 satellite classes held in various locations around the synod; and
- 648 called workers attended Pastors Institute presentations (shorter, not-for credit events sponsored by circuits, pastoral conferences, or district conventions) at 14 events in various locations around the synod.

Retreats and mentoring

Grow in Grace seeks to provide collaborative opportunities for pastors to learn from one another and to gather with peers celebrating similar ministry milestones.

Mentoring—Begun as a pilot project in 2010, the Pastor Partners mentoring initiative received formal approval from the 2015 synod convention. The mentoring initiative provides Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduates with three years of focused encouragement from a trained, experienced pastor. The mentoring initiative seeks to encourage pastors in building strong patterns in areas such as their devotional lives and in managing their time and energy wisely among their multiple God-given callings (pastor, husband, father, etc.). The mentoring initiative also seeks to help the new pastor to continue to grow by building strong ties with his circuit pastor, district president, other ministry peers, as well as with lay leaders in his calling body. During the early years of this initiative, the mentoring initiative received generous support through grants. However, now that it has been formally adopted by the synod, congregations receiving a new graduate will be contributing \$1,000 per year to cover the costs of mentoring. Professor emeritus Forrest Bivens serves as the part-time administrator for the Pastor Partners mentoring initiative. Through the years of this initiative, here are the numbers of experienced pastors serving as mentors and the number of new graduates with whom they have worked.

Year	Pastors serving as mentors	New graduates being mentored
2010	1	3
2011	8	19
2012	16	22
2013	22	29
2014	22	22
2015	25	28

Retreats—Celebration of Ministry Retreats invite pastors and wives marking significant ministry milestones to a time of worship, Bible study, and fellowship. Congregations are encouraged to invest in their pastor's ministry by making attendance for him (and his wife, if married) possible. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from those who have attended these retreats indicates that the congregations are making a wise investment in their pastor's ministry by enabling his attendance at these retreats. The first retreat was held in 2012 in San Antonio, Texas, during the week after Easter. In that first year, one retreat was hosted for pastors and wives marking 10 years since seminary graduation. In 2014, a second simultaneous retreat was added in San Antonio for pastors and their wives who are observing 25 years since seminary graduation. In 2016, a third simultaneous retreat was added for pastors and their wives who are

marking three years since graduation (this retreat also marks the formal ending of the mentoring initiative). In 2016, more than 140 pastors and wives participated in those three retreats. A retreat team of more than 30 partnered to provide an edifying and encouraging experience for all who attended. Here are the numbers from all the retreats:

Year	Number of retreats held	Pastors/Wives in attendance	Retreat team in attendance	Total in attendance
2012	1	58	20	84
2013	1	60	20	80
2014	2	138	19	157
2015	2	121	20	141
2016	3	142	30	172

Strengthening ministry

Grow in Grace seeks to deliver gospel-rich resources that assist pastors to partner with others in honestly evaluating all their callings and to plan for growth with confidence.

Grow in Grace has produced three study packages of resources for pastors.

Guard What Has Been Entrusted to Your Care is an essay and workbook that help a pastor guard four key gifts of God that assist him in guarding his greatest treasure (the gospel). Those four key supporting gifts are—the gift of time (managing oneself wisely in God’s gift of time), the gift of faith (personal devotional life), the gift of health (stewardship of physical health through exercise, a healthy diet, rest, and relaxation), and the gift of brothers/sisters (treasuring the encouragement of others, both called workers and laypeople). This is available as a presentation that can be given to groups of pastors or other called workers.

Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage is a series of four essays and accompanying planning tools that seek to help a pastor (or other called worker) to strengthen his devotional life by approaching Word and prayer from a gospel-focused perspective. It emphasizes as gifts of God’s grace the three elements Martin Luther said God uses to make a theologian—*oratio* (prayer), *meditatio* (meditation on God’s Word), and *tentatio* (struggle). This is available as a presentation to pastors (or other called workers) as well as being offered as an on-campus, satellite, or online course.

Fan God’s Gifts into Flame is an essay and workbook (to be released in the summer of 2016) that helps a pastor (or other called worker) to approach planning for growth from a biblical perspective. The essay discusses some of the pitfalls but also blessings of such planning for growth. The workbook walks the pastor through a four-step path that enables him to develop a plan for growth in all his vocations (child of God, public minister, and his royal priestly callings). This resource will also be available as a presentation to groups of pastors as well as being offered as an on-campus, satellite, and online course. The ad hoc Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force, whose report can be found on p. 15, was instrumental in helping to field test and refine this essay and workbook.

Growth resources

Grow in Grace seeks to deliver informal resources useful for individual or group study that assist pastors to grow in all their callings.

Under this goal, Grow in Grace gladly acknowledges that much of the best growth for pastors takes place in personal study and in gatherings of pastors in groups such as study clubs, circuits, pastoral conferences, and district conventions. Under this goal, Grow in Grace seeks to develop and/or publicize growth resources that can be used individually or by groups of pastors.

The Shepherd’s Study is a collection of more than 100 reviews on classic or current books in every area of theology. These reviews are written by a team of about 25 pastors currently under the direction of Pastors John Derme’ and Ben Schaefer. The goal is to post a new book review every week in PDF and MP3 formats. These reviews seek to help pastors make wise choices of books to read in any area of theology in which they would like to grow.

Preach the Word is an online archive and searchable database of all the volumes of the Commission on Worship’s bi-monthly preaching newsletter.

The Four Branches Review is an e-newsletter that, beginning this fall, will be sent out to pastors once per month with a very brief article of interest in each of the four theological disciplines (biblical theology, doctrinal theology, church

history, and practical theology). Pastor Joel Seifert serves as editor as he works with a team of 24 pastors to produce this resource. This e-newsletter is another fruit of the work of the Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force.

A regularly updated list of available growth resources in every area of a pastor's work has also debuted this summer. The list will note apps, articles, essays, books, websites, videos, courses, and presentations that could be of help to a pastor looking to grow in the various areas of his life and ministry. This resource list is also a fruit of the work of the Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force.

Lectionary and hymn posts on Grow in Grace's Facebook page can also be growth resources.

There are several other resources for informal growth available on the Grow in Grace website.

Pastor Don Patterson produced a sermon and Bible class on the importance of continued growth for called workers. This resource could be used by a pastor or lay leader. The idea is that this resource could provide the pastor some extra time to devote to his annual planning for growth. This is also the fruit of the Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force.

A digital version of the now out-of-print Light on the Path calendar has been created that offers a passage of Greek and Hebrew for each day of the year.

An archive of devotions written for pastors from past issues of Grow in Grace's monthly "Grow in Grace Notes" e-newsletter has been posted.

A look ahead

Continuing education for teachers and staff ministers

The Commission on Lutheran Schools and Martin Luther College will continue to provide the structure and resources WELS teachers and leaders need to grow throughout all ministry stages. The following areas will receive special attention.

New Teacher Induction—Now fully implemented in all 12 WELS districts, the emphasis is on recruiting and training a sustainable core of skilled mentors. Mentors enjoy seven courses that can be taken for graduate credit and a mentoring certificate.

Ministry Development Plans—Authorized by the 2011 synod convention, Ministry Development Plans (MDPs) guide teachers and school leaders in reflective and intentional plans for spiritual and professional growth. The MDPs and accompanying training are being piloted through the Commission on Lutheran Schools, and plans are to implement them synodwide in 2018. Martin Luther College provides a variety of webinars and online coursework to help support school leaders as they implement the new Ministry Development Plans.

School leadership support—With a variety of programs now in place for both principals and early childhood directors, the focus will shift toward growing the pool of trained school leaders.

Special education—The special education emphasis in MLC master's program is being expanded and licensed.

Master of Arts in Theological Studies—This degree has been a working project for a few years, and we pray the Lord will open doors for its completion. Our challenge is finding properly degreed people who are able and willing to commit to the project.

Continuing education for pastors

Here are some of the key initiatives that Grow in Grace is planning during the next biennium.

The last of the four planned Celebration of Ministry retreats is scheduled to begin in spring 2018. This retreat will focus on those retiring from full-time pastoral ministry. The retreat will thank God for the years of service to God's kingdom rendered by the retiring pastors and their wives. The retreat will also seek to help attendees think through many different ways they could continue to serve during their retirement years as God-given health and strength permit.

Plans are beginning for how to better coordinate on-campus, satellite, and online courses so as to provide a richer variety of faith- and ministry-impacting courses to as many pastors as possible. While seeking to strengthen the on-campus Summer Quarter experience, the goal is also to offer a more regular and broader range of satellite courses in synodical districts furthest from the seminary's campus in Mequon, Wis.

Planning will also be done to identify ways to better leverage digital technology by offering portions of courses in a webinar (or similar) format. This would allow a pastor to access bite-sized growth opportunities that otherwise might only be available as part of a full course.

Attention will continue to be given to what additional informal learning resources could be developed or delivered to help pastors in their individual study or in study with other pastors.

Over the next two years, the mentoring initiative for newly graduated pastors will transform into being completely funded by congregations receiving WLS graduates. Along with that transformation, the goal will be to continue to strengthen the good beginning mentoring has made in our midst while also addressing areas of observed weakness. The goal will be to enable each mentoring relationship to be as rich a blessing as possible to the new pastor for the sake of the gospel ministry he carries out for immortal souls.

In all that has been described under the work of the Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee, it is our prayer that God will bless these efforts to assist all our called workers in their progress in spiritual and professional growth. The ultimate goal of such growth is to display the splendor of Jesus' gospel to sheep already in the fold and to sheep not yet in Jesus' flock. Strengthening of gospel ministry to eternal souls is the heart of what spiritual and professional growth is all about.

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

Rev. James Huebner, chairman and first vice president of WELS

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, coordinator of WELS Congregation and Ministry Support Group

Prof. Richard Gurgel, director of continuing education, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Teacher James Henrickson, coordinator of Growing Educators in Ministry, Lutheran Schools

Prof. John Meyer, director of graduate studies, Martin Luther College

Prof. Lawrence Olson, director of staff ministry, Martin Luther College

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Teacher Jim Rademan, director of WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force

Our calling

The 2013 synod convention directed the synod president to appoint a special task force to develop a continuing education process for pastors and staff ministers "so that progress toward professional growth for pastors and staff ministers can be more formally encouraged and reported." Since that time the committee has met almost monthly to consider how we as a synod can better accomplish that task.

While the initial goal of the task force was to present a final report of its work to the 2015 synod convention, the task force requested from the 2015 convention (and was granted) some additional time to complete its work. The task of continuing to encourage growth among pastors and staff ministers (indeed, all our called workers) will always be an important element of our work together as a synod. However, this extra time has enabled the task force to bring to completion its work on several initiatives.

Here is a listing of those initiatives on which the task force has focused.

Our initiatives

Fan God's Gifts into Flame

The task force worked with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Grow in Grace on an essay and workbook titled *Fan God's Gifts into Flame* that enable a pastor or staff minister (or any called worker) to develop a well-designed annual plan for growth. The essay explores the pitfalls and blessings of such planning for growth from a scriptural perspective.

The workbook offers a four-step process that a called worker could follow to develop a plan for growth in all their callings (vocations): as a child of God, a public minister of the gospel, and in their more royal priestly callings (spouse, parent, member of a congregation and synod, etc.). The task force facilitated some field testing of the essay and workbook and helped the author to strengthen and refine the documents. It is hoped that this package can help called workers to develop a strong annual pattern of planning for growth under God's blessing. It is also hoped that the fruit of such planning becomes a regular part of the annual information that is already regularly shared with the Conference of Presidents.

Fan God's Gifts into Flame is available as of this summer. The essay and workbook can be found on the Grow in Grace website, wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace/fan-gods-gifts-into-flame. There are both printable documents and tools that can be used directly online. The package will also become an on-campus, online, and satellite course offered by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Sermon and Bible study on growth for called workers

The task force enlisted South Central District President Don Patterson to put together a sermon and Bible class focused on the importance of continued growth for public ministers of the gospel.

This tool serves a double purpose. Our synod continues to urge congregations to assist their called workers to grow by providing time and financial resources for pursuing growth. In keeping with that emphasis, these materials can help congregations to grasp that they are investing in gospel ministry when they invest in the spiritual and professional growth of their teachers, staff ministers, and pastors. But there is a second purpose. These resources can also be used to free up time for pastors so that they can devote themselves to careful planning for growth.

Expanded listing of growth reported on annual form to Conference of Presidents

Part of the mandate given to the task force by the 2013 synod convention was to look for ways to strengthen how growth is reported. All called workers already annually submit information on growth in ministry along with the other updated ministry information they share annually with the Conference of Presidents. However, up to this point, that listing was limited to formal course work completed and organized workshops attended. While such course work and attendance at workshops can offer rich opportunities for growth in ministry, those are not the only ways that pastors and staff ministers grow in their callings. The task force partnered with representatives of the Conference of Presidents who were charged with refining the annual information forms. In the future, a much broader range of growth activities will be able to be listed to reflect the many different ways that called workers are growing (books read, focused ministry projects completed, other growth goals reached, etc.). This expansion of what could be listed annually in the area of growth will blend well with the encouragement found in the *Fan God's Gifts into Flame* workbook.

Online growth tools listing

The task force has assembled an ever-growing list of growth tools that a pastor or staff minister could use to pursue growth in any or all of their unique callings (calling to faith, to public ministry, and in their royal priestly callings of spouse, parent, etc.). The tools include listings of articles, essays, books, videos, websites, podcasts, courses, and workshops that could prove useful to a called worker. This tool will find its online home on the Grow in Grace website at WLS (wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace). The Grow in Grace staff will carry on the work of the task force by seeking to keep the resource list up to date and growing.

The Four Branches Review

In partnership with Grow in Grace at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, the task force has spearheaded the development of a monthly digitally delivered e-newsletter called *The Four Branches Review*. Each month, this e-mailed newsletter will feature four very brief articles. Each article will focus on an insight for ministry from one of the four areas of theological study: biblical theology, doctrinal theology, historical theology, and practical theology. Pastor Joel Seifert of Bozeman, Mont., has agreed to serve as editor for *The Four Branches Review*. In consultation with the task force and the seminary faculty, Seifert has assembled a team of more than 20 pastors to write the articles. This large team was assembled so that the time commitment for writing did not fall too heavily on any one author. The first monthly edition of *The Four Branches Review* will appear this fall.

The resources can be found on the Grow in Grace website, wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace.

Encouraging lay leaders

If there is one area that the task force realizes could still use much more thinking and planning by those who will take up this cause after us, it is the area of helping lay leaders grow in their understanding of the importance of investing

in their called workers' growth. So far, a series of articles on the importance of lay leaders encouraging their called workers toward growth is planned for *Forward in Christ*. The task force is also encouraged by the fact that Grow in Grace has the opportunity to work directly with the lay leaders of more than 100 congregations each year as they urge those congregations to send their pastor and wife to the Celebration of Ministry Retreats that are hosted each spring in San Antonio. For those congregations that do invest in their pastors by sending them to these retreats, a follow-up contact with those lay leaders gives thanks that their congregations made the investment in their pastor and his wife and urges them to continue investing in the growth of all their called workers.

With the delivery of this set of resources our task force will ask the synod to consider its work completed. We pray that God will bless what has been produced. We also pray he will spark others to build on our imperfect efforts so as to continue to strengthen opportunities in our midst for our called workers to grow in all their callings.

Rev. Rob Guenther, reporter

Rev. Rob Guenther, chairman

Prof. Richard Gurgel

Mr. Lowell Holtz

Prof. Lawrence Olson

Rev. John Seifert

Staff Minister Brandon Steenbock

Prof. Brad Wordell

Translation Liaison Committee

Our calling

The purpose of the Translation Liaison Committee (TLC) is “to evaluate major Bible translations; to communicate with their editors and publishers; to offer, when appropriate, suggestions to improve such translations; and to share its findings with the synod at large” (2013 *Proceedings*, p. 68).

Our current situation

Recommendations for the Holman Christian Standard Bible

From January 2014 through April 2015 the TLC worked feverishly to submit Bible translation recommendations for the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). In the end, the TLC submitted 56 pages of “global recommendations” dealing with issues not limited to one passage or context, and 1,031 recommendations on individual passages. To produce this body of work, the TLC met 40 times using Google Hangouts.

The reason the TLC invested so much time and energy in the HCSB is that the HCSB was one of the three finalists when Bible translations were evaluated in 2011–13 for use in WELS publications. In addition, the overseers of the HCSB informed us that they were planning a top-to-bottom review of the HCSB with a view toward improving the translation, and they bent over backwards to welcome our input. Throughout the process, the HCSB overseers gave us the impression that our input was being carefully considered.

For anyone interested in looking at our TLC input for the HCSB, all of it is posted on the WELS website under the TLC (bibletranslation.welsrc.net). The date of publication for the revised HCSB has not been made public. But when the revised HCSB appears, it will be interesting to see how much of our input has been incorporated. At this point, the TLC is optimistic that the revision will be a significant improvement, making the HCSB an even better option for use in WELS.

Contacts about the English Standard Version

After completing our work with the HCSB, the TLC made a contact with the oversight committee of the English Standard Version (ESV), chaired by Dr. Lane Dennis. We were informed that the ESV oversight committee would

be meeting in July 2015 and that it might be possible for a few WELS recommendations to be considered by that group. In response, the TLC quickly drafted and submitted seven recommendations. Subsequently, we have not heard anything about the meeting or future plans for the ESV.

It is well known that the ESV overseers are not interested in making substantial changes. The overseers have indicated that they do not want to “destabilize” the text, and the oversight committee meets only once every five years or so. We expect that a few minor changes will be made in the ESV in the coming years.

Contacts about the NIV

In May 2015 the TLC also contacted Dr. Douglas Moo, the chairman of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) overseeing the New International Version (NIV). He indicated that the CBT meets every summer to consider changes for the NIV, and he invited us to submit recommendations. There are no immediate plans for another revision for the NIV, but at some point a new edition will be published with minor changes.

Based on Dr. Moo’s invitation, the TLC has begun to comb through the NIV and to write up recommendations—working at a leisurely pace. In May 2016 we intend to submit our first batch of recommendations, numbering about 25 or so.

Reflections on the first three years of the TLC

When the TLC was set up in 2013, it was hoped that WELS through this committee could have at least a little influence on the major Christian Bible translations. That outcome, it seems, may be possible. We have been encouraged by the response of the HCSB, ESV, and NIV.

It has also been interesting for us on the TLC to get a glimpse into how some of the major Christian Bible translations are produced and overseen. As English-speaking Christians, we should never lose sight of the fact that we are richly blessed to have so many high quality English Bible translations—beyond what has been available for Christians in other ages and what is now available for Christians in other languages.

A look ahead

Recommendations for the NIV

The TLC plans to continue to submit recommendations for the NIV. To help us, we are using the resources that were developed in 2011–13 when WELS formally evaluated the revised NIV. We would also be eager to hear from anyone who has additional suggestions for the NIV.

Review of the upcoming HCSB revision

The TLC was happy to see that the 2015 WELS convention mandated a synodwide review of the revised HCSB when it appears. The resolution stated: “Be it Resolved, a) that when the revision of the HCSB appears, the Conference of Presidents direct a synodwide review to take place, coordinated either by the TLC or a new committee appointed for that purpose; and be it finally Resolved, b) that the results be shared with the 2017 WELS convention if possible or with the 2019 convention, if necessary” (2015 *Proceedings*, p. 23). The TLC is eager to see what the revised HCSB will look like, and the TLC stands ready to help with a synodwide review, if desired.

Prof. Thomas Nass, reporter

Prof. Thomas Nass, chairman
Rev. Glenn Schwanke, secretary
Rev. Brett Brauer
Prof. Kenneth Cherney Jr.
Prof. Joel Fredrich
Rev. Geoffrey Kieta
Prof. Paul Zell

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

Our calling

The WELS Bylaws charge the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) to “serve under the Conference of Presidents by representing the synod in doctrinal discussions with other church bodies who are, or are not, in fellowship with the synod” and to “keep itself informed on the doctrinal trends in other church bodies.” This function is in keeping with the object and purpose of the synod: to “extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church” (WELS Constitution, Article IV).

To carry out our calling, the CICR meets twice each year as a commission, including regular meetings with the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), for theological discussion, information sharing, and mutual encouragement. The CICR has also assisted individuals and churches that are seeking to take confessional Lutheran stances around the world. Finally, commission members stay abreast of happenings in other Lutheran church bodies around the world through periodical reading and with visits to church conventions, conferences, and symposia.

Prof. Thomas Nass finished his term on the CICR in 2015. He is thanked for his many years of faithful service. Appointed to replace him was Prof. James Danell.

Our current situation

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) consists of 29 confessional Lutheran church bodies throughout the world that are in fellowship with WELS.

The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany (ELFK) will host the 2017 convention from June 28–July 2 at the Gymnasium St. Augustin in Grimma, where Lutheran pastor and hymn writer Paul Gerhardt was a student. The theme of the convention is “Reformation Then and Now.” Since 2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of Luther’s posting of the 95 Theses, the 2014 CELC delegates authorized the writing and distribution of a new set of 95 Theses for the anniversary, presenting all the Lutheran fundamentals but also including topics directed toward religious challenges in our contemporary society. It was proposed that if these “95 Theses for the 21st Century” are approved at the 2017 convention in Germany, they could be translated and circulated in all CELC churches and read publicly on Oct. 31, 2017, in CELC churches around the world. Prof. Thomas Nass (WELS) and President John Moldstad (ELS) will be heading the 95 Theses project with additional appointees from around the world to be added by the Planning Committee.

Additional information about the CELC can be found on the CELC website at celc.info. Included on the website are the *Proceedings* from the 2014 CELC convention with the full text of the five essays. The website also has pictures from the 2014 convention, information about each of the member churches, and PowerPoint presentations that could be used to introduce people to the CELC and its member churches.

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

The ELS is our American sister synod with which we have been in fellowship since its organization in 1918. Presently the ELS has about 20,000 souls in roughly 130 congregations. The CICR maintains contact with the ELS in a variety of ways in order to express and foster our unity in faith. Pastor Steven Lange attended the ELS convention in June 2015 as an official WELS observer.

In September 2015 the CICR met with the ELS Doctrine Committee, a biennial event. The doctrine and practice of church fellowship was the main topic, especially as it relates to the recent formal discussions with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) and the more informal discussions with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS). The ELS Doctrine Committee also asked for clarification on the recent WELS Conference of Presidents (COP) study on church fellowship that addressed applications for area Lutheran high schools, especially non-member student participation in choirs within a worship setting. One of the concerns expressed by our ELS brothers was an apparent lack of careful communication within some high school federations, especially in those federations made up of both WELS and ELS congregations. The ELS brothers were assured that the COP never intended the church fellowship

study to be a directive that delineated practices. Instead, the intent of the study was to help facilitate a careful consideration of the doctrine and practice of church fellowship on the basis of the Scriptures and to lead God's people to make careful, godly, and evangelical applications for specific circumstances.

Baltic and Eastern Europe

The CICR maintains direct contact with the Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia through its contact man, Pastor Jonathan Balge. Understandably, the Christians in this sister church are concerned about the geo-political situation in their part of the world. We continue to pray for them and for their gospel work in God's kingdom.

Scandinavia

The CICR continues to promote contact and communication with sister churches in Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Prof. Keith Wessel is currently serving as the contact man to Scandinavia. He was privileged to visit these church bodies in person in July 2015 and to share our synod's joy that they are partners in the gospel ministry with us (Philippians 1:5). One new idea in this gospel partnership that is currently being explored is Scandinavian pastoral students receiving parish experience as vicars in the United States. The first of these, David Akerlund (Finland), came to the United States in April and served at Holy Word, Austin, Texas, for about five weeks. The Scandinavia Fund of WELS is also assisting with Bjarte Edvardsen's vicar training in Sweden. There also is a plan for Anders Nissen, pastor in the LBK-Sweden, to attend Summer Quarter at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis., during 2016.

Germany

The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany (ELFK) is a church body of nearly 1,250 members in 16 parishes. The CICR, through its Germany contact man, seeks to maintain and strengthen the ties of fellowship between WELS and the ELFK. Prof. John Brenner had been serving as the contact man for several years, but with his election to the chairmanship of the CICR, Prof. James Danell was appointed as the new contact man.

The ELFK celebrated its 140th anniversary at its 2016 convention. The ELFK has a proud history and greatly appreciates the fellowship it has with WELS. A new ELFK hymnal, *Lutherisches Gesangbuch*, was published in July 2015 after 12 years of preparation and is now being introduced in ELFK congregations. The seminary in Leipzig currently has two full-time students. Martin Luther Schule in Zwickau continues to have a steady enrollment, 141 students at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year. For the past several years the Germany Support Fund has helped to underwrite the cost of ELFK students studying at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Mich., though there were no German students at MLS this past school year.

On a somewhat broader note, the need for continuing pastoral education in Europe is clear, both for strengthening the bonds of fellowship and for possible accreditation and degree granting from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). In the near future it will be important for the CICR, the WELS Board for World Missions (BWM), and WLS to get together and discuss all the efforts WLS is putting into continuing education for our partner churches since many more requests are anticipated in the near future.

Portugal

Prof. Ken Cherney serves as the contact man to our sister church body in Portugal, the Lutheran Church of Portugal (ILP). Pastor Artur Villares continues to serve as the anchor of this small church body and as an asset to the CELC in Europe. In 2015 the Antioch II Foundation supplied a two-year grant to support the work of Villares, who has put together an aggressive ministry plan for gospel outreach in Portugal. Another generous donation has also been given to assist in a new Brazilian missionary initiative by Pastor António Canoa to be directly overseen by the ILP. That missionary effort is now moving forward, but the Brazilian location has not yet been decided at the time of this writing.

Puerto Rico

It is the responsibility of the CICR to maintain contact with our sister church in Puerto Rico, the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church. The CICR does this through Pastor Timothy Satorius, a liaison who makes periodic visits.

Japan

The CICR has assumed responsibility for contacting the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church in Japan (LECC) since the Board for World Missions ended its mission work there. The LECC numbers 366 souls in six congregations. On Oct. 12, 2015, the LECC celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Tokyo congregation. Former missionary Kermit Habben was able to attend with his wife, as was former Japan missionary Prof. Brad Wordell, who has agreed to be a liaison with the LECC for the CICR. Oversight of the Japan Fund has been transferred to the CICR, and with that fund we hope to cover our contact expenses and to offer limited aid.

Hong Kong

In November 2014 the CICR received a request from the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) in Hong Kong for the CICR to work with them to establish an official fellowship relationship with WELS with a view toward membership in the CELC. The CICR has received a "Statement of Faith" from SALEM and continues to work with these brothers in Christ to clarify their doctrine and practice on the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Ethiopia

In recent years exciting developments have unfolded in our relationship with the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia (LCE) and its founder and president, Dr. Yigezu Kebede. Kebede founded and oversees the work of Maor Theological College (MTC) in Bishoftu. He has demonstrated himself to be an aggressive promoter of confessional Lutheranism and has expressed strong agreement with our synod's doctrinal statements. Prof. Ken Cherney has served as the main CICR contact to Ethiopia, making visits to the field with other WELS representatives and representatives from the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA). The most recent onsite visit took place in September 2015 to celebrate the cornerstone-laying of a new building for MTC, partially funded by a generous grant from the WELS Board for World Missions, and the college's first graduation with 42 graduates receiving degrees. MTC is requesting that WLS help staff its aggressive program of ministerial education, but further visits to the field are currently on hold, pending WLS's current attempt to get a better handle on how best to manage the many overseas commitments and requests for theological training. Kebede's vision is that instructors who visit Africa to teach in the Greater Africa Theological Studies Institute (GRATSI), while en route, could spend a week in Bishoftu teaching an intensive course. Coordinating this will be on the agenda of the new world mission seminary professor, Brad Wordell. Some form of accreditation for MTC's program is also extremely important to Kebede. The LCE is currently in the process of applying for membership in the CELC. At its March 2016 meeting, the CICR unanimously resolved to recommend that the 2017 WELS convention make a formal declaration of church fellowship with the LCE.

Other world church bodies

The CICR continues to monitor developments with Lutheran church bodies throughout the world that have expressed interest in establishing confessional ties with WELS, including churches in Congo, Sudan, and Kenya.

Church of the Lutheran Confession

Representatives from the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), the ELS, and WELS have met for formal doctrinal discussions on several occasions in the past two years. These were the first meetings between representatives of these three synods since 1990. They were called by the synod presidents, with the encouragement of the appropriate synod committees, upon the request of a grassroots group of pastors from all three synods in the Mankato, Minn., area.

These meetings have been cordial and productive. Participants have shared perspectives on the history of the relationship between the three synods and discussed the "Joint Statement Regarding the Termination of Fellowship Between Church Bodies," a document that was prepared in 1990 during the last round of doctrinal discussions. Representing the CLC were Pres. Michael Eichstadt, Pastor Paul Nolting, and Pastor Bruce Naumann; representing the ELS were Pres. John Moldstad, Prof. Gaylin Schmeling, and Prof. Erling Teigen; and representing WELS were Prof. John Brenner, Prof. Thomas Nass, and Pres. Mark Schroeder. Only one of these participants was involved in the 1990 meetings, so these meetings have brought together a new generation of leaders who have not discussed the issues together before.

Based on their discussion, this committee drafted a "Joint Statement Regarding the Termination of Fellowship," which has received reaction from members of the appropriate synod committees. The "Joint Statement" is now placed before the 12 districts for their reaction. Please see the addendum to this report for the "Joint Statement" (p. 23). It should be noted that a formal acceptance of the "Joint Statement" by all three church bodies would not yet clear the way for any recommendations for formal declarations of church fellowship. There are still other issues to address.

Free conferences

A free conference is a gathering that individuals attend, not as representatives of their church bodies, to discuss doctrinal and practical issues of the day. They are historically conducted outside the framework of fellowship (no joint devotions or prayers). In keeping with their historical use by American Lutherans, they have the goal of bringing about doctrinal clarity, clearing up misunderstandings between Lutheran church bodies, and giving a forum for the presentation of the truth of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Members of the CICR continue to attend these conferences as they are able and encourage others in our synod to do so.

Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

The CICR continues to monitor developments in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS). Another

informal meeting between leaders of WELS, the ELS, and the LCMS was held in December 2015, after which the representatives of the three church bodies issued a formal report on the progress made in these meetings, including areas of apparent agreement and disagreement in matters of doctrine and practice. In part the statement reads: "We agree that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God and the only source of authority for doctrine and practice. We agree that the chief message of the Bible is justification by grace through faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, and that the entire Bible is Christ-centered. In light of this agreement, it seems that there is reason to continue to discuss doctrine together with the hope that we may be able to come to full agreement under the guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit. All of us also confess without reservation (quia) that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct exposition of the Holy Scriptures. When discussing hermeneutics, we found that we say basically the same thing: Our doctrine is based on Scripture, and when we compare Scripture with the Lutheran Confessions, we find that they agree. Therefore we subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions and use them as normative for teaching in the Lutheran Church." That being said, the report goes on to state that "a number of significant differences (real or perceived) remain that need to be thoroughly addressed. It should be stated clearly that we do not expect to reestablish church fellowship in the near future. All of us are convinced that church fellowship requires complete agreement in doctrine." Another meeting is scheduled in December 2016 when an LCMS presentation will be made by Pastor Al Colver III on the LCMS's understanding of "cooperation in externals." Presentations will also be made by one representative from each synod on our respective understandings of what the Bible teaches about the roles of men and women. Prof. Earle Treptow will be the WELS presenter.

As it has done in the past, the CICR will plan to send observers to the 2016 LCMS convention, scheduled to be held in Milwaukee. Both President Mark Schroeder and First Vice President James Huebner will be attending some sessions, as will the official CICR observer, Prof. Bill Tackmier.

CICR special funds

The CICR now oversees six special funds that are used to cover our contact expenses and to help sister churches in specific areas. The funds are the Baltic Eastern Europe Fund, the Germany Support Fund, the Portugal Fund, the Puerto Rico Fund, the Scandinavia Fund, and the Ukraine Fund. Gifts to these funds are encouraged from school groups, women's groups, individuals, and others. Gifts may be sent to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry.

A look ahead

This year CICR personnel will serve as convention observers in various places. Pastor Steven Lange is slated to attend the 2016 ELS convention. Former CICR chairman, Prof. Thomas Nass, plans to attend the 2016 convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and he may be joined by an official CICR observer as well. The commission sees attendance at these gatherings as opportunities to express interest in what is happening in other churches and to keep ourselves informed about events and activities in their midst.

CICR contact men will make field visits to their specific areas of responsibilities as they can.

Finally, CICR personnel will continue monitoring various Lutheran publications to stay informed on the Lutheran scene in North America and around the world.

Rev. Peter Prange, reporter

Prof. John M. Brenner, chairman

Rev. Bart Brauer, vice chairman

Rev. Peter Prange, secretary

Rev. Jonathan Balge

Prof. Kenneth Cherney Jr.

Prof. James Danell

Rev. Steven Lange

Prof. Bill Tackmier

Rev. Benjamin Tomczak

Prof. Keith Wessel

Advisory:

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president

Addendum:

Joint Statement Regarding the Termination of Fellowship

Introduction to the Joint Statement

Since the establishment of the CLC in 1960, there has been much discussion about the history behind the formation of the CLC and the precise nature of the differences that have separated the CLC from the ELS and WELS. God desires that we agree on the doctrinal principles of God's Word and commit ourselves to implementing those principles in our church life. Then we will react to circumstances in the future with a unified understanding of Bible doctrine.

To that end, the "Joint Statement," drafted in 1990 and revised in 2015 by representatives of the CLC, ELS, and WELS, is offered as a scripturally sound presentation on the matters of church fellowship that have separated us for many years. Agreement on this doctrine would be a necessary first step toward the restoration of God-pleasing fellowship relations.

It is understood that this "Joint Statement," if and when it is adopted by the three synods, will supersede all previous statements or interpretations of previous statements that are in conflict with it. All conflicting or possibly conflicting statements from any of the three synods are herewith rejected.

JOINT STATEMENT

Regarding the Termination of Fellowship

I. On the basis of Holy Scripture and in a spirit of Christian unity and love we believe and affirm that it is God's gracious will and purpose:

A. That His church on earth be one flock under one Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' sheep listen to His voice (Jn. 10:16,27). They gladly hear His Word and follow Him because He is "the way and the truth and the life." No one comes to the Father except through Him (Jn. 14:6). The words that Jesus speaks are precious to His followers because they "are spirit and they are life" (Jn. 6:63). Jesus alone has the words of eternal life because He is the Holy One of God (Jn. 6:68,69). His church lives by His Word and gladly shares it with others.

B. That all who believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among them and they may be perfectly united in mind and thought (1 Cor. 1:10). He urges them "to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Dissensions and divisions arise when Jesus' disciples do not carefully listen to His voice as He speaks to them in the Holy Scriptures, God's inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word. Jesus assures them that if they remain in His Word and hold firmly to it, they are really His disciples. He promises, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn. 8:31,32). For this reason Scripture admonishes us to watch our life and doctrine closely and to persevere in them so as to save both ourselves and our hearers (1 Tm. 4:16), to keep as the pattern of sound teaching what we have heard from God's spokesmen (2 Tm. 1:13), and to do our best to be workers who do not need to be ashamed and who correctly handle the word of truth (2 Tm. 2:15).

C. That Christians as individuals and as church bodies be on constant guard against falsehood and error. False doctrines and unscriptural teachings are sown by Satan, "the father of lies." "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth" (Jn. 8:44). His aim is to separate Jesus' sheep from their Good Shepherd and to take them with him to eternal destruction. With fatherly love God therefore warns us to beware of false prophets (Mt. 7:15), to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in our way by going contrary to the teaching we have learned and to "keep away from them" (Ro. 16:17). Out of loving concern He commands us not to "be yoked together with unbelievers," but rather to "come out from them and be separate" (2 Cor. 6:14,17). Earnestly He admonishes us not to assist or encourage those who do not continue in Christ's teaching (2 Jn. 10, 11).

D. That Christian brothers, motivated by Christian love and concern, exercise their fellowship by admonishing one another whenever it is called for, and particularly also when they notice that their brothers have strayed into error (Eze. 33:1-9; Ro. 15:1-14; Ga. 6:1-5; Eph. 4:1-6; Col. 3:12-17; 2 Tm. 4:2). Failure to admonish would be disobedience to God and evidence of an unloving heart. Those giving the admonition will not do this in a self-righteous, haughty spirit or in a loveless, mechanical way, but humbly and patiently, in the spirit of Christ, the Good Shepherd, who lovingly seeks

every lost and straying sheep and strives to rescue it (Lk. 15:3-7). The response to such fraternal admonition given to an erring individual or group within the fellowship will help to determine whether the error is a matter of weakness or whether the erring individual or group is causing divisions and offenses by teaching contrary to God's Word (Ro. 14:1; 16:17). If the erring individual or group is willing to be instructed from the Word of God while also refraining from promoting the error and at the same time making efforts to address it, the error will be treated as a matter of weakness. If, however, the erring individual or group rejects the admonition from Scripture and holds to the error, they are causing divisions and offenses, and our Lord instructs us to avoid them (Ro. 16:17).

[Note: Those who adhere to false teaching in spite of admonition are regularly referred to as "persistent errorists" in the ELS and WELS, while in the CLC they are referred to simply as "errorists." This document uses the phrase "those who adhere to error" because it communicates the truth adequately and it has been used in the same manner in all three synods (see III G, H).]

II. With respect to Romans 16:17,18, on the basis of Holy Scripture and in a spirit of Christian unity and love, we believe and affirm:

A. The present active infinitive *skopein*, meaning "to keep on watching out for," refers to Christians' ongoing activity of being constantly alert and on the lookout for those who are causing divisions and offenses by teaching contrary to God's Word (see III A, B).

B. While the word *skopein* does not in itself specifically and directly enjoin admonition, this does not deny that admonition as enjoined in other passages of Scripture will normally take place concurrently with the watchfulness of which *skopein* speaks whenever error appears within the circle of fellowship.

C. The primary purpose of such admonition is in love to show the erring individual or group that they have left the truth of God's Holy Word, and then also by the power of the Holy Spirit to bring them back, if possible, to the "pure, clear fountain of Israel" (Formula of Concord, S.D., Comprehensive Summary, 3; Concordia Triglotta, 851) (see III C).

D. Admonition continues until the erring individual or group either repents of their error and turns away from it or until they show themselves to be guilty of causing divisions and offenses by continuing in their error (see III D).

E. Christians will rejoice when those who have misspoken or inadvertently strayed into error accept admonition and correction from God's Word (see III I).

F. Scripture enjoins us to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 Jn. 4:1). This testing involves making a judgment based on the principles of Scripture as to whether we are dealing with weak brothers or those who adhere to error (see III E).

G. When "testing the spirits" in regard to a church body we need to consider not only its official statements and resolutions, but also its corporate actions or inactions. We cannot assume that every expression of individual members reflects the position of the church body, or that the correctness of its official statements and resolutions automatically guarantees that there is scriptural practice within the body.

H. The imperative *ekklinete* calls for a clean break of fellowship with those who adhere to error. When it has been ascertained that a person or a church body is causing divisions and offenses (*tous poiountas dichostasias kai ta skandala*) by teaching contrary to Holy Scripture, the directive to avoid is as binding as any word addressed to us by our Savior God in His holy Word (see II D).

I. A break in fellowship with those who adhere to error is a forceful, loving, and ongoing admonition regarding the seriousness of their error.

J. The apostle's urgent command *ekklinete* ("avoid," "keep away from") is the voice of the Good Shepherd Himself as He lovingly protects His sheep and lambs from the deception of error. Such a termination of fellowship serves the spiritual welfare of Christ's flock. Continuing in fellowship with those who are causing divisions and offenses exposes Jesus' disciples to the leaven of error, which is contrary to His saving intent (Mt. 16:5-12; Rom. 16:18).

III. With respect to Romans 16:17,18, on the basis of Holy Scripture and in a spirit of Christian unity and love:

A. We reject the view that the verb *skopein* refers to labeling or branding those who have already been identified as individuals or a church body causing divisions and offenses (The KJV translation "mark" can be misunderstood.) (see II A).

- B. We reject the view that *skopein* does not refer to an ongoing, durative activity (see II A).
- C. We reject the view that the primary purpose of admonition is to determine whether or not people are adhering to error (Gal. 6:1; see II C).
- D. We reject the view that the decision to avoid is to be made on the basis of a subjective judgment or conjecture about the possible outcome of the admonition (see II D).
- E. We reject the view that permits the use of subjective judgment to prolong fellowship with those who adhere to error, since such action is contrary to the principles of Scripture (see II F).
- F. We reject using expressions such as “debt of love” as a basis for delaying a break in fellowship with those who adhere to error.
- G. We reject the understanding that, when a person or group has been identified as causing divisions and offenses through false teaching, persistence in the error is an additional criterion that must be met before breaking fellowship. We likewise reject the understanding that demanding recognition for error or making propaganda for error are additional criteria that must be met. Rather, these are ways that a person or group can be identified as causing divisions and offenses.
- H. We reject any use of the term “persistent errorist” that would imply that there are individuals or groups who adhere to error with whom we can continue in fellowship in the hope that they may someday return to the truth.
- I. We reject the view that the *ekklinatē* injunction is to be applied to those within the circle of fellowship who have misspoken or inadvertently erred, or to those who are weak brothers. Christian love will lead us rather to “correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” those who have erred in this way (2 Tim. 4:2; see II E).
- J. We reject the view that a break in fellowship with those who adhere to error is per se the equivalent of excommunication. A termination of fellowship is a judgment on doctrine, not on personal faith.

Revised
Pewaukee, Wisconsin
November 13, 2015

Church of the Lutheran Confession:
Michael M. Eichstadt
Bruce J. Naumann
Paul D. Nolting

Evangelical Lutheran Synod:
John A. Moldstad, Jr.
Gaylin R. Schmeling
Erling T. Teigen

Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod:
John M. Brenner
Thomas P. Nass
Mark G. Schroeder

Ministry of Christian Giving

Our calling

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) serves on behalf of the Conference of Presidents (COP) to encourage every WELS member to “excel in the grace of giving” through Christ. We consider it a privilege to help God’s people make gifts to Jesus for his work in their congregations, synod, and other WELS organizations.

The MCG assists the Conference of Presidents with its responsibility to fund the Lord’s work through the synod. This funding is provided through Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) as well as direct gifts to WELS from individuals and foundations.

- In the area of CMO, our efforts are focused on supplying congregations with information on ministry opportunities and needs as well as stewardship training resources.
- In the area of direct gifts from individuals, we regularly mail and e-mail appeals for support of synodical ministries. We also provide information to donors about Christian estate planning and other planned giving options that allow them to give in a way that is beneficial for them, their families, and the ministries close to their hearts. The MCG supports 17 Christian giving counselors (12.8 full-time equivalents due to 7 of the counselors being semi-retired) across all 12 districts of WELS to assist God’s people with gifts of any kind. These services are free and confidential.
- Gifts from foundations often result from consultation between the MCG director, other synod leaders, and the foundations regarding funding of new ideas and enhancements to ministry.

Our current situation

Congregation Mission Offerings

In 2015, the MCG and Communication Services helped the COP create a special video and instructions letters personalized to each district that illustrated the work Jesus does through the areas of ministry supported by our CMO.

The CMO for calendar year 2015 came in at 1.1 percent higher than 2014 gifts and 2.9 percent higher than subscriptions. Total CMO for the year was \$21.5 million, an increase of \$234,000 over the previous year. This is the highest CMO total in the synod’s history and the fourth consecutive year that congregations have exceeded their subscriptions. We praise Christ for such generosity and commend his people for these gifts!

At the start of 2016, 95 percent of WELS congregations reported their CMO subscriptions. While they show a decrease of 1.8 percent from 2015 actual receipts, no reductions in ministry are necessary because of the higher than anticipated offerings in 2015.

A stable—not declining—CMO makes it possible to maintain the present level of ministry as long as there are also many substantial special gifts from churches and individuals. While CMO has increased about 1 percent annually over the last ten years, that increase provides only one-third of the 3 percent annual increase in gifts needed for maintaining WELS’ present level of worldwide gospel outreach for Jesus.

Debt elimination

At the direction of the 2013 synod convention, the special synodwide offering to eliminate the remainder of the synod’s debt was launched at the 2015 synod convention and will conclude at the end of June 2016. Significant progress through gifts and planned FY2016 debt payments has been made toward the \$4.7 million goal, which will put us in a better financial position to move forward with current ministry.

IRA rollover opportunity

On Dec. 18, 2015, Congress passed legislation to make permanent the giving opportunity known as the IRA charitable rollover. With this type of gift, anybody 70.5 or older can make distributions from his or her IRA to charity tax free. The MCG is working with WELS Foundation to communicate this opportunity with our fellow saints via postcard mailings and counselor visits.

WELS endowment funds

The 2005 synod convention asked the Ministry of Christian Giving to work toward building up \$300 million in WELS

endowment funds for the benefit of Ministerial Education and Missions. By early 2016 WELS received \$20.6 million in immediate gifts with another \$50.3 million expected from deferred gifts arranged by donors working with Christian giving counselors. The 2015 distribution from these endowments totaled \$735,331, including \$408,615 to Missions and \$326,716 to Ministerial Education.

We also encourage gifts to the WELS Operating Endowment Fund, which as of the end of 2015 had a balance of \$947,878 with \$335,859 expected from deferred gifts. In 2015 this fund distributed \$52,026 to WELS.

Christian giving counselors

Through face-to-face visits and presentations, our Christian giving counselors invite faith-prompted support of WELS' Operating Fund, Congregation and Ministry Support Group, Home and World Missions, the ministerial education schools, Christian Aid and Relief, WELS endowments, and more.

During each one of the past seven fiscal years, Christian giving counselors (CGCs) have averaged—per full-time equivalent (FTE)—286 face-to-face donor visits and have nurtured an average (per FTE) of \$529,978 in immediate gifts (not including gifts to congregations, collaborative partners, and other WELS organizations) and \$2,269,514 in deferred expectancies. In fiscal year 2014–15, WELS Christian giving counselors (12.8 FTEs) conducted 3,649 free, confidential visits with God's people that helped facilitate \$5.7 million in gifts received for WELS and \$34.7 million in deferred expectancies for congregations, the synod, and other WELS organizations. Annually, our church body invests approximately \$1.3 million in our field staff's service to Jesus. We praise the Lord for blessing our efforts and, more importantly, prompting and enabling God's people to honor him with generous gifts for his kingdom endeavors!

Staffing changes: Mr. Rick Kneser began serving the Southeastern Wisconsin District as a deferred counselor on Aug. 1, 2015, following the retirement of Mr. Jim Schwartz. Mr. Ken Dierks transitioned from his full-time position to semi-retirement effective Jan. 1, 2016. Pastor Kevin Hundley accepted the call to serve as full-time current counselor for the Southeastern Wisconsin District and began Jan. 1, 2016, following the retirement of Pastor David Dolan, whom we thank for his service to Jesus and his people.

Appeals

The MCG works closely with our WELS areas of ministry and ministerial education schools to send 13 mailed appeals and four e-appeals per calendar year. Each of the synod's four main areas of ministry receives two of the mailed appeals and one e-appeal. One of the appeals each year promotes charitable gift annuities for WELS Foundation. The appeals coordinate with other WELS media including *WELS Connection* and *WELS Connection Close-up, Forward in Christ*, WELS' websites, and the "Together" e-newsletter. In fiscal year 2014–15, Ministry of Christian Giving mailings helped facilitate \$877,116 in immediate support for WELS.

Development counsel to other organizations

We annually offer development training to Christian giving counselors, ministerial education mission advancement staff, and anyone serving a WELS/ELS-affiliated ministry in development. One goal of such training is to encourage a consistent approach to God's people that's Christ-centered and donor-sensitive and that minimizes the impression that we're competitors or trying to "get" something from our fellow Christians. Sixteen individuals participated in our 2016 training.

WELS parasynodicals can formally contract with the MCG in a part-time "collaborative partnership" where our counselors proactively represent their organizations on visits with members. This allows both WELS and the parasynodicals to share their ministry stories with a broader audience of prospective partners. The MCG currently has part-time collaborative partnerships with Camp Shiloh, Friends of China, Luther High School Foundation, and Lutheran Institutional Ministry Association.

Stewardship programs

The MCG encourages biblical stewardship through our e-newsletter, "An Encouraging Word;" Faith Focused Finances resources including Joyful Generosity; and the latest stewardship program. Currently a "One in Christ" Bible study is available among other resources for the special offering. The MCG also maintains an archive of past stewardship programs at cloud.wels.net for congregations to use as needed.

Congregational planned giving program

The MCG has developed a new congregational planned giving manual to help congregations jump-start a program

of promoting planned giving opportunities to members. It also provides guidance on jump-starting an endowment program through WELS Foundation, setting up a planned giving committee, and establishing and administering an endowment fund. The program is available online at wels.net/plannedgivingprogram.

Statistical Report

Thanks to the efforts of WELS Technology, the gathering and reporting of statistics was moved to a new web platform that better synchronizes with the synod's WELSource database.

A look ahead

Following are our goals and plans for 2016:

- We will take a similar approach to communicating with congregations regarding 2017 CMO subscription setting, including personalizing a video and letter for each district.
- The CMO subscription web form will move to a new and improved web platform.
- Last October the COP approved a campaign by the MCG and Missions to gather \$4 million to fund new missions initiatives. The campaign, which will take place in FY2017, will encourage special gifts from individuals and feature joint visits by Christian giving counselors and missions representatives.
- We plan to continue encouraging gifts to WELS endowments with an appeal in November and by promoting the funds in visits and presentations.
- Our next WELS Christian giving training for WELS/ELS advancement personnel will take place Jan. 11–13, 2017. Contact us to register or receive more information.
- This year's stewardship program will utilize Pastor Andrew Schroer's "364 Days of Thanksgiving," available through Northwestern Publishing House. We also plan to start a page at cloud.wels.net to share stewardship resources shared by congregations.
- At the end of June 2016, Harry Mears, deferred counselor in the Western Wisconsin District, will fully retire. We thank him for his service to Jesus and his people.

The Ministry of Christian Giving is privileged to serve God and you by helping to fund the ministries that touch the hearts of WELS members. We are happy that these gifts in response to Christ's love are helping us as a synod to fulfill our calling of proclaiming Jesus' name to more and more people.

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, reporter

Mr. Robert Tupper
Mr. Mark Handeland

Advisory:
Rev. Kurt Lueneburg

Communication Services

Our calling

Communication Services exists to assist the Conference of Presidents in communicating WELS' mission to the members of the synod. It is responsible for a clear and consistent communication of the synod's mission from the synod's national offices—and for exploring, supporting, and expediting innovative media usage, shared communication, and similar improvements on a continuing basis for WELS ministries and congregations. It is also responsible for reviewing and authorizing all new communications originating in the synod's national office. The current staff consists of five full-time equivalents and one part-time.

Our current situation

The Communication Services staff is focused on working on the synod's major communication initiatives. The most important initiative is to coordinate the various WELS communications platforms so that they have a single, recognizable look and feel. Communication Services' goal is to work with each area of ministry to identify their

priorities—and then to communicate these priorities to laypeople and called workers alike through this cross-promotion, multi-platform strategy.

Communication Services works closely with Northwestern Publishing House to produce *Forward in Christ*, WELS' official magazine. Delivered monthly, *Forward in Christ* (FIC) provides its subscribers with inspirational and educational articles focused on God's grace as well as devotions, Bible studies, and synod news items. In 2015, *Forward in Christ* added a parenting column (*Heart to heart: Parent conversations*) and a missions series that introduces our brothers and sisters in Christ from around the world. Through use on the synod's website, articles reach a broader audience outside its subscribers; an online archive of the magazine can be found at wels.net/forwardinchrist. Currently FIC has a print run of more than 37,000; it also has more than 100 digital subscribers.

WELS Connection, the monthly video production, is viewed in more than 900 congregations. The video highlights the important work the synod is doing with your Congregation Mission Offerings. Northwestern Publishing House handles the subscription process so our churches do not have to actively subscribe each year. They automatically receive an invoice each fall for the upcoming year. In an effort to encourage our churches to use the downloadable video file, we offer two annual subscription rates: \$95 for the downloadable version and \$105 for a DVD that will be mailed three times per year. The *WELS Connection* video is also posted on wels.net and the WELS Facebook page the following month after it is viewed by the local congregation, further expanding the audience reach of the video. Our hope is that every member in the pew will know the blessings that God has provided WELS through their support.

The *WELS Connection* Close-up is a bulletin insert that showcases the area of ministry featured during the *WELS Connection* video. It is another opportunity to share with our members the important work that is happening on their behalf as a synod. We currently print nearly 150,000 inserts per month and ship them to our subscribed congregations along with the DVD. *Forward in Christ* magazine and the WELS website also feature stories related to the *WELS Connection* topic each month.

The synod's official website, wels.net, was redesigned in 2015 by the Communication Services and WELS Technology teams. The redesign includes the consolidation of the WELS Church Extension Fund, WELS Foundation, and WELS Investment Funds websites into a combined gift-giving site. The new website is more topical than departmentalized—designed for the average layperson or non-WELS visitor. It is easier to search and is optimized for mobile devices. It provides timely content for both synod members and non-members who want to learn more about WELS and what we believe. We ask every WELS church and school to proudly display the WELS logo and link on their websites.

"Together" e-newsletter is written and distributed on the first and third Tuesday of each month and is e-mailed to more than 9,000 subscribers. All stories are posted on the wels.net homepage and more than 300 churches also use the print version we provide as a pdf file. This newsletter reports on news and events happening within the synod that every congregation should share with their members.

New in 2016 is the "Together" video update. In January we began using the Center for Mission and Ministry studio to produce a biweekly video news update. We are highlighting important and interesting synod news in a short video that features an interview with the newsmaker. The "Together" video update is shared with all current subscribers to the print version of the e-newsletter.

The 2015 *WELS Annual Report* showcases the significant work that God in his grace is accomplishing through the people of WELS and includes information from all synod entities and subsidiaries. The annual report is available in many formats to support users on a variety of platforms. Visit wels.net/annualreport to view the report as a pdf, a PowerPoint, or a flipbook. New this year is the webpage format, which features additional resources such as videos and links to supplementary information. Print versions of the report were sent to every WELS congregation and every synod donor. Additional print versions are available from Northwestern Publishing House for free.

The Communication Services team continues to develop and produce all official synod reports: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, *Report to the Twelve Districts*, and *Proceedings*—the official record of each synod convention. This is a large annual task that is important in preparing our delegates to district and synod conventions and then informing our called workers and members in the decisions that are made during those meetings.

Social media is another important communications platform and tool to keep our members informed on the work of the synod. Our Facebook page, facebook.com/welslutherans, has more than 30,000 followers. We are active daily on the Facebook page and invite more interaction from our followers. We also have a Twitter page, @welstweets, with nearly 2,000 followers and an Instagram account.

Interactive Faith online Bible studies are offered twice per year. Led by a pastor or professor, these one-hour studies are broadcast live via the Internet. Many congregations gather as a group for the Wednesday night study; other WELS members connect as couples or individuals. A promotional postcard is mailed to all of our congregations prior to each study encouraging them to join the thousands of online viewers each week studying God's Word. We also provide a bulletin insert and poster for pastors to use to promote the Bible class at their church. The next Interactive Faith online Bible study will be held during the fall of 2016.

Working with Technology Services, Communication Services completed a redesign of Evangelism's What About Jesus? website. The new website is mobile responsive and features all new images and graphics. The site went live in March.

A look ahead

The synod's current long-range plan states:

Worldwide identity as Confessional Lutherans

1.1 - WELS will be more widely known as a confessional Lutheran church body, firmly founded on the Holy Scriptures and joyfully proclaiming the saving love of Jesus Christ in Word and sacrament to as many people as possible around the globe.

The Communication Services staff is developing a Lutheran Reformation 500 section on wels.net that will feature stories and resources on Martin Luther. Working with the Northwestern Publishing House team, we will launch the web pages prior to the district conventions in June. NPH will provide a Luther product list with links and images for NPH resources. Book excerpts will primarily be current content with links to the product page on the NPH website.

The synod is planning a special service in downtown Milwaukee on Oct. 31, 2017, to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. The service will be the culmination of continuing education opportunities for WELS called workers held at the Wisconsin Center in downtown Milwaukee on Oct. 30-31, including Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's annual symposium and the Wisconsin Lutheran Teachers' Conference, which will be inviting WELS educators nationwide to participate. The service will be held at the Bradley Center. Choirs from all WELS high schools will participate in the service.

WELS districts and conferences also are planning celebratory events in 2017 on the weekends surrounding Reformation day. The events calendar of the WELS website will be updated as more information becomes available.

We will again use social media as a communications and marketing tool for the upcoming WELS International Youth Rally in Fort Collins, Colo., this summer. With nearly 2,000 young participants attending the rally, the wels.net home page and our Facebook and Twitter pages will be the source of information and stories happening at the rally. It is a great way for parents, family, and friends of the participants to keep up to date on events at the rally and have these young people share their experiences and photos from the rally.

Other Communication Services projects currently in production:

- We are developing a special mission's issue of *Forward in Christ* that all subscribers will receive in addition to the 12 issues they receive each year. The special issue will inform readers of the exciting opportunities for outreach at home and abroad. We plan to share inspirational stories of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. We will encourage readers to get involved through prayer, personal outreach opportunities, and monetary support for the work the synod provides in our home and world mission fields.
- A Congregation Mission Offerings video customized for each of the 12 districts will be distributed to all congregations in September.
- A monthly ministry media kit is sent to all pastors the first week of each month that includes digital display graphics, bulletin blurbs, and prayers featuring WELS' areas of ministry.
- We provide ongoing promotion of the One in Christ debt elimination campaign.
- Coordinating the annual WELS Night at Miller Park, which last year drew more than 3,500 members. The 2016 event is scheduled for Fri., July 29.
- We produce the *Heart to heart* monthly video featuring select authors of the *Forward in Christ* parenting series.
- Planning is already underway for the 2017 synod convention to be held on the Luther Preparatory School campus in Watertown, Wis.

Mr. Lee Hitter, reporter

Advisory:

Rev. John A. Braun, Northwestern Publishing House

Mr. Lee Hitter, director of communications

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Prof. Bill Tackmeier, *Forward in Christ* consultant

Congregation and Ministry Support Group

Our calling

The Congregation and Ministry Support Group (CMSG) is part of Congregation and District Ministry and serves under the Conference of Presidents (COP).

The role of the CMSG is to serve congregations, schools, and their leaders by providing resources, training, and personal assistance so that they might carry out gospel ministry in the most faithful way on the local level.

The various CMSG units give focused attention to specific areas of congregational life. Resources that are offered include print/electronic material, “schools” for specialized leadership training, conferences, consultation, and Web connections. Each CMSG unit works with district coordinators to assess the needs of district parishes and schools and to provide resources, training, and personal assistance to meet those needs.

Strong and healthy congregations are best able with gospel ministry to expand the kingdom and to enable the synod to carry out its ministries. Thus the many CMSG programs and services benefit not only congregations but also the worldwide mission of WELS.

Our current situation

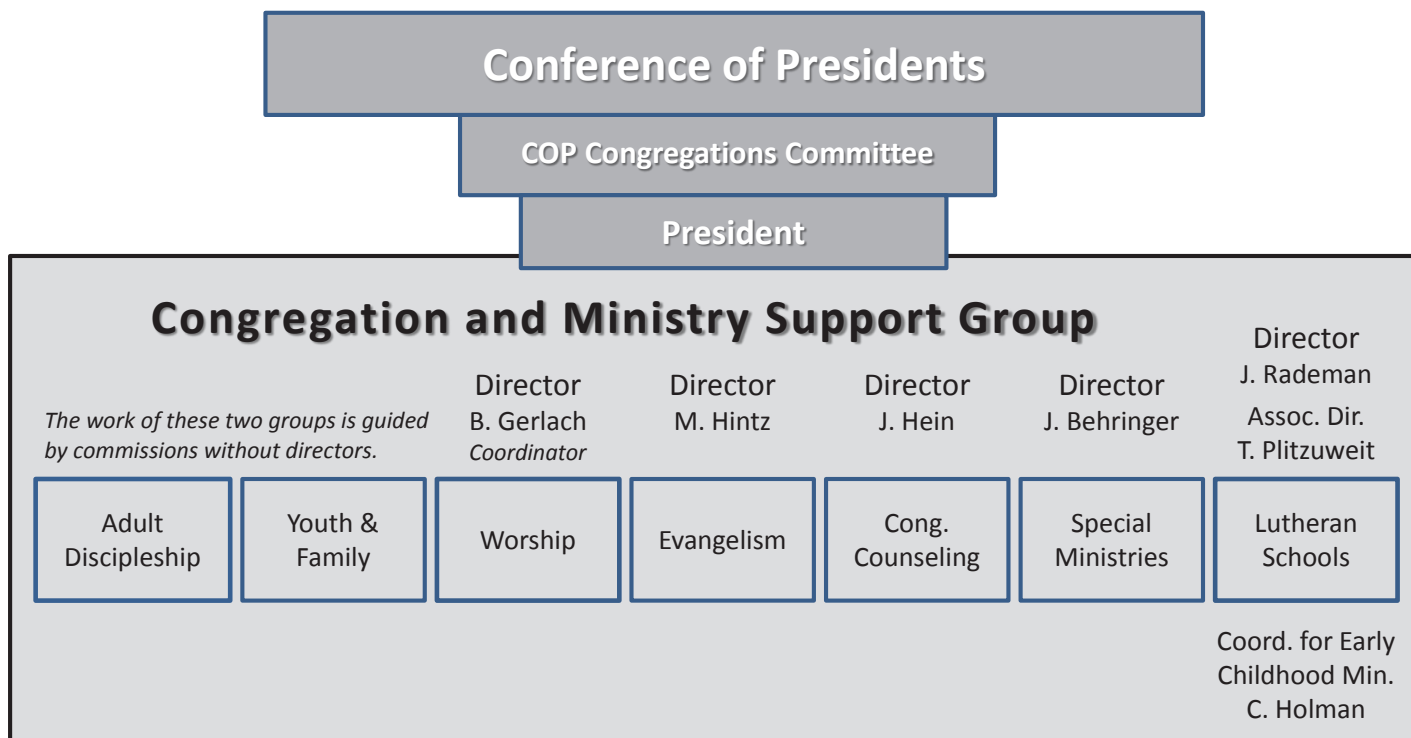
Synodical priorities and budgetary realities since 2009 have required a downsized CMSG. In early 2016 there are seven people serving in called CMSG positions, down from 11 in 2009. This includes two positions prioritized by the COP and funded since 2009: the national coordinator for early childhood ministry (July 2011) and the director for congregational counseling (July 2013).

The Commissions on Adult Discipleship and on Youth and Family Ministry continue their work without directors and with very limited synod subsidy support. They rely on special funds to carry on limited programs. However, in February 2016 the Synodical Council placed a joint director for these commissions on the Unfunded Priority List (see p. 60). The following report appeared in the Feb. 2, 2016, issue of “Together”:

The 2015 synod convention passed a resolution asking the Synodical Council to give high priority to the calling of a director for Youth and Family Ministry. After consultation with the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry and the Commission on Adult Discipleship, the COP was convinced that a director should be called to serve as director of both commissions. The COP is asking that the Synodical Council give this position high priority on the list of unfunded programs.

The April 2016 meeting of the Synodical Council came very close to approving the position to begin already in July 2016. There is strong support for the position, even if some of the funding would need to come from areas of ministry reallocating a small portion of their synod subsidy. But flat revenue projections for the next biennium suggest taking a careful look at the idea of adding staff when cuts might be required in other areas. The SC will reconsider the question at its November 2016 meeting in light of newer revenue projections and available sources of funding.

The current structure of the CMSG is shown in the following chart. Boxes indicate commissions; members are indicated in the reports that follow.



CMSG units strive faithfully and creatively to serve congregations, schools, and their leaders. The unit reports that follow give some of the details of this service in the cause of our Lord Christ and his kingdom.

For additional information, contact Pastor Bryan Gerlach, 414-256-3265 or bryan.gerlach@wels.net.

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, reporter and CMSG coordinator

Appendix: Institute for Worship and Outreach

The Institute for Worship and Outreach (IWO) works under the auspices of the Conference of Presidents to assist and encourage pastors as they strive for excellence in public worship and mission outreach. The IWO is a group of WELS pastors who have become convinced, on the basis of study and ministry experiences, that worship forms and outreach methods can and must intersect confessionally and evangelically in efforts to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. With this perspective, they have come together to foster a unified philosophy of worship and outreach in WELS and to be a resource for pastors as they reach out to the lost with the gospel of Jesus in public worship.

The IWO carries out the following functions.

- **Publishing:** The institute publishes papers, articles, and blogs at worshipandoutreach.org.
- **Studying:** The institute is committed to an ongoing study of methods, practices, and customs that concern especially the interaction of worship and outreach. The institute assembles periodically and invites other WELS pastors to participate in the studying process.
- **Training:** Through resource development, program content, and publishing, the institute assists pastors interested in developing an overall strategy of outreach that includes an emphasis on public worship.
- **Consulting:** When invited, members of the institute will work with individual pastors and/or groups of pastors to offer advice and counsel concerning specific challenges in the field.

Since its inception in 2010 the IWO has presented to eight districts; the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium; Martin Luther College Evangelism Day; Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Mission and Ministry; and the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts. Several members of the IWO are regular presenters at WELS Schools of Worship Enrichment and WELS Schools of Outreach. Eight of its members serve on committees to produce the next WELS hymnal.

Rev. Jonathan E. Schroeder, reporter

Rev. Jonathan E. Schroeder, moderator
Rev. Jonathan Hein, co-moderator
Rev. Jonathan Bauer
Rev. Aaron Christie
Rev. Donn Dobberstein
Rev. Michael Hintz
Rev. James Huebner
Rev. Michael Geiger
Rev. Bryan Gerlach
Prof. Daniel Leyrer
Rev. Adam Mueller
Rev. David Scharf
Rev. Michael Schultz
Rev. John Steinbrenner
Rev. Nathan Strutz
Prof. James Tiefel
Prof. Earle Treptow
Rev. Charles Westra
Rev. Jon Zabell

Commission on Worship

Our calling

The Commission on Worship exists to help parishes in their central activity of worship that glorifies God and strengthens his people. Music and liturgy consume much of the commission's time, but "worship" includes far more: an interest in the style, the forms, and the setting of worship; in preaching; in liturgical orders and rites; in church music for the congregation, choir, soloists, and instruments; in architecture and ecclesiastical arts.

Worship is the heart of all parish life, the time when the greatest number of members gather to proclaim the gospel and receive God's life-giving power in Word and sacrament.

Our current situation

The last two years have brought significant blessings and milestones for WELS through the Commission on Worship.

The National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts

The National Worship Conference is the largest worship conference of all North American Lutheran church bodies (including events sponsored by the pan-Lutheran Association of Lutheran Church Musicians), even though WELS is one of the smaller Lutheran synods. The triennial conference was held in 2014 at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis. The 2017 conference, with strong emphasis on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, will be June 13–16, again at Carthage College.

Worship conferences contribute to WELS efforts at continuing education and pursuit of excellence. Several of the typically 60 presentations relate to the intersection of worship and outreach, including some cross-cultural themes. Many presentations advance the education and expertise of those who serve us in worship, both called workers and lay leaders. Some topics focus on themes meant to strengthen our unity as expressed in worship. All enable us better to proclaim "Christ's Love, Our Calling" to both the found and the lost.

In addition to a main conference in the Midwest, the commission plans to offer two satellite sites (South Atlantic and Arizona-California Districts; at the time of this writing dates are not firm; check wels.net/worship for more information). These sites would offer slightly scaled down conference options. This would enable us to serve a larger audience in the Reformation anniversary year. More than half of the worship conference attendees are, as expected,

from the WELS heartland—the three Wisconsin districts. At the 2014 conference, outlying districts near proposed satellite locations sent only 107 people: 58 from Arizona-California, 32 from South Atlantic, 17 from South Central. Although overall attendance at conferences has remained solid or increased, attendance from outlying districts has declined at the last three conferences.

Resources from past worship conferences are available at worship.welsrc.net. Some of the resources are valuable for discussion by worship committees or boards of elders (if addressing worship topics). The 2014 plenary address by Pastor Jon Hein, “Compelling Worship,” is especially valuable. Double CDs of conference highlights are available from Northwestern Publishing House (NPH). The 2014 CD is titled “By Faith.” The title track is a hymn-anthem by Keith and Kristyn Getty and Stuart Townend, arranged by Richard Nichols.

Schools of Worship Enrichment

The Commission on Worship has offered Schools of Worship Enrichment since 2002. These events have been some of the most valuable and appreciated efforts of the Commission on Worship. Participant surveys at every site representing a wide variety of parishes throughout the country have given high marks to these events. We have experimented with a one-day event as an alternative to the full weekend event. But when possible we still recommend the full weekend option, Saturday morning through Sunday 4:00 p.m., with Sunday morning worship planned by School of Worship Enrichment leaders.

Christian Worship: Supplement

Sales of *Christian Worship: Supplement* have far exceeded the projections of Northwestern Publishing House from 2008. By the end of August 2015, 2,159 accompaniment editions were sold, indicating that a strong majority of WELS parishes are using the supplement to some degree. The pew and spiral editions have combined sales of 59,920 copies.

In addition to the 255-page pew edition and the accompaniment edition, other editions (with sales) are: electronic (637) and guitar (677). Purchase of the electronic edition makes use of pew edition optional. Sales of all *Christian Worship: Supplement* editions total more than \$1 million.

Newsletters

The commission publishes two bi-monthly newsletters: *Worship the Lord* and *Preach the Word*. These newsletters are used also in Hong Kong, Ukraine, Sweden, Indonesia, and parts of Latin America. In addition a growing number of non-WELS pastors are making use of *Preach the Word*.

In September 2015 a new *Preach the Word* series began on preaching to Millennials, with a variety of writers selected in partnership with the Commission on Evangelism.

Worship the Lord, after focusing in recent years on theological and historical emphases, began a new series in 2014 that focuses on a variety of practical worship issues.

Back issues of both newsletters are available online, both in PDF format at worship.welsrc.net (all back issues) and starting in 2015 also in a blog format, welcoming comments, at blogs.wels.net/worship. *Preach the Word* is also available at the seminary’s Grow in Grace site as an online searchable database.

A look ahead

Ongoing activity

Many of the activities described above will continue in the future, encouraging WELS toward good worship variety and vitality. In particular, several Commission on Worship members serve on Hymnal Project committees. Read more about the Hymnal Project on p. 35.

Future activity

Hymnology: A committee has been working since 2012 on a hymnology curriculum. The mission is simple: “This curriculum will help teachers cultivate in their students a deeper appreciation for Christian hymnody.” The curriculum has three objectives: show Christ, application, and develop a love to sing and perform these melodies. Writers are submitting lesson plans. These plans are in the editing process. NPH will release year one (of three) of the curriculum by June 2017. Initial committee members include two pastors (Jon Zabell and Jason Oakland) and six teachers (Julie Neujahr, Naomi Laabs, Beth Nolte, Mary Prange, Mike Marquardt, and Kevin Bode).

Worship education resources: While the commission has previously reported plans to provide new resources for worship education, the heavy involvement of many worship leaders in other projects—especially the new hymnal—

has prevented this. To temporarily fill the need, a variety of resources from NPH and from the Commission on Worship are highlighted at worship.welsrc.net under the “worship education” tab. A new major worship education resource will be developed in conjunction with the new Hymnal Project. The last major publication for worship education was the 1996 curriculum *Come Worship Christ*.

2017 Reformation anniversary: In anticipation of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and in conjunction with the new Hymnal Project, the Commission on Worship has explored revision of some historic Lutheran hymns. The language in translation of some hymns may be improved, making these worship masterpieces more accessible to 21st-century worshipers. New translations would speak with as much clarity and impact as found in newer English hymns, such as “In Christ Alone.” In some cases, new music might be provided. See “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands” in *Christian Worship: Supplement* for an example of new music. Now that the Hymnal Project has begun, initiative for consideration of new texts, translations, and tunes moves from the Commission on Worship to the Hymnal Project.

The Commission on Worship plans to assist congregations with Reformation worship plans in 2017 by providing:

- Five Reformation-themed services released at the 2017 worship conference(s).
- Commissioned musical works that will be usable in a variety of parishes. Additional commissions will include works of liturgical art, e.g., paraments, banners, graphic arts, graphics.
- Encouragement for planners to aim high for district events.

For additional information, contact Pastor Bryan Gerlach, 414-256-3265 or bryan.gerlach@wels.net.

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, reporter

Rev. Jon Zabell, chairman

Rev. Aaron Christie, secretary

Teacher Kevin Bode

Mr. Harvey Dunn

Rev. Jason Hacker

Dr. Kermit Moldenhauer

Advisory:

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, director of WELS Commission on Worship

Mr. Carl Nolte, Northwestern Publishing House

Prof. Joel Otto, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Rev. Michael Schultz, director of the Hymnal Project

Appendix: WELS Hymnal Project

Our calling

In 2011, the synod in convention adopted a long-range plan that included this goal under strategies for congregation and district ministry: “establish a committee to publish a new hymnal by the 500th anniversary of the first Lutheran hymnal (1524).” This plan for developing our synod’s next hymnal was also in harmony with the 1993 Joint Hymnal Committee’s desire that *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* would serve as our synod’s hymnal for approximately 30 years.

In keeping with that long-range plan, the Commission on Worship began preliminary work on the project’s aim, scope, and timeline. In 2012, the Conference of Presidents called Pastor Michael Schultz to serve as project director. Soon afterward, the administrative structure of the project, which consists of a thirteen-member executive committee and seven subcommittees, began to take shape.

The WELS Hymnal Project has adopted the following mission statement for its work:

1. This hymnal will confess Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, who comes to us in the means of grace.
2. This hymnal will provide materials that enable believers to use the means of grace in public worship and other devotional settings.
3. This hymnal will be faithful to the scriptures and to the witness of the scriptures in the Lutheran Confessions.
4. This hymnal will respect and draw from the historic worship voice of the Christian Church and from our Lutheran heritage.

5. This hymnal will include texts and music of excellent quality from past and present sources.
6. This hymnal will be produced with thorough study of the character of worship in WELS and the prayer that it may be used joyfully by the people and congregations of our synod.
7. This hymnal will be accompanied by print and electronic resources intended to meet the needs of various worship settings in WELS.

It remains our goal that our synod's next hymnal would be released in the early part of the next decade.

Our current situation

From the time each of the seven subcommittees began their work, they have been busy processing input gathered from throughout the church body, studying pertinent issues, and developing the necessary philosophical framework that will guide their committee's work. Below is a brief summary of the responsibilities of each of the seven subcommittees and the direction they are heading with their work.

The **Hymnody Committee** is responsible for the 650 or so hymns that will be found in the new hymnal. Following the lead of most recent hymnal efforts, approximately two-thirds of those hymns will come from the body of hymns currently found in *Christian Worship* and *Christian Worship: Supplement*. The Hymnody Committee hopes to make the settings of the hymns found in the pew edition of the hymnal as accessible as possible, with the singer especially in mind. The Hymnody Committee plans to make alternate accompaniments, instrumental parts, descants, and other opportunities for musical variety for each hymn available digitally outside of the pew edition.

The **Psalmody Committee** is responsible for the musical settings of the psalms. As is the case in *Christian Worship*, the pew edition will include a selection of psalm settings. In addition to the psalms printed in the pew edition, the Psalmody Committee plans to compile even more psalm settings for even more psalms in a standalone volume called a psalter. Between the settings printed in the pew edition and those found in the psalter, the Psalmody Committee hopes to build on the significant contribution *Christian Worship* made to the use of psalmody in worship by providing congregations with even more options for using these divinely-inspired songs in worship.

The **Rites Committee** is responsible for the orders of service found in the pew edition of the hymnal. The Rites Committee is proposing one main structure for a Sunday morning order of service that includes the celebration of Holy Communion. This one main structure will allow for flexibility and variety in a number of ways, including in the musical settings used for the service's canticles. The main order of service will be very familiar for those who are used to the orders of service found in our current resources. A new set of musical settings for the canticles is being compiled. At the same time, the service will be able to be used just as easily with musical settings with which congregations are already familiar.

The **Occasional Services Committee** is responsible for the orders of service not found in the pew edition. Many of these orders of service are currently found in *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*, such as installing pastors and teachers and receiving new members into the church. This committee has just recently begun its work.

The **Scripture Committee** is responsible for the calendar that will guide churches in their annual remembrance of the life and teachings of Christ along with its accompanying three-year lectionary. The Scripture Committee has completed its first draft of a calendar and lectionary that closely resemble the calendar and lectionary found in our current resources, especially pertaining to the appointed Gospels. Where changes have been made, they establish a closer connection between the theme set by the Gospel and the other two readings and more closely align our calendar and lectionary with those used within the rest of Lutheranism and the Holy Christian Church as a whole.

The **Technology Committee** is responsible for the digital delivery of the content of the next hymnal. The Technology Committee has prioritized its work in the following areas: a digital database of the hymnal content; tools that aid in worship planning; mobile applications that aid the devotional life of laypeople; and content formats that assist musicians. The Technology Committee is also responsible for the design and formatting that will be used across the print and digital resources of the next hymnal.

The **Communications Committee** is responsible for gathering information and input from the congregations and schools of our church body. This research not only pertains to how current resources are being used but also includes gathering feedback on samplings of proposed new resources as they are developed. As the Hymnal Project progresses, work will transition away from research to the areas of education and promotion. As the release date approaches, the Communications Committee will partner with the marketing department at Northwestern Publishing House to promote the new hymnal and its accompanying resources within our church body.

A look ahead

As each subcommittee starts to see some of the initial fruit of its labor, the Hymnal Project is excited to disseminate some of those resources to the congregations and schools of our church body for testing and feedback. That testing will primarily take place starting in the spring of 2016 and conclude around the time of the 2017 National Worship Conference. We will be asking for assistance from various random samplings of congregations and schools in order to carry out this testing process.

We look forward to sharing updates and results from the testing process. As the project continues to progress, we plan to release to the church body as a whole a set of materials representative of each committee's work to that point.

The members of the Hymnal Project ask for your continued prayers as we seek to assist the congregations, schools, and people of our church body in their continued desire to proclaim Christ's saving name in their public and personal worship.

Rev. Jonathan Bauer, reporter

Rev. Jon Zabell, chairman

Rev. Daniel Sims, secretary

Rev. Caleb Bassett, Technology Committee

Rev. Jonathan Bauer, Communications Committee

Rev. Aaron Christie, Hymnody Committee

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, director of the Commission on Worship

Teacher Michael Marquardt

Rev. Jonathan Micheel, Rites Committee

Rev. Paul Prange, Psalmody Committee

Rev. Jonathan Schroeder, Scripture Committee

Rev. Michael Schultz, director of the Hymnal Project

Prof. James Tiefel

Rev. Keith Wessel, Occasional Services Committee

Commission on Evangelism

Our calling

The Commission on Evangelism exists to assist congregations and members to seize every opportunity the Lord provides to evangelize lost souls. Our service to WELS is:

1. To develop and promote evangelism resources that faithfully proclaim the truth of Scripture.
2. To promote evangelism attitudes, structures, and programs consistent with Christian doctrine and the situation into which God has called a church, its called workers, and its people.
3. To promote the "equipping of the saints" for both organized congregational evangelism and individual Christian witness.

Our current situation

School of Outreach

A main objective of the WELS Commission on Evangelism is to assist every WELS congregation with specific and ongoing guidance for evangelism planning, organization, and implementation of outreach strategies. The School of Outreach continues to be an important aspect of our work to help accomplish this objective.

In 2014 a milestone was reached. The 200th School of Outreach was conducted. Originally, the School of Outreach was held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Then congregations began hosting the program, and nearby congregations would also attend. This "satellite" School of Outreach made it possible for more congregations to participate. The first satellite School of Outreach was held in September 1993. Over the course of time, the materials have been revised numerous times to address the outreach needs congregations face in a changing environment. The latest revision was completed in 2015.

From July 2014 through June 2016, 116 congregations participated in the School of Outreach program conducted in 34 locations in the U.S. and Canada. Leaders from those congregations attended two one-day workshops that were scheduled several months apart. At those workshops they heard presentations on key components of a congregational evangelism program. Additionally, there were breakout sessions at which the presenters worked with individual congregations to advise them regarding outreach plans and strategies. In the months following each of the workshops, those advisors were available to offer follow-up assistance specific to the needs of congregations.

WhatAboutJesus.com

This outreach website produced by the Commission on Evangelism continues to reach many people with God's Word. For example, from January through September 2015 there were more than 215,000 visitors to the site. New articles are posted on a regular basis. The site was redesigned, and the new look was launched in March 2016. The texts and podcasts of Daily Devotions appear every day on the WhatAboutJesus.com and wels.net websites. The WELS Mobile App is another option for accessing the devotions on mobile devices. They are also sent to about 10,000 e-mail subscribers. Predominantly, e-mail subscribers are based in the United States and Canada. However, people all over the world access the devotions.

Online evangelism courses

The WELS Commission on Evangelism is offering evangelism courses through the Martin Luther College online continuing education program. These evangelism courses are designed and intended for laypeople and called workers to help them lead their congregations with planning and implementing efforts to reach more people with the gospel. These courses make up the Evangelism Certificate Program at Martin Luther College. There are three one-credit courses: 1) The Mission of the Church, 2) Practical Evangelism for Congregations, and 3) Friendship Evangelism. Information is available at wels.net/evangelism.

Evangelism Day at Martin Luther College

The Commission on Evangelism partners with the faculty of Martin Luther College to enhance the evangelism training of students at the college. In January 2016 the eleventh annual evangelism day was conducted. The day for focusing on personal and congregational evangelism starts with a worship service and includes two workshops for each class and various "elective" presentations. About 50 individuals including pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and lay members made presentations in 2016.

Outreach movie

My Son, My Savior was released in October 2015. It is about the coming, life, and ministry of Jesus told from the perspective of his mother, Mary. The movie portrays Mary experiencing and pondering the miracle of Jesus' coming and humbly growing in her understanding that her son is also her Savior. The main message for all viewers is that Jesus is their Savior, too. Two Bible studies, a personal reflection guide, and an Advent by candlelight program were produced based on the movie. More than 75,000 DVDs have been distributed. The movie is extensively viewed in Latin America on the Academia Cristo website. Additionally, the movie is being promoted to various broadcasters worldwide as a Christmas and an Easter title; the potential audience reaches into the millions.

My Son, My Savior is the third in a series of four outreach movies that are planned as a collaboration between WELS Commissions on Evangelism and Adult Discipleship, Northwestern Publishing House, WELS Multi-Language Publications, and Boettcher+Trinklein Television, Inc. The first two movies, *Road to Emmaus* and *Come Follow Me*, have been distributed worldwide and received critical acclaim from a number of Christian film groups.

To learn more, visit wels.net/mysonmysavior.

Outreach Newsletters

Outreach Newsletters is produced annually by the Commission on Evangelism and is primarily designed to assist congregations with their efforts of nurturing people on their prospect lists. Outreach Newsletters 2016 focuses on the main message of the movie *My Son, My Savior*. The monthly articles treat aspects of the truth that Jesus is the Savior.

Preaching to Millennials

The Commission on Evangelism coordinated the writing of articles for a series on preaching to Millennials. This series of articles is available in the publication of the Commission on Worship: *Preach the Word*, Volume 19.

A look ahead

School of Outreach

The Commission on Evangelism works closely with district evangelism coordinators to carry out the School of

Outreach program. Our intent is to continue conducting the program annually at various locations in each district so that all congregations have an opportunity and are encouraged to attend.

District evangelism coordinators:

<i>Arizona-California</i>	Pastor Steven Hillmer
<i>Dakota-Montana</i>	Pastor Justin Cloute
<i>Michigan</i>	Pastor Joel Thomford
<i>Minnesota</i>	Pastor Stephen Meyer
<i>North Atlantic</i>	Pastor Frederick Guldberg
<i>Nebraska</i>	Pastor Jesse Stern
<i>Northern Wisconsin</i>	Pastor Michael Weigand
<i>Pacific Northwest</i>	Pastor Timothy Schwartz
<i>South Atlantic</i>	Pastor Jonathan Scharf
<i>South Central</i>	Pastor Paul Seager
<i>Southeastern Wisconsin</i>	Pastor David Pagel
<i>Western Wisconsin</i>	Pastor Joseph Fricke

New movie

The writing team and producer of the three movies *Road to Emmaus*; *Come Follow Me*; and *My Son, My Savior* are working on a fourth movie. The plan for the movie is to show the fulfillment of Jesus' command at his ascension to be his witnesses and take the gospel "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). That phrase of Jesus is the working title for the movie. Our goal is to have the movie and supplemental resources available in 2018.

Plans

Over the next two years the Commission on Evangelism is planning to work on the following ministry programs:

- Offer a workshop in every district on the topic of utilizing our schools and early childhood ministries for outreach. The workshop is called *Telling the Next Generation*. This a collaborative effort of the Commissions on Evangelism and Lutheran Schools.
- Develop strategies and resources to help rural congregations accomplish more outreach.
- Work with area Lutheran high schools to enhance outreach training of students and increase mission opportunities.
- Develop/provide resources to help our members answer questions and objections about the Christian faith.

Rev. Michael Hintz, reporter

Rev. Donn Dobberstein, chairman

Rev. Joseph Fricke

Rev. Michael Geiger

Rev. John Huebner

Rev. Douglas Tomhave

Advisory:

Rev. Michael Hintz, director of WELS Commission on Evangelism

Prof. Daniel Leyrer, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Commission on Congregational Counseling

Our calling

The Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC) assists WELS congregations to assess and evaluate ministry, review biblical teachings and principles that impact ministry, develop plans to adjust and expand ministry in appropriate ways, and carry out their plans over a period of time. The CCC serves under the direction of the Conference of Presidents, providing a means for district presidents to offer encouragement and support to their congregations.

Our current situation

These past two years were the first of WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling's existence with a director. Having a director allowed the CCC to develop and implement the following programs to assist congregations with planning, leadership development, and ministry expansion.

The School of Strategic Planning

The School of Strategic Planning is similar to the School of Outreach (operated by the Commission on Evangelism) and School of Worship Enrichment (operated by the Commission on Worship). This school brings together clergy and lay leaders from multiple congregations for a weekend to review the four parts of strategic planning as it applies to churches. The sessions include multiple breakout periods where the congregations huddle individually to discuss how to better plan in their context and even practice some good planning habits. Online tools are provided to the participants to help them in their next round of annual planning, whenever that might begin. The School of Strategic Planning has been extremely well received by both pastors and lay leaders. The CCC would like to offer at least one School of Strategic Planning in each district annually.

Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program

This program helps churches to self-assess 10 different areas of ministry: worship, evangelism, fellowship, elder work, adult education, youth, stewardship, member volunteerism, leadership, and facility. A CCC counselor helps the church do thorough SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats) analysis of ministry as well as community assessment. The Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program then helps those churches plan how to make adjustments to those areas of ministry as needed, either to deal with weaknesses or capitalize on opportunities. Thus, the Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program's goal is to help churches increase their means of grace efforts. The prayer is that the Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program ultimately sets up a cycle of planning, planning assessment, and planning adjustment that allows churches to better address ministry challenges year after year. The CCC has 36 pastors trained to assist congregations through the Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program. Demand remains high, with more than 100 congregations expressing a desire to enroll in the Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program.

Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation Program

This program helps congregations evaluate how human resources are aligned and utilized. The Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation Program looks at how much and what types of human resources are called for in a congregation's ministry plan. It also examines what the congregation currently possesses in the way of human resources in the called workers, hired staff, lay leadership, and congregational volunteerism. It then addresses the "gaps" where the ministry plan calls for human resources the congregation does not currently possess. It then helps the congregation determine the best way to fill those gaps: through increased volunteerism, staff training, ongoing education, adding staff, realigning responsibilities to fit gifts/interests, reducing/adjusting ministry, etc.

Statistical report demographics request

Starting with the 2015 annual statistical report, the CCC asked WELS congregations to provide some demographic information, listing how many members they had in various age brackets. This was done to help the CCC with a number of studies, especially relating to aging congregations and the Millennial generation.

A look ahead

In the coming year, the CCC is looking at some issues that affect our synod as a whole.

Aging congregation study

This study will take that demographic information from the statistical report and look at the "60/50 challenge"—congregations that have an average age of 60 or older and an average worship attendance of 50 or less per Sunday. The CCC believes at least 100 congregations will fall into that category and that the total might be as high as 150. Over the next two decades, in many cases these congregations will merge with others. In others cases, they may simply cease to exist. This obviously has synodical implications: number of called workers needed, Congregation Mission Offering potential, etc. The CCC will have a preliminary report for the district conventions in June 2016 and a final report, including recommendations for congregations that are facing this challenge, ready for the 2017 synod convention.

Merging congregations plan

The CCC has received approximately a half-dozen requests for help from "clusters" of congregations that are considering some sort of merger. In some cases, it is driven by need—the congregations are shrinking and will soon not be able to afford their own pastor. In other cases, the congregations simply believe it would impact ministry positively if that

ministry were conducted jointly. The CCC is looking at the practical issues that would revolve around such merges. By the 2017 synod convention it will have produced a formal program to aid congregations in wrestling with these issues as they move forward with a merger. This program, combined with the aging congregation study, would allow a district presidium to look at clusters of congregations that may be at risk and help them plan for the impending challenges.

Millennial study

The demographic portion of the statistical report is also being used as part of a study of the Millennial generation. The CCC wants to quantify how WELS is doing in retaining this generation, which is typically leaving religion behind. The CCC constituted a task force to look at best practices among congregations where it seems the Lord is blessing efforts to reach this demographic. A preliminary report will be available this summer to the districts, with a final report made available to the 2017 synod convention.

Online repository

The 2015 synod in convention asked the CCC to oversee the production of an online repository that could house a variety of resources—Bible classes, worship folders, outreach materials, etc.—produced by WELS pastors. That repository, called Shepherd Resources, is in development and will be launched by the 2017 synod convention.

Director call made permanent

The 2015 synod in convention also passed the resolution to make the CCC director position a permanent call. The Conference of Presidents called the interim director, Pastor Jonathan Hein, to serve in this capacity.

For more information, contact Pastor Jonathan Hein at 843-873-5522 or pastorhein@gmail.com.

Rev. Jonathan Hein, reporter

Rev. David Scharf, chairman

Rev. Norm Burger

Rev. Adam Mueller

Rev. Doug Tomhave

Advisory:

Rev. Jonathan Hein, director of WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president

Commission on Special Ministries

Our calling

The Commission on Special Ministries assists congregations, called workers, and WELS lay members to offer spiritual and other services to people whose needs are not adequately met by the regular ministries of WELS parishes, schools, and agencies.

WELS Special Ministries reaches out to individuals, congregations, and families to offer specialized services and resources to address the special need(s) with which they are confronted. We serve people who are physically, mentally, or emotionally in need of special consideration as regards their ability to learn, worship, and participate in local ministries and everyday living situations. We also serve thousands of people who are away from their church home, e.g. military personnel and/or people living overseas, in prison, or in some other institution.

To carry out its mission effectively and efficiently, the commission has appointed committees to focus on eight areas of special need. These committees include

- Prison Ministry Committee
- Military Services Committee
- Care Committee for Called Workers
- Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry

- Committee on Mental Health Needs
- Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Mission for the Visually Impaired
- Health and Wellness Committee

While the commission gladly serves WELS members, our Lord continues to provide opportunities for us to also proclaim the gospel to people who are unchurched or have fallen away from their former church.

Our current situation

Through its leaders and committees and in partnership with several WELS parasynodical agencies, Special Ministries committees mobilize thousands of volunteers in a worldwide effort to meet the spiritual needs of people who might otherwise be ignored or forgotten. All units of Special Ministries are almost entirely dependent on grants and the freewill offerings of individuals, congregations, and groups. In the recent budgets, \$30,000 has been designated to partially support the civilian chaplain program of Military Services. Other than that funding, only the Special Ministries administrative office is funded through the synod budget.

As part of the Congregation and Ministry Support Group (CMSG), Special Ministries probably provides more ministry resources to congregations and individuals than most areas of WELS ministry. The Special Ministries Resource Center at csm.welsrc.net has become a vital link in providing resources quickly and economically. With the launch of this resource center in 2015, Special Ministries has invested a lot of effort in making it useful and valuable for the sake of people with special needs and the WELS ministries that serve them. It continues to be a challenge to make our called workers and laity aware of the wealth of Special Ministries resources available.

A key to several Special Ministries is referral. Military Services, Prison Ministry, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry, and ministry to the Visually Impaired depend upon referrals and requests for help. This year the WELS referral form was streamlined to make it easier to refer people for Special Ministries. If you or someone you know can benefit from specialized ministry resources, please use the form at wels.net/referral.

A report on the work of the eight Commission on Special Ministries committees follows.

Prison Ministry

WELS Prison Ministry administers an extensive ministry-by-mail program and provides training opportunities for laypeople and pastors who would like to begin a local jail or prison ministry. Our prison ministry program is administered through an office in New Ulm, Minn. In 2015, the Lord provided the program with the second full-time administrator in its history, Mr. Brad Price. He is assisted by staff and a large number of volunteers working in New Ulm and across the nation.

Through the ministry-by-mail program, Prison Ministry has touched the lives of thousands of inmates throughout the United States. In addition to some face-to-face ministry in jails and prisons, it uses Bibles, Bible study correspondence booklets, devotional materials, pen pal letters, cards, bookmarks, and other religious materials to plant the seed of God's holy Word in the hearts of those incarcerated.

Partnering with Institutional Ministries, WELS Prison Ministry has organized a Jail Ministry Training Team, chaired by Pastor Rick Tuttle, to identify and train laypeople to serve as jail/prison ministry teams in their congregations. The Jail Ministry Training Team has trained hundreds of lay volunteers and called workers from congregations in 10 of the 12 WELS districts.

Prison Ministry continues to produce additional Bible study correspondence courses. We currently offer 21 level 1 booklets and 15 level 2 booklets. Presently we have 15 level 1 booklets printed in Spanish.

Level 2 booklets are sent to inmates after they have completed all of the level 1 booklets. As the name suggests, level 2 booklets are written at a higher reading level and provide more in-depth content. This year Prison Ministry released two new publications: a Level 1 Bible correspondence course on the story of David, called "Overcoming the Guilt of Sin" and three Level 2 courses, including Psalm 23 told in narrative style with a story to apply each verse, entitled "The Lord Cares for Me;" a companion study for the WELS outreach movie, "Come Follow Me" (which can be used without the movie); and a narrative-style Bible study course on baptism, called "Rescued from the Belly of the Beast." We share all of our materials with WELS Multi-Language Publications, a division of WELS World Missions.

Booklets on the following topics are nearing completion:

- the life of Job,
- Christian parenting, and
- peer pressure.

Prison Ministry continues to provide printed materials for mentoring released inmates. *Facing Freedom* is a book to help inmates prepare for release and *Water of Life*, a series of 30, 30-minute Bible studies, is intended for mentors to use with ex-offenders. *Friends in Christ—a Manual for Mentoring Ex-offenders* is also available. We have produced “Congregational Guidelines for Dealing with Sexual Offenders” to help congregations form procedures to keep children, youth, and vulnerable adults safe from sexual abuse; to respond to a person who has been convicted or accused of sexual offenses; and to educate congregation members about child sexual abuse and prevention.

The Milwaukee County Correctional Facility—South processes some 24,000 inmates each year. Two WELS chaplains, Pastor Mark Wenzel and Staff Minister Martin Rosewicz, and a few lay volunteers offer 20-plus hours of Bible classes, worship services, and one-on-one counseling each week. Lead Chaplain Wenzel schedules all religious programs at the institution. These WELS chaplains, together with local WELS volunteers, touch the lives of hundreds of inmates each week with the gospel. We have also begun to expand the scope of our ministry by involving local WELS congregations in mentoring released inmates. For more details on this effort or the entire ministry, contact us at specialministries@wels.net.

Funding for WELS Prison Ministry is provided solely through grants and gifts from organizations and individuals. The Marvin Schwan Foundation and the Antioch II Foundation have provided substantial reliable support for this ministry. Much of the prison and jail ministry work in Wisconsin is funded by the association of WELS churches that support Institutional Ministries.

Materials are available for free for jail and prison ministry (for other uses, most of our materials are for sale at a low price through Northwestern Publishing House). Contact Mr. Brad Price, administrator of WELS Prison Ministry, at prisonministry@wels.net, 507-354-3130, or P.O. Box 452, New Ulm MN 56073.

Health and Wellness

The WELS Health and Wellness Committee encourages and assists WELS members and their congregations as they offer programs and materials for the spiritual, physical, and mental care to people of all ages, primarily when they are homebound or in a care facility. The programs are designed to offer such help as requested within their parishes and communities. The committee promotes and supervises ministry in the following areas: ministry to the aging, nursing and parish nursing, hospitals, long-term health care facilities, and independent and assisted living ministries.

The Health and Wellness Committee offers presentations and publishes materials to encourage and assist Christians to minister to others, especially those in medical institutions or homebound. It also provides counsel and instruction to pastors, congregations, and individuals as they nurture, guide, and assist others with special needs. For example, we provide guidance for congregations who seek help starting a support group. Samaritan Partners, a support group for caregivers in the Milwaukee area, provides a good example of Health and Wellness ministry. A partner in our senior care work has been the Michigan District’s Martin Luther Eldercare Ministries (mlecm.org), which has developed nursing home outreach programs using pastors and laity and produced an online Martin Luther College course, Geriatric and Care Facility Ministry.

The WELS Chaplain Certification program, which is a cooperative effort with Prison Ministry and Military Services, is part of the Health and Wellness Committee’s mission to assist Christians to minister to others. This program offers continuing education in specialized areas of ministry. Many healthcare facilities, jails and prisons, and military installations are tightening their requirements for ministry in their facilities, especially if the pastor or layperson wants to reach out to more than one’s own members. The program is open to all who wish chaplain certification, including pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and laity. For more information, consult Martin Luther College’s website’s section on “Graduate Studies and Continuing Education” under the category of “Synod Certifications” or contact Pastor Robert Dick, Chaplain Certification chairman, chaplaincert@wels.net.

As this program has prepared called workers and laity for chaplain work in communities and institutions using online courses at Martin Luther College, the number of chaplains active in WELS has grown. The Association of WELS Chaplains, which formerly consisted only of called chaplains serving WELS organizations, held a reorganizational meeting to give all WELS members who serve as chaplains an opportunity to grow professionally and spiritually.

The WELS Nurses Association unites WELS nurses committed to serving their Lord and others through their profession. The association “aims to educate and support nurses, encouraging them to serve others with Christ-centered care.” The WELS Nurses Association includes WELS parish nurses and continues to provide a practical way for congregations to demonstrate loving Christian care and a clear gospel witness to members and the community. For more information or to get involved, visit welsnurses.net.

Military Services

The WELS Military Services Committee provides spiritual services to WELS members and others who serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. The committee carries out its mission through devotions that are e-mailed and posted online, a full-time civilian chaplain in Europe, and a national civilian chaplain and liaison to the U.S. military. The committee also participates in the WELS Chaplain Certification program.

Chaplain Joshua Martin has served hundreds of military personnel and civilians in Europe. Having accepted a call stateside, the Conference of Presidents is calling his replacement. Our European civilian chaplain is housed at Spiesheim, Germany (near Mainz and Frankfurt), and ministers to military personnel and civilians scattered throughout Europe (wels.net/military-services).

As WELS’ national civilian chaplain and liaison to the military, Chaplain Paul Ziemer maintains a database of contact information for WELS members serving in the U.S. military. He prepares and distributes weekly devotions via e-mail and the WELS website. Ziemer coordinates training conferences for WELS military contact pastors, orients and mentors new military contact pastors, and when possible supervises periodic chaplain trips to the Middle East or other areas of hostility. Ziemer has personally traveled to the Middle East to minister to American troops, but in recent years the military has declined to provide the necessary clearances for a WELS chaplain to serve in areas of hostility.

One hundred twenty-five WELS pastors who live near military bases in the continental U.S. and select nations overseas stand ready to serve our military personnel and their families as part-time WELS civilian chaplains, also known as “Military Contact Pastors.”

The Commission on Special Ministries continues to send free copies of *Meditations* to military personnel and expatriate WELS civilians on our mailing list. We discontinued the mailing of a monthly printed service, as demand for that service declined due to the wealth of WELS worship services now posted online.

Veterans, members of both WELS and the ELS, have expressed a desire to strengthen our military ministry and to that end have formed a new organization called Lutheran Military Support Group (lutheranmilitary.org). Besides strengthening the financial support of WELS Military Services, the Lutheran Military Support Group has focused locally on the well-being of families of active duty military personnel and on mutual encouragement and help for veterans.

WELS Military Services receives a subsidy of \$30,000 from the WELS budget and is otherwise funded entirely through designated gifts and grants. Offerings from individuals and groups such as the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors and the Lutheran Military Support Group continue to flow into the Civilian Chaplaincy Special Fund.

Send the name and address of those serving in the military or living in Europe to the Commission on Special Ministries at N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188. Our online referral service is readily available at wels.net/military-services.

For more information, contact Pastor Paul Horn, Military Services Committee chairman, revhorn2004@gmail.com, 270-304-1682.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry

The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry addresses the spiritual needs of people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families (wels.net/iddm). The ministry focuses on these areas:

- Promoting and marketing special education resources for Sunday school, Bible class, and other Christian instruction.
- Support, encouragement, and networking for families of children who have intellectual or developmental disabilities.
- Promoting full participation in congregational life for members who have special education needs or have developmental disabilities.
- Coordinating services between our ministry and others who serve the same area of need, such as Jesus Cares Ministries and Lutheran Schools.

Resources:

- *Dear Christian Friend* is a special education curriculum that helps parents and churches teach people with developmental disabilities the basic truths of the Bible. Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry partners with Jesus Cares Ministries to produce this and other helpful resources.
- He Cares, We Care Program—Special Ministries sends out encouraging cards and greetings to 500 people with developmental disabilities.
- *Joy in Jesus* is an adult special education Bible study based on the book of Philippians.
- We produced a series of helpful webinars for special needs families that can be seen at wels.net.
- Families can access help through the Special Needs Family Network, a parent/caregiver support system, and discover other programs offered for their families that are posted on the WELS Web site.

For more information, contact Teacher Thomas Heuer, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry chairman, at tgheuer@outlook.com, 920-253-9530, or the Special Needs Family Network at specialneeds@wels.net.

Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing seeks to help congregations share the gospel of Jesus Christ with members of WELS and others who are deaf or hard of hearing. The mission

- offers training and resources for ministry to deaf and hard of hearing people.
- provides information on using hearing loops, video remote interpreting, assistive listening systems, and other technology to congregations as they seek to improve their ministry to hearing impaired people.
- maintains directories of WELS congregations that provide hearing loops, assistive listening devices, or sign language interpreted services.
- provides captioning for *WELS Connection*.
- produced and offered an online American Sign Language course for Martin Luther College.

For more information, contact Mr. Dean Weigand, chairman of Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, mdhh@wels.net, 262-547-3096.

Mission for the Visually Impaired

Our mission is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who are visually impaired and others who may be unable to read due to physical or learning disabilities.

We produce devotional and other materials in Braille, large print, and on cassette tape. We distribute *Meditations* and *Forward in Christ* and other WELS materials and services in these formats free of charge to visually impaired people throughout the world. We plan to make digital subscriptions available free of charge to the visually impaired as well. As a generation of visually impaired people who use the Internet and digital technology grows, our ministry is evolving. We urge WELS churches to be aware of the need to have their websites in the format able to be read by the technology used by the blind when they navigate the Internet.

Christian Worship: Supplement is available in Braille. It translates into three volumes of Braille print, front and back, with 40 pages per volume. *Christian Worship* in Braille takes up six volumes.

To order materials or to learn more about this ministry, contact WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired, 651-291-1536, or 375 Bridgepoint Way, South St. Paul MN 55075-2466.

For more information, contact Mr. Bill Bremel, Mission for the Visually Impaired chairman, at welsvimp@wels.net.

Care Committee for Called Workers

The Care Committee for Called Workers exists to assist WELS calling bodies in the spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional care of their called workers, supporting called workers and their families, encouraging them in their ministries, and enhancing their quality of life.

This year the committee has focused on encouraging congregations and called workers to work together on saving for retirement. After research, the Care Committee for Called Workers concluded that in addition to Social Security and the synod pension plan, saving for retirement with the Shepherd Plan provides significant benefits for most called workers. At present, the committee is developing a plan to communicate with congregations and called workers about the importance of retirement savings.

The Care Committee for Called Workers offers a free resource, *Care to Care* (available as a DVD and a handbook from Special Ministries or also downloadable from the Special Ministries Resource Center at csm.welsrc.net/cccw). *Care to*

Care provides a general overview of the purpose of the local care committee and portrayals of the three types of visits (entrance, annual, and transition) for which the local Care Committee is responsible. The 2013 WELS convention urged distribution of these materials to every church by circuit pastors. *Care to Care* comes with newly revised (2016) study materials that provide more detailed information about Care Committee work, including how to start a Care Committee, suggestions for the types of questions to ask during the visits mentioned above, and suggestions for activities that the committee can carry out.

For more information, contact Mr. Kurt Holzhueter, committee chairman, at kpholz@juno.com or 616-916-4313.

Committee on Mental Health Needs

The Committee on Mental Health Needs assists WELS congregations, institutions, called workers, and lay members as they minister to one another in love, especially to those who are experiencing mental health needs.

The committee has developed several brochures for tract racks and for distribution to members. These brochures will be helpful for members of WELS as they seek to find a therapist, interview a therapist, and understand therapist language. The downloadable forms of the newly updated brochures are located on the Special Ministries Resource Center at csm.welsrc.net in the Mental Health Needs area. Printed copies of the brochures are available through the Special Ministries office.

The committee is currently divided into several sub-committees.

The WELS/ELS Christian Therapist Network has constructed a website that contains a listing of therapists in fellowship with WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) throughout the nation. The link is “WELS ELS Christian Therapist Network.” As names of therapists continue to be added to this website, WELS members and called workers should have a listing of WELS or ELS people doing therapy work in the United States and Canada for consultation and referral purposes. Therapists in fellowship with WELS or the ELS who want to be included in this listing are encouraged to apply for membership in the network through the website.

A second committee is **Conquerors through Christ**. Their website, conquerorsthroughchrist.net, has begun to help men and women who are struggling with pornography issues. This group provides Christ-centered encouragement and guidance to those who are battling the temptation to use pornography. All of the work of this committee will be done in a way that respects the individual’s need for confidentiality as well as the sanctity of the divine call.

The newest committee is **Freedom for the Captives**, whose mission is the prevention of child abuse and healing of survivors of abuse. The freedomforcaptives.com website serves as a resource for churches developing policies to prevent abuse as well as a spiritual resource for survivors and those who minister to them.

Representatives of Conquerors through Christ and of Freedom for the Captives have been making presentations at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to equip future called workers to deal in a faithful Christian way when sins or struggles in these areas surface in churches and schools. The Mental Health Needs Committee is available for presentations on addiction ministry as well and has presented to many pastoral conferences. The committee works closely with WLCFS—Christian Family Solutions and is preparing training materials for other WELS members trained as counselors who desire to do Christian counseling.

For more information, contact Prof. John Schuetze, Mental Health Needs chairman, at schuetzj@wls.wels.net or 262-242-8165.

A look ahead

During the next year of the biennium, the Commission on Special Ministries and its committees will:

- Promote and continue to expand the WELS Chaplain Certification Program.
- Provide a training conference for military contact pastors in the United States and establish an online orientation and training course for pastors who become military contact pastors.
- Establish a comprehensive homeland and worldwide military crisis management plan.
- Equip and certify ten WELS/ELS people in uniform to serve as lay worship leaders during deployments.
- Train two civilian chaplains to complement the national civilian chaplain’s work.
- Provide jail/prison ministry training in at least seven new locations in the United States where opportunities are available to do face-to-face ministry in sharing the gospel with the incarcerated.
- Increase the scope of jail/prison ministry in the Minnesota District through the collaboration of Institutional Ministries (WLIM) and the Lutheran Institutional Ministry Association (LIMA).

- Give presentations on WELS Prison Ministry in three districts to include awareness of the opportunities for ministry, volunteer activities, available training for ministry, resources, and the need for financial support.
- Work with Multi-Language Publications to produce four more English prison ministry Bible study courses that Multi-Language Publications can use for other outreach work, and print two new Spanish translations of our current prison ministry Bible courses.
- Identify and track via a database families who have children with intellectual or developmental disabilities and others who could benefit from the Special Needs Family Network and family support groups.
- Promote full participation in churches for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.
- Recruit WELS members with intellectual or developmental disabilities who can be spokespersons/ambassadors for promoting participation in churches for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.
- Coordinate services to those with special needs among agencies such as Jesus Cares Ministries, Lutheran schools, and WELS Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry.
- Promote ministry to the deaf and hard of hearing by holding two informational networking meetings in key areas of the country.
- Encourage and help congregations to install hearing loop and assistive listening systems in churches and schools. A hearing loop system enables people using hearing aids and cochlear implants to hear a speaker without using hard-wired devices.
- Publish guidelines to assist called workers as they prepare for and enter retirement (Care Committee for Called Workers).
- Produce and promote a Conquerors through Christ Parent Plan to equip parents to foster in their children a healthy, biblical sexuality and reject, resist, and recover through Christ when they encounter sexual temptation and pornography.
- Produce and promote Conquerors through Christ resources to help repair relationships that have been wrecked by pornography.
- Train dozens of presenters across the nation to share the message/values of Conquerors through Christ in churches and schools.
- Expand the use of the WELS website and the Special Ministries resources on the WELS Resource Center for making valuable and usable resources available for ministry and people who need them.
- Develop software for parish nurses to use as they practice within the congregation.
- Partner with Kingdom Workers' Lutheran Health Alliance to provide training to facilitate Wellness Circles within our WELS congregations via parish nurses.
- Expand our work with Northwestern Publishing House to provide new digital resources for people who are blind or visually impaired.

For more information on any or all of the areas of Special Ministries, visit wels.net/special-ministries or csm.welsrc.net, or contact Pastor Jim Behringer, director of the commission, at 414-256-3240 or jim.behringer@wels.net.

Rev. Jim Behringer, reporter

Rev. Joel Gaertner, chairman

Rev. Paul Horn, vice chairman and chairman of the Military Services Committee

Mr. LeRoy Robbert, secretary

Mr. Leon Brands, chairman of the Prison Ministry Committee

Mr. Bill Bremel, chairman of the Mission for the Visually Impaired

Mr. Thomas Heuer, chairman of the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Committee

Mr. Kurt Holzhuetter, chairman of the Care Committee for Called Workers

Prof. John Schuetze, chairman of the Committee on Mental Health Needs

Rev. Jonathan Semro, chairman of the Health and Wellness Committee

Mr. Dean Weigand, chairman of the Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Advisory:

Rev. Jim Behringer, director of WELS Commission on Special Ministries

Mr. Brad Price, administrator of WELS Prison Ministry

Commission on Adult Discipleship

Our calling

God calls his people to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Our WELS Commission on Adult Discipleship (CAD) assists congregations and called workers in helping individuals grow in their relationship with Jesus and become better equipped to use their unique gifts to bring Christ’s love and the gospel message into all their daily relationships and activities.

Our current situation

The Commission on Adult Discipleship is grateful for the faithful service of commission members who have dedicated countless hours of service to the Lord and his people. We especially thank Pastor Randy Hunter and Prof. Tom Kock. Kock resigned from the commission when he accepted a call to serve as a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Hunter served as the chairman of the Commission on Adult Discipleship for many years and also has been a dedicated, faithful leader in the area of marriage ministry. Not only has he been responsible for developing the gospel-centered materials for marriage enrichment weekends, but he has also been instrumental in promoting and leading them. We are appreciative of his willingness to continue to partner with the commission in this area, and we are confident that the Lord will continue to bless marriages in our midst through his ongoing commitment to strengthening marriages with the gospel.

We are excited about the possibility of calling a director to oversee the Commissions on Adult Discipleship and Youth and Family Ministry. Both of these commissions overlap in many ways regarding family.

Interactive Faith Bible studies

The Commission on Adult Discipleship offers two online, live Bible studies per year. In the past two years online classes have been taught by Pastors Mike Quandt, David Scharf, Keith Wessel, and Gary Pufahl. These studies are archived if you or your congregation would like to use them as studies for your setting. Visit wels.net/interactive-faith.

Marriage enrichment

Adult Discipleship has been providing rich blessings to husbands and wives throughout WELS and beyond by means of its marriage enrichment weekends. These weekends are much more than just a couples’ retreat; they are gospel-rich marriage-strengthening experiences. Marriage enrichment weekends are currently being promoted and hosted throughout the synod. Pastor Randy Hunter often leads them. As a means of encouraging local pastors to participate in these weekend events with their wives, Pastor Hunter shares the resources and materials with each participating pastor. Each pastor is then free to use the materials as he sees fit in the congregation he serves. In this way marriage enrichment is able to extend its reach beyond just those who attend the marriage enrichment weekends.

Women’s Ministry Committee

The Women’s Ministry Committee is excited about its upcoming conference entitled “Mentors.” This conference is being held July 21–23, 2016, at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Christian women mentor when they lovingly share their faith and life through relationships, building up fellow believers and showing Christ to unbelievers. Sharing one’s faith has become challenging in a culture that is increasingly hostile to biblical Christianity. This conference will feature

- biblical presentations on Christian mentoring,
- practical application to everyday mentoring/ministry situations,
- focused discussions on relevant issues facing mentors today,
- proven methods for formal and informal mentoring,
- networking with women to share ideas and resources,
- sharing and brainstorming sessions for ministry teams,
- useful information on opportunities for service, and
- personal coaching on ministry efforts.

The Women’s Ministry Committee also offers a number of Bible studies, devotions, Advent by candlelight services, and other material of interest to women’s ministries. Visit wels.net/women for more information.

Partnership with Northwestern Publishing House

Northwestern Publishing House offers many resources to congregations and called workers to help individuals grow in their relationship with Jesus. Some of these resources include:

- *Timely Topics, Timeless Truths* by Pastor Jonathan Bauer: This eight-lesson study includes topics such as Intelligent Design, gender identity, and close communion.
- *Idols We Never Knew We Had* by Pastor James Hein: It's not always obvious, but idolatry can live on in success, love, sports, and other places.
- *God's People Discussion Guides* by Pastor Randy Hunter: These studies are written for small group Bible studies as a companion to NPH's popular God's People series. Participants learn about key characters like David, Ruth, and Peter, and engage in meaningful discussions to apply the truths to their own lives.
- *Teach the Word*: This free monthly e-newsletter is a collaboration of NPH, WELS, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary writers. It offers resources, tips, and encouragements for teaching adults. To sign up, use the link bit.ly/teachthewordsignup.

A look ahead

It is our prayer that during this year our synod will call a director of nurture (discipleship) to oversee the ministries of Adult Discipleship and Youth and Family. This director will work in a partnership under the WELS Congregation and Ministry Support Group (CMSG). He will coordinate training events and facilitate resources to assist congregations and called workers to help individuals grow in their relationship with Jesus. Some areas in which we are looking to expand include small group ministries, resources to help Christians witness for Jesus, and enrichments for marriage.

For more information on the calling of someone to lead the Commissions on Adult Discipleship and Youth and Family Ministry, see p. 60 of the Synodical Council report.

Interactive Faith Bible studies

As we prepare for the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we are planning a fall topic in connection to the significance of God's grace given to the world through the Lutheran Reformation.

We are facilitating the transition from Prof. Tom Kock as the main recruiter for Bible study leaders to a current member of the Commission on Adult Discipleship.

We are seeking to gather information from those who have presented Interactive Faith Bible studies in the past to better determine what is working well in the current format and what may be improved and to give practical tips for those who will present in the future. We will also work with WELS Technology to identify any "bugs" or improvements to the streaming format that we use.

Marriage enrichment

While the blessings and benefits of marriage enrichment weekends are clear, there are questions the Commission on Adult Discipleship must wrestle with moving forward. With limited resources and manpower, should marriage ministry be a priority for the Commission on Adult Discipleship? If so, will a limited budget allow the Commission to continue offering marriage enrichment as extensively in future years as it is currently? Can or should marriage ministry be something that is fostered and encouraged to a greater degree at the district level? Budget constraints compel us to continue addressing these questions and exploring other feasible options in terms of format and affordability.

Rev. Gary Pufahl, reporter

Rev. Gary Pufahl, chairman

Rev. Aaron Boehm

Rev. Jonathan Bergemann

Rev. David Wenzel

Rev. John Vieths

Advisory:

Prof. Stephen Geiger, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Rev. Daniel Schroeder, Northwestern Publishing House

Prof. Ross Stelljes, Martin Luther College

Commission on Youth and Family Ministry

Our calling

The Apostle Paul focuses on the importance of building up God's people with the Word from a young age when he writes, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14-15). The mission of the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry is to help and encourage parents, pastors, and youth workers to carry out ministry to the youth and families in their congregations. The commission provides materials and support to enhance the spiritual development of children from birth through college.

Our current situation

The 2015 synod in convention resolved that calling a full-time director for the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry be listed on the Synodical Council's Unfunded Priority List. Noting the variety of unfunded priorities and a family ministry basis for service to youth, families, and many adults, the Conference of Presidents has recommended to the Synodical Council that a full-time director be shared between the Commissions on Youth and Family Ministry and Adult Discipleship and that the calling for this position take place as soon as funding becomes available.

The Commission on Youth and Family Ministry is currently giving support to a new venture, the WELS Schools of Youth and Ministry. This project, based on the success and model of ongoing Schools of Outreach and Schools of Worship Enrichment, is designed to aid congregations who are either struggling with family ministry or wanting to expand or improve their efforts. Based on data gathered by the Commission on Congregational Counseling, this is likely a high majority of WELS congregations. Workshops include a look at current youth ministry trends; experiential faith opportunities; mixers, games, and activity planning; ministering to seventh grade and beyond; youth-driven Bible studies; the importance of Christian mentoring; marriage growing ministries; and birth- to sixth-grade focuses.

After substantial planning and beta testing, the Schools of Youth and Family will be introduced at the summer 2016 WELS International Youth Rally in Fort Collins, Colo. The rally, held at Colorado State University from June 28–July 1, will offer worship opportunities, several breakout sessions, recreation, and fun for the almost 2,000 WELS young people and youth leaders gathered from around the globe.

In January 2016, the commission launched a weekly devotional series titled "TRANSFORMED: Devotions Connecting Teens to Christ." This series of devotions has been well received and is being used by teens and congregations throughout the synod. To subscribe or to read past devotions, visit wels.net/transformed.

A look ahead

It is an exciting time as the Commissions on Youth and Family Ministry and Adult Discipleship work together with synodical leadership to plan for and call a full-time shared director in the near future. (See p. 60 for more details on the status of that position.) While work continues to be carried out prior to this position becoming a reality, we look forward to having a person in place to coordinate and oversee the work going on in this important area of our synod's ongoing and future ministry. As the commission looks ahead to the continued successes of our WELS International Youth Rally, the growth of our WELS Schools of Youth and Family, the production of *Kid's Connection*, and more, we realize that there will be challenges and hurdles to overcome. We also pray that a full-time director will bring stability and expansion in our mission to young people, adults, and families—a blessing, indeed, as the mission of the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry is also in essence the mission of the church. We are confident that Jesus will bless the families of our synod as we take to heart and carry out the theme "Christ's Love, Our Calling."

Rev. John Boggs, reporter

Rev. John Boggs, chairman
Staff Minister Tom Banaszak
Rev. Benjamin Berger
Prof. Thomas Kock

Advisory:

Rev. Raymond Schumacher, Northwestern Publishing House
Prof. David Sellnow, Martin Luther College

Commission on Lutheran Schools

Our calling

God's command to us as Christians is clear: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Luke 18:16). The mission statement of the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) is also clear: "to guide and assist congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening Lutheran schools." It is with these two statements in mind that the CLS works to serve our synod's early childhood ministries (403); Lutheran elementary schools (313); area Lutheran high schools (25); and preparatory schools (2). The CLS helps our congregations and schools welcome more than 41,000 children and young adults into the Savior's waiting arms through our schools' outreaching and nurturing ministries.

Our current situation

The CLS has provided resources, training, and personal assistance in a wide variety of ways:

- Consulting with principals, directors, teachers, schools, and congregations
- Developing about 600 call lists per year on behalf of the 12 district presidents
- Managing school personnel and statistical data
- Attending teachers' conferences and conducting school visits throughout the synod
- Publishing a weekly electronic news bulletin—the "CLS e-News"
- Coordinating a synodwide Lutheran elementary school testing program to assess our students' progress and provide tools for modifying instruction to improve learning
- Representing WELS schools to the general public through interaction with the National Council on Private School Accreditation, the Council for American Private Education, the United States Department of Non-Public Education, and various other state and national education agencies and organizations
- Developing and maintaining partnerships with the district schools coordinators, early childhood district coordinators, Northwestern Publishing House, Martin Luther College, and many others to provide resources to strengthen the instruction, materials, and curriculum within our schools (a list of resource partners is on the CLS website)

Lutheran school enrollment trends

School type	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
ECM	9,354	9,567	9,823	9,600	10,019	10,717	10,423	10,694	10,595	10,911
LES	26,035	25,712	25,289	24,597	24,300	24,644	24,254	24,245	24,424	24,410
LHS	5,912	5,847	5,816	5,510	5,577	5,303	5,123	5,141	5,093	5,174
PHS	624	554	529	558	558	583	668	682	675	643

Overall student enrollment has had minimal variation over the past few years after more than a decade of steady decline. Early childhood enrollment has remained steady. Lutheran elementary schools have experienced growth in some suburban and urban areas but have struggled in many small towns and rural communities. Rising operational costs and demographic changes are two of many societal changes that have challenged congregations seeking to support Lutheran schools.

Congregations seeking to call a teacher from the field this past year have frequently requested candidates with organ skills. The large number of congregations seeking organists has helped reveal the fact that the number of teachers

who are organists and able to consider a relocation call is dwindling. Teachers able to speak or teach Spanish and those with the ability to serve in early childhood and urban areas are also areas of need.

A look ahead

Early childhood ministries

Early childhood ministries are privileged to share the gospel with approximately 11,000 young children and their families through WELS congregations. This year a new series of devotions for early childhood educators is available online. A task force is being assembled to respond to the resolution brought to the 2015 synod convention by the Ad Hoc Commission 2 of the Synodical Council. The resolution encourages congregations to review the mission and purpose of their early childhood ministry and provide adequate support for the early childhood ministry to carry out that work. The goal of this task force is to identify ways to encourage and support congregations in this regard. The CLS is also working to provide consultation resources for congregations looking to start, expand, or revitalize an early childhood ministry in addition to the newly revised *Building Blocks: A Handbook for Beginning and Operating a Christian Early Childhood Ministry*. Early childhood district coordinators continue to develop and share resources, consultation, and support for congregations and early childhood ministries in each of the districts.

National conferences

The CLS has established a pattern of offering a national conference every three years. In June 2015, nearly 400 educators attended the National Leadership Conference in Pewaukee, Wis. Plans are well underway for the Reformation 500 Teachers Conference in Milwaukee, Wis., on Oct. 30 and 31, 2017. All WELS teachers should save the date and consider attending the conference. More information will be distributed in the months to come.

Voluntary Supplemental Contribution Program

The Voluntary Supplemental Contribution Program was initiated in 2007 when WELS budgetary support for the CLS was no longer sufficient to completely cover its basic costs. Today the program continues to fund more than 20 percent of basic operating costs for the Commission on Lutheran Schools. The CLS has recently increased spending without additional WELS budgetary support to respond to the need to assist in training new principals and early childhood directors and also training consultants to assist struggling schools or congregations seeking to expand a children's ministry. The revitalized efforts are occurring at a time when funds from grants are considerably lower than in the recent past. Every school is strongly encouraged to participate in the supplemental contribution program as those funds are necessary to allow the CLS to continue training and addressing vital areas of need.

WELS School Accreditation

Currently 118 schools are accredited through WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA), and this number continues to grow. During the 2015–16 school year, 22 schools plan to host a site visit. Of those 22 schools, 10 are seeking first-time accreditation, and 12 are renewals. Plans are already underway to secure site teams for more than 30 schools during the 2016–17 school year. With the addition of the 3K/4K addendum standards, several schools are working through the process of having their preschool accredited along with their elementary school. WELSSA continues to utilize electronic standard tracking tools, which have allowed for a number of reaccreditation visits to be completed over a two-day period. Currently there are more than 100 site team captains, team members, and consultants available to assist schools seeking to make use of this ministry tool for school evaluation and self-improvement. WELSSA currently has accredited schools in 14 states across the nation, involving nearly 16,000 students. Teacher Tom Plitzuweit serves as WELSSA's fourth executive director.

WELS school testing

A task force is seeking to select a new synodwide student summative testing platform that will be needed for the 2017–18 school year. Recent test results indicate that the class of 2016 scored significantly higher than the national average in the areas of reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies in the fall 2015 testing. A longitudinal study of five years of testing indicates that the longer students attend WELS schools, the better they do in outperforming the nation in the basic skills areas of reading, language, and mathematics. While the CLS seeks a summative national test, it has reached a cooperative purchasing agreement with a formative testing platform.

A critical need

Double-digit vacancies for both principals and early childhood directors has the CLS supporting the following three programs to provide training for new leaders.

Leadership Candidate Training Program

Eight male and seven female candidates will soon complete the one-year Leadership Candidate Training Program.

The eight males are current teachers who will receive training and practical experience to help prepare them to one day serve as principals in our schools. The seven females are current teachers who will use the training experience to prepare them to one day serve as early childhood directors.

Principal Training Program

This pilot program pairs a Martin Luther College graduate with an on-site principal at a WELS school who mentors the graduate for two years as a teacher while also providing leadership instruction. The graduate assumes greater leadership during the third year and is mentored by the on-site principal as a principal-in-training. Following the third year, the graduate returns to the Assignment Committee to be assigned as a principal, and his mentor principal mentors him during the first year at the new assignment. Currently three men are in the program, and a number of schools have applied to host a candidate beginning in 2016. The CLS identifies schools and on-site mentor principals, while MLC identifies candidates and provides mentor training for the host principals.

Principal Apprentice and Director Apprentice Mentoring

Eleven principal apprentices and five director apprentices are currently receiving two years of apprentice mentoring thanks to an Antioch II grant and a \$1,000 fee paid by the congregation of the apprentice in each of the first two years. Apprentice mentoring will continue in 2016–17 without grant funding but rather through a greater utilization of voluntary supplemental contributions.

Telling the next generation: Utilizing our schools for outreach

The Commissions on Evangelism and Lutheran Schools are jointly offering a new one-day School of Outreach seminar focused on effective outreach practices for our schools. The six-hour program is designed for pastors, principals, early childhood directors, and other church and school leaders to gather for interactive presentations on maintaining a Christ-centered mission, the critical role of relationships, and a planned and effective harvest strategy. Each ministry team is also provided with an advisor to consult with in the months following the seminar. The goal is to offer the seminar in all the districts during the 2016–17 school year.

Redesigned team ministry program

Several schools are piloting formative teacher growth models based on the WELS Teaching Standards. The Ministry Development Plan is a main component of the formative growth model. Continuous teacher growth and improved student learning are key goals of the redesign.

Tools and protocols for a redesigned summative assessment model for reporting to WELS are also currently being developed by the CLS. The goal is to launch the redesigned program in 2018.

School counseling services

The CLS is in the midst of training consultants to assist congregations who are seeking to start or expand a children's ministry; experiencing struggles in their current school or early childhood center; or desiring support as a complement to a Commission on Congregational Counseling visit. The goal is to have trained consultants in each district or region to provide timely, effective, and affordable support.

The Lord continues to provide a multitude of nurture and outreach opportunities through our schools. We ask his blessing on our collective efforts.

Teacher Jim Rademan, reporter

Teacher James Sievert, chairman

Rev. Matt Brown, secretary

Rev. Jonathan Brohn

Mr. Ronald Conradt

Teacher Shawn Herkstroeter

Teacher Mark Otte

Mr. Jim Sexton

Advisory:

Teacher Jim Rademan, director

Teacher Tom Plitzuweit, associate director

Teacher Cindi Holman, national coordinator of early childhood ministries

Prof. Robert Klindworth, Martin Luther College

Prof. Joel Otto, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Reformation 500 Committee

Our calling

President Mark Schroeder appointed the Reformation 500 Committee in 2009 in order to guide the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

Our current situation

As we began planning we set two goals: 1) no funds were to be used that would take money away from the ongoing ministry of the synod; projects would have to be funded in other ways, and 2) the celebration of the Reformation was to be an opportunity to educate WELS and others on the important truths the Reformation brought to light.

Logo

We first developed a logo that would serve as our visual identity for the celebration. It is available for individual congregation, conference, and district events and publications. If you need a copy, you may request digital versions of the logo by contacting the committee chairman, Pastor John Braun, at braunj@nph.wels.net, or by visiting wels.net/reformation500.

Events

We also encouraged districts to begin planning for their conventions by choosing Reformation themes. In addition, districts, conferences, and other groups have begun planning for Reformation gatherings in 2017. Our goal was to encourage those gatherings rather than plan them. Several of these gatherings are already being planned.

One of those gatherings intends for all called workers of WELS to gather in downtown Milwaukee for study conferences on Mon., Oct. 30, and Tues., Oct. 31, 2017. All laypeople will be invited to the closing worship for that gathering on Tuesday. It will be open to the public and will include choirs from the preparatory schools and area Lutheran high schools, an orchestra, and many other special touches befitting the once-in-a-lifetime nature of celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Books and resources

The committee took steps to prepare published materials so they would be ready at the appropriate time. These books are already available through NPH:

- *The Life and Faith of Martin Luther* (A. Fehlaue);
- *Martin Luther and the Long Reformation* (Kiecker);
- *Martin Luther, Reformer in the Making* (E. Scharf);
- *In Defense of the Lutheran Faith Against the Doctors of the Roman Church* (H. Masius, translated with notes by J. W. Montgomery);
- *Martin Luther: Reformer* (A. Schuetze);
- *Martin Luther and the Jewish People* (N. Tjernagel);
- Reformation bulletin inserts for 2015, 2016, 2017;
- *Martin Luther: A Musical Drama for Children* (G. Bartel); and
- *From Heaven Above* (Christmas kit for 2016).

Additional new titles will be available in the next 18 months. They include

- *Luther's Protest* (J. Braun);
- a translation of some of Luther's Christmas sermons;
- *Studies in the Smalcald Articles* (J. Meyer; reworked by J. Brenner);
- *Reformation 500: The Enduring Relevance of the Lutheran Reformation* (Essays);
- *Repent: Turn to Jesus* (Lenten kit for 2017);
- *Luther's A Simple Way to Pray with the Small Catechism*;
- *Reformation: Grace, Faith, Scripture* (Bible study);
- *The Word Endures: Lessons from Luther* (Bible study: P. Koelpin);
- *The Word Endures: Lessons from the Princes* (Bible study: J. Korthals);

- a revision of the exposition to *Luther's Catechism*;
- music selections commissioned for the WELS worship conference in 2017; and
- Christmas kit 2017.

NPH will also publish a new translation of the New Testament and Psalms, the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV). NPH will fund the publication of all of these projects. In addition, some resources not included in this list will be available for congregations for use in celebrating the Reformation in 2017.

Video productions

Thrivent has provided funds for the production of a new two-hour video on Martin Luther for PBS produced by Boettcher+Trinklein, Inc. God willing, we will also produce a shorter version of the video focused on our WELS audience for private use and use by congregations and schools.

In addition, a series of short vignettes on important Reformation themes (four- to six-minutes) will be produced for use by congregations, schools, and others. This series can be used by pastors for short discussions of the Reformation in their organizational meetings, as information during or after worship services, on congregational websites, or as short introductions in Bible classes. Pastors and teachers may find other uses for the short vignettes.

Outreach

We have a third goal: to use the celebration of the Reformation as an opportunity to share the gospel with the communities that surround our congregations. The above projects focus on helping congregations renew their appreciation for the blessings we have as Lutheran Christians. They will certainly also be available for everyone who is curious about the Reformation. But we also believe that the focus of our celebration should include reaching out to those who do not share an appreciation for the gospel we treasure. We encourage local congregations to use the anniversary as an opportunity to share Christ with their own communities. Together with the Board for Home Missions and the Commission on Evangelism we are developing resources for each congregation to reach out with special services and information geared to those on their prospect lists. We believe that the message of the gospel God has given us through the Reformation is to be shared. In the year of the anniversary we challenge every congregation to stretch their vision for this celebration to include their neighbors and communities. We will encourage that vision and provide resources to assist.

Thrivent has also provided funds for congregations to plan some kind of humanitarian outreach to their communities. Additional information and encouragement will be provided to all congregations of the synod shortly.

Webpage

We are working to create a webpage that will be a source for all things Reformation 500. We will highlight the books and materials when they become available. Resources for use by congregations will be available on the site to download. Information about rallies and other gatherings in the districts of the synod will be posted for easy reference. We will make trailers for the various video productions available. The webpage, wels.net/reformation500, should be available by the district conventions this year and is a joint project of Communication Services and NPH.

A look ahead

We have a special opportunity to remember God's blessings to us. We look forward to the few months of planning that we have remaining and then to the production of the material we plan.

Rev. John Braun, reporter

Rev. John Braun, chairman

Rev. Curtis Jahn, Northwestern Publishing House

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, Congregation and Ministry Support Group

Prof. Arnold Koelpin, Martin Luther College

Prof. Paul Koelpin, Martin Luther College

Prof. James Korthals, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Ministry Support

The Ministry Support area of the ministry financial plan includes the Synodical Council and all entities overseen by the Synodical Council. These include:

Synodical Council

- Expenses for regular and special meetings of the Synodical Council
- Expenses for the Accounting Oversight Committee
- Insurance and banking expenses

President's Office

- Compensation for the synod president
- Stipends to the congregations of the first and second vice presidents
- Office staff serving the president and the Synodical Council
- Travel expenses for the synod presidium
- Special support for displaced called workers
- Colloquy expenses

Facilities

All expenses related to the maintenance and operation of the Center for Mission and Ministry, including insurance costs

Synod Archives

WELS Historical Institute (see p. 151)

Publication Coordinating Commission

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Expenditures related to humanitarian aid and relief programs; funding for the programs of Christian Aid and Relief is provided by gifts from individuals and congregations and other organizations

Technology Services

Financial Services

Human Resources

Synodical Council

The Synodical Council (SC) is responsible for the implementation of all decisions and resolutions made by the synod in convention and for overseeing all activities of the synod in pursuit of its mission (other than those that are the specific responsibility of the Conference of Presidents). In keeping with the synod's constitution and bylaws, the SC has the authority to act on behalf of the synod between conventions when proper and necessary. The 2015 convention compliance listing is included in this report (p. 68) and provides an updated summary of the progress made to date in implementing convention resolutions.

As it carries out the broad oversight described above, the SC is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and overseeing all programs of ministry carried out by the synod. Part of that oversight is the management of all financial activities of the synod, assuring fiscal soundness, preparing and updating support forecasts, and monitoring expenditures in order to maintain a balanced financial plan. In the years when the synod meets in convention, the SC is responsible for working with all areas of ministry to develop and propose a balanced biennial ministry financial plan (budget) that supports the work of the synod in keeping with its long-range ministry plan.

Standing committees

The SC is organized into three standing committees. The Finance Committee is responsible for establishing the support forecast and for recommending the overall level of spending for budgetary planning. The Finance Committee also monitors the financial performance and works closely with the synod's chief financial officer to oversee the risk management, banking, and general financial situation of the synod. The Administration Committee is responsible for developing and implementing general policies and procedures; providing oversight of the synod's subsidiary organizations; overseeing WELS Human Resource, Technology, Communication Services, and the Ministry of Christian Giving; and providing recommendations for called worker compensation (with the input of the Compensation Review Committee). The Ministry Committee oversees and coordinates the plans and activities of all areas of ministry and works to monitor and evaluate how the various areas of ministry are carrying out their tasks in keeping with the synod's long-range ministry plan.

Since 2011, the Finance Committee establishes the recommended spending levels based on the support forecast, while the Ministry Committee then determines what portion of the available resources are allocated to each area of ministry. This arrangement has proven to be very beneficial as the areas of ministry work together cooperatively rather than competitively to allocate the levels of financial support.

The Compensation Review Committee is a standing subcommittee that reports to the Administration Committee. The Compensation Review Committee reviews and recommends adjustments to the synod's compensation guidelines for called workers. In 2015, as a result of a recommendation by the Ad Hoc Commission 2, the Compensation Review Committee began a comprehensive examination of the synod's compensation guidelines. The goal was to simplify the guidelines if possible, to address the question of whether the guidelines can or should do more to provide increased compensation for increased responsibilities, and to analyze whether the current way that years of experience are compensated is functioning as it should. After its study is completed, the committee will bring its conclusions and any recommendations to the Synodical Council as it develops the ministry financial plan for the next biennium. Any changes in the compensation guidelines would need the approval of the 2017 convention. See p. 74 for initial recommendations from the Compensation Review Committee.

2015 convention compliance

The SC has the responsibility to monitor compliance to the resolutions passed by the synod convention. A progress report on convention compliance can be found on p. 68.

Long-range planning

The 2011 synod convention adopted a long-range plan entitled "In Christ Alone" (see p. 63). The plan was to serve as a guideline and roadmap for ministry and financial planning through the year 2017. Progress toward the general goals outlined in the plan has been blessed. The number of new congregations served by Home Missions increased significantly; World Missions has responded quickly to new opportunities in new fields around the world; the ministerial education schools have continued to provide well-trained workers in sufficient numbers while also seeing their overall financial situations improve or stabilize. In keeping with the plan, the synod administration has continued the process of downsizing through increased efficiency and improved processes. Efforts to strengthen congregations through the various commissions of the Congregation and Ministry Support Group have increased and have been adjusted to meet the needs of congregations and schools.

While progress has been made, the ambitious ministry goals, along with necessary financial support, do not appear to be fully achievable by 2017. In spite of that, however, the Lord has blessed our planning and has enabled ministry to expand in many areas.

The SC has begun work on the next long-range plan that will outline goals and direction for the years beyond 2017. The final plan will be presented to the 2017 synod convention. Reflecting the fact that 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, the plan is entitled "Our Great Heritage." An initial draft of the plan can be found on p. 70.

Relocation of the synod's archives

After many years of delay, work has begun on the relocation of the synod's archives from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry. A committee has been appointed to oversee all aspects of the project, including the preparation of the space on the lower level of the Center for Mission and Ministry. The committee has also hired a full-time archivist, in keeping with the direction set by the 2015 synod convention. The project is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2016, with the actual relocation of archives material taking place upon completion. The funding for the project is being provided by the synod's building fund and a \$200,000 contribution from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

In addition to space for archives, a visitor center display area will be open to visitors to the Center for Mission and Ministry.

Congregation Mission Offerings

Congregation Mission Offerings for 2015 were \$21.5 million, an increase of 1.1 percent (approximately \$200,000) over the prior year and an all-time record high. Actual offerings were 2.9 percent higher than what congregations had indicated in their subscriptions. This marks the fourth year in a row that actual offerings were more than congregational subscriptions. We thank God for these blessings.

Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) subscriptions for 2016 show a decrease of 1.8 percent from 2015 actual receipts. No reductions in ministry are necessary, however, because of the higher than anticipated offerings in 2015.

In general, finances for the synod's mission and ministry remain somewhat tight. A 3.5 percent increase in expenditures is necessary simply to maintain the current operations of the synod. But CMO has been relatively flat for eight years. In that same time period, grants from the Schwan Foundation have decreased from \$8 million to \$2 million annually. In spite of that, revenue from unanticipated sources as well as concerted efforts by the Synodical Council to increase efficiency with fewer workers have enabled the synod not only to maintain its ministries but even to expand them. God continues to bless our synod with generous people and with undeserved financial resources. For complete financial information, please refer to the Finance and budget report on p. 102.

Preparing the proposed ministry financial plan (budget) for 2017–19

The Synodical Council has the responsibility to submit a proposed ministry financial plan (budget) to the 2017 synod convention. The synod constitution requires the plan to be balanced, providing funding for ministry plans and programs based on the anticipated available financial support.

At its April 2016 meeting, the SC approved the support forecast. Based on the best available information, the support forecast indicates that the areas of ministry will need to plan for no increase in financial support from the synod's operating budget. Support from Congregation Mission Offerings is conservatively projected to increase by 0.5 percent in each year of the biennium, with support from other sources projected to be flat. With the assumption of no increase in support from the synod's operating budget, areas of ministry will either need to identify other funding sources or reduce spending. If actual CMO receipts exceed projections or if other support is greater than projected, the SC has the ability to make adjustments to synod support amounts throughout the plan development process.

"One in Christ" debt retirement

The "One in Christ" debt retirement effort continues to be blessed. As of May 3, the gifts toward debt retirement reached nearly \$2 million. Some congregations are still in the process of gathering the offering, and the Ministry of Christian Giving, along with the Conference of Presidents, will continue to communicate the importance of the offering until it comes to a close at the end of June 2016. It is assumed that some congregations and individuals will continue to bring offerings for the effort even after the end of June. At its April meeting, the SC determined that if the offering itself does not completely retire the debt, regular payments would continue to be made from the synod's budget, with the entire debt expected to be eliminated by the 2017 synod convention. Individuals and congregations that have not yet participated are encouraged to do so in the coming weeks and months. Additional envelopes are available from Northwestern Publishing House, and other additional resources can be provided by the Ministry of Christian Giving.

Modifications to the ministry financial plan

The ministry financial plan adopted by the synod in convention sets the spending limits for all synodical entities. Entities that desire to exceed that level of spending may request that the SC modify the approved spending level, provided that the entity can demonstrate that it has the funds available and that no additional synodical operating funds will be used.

The SC also adopted a policy stating that synodical entities that desire to use more-than-planned reserves in amounts greater than \$50,000 or .5 percent of expenditures must receive prior approval from the SC.

The SC has approved the following modifications.

Luther Preparatory School

In conjunction with the celebration of its 150th anniversary, Luther Preparatory School (LPS) made plans to renovate its chapel and to increase the financial aid available to its students. The project was to be funded through a special offering carried out by Luther Preparatory School in cooperation with the Ministry of Christian Giving. After the adoption of the Ministry Financial Plan, LPS determined that it would be wise to refurbish the chapel organ in conjunction with the chapel renovation. The cost of the entire chapel and organ project was estimated to be \$100,000 above the approved amount. The source of the funds is a special offering being gathered by LPS from its supporters.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC) is in the third year of an eight-year auditorium renovation project. It has determined that it makes good sense to complete the refurbishment of the seating now rather than to delay. MLC has also determined, with input from the Minnesota Department of Health, that upgrades and refurbishment are needed in its food serving lines. Finally, the MLC Governing Board approved the addition of one professor as the second in a four-step plan to bring teaching loads into line with recommendations from the Higher Learning Commission. The total amount of the requested adjustment was \$325,000 in FY 2015–16 and \$100,000 in FY 2016–17. The source of funding is a donation from MLC's food service provider and from MLC's special funds.

Boards for Home Missions and Ministerial Education

The Joint Mission Council, whose budget is a part of the budget of Home Missions, along with the Board for Ministerial Education, is creating the new position of international recruitment director. The position, to be called by the new International Operations Group and based at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, is being established because of the need to coordinate and manage the increasing requests for theological instruction and training from around the world. Joint Mission Council special funds will be used to support the project, with \$37,500 allocated in FY 2016–17 and \$150,000 allocated in FY 2017–18. The source of the funding is from the Joint Mission Council's endowment fund.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has offered to utilize \$100,000 in both FY 2016–17 and FY 2017–18 to facilitate the relocation of the synod archives from the seminary to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry. The source of the funding is from WLS special funds.

World Missions

Due to a store sale by the Zietlow Family Real Estate Holdings, LLC (ZFREH), lower than planned Special Funds support provided by ZFREH will be available for World Missions. To make up the difference, synod support for World Missions will increase by \$48,000 in FY 2016–17 and by \$105,000 in FY 2017–18.

Synod archives

At its April 2016 meeting, the SC authorized \$300,000 to be transferred from undesignated unrestricted reserves to the synod's Building Fund. The SC also authorized a modification to the ministry financial plan to enable these funds to be spent to prepare space for the synod archives and visitor center at the Center for Mission and Ministry.

WELS Foundation and WELS Investment Funds (WIF)

In the spring of 2015 the SC directed the WELS Foundation and WELS Investment Funds (WIF) to investigate whether significant savings could be achieved either by a combination or consolidation of the two organizations or by having only one person serve as the administrator for the two organizations. In addition, the SC asked the WELS Investment Funds Board to explore all investing options to determine if a less expensive alternative would be available without having a negative impact on investment returns.

Initial studies reported to the SC in the fall of 2015 indicated that, unless amended, the WELS bylaws state that WELS Investment Funds (WIF) and WELS Foundation need to continue as separate corporate entities. The study revealed that substantial cost reductions could be realized without affecting the overall performance of the investments and without negatively impacting the organizations that invest through WIF. These cost reductions are estimated to be in excess of \$700,000. The majority of these cost reductions can be achieved through a change in the investment policy of WIF. Having one individual serve as the administrator of both WIF and the Foundation also results in some cost savings.

The SC approved the proposed change to the investment policy at its February 2016 meeting. The WIF Board and Foundation had earlier agreed to have the executive director of WELS Foundation also serve as the executive director of WIF, eliminating the need for one administrative position. Additional cost savings could result from other changes being considered, although these changes would require an amendment to the WELS bylaws. The SC encouraged the WELS Investment Funds Board to continue to investigate these options.

Hymnal Project funding

Northwestern Publishing House agreed to produce a new hymnal using funds that it had on hand. Those funds are adequate to produce both the hymnal and other accompanying resources that a hymnal requires. The Hymnal Project Committee and the publishing house have since identified other worship tools (primarily digital) that would be highly desirable and that would result in a more widespread use of the new hymnal. The SC allocated \$400,000 of undesignated funds to the Commission on Worship to be set aside for use for these projects if funding is needed.

Director for Commission on Youth and Family Ministry and Commission on Adult Discipleship

The 2015 synod convention approved a resolution that placed the calling of a director for Youth and Family Ministry high on the Unfunded Priority List. Since that time, both the Ministry Committee of the Synodical Council and the Conference of Presidents have expressed strong support for calling a director who would serve both the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry as well as the Commission on Adult Discipleship. Because of the many areas in which these two commissions have common tasks, there has been some discussion about combining the two commissions into a single entity.

At its April meeting, the Synodical Council discussed a proposal to approve this position immediately, using dollars from the commissions' special funds and from the Financial Stabilization Fund to provide support for the position for the rest of the current biennium. Given the current uncertainties in the financial situation, the Synodical Council decided not to approve the position immediately but rather to reconsider the proposal in November. Regardless of what decision is made in November, the new position will be given high priority in the planning process as the ministry financial plan for the next biennium is developed.

WELS Building Fund

The SC is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the synod's infrastructure (land, buildings and grounds, fixed equipment, etc.). Included in this responsibility is the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, which houses the synod's administrative offices. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that funding is in place for maintenance and improvement of the infrastructure at the Center for Mission and Ministry. The fund is targeted to have a balance of not less than \$150,000 or 2.5 percent of the current replacement value of the Center for Mission and Ministry. As of June 30, 2015, the balance in the fund was \$230,600 or 3.8 percent based on a replacement cost of \$6 million.

Capital Projects Committee

The Capital Project Committee (CPC) has developed a timeline through March 2017 to identify and prioritize all capital projects for the synodical schools and the Center for Mission and Ministry so that proper planning can be carried out. This is to include capital projects of upgrades, maintenance, and new projects. Two members of the committee will be visiting all the facilities to be able to provide a comparison for prioritization of projects. Each ministerial school campus has provided an updated master plan so that the committee can begin work on an overall prioritization of projects and possible funding mechanisms.

Unfunded Priority List

When the synod convention adopts a ministry financial plan, it is also required to adopt a prioritized listing of those programs that are desirable but not able to be funded with the anticipated resources. The SC is responsible for monitoring this list, approving projects when funds become available, and modifying the list in keeping with current needs.

The SC updated the Unfunded Priority List at its November 2015 meeting. The list includes:

- Publication Coordinating Commission (\$100,000)
- Director, Commission on Youth and Family Ministry/Commission on Adult Discipleship, along with program costs (\$200,000)
- Ministry of Christian Giving counselor (\$100,000)
- World Missions Ethiopian/Sudan worker training support (\$50,000)
- Increased student financial assistance at Martin Luther College (\$180,000)

- Special Ministries WELS Military Services Committee (\$50,000)
- Home Missions additional mission starts (\$125,000)
- Special Ministries WELS Prison Ministry Committee (\$50,000)
- Associate director, Commission on Lutheran Schools (\$100,000)

The SC also adopted a policy that lists some of the events that would trigger the possible funding of items on the Unfunded Priority List. Such events would include, but not be limited to 1) a balance in the Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) more than twice the amount provided by the FSF in the most recently completed fiscal year; 2) a combination of increased Congregation Mission Offering results 0.5 percent greater than planned and Congregation Mission Offering subscriptions 0.5 percent greater than planned; 3) a new, unrestricted source of funding, including increased unrestricted giving over a defined period of time, new grants that will continue over a period of time, or a new endowment that would support the unfunded program.

Appointments

To WELS Foundation, Inc., Board of Directors:

Mr. Nathan Birkholz
 Mr. Timothy Boernecke
 Mr. Mark Maurice
 Rev. Paul Prange
 Mr. Kurt Sames

To WELS Investment Funds, Inc., Board of Directors:

Mr. Jon Bruss
 Mr. Charles Cairns
 Mr. Ronald Schmitz
 Mr. Dennis Walters
 Mr. Max Wenck

To WELS VEBA Commission:

Mr. Charles Adrian
 Mr. Robert Bullens
 Teacher Douglas Dast
 Mr. Richard Hudock
 Rev. David Kolander

To WELS Retirement Fund Commission:

Mr. Robert Fischer
 Mr. Scott Heins
 Mr. Thomas Medema

To WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., Board:

Mr. Brad Beal
 Rev. Timothy Gauger
 Mr. Timothy Gensmer
 Mr. David Hiron

To the Accounting Oversight Committee:

Mr. William Schultz
 Mr. Barry Haller

Thanks

Two members of the SC have completed their time of service—Pastor Earle Treptow, who served on the SC as one of the three Conference of Presidents representatives, and Mr. Mark Bannan, who served as the lay representative from the Michigan District. We are thankful to both of these men for their faithful work and pray for God's continued blessings on them and their families.

Rev. Mark Schroeder, reporter

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president and chairman
Mr. Warren Ehlke, Pacific Northwest District
Mr. John Fowler, South Atlantic District
Mr. Kenneth Gosch, Dakota-Montana District
Mr. Gary Graf, North Atlantic District
Mr. Steven Hansen, Arizona-California District
Rev. Philip Hirsch, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Mr. Paul Holzhueter, Minnesota District
Rev. Joel Jenswold, pastor-at-large
Mr. Bradley Johnston, South Central District
Dr. Timothy Kriewall, Michigan District
Mr. James Moeller, teacher-at-large
Rev. Howard Mohlke, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions
Mr. Dale Pohlman, Nebraska District
Rev. David Rutschow, Conference of Presidents
Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, Northern Wisconsin District
Rev. Jonathan Schroeder, pastor-at-large
Mr. Timothy Snyder, Southeastern Wisconsin District
Mr. Art Tessmann, Western Wisconsin District
Rev. Donald Tollefson, Conference of Presidents
Rev. Charles Westra, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions
Rev. Joel Zank, Conference of Presidents

Advisory:

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions
Rev. Bryan Gerlach, coordinator of the Congregation and Ministry Support Group
Mr. Lee Hitter, director of communications
Rev. James Huebner, first vice president
Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of the Ministry of Christian Giving
Mr. Dennis Maurer, director of human resources
Mr. Todd J. Poppe, chief financial officer and treasurer
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions
Mr. Martin Spriggs, chief technology officer
Rev. Joel Voss, second vice president
Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

Appendix 1:

WELS Long-Range Plan 2011–17

“In Christ Alone”

Underlying principles

“Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:4-6).

We affirm that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can create and sustain faith. Thus, spiritual results related to the growth of the Holy Christian Church are completely in the hands of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the means of grace to accomplish the results that only he can work, and he has entrusted the means of grace to human beings as his messengers. It is, therefore, a stewardship issue that we are outlining in this document. We want to be faithful stewards of the resources God has given us by planning our activities (sometimes called “strategies”) in order to move toward the goals (sometimes called “results”) for the visible church known as WELS, which we, under God’s blessing, hope to attain.

At the heart of our planning for the future is our desire to seek the lost as well as nurture the found. We do that as individuals and as congregations working together in a confessional Lutheran church body, that is, we carry out our gospel ministry together while standing squarely on all the truths of Scripture as expressed by the Lutheran Confessions. At all times and in all we do our focus is the cross of Christ Jesus.

In planning for the future, the leaders of our synod not only desire to be good stewards but also recognize that they are responsible to the members, called workers, congregations, commissions, and boards of the synod. We trust them to do their work and ask them to provide reports as they have the opportunity. The leadership groups of our synod, in particular the Synodical Council (SC) and Conference of Presidents (COP), will continue to review the synod’s organizational structure so that it operates in the best and most appropriate way, fostering a spirit of unity, supporting the gospel ministry we carry out together, and making the most of every opportunity the Lord places before us. Therefore, we place all things confidently into the hands of our gracious God and make our plans in this working document in keeping with his revealed will.

“In Christ Alone, This Cornerstone, This Solid Ground”

Foundation for long-range planning—our purpose

For the purpose of communicating to people inside and outside of our church body, the synod in convention has adopted this purpose statement:

As men, women, and children united in faith and worship by the Word of God, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to make disciples throughout the world for time and for eternity, using the gospel in Word and sacrament to win the lost for Christ and to nurture believers for lives of Christian service, all to the glory of God.

The focused purpose of our work as a corporate synod structure is summarized in our constitution:

The object and purpose of the synod shall be to extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church:

- a) By assisting and counseling in every appropriate way the pastors, teachers, and congregations affiliated with the synod;
- b) By establishing and maintaining theological seminaries, colleges, academies, schools, and other institutions of learning;
- c) By establishing and maintaining home and world missions and such charitable institutions as it may deem appropriate to its calling;
- d) By printing, publishing, purchasing, selling, and disseminating literature that maintains Lutheran doctrine and practice;
- e) By furnishing appropriate literature for parish schools, Sunday schools, missions, institutions, and churches.

For the purposes of planning, of marshalling resources as good stewards of God's blessings, and of encouraging unity in spirit, the leaders of our synod have noted the constitutional priorities articulated by recent synod conventions and have summarized the purpose of our work as a synod with this planning guide:

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to give all glory to God by upholding, defending, and proclaiming the truth of the Holy Scriptures as articulated in the Lutheran Confessions, and by providing a means for congregations and their members to extend the reach of their God-given mission of proclaiming the gospel in Word and sacrament through joint mission efforts at home and abroad and through the training of called workers.

"In Christ Alone My Hope Is Found"

Long-range plans—the picture in 2017

Under God's blessing and by grace alone, we hope to see the following ambitious and realistic snapshot of our work in 2017. Details follow in the section entitled "Strategies to reach long-range plans."

Worldwide identity as confessional Lutherans

As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we note the potential realignment of confessional Lutherans in North America and beyond so that by 2017:

- 1.1 - WELS will be more widely known as a confessional Lutheran church body, firmly founded on the Holy Scriptures and joyfully proclaiming the saving love of Jesus Christ in Word and sacrament to as many people as possible around the globe.

World Missions

Recognizing the need for billions of souls to hear the gospel, by 2017, the Board for World Missions (BWM) will:

- 2.1 - have a world mission team (from administration to national churches) that agrees on a scriptural understanding of missiological terms and philosophy.
- 2.2 - have six regional seminaries (5 in 2010),
- 2.3 - ten national theological professors (6 in 2010),
- 2.4 - ten functional Bible institutes (8 in 2010), and
- 2.5 - regular curricula supplemented by distance learning.
- 2.6 - publish at least 1/3 of the necessary Bible institute and seminary course materials in at least 20 languages.
- 2.7 - operate in 30 countries (23 in 2010).
- 2.8 - serve more than 150,000 souls worldwide (107,000 in 2010).

Home Missions

Recognizing that the process of encouraging, enhancing, establishing, developing and enriching missions in North America involves partnerships with congregations, groups, and individuals, by 2017, the Board for Home Missions (BHM) will:

- 3.1 - open 8 new missions a year (4 in 2010).
- 3.2 - support 8 new ministry enhancements a year (10 in 2010).
- 3.3 - subsidize mission efforts in 200 congregations (150 in 2010), with eight missions and five ministry enhancements achieving self-support every year.

Ministerial Education

Mindful of the precious Lutheran heritage of the unconditional gospel that has been passed to our generation with remarkable clarity, by 2017, the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) will:

- 4.1 - graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) approximately 30 pastor candidates annually (42 in 2010), reflecting the actual number of pastor-track students already enrolled in 2010 at MLC. The COP recognizes that the smaller classes result in a workable 10 percent vacancy rate in our parishes (5 percent in 2010). As we open more missions and as congregations grow, there will be a need for more candidates.
- 4.2 - graduate from Martin Luther College (MLC) approximately 55 teacher candidates (50 in 2010) who can serve anywhere annually, allowing every early childhood center, Lutheran elementary school, and area Lutheran high school to be staffed by synodically-certified directors, principals, and teachers. There will be 45 additional graduates annually who can serve only in limited geographic locations (40 in 2010).

- 4.3 - graduate from MLC staff minister candidates and those trained for part-time and volunteer service to meet the needs of congregations.
- 4.4 - in collaboration with the COP and Congregation and Ministry Support Group (CMSG), have in place for all ministerial education schools self-supporting continuing education courses in a wide variety of formats for called workers, with a strong component of equipping the saints for the strengthening of congregations.
- 4.5 - have working relationships between WLS, MLC, Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Luther Preparatory School (LPS), and Home and World Missions to serve the needs of each of our mission fields, home and abroad, and our sister churches in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC).

Congregation and District Ministry

Recognizing the vital importance of congregational health and the impact of called workers growing spiritually, personally, and professionally, by 2017, the COP and the CMSG will collaborate with WLS and MLC to provide counsel, resources, and training for all congregations to:

- 5.1 - strive for an increasing percentage of participation in worship and Bible study.
- 5.2 - improve assimilation, relationships and personal connections, and service opportunities in church and community, with an emphasis on Christian vocation.
- 5.3 - strengthen the overall quality of education, specifically instruction and leadership, in our early childhood centers, Lutheran elementary schools (LES), area Lutheran high schools, and other children's ministries, so that they demonstrate excellence in both nurture and outreach.
- 5.4 - find ways to connect with the people of their communities and make use of outreach opportunities to share Jesus' love with as many people as possible, including those with special needs.
- 5.5 - support formal and informal programs for the spiritual, personal, and professional growth of called workers.
- 5.6 - support the work of the synod with 10-15 percent of offerings for Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) (7 percent in 2010), with 100 percent of congregations participating (92 percent in 2010).
- 5.7 - reflect synodical unity and vitality in all aspects of congregational doctrine and practice.

Publishing

Mindful of one of the main reasons we joined together as a synod, by 2017, Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) will:

- 6.1 - work toward providing dignified and quality materials that identify us as a confessional Lutheran church body that is serious about what we believe and interested in sharing our witness with the world.
- 6.2 - coordinate the publishing plans and needs of the boards and commissions of the synod and NPH to avoid duplication and promote consistency.
- 6.3 - explore and implement all methods of proclaiming our message, including print and digital media, in a cost-effective way.
- 6.4 - develop literature for adults, teens, and elementary children that helps them grow in knowledge and devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the confessional Lutheran truths we treasure.
- 6.5 - develop material that can be translated and shared through Multi-Language Publications' efforts among other cultures in our country and worldwide.

Resources

- 7.1 - It is the stated goal of WELS leadership and the synod in convention to have Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) serve as the primary source of financial support for synodical ministries. In order to carry out the plans and goals listed in this long-range plan, under God's blessing and by his grace alone, by fiscal year 2017 we pray that our synodical ministry plan will be funded by unrestricted gifts of \$39 million per fiscal year with \$27.5 million of that coming from Congregation Mission Offerings (\$29.6 million with CMO of \$20.9 million in fiscal year 2010-11). The increase in CMO amounts to congregations moving from giving 7 percent of their offerings to 10 percent of their offerings.

Except for publicity and communication purposes, publishing efforts will most logically be funded by Northwestern Publishing House through the sale of the material. For projects that cannot recover the cost of development, the Publication Coordinating Commission may seek budgetary funds or special gifts to fund new projects.

Resource allocation

With the direction of recent synod conventions, and flowing from the plans above, in fiscal year 2016–17:

- 8.1 - Missions will utilize 40-50 percent of CMO and Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) resources (40 percent in 2011).
- Ministerial Education will utilize 30-40 percent of CMO and FSF resources (30 percent in 2011).
- Congregation and District Ministry will utilize 10-15 percent of CMO and FSF resources (14 percent in 2011).
- Ministry Support will utilize 10-15 percent of CMO and FSF resources (16 percent, including 5 percent debt retirement, in 2011).

“In Christ Alone, Jesus Commands My Destiny”

Strategies to reach long-range plans

Worldwide identity as confessional Lutherans

In the years leading up to 2017, WELS will:

- 1.1.1 - clearly and consistently express ourselves to the world as confessional Lutherans in doctrine and practice.
- 1.1.2 - maintain communication with the church bodies of the CELC and seek out the fellowship of other confessional Lutheran churches around the world.
- 1.1.3 - make every effort to identify confessional Lutherans in the United States and to rejoice in doctrinal unity when such unity can be determined.

World Missions

In the years leading up to 2017, the BWM will:

- 2.7.1 - enter new fields as God gives the opportunity.
- 2.9.1 - work with Home Missions and Ministerial Education to build awareness of the Church’s mission to the lost and support of World Missions work among called workers and constituency.
- 2.2/4.1 - work with Ministerial Education to develop a worldwide ministerial education system on the model of basic Christian instruction, then Bible institute, then seminary.
- 2.6.1 - publish foundational materials at all levels of theological development in as many targeted languages as possible.
- 2.9.2 - streamline administration and increase joint planning with other administrative units.

Home Missions

In the years leading up to 2017, the BHM will:

- 3.1.1 - prioritize funding with a balance of immediate opportunities and targeted efforts for long-range impact.
- 3.4.1 - streamline the communication, support structure, and resources in the field and in the offices.
- 3.2.1 - provide proactive assistance and strategies to reach the lost with the gospel.
- 3.3.1 - mentor new personnel in mission settings.
- 3.5.1 - partner with World Missions, Ministerial Education, and other leaders to communicate the urgency for outreach and to develop helpful tools and resources.

Ministerial Education

In the years leading up to 2017, the BME will provide coordination, stressing efficiency and fiduciary responsibility, as:

- 4.1.1 - Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) and Martin Luther College (MLC) graduate students who are confessional in stance, evangelical in approach, mission-minded in spirit, culturally sensitive, appropriately flexible, and zealous to nurture and to equip the saints.
- 4.5.1 - Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) and Luther Preparatory School (LPS) graduate students prepared to succeed at Martin Luther College.
- 4.5.2 - MLC continues to recruit students from prep schools, area Lutheran high schools, public schools, home schools, and adults in our fellowship considering another career.
- 4.2.1 - MLC expands its efforts in the training of principals, early childhood directors, and early childhood workers.
- 4.4.1 - the ministerial education schools expand their efforts in continuing education of called workers, education of international students for service in their ethnic groups of origin, and education of those who want to serve part time or as volunteers in the congregation.
- 4.5.3 - it monitors the needs of the synod and encourages the schools to tailor their recruitment efforts to match those needs.

- 4.1.2 - the schools continue aggressively to recruit candidates for pastoral ministry, recognizing that, in every year, at every time, “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few,” so that we graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as many pastoral candidates as possible.
- 4.2.2 - the schools continue aggressively to recruit candidates for teaching ministry, recognizing that, in every year, at every time, “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few,” so that we graduate from Martin Luther College as many teaching candidates as possible.
- 4.5.3 - the schools increase the diversity of their student bodies.

Congregation and District Ministry

Recognizing the emphases in this area changing to “training the trainers,” in the years leading up to 2017, the COP will:

- 5.4.1 - foster the ministries of the CMSG (the Commissions on Congregational Counseling, Worship, Evangelism, Adult Discipleship, Youth and Family Ministry, and Special Ministries) to provide counsel, resources, and training to congregations and all called workers.
- 5.3.1 - foster the ministry of the Commission on Lutheran Schools to provide training, assistance, expertise, and resources for the precious and valuable resources we have in our early childhood ministries, Lutheran elementary schools, area Lutheran high schools, and other children’s ministries, looking for new opportunities and sustainable models of Lutheran education.
- 5.5.1 - work with WLS, MLC, and the CMSG to foster spiritual, personal, and professional growth for all called workers through flexible programs of continuing education and mentoring, to enable the called workers better to equip, empower, and encourage lay members in their vocations and in volunteer service for their congregations.
- 5.1.1/6.1.1 - establish a committee to plan and develop a new hymnal by the 500th anniversary of the first Lutheran hymnal (1524).
- 5.6.1 - work with all congregations to increase CMO using the 10/10 plan.
- 5.7.1 - work with parasynodicals to enlist and coordinate their support roles in funding and ministry.

Publishing

In the years leading up to 2017, NPH will:

- 6.2.1 - plan materials that will help us celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017.
- 6.1.2 - continue to publish materials that will help congregations carry out their ministries through the printed or digital word.
- 6.4.1 - explore new confirmation instructional material.
- 5.1.1/6.1.1 - put plans in motion to publish a new hymnal by the 500th anniversary of the first Lutheran hymnal (1524).

Resources

- 7.1.1 - In order to fund an annual ministry plan with unrestricted gifts of \$39 million in 2017, plans will be put in motion that will rely solely on the grace of God and his promises of undeserved love through Christ Jesus and will be applied to the hearts of God’s people through a carefully organized every-member visit for every member of WELS. The plans will offer specifics on how to do that in every congregation of WELS—tailored for small, middle-sized, and large congregations. The plans will feature materials that will be brief but pointedly directing all to the “why” of joyful and generous financial stewardship—the cross and empty tomb of Jesus—and will include the “how to” of joyful and generous financial stewardship through a percentage of income offered, through special gifts (a possible special offering for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation), and through planned and deferred giving (estate planning).

Leadership

In the years leading up to 2017, the SC and COP will continue to work together to make the most of opportunities the Lord is placing before us. Issues “on the table” include:

- 9.1.1 - reviewing church governance issues (process and function of synod conventions, boards, size of the SC, etc.).
- 9.2.1 - reviewing the size and number of districts, the size of circuits, possible term limits for district officials.
- 9.3.1 - reviewing the size and efficiency of synod technology, communication, and fiscal support offices.
- 9.4.1 - emphasizing continuing education for all called workers.
- 9.5.1 - encouraging collaboration in synodical support and ministerial endeavors.
- 9.6.1 - continuously updating the strategic plan so that the process continues beyond 2017.

Appendix 2: 2015 WELS convention compliance listing

Committee, resolution	Responsible group	Resolution description	Due by/status:
Res 1-01	President	Synod to follow outlined direction and emphases	Ongoing
Res 1-02	President	Expressions of gratitude	Completed
Res 2-04	COP	Convention at Luther Prep	July 2017; planning begun
Res 2-05	COP	Direct review of Holman Christian Standard Bible; share findings with synod	July 2016 if possible; 2017 if necessary
Res 2-06	COP/CLS/MLC	Include all new teachers in New Teacher Induction program	Plans in place
Res 2-07	COP	Oversee completion of the work of CECW Task Force	Ongoing
Res 2-08	COP	Implement mentoring program for new pastors	Plans in place
Res 2-09	COP	Encourage congregations to support professional growth of called workers	Ongoing
Res 3-01	CICR	Continue discussions with Lutheran groups around the world	Ongoing
Res 3-02	President/CICR	Continue informal discussions with the LCMS	Completed; another meeting scheduled for December 2016
Res 3-03	President/CICR	Continue formal doctrinal discussions with CLC	Ongoing; another meeting scheduled for August 2016
Res 4-01, Res 10-02	COP/MCG	Encourage congregations to make use of MCG toolbox for setting CMO subscriptions	Ongoing
Res 4-01, Res 10-03	COP/MCG	Encourage congregations to participate in "One in Christ" debt retirement offering and make materials available	Offering in progress
Res 7-03	HR	Share HR information with congregations	Ongoing
Res 7-01	SC	Designate the Capital Projects Committee as a permanent standing committee of the SC and include representation of all entities, including subsidiaries	Completed; committee in place and functioning
Res 8-01	President/SC/WLS	Secure funding from WLS for archive planning personnel; develop plans for relocating archives and permanent staffing	Funding provided; planning work for relocation taking place; hiring of archivist in progress
Res 9-01	COP/Communications	Encourage congregations to make use of informational materials to promote the work of WELS Christian Aid and Relief	Ongoing
Res 13-01	SC/BME	Explore ways to reduce student debt	Ongoing
Res 14-01	COP	Encourage COP to make CCC director permanent	Completed
Res 16-01	CLS	Encourage schools to use CLS tools for school improvement	Ongoing

Appendix 2: 2015 WELS convention compliance listing (cont.)

Committee, resolution	Responsible group	Resolution description	Due by/status:
Res 16-02	CLS	Continue efforts to develop school leaders	Ongoing
Res 16-03	COP/CLS	Encourage all schools to participate in the supplemental contribution	Ongoing
Res 17-01	SC	Restore \$100,000 to PCC upon retirement of the synod's debt or sooner if possible	June 2016
Res 17-02	NPH	Encourage congregations to review and consider using Christ-Light Sunday school material	Ongoing
Res 20-01	VEBA Comm.	Educate congregations regarding the benefits of the VEBA plan	Ongoing
Res 21-01	SC/CRC	Develop draft of revised compensation plan and share with districts	June 2016; work in progress
Res 21-02	COP	Improve delegate preparation and conduct survey of 2017 delegates to determine how preparation can be improved even more	January 2016; work in progress
Res 21-03	COP	Make procedural adjustments to improve district delegates' knowledge of candidates	June 2016; in progress
Res 21-04	President/COP	Make procedural adjustments to improve synod delegates' knowledge of candidates	July 2017; in progress
Res 21-05	BME	Explore additional merit-based scholarships	June 2016; in progress
Res 21-06	COP/CLS	Encourage congregations to review the purpose and mission of existing and planned ECE programs and to provide adequate support for leadership training	Ongoing
Res 21-07	BWM	Develop and implement strategic plans for entering and departing mission fields	Ongoing
Res 21-08	CEF/BHM	Review policies to safeguard the synod's investment in cases where congregations leave the synod after receiving support from the synod or from the CEF	June 2016
Res 21-09	CCC/CMSG	CCC to work with all entities of the CMSG to create an online repository of ministry resources	Ongoing
Res 22-03	SC	Place director for Youth and Family Ministry on the Unfunded Priority List	Completed

Appendix 3:

Draft of WELS Long-Range Plan 2018–25

“Our Great Heritage”

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory.’ ” (Revelation 14:6-7a).

We exist to proclaim the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ. We affirm that only that gospel can create and sustain faith. Thus, spiritual results related to the growth of the Holy Christian Church in every nation, tribe, language, and people are completely in the hands of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the means of grace to accomplish the results that only he can work, and he has entrusted the means of grace to human beings as his messengers. We fear God, preaching and teaching the law. We give him glory, preaching and teaching the gospel. We do that as individuals and as congregations working together in a confessional Lutheran church body, that is, we carry out our gospel ministry together while standing squarely on all the truths of Scripture as expressed by the Lutheran Confessions. At all times and in all we do our focus is the cross of Christ Jesus.

“To Spread Its Light From Age To Age Shall Be Our Chief Endeavor”

FOUNDATION FOR LONG RANGE PLANNING—OUR PURPOSE

For the purposes of making it clear that we are an outreach organization, for planning and marshalling resources as good stewards of God’s blessings, and for encouraging unity in spirit, the leaders of our synod have noted the constitutional priorities articulated by recent synod conventions and have summarized the purpose of our work as a synod with this planning guide:

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to give all glory to God by upholding, defending, and proclaiming the truth of the Holy Scriptures as articulated in the Lutheran Confessions, and by providing a means for congregations and their members to extend the reach of their God-given mission of proclaiming the gospel in Word and sacrament through joint mission efforts at home and abroad, the training of called workers, and coordination of gospel applications to encourage spiritually healthy called workers in spiritually healthy congregations and schools.

“Through Life It Guides Our Way”

THE PICTURE IN 2025

Under God’s blessing and by grace alone, we hope to see the following ambitious and realistic snapshot of our work in 2025.

Worldwide Identity as Confessional Lutherans

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 and the 175th anniversary of WELS in 2025, we are engaging Christian leaders around the world to join with confessional Lutherans in North America and beyond so that by 2025 the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) will be more widely known as a confessional Lutheran church body firmly founded on the Holy Scriptures and joyfully partnering to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ in Word and sacrament to as many people as possible around the globe.

What you will recognize

- WELS materials will present the gospel with remarkable clarity as an authentic voice of the confessional evangelical Lutheran Church.

What may look new

- Existing Christian church bodies around the world will be training their pastors and other called workers with WELS materials and personnel in order to become confessional Lutherans.

World Missions

Recognizing the need for every soul to hear the gospel, by 2025 the Board for World Missions (BWM) will be working with all of the other areas of the synod to serve more than 1,000,000 souls worldwide (160,000 souls in 2016).

What you will recognize

- A world mission team that agrees on a scriptural Lutheran understanding of missiological terms and philosophy, using planning tools to keep the work focused on the one thing needful.

- Regional seminaries, national theological professors, functional Bible institutes, and regular on-site training from catechetical level on up supplemented by distance learning.
- Catechetical, Bible institute level, and seminary course materials in many languages.
- Expatriate missionaries increasingly in a training function.

What may look new

- The majority of missionaries, pastors, and other congregational leaders from the people groups themselves.
- Mission networks and mission support networks that transcend national boundaries.

Home Missions

Recognizing that establishing new gospel outposts in North America is the primary purpose of Home Missions, by 2025 the Board for Home Missions will continue to seek every opportunity to plant new ministries and to enhance gospel outreach in existing congregations in order to serve more than 300,000 communicant members and more than 400,000 baptized members in the United States (298,899 communicant members and 376,177 baptized members in 2016).

What you will recognize

- The goal of opening at least 10 new missions a year.
- Support for ministry enhancements in existing congregations.
- Coordinated support for all stages of ministry development, including repayment of building loans, with some congregations and programs achieving self-support every year.

What may look new

- Increased multi-site opportunities throughout mission fields.
- Increased flexibility in facility acquisitions (especially in high-cost areas).
- Self-supporting immigrant groups in urban areas with the majority of missionaries, pastors, and other leaders from the people groups themselves.
- Purposefully enhanced relationships with subsidiaries and parasynodicals in supporting mission opportunities.

Joint Mission Council

With the combined resources and coordination of Home and World Missions, working with Ministerial Education programs for training non-traditional workers, by 2025 the Joint Mission Council (JMC) will coordinate the networking of confessional Lutherans from at least a dozen people groups with which WELS members come into contact.

What you will recognize

- Regular meetings of leaders from people groups in our fellowship.

What may look new

- Just-in-time Lutheran training at the appropriate doctrinal level for any individual who wants to serve as a pastor, teacher, or missionary anywhere in the world.
- Organizational structures that facilitate the new ministry.

Ministerial Education

Recognizing God's grace in the precious Lutheran heritage of proclaiming the unconditional gospel that has been passed to our generation, by 2025 the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) will be working with all of the other areas of synod to provide the right number of pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and missionaries so that annual vacancy levels remain under 10 percent (8 percent vacancy rate in 2016).

What you will recognize

- Graduates who are willing to serve anywhere that the church needs them, who believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, and who subscribe without reservation to the Lutheran Confessions.
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), offering theological training that prepares men to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS or of churches within our confessional fellowship, and endeavoring to offer opportunity for theological and professional growth to called workers who already are serving in the ministry of our confessional fellowship.
- Martin Luther College (MLC), training a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of WELS and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. These Christian witnesses include men ready for pastoral training at WLS; men and women

ready for service as teachers and staff ministers in the synod's churches, schools, and other institutions; men and women ready for other church ministries, both full and part time, responding to the needs of WELS; international students preparing for ministry in partnership with WELS mission fields; and men and women in programs of continuing education that meet the ministerial needs of WELS.

- Michigan Lutheran Seminary, preparing high school students for the public ministry of the gospel, encouraging them to enroll at MLC.
- Luther Preparatory School, preparing and encouraging young men and women for the full-time ministry in WELS.

What may look new

- Declining rates of educational debt held by graduates of MLC.
- Comprehensive long-term plans to maintain and improve the physical plants of the ministerial education schools.
- Growing participation with partners in Home and World Missions to serve diverse ethnic populations in global ministry.
- Rapidly growing numbers of teachers in self-supporting Lutheran schools in major U.S. urban areas.

Congregation and District Ministry

Recognizing the vital importance of congregational health, by 2025, under the direction of the Conference of Presidents (COP), the Congregation and Ministry Support Group (CMSG) will serve congregations and their leaders by providing resources, training, and personal assistance so that they might carry out gospel ministry in the most faithful way on the local level.

What you will recognize

- The Commission on Worship, helping parishes in their central activity of worship that glorifies God and strengthens his people.
- The Commission on Evangelism, assisting congregations and members to seize every opportunity the Lord provides to evangelize lost souls.
- The Commission on Special Ministries, offering spiritual and practical guidance and training to congregations and individuals as they share God's love to those with needs or circumstances that prevent them from being served through the congregation's usual ministry.
- The Commission on Lutheran Schools, guiding and assisting congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening Lutheran schools and early childhood ministries.

What may look new

- A new hymnal completely supported by electronic worship planning resources.
- The activities of all of CMSG generated by the needs and priorities identified by the COP through Commission on Congregational Counseling contacts with congregations and considered requests from individuals and parasynodical organizations.
- Expanded activities of the Commission on Adult Discipleship and the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry under one director.

"Lord Grant While Worlds Endure We Keep Its Teachings Pure"

Resources

It is the stated goal of WELS leadership and the synod in convention to have Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) serve as the foundational source of financial support for synodical ministries. In order to carry out the plans and goals listed in this long-range plan, under God's blessing and by his grace alone, the Conference of Presidents (COP) will coordinate the work of circuit pastors and synod communications materials to encourage CMO gifts as well as the work of the Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) to encourage special gifts from individuals and groups for the general work of WELS and for specific gospel projects. The Synodical Council (SC) will coordinate the use of CMO, general gifts placed in previous years in the Financial Stabilization Fund, and specific gifts in each biennial ministry plan.

Resource allocation

The synod president will consult with the President's Advisory Council (PAC) to develop a biennial ministry plan for presentation to the Synodical Council and the synod convention. The ministry plan will reflect continuity in our work of proclaiming the gospel as well as considered decisions for dealing with new circumstances and opportunities as they arise.

Faithful use of resources for mission and ministry

The work of the synod takes place properly with a scriptural worldview of history. When the forces of Satan have conspired and risen up to attack God's church and the gospel itself, God has enabled faithful believers to stand firm. They listen to the Word, repent of their sin, return to the cross, and treasure the sweet news of full forgiveness in Jesus. They form visible churches to hold faithfully to the Word of God without compromise and then to proclaim the saving message of that pure Word to the world, throughout all generations.

Compensation Review Committee

Please note: The Compensation Review Committee is a standing committee of the Synodical Council. The committee has spent considerable time reviewing the synod's compensation guidelines. The following is a report of its progress. It should be noted that ideas presented in this report are not at this time firm recommendations or proposals of the committee or of the Synodical Council. Rather, the report presents the committee's ideas for consideration, and the committee is seeking reaction and input from the districts. Based on input provided from the districts, the committee will make necessary adjustments and will present a final report and recommendations to the Synodical Council. The Synodical Council will then forward the final recommendations to the 2017 synod convention.

Background

The Ad Hoc Commission 2 (AHC2), charged by the 2013 synod convention with the task of assessing synod structure and programs, identified the WELS Compensation Guidelines as a matter needing review. The AHC2 noted a number of weaknesses they felt could be addressed in a revision of the compensation guidelines officially adopted by the synod in convention in 2003. Their report to the 2015 convention noted the following: "Some of the issues that the present guidelines seem to influence strongly are: increases in salary that are largely tenure-based and do not reflect sufficiently the called workers' duties or responsibilities, the lack of calls to older pastors and teachers, the difficulty the synod is having in filling principal vacancies, the lack of any mention of early childhood education directors in the present guidelines, and more."

The AHC2 shared a preliminary report with the Compensation Review Committee (CRC), a standing committee that reports to the Synodical Council (SC), before presenting it to the synod in convention. The CRC agreed with the recommendation of the AHC2 and consented to take the lead in reviewing the current guidelines and proposing revisions should the convention request such a review.

The 2015 synod convention adopted a resolution directing the CRC to "develop a draft proposal of the revised guidelines to be shared with the 2016 district conventions" and to have a "final recommendation of the revised synod compensation guidelines be presented to the 2017 synod in convention" (2015 *Proceedings*, pp. 44,45).

Goals for this revision

The CRC adopted a number of goals to guide its work on the revision of the compensation guidelines. The committee wants to produce compensation guidelines that

1. reflect the Scriptural principle that those who serve in the public ministry are worthy of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17);
2. recommend appropriate compensation so that gospel servants may devote themselves to the work of the ministry, without needing to find outside employment to support themselves and their families (1 Corinthians 9:1-14);
3. encourage equity in compensation, so that two people doing the same work receive the same compensation;
4. recognize the value of experience but place a greater emphasis on responsibilities assigned to the individual worker;
5. will be easy for calling bodies to utilize in putting together a compensation package for their workers; and
6. will be relatively cost-neutral to the work we do together as a synod as they are implemented.

The goals are listed in priority order.

Preliminary findings

The committee began its work with the thought that the current compensation guidelines (see Appendix 4, p. 80) would have to be substantially revised and a significantly different approach to compensation adopted. The more the CRC wrestled with the issues, the more it recognized the excellent work that had been done in putting together the current compensation guidelines. A number of the concerns raised by the AHC2 are actually addressed in the current guidelines; the problem has been that calling bodies haven't consistently applied the guidelines' recommendations. In that regard, the CRC has discussed ways to repackage the current guidelines so that the provisions will be more uniformly applied. The CRC decided to focus on a modification of the current guidelines rather than on a radical reworking of them.

While the WELS Compensation Guidelines are primarily intended for use by those ministries officially under the auspices of WELS, the guidelines have also been used by self-supporting calling bodies across the synod. Recognizing this, the CRC is aiming to add positions common to congregational ministries that are not currently listed in the guidelines.

Recommendations

The CRC has spent much of its time working on its overall philosophy and approach to compensation for called servants of the Word in light of the concerns identified by the AHC2. While the members of the CRC initially hoped to have a more detailed proposal by the time of this writing, at this point they feel it would be wiser to get reaction to the general concepts before attending to all of the details. The recommendations proposed below are only preliminary; they are meant to foster discussion and elicit feedback from the districts that will help the CRC as it moves forward. The CRC offers the following high-level recommendations for consideration and feedback:

1. That we retain a number of the compensation plan components included in the current guidelines and more strongly encourage their use:
 - a. Cost of Living Adjustment [COLA] (to reflect the variance in the cost of living from region to region)
 - b. Social Security Reimbursement [SECA tax] (remunerating up to one-half of the self-employed social security tax for those classified as Ministers of the Gospel by the Internal Revenue Service)
 - c. Housing allowance (for every called worker, whether or not that worker is head of household or is married to another called worker)
 - d. Housing equity allowance (for those who live in provided housing)
 - e. Contribution to WELS Pension Plan
 - f. Health insurance
 - g. Reimbursement for business-related expenses such as travel and conferences

(Rationale: The current guidelines provide compensation and benefits that allow called workers to focus on the ministry instead of needing to supplement their income with outside employment. In addition, particularly in the matter of a housing allowance, the guidelines encourage equity in compensation for those serving in similar positions.)

2. That calling bodies set aside \$1,000 a year for each of their called workers to be used to reimburse costs associated with professional growth/continuing education.

(Rationale: Both the 2013 and the 2015 synod conventions passed resolutions encouraging calling bodies to set aside funds to assist their called servants in pursuing growth. Including it as part of the compensation guidelines would give it the higher profile that two consecutive synod conventions desired.)

3. That principals be compensated in the same range of columns as pastors and missionaries.

(Rationale: Those who serve as principals in our Lutheran elementary schools and high schools have heavy responsibilities placed upon them and ought to be honored for their service. The AHC2 identified the shortage of teachers willing to serve as principals, in large part because of the demands of the position. While compensation is not the only component in fostering an environment in which more would be willing to serve as principals, it is one way to demonstrate our respect synodically for that office.)

4. That the current salary matrix, which includes an increase in salary for each year of experience up to 32 years, be shrunk by ten years, to 22 years of experience (see Appendix 3 on p. 79).

(Rationale: This may reduce the budgetary impact of calling an experienced worker and perhaps provide opportunity for more called workers to consider calls later in their service in gospel ministry.)

5. That the salary numbers in rows 1 to 22 of the current salary matrix be used in the revised salary matrix (see Appendices 2 and 3 on pp. 78 and 79).

(Rationale: Consideration was given to making the compensation currently in row 32 the new row 22 and adjusting the percentage change from one row to the next, but that would end up in a substantial increase in the synodical budget over what would be expected under the current guidelines. It might also work against the rationale mentioned in connection with the previous recommendation.)

6. That the salary matrix be broadened with the addition of two columns to the left of column A in the current matrix and one column to the right of column H in the current matrix (see Appendix 3 on p. 79).

(Rationale: The two columns to the left of the current column A would provide salary recommendations for those congregations who call people, particularly in early childhood ministries, who have not yet earned a bachelor's degree. The addition of a column to the right of current column H allows for a calling body to increase a called worker's salary as an acknowledgement of the worker's increased duties and responsibilities.)

7. That the range of columns for most positions be increased by one column, with a range of four columns instead of the three columns in the current guidelines (see Appendix 1 on p. 77).

(Rationale: The range of columns in the salary matrix provide calling bodies with flexibility in determining appropriate compensation for an individual called worker. The lowest number in the suggested range of columns reflects the minimum salary a called worker in a particular position should be paid. A calling body should carefully weigh and consider a number of factors to determine which salary column to choose, such as responsibilities, continuing education, extra duties, etc. By expanding the range of columns, the CRC is hoping that calling bodies will approach the task of determining compensation with more careful thinking and analysis. The goal would be for the calling body to replace the last ten years of salary increases based solely on experience with increased compensation on the basis of identified duties and responsibilities. The range of compensation across four columns would be 15%, which would be a range from \$4,000 to \$6,000 a year, depending on the worker's experience. The final guidelines would include some guidance to calling bodies regarding items to consider in determining the appropriate salary matrix column and level of compensation.)

8. That a user-friendly form, perhaps web-based, be produced to assist calling bodies in determining appropriate compensation for their gospel servants.

(Rationale: The current guidelines may not always be fully utilized because of the complexities involved in their use. Some calling bodies think they are compensating according to the so-called "synod code" when they pick a number from the salary matrix, not realizing the number of other benefits that ought to be included. A user-friendly form could highlight the other items to be included in the overall compensation package for a public minister of the gospel.)

9. That the CRC, working together with WELS Human Resources, prepare materials for circuit pastors and district presidents to use in helping calling bodies understand and apply the compensation guidelines.

(Rationale: District presidents and circuit pastors regularly meet with congregations at the time of a pastoral vacancy and provide counsel on appropriate compensation. They would welcome tools to assist them in that work, not just at the time of a vacancy, but in their regular visitation of congregations.)

10. That WELS Human Resources, in conjunction with the district presidents, contact calling bodies annually with materials intended to assist congregations in determining appropriate compensation packages for those who serve in their name.

(Rationale: Each year, the Ministry of Christian Giving contacts congregations with helpful information for congregations to use as they prayerfully determine their Congregation Mission Offerings for the year. Following that model, WELS Human Resources could provide helpful materials to congregations regarding compensation so that calling bodies give prayerful consideration to the work they are asking of Christ's servants and compensation that would acknowledge their service with thanksgiving.)

Next steps

Significant work remains to be done on this modification of the current compensation guidelines before a concrete proposal can be submitted to the 2017 synod convention. The CRC recognizes that the devil is in the details, especially in a matter like compensation. The CRC desires and needs feedback from district conventions regarding

these proposals so that it can prepare compensation guidelines that will serve the synod well. The members of the CRC plan to meet in July to consider the counsel received from the districts and to plot a course moving forward.

Prof. Earle Treptow, reporter

Prof. Earle Treptow, chairman

Mr. Brad Johnston, secretary

Mr. Mark Bannan

Rev. Joel Jenswold

Teacher James Moeller

Advisory:

Mr. Dennis Maurer, director of WELS Human Resources

Mr. Todd Poppe, WELS chief financial officer

Appendix 1:

PROPOSED WELS SYNODICAL SALARY RANGE ASSIGNMENTS		
<i>Position</i>	<i>Current Column Assignment</i>	<i>New Column Assignment</i>
Early Childhood Ministry Teacher w/o degree	n/a (new)	A - B
Early Childhood Ministry Teacher (BS or BA base)	n/a (new)	C - F
Teacher (BS or BA base)	A - C	C - F
Early Childhood Ministry Director	n/a (new)	D - G
Preparatory School Professor	B - D	D - G
Staff Minister	B - D	D - G
Principal	B - D	E - H
Pastor	C - E	E - H
Home Missionary	C - E	E - H
World Missionary	C - E	E - H
Preparatory School Vice President	C - E	E - H
Preparatory School Dean	C - E	E - H
College Professor	C - E	E - H
Center for Mission and Ministry Associate Administrator	C - E	E - H
Associate Center for Mission and Ministry Director	n/a (new)	E - H
Center for Mission and Ministry National Coordinator	n/a (new)	E - H
Mission Counselor	C - E	E - H
Center for Mission and Ministry Administrator	D - F	F - I
Center for Mission and Ministry Director	n/a (new)	F - I
Preparatory School President	D - F	F - I
College Vice President	D - F	F - I
College Dean	D - F	F - I
Seminary Professor	D - F	F - I
Seminary Vice President	D - F	F - I
College President	E - G	G - J
Seminary President	E - G	G - J
Synod President	H	K

Appendix 2:

Draft Synod Schedule

0.75% Inflation Rate Adjustment

WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES CURRENT Salary Matrix 2017-18

Range Spread	14,536	15,263	15,990	16,717	17,443	18,170	18,897	19,624
Service Incr.	485	509	534	558	583	608	633	657
Ranges	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<i>Experience</i>								
0	29,072	30,526	31,980	33,433	34,887	36,341	37,794	39,248
1	29,557	31,035	32,514	33,992	35,470	36,948	38,427	39,905
2	30,042	31,544	33,048	34,550	36,054	37,556	39,060	40,562
3	30,526	32,052	33,582	35,108	36,637	38,164	39,693	41,219
4	31,011	32,561	34,116	35,666	37,221	38,771	40,326	41,876
5	31,495	33,070	34,650	36,224	37,804	39,379	40,959	42,533
6	31,980	33,579	35,184	36,783	38,388	39,987	41,592	43,191
7	32,464	34,087	35,718	37,341	38,971	40,594	42,225	43,848
8	32,949	34,596	36,252	37,899	39,555	41,202	42,857	44,505
9	33,433	35,105	36,786	38,457	40,138	41,810	43,490	45,162
10	33,918	35,614	37,320	39,016	40,721	42,417	44,123	45,819
11	34,402	36,123	37,854	39,574	41,305	43,025	44,756	46,476
12	34,887	36,631	38,388	40,132	41,888	43,633	45,389	47,133
13	35,371	37,140	38,922	40,690	42,472	44,240	46,022	47,791
14	35,856	37,649	39,456	41,248	43,055	44,848	46,655	48,448
15	36,341	38,158	39,990	41,807	43,639	45,456	47,288	49,105
16	36,825	38,666	40,524	42,365	44,222	46,063	47,921	49,762
17	37,310	39,175	41,058	42,923	44,806	46,671	48,554	50,419
18	37,794	39,684	41,592	43,481	45,389	47,279	49,186	51,076
19	38,279	40,193	42,126	44,040	45,972	47,886	49,819	51,733
20	38,763	40,701	42,660	44,598	46,556	48,494	50,452	52,390
21	39,248	41,210	43,194	45,156	47,139	49,102	51,085	53,048
22	39,732	41,719	43,728	45,714	47,723	49,709	51,718	53,705
23	40,217	42,228	44,262	46,272	48,306	50,317	52,351	54,362
24	40,701	42,737	44,796	46,831	48,890	50,925	52,984	55,019
25	41,186	43,245	45,330	47,389	49,473	51,532	53,617	55,676
26	41,671	43,754	45,864	47,947	50,057	52,140	54,250	56,333
27	42,155	44,263	46,398	48,505	50,640	52,748	54,883	56,990
28	42,640	44,772	46,932	49,064	51,224	53,356	55,515	57,647
29	43,124	45,280	47,466	49,622	51,807	53,963	56,148	58,305
30	43,609	45,789	48,000	50,180	52,390	54,571	56,781	58,962
31	44,093	46,298	48,534	50,738	52,974	55,179	57,414	59,619
32	44,578	46,807	49,068	51,296	53,557	55,786	58,047	60,276

Appendix 3:

Draft Synod Schedule 0.75% Inflation Rate Adjustment		WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES PROPOSED Salary Matrix 2017-18										
Based on Compensation Review		Comm Recommendations										
Range Spread Service Incr.	8,528 388	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Ranges Experience												
0	23,258		24,712	29,072	30,526	31,980	33,433	34,887	36,341	37,794	39,248	40,701
1	23,646		25,124	29,557	31,035	32,513	33,991	35,468	36,946	38,424	39,902	41,380
2	24,033		25,536	30,042	31,544	33,046	34,548	36,050	37,552	39,054	40,556	42,058
3	24,421		25,948	30,526	32,052	33,579	35,105	36,631	38,158	39,684	41,210	42,736
4	24,809		26,359	31,011	32,561	34,112	35,662	37,213	38,763	40,314	41,864	43,415
5	25,196		26,771	31,495	33,070	34,645	36,219	37,794	39,369	40,944	42,518	44,093
6	25,584		27,183	31,980	33,579	35,178	36,777	38,376	39,975	41,574	43,173	44,772
7	25,971		27,595	32,464	34,087	35,711	37,334	38,957	40,580	42,204	43,827	45,450
8	26,359		28,007	32,949	34,596	36,244	37,891	39,539	41,186	42,833	44,481	46,128
9	26,747		28,419	33,433	35,105	36,777	38,448	40,120	41,792	43,463	45,135	46,807
10	27,134		28,831	33,918	35,614	37,310	39,006	40,701	42,397	44,093	45,789	47,485
11	27,522		29,243	34,402	36,123	37,843	39,563	41,283	43,003	44,723	46,443	48,163
12	27,910		29,654	34,887	36,631	38,376	40,120	41,864	43,609	45,353	47,097	48,842
13	28,297		30,066	35,372	37,140	38,909	40,677	42,446	44,214	45,983	47,752	49,520
14	28,685		30,478	35,856	37,649	39,442	41,234	43,027	44,820	46,613	48,406	50,198
15	29,073		30,890	36,341	38,158	39,975	41,792	43,609	45,426	47,243	49,060	50,877
16	29,460		31,302	36,825	38,666	40,508	42,349	44,190	46,031	47,873	49,714	51,555
17	29,848		31,714	37,310	39,175	41,041	42,906	44,772	46,637	48,503	50,368	52,234
18	30,235		32,126	37,794	39,684	41,574	43,463	45,353	47,243	49,132	51,022	52,912
19	30,623		32,538	38,279	40,193	42,107	44,021	45,935	47,848	49,762	51,676	53,590
20	31,011		32,949	38,763	40,701	42,640	44,578	46,516	48,454	50,392	52,330	54,269
21	31,398		33,361	39,248	41,210	43,173	45,135	47,097	49,060	51,022	52,985	54,947
22	31,786		33,773	39,732	41,719	43,706	45,692	47,679	49,666	51,652	53,639	55,625

Appendix 4: Compensation Guidelines: Effective July 1, 2003*

Compensation Plan Components

Base Salary

Base salary is the starting point for developing a total compensation package for all called workers. The entry-level figure of the synod salary matrix (see below) is derived from national averages of survey data taken from the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Two surveys, the Consumer Expenditure Survey and national per capita income are reviewed annually in order to indicate the entry-level salary.

In November 2002, the WELS Synodical Council approved an additional salary matrix that provides for incremental implementation of the base salary guidelines. The incremental schedule will increase over the next three years to reach the original goals of the compensation plan by July 2005. A calling body is free to choose the appropriate matrix based upon the resources available as compensation planning is undertaken.

Salary Ranges

The salary matrices outlined below provide calling bodies with a flexibility to establish compensation levels based upon a number of factors. The salary ranges (A-H) may be combined in any manner that allows for recognition of differing responsibilities between positions. It is important to understand that a range assignment within the matrix is a continuum with multiple salary points. A specific salary is determined for an individual holding the position based upon call responsibilities and education level attained and experience years. A periodic review (minimally once per year) should be undertaken to evaluate an individual's compensation level. Again, as with the range assignment, changing call responsibilities and educational levels may lead to a salary adjustment.

Years of Experience

The salary matrix recognizes the value of ministry experience.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

General Information

The cost of living varies from region to region in the United States. The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is the component of the compensation package that allows calling bodies to adjust wages to reflect this fact.

It is important to remember that this adjustment is to reflect living costs apart from housing. This means the calculation will be the same regardless of whether the called worker owns, rents, or has housing provided. This also means that any cost of living index (COLI) must exclude housing as a component of the index. See the "Housing" component of the package for further details on how housing affects compensation.

The COLA Calculation

The actual calculation for this adjustment is very simple. It only requires multiplying the base salary by the appropriate modifier (base salary x modifier = COLA). The base salary will be provided by the WELS Human Resources Office of synod. This figure will be reviewed on an annual basis. As of July 1, 2003 the base salary is \$26,300. The modifier must be set by the calling body. Guidelines for determining this value are detailed in the sections below.

Example: With a base salary of \$26,300 and a modifier of 0.09, a COLA of \$2,367 would result (\$26,300 X .09 = \$2,367).

Selecting a Cost of Living Data Source

There are many resources available that provide cost of living information. However, there is not one single source that will work as needed for all WELS calling bodies. This makes it necessary for each calling body to review the available sources and determine for themselves which resource or combination of resources best serves their specific situation.

There are two primary reasons for not being able to designate a specific resource as the final guide for selecting the base salary modifier. First, some resources do not cover an adequate number of locations. Second, some resources do not provide enough information on how their number was derived. This second point is important because of the need to exclude the housing component (see **General Information** above).

Although each of the resources listed below does include housing in their composite number, some of them provide enough information so that this housing element can be mathematically removed. Since housing is often the largest contributing factor to these indices, it is imperative to be able to eliminate that portion in order to have an accurate base salary modifier for our purposes.

The organization ACCRA is one group that has developed a suitable Cost of Living Index (COLI). The WELS Human Resources Office has determined that the methodology they use to calculate COLI is very sound and should be used as the starting point for determining the appropriate base salary modifier. The primary shortcoming of their COLI is the limited number of locations covered each quarter. The composite COLI does include housing. However, ACCRA provides enough information to remove housing from COLI. Instructions for making this calculation can be found in the following section on Removing the Housing Component from the Composite Value.

The COLI data can be found at www.coli.org. ACCRA data for selected areas may be found on the WELS pWeb under the Human Resources Collection. Specific data may be requested by e-mail to hro@sab.wels.net.

A web site that uses COLI and other information to generate cost of living comparisons is found at www.bestplaces.net.

Three other sites that provide cost of living data are www.homefair.com (under Tools and Calculators) and list.realestate.yahoo.com/re/neighbor (Real Estate > Neighborhood), and <http://cgi.money.cnn.com/tools/costofliving/costofliving.html?step=form>. However, these resources do not provide enough information to allow removal of housing from the data.

Removing the Housing Component From a Composite Value

The cost of living information available from the Internet comes as a composite value that includes housing. As addressed earlier, it is important to mathematically remove that component to obtain an appropriate value for use with this compensation plan. The removal of the housing component from cost of living eliminates a duplication with the separately provided housing/housing allowance element of this plan.

The composite cost of living figure is usually listed as a percentage relative to the average cost of living. The average cost of living is written as 100%. A cost of living of 109% would indicate an area where costs are 9% higher than the average.

Since the composite value is a weighted average of several cost of living components, the information required in order to remove the housing component is as follows:

The percent weighting of each component
The specific value of each component

Consider the following example (taken from the www.bestplaces.net web site):

<u>Cost of Living Component (Component Weight)</u>	<u>Relative Percentage</u>
Housing (31%)	117%
Food/Groceries (16%)	102%
Transportation (10%)	102%
Utilities (8%)	95%
Health (5%)	120%
Miscellaneous (30%)	102%
Overall (i.e. the composite-weighted value)	107%

Here we have the information we need, the weighting factors (31% of the composite value comes from housing) and the value for each component (housing = 117% of average).

Note that the weighting factors total 100% ($31 + 16 + 10 + 8 + 5 + 30 = 100$).

The following steps will remove housing from the composite:

1. Calculate the total weighting of all the components that will remain in composite after removing housing.

That number is $100 - 31 = 69\%$

or $16 + 10 + 8 + 5 + 30 = 69\%$

or $0.16 + 0.10 + 0.08 + 0.05 + 0.30 = 0.69$ (in decimal for Steps 2 & 3).

2. Multiply each remaining component by its weighting factor and add the results.

$$.16 \times 102\% = 16.32\%$$

$$.10 \times 102\% = 10.2\%$$

$$.08 \times 95\% = 7.6\%$$

$$.05 \times 120\% = 6.0\%$$

$$.30 \times 102\% = 30.6\%$$

$$70.72\%$$

3. Divide the cost of living figure without housing from Step 2 (70.72%) by the combined weighting factor calculated in Step 1 (0.69).

$$70.72\% \text{ divided by } .69 = 102.49\%$$

This example is the relative cost of living for Milwaukee (based on 2001 data) with housing removed (compared to 107% of average if housing is included).

Determining the Base Salary Multiplier from Relative Cost of Living Figures

The base salary multiplier (see section **The COLA Calculation** above) is easily determined from the composite cost of living value with housing removed, as calculated in the section above.

Remember that the cost of living figures shown above are relative to an average value of 100%. To determine the multiplier, simply subtract the average percentage from the new composite percentage.

$102.49\% - 100\% = 2.49\%$, or 0.0249 for use as the multiplier to determine COLA (see Section **The COLA Calculation**). Thus in this example, the COLA would be

$$\$26,300 \times .0249 = \$654.87 \text{ (rounded to \$655)}$$

Note: If the cost of living were less than average, (i.e. less than 100%) a negative multiplier (hence a negative COLA) would result, reflecting the lower cost of living for that area.

Education

This element is considered as rate range assignments are established. For example, the minimal educational expectation (just one component of the Level A range) for an elementary classroom teacher is the Bachelor's Degree. Continuing education toward the Master's Degree would seem to be a worthwhile goal, and as that goal is worked on, the calling body would be encouraged to move that teacher's compensation level along the salary ranges listed from A to C. Salary numbers need not be exactly A, B, or C, but could rather be placed anywhere between the A to C ranges as continuing education proceeds. Similar progression could be applied to principals or secondary teachers as they continue their education toward the Master's Degree, something which would seem especially valuable given their respective callings and levels of responsibility.

Missionaries, counselors, administrators, and all other called workers could be so encouraged. The point is this . . . continuing education should be recognized for all called positions. As additional educational levels are attained and utilized in an individual's call, consideration should be given to moving this salary component to higher levels within the respective ranges. Learning is life-long, and clearly does not stop, even formally, upon graduation.

Levels of Responsibility

General Information

The current compensation package lists nineteen different ministry forms. Each job classification has a built-in set of responsibilities. Some classifications have higher levels of responsibility than others. For example, the job classification of high school principal has more responsibility than that of high school instructor. However, within the **same** job classification there are often extra duties and responsibilities that may be assigned. This component allows the calling body to recognize these added responsibilities with additional pay.

The responsibility component recognizes additional duties that are assigned to individuals within the same job classification. It is **NOT** the process of measuring how well these or any job responsibilities are being carried out. At this point there is no provision within the compensation package to perform this type of evaluation.

Some additional assignments may be temporary in nature, lasting only for a year or so. Others may continue from year to year. In either case, the calling body should review each called worker's responsibilities on at least an annual basis. Additional compensation may be considered for those workers who have assumed these additional responsibilities.

General Responsibility Factors

Increased job responsibility can occur in a variety of forms. Any notable change in the complexity of the job or the time required to complete assigned tasks may warrant consideration for additional compensation. Some general factors to consider:

1. Additional time requirements
2. Increased knowledge, skill, or expertise for new assignments
3. Additional decision making
4. Additional communication requirements (motivation, facilitation, negotiation)
5. Increased requirement for critical thinking and problem solving

Responsibility Examples

Following is a list of tasks that could be considered as "additional responsibilities" within a specific job classification. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

1. Administrative Responsibilities
 - a. Supervision of staff
 - b. Budget management
 - c. Leadership/Team building
 - d. Policy development
 - e. Develop operational procedures
 - f. Strategic planning
2. Additional Duties
 - a. Coaching - athletics/athletics-related
 - b. Director of music
 - c. Counseling
 - d. Special programs
 - e. Computer
3. Program Development
 - a. Youth programs
 - b. Adult programs
 - c. Outreach programs

Calculating the Responsibility Amount

The recommended compensation for additional responsibilities should be determined on a sliding scale. That scale could range anywhere from a one to a ten percent increase. These percentages are based on the salary matrix. Each level is five percent higher than the previous level. (Level B is 5% higher than Level A, Level C is 10% higher than level A). The calling body will have to determine the exact amount on an individual basis.

Social Security Reimbursement (SECA Tax)

Congregations/calling bodies are encouraged to remunerate up to one half of the self-employed social security tax for Ministers of the Gospel. This cash reimbursement is taxable income under current tax code. The reimbursement amount is calculated on base salary, cost of living, and housing value (provided or allowance).

Housing Allowance

General Information

Because many called workers have housing provided in the form of a teacherage or parsonage, it is necessary to make the housing allowance a separate component of the compensation package. If we remember this fact, we can better understand how this component is to be applied. The breakout is not required to receive the associated income tax benefits. The tax benefit is achieved by making the appropriate request that lists actual housing expenses. (See the tax planning section for more details). If there were no parsonages or teacherages, this component would not be needed. The base salary could be increased and the cost of living adjustment (COLA) could reflect the regional differences in housing costs.

Each called worker is entitled to a housing allowance. This is part of their total compensation and should not be determined on the basis of need. Two individuals performing the same job should receive the same pay for that job. No consideration, for example, should be given to the size of an individual's family. Nor does it matter if a called worker is head of household. The new compensation package attempts to establish a fair wage for a specific job. That fair wage includes the housing allowance regardless of what the actual housing needs are for that individual.

Calculating the Housing Allowance

The cost of housing can vary significantly from region to region within the United States. This variance must be considered when establishing the appropriate amount for this component. Remember that the cost of living adjustment (COLA) does not include the variance in housing costs.

The calling body should determine the average cost of renting a three bedroom home in the area where the called worker lives or works. This amount should be included as part of compensation for any worker who is not provided housing. Local real estate companies can be of assistance in determining this number.

Phase-in Plan

The housing component potentially represents a major change to some calling bodies. In previous plans, housing may have been considered on an "as needed" basis. The new plan attempts to set a value for each specific job performed. The same compensation would be paid to any person doing that ministry. It is only a bookkeeping type entry that separates this amount into salary and housing allowance.

Because this change could place a significant financial burden on some calling bodies, the HRC is recommending the following phase-in schedule if necessary.

Calling bodies should be allowed to phase in the new philosophy regarding housing allowance beginning with fiscal year 2003 through the beginning of fiscal year 2007. The phase-in process would include **at a minimum** the following schedule for all individuals who are currently not receiving the total housing amount.

2003	Amount equal to the housing equity component (currently \$526)
2004	40% of the housing component for that area
2005	60% of the housing component for that area
2006	80% of the housing component for that area
2007	100% of the housing component for that area

Housing Equity

General Information

Called workers who have housing provided do not have the benefit of accumulating the same housing equity as do their counterparts who receive a housing allowance. This can present a serious problem as these individuals approach retirement. This component of the compensation plan is intended to relieve this problem. Individuals who spend most of their ministry in provided housing will be able to accumulate the funding necessary to provide their own housing upon retirement.

Calculating the Housing Equity Allowance

The recommended amount for this allowance is 2% of the base salary. As of July 1, 2003, the base salary is \$26,300. This would make the Equity Allowance:

$$\$26,300 \times .02 = \$526$$

The base salary is set by the Human Resources Office and could be adjusted annually. Ideally the equity amount could be invested in a tax-free account under the name of the called worker. For more information see the Tax Planning section of this document.

Compensation Related Issues

Benefit Plans

Pension

Each called worker who works at least half-time during the year is provided coverage in the WELS Pension Plan. Calling bodies pay for the cost of the plan through contribution payments established by the Pension Commission and approved by the WELS Synodical Council. The plan provides a portion of post-retirement income for the worker. Other sources of post-retirement income needed at the end of a career include a combination of personal savings and Social Security benefits.

Details about the plan are available at www.welsbpo.net or by calling the WELS Benefit Plans Office at 414.256.3860.

Other Benefits

All calling bodies are encouraged to provide health insurance coverage and other benefits as part of their compensation package. While not mandatory, further encouragement is given to participate in the WELS Voluntary Employee Benefit Association (VEBA) Group Health Care Plan.

What is a VEBA? It is a legal entity by which a benefit organization is granted tax-exempt trust status by the IRS. The beneficiary association can provide for the payment of life, sick, accident, or other benefits to their members or their dependents.

In addition to health care coverage, the VEBA Plan provides the following coverage either as part of the plan or as a voluntary benefit:

- ☐ Long-term Disability Insurance
- ☐ Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance
- ☐ Group Term Life Insurance (voluntary)
- ☐ Dental Insurance (voluntary)
- ☐ Medicare Supplement (voluntary)

Details about the plan are available at www.welsbpo.net or by calling the WELS Benefit Plans Office at 414.256.3860.

Flexible Spending Plans (Internal Revenue Code Section 125)

Qualified flexible benefit plans allow workers to pay for certain eligible benefits with pre-tax dollars. This means that contributions are made before almost any income and payroll taxes are calculated and deducted. At the federal level this translates into no FICA (Social Security taxes), Medicare, Federal Unemployment (a tax not applicable to most WELS entities) or income tax. The FICA and Medicare savings apply both to the employee and the employer. In almost all states these plans also allow for no state income taxes to be calculated or deducted on the Section 125 amounts.

Flexible spending plans come in different forms. Some examples are:

- Premium Conversion Plan (premium only plan of POP)
- Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs)
- Full Flex Plans (cafeteria plans)

Since these plans may have complex legal and cost implications, calling bodies are **strongly encouraged** to seek professional advice when considering their establishment. Exploration is underway to provide some form of flexible spending plan through WELS VEBA in which sponsoring WELS organizations may participate.

Business Expenses

Certain business expenses are incurred by workers in carrying out ministry work; calling bodies are urged to recognize such costs and provide for non-taxable reimbursement of such expenses to the fullest extent allowed by law. Such expenses may include the following:

- ☐ Car Allowance - IRS per mile rate
- ☐ Conference Expenses
- ☐ Book Expense
- ☐ Office supplies
- ☐ Communications: Phone, cellular, e-mail access, Internet, pager

Tax Planning

All workers are encouraged to minimize tax liability through careful planning and making use of advantages available to them in the tax laws. The WELS Financial Services area publishes a tax guide for use by calling bodies and individuals that outlines federal tax laws and applies them to practical situations.

Workers and calling bodies are urged to look for professional advice within their local areas when undertaking tax planning.

** Pages 7-15 of the Compensation Guidelines: A Guide to Compensating Called Workers, Effective July 1, 2013. To view the entire guide from 2013, visit cloud.wels.net/hr and choose "Compensation." The document is titled "2013 Synod Compensation Guidelines." The document was updated with a new salary matrix in 2013 but includes all the original information from the 2003 report.*

Accounting Oversight Committee

Our calling

The Accounting Oversight Committee serves the synod and its schools, subsidiaries, and affiliates that are under the oversight of the Synodical Council (SC). The committee serves the SC by assisting in ensuring that appropriate accounting policies and internal controls are established and financial systems are efficient and effective; retaining external auditors; assisting in ensuring that financial personnel have the requisite skills; and by assisting in ensuring that financial reports are prepared timely, accurately, and in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles. The committee keeps the SC informed of its action through its appointed member of the committee; the synod's schools, subsidiaries, and affiliate boards, commissions, and committees are informed through WELS' chief financial officer.

Our current situation

The committee engaged the independent audit firm of CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP, to conduct the annual audits of the consolidated financial statements of the synod, its schools, and its subsidiaries for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2015. All audits were completed within five months of year end and all entities received an unmodified opinion, the best you can get, on the financial statement's compliance with generally accepted accounting principles. The auditors did identify one significant deficiency in internal controls over a single investment valuation calculation that needed to be improved, and the necessary changes were made to the calculation. Copies of the annual financial statements, quarterly consolidated financial statements, and quarterly budget reports are available at cloud.wels.net/finance.

In addition to the annual synod financial statement audits, the committee engaged CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP, to audit the WELS VEBA Group Health Plan and WELS Pension Plan for 2014. These financial statements also received unmodified opinions for 2014, and the auditors did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weakness in their control environments.

At the time of this writing, the 2015 calendar year audits for these two entities are scheduled for early 2016. Also, the Accounting Oversight Committee engaged CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP, to perform a 2015 audit of the WELS 403(b)9 retirement income account plan, which is also known as the WELS Shepherd Plan.

In 2015, the committee added two new members, Layman Barry Haller and Layman Bill Schultz. The committee added these two members to ensure that the committee continues to operate effectively when Layman Tom Walters and Layman Carl Rudolph reach their term limits in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

A look ahead

During 2016, the committee will be issuing a request for proposals for independent audit services as the five-year contract with CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP, will be terminating with the fiscal year 2015–16 audits. The committee expects to receive very competitive bids given the continuing improvements in financial systems, controls, reporting, and personnel that have been built up over the past decade.

To allow the committee and its new members to meet key accounting personnel, the committee has asked the finance department at the synod, the synod's ministerial education schools, and Northwestern Publishing House to complete a strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis that focuses on process controls, staffing levels, cross-training, and other opportunities or threats in the accounting area at their institution. The results of the SWOT analysis were not available at the time of this writing, but the committee will work with WELS accounting management or the Synodical Council to address any concerns that are identified through this process.

Mr. Tom Walters, reporter

Mr. Tom Walters, chairman

Mr. Jim Freer

Mr. Barry Haller

Mr. Paul Holzhueter, Synodical Council liaison

Mr. Carl Rudolph

Mr. Bill Schultz

Advisory:

Mr. Todd J. Poppe, chief financial officer and treasurer

WELS Archives

Our calling

The archives of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is the official repository for records of historical value created by and about WELS and its congregations, called workers, and related parasynodical organizations and institutions. Its mission is to gather, preserve, and make available documentary evidence of the ongoing life and work of the synod and to offer a useful information service to synod administration, WELS called workers, and WELS congregations.

Our current situation

Materials held in the archives at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary are organized and accessible to researchers. Significant progress continues in creating aids to help find information and materials and in creating archival descriptions for the collections. Many requests for information are successfully filled. There is a small backlog of unprocessed, donated materials.

Although routine requests for information are regularly filled, many functions crucial to a successful archival program are not being carried out. Examples include preserving gathered items, systematic collecting of documents into the archives, advising areas of ministry and congregations on how to manage and preserve records, managing electronic records, and disaster planning. In addition, the current archives space is not only insufficient in size but because its climate cannot be controlled it is also unsuitable for proper preservation of the historical record of our synod.

A look ahead

Plans are being implemented to build out an archives and visitor center in the lower level of the Center for Mission and Ministry. The space will be finished by the summer of 2016. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has made funds available to hire an archivist for two years. Our new archivist will begin the process of moving materials from the old space at the seminary to the new archives. We thank God for this long-awaited progress in providing a suitable space and staffing for our archives, and we ask for his blessing as we move forward.

Prof. John P. Hartwig, reporter

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Our calling

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is the synod's "ministry of compassion," bringing physical relief to victims of natural disasters in the form of cash grants, food, clothing, and medical supplies. Christian Aid and Relief also partners with WELS missionaries to support humanitarian aid projects that can help build bridges to proclaim the gospel. The mission of Christian Aid and Relief is drawn from the scriptural encouragement, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10). Because of all that Christ has done for us, we are eager to reflect Christ's love and compassion to those in need. We seek to personalize our efforts by conducting careful assessments and distributing our funds first through our churches and then through other trusted secular agencies.

Our current situation

Christian Aid and Relief is not funded in the WELS budget but by the special gifts of WELS members. From Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2015, our total expenditures for relief projects were \$544,339. Domestic relief effort expenditures totaled \$147,345. Foreign relief effort expenditures totaled \$396,994. In addition, \$332,426 was designated for humanitarian aid projects for fiscal year 2015–16. These projects assist our missionaries in building bridges to proclaim the gospel.

Major opportunities to provide relief in the past year centered in Nepal where \$82,000 was granted for earthquake relief. This provided food, water, blankets, Bibles, and tents for temporary worship. A grief counseling worship was also funded to train our Christian leaders there to share the comfort of the gospel with people suffering catastrophic loss.

In response to devastating flooding in Malawi, funds were granted to provide temporary housing supplies and 450 tons of maize to our brothers and sisters of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa.

We are supporting our world mission work among several orphanages in Haiti by providing food and nutrition.

A \$21,000 grant was given to support our Central Africa Medical Mission.

Other domestic relief activities include \$15,000 for tornado disaster relief in Garland, Texas. Funding was also granted to provide crisis counseling to tornado victims through Christian Family Solutions (WLCFS). General aid was provided to food pantries, inner city relief, and general aid for called workers and congregational members suffering from extreme medical and financial burdens, totaling \$100,119.

Christian Aid and Relief continues to work with the WELS Board for World Missions, WELS Board for Home Missions, our WELS missionaries, and our sister congregations of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference around the world in funding humanitarian aid projects. Below is a list of this year's granted projects, totaling \$332,426.

Nigeria

Funds have been granted to Nigeria to help in the distribution of health care for people in great need, many of which are not members of the local church. The ability to offer care and provide humanitarian aid to Nigeria's unchurched will serve as a bridge for Christ The King and All Saints Lutheran Churches of Nigeria to invite villagers to church to hear the gospel. Funds will also be used to help offer pharmacy services and health education in rural areas demonstrating the loving care of Lutheran Christians. Aid will provide support for church members to visit rehab centers, hospitals, prisons, orphanages, and health centers and to assist widows, widowers, and people with special needs. Funding is also granted to drill a borehole at each of the two congregations in order to provide pure water for the local pastor, congregation members, and non-members living in the surrounding area. This brings many to the door of the church on a daily basis, where contacts for Christ can be made.

Zambia

Christian Aid and Relief provides funding to drill boreholes to provide villagers access to clean water, which helps them in their struggle against disease and death. Providing this water to people living in the lostness and struggle of unbelief is a powerful analogy for the necessity of Christ in their lives. Aid granted to Zambia provides for home-based care that bridges the physical and spiritual care of the chronically ill and dying. This grant will help prepare the Christians in this ministry to better meet the needs of the community through acts of sharing God's gracious gift of salvation as they help those with AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other chronic and terminal illnesses. Funds have also been granted to support a literacy program. A person who is able to read and write is well positioned to do God's work more efficiently, especially where evangelism is concerned. The Central Africa Medical Mission in Zambia receives funding for medical supplies and medicines that help support the mission of communicating Christ's love and sharing caring concern for the physical needs of others. This work of compassion is performed so the gospel may reach those in need. Each clinic begins with a devotion, and a national pastor provides spiritual counsel.

Malawi

The Central Africa Medical Mission in Malawi also receives funding from Christian Aid and Relief for medical supplies and nutritional supplements for infants. Recent flooding creates extra challenges as the staff prepares for an increased malaria outbreak and a severe hunger season for Malawi adults and children. Those who provide care continue to pray that this assistance opens doors for gospel outreach. Funds are also provided to drill boreholes for clean drinking water in several villages. Many people will hear the Word of God as devotions are shared every morning before people start drawing water.

Thailand

We continue to support the efforts of medically trained volunteers who travel to Thailand to set up week-long medical clinics in our village churches. As these clinics draw people from both local and neighboring villages, they provide the missionaries and other workers with a unique bridge for presenting the gospel and for creating goodwill presence for our churches through such care and service. These efforts include vacation Bible school and English as a foreign language classes as well as follow-up contacts after the classes conclude.

Indonesia

Funding has been granted to assist congregations in Indonesia to hand out basic needs such as food and personal items to needy households in their neighborhoods. The hope and prayer is that caring and sharing will provide a bridge with these people by letting them know the location of the source of the aid and by strengthening the churches' reputation among their neighbors.

Russia

Funding has been granted to Russia to provide food, clothing, hygiene items, school supplies, and medicine for the needy. These gifts will allow for law-gospel pamphlets to be distributed and to invite people to Bible instruction classes. This will let the workers' lights shine in the area and grow their reputation of helping those in need. Aid has also been granted to assist institutions such as hospitals, rehab centers, orphanages, and half-way houses. The government values this work and presence, which is very important as it opens the doors for Bible classes and Christian counseling. Through this ministry, Christian literature is left in public schools, rehab centers, and other institutions.

Haiti

Christian Aid and Relief provides funding for food and nutritional supplements for orphans that our Haitian mission presently serves. Through this aid, doors are open to provide children spiritual nourishment by teaching them the gospel through our missionaries there. Many of these orphans have received the blessings of Holy Baptism and have learned about God and his Word.

Mexico

In Mexico, funding has been granted to the Costa Maya Ministry Center, which is used for worship services, Bible classes, a soup kitchen, and other community events. Many people who have attended community events have also decided to attend worship services and Bible studies. Through an increased presence and by offering community programs, we pray that the Christians there may continue to form relationships with those in their neighborhoods so that even more people may be reached with the gospel.

India

Medical aid to India has been approved to provide supplies for government and private hospitals and health clinics. This includes basic necessities such as blood pressure cuffs and thermometers, hospital beds, baby warmers, and more sophisticated equipment such as an instrument to test for glaucoma. Funds have also been granted for the digging of approximately 30 fresh water wells. As with most of the humanitarian work in India, these projects may not open new doors directly for gospel "bridge building," but they will help to ensure that the doors to India will remain open for WELS counselors living and working there. These kinds of projects are necessary for our presence in India to continue; it is excellent and necessary public relations with the local medical community, government officials, and other influential people.

Nepal

Aid supplied to Nepal provides funding for health clinics. A medical person and gospel worker minister to the physical and spiritual needs of those who receive care. Christian literature is distributed. Each clinic leads to the formation of a Bible study group, and nearly all of these clinics have developed into local churches. Aid is provided to reach out to women in rural and remote areas to offer activities and sessions to improve basic skills. Offering these skills provides opportunities to share the gospel. Financial support has also been granted to share the gospel through technology. Many young people in Nepal have a desire to learn about technology, and through this grant, some will be exposed to both technology and the gospel at the computer labs. Aid will also support 10 orphans by helping cover the cost of schooling, meals, clothing, and medicine. This provides Christian instruction, and with God's help, these young people are nurtured to become leaders in the church in Nepal. Funding was provided for drilling 10 boreholes. As people go to collect water they will not only receive safe drinking water but they will also learn about the eternal, living water that comes from Jesus Christ. Aid also provides textbooks for higher secondary-level students in several districts in the area of Tibet. This opens doors for sharing the gospel in these areas and helps to train future leaders and

teachers of the Christian church. Health education classes have been funded, which teach students good habits of daily cleanliness and the sanctity of life in the womb. They also receive instruction and literature encouraging them to study about the true God. The bridge provides opportunities to share the gospel message and literature with participants and the community. Funding has also been granted to help local church leaders become self-supporting by teaching them farming skills. By equipping the local church leaders with these skills, we pray that the growth of the church will expand significantly to others, even by sharing these skills as a means to building bridges for gospel outreach. We also pray that through this farming effort, the government of Nepal will view the church in a favorable light.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, funding has been granted to provide medical care for many families and assist with crippling debt. The kindness shown to those in desperate need opens doors to share the good news of the Great Physician of both body and soul. Funding has also been granted to train women in basic skills like knitting, stitching, and embroidery. Each session begins and ends with a gospel devotion. By learning these skills, women can then support themselves and be spared ill treatment in the public marketplace and work safely from home to receive income to support their families as well as mission work in Pakistan.

Funding has been provided for medical clinics to share the gospel with thousands of people through social services by treating the sick, especially the pregnant mothers of local villages. Many come to know about Christ for the first time through the gospel that is shared at these clinics and through the distribution of Christian literature. Aid has also been granted for food distribution at Christmas and Easter in neighborhoods bordering Christian homes and schools.

Las Vegas

Working with the Board for Home Missions, Christian Aid and Relief was able to fund several projects. In the Las Vegas area, funding has been granted to assist in refugee/immigrant outreach. As new African immigrants arrive in this area, congregation members can welcome them, provide a welcome gift, assist them in getting settled into the community, help with English needs, provide rides, and further assist with counseling, English as a second language training, etc. The intent of this ministry is to assist the refugee immigrants as they transition to life in America, using this opportunity to proclaim to them the gospel of Jesus.

Chicago

Funding has been granted to the Crossroads Household Kits project. Housewarming packages are assembled and distributed to refugee families as they arrive in the United States via Chicago. These gifts help refugee families set up an apartment and help our church members at Crossroads, Chicago, build bridges with those families. This leads to additional relationships and ministry opportunities.

Farmington

In Farmington, N.M., a grant was given to support a major outreach effort, Path to Victory Basketball Camp, which draws people in a financially depressed area to the local congregation and gives the congregation members the opportunity to share Jesus with many participants. This effort provides prospect follow up among Navajo, Hispanic, and Anglo children and adults.

New Orleans

Aid supplied to the Crown of Life Community Garden in New Orleans creates a connecting point between Crown of Life and its community. Through this project congregation members can build relationships, create goodwill with neighbors, and build bridges to share Christian love with unchurched people in the area. The prayer is also that this garden project will create many opportunities for planting the seed of the gospel in the hearts of Crown of Life's neighbors.

Toronto

Funds have been granted to Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, as it operates Hope Food Bank and Financial Assistance. The project enables the congregation to provide valuable humanitarian assistance to newcomers to their area. The assistance can take the form of food, rental help, and help with other matters pertaining to their transition into the area. This project helps Hope to be a "light" in the community and reach families who find themselves in dire straits. It also opens the door to share the gospel with some of the new families in the area.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief also continues to provide help for families with catastrophic personal and medical difficulties, assisting the efforts of local congregations. We thank the Lord for moving the hearts of WELS members to show how much they care with their prayers and gifts of love.

A look ahead

Annually, Christian Aid and Relief reviews humanitarian aid grant requests forwarded to us from the Boards for World Missions and Home Missions.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief continues to look for ways to improve its communication to the members of the synod. *Lifeline* videos have been developed so that those who support our work can see firsthand how their gifts are being used. Our webpage, wels.net/relief, continues to offer timely information and a convenient way to donate online for Christian Aid and Relief projects. Members can also find us on Facebook at Christian Aid and Relief. Committee members and volunteers also make presentations to various groups to “tell our stories,” letting WELS members know about the needs and opportunities to help people through Christian Aid and Relief. DVDs of *Lifeline* videos and other written materials and photos are also available upon request. We are partnering with other WELS agencies such as Kingdom Workers, Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, and the WELS Nurses Association to coordinate volunteers to assist in relief efforts when appropriate.

Rev. Robert Hein, reporter

Rev. Robert Hein, chairman

Staff Minister Tom Hering, secretary

Rev. Bruce Marggraf

Mr. Mark Vance, director of operations for WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Rev. Richard Warnecke

Mr. Steven Wright

Support Services

Support Services is the area that encompasses Financial Services, Technology, Human Resources, and Facility Services. These areas support the ministry of the synod and its four ministerial education schools.

Technology

Our calling

WELS Technology exists to support the work of the synod by providing a capable and secure technical infrastructure, facilitating digital communications, assisting congregations and called workers to better leverage technology, and coordinating technology initiatives that can't be done at smaller organizational levels. Together the dedicated men and women that make up the WELS technology team seek to help the spread of the gospel with technology tools the Lord continues to make available in the 21st century.

WELS Technology divides its working into 10 service areas:

1. IT administration,
2. workstations and peripherals,
3. project management,
4. disaster recovery,
5. servers and storage,
6. documentation and training,
7. end-user support,

8. network and telephony,
9. application and web development, and
10. application and web maintenance.

Through these services WELS Technology supports the ministry efforts of Home and World Missions, ministerial education, the Congregation and Ministry Support Group, other synod agencies, and individual churches and schools. Great care has been taken to organize according to ministry need. As a result, the services provided can be tied directly to the activities of those areas of ministry.

One of the challenges of providing the appropriate technology to meet ministry needs is determining the best choice among many that is both cost effective and is future-proof. Since technology advances so quickly, it is difficult to predict if a technology chosen today will be obsolete or even “gone” tomorrow. Strategic planning is essential to being good stewards and to still meet changing needs.

Clearly, an even brighter focus than ever before is on security. While appropriate steps have always been taken to keep the synod’s digital assets secure, they are at even greater risk today given the current climate and prevalence of hacking, phishing, and identity theft. More and more time and budget are spent in securing the data entrusted to us by churches, schools, called workers, volunteers, and donors.

Perhaps our primary calling is connecting gospel-sharers with the available technologies that can better assist in the spread of that gospel. As a result, time and resources are set aside to help with the process of making technologies available to those who would like to share the good news by “any means possible.” We believe “our calling” is to find those intersections between technology and ministry.

Our current situation

This year WELS Technology continued the gradual migration of the longstanding synod database called “Progress” to a newer platform called WELSource based on Microsoft technologies. Thousands of hours have been spent planning and architecting a solution that will provide accurate data about our called workers, churches, schools, performance evaluations, pension benefits, and the calling process. This past summer Phase 2 was launched, which included a new call list creation tool, revised call report, new capabilities to maintain the service records of our called workers, church and school statistics capture and viewing, and pension plan maintenance. This summer will see the launch of a number of electronic forms, including:

1. called worker information—allows called workers and other synod employees to maintain their biographic information online and see all synod data pertaining to them and their family;
2. self-assessments—allows called workers to submit annual self-assessments, automatic routing for approval of those assessments, and then inclusion on call lists;
3. monthly mission reports—allows home mission sites to provide the synod with monthly status reports;
4. call list request form—allows organizations to submit requests for call lists to replace or add called workers to their staff; and
5. congregational statistics reporting—allows congregations to submit their annual statistics online.

Over the past year, all synod web properties were migrated to a new platform and content management system (WordPress). This large effort required a reevaluation of the current content, security of the platform, and mobile “friendliness” of the site. As a result, wels.net has a fresh design, includes more relevant content, and is easily viewable on mobile devices. The site serves more than 1,000,000 visitors each year.

WELS Mobile, the synod mobile app available on iOS, Android, and Amazon, has more than 20,000 users. Devotional text, audio, and video content are available through the app as well as news, call reports, and basic called worker and congregation Yearbook data. The Yearbook portion of the app is also available through a web browser by going to <http://myb.wels.net>. The app allows you to search by church/school or by called worker. Congregational statistics are also now available through the same app. Recently added were devotions for early childhood ministry educators and devotions written specifically for teens. Just search your favorite app store for “WELS Mobile.”

WELSTech, a weekly audio/video podcast about technology and ministry, celebrated its 400th show last summer at the WELSTech Conference held in Waukesha, Wis. The conference was attended by approximately 250 pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and laymen/women who learned about the many ways technology can be used in the church and as a tool for personal witness. Many “connections” were made and plans will get underway soon for

another conference in the future, perhaps in coordination with the Lutheran Schools leadership conference. The podcast continues each week with guest interviews, timely tech-in-ministry topics, and great feedback from show listeners. This past year the hosts of the show, Mr. Martin Spriggs and Ms. Sallie Draper, co-wrote a book on project management for churches, schools, and other faith-based organizations called “With All Your Heart.” To get a copy or view the show notes page for the podcast, visit welstech.wels.net.

Behind the scenes much work is being done to protect the synod’s digital assets. A full security audit was completed to ensure that websites that provide ecommerce functionality are secure and appropriate policies and procedures are in place and in compliance with Payment Card Industry (PCI) standards. A number of gaps were identified and have now been addressed. More frequent and aggressive attacks on our systems have been observed but no violations to date. Security audits will continue and also be coordinated with other synod institutions, especially our four synod schools and subsidiaries.

A look ahead

In the coming year work will continue on the WELSource project. Phase 3 will finally sunset the old “Progress” database. This project will see the migration of Campus Ministry data, Yearbook data, and other event data. Alongside the WELSource project will continue the steady migration of paper to digital forms. Hundreds of forms (both paper and simple PDFs) still remain to be recreated/enhanced in the synod’s forms tool. All of these efforts together will save thousands of man hours each year in data entry and management. Many of these improvements will benefit called workers, churches, and schools as they have greater visibility into synod data that affects them and allows an easy way to keep that data up-to-date. Call lists will be more accurate, reports more timely, and access to the right forms and people more likely without assistance.

Security, resource availability, and disaster recovery will again be a priority in the year ahead. It is a goal to provide continuing services to synod workers by making available virtual resources that can be accessed from any computer. This “mobile” approach to computing will also support a more decentralized office model. The current trend sees more and more synod employees working from off-site locations and during business trips. Cloud-based resources address the need for information on-the-go. This will also require even better security of portable computing equipment (laptops, tablets, and phones). Remote device management and disk encryption will be put in place to safeguard data.

WELS.net University will be upgraded and renewed efforts will be made to make it a viable e-learning platform. Special Ministries has asked for courses to be set up that include military contact pastor training, Conquerors through Christ accountability partner training, and continuing education for chaplains. Currently an online Bible study for the book of John, Sunday school teacher courses, and parenting courses are available. Sites hosted on our Moodle Learning Management platform can offer videos, text resources, forums, surveys, and quizzes.

The WELS Technology team looks forward to opportunities for service. As God has allowed new technologies available for our use, we strive to be good stewards of them and enable our synod’s ministries to use them to spread the precious news of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. To him be the glory.

Mr. Martin Spriggs, reporter

Financial Services

Our calling

Financial Services prepares and provides accounting and financial information and services that support and serve WELS ministries. This is accomplished with timely, accurate, and complete financial statements, reports, and analyses that facilitate ministry by providing God-pleasing, efficient, and effective financial services and operations that are in accordance with policies, procedures, and regulations and by installing and maintaining internal control systems that safeguard the assets God has provided.

Financial Services provides financial planning and forecasts; accounting, audit, and financial statement preparation; gift processing; accounts payable; accounts receivable; unclaimed property; special funds accounting; payroll; risk management; insurance; records retention; banking; cash management; investments; contract review; corporate credit card and rental vehicle programs; trust administration; and tax advisory services and legal services coordination. These services are provided to WELS, WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF), WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds (WIF), WELS Retirement Plans, WELS Voluntary Employee Benefits Association (VEBA) as well as serving as consultants for these services to Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) and WELS' four ministerial education schools.

Human Resources and Facility Services also report to the chief financial officer (CFO). The CFO is the WELS treasurer and an advisor to the Synodical Council and Accounting Oversight, Compensation Review, and Human Resources Advisory Committees. In addition, the CFO serves on the Capital Project Committee and as the synod president's designate serves as an advisory member to the board of directors of NPH, CEF, WELS Foundation, WIF, and the WELS Retirement Plans and VEBA Commissions.

Our current situation

Financial Services is blessed with a dedicated, talented staff with complementary education, training, and work experiences. Financial Services will continue to identify, investigate, and implement strategies that improve effectiveness and reduce costs within the area and across WELS.

In 2015–16, Financial Services has again identified and implemented strategies that reduced staff while meeting and, in some cases, exceeding service expectations. While staffing reductions did and continue to pose some challenges, we thank God for providing staff with hearts for serving WELS ministries.

Even with significantly fewer staff than several years ago, Financial Services is focusing on maintaining day-to-day operations, reducing costs, and improving effectiveness. Recently, the following occurred:

- Completed all audits within four months of year end and the auditor's opinions were unmodified (the best you can get).
- Collaborated with CEF on the selection and implementation of investor and loan management software.
- Guided development of a balanced ministry financial plan (budget) for the 2015–17 biennium.
- Led the implementation of software to enhance endowment management and donor services provided by WELS Foundation.
- Continued to develop documentation and staff cross-training to avoid disruption of operations.
- Collaborated in the evaluation of WIF operation models and administrative structures.
- Provided payroll processing services for all of the schools.
- Negotiated fee reductions for audit services for fiscal year 2015–16.
- Assumed additional responsibilities for CEF member investment rate setting, accounting, and reporting.
- Collaborated on the development and implementation of a disaster response plan.
- Reviewed and enhanced WELS Foundation's compliance with state charitable gift annuity registration requirements.
- Use of corporate credit cards is at its highest level, which has resulted in a small cash back award and has saved tens of thousands of dollars annually through its provision of insurance on rental cars.

A look ahead

With no increase in synod support, Financial Services is forced to further reduce staff. We are confident that controls will not be weakened and are fully committed to ensuring that services will not deteriorate as a result of the further reduction. However, our abilities to react to new service requests may be limited. We will continue to seek out and implement changes that reduce costs, increase effectiveness, and/or strengthen internal controls.

Looking ahead, our plans include the following:

- Acclimation and training of new employees and employees with new responsibilities.
- Transition to electronic storage and retention of reports, communications, and records.
- Conduct, in collaboration with the ministerial education schools, NPH, WELS VEBA, and Pension Plan, a request for proposal (RFP) for the provision of banking services.
- Conduct, on behalf of the Accounting Oversight Committee, solicitation and evaluation of RFP for audit services for FY2017 and beyond.
- Evaluate the economic benefits of further increases to property, casualty, and auto insurance lines.
- Evaluate electronic receipt processing and retention for the corporate credit card program.

- Collaborate in the development of a short- (biennium), intermediate- (3-10 years), and long- (>10 years) term capital projects plan for WELS, its schools, and its subsidiaries for the 2017 long-range ministry plan.
- Further leverage purchasing power through expanded negotiated contracts for goods and services.

In summary, the Financial Services team is honored to serve and is prepared to use the available resources and its God-given skills and abilities to support the ministries of WELS.

Mr. Todd J. Poppe, reporter

Human Resources

Our calling

The synod's Human Resources Department oversees the personnel functions for synod workers, including development, communication, and implementation of personnel policies; recruitment; compensation; benefits; performance management; and employee relations. Human Resources provides support to the Center for Mission and Ministry leaders and employees, as well as the various WELS entities, schools, and congregations. Human Resources also provides advice to supervisors on matters ranging from federal and state legal requirements to recruiting and developing members of their teams.

Human Resources (HR) serves as a resource to WELS congregations and to affiliated groups and entities on the matters mentioned above as well as for risk management and federal and state legal requirements related to personnel matters. Further, in addition to legally mandated reporting to authorities, any charge, report, or allegation of sexual misconduct or physical abuse that has been made of an incident involving pastors, teachers, vicars, full- or part-time employees, and volunteers in any capacity must be reported to the synod president, director of Lutheran Schools, or director of Human Resources.

Our current situation

Beyond day-to-day human resource management activities, there are a few key activities/accomplishments that deserve special attention:

- The Human Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC) is in place and operating to ensure the WELS HR function provides support, counsel, and leadership in key areas related to management, worker development, and policy across all synodical entities. Further, that these systems are efficient and effective and that HR is staffed appropriately to include the requisite training and experience. The committee meets quarterly, rotating on-site meetings with conference call meetings.
- Staffed the following roles at the Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM) within the last 12 months—payroll specialist; loan servicing manager, WELS CEF; administrative assistant, Commissions on Special Ministries and Worship; executive director, WELS CEF; missions liaison; communications specialist; benefits specialist; and administrative assistant, Technology.
- Migration of HR website information from the WELS Connect site to the WELS Cloud. Massive clean-up required in advance of the move and ongoing to streamline the usefulness of HR information.
- HR continues to perform due diligence on the vendors and systems in place within the HR structure. This has been and will continue to be an important step to ensure that both the outcomes provided, as well as the costs, are appropriate and expected.
- An audit has been completed on internal and external compliance within Human Resources' policies and procedures. Improvements are being implemented to ensure all activities are completed promptly. Thorough review of I-9 forms revealed many inaccurately completed and incomplete forms that have now been updated.
- Updated human resource materials for WELS organizations including compensation worksheets to assist in budgeting compensation and benefits for called workers. Visit cloud.wels.net/hr.
- Processing of new reporting and compliance documents required by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) starting in 2015 requiring all large employers to file annual reports and monitor measurement periods to comply with the ACA employer mandate.

- HR continues to work with congregations and COP members on personnel matters and general compensation issues.

A look ahead

Our key area of focus will be to review current operations and identify where process improvements can be implemented. Over the next biennium, Human Resources will, with God's guidance and blessings:

- Develop compensation guidelines, matrices, and models for the 2017–19 biennium.
- Provide continued training with synod leaders to continue to reinforce and develop the supervisory skills required.
- Continue to work with all synod entities to identify areas that can be developed, improved, or modified to create better efficiency and effectiveness.
- Assist members from both an informative as well as a practical aspect.
- Update and maintain the WELS HR Cloud site to ensure information and details provided assist members from both an informational as well as a practical aspect.
- Full utilization of the ADP HR & payroll software modules and support for the Center for Mission and Ministry and the ministerial education schools.

The Human Resources Advisory Committee continues to be active. The committee meets at a minimum biannually and will meet more regularly as needed. The committee's focus has changed from assistance and direction for day-to-day operational HR issues to involvement, planning, and assistance in strategic items such as compensation/benefit design, succession planning, and organization architecture/design issues.

Questions can be directed to hro@wels.net or call 414-256-3268.

Mr. Dennis Maurer, reporter

Mr. Thomas Plath, Human Resources Advisory Committee chairman

Mr. Robert Bullens, Human Resources Advisory Committee member

Mr. Len Kasten, Human Resources Advisory Committee member

Mr. Todd J. Poppe, Human Resources Advisory Committee member and WELS chief financial officer

Prof. Earle Treptow, Human Resources Advisory Committee member

Facility Services

Our calling

Facility Services provides support services to the ministries conducted at or through the synod corporate headquarters. This objective is accomplished by providing a God-pleasing physical work space conducive to ministry operations and by creating a welcoming environment to passersby, visitors, guests, and employees.

Our current situation

Since the summer of 2013, synodical administration has been housed in a building located in Waukesha, Wis., along I-94 on Stone Ridge Dr. It is called the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM). The building has 33,000 square feet of space on two floors. All areas of ministry and departments of the synod, along with the WELS subsidiaries (WELS Church Extension Fund, WELS Foundation, and WELS Investment Funds), WELS VEBA, and WELS Pension Plan are located at the new site.

Since the move, there have been two major projects to restore the grounds, which were not well maintained by the former owners. The projects involved the landscaping and the entrance and patio stone work. To ensure the building is maintained going forward, the Synodical Council established a building reserve fund for the setting aside and accumulation of funds for future projects.

A look ahead

The new location has a full basement and at the time the building was acquired this basement was identified as a possible home for the synod archives, which are currently housed at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. At the time of

this writing, the synod, fueled by a \$200,000 grant from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, is moving forward with an archives project in the basement of the Center for Mission and Ministry. The project includes hiring an archivist, building out a proper space for the synod's archives, and creating a visitor center. The construction project is expected to be completed this summer, and the archives will be relocated before winter. Build out of the space for the archives and the visitor center, including racking, fire suppression, and HVAC is estimated to be about \$300,000 and will be funded by the seminary grant and the synod's building fund. The ongoing operating and maintenance costs will be included in the synod support allocations starting in the next biennium.

Mr. Todd J. Poppe, reporter

Capital Projects Committee

Our calling

By resolution, the 2013 synod convention created the Capital Projects Committee to ensure that the synod's capital needs were a component of the synod's ministry plans in the near term and longer term. The Capital Projects Committee established a charter and various criteria and definitions to guide its work for this initial phase, which focused on the facility capital projects needed and desired for the 2015–17 biennium as well as the 2017–25 long-range plan for ministry.

Our current situation

The Capital Projects Committee believes that in general terms, the synod's facilities are being well maintained and updated as funds are available. Specifically, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) and Martin Luther College (MLC), through a use of their operating funds, reserves, synod support from the Board for Ministerial Education (BME), and gifts, are able to keep up on maintenance and modernize their facilities and grounds. Luther Preparatory School (LPS) and Michigan Luther Seminary (MLS) have limited reserves and thus rely on allocations of their operating funds and synod support through the BME for their facility maintenance and modernization needs. Additionally, the MLS Foundation has in the past focused on the funding of capital projects at MLS. Recently, the MLS Foundation has changed its emphasis to include both student assistance and special projects. Collectively, these sources have proven to be moderately adequate for the maintenance of the facilities and grounds. The synod's Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM) facility needs are funded from its Building Fund. The CMM Building Fund is funded by subsidiary and affiliate rent for space at the CMM and is adequately funded for the foreseeable future, given the newness of the building. Northwestern Publishing House declined to participate in the work of the committee.

A look ahead

Looking forward, the Capital Projects Committee has concerns about the synod's ability to maintain and modernize its schools' facilities and grounds. WLS and MLC have been able to use synod support, unrestricted gifts, and reserves to fund maintenance projects. This funding model may be challenged going forward with the prospects of flat or declining synod support from Congregation Mission Offerings, which could result in synod support being redirected to maintain reasonable tuition rates and student assistance. Likewise, LPS and MLS could be required to use more of its synod support funding for maintenance projects, which could make tuition rates rise significantly.

At the direction of the 2015 synod convention, each of the synod's schools are working on development of a campus master plan. This summer, the Capital Projects Committee will review these plans and develop a prioritized list based on synodwide needs. Working in collaboration with the Conference of Presidents, a funding approach will be identified for each project that is included in the long-range ministry plan to be considered by the 2017 synod convention.

Mr. Tom Schermerhorn, reporter

Mr. Tom Schermerhorn, chairman and Synodical Council lay representative

Mr. Matt Burow, lay representative

Mr. Chris Kestner, Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Mr. Todd J. Poppe, WELS chief financial officer
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of Board for Ministerial Education
Mr. Steve Strucely, Luther Preparatory School
Mr. Steve Thiesfeldt, Martin Luther College
Mr. Brian Treichel, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
Mr. Dean Waldschmidt, Board for Ministerial Education

Advisory members:

Ms. Carla Hulke, director of finance for Martin Luther College
Ms. Jamie Ristow, director of financial planning and analysis for WELS

Finance and budget

Financial results and ministry financial plan

Overview

The Lord continues to bless the synod with financial support for missions and ministry through congregations, members, and supporting organizations. This support and the ministry it funds form the ministry financial plan. The Synodical Council (SC) guides, through the synod president, the development of the plan by areas of ministry and the ministerial education schools for each fiscal year of the biennium. The proposed plan is presented by the SC to the synod for approval at the biennial convention.

To provide a comprehensive financial picture, the ministry financial plan includes the synod and its four ministerial education schools' operating and special funds. The operating funds include Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) and other unrestricted gifts. Special funds are used by the synod and the schools to account for gifts that donors have restricted for a specific mission or ministry.

In addition to the operating and special funds, the synod created a Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) for unrestricted gifts, like bequests and grants from the Schwan Foundation. These gifts and grants are held in the FSF until the year(s) after they have been received. The fund was created in FY2010 to increase the predictability of unrestricted gifts that were used for funding the plan. Prior to establishment of the FSF, mid-year ministry plan adjustments were frequently required to keep the plan balanced. Subsequent to establishment of the FSF, mid-year plan adjustments have not been necessary for unanticipated changes in support levels and sources.

Fiscal year 2014–15 (FY15)

The plan was developed based on the assumption that CMO—the synod's cornerstone for financial support—would increase 4.0 percent in 2014 and 2015. CMO did not keep pace with the growth assumption, so the Synodical Council was compelled to reduce synod support by \$825,000 at the start of the year. Thankfully, actual receipts for FY15 were about \$285,000 higher than expected from 2015 subscriptions, and cost savings resulted in lower than planned expenditures, which made further ministry reductions unnecessary.

A detailed report on the financial results for FY15 is available at cloud.wels.net/finance. Also, please refer to pp. 105-107 for the FY15 consolidating schedules of financial position and activities that provide the results for the year by entity (synod, its four ministerial education schools, and the Ministry Support subsidiaries) on a consolidated basis.

Fiscal year 2015–16 (FY16)

The plan for FY16 was developed on the following assumptions—2015 CMO subscriptions would be met and CMO would increase 1 percent in 2016; \$1.6 million would be used to pay down debt; other sources of support would remain relatively flat; synod funding for ministry and ministry support would remain flat at the FY15 level; and the FSF reserves would be reduced by \$2.9 million.

Since the plan was developed and approved by the convention, there have been several positive changes.

- In 2015, CMO receipts were 2.9 percent greater than subscriptions and reached a new all-time high, but subscriptions for 2016 are 1.8 percent less than 2015 receipts. The net effect is CMO of about \$330,000 more than in the original plan.
- A property sale increased by \$815,000 a grant that flows to the synod through the WELS Foundation.
- Expenses are lower than planned due to position vacancies and cost containment efforts in Ministry Support.

The result is a plan that is balanced and reduces FSF reserves by an estimated \$2.0 million or \$900,000 better than planned.

However, FY16 has also seen its challenges. CMO outperformed subscriptions and reached a record high in 2015 but has, on average, only increased .5 percent over the last five years while costs have been increasing about 3 percent.

Also, the special funds have been hard hit by investment losses due to the market downturn that started in the second half of 2015. So, while the results for FY16 appear to be better than planned, significant longer-term challenges remain if the synod's cornerstone of financial support, CMO, does not grow at least as fast as costs are increasing.

Fiscal year 2016–17 (FY17)

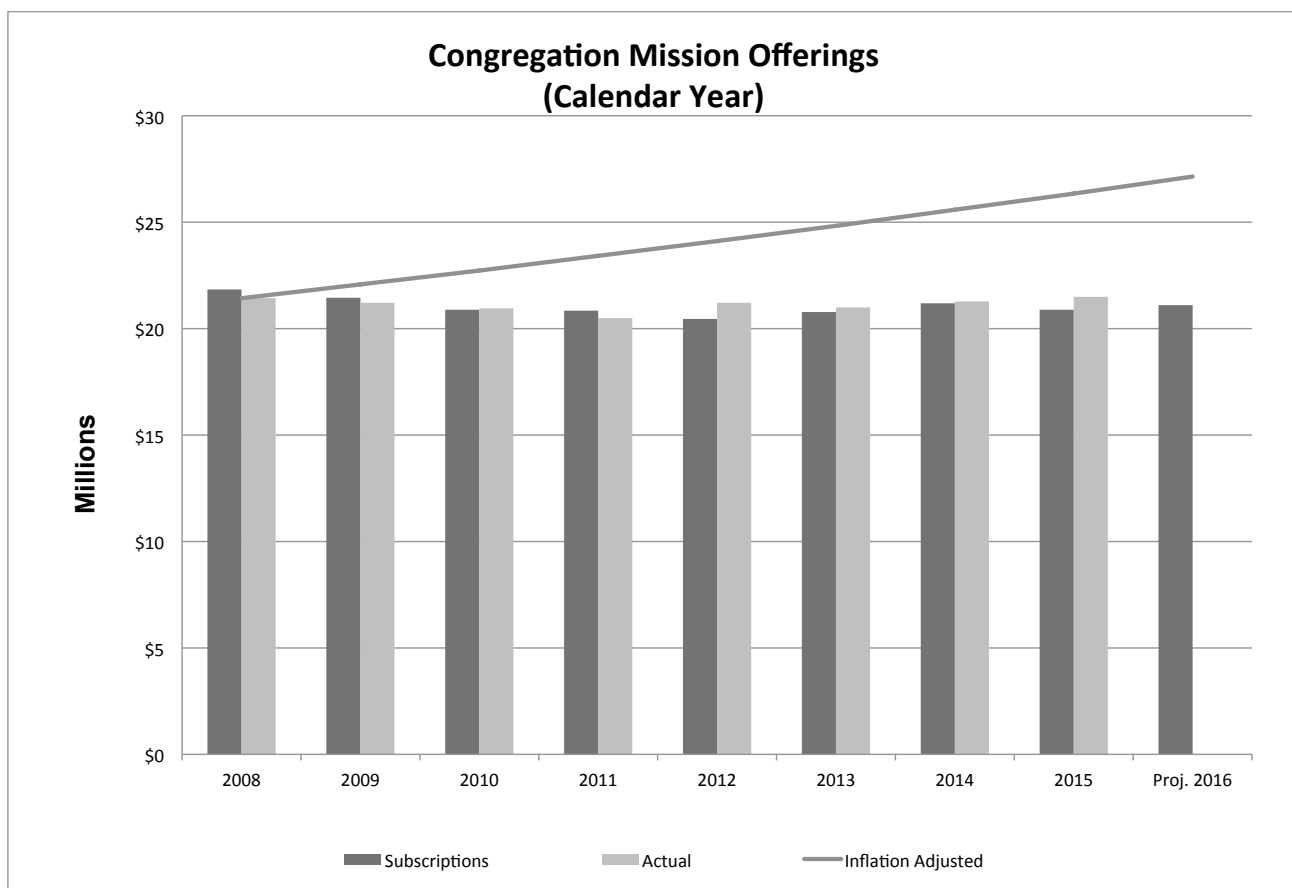
The plan for FY17 was developed on the following assumptions—2015 CMO subscriptions would be met and CMO would increase in 2016 and 2017 by 1.0 percent; the One in Christ offering would eliminate the synod debt payment; an investment that results in grants that flow through the WELS Foundation would be liquidated and result in a one-time grant of \$2.9 million; other sources of support would remain relatively flat; and the FSF reserves would increase \$2 million.

As in FY16, there have been changes that affect the FY17 plan:

- In 2015, CMO receipts were 2.9 percent greater than subscriptions and reached a new all-time high but subscriptions for 2016 are 1.8 percent less than 2015 receipts. CMO is projected to increase 1.0 percent in 2017. The net effect is CMO about even with the plan.
- One in Christ offering receipts do not appear to be sufficient to retire the synod's debt, and debt service payments were not included in the plan for FY17.
- A property sale in FY16 reduces to \$2.5 million the amount to be realized from the investment liquidation.
- It is unknown if the expense savings expected for FY16 can be sustained into and through FY17.

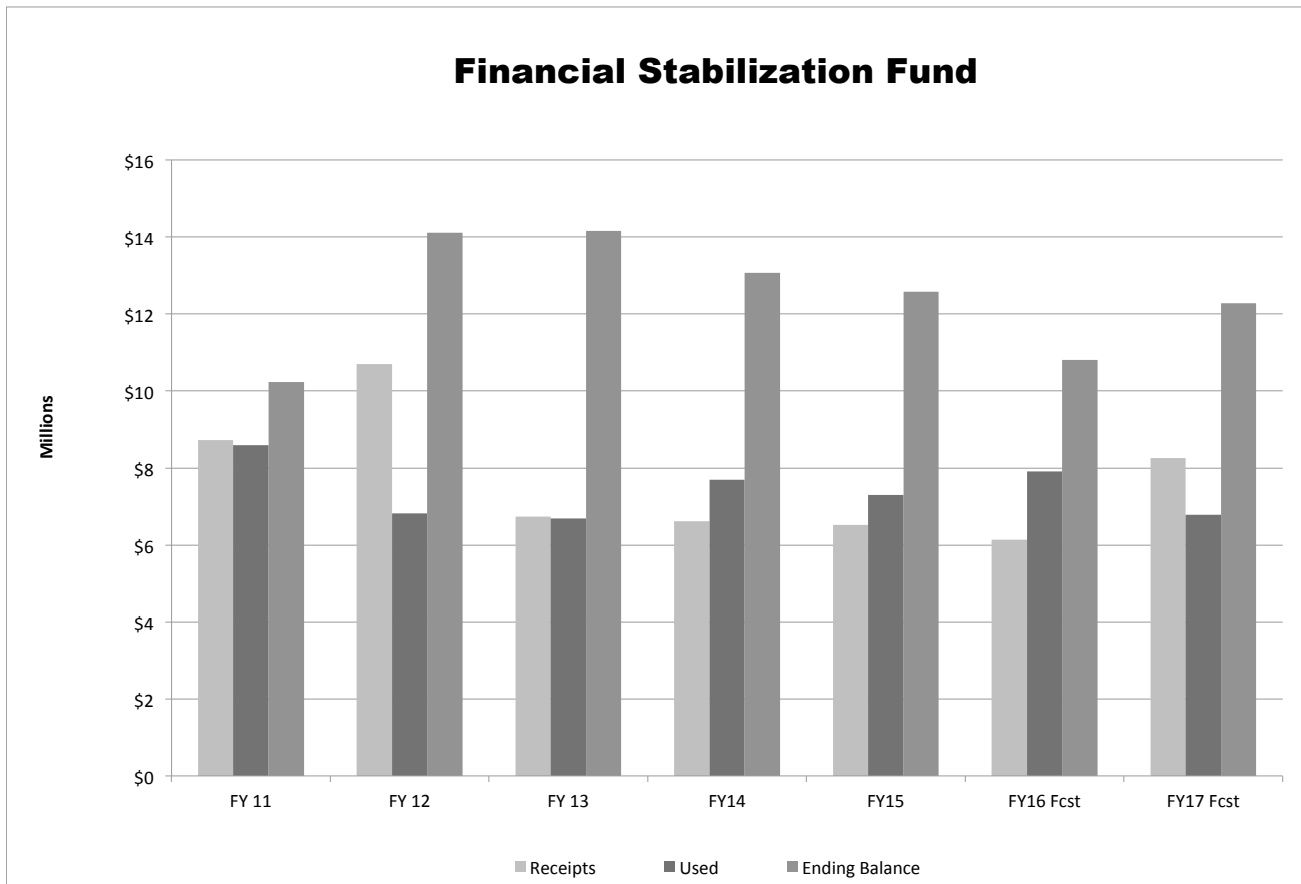
The result is a plan that is balanced but results in an FSF reserve balance \$530,000 less than planned plus some amount to continue to make payments on the synod's remaining debt.

As noted previously, CMO—the synod's cornerstone for financial support—has not kept pace with normal cost increases, much less provided support to increase ministries where the gospel is so desperately needed and desired. If this trend is not changed, other sources of support will need to be identified and developed or costs reduced. With other sources of support could come restrictions that limit the ministries they can be used for, rather than following the approved ministry plan.



Financial Stabilization Fund

The FSF has been blessed. A bequest of \$3.2 million in FY12 and the proceeds from an investment termination expected in FY17 provide a solid foundation for overcoming unanticipated changes in unrestricted support levels. However, as a result of the investment termination, approximately \$550,000 annually of World Mission ministries that was funded by earnings from that investment will need to be funded by CMO and the Financial Stabilization Fund in FY18 and beyond. Continuing to have FSF uses exceed receipts is not sustainable and could cause funding model changes with undesirable consequences. The SC is aware of the situation and is committed to maintaining an acceptable balance in the FSF while also trying to avoid any undesirable consequences that could arise if uses continue to exceed receipts by significant margins. An appropriate course of action is being considered as work begins on planning for the 2017–19 biennium.



WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Schedule of Financial Position

June 30, 2015

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	CEF	Foundation	WIF	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
Assets											
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 22,340,440	\$ 7,070,196	\$ 1,555,817	\$ 20,998	\$ 1,103,843	\$ 36,943,450	\$ 923,577	\$ -	\$ 892,730	\$ -	\$ 70,851,051
Cash restricted for gift annuities and trusts payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	671,389	-	-	-	671,389
Investments	17,984,415	13,734,054	11,939,094	1,286,628	1,526,629	18,359,897	84,180,876	171,667,663	2,308,672	(135,096,396)	187,869,532
Certificates of Deposit	-	141,400	-	19,156	-	-	-	-	-	-	160,556
Accounts receivable, net	295,312	97,012	60,764	71,994	9,060	-	(10,515)	1,060	660,706	-	1,185,393
Gifts and bequests receivable, net	2,465,829	133,243	123,000	94,500	153,076	70,001	978,677	-	-	-	4,018,326
Accrued interest receivable	-	-	-	-	-	434,692	-	116,808	-	-	551,500
Inventories	-	116,351	72,131	35,440	15,602	-	-	-	2,242,581	-	2,482,105
Loans to students	-	1,026,237	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,026,237
Property and real estate held for sale, net	9,707	-	-	-	-	71,910	854,650	-	-	-	936,267
Loans receivable from congregations, net	-	-	-	-	-	124,096,129	-	-	-	-	124,096,129
Cash surrender value on life insurance policies	-	28,735	39,605	12,525	-	-	1,261,070	-	-	(87,203)	1,341,935
Assets held in trust - outside WELS	496,628	1,206,608	-	86,004	-	80,090	-	-	-	-	1,869,330
Other assets	508,528	295,912	74,043	12,555	35,507	-	-	-	112,257	-	1,038,802
Contributions receivable - Foundation	13,282,916	1,480,000	1,784,714	2,022,008	160,143	1,207,602	-	-	-	(19,937,383)	-
Beneficial interest - assets held by WELS Foundation	14,322,217	2,164,710	1,938,214	257,610	363,071	-	-	-	-	(19,045,822)	-
Property, plant, and equipment, net	7,952,638	24,680,996	3,899,311	5,987,088	7,839,473	-	-	-	1,839,784	-	52,199,290
Investment in CEF certificates	13,190,275	-	1,565,507	-	-	-	25,921	-	1,940,403	(16,722,106)	-
Short term investments with WELS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Due from related party	1,536,175	4,635,000	-	-	-	(47,777)	(32,414)	-	-	(6,090,984)	-
Collections and works of art	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total assets	\$ 94,385,080	\$ 56,810,454	\$ 23,052,200	\$ 9,906,506	\$ 11,206,404	\$ 181,215,994	\$ 88,853,231	\$ 171,785,531	\$ 9,997,133	\$ (196,981,894)	\$ 450,230,639
Liabilities and Net Assets											
Liabilities:											
Accounts payable	\$ 728,579	\$ 306,985	\$ 33,297	\$ 25,903	\$ 180,116	\$ 68	\$ 3,923	\$ -	\$ 194,909	\$ (9,957)	\$ 1,463,823
Accrued expenses and other liabilities	2,577,129	375,358	64,966	49,273	162,346	2,519,035	23,853	96,593	287,814	-	6,158,367
Deferred revenue	132,747	335,442	67,340	4,359	62,883	-	-	-	627,084	-	1,229,855
Retiree health benefits payable	1,816,672	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,816,672
Certificates payable	-	-	-	-	-	83,040,478	-	-	-	(16,722,106)	66,318,372
Liabilities to other beneficiaries	-	1,273,707	-	-	-	-	8,328,993	-	-	-	9,602,700
Deposits held in custody	-	9,543	4,200	50,564	23,753	-	-	-	-	-	88,060
Liabilities to outside agencies and organizations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gift annuities and trusts payable	2,156,663	5,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36,586,098	38,748,261
U.S. Government grants refundable	-	-	-	-	-	-	28,623,568	-	-	-	28,623,568
Bonds payable	4,635,000	843,469	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	843,469
Due to related party	133,798	896,275	51,949	(14,935)	(378,683)	836,679	8,149	-	-	(4,635,000)	4,635,000
Total liabilities	12,180,588	8,681,279	221,752	115,164	50,415	86,396,260	36,988,486	98,593	1,109,807	13,685,803	159,528,147
Net assets:											
Unrestricted	29,773,735	6,595,752	6,513,734	129,742	1,146,908	68,449,167	12,211,005	171,666,938	8,882,326	(129,832,214)	175,557,093
Temporarily restricted	28,016,582	32,102,753	8,609,063	8,729,129	9,018,500	1,287,680	21,701,456	-	5,000	(63,536,536)	45,933,627
Permanently restricted	24,414,175	9,430,670	7,707,651	932,471	990,581	25,062,887	17,952,284	-	-	(17,298,947)	69,211,772
Total net assets	82,204,492	48,129,175	22,830,448	9,791,342	11,155,989	94,819,734	51,864,745	171,666,938	8,887,326	(210,667,597)	290,702,492
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 94,385,080	\$ 56,810,454	\$ 23,052,200	\$ 9,906,506	\$ 11,206,404	\$ 181,215,994	\$ 88,853,231	\$ 171,785,531	\$ 9,997,133	\$ (196,981,894)	\$ 450,230,639

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
Consolidating Schedule of Activities
Year Ended June 30, 2015

	Unrestricted							Eliminations	Consolidated
	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	CEF	Foundation		
Member Support and Revenues									
Member support:									
Offerings from congregations	\$ 21,641,358	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 21,641,358
Gifts and memorials	4,276,830	566,839	428,614	207,999	227,434	96,090	980,208	-	5,612,701
Bequests	1,662,686	257,212	329,913	259,751	554	2,003,768	68,850	-	4,582,734
Total member support	27,580,874	814,051	758,527	467,750	227,988	2,099,858	1,049,058	-	31,836,793
Revenues:									
Net student tuition and fees	-	10,911,308	781,639	1,429,975	3,521,161	-	-	-	16,644,083
Activity fees and retail sales	2,471,882	894,163	77,319	176,438	190,306	-	-	-	8,552,410
Interest and dividends	837,748	188,596	168,498	1,215	41,643	6,447,466	111,668	5,495,390	8,362,310
Net realized and unrealized gain on investments	-	(33,097)	(31,788)	-	(2,408)	(76,870)	(25,449)	108,915	(187,033)
Change in value of trust agreements	-	-	-	267	-	-	(1,354,779)	(17,421)	(1,354,512)
Redesignated fixed asset additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Change in value - endowments below historical gift value	(8,705)	-	(6,936)	-	-	-	(8,149)	-	(23,790)
Other	361,035	110,280	7,307	9,965	295,620	(413,893)	1,363,283	280,889	2,014,486
Transfers from other funds	6,904,156	3,582,877	2,371,062	1,383,673	2,899,881	-	-	-	-
Total revenues	10,566,116	15,654,127	3,367,101	3,001,533	6,746,203	5,956,703	86,574	5,867,773	34,007,954
Donor redesignation	-	-	-	-	-	-	(2,250)	-	(2,250)
Net assets released from restrictions	7,908,877	3,168,056	1,346,906	910,346	642,656	21,740	3,624,875	36,667	12,452,431
Total member support and revenues	46,055,867	19,636,234	5,472,534	4,379,629	7,616,847	8,078,301	4,758,257	5,904,440	78,294,928
Expenses									
Program services:									
Ministerial education	8,758,369	18,966,539	5,750,524	4,332,479	7,482,159	-	-	-	34,056,534
World missions	9,016,874	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,765,149
Home missions	7,979,715	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,342,110
Congregational and district ministries	6,655,126	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,353,956
Northwestern Publishing House	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,571,931	6,541,385
Total program services	32,410,084	18,966,539	5,750,524	4,332,479	7,482,159	-	-	6,571,931	63,059,134
Support services:									
Ministry support - subsidiaries	356	-	-	-	-	4,353,613	1,669,275	-	6,532,380
General and administrative	11,767,585	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,469,619
Transfers to other funds	64,508	-	-	-	-	-	4,581,105	-	-
Total support services	11,832,449	-	-	-	-	-	6,250,380	-	11,001,999
Total expenses	44,242,533	18,966,539	5,750,524	4,332,479	7,482,159	4,353,613	26,541,054	6,571,931	74,061,133
Change in Net Assets	1,813,334	689,695	(277,990)	47,150	134,688	3,724,688	(1,492,123)	(5,710,099)	4,233,795
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	27,960,401	5,926,057	6,791,724	82,592	1,012,220	64,724,479	13,703,128	9,549,817	171,323,298
Net Assets - End of year	\$ 29,773,735	\$ 6,565,752	\$ 6,513,734	\$ 129,742	\$ 1,146,908	\$ 68,449,167	\$ 12,211,005	\$ 8,882,326	\$ 175,557,093

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
Consolidating Schedule of Activities (Continued)
Year Ended June 30, 2015

	Temporarily Restricted										
	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	CEF	Foundation	WIF	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
Member Support and Revenues											
Member support:											
Gifts and memorials	\$ 4,902,661	\$ 731,426	\$ 666,983	\$ 667,131	\$ 564,806	\$ -	\$ 1,380,003	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,913,010
Bequests	1,308,271	21,557	224,200	-	-	-	2,921	-	-	-	1,556,949
Total member support	6,210,932	752,983	891,183	667,131	564,806	-	1,382,924	-	-	-	10,469,959
Revenues:											
Activity fees and retail sales	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Interest and dividends	366,991	381,047	127,618	62,020	22,042	-	1,490,205	-	-	-	2,449,923
Net realized and unrealized loss on investments	(128,913)	(110,901)	(51,600)	(43,685)	(7,590)	-	(538,896)	-	-	(41,973)	(923,558)
Change in value of trust agreements	715,157	246,363	(44,340)	8,585	35	3,399	(704,820)	-	-	(794,878)	(570,499)
Redesignated fixed asset additions	-	1,060,533	636,023	591,225	227,415	-	-	-	-	(2,515,196)	-
Change in value - endowments below historical gift value	8,705	-	6,936	-	-	-	8,149	-	-	-	23,790
Other	(219)	-	-	-	-	-	(57,378)	-	-	-	(57,597)
Transfers from other funds	-	-	4,000	-	-	-	(28,575)	-	-	24,575	-
Total revenues	961,721	1,577,042	678,637	618,145	241,902	3,399	168,685	-	-	(3,327,472)	922,059
Donor redesignation	-	-	-	-	10,124	-	-	-	-	-	10,124
Net assets released from restrictions	(7,908,877)	(3,168,056)	(1,346,906)	(910,346)	(642,656)	(21,740)	(3,624,875)	-	(36,667)	5,207,692	(12,452,431)
Change in Net Assets	(736,224)	(838,031)	222,914	374,930	174,176	(18,341)	(2,073,266)	-	(36,667)	1,880,220	(1,050,289)
Net Assets - Beginning of year	28,752,806	32,940,784	8,386,149	8,354,199	8,844,324	1,306,021	23,774,722	-	41,667	(65,416,756)	46,983,916
Net Assets - End of year	\$ 28,016,582	\$ 32,102,753	\$ 8,609,063	\$ 8,729,129	\$ 9,018,500	\$ 1,287,680	\$ 21,701,456	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ (63,536,536)	\$ 45,933,627
Member Support and Revenues											
Member support:											
Gifts and memorials	\$ 67,950	\$ 302,803	\$ 652,951	\$ -	\$ 102,400	\$ -	\$ 389,272	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (23,000)	\$ 1,492,376
Bequests	1,525,001	828,380	171,689	-	123,000	-	1,369,218	-	-	-	4,017,288
Total member support	1,592,951	1,131,183	824,640	-	225,400	-	1,758,490	-	-	(23,000)	5,509,664
Revenues:											
Change in value of trust agreements	1,391,634	204,607	154,581	6,543	(8,695)	-	71,215	-	-	(1,785,337)	34,548
Other	-	(423)	328	-	-	-	87	-	-	-	(8)
Transfers from other funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total revenues	1,391,634	204,184	154,909	6,543	(8,695)	-	71,302	-	-	(1,785,337)	34,540
Donor redesignation	-	-	-	-	(10,124)	-	2,250	-	-	-	(7,874)
Net assets released from restrictions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Change in Net Assets	2,984,585	1,335,367	979,549	6,543	206,581	-	1,832,042	-	-	(1,808,337)	5,536,330
Net Assets - Beginning of year	21,429,590	8,095,303	6,728,102	925,928	784,000	25,082,887	16,120,242	-	-	(15,490,610)	63,675,442
Net Assets - End of year	\$ 24,414,175	\$ 9,430,670	\$ 7,707,651	\$ 932,471	\$ 990,581	\$ 25,082,887	\$ 17,952,284	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (17,298,947)	\$ 69,211,772

Current called worker compensation guidelines

A Bible study on compensating called workers

Introduction

For the Corinthians the question of how to compensate those who served them with the gospel was initially an easy one to answer. The apostle Paul would not take any compensation. Aware that accepting support from the Corinthians could enable opponents of the gospel to charge that Paul was “in it for the money,” the apostle preached the gospel “free of charge” (1 Corinthians 9:18).

Yet in 1 Corinthians Paul has more to say about compensating servants of the gospel than in any of his other epistles. While there is no Bible passage that specifically tells us how to arrive at levels of compensation for called workers, the words of Jesus and his apostles do establish two timeless principles for addressing the issue of compensation.

Principle #1: “Those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.”

When Jesus sent his 72 disciples out to preach the gospel (Luke 10), he told them to stay with the people to whom they were preaching, “eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages” (Luke 10:7). Later, when Paul was addressing the issue of compensation with his co-worker Timothy, he quoted those words of Jesus (see 1 Timothy 5:18).

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-18.

In Paul’s extensive teaching about compensation in 1 Corinthians 9, he speaks repeatedly about the “right” to compensation.

“Don’t we have the right to food and drink?” (verse 4).

“If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more? But we did not use this right” (verse 12).

“... that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it” (verse 18).

For reasons that had to do with the particular situation in Corinth, while Paul was in Corinth he did not use the right to make his living from the gospel. Instead, he worked, making and selling tents to support himself. But, lest the Corinthians assume that every servant of the Word must serve them free of charge, he very carefully laid out a rationale for the compensation of the public ministers of the Word.

The apostle’s inspired rationale included references to the Old Testament, where the priests who served at the altar shared in what was offered on the altar. He also quoted Deuteronomy 25:4, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and stated that it was ultimately not oxen but people that God was concerned about. Finally, he writes, “The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14).

For discussion

1. How does Paul’s reference to soldiers, farmers, and shepherds (verse 7) reinforce his point that those who preach and teach the gospel have a right to expect compensation from those they serve?
2. Would there be any benefit if teachers or pastors today were expected to work to support themselves and carry on their ministry as Paul did? What would the down side of such a “tent ministry” be?

Principle #2: Honor for those who preach and teach the gospel is honor for Christ.

A discussion of compensation that begins with called workers asserting their right to compensation—and the calling body grudgingly obliging—has gotten off to a bad start. As Jesus and his apostles describe it, it is joy and thankfulness produced by faith that prompt those who hear the gospel to support those who teach and preach the gospel.

A hymn sometimes sung at the installation of called workers begins with this stanza:

“We bid you welcome in the name Of Jesus our exalted head.

Come as a servant—so he came—**We shall receive you in his stead.”**

Those who hear the gospel honor Christ, first of all, by believing the message his messengers deliver. Jesus said, “He who listens to you, listens to me” (Luke 10:16). Honor is also given to Christ by the manner in which his messengers are treated. Paul advised Timothy, “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17).

Honor can be given in many ways. It’s an attitude. The attitude can be heard in the way we speak to or about those who serve us with the gospel. Honor can also be shown in the compensation given to those who serve us with the Word. In fact, the word Paul uses for “honor” in the passage above can also be translated “pay.” (Cf. *honorarium*, a payment, usually for services which custom or propriety forbids a price to be set)

Paul’s mention of *double* honor is probably not a mathematical formula for arriving at the level of compensation for elders but rather another way of saying that adequate or ample compensation is to be provided for them.

In *The People’s Bible* for 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, Armin Schuetze wrote:

Put into today’s terms, by the salary it pays and the benefits it provides, a congregation shows honor and respect for its called workers. It hardly shows “double honor” if their support is kept at the poverty or minimum subsistence level. Neither should the pastor expect, however, that “double honor” requires that those he serves make him a man of wealth.

Determining the specifics of called worker compensation is similar to determining the level of our individual giving for the Lord’s work. The Bible doesn’t give us specific figures. Rather, the Scriptures acquaint us with the grace of God, who offered his own Son as the sacrifice for sin. Thankfulness for that grace leads to generous giving and ample support for called workers.

Compensation plan objectives

Goal #1

Provide a compensation package that reflects the scriptural principles that pertain to the financial support of called workers.

Goal #2

Provide a compensation package that gives the opportunity for those who are served by the gospel to provide financial support to those who serve them with that gospel.

Goal #3

Provide a compensation package that enables called workers to provide for the material well-being of their families and devote their energies, time, and attention to the work of the public ministry.

Synodical salary range assignments

Teacher	A-C
Principal	B-D
Prep professor	B-D
Staff minister	B-D
Prep vice president	C-E
Prep dean	C-E
College professor	C-E
Home missionary	C-E
World missionary	C-E
Associate administrator	C-E
Mission counselor	C-E
Prep president	D-F
College vice president	D-F
College dean	D-F
Seminary professor	D-F
Seminary vice president	D-F
Administrator	D-F
College president	E-G
Seminary president	E-G

Note: A periodic review (minimally once per year) should be undertaken to evaluate an individual's compensation level. Changing call responsibilities and educational levels may lead to a salary range reassignment.

Above base compensation components for called workers

1. Cost of living adjustment (using ACCRA or similar COLA index).
2. Cash housing allowance if not provided housing (using HUD Fair Market Rental Values established upon hire date + adjusted annually based on the percent change for the salary matrix. For 2015–16 and 2016–17 this adjustment would be .5%).
3. Social Security allowance (7.65% of salary, cost of living, and housing value/cash housing/fair market rental of parsonage-teacherage).
4. Housing equity of 2% of entry-level base for workers in provided housing (parsonage/teacherage).
5. VEBA health insurance.
6. WELS Pension.
7. Reimbursement for business-related expenses such as travel and conferences.

Note: An Excel compensation spreadsheet is available for download on the Human Resources page under "compensation" at cloud.wels.net

Compensation for synod president and congregational support for vice presidents

The synod president is compensated with a salary based on column "H." In addition to the base salary and the other components of compensation listed with the compensation guidelines, in 2015–16 the president will receive above base compensation the amount of \$41,225, which reflects a .5% increase from 2014–15. In 2016–17, this component of the president's compensation will be increased by .5% to \$41,431.

The proposed budget for the next biennium includes funding for the first and second vice presidents' congregations in the amount of \$20,000 and \$10,000, respectively. The congregations of the vice presidents are free to request and utilize these funds as they see fit to cover expenses and lost ministry time as a result of the synodical duties of their pastors.

Note: Salary matrices and compensation worksheets are available for download on the Human Resources page under "compensation" at cloud.wels.net

Synod schedule

0.50% Inflation Rate Adjustment

WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES**Salary Matrix****2015–16**

Range Spread	14,356	15,074	15,822	16,540	17,287	18,005	18,753	19,471
Range Spread	14,356	15,074	15,792	16,510	17,227	17,945	18,663	19,381
<i>Service Incr.</i>	479	502	527	551	576	600	625	649
Ranges	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<i>Experience</i>								
0	28,712	30,148	31,584	33,019	34,455	35,891	37,326	38,762
1	29,191	30,651	32,111	33,571	35,031	36,491	37,951	39,411
2	29,670	31,153	32,639	34,122	35,607	37,091	38,576	40,060
3	30,148	31,656	33,166	34,673	36,184	37,691	39,202	40,709
4	30,627	32,158	33,693	35,225	36,760	38,291	39,827	41,358
5	31,105	32,660	34,221	35,776	37,336	38,891	40,452	42,007
6	31,584	33,163	34,748	36,327	37,912	39,492	41,077	42,656
7	32,062	33,665	35,275	36,879	38,489	40,092	41,702	43,305
8	32,541	34,168	35,803	37,430	39,065	40,692	42,327	43,954
9	33,019	34,670	36,330	37,981	39,641	41,292	42,952	44,603
10	33,498	35,173	36,858	38,533	40,217	41,892	43,577	45,252
11	33,976	35,675	37,385	39,084	40,794	42,493	44,202	45,901
12	34,455	36,178	37,912	39,635	41,370	43,093	44,827	46,550
13	34,934	36,680	38,440	40,187	41,946	43,693	45,453	47,199
14	35,412	37,183	38,967	40,738	42,522	44,293	46,078	47,848
15	35,891	37,685	39,495	41,289	43,099	44,893	46,703	48,497
16	36,369	38,188	40,022	41,841	43,675	45,493	47,328	49,146
17	36,848	38,690	40,549	42,392	44,251	46,094	47,953	49,795
18	37,326	39,193	41,077	42,943	44,827	46,694	48,578	50,444
19	37,805	39,695	41,604	43,494	45,404	47,294	49,203	51,093
20	38,283	40,197	42,132	44,046	45,980	47,894	49,828	51,742
21	38,762	40,700	42,659	44,597	46,556	48,494	50,453	52,391
22	39,240	41,202	43,186	45,148	47,132	49,094	51,078	53,041
23	39,719	41,705	43,714	45,700	47,709	49,695	51,704	53,690
24	40,197	42,207	44,241	46,251	48,285	50,295	52,329	54,339
25	40,676	42,710	44,769	46,802	48,861	50,895	52,954	54,988
26	41,155	43,212	45,296	47,354	49,437	51,495	53,579	55,637
27	41,633	43,715	45,823	47,905	50,014	52,095	54,204	56,286
28	42,112	44,217	46,351	48,456	50,590	52,696	54,829	56,935
29	42,590	44,720	46,878	49,008	51,166	53,296	55,454	57,584
30	43,069	45,222	47,406	49,559	51,742	53,896	56,079	58,233
31	43,547	45,725	47,933	50,110	52,319	54,496	56,704	58,882
32	44,026	46,227	48,460	50,662	52,895	55,096	57,330	59,531

See p. 110 for synodical salary range assignments and above base compensation for called workers. See p. 108 for a Bible study on called worker compensation and compensation plan objectives.

Synod schedule

0.50% Inflation Rate Adjustment

WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES**Salary Matrix****2016-17**

Range Spread	14,428	15,149	15,901	16,622	17,374	18,095	18,846	19,568
Range Spread	14,428	15,149	15,871	16,592	17,314	18,035	18,756	19,478
<i>Service Incr.</i>	481	505	530	554	579	603	628	652
Ranges	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<i>Experience</i>								
0	28,856	30,299	31,742	33,184	34,627	36,070	37,513	38,956
1	29,337	30,804	32,272	33,739	35,206	36,673	38,141	39,608
2	29,818	31,309	32,802	34,293	35,785	37,276	38,769	40,260
3	30,299	31,814	33,332	34,847	36,365	37,880	39,397	40,912
4	30,780	32,319	33,862	35,401	36,944	38,483	40,026	41,565
5	31,261	32,824	34,392	35,955	37,523	39,086	40,654	42,217
6	31,742	33,329	34,922	36,509	38,102	39,689	41,282	42,869
7	32,223	33,834	35,452	37,063	38,681	40,292	41,910	43,521
8	32,704	34,339	35,982	37,617	39,260	40,895	42,539	44,174
9	33,184	34,844	36,512	38,171	39,839	41,499	43,167	44,826
10	33,665	35,349	37,042	38,725	40,418	42,102	43,795	45,478
11	34,146	35,854	37,572	39,279	40,998	42,705	44,423	46,131
12	34,627	36,359	38,102	39,833	41,577	43,308	45,051	46,783
13	35,108	36,864	38,632	40,387	42,156	43,911	45,680	47,435
14	35,589	37,369	39,162	40,941	42,735	44,514	46,308	48,087
15	36,070	37,874	39,692	41,496	43,314	45,118	46,936	48,740
16	36,551	38,379	40,222	42,050	43,893	45,721	47,564	49,392
17	37,032	38,884	40,752	42,604	44,472	46,324	48,192	50,044
18	37,513	39,388	41,282	43,158	45,051	46,927	48,821	50,696
19	37,994	39,893	41,812	43,712	45,631	47,530	49,449	51,349
20	38,475	40,398	42,342	44,266	46,210	48,133	50,077	52,001
21	38,956	40,903	42,872	44,820	46,789	48,737	50,705	52,653
22	39,437	41,408	43,402	45,374	47,368	49,340	51,334	53,305
23	39,918	41,913	43,932	45,928	47,947	49,943	51,962	53,958
24	40,398	42,418	44,462	46,482	48,526	50,546	52,590	54,610
25	40,879	42,923	44,992	47,036	49,105	51,149	53,218	55,262
26	41,360	43,428	45,522	47,590	49,684	51,752	53,846	55,914
27	41,841	43,933	46,052	48,144	50,264	52,356	54,475	56,567
28	42,322	44,438	46,582	48,699	50,843	52,959	55,103	57,219
29	42,803	44,943	47,112	49,253	51,422	53,562	55,731	57,871
30	43,284	45,448	47,642	49,807	52,001	54,165	56,359	58,523
31	43,765	45,953	48,172	50,361	52,580	54,768	56,987	59,176
32	44,246	46,458	48,703	50,915	53,159	55,371	57,616	59,828

See p. 110 for synodical salary range assignments and above base compensation for called workers. See p. 108 for a Bible study on called worker compensation and compensation plan objectives.

Board for World Missions

Our calling

Christ's love is the greatest treasure we share as we walk together toward our heavenly home. It is a treasure that goes to work in our hearts and moves us to share Christ's compassion for the lost. There are so many in this world who do not know that this love in Christ is God's gift to us all. For this reason we are so eager to carry out our calling to preach the good news to every creature. In response to our calling, the Board for World Missions is directed to carry out "... the responsibility of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ for the discipling of all people living outside the United States of America and Canada and those people who, because of cultural barriers, have not been made the responsibility of other agencies of WELS" (WELS Bylaws, Sec. 6.1). Into a world that desperately needs it, our missionaries and national church partners bring the light of God's Word. With this powerful tool deployed and in the hands of the Lord of the Church, our work is bearing much fruit.

Our current situation

World Missions

- has a presence in 23 different countries;
- serves 74,834 baptized members in Lutheran churches;
- serves 60,000 more souls through correspondence and workshops;
- is training more than 170 men to become pastors in their own countries;
- is assisting national pastors to train hundreds of people to be Sunday school teachers, liturgists, evangelists, and leaders in congregations in their home countries;
- is exploring outreach possibilities in 5 additional countries;
- supports 41 missionaries, 9 teachers, and more than 60 lay workers in our missions; and
- is reaching more than 194,000 via Internet outreach.

Worldwide the national churches have called nearly 400 national workers who serve the spiritual needs of more than 700 congregations and preaching stations.

The Board for World Missions has appointed eight administrative committees to facilitate this work around the globe. They are the

- Africa Administrative Committee, working with Cameroon, Malawi, Nigeria, and Zambia;
- Asia-Pacific Rim Committee, working with Indonesia, Japan, and Thailand;
- East Asia Administrative Committee, working among Chinese-speaking peoples;
- Europe Administrative Committee, working with Albania, Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine;
- Latin America Administrative Committee, working with Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, and online Spanish contacts;
- Native American Administrative Committee, working with the White Mountain and San Carlos Reservations in Arizona;
- South Asia Administrative Committee, working with India, Nepal, and Pakistan; and
- Multi-Language Publications Administrative Committee, overseeing production, translation, and distribution of digital, printed, online, video, and other resources for our fields.

Information concerning independent sister churches who receive specialized help from WELS can be found in the report of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (p. 19).

The five-man Board for World Missions consists of two pastors, one teacher, and two laymen who are elected by the synod in convention. The administrative committees consist of pastors, teachers, and laymen who volunteer to facilitate the work of the world fields assigned to them. The administrative committee members are appointed by the Board for World Missions and work on behalf of the board to administer the activities in their respective fields. Of course the heart of this work is carried out by our missionaries and the national leaders who are hard at work as Christ's ambassadors in many lands.

The Board for World Missions has asked that all the administrative committees unify planning processes and reports to help coordinate the work we do together. This will help meet the request from the 2015 synod convention asking every field to use careful plans that consider the impact of our work and the help or harm of the withdrawal of resources we use to partner with growing churches around the world.

Every aspect of the work our mission teams carry out in so many ways and so many places is worthy of note. Summaries of this work can be found at wels.net/missions. What follows are some highlights to give an example of what the Lord is using us to do on your behalf.

Malawi receives aid

In the early spring of 2015 severe flooding wiped out much of the essential crops many members of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Malawi needed to feed their families. Through the resources of Christian Aid and Relief, WELS members were able to provide 450 tons of maize to around 4,000 LCCA families. These efforts have helped this church of more than 40,000 members realize that the love of Christ faithfully taught by our missionaries who are there to train future workers is reflected in these gifts from their brothers and sisters in North America.

Indonesia training

Our mission work to partner with the more than 1,500 souls in the Lutheran Church of Indonesia largely centers on worker training. An Indonesian pastor and his wife spent time at our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis., as part of his training to be a trainer to others. He has now returned to Indonesia and works with the other pastors there to organize worker training and outreach ideas to continue to spread the good news in a very Muslim country.

Romani work

A pastor of Romani (often known as Gypsy) descent and member of our sister church in Bulgaria has implemented a plan to reach out to Romani people in Bulgaria, Romania, and other countries in Europe. This work has been met with enthusiasm by sister churches in Europe. Through the last two centuries this people group has been marginalized as it spread throughout Europe. Our Lutheran churches in the area share great interest to get the gospel before them. Five Romani groups have been gathered so far and many more contacts are set to be explored.

Pakistan goes on

Under threat of death our contact in Pakistan has had to flee this Muslim country. Human expectation would assume that this would put an end to our Lutheran work there. However, the groundwork that had been laid over the last years with the gospel as its foundation is still bearing fruit. The work in house churches and correspondence courses continues. More than 50,000 are signed up for the correspondence classes, and more than 30 locations have leaders gathering others every week to teach them Bible stories and catechism lessons. Our contact recently shared this report that is another reason to rejoice in the power of God's Word: "The work seems to be doing better without me." Plans are underway to consider how to begin the next levels of worker training over the Internet and with careful travel.

Nepal recovers and grows

Large earthquakes shook this country last year. Thirty members of our Lutheran churches in Nepal are now at their Father's side as their earthly homes crumbled. Disaster relief in remote villages provided by WELS Christian Aid and Relief has allowed our contacts in the country to bring eternal comfort along with temporary relief. More than 4,000 people are part of our young but growing church in Nepal. Plans are underway to design training for the group of leaders that will continue to reach more and more in this country that is only 1 percent Christian.

Latin American outreach

Our mission team in Latin America continues to partner with local leaders in several small Lutheran church bodies in the Spanish-speaking world. To reach even further an online net is being cast to find more interested people among the 400 million native Spanish speakers in the world. So far more than 250,000 people have watched WELS outreach movies online; thousands are signing up for live classes taught online by dozens of Spanish-speaking called workers in WELS; and more than 30 contacts are using our materials to teach others. These efforts are only a year old.

Hmong work in Thailand

Hmong immigrants in the United States who became WELS members have connected us with several Hmong villages in Thailand. Growing Lutheran churches now have Hmong leaders who have been trained as pastors. The Hmong people are not only found in Thailand. The connection of Hmong members of WELS churches in North America has led to a joint effort to explore possibilities to reach the millions of Hmong that live in Vietnam across the northern borders further into East Asia.

Russian workers are busy

The second year of WELS members moving to Russia to teach English and make new contacts through our sister churches in Russia is underway. Our mission team has trained two Russian pastors who are becoming more and more independent as they lead their churches. A third church has been added to this work as a Ukrainian Lutheran church in Crimea now finds itself under a new government. Our missionaries continue to support these men but now have added opportunities to explore and reach new contacts.

East Asia is thriving

Some of the work done by WELS World Missions cannot be reported online. The most populated country in the world has seen a flurry of work over the last decade. Pastors are trained and ready to lead, and more and more are gathering to hear. Keep an eye out for mission presentations in your area that highlight our work in this part of the world to learn more specifics.

Multi-Language Publications is ready to help

For years our World Missions program has organized multi-language publications to provide confessional Lutheran materials to enhance our gospel work around the world. This year Multi-Language Publication's director relocated his office to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry in Pewaukee, Wis. Among many considerations this allows close partnership with WELS members and resources who have expertise in digital, video, and online production to increase the reach of the quality materials being produced.

A look ahead

Our WELS World Mission work has put us in touch with more than 300,000 people who continue to need the new life the gospel provides. That does not mean that our global work is done. The world's population is growing. More than 7 billion people live on this planet with us. Unfortunately the vast majority do not share the treasure of Christ's love. Even many who live in so-called Christian nations do not know the peace that Jesus brings. We have before us the biggest mission field the world has ever seen.

This leads us to constantly consider additional opportunities to reach out with the life-saving power of Jesus' gospel. These are a sample of new opportunities that are being explored.

Hmong outreach

In Vietnam a group of more than 70,000 members has asked us to help them bring the pure gospel to their churches. Mission work was started by other Christians decades ago, but the group has not had a functional worker training program as the government in this country holds tight control. There is an astonishing lack of even a basic understanding of the peace the gospel brings. They are asking us to help bring what they have been missing. Our Hmong contacts have also led us into the population of millions more Hmong that live across the border to the north.

South Sudanese opportunity

Immigrants from South Sudan have been connecting with WELS congregations for a decade. They want to reach back to Africa. The wars in their home country have led more than 750,000 people from their tribes to flee to reside in refugee camps along the South Sudanese border. Plans are underway to send trainers and material so that those who are in these desperate conditions can learn the joy that an eternity with Jesus brings.

Ethiopia and Kenya

The changing doctrines of many in worldwide Lutheranism have created a vacuum that those who have learned to love confessional Lutheranism look to fill. The search of two groups, one in Kenya and one in Ethiopia, has led to the possibility to reach out with the gospel through African brothers who want to connect to our church and the clear teaching we confess.

International recruitment director

The opportunities above and several more in countries where work has been ongoing for years have led to the need for more worker training. Often this is the best way for us to partner with others who would be unable to provide the experience and solid teaching our synod knows so well. WELS has run seminary programs in several World Mission fields for decades. In addition to that there are more than 300 men who are currently asking WELS to provide them pastoral training so they can continue in the gospel work local groups have called them to carry out. We are beginning a new program connected to our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. An international recruitment director will join the team of the Pastoral Studies Institute professor and the world mission seminary professor to study resources available and design training programs that fit local worker training needs in countries around the world. Our prayer

is that this trio can help us find new ways to coordinate our efforts and new ways to train those who are ready now to carry the gospel to more and more people.

The work in East Asia is growing quickly and will continue to be a high priority for World Missions. Existing work in Africa and new contacts in new countries provide a huge opportunity in the continent that some predict will be the fastest growing over the next decade. In addition, Multi-Language Publications will remain a top funding priority. The development of sound materials that can be used electronically, in print, and online in the many languages in our partnership is essential.

Your World Missions team rejoices in the ongoing support of the members of WELS. Your prayers, attention, and gifts allow us to continue this work that is at the heart of being a Christian church body. May the Lord bless our work together as we take the treasure of Christ's love and share it with a world that will be lost without it.

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, reporter

Rev. Howard Mohlke, chairman

Dr. Robert Anderson, secretary

Rev. Glen Hieb

Mr. Mark Schulz

Mr. Danny Wehmeyer

Advisory:

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

Joint Mission Council

Our calling

The Joint Mission Council (JMC) oversees those mission opportunities that are the operational responsibility of both the Boards for World and Home Missions. The members of the council are the elected chairmen and administrators of both boards, the director of Missions Operations, and a representative designated by each board.

The present focus of the Joint Mission Council is to

- coordinate the future expansion of multi-cultural ministries to enhance the reaching of more lost souls both in North America and the home countries of those ethnic groups being served,
- continue to work on developing a structure that will best facilitate the mission outreach of these areas of ministry,
- coordinate the actions of World Missions and Home Missions in situations where normal ministry responsibilities of both boards overlap, and
- provide solutions to opportunities between the two boards as a result of overlapping ministries.

Our current situation

In the previous reports submitted to the 12 districts, we've pointed to the fact that more than 40 million foreign born people currently reside in the United States. The percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign born continues to be near the all-time high that our country has ever seen. The Census Bureau estimates that 85 percent of this population speaks a language other than English at home. The percentages and statistics can wax and wane over the years, but no matter how you look at it, 40 million people is a huge mission field. When you add to this the number of second and third generations of families with foreign ties, the flavor of these cultures among us gets even more complex.

Add to those percentages that the population growth is fastest among minorities as a whole, and according to the Census Bureau's estimation for 2012, 50.4 percent of American children under the age of 1 belonged to minority groups. The world is shrinking while the opportunities are growing.

The challenge is to meet those ever growing outreach opportunities head on.

One of the initiatives that the JMC launched to help the synod meet those needs was the creation of the Global Ministry Committee (GMC), a subcommittee of the Joint Mission Council. The GMC has been charged with exploring the multiple opportunities for collaboration within the same ethnic groups here in the United States as well as to connect stateside ministries to new opportunities in international settings.

The Global Ministry Committee continues to identify resources in our fellowship to help with that effort and is connecting the people with the resources. That committee has also identified ways to help WELS congregations reach out to immigrant groups in their own communities with an eye toward the overseas connections that come with those opportunities. Hmong, Spanish, Chinese, Sudanese, and Korean ministries are current examples in our fellowship of the impact reaching into an immigrant community can have not only on our synod here at home but reaching around the globe to where families and relatives of these new WELS members reside.

The GMC hosted a Toolkit Conference that took place at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in June 2015. It was a conference designed for attendees to learn more about cross-cultural ministry in North America as well as introduce potential partners in WELS to these cross-cultural ministries. Of the 35 participants, 5 represented the Sudanese (3 Anglo in the group of 5), 6 Hmong, 1 African, 3 Pakistanis, 4 represented the Hispanic (3 Anglo in the group of 4), 4 Evangelical Lutheran Synod leaders, 5 WELS leaders, 3 Global Ministry Committee members, 3 from Kingdom Workers, and 1 from Christian Aid and Relief. Each culture shared an overview of its ministry. Ministry groups shared how they function and might serve culture ministry. Each culture spent time developing the next steps for their ministry.

While the GMC continues to work on making connections such as the ones identified above, the Joint Mission Council continues to focus on the various cross-cultural ministries it has traditionally supported to date.

Cristo Palabra de Vida

The Cristo Palabra de Vida (CPdV) National Council continues to help congregations plan, develop, and implement outreach plans to reach the Hispanic population in their immediate vicinity, as well as work with the congregations already doing work among Hispanics. CPdV is willing and able to work with all the congregations in WELS who have the opportunity to reach out to the Hispanic communities near them. By the grace of God, close to 20 congregations hold worship services in Spanish while an additional 91 are working among Hispanics and welcoming them into their English services.

Cristo Palabra de Vida also continues to promote and direct lay leadership training. By developing a Bible Institute for Leadership Training, local pastors can teach a variety of materials that will lead members to assist their pastors in the areas of teachers, evangelists, and elders. Right now, Cristo Palabra de Vida is blessed to have more than 35 Hispanics who are participating at their local congregation in these Bible institute courses.

A Spanish pastor's conference was held in January 2016 in San Antonio, Texas. The entire conference was in the Spanish language. There were guests from the 18 congregations holding Spanish-speaking worship in the United States, who met alongside guests from our sister synods in Puerto Rico and Mexico. They studied Christian stewardship together, addressing the cultural realities that are present in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural situations. They enjoyed the fellowship and prayed and worshiped together. We look forward to another conference in 2018. Pastor Tim Flunker serves our church body as the Hispanic outreach consultant.

Cristo Palabra de Vida coordinates the instruction of men who move from the Bible institute program into the Pastoral Studies Institute. Cristo Palabra de Vida is also looking at new, innovative, and personal ways to mentor men currently involved with Hispanic outreach, especially those men who are working in areas that are far removed from other Hispanic work.

As the demographics show us, the Hispanic population in the United States continues to grow, and by the grace of God, is it growing around many of our established congregations. Cristo Palabra de Vida desires to help those established congregations reach out with the clear gospel. To this end, Cristo Palabra de Vida members attend at least three district conventions during non-synod-convention years.

Sudanese outreach

The Lord continues to bless the outreach opportunities throughout the United States and Canada to reach more and more Sudanese refugees with the gospel. This work has spread from our WELS congregations in Des Moines, Ia., and Omaha, Neb., to other WELS congregations in North America.

Since this opportunity is growing by leaps and bounds, Pastor Peter Bur was called in June 2015 as the coordinator of South Sudanese ministry to work with the Pastoral Studies Institute to coordinate the training of South Sudanese evangelists and pastors in North America.

Bur's installation was held at Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb., and it was an incredible service and celebration, though it was difficult to count how many Sudanese attended over the course of the four-hour service because some came and went. Pastor Mike Ewart said about 200 would be a safe estimate with an additional 20 or so Good Shepherd members attending at least part of the service. WELS Sudanese attended from Iowa, Minnesota, Washington, and Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Many Sudanese from the Omaha community also attended.

The goal is that there will be South Sudanese men in training in 20 locations in North America. Bur will also work with the Board for World Missions and the Africa Administrative Committee in coordinating the training of Sudanese pastors and evangelists for South Sudanese refugees in Africa. There will be South Sudanese men in training in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda to reach out to the more than 600,000 refugees that have fled fighting in their home country.

With the lack of materials in the Nuer language, more outreach and training materials will be needed as well. The *Christian Worship* liturgy has been translated and will be reviewed for the Sudanese who attend regular services at our congregations. "The Promise" booklet has been translated and will be published by Multi-Language Publications so that an easy tool is available to put in the hands of those who need to know the Savior. Multi-Language Publications stands ready to assist in translating additional materials as needed, especially materials that will facilitate ongoing teaching and sharing of the gospel within this tight knit people group.

Although opportunities exist in the country of South Sudan, the ongoing fighting and brutality are interfering with possible mission trips into this area.

A look ahead

Hmong ministries

At its April 2015 meeting, the Joint Mission Council authorized the creation of the Global Hmong Committee to function on a trial basis for the July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016, fiscal year. Its purpose was to look at all of WELS' Hmong ministry. Since there are standing committees dealing with Hmong outreach in both Home and World Missions (Board for Home Missions has the Hmong Asian Committee and the Board for World Missions has the Asia-Pacific Rim Administrative Committee) these two committees had a joint meeting in June 2015 to help all committee members understand the purpose and role of the Global Hmong Committee as well as to understand how the two existing committees will continue to function.

The main purpose for the formation of the Global Hmong Committee was to take an overarching look at the opportunities our church body has for expanding Hmong ministry primarily in Asia, specifically North Vietnam, but also in China, Thailand, and here at home in the United States.

Since 2008 Pastor Bounkeo Lor, one of our Hmong pastors serving a congregation in Kansas City, Mo., has been making trips to North Vietnam to share the gospel. As time passed, he began working with spiritual leaders in the Hmong Fellowship Church. The Hmong Fellowship Church is part of a larger church body recognized by the North Vietnamese government, and that church body is currently being tolerated by government. The Hmong Fellowship Church has membership of around 63,000 souls. From a field visit report on one of Lor's trips, some 55 spiritual leaders were being taught God's Word as they went through the book of Galatians. Law and gospel were emphasized. The report our pastors shared was that the gospel was well received. In fact the Hmong Fellowship Church has invited Lor to offer further training, and that is happening three times a year. Now though the question is how do we in WELS proceed with this opportunity as well as all Hmong ministry? How do we go forward? How do we balance all WELS Hmong ministry? The Global Hmong Committee is working at that as well as working at other facets of Hmong ministry.

In the United States there are nine Hmong congregations. Most of these ministries receive support from district mission boards as well as the Hmong Asian Committee. The Hmong Asian Committee assists district mission boards in their service to Hmong pastors. Ministry that took place over the past period of time included a special grant from WELS Church Extension Fund to Grace Hmong in Kansas City, which has allowed them to purchase a church. This is the first Hmong ministry with its own worship facility, and it will be dedicated in the summer of 2016.

Certainly the Hmong members in churches in the United States do reach back to family and friends in Thailand as well as to other countries. As the gospel has touched their hearts and the Spirit has led them to believe in Christ Jesus as their Savior, their desire is for more Hmong, both in America and throughout the world, to hear this precious message.

International recruitment director

As you've read earlier in this report, WELS missions is being presented with countless requests to serve and support theological education by people groups from all over the world. Groups from countries such as Kenya, Nepal, Latin America, Thailand, and Vietnam are thirsting for the unconditional gospel.

The type and scope of training being requested is quite beyond the ability of current mission fields to follow up on. It also goes beyond what Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary was set up to respond to. Our choices were to either do nothing or to make an attempt to serve these people with the training that they were desperately in need of.

In times past, new mission starts in world missions would occur when the Board for World Missions would target a field and send missionaries in. They would then start from scratch to build congregations and churches and to commence theological education. What seems to be happening more and more is that people who have become disenfranchised with the Western church's liberalism are seeking solid support from churches like ours that offer solid biblical leadership and training.

The opportunities before us were obviously calling for an enhanced partnership between the Board for World Missions, the Board for Home Missions, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary that went beyond the Pastoral Studies Institute. Thus, we created the position of international recruitment director.

The international recruitment director will work in close partnership with the world mission seminary professor and the Pastoral Studies Institute director to establish a culturally-informed vetting process for all students. Then the international recruitment director will work with the field and the student to establish an appropriate individual study plan for each student. Once those have been established, the director will develop an appropriate assessment

of skills and ability in ministry during the vicar experience to assess compliance with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's standards.

Working with the field and missions administration, he will then work to establish the appropriate calling, sending, and/or management protocols for every graduate. The international recruitment director will also walk with a national church body or people group to help them through the initial process.

The international recruitment director, along with the world mission seminary professor and Pastoral Studies Institute director, will be called to oversee a fleet of theological educators ranging from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College professors to active parish pastors and teachers including some who are retired with world mission experience.

The Lord continues to bless the work of the Joint Mission Council and our mission boards as they continue to share the gospel message. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will provide us with the resources to meet these opportunities.

Mr. Sean Young, reporter

Dr. Robert Anderson, member of WELS Board for World Missions

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions

Rev. Howard Mohlke, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions

Mr. Jude Peck, representative of WELS Board for Home Missions

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions

Rev. Charles Westra, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions

Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

Board for Home Missions

Our calling

Not too long ago I watched the movie titled “Perfect Storm.” Having seen it before, it still captured my attention. Near the end of the movie, a fishing crew fights valiantly yet vainly to keep their rig afloat. Despite their best and frantic efforts, eventually the churning waters and mountainous waves were too much to overcome. The boat was submerged by a giant wave and sank. Despite the crew’s best efforts, in the end the ocean became their watery grave.

Every human being faces the reality of perishing in an ocean of our sins. We can’t overcome our sins or make up for our sins or try to cover up our sins, despite our “best efforts.” Without a rescue plan, we would go down into a fiery grave, forever, to be punished in a real hell.

In thinking of this, some have described the outreach work of the Church as a rescue mission. Those saved by the grace of God have been pulled out of the waters of everlasting death in hell. And for those who have been rescued, we thank God for what Jesus Christ has done. And now our work, our privileged direction, is to share with more and more the saving gospel. By the work of our gracious God, we pray the message we speak will be blessed as the Spirit works faith in hearts. We pray more people will be brought into the “life raft” of salvation as we witness to what our Savior Jesus Christ has done.

In order to reach more souls, our church body has charged Home Missions to plant more churches from which the life-saving gospel can be proclaimed. Working with many willing partners, Home Missions continues to support and to open more rescue mission congregations.

Our current situation

Throughout its history, Home Missions has referred to mission churches with various titles. Over the past eight to nine years, Home Missions has classified missions by the categories of establishment missions, development missions, or enhancement missions. To try to simplify the mission congregation classifications, at the spring 2016 Board for Home Missions meeting, Home Missions approved a recommendation to label missions as either subsidized missions or unsubsidized missions. A subsidized mission means that the mission is receiving synod financial support. An unsubsidized mission means that while a mission, the congregation does not receive synod financial support. These new terms will start to be used July 1, 2016.

Currently Home Missions is serving 28 missions in the establishment phase (in the first three years of mission status), 20 missions in the development phase (missions in year four and beyond still receiving subsidy), 4 enhancement ministries, 26 cross-cultural ministries as well as serving and supporting a number of campus ministries in the United States and Canada. Another 60 congregations are classified as mission congregations due to their loans with the Church Extension Fund.

Thanks to the faithful work of district mission boards and mission counselors in identifying and preparing new locations for potential mission churches, each spring the Board for Home Missions has the opportunity to prayerfully consider where to start new missions. One of the vision goals of Home Missions is that each year the fourteen district mission boards each bring in at least one request to start a mission/new ministry. Once the district mission boards’ recommendations are submitted, the Board for Home Missions through its Executive Committee prioritizes the requests. Understanding there are limited funds, not all prioritized requests receive authorization to become a financially supported mission. Home Missions is extremely thankful for the full-time work of the mission counselors and for the thousands of hours the mission board members volunteer in the relentless quest to plant more churches. Pastors Mark Birkholz, Peter Kruschel, and Edward Schuppe serve as the current Home Missions mission counselors.

This spring, the Board for Home Missions authorized eight new mission starts, three ministry enhancements, and one relocation. New ministry support will total almost \$1 million during the next fiscal year. Generous gifts to Home Missions helped the board be more aggressive in its planning.

The new ministries that will now be supported include new starts in Lehi, Utah; Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Rockwall, Texas; Fredericksburg, Va.; Atlanta, Ga.; Victoria, Texas; Meridian, Idaho; and Stevens Point, Wis. Home Missions will also support ministry enhancement at three congregations—Centennial, Milwaukee, Wis.; Abiding Grace, Henry-Newton County, Ga.; and Risen Savior, Lakewood Ranch, Fla. These existing congregations will receive funds from Home Missions to support projects that will allow the congregations to reach more people with the gospel. In addition, Home Missions will help Peace, Holiday, Fla., with some transition costs as it moves to Trinity, Fla. This established congregation is already seeing God's blessing on the new location. Twenty-five adults have been confirmed at Peace during the past 18 months.

Starting missions usually has a financial price tag. To that end we are thankful for the support of our church body through Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO). CMO is the financial foundation for Home Missions, but it isn't the only means of financial support. Home Missions is also thankful for the special gifts that come to Home Missions. Those gifts have been significant. And we are thankful that mission churches understand the importance of decreasing subsidy. As subsidized missions are able to decrease the amount of financial support they receive, those dollars can go back into the budget to help support the next mission. In this regard, here are a couple sentences from a mission board expressing that desire from a mission pastor with whom they met:

He (the mission pastor) said that unless things change they will continue to prepare for being self-sustaining as of July 1, 2016. He said the desire of the leaders is to get off synod subsidy as soon as possible so our synod will have money to start more missions elsewhere.

For FY2017, Missions—both Home and World—are partnering with the Ministry of Christian Giving to launch an individual mission campaign. WELS members will be given the opportunity to share a special gift in support of Missions. A major part of the effort will be mission workers going along with Christian giving counselors to make personal visits. The mission personnel will share the story of missions. The Christian giving counselors will provide the contacts, set up the visits, and assist those who want to make a special gift to Missions. The offerings will be to support new mission initiatives in Home and World Missions as well as through the mission work of the Joint Mission Council.

New mission starts

As new mission start requests are submitted, the district mission boards display flexibility and adaptability in how a church can start. There is no one "right way" to start a mission. During the past few years one of the ways mission requests have come in is through the multi-site approach. A congregation sees an opportunity to expand the proclamation of the gospel to a nearby location. They have some families living in that area who are willing to be the committed core group. But rather than venturing out on their own and starting a new church, this group keeps its affiliation with the established church. While outreach plans are put into place, a new worship site is found and more than likely another pastor is needed. The name of the church is the same as the founding church. There is one leadership team. There is one budget. Think of it like this. Just as many churches offer two or three worship services over a weekend, in a multi-site mission, people have their choice of two (or more) locations at which they may worship. If you would like to learn more about the multi-site concept, Grace, Tucson, Ariz., will be hosting a WELS multi-site conference Nov. 14–16. Contact Missions at jmo@wels.net for registration information.

If it would be premature for your congregation to attend the WELS multi-site conference, another way to see if your congregation might consider being involved in starting a mission is by going through a document titled "Who Will Go? We Will Go!" Going through this document allows interested congregations the opportunity to thoroughly study the option that they might be a partner with Home Missions in starting a mission church. You can locate the document at missions.welsrc.net/downloads-missions/home-missions/.

WELS Church Extension Fund

Home Missions gives thanks for the wonderful partnership we enjoy with WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF). Through the years, the Church Extension Fund's management of the gifts and investments WELS members have made truly has been a blessing for Home Missions. Since 1993 when a grant program was introduced, more than \$27 million has been granted to mission congregations to assist in the purchase of land and the building or buying of worship facilities. These grants, in addition to market or below interest rate loans, have certainly allowed mission churches to move forward in their ministries with their own worship facility.

In February 2015 the CEF Board of Directors approved a net asset policy. While the policy will receive an annual review, it is the hope of the board of directors that each year Home Missions will receive somewhere between

\$500,000-\$700,000 to be used toward the start of more missions. The first disbursement in September 2015 was beyond expectations. It was \$833,000.

What a blessing our church body has in the ministry of WELS Church Extension Fund. To learn more about CEF or to consider an investment, go to cef.wels.net.

Cross-cultural ministry

Through the years, Home Missions has been supporting and expanding cross-cultural ministry. Over the past 15 years or so, around 30 percent of Home Missions' budget helps support cross-cultural and multi-ethnic congregation missions. As these ministries mature, additional cross-cultural gatherings have taken place.

A Toolkit Conference took place at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary June 18 and 19, 2015. It was a conference designed for attendees to learn more about cross-cultural ministry in North America as well as introduce potential partners in WELS to these cross-cultural ministries. To learn more about this conference, see the report of the Joint Mission Council on p. 117.

A Hmong Asian Conference took place Oct. 7 and 8, 2015, at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. There were 19 Asians who attended: 3 Korean pastors/spiritual leaders; 2 lay leaders from the Boise, Idaho, Vietnamese ministry; 2 men going through the Pastoral Studies Institute/pre-Pastoral Studies Institute in Minneapolis (a Laotian and a Hmong); 2 Pastoral Studies Institute students from Kansas City; 1 Pastoral Studies Institute student from China; 1 Chinese man connected with our mission in Vancouver; and 8 Hmong pastors. In addition, Anglo mentors, district mission board members, and members from the Hmong Asian Committee attended for a total of 35 attending. On Oct. 7 the emphasis was on outreach ministry, led by Prof. Sorum and 2 Hmong pastors and 1 Korean pastor. On Oct. 8 Dr. Thomas Kuster, director of Christ in Media Institute from Bethany Lutheran Seminary, presented an outreach strategy using cell phones.

A Spanish pastor's conference was held Jan. 18-20, 2016, in San Antonio, Texas. There were guests from the 18 congregations holding Spanish-speaking worship in the United States, who met alongside guests from our sister synods in Puerto Rico and Mexico. Pastor Tim Flunker serves our church body as the Hispanic outreach consultant.

A bi-annual event is the Hmong National Conference. Immanuel Hmong Lutheran, located in St. Paul, Minn., will be the host congregation in 2016. Some 200 Hmong from the eight WELS Hmong churches in the United States are anticipated to attend. In addition to Hmong attendees from the United States, three to four Hmong pastors and spouses from Thailand are planning to attend. The conference will take place July 8-10, 2016.

Campus ministry

Campus ministry is under Home Missions. The Campus Ministry Committee, chaired by Pastor Charlie Vannieuwenhoven, ably serves campus ministry. The primary purpose of campus ministry is to be a student's "church home" while away at college. In addition to supporting our WELS members attending college, campus ministries are encouraged to strive to take the gospel to others. That happens both with Anglos and with international students.

In addition to your prayers on behalf of campus ministry, a huge way churches and individuals can assist campus ministry is by sharing names and contact information of students who are attending a college. Perhaps your church can designate a family who has a senior in high school to get the names of fellow twelfth graders going to college. Perhaps your church can form a committee to do this or the office secretary can do this or. . . . The key is that each spring the name(s) and contact information of high school seniors who are going to college are shared with the Campus Ministry Committee. Send contact information to Campus Ministry Committee Secretary, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Road, Waukesha WI 53188 or e-mail information to cm@wels.net.

Partners

In talking about Home Missions, realize that we thank the Lord for every blessing. And humanly speaking what happens isn't just because of those directly involved with Home Missions. We have a strong group of partners who help support missions. While much could be written about each partner, here are some of the partners of Home Missions and some of the ways in which they assist gospel outreach.

Christian Aid and Relief

On an annual basis Christian Aid and Relief provides an opportunity for Home and World Missions to request humanitarian aid grants as bridges for the gospel. In June 2015, five home missions (along with a number of world missions) were approved grants. Christian Aid and Relief also provides grants for disaster relief assistance. Visit wels.net/relief for more information.

Kingdom Workers

Kingdom Workers spreads the gospel by mobilizing Christians to create locally sustainable ministries addressing spiritual and physical needs in communities around the world. Builders For Christ teams have built dozens of churches and schools for congregations throughout the United States. Faith In Action puts teams into various communities to assist churches with spreading the gospel in that area. Faith In Action teams can be used for many different types of projects, such as canvassing neighborhoods to promote a special event at the church or teaching summer Bible programs. The Lutheran Health Alliance sends health professionals to work with congregations to create a new way of meeting the community's needs. For more information, visit kingdomworkers.com.

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society

On an annual basis, through the caring communication of Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) members, many missionaries and their families receive encouraging cards and letters as well as thoughtful care packages. Each spring and fall, LWMS rallies help financially support special projects for Home and World Missions. LWMS's 53rd National Convention is being held in St. Charles, Ill., on June 23–26, 2016. The next national convention will be held in Orlando, Fla., from June 22–25, 2017. For more information, visit lwms.org.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College organizes students to canvas for missions. Some students spend summers at mission congregations assisting with outreach ministry. For more information, visit mlc-wels.edu.

Multi-Language Publications

Pastor Paul Hartman retired in 2015 as coordinator. We thank him for his faithful service. Pastor Nathan Seiltz began working from the Center for Mission and Ministry as the new coordinator on July 1, 2015. For more information, visit wels.net/mlp.

WELS Foundation

WELS Foundation exists to help God's people support gospel ministry through WELS. It provides planned giving services and administrative support for gifts benefiting WELS congregations and ministries including endowment funds, charitable gift annuities, donor advised funds, and charitable remainder trusts. Through WELS Foundation, Home and World Missions received a portion of the distributed \$7.1 million in donor-directed gifts in calendar year 2015. For more information, visit wels.net/foundation.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Each year in early February the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary student body has three days of ministry workshops known as Mission and Ministry. Home Missions is featured on one of those days.

First- and second-year students have the opportunity to do ministry for 10 weeks in the summer in mission and self-support congregations as summer student assistants. For those students serving in a mission, what costs the mission can't cover, Home Missions covers.

About 18 to 22 third-year seminary students are assigned into mission congregations or mission-minded congregations through the Vicar in Missions program. Home Missions and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary personnel work to select congregations who will receive a vicar assignment. Both entities also provide funding toward the support of the program.

The Pastoral Studies Institute works with the coordination of the training of cross-cultural students. Through the institute, there is interaction with district mission boards and the Home Missions administration.

For more information on Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, visit wls.wels.net.

A look ahead

In one sense, the focus for Home Missions is simple. As Home Missions has done in the past, and is doing now, as Home Missions looks to the future, its focus continues to be planting more missions. With synod resources, through mission counselors and district mission board members and with the aid of many partners, we pray the Lord's blessings in being able to plant more churches.

Home Missions also looks to be flexible and adaptable in planting mission churches from which the gospel can be proclaimed. Whether it is doing urban ministry or starting a multi-site mission or using technology to help reach more in a specific culture, the ways in which missions are started can happen in a variety of ways.

And as we look ahead, Home Missions is sharing the story of missions through the Missions website and is ready to personally share the message through presentations and Mission Sundays. Home Missions is blessed with an active Missions promotions staff. Go to wels.net/missions for blogs and videos and more to keep current on what is happening in WELS Missions, both Home and World.

Thank you for your prayers and support of Home Missions. May the Lord bless us to rescue more who are lost in their sins so that they too can rejoice with us that our Savior Jesus Christ did everything necessary and needed to save us from our sins. To him be the glory now and forever.

Rev. Keith Free, reporter

Rev. Charles Westra, chairman
Mr. John Beeskow, Michigan Mission District
Mr. Bruce Burger, Nebraska Mission District
Rev. John Dorn, Northern Wisconsin Mission District
Mr. Dwayne Coryell, North Atlantic Mission District
Mr. John Deschane, Northern Wisconsin Mission District
Dr. Keith Eldred, Colorado Mission District
Rev. Mark Gabb, South Atlantic Mission District
Dr. August Gabert, Pacific Northwest Mission District
Rev. Jeremy Glowicki, Minnesota Mission District
Rev. Harland Goetzinger, WELS–Canada Mission District
Mr. Thomas Hansen, Dakota-Montana Mission District
Mr. Mark Hartman, South Central Mission District
Rev. Stephen Helwig, Nebraska Mission District
Mr. Steven Kalscheuer, Western Wisconsin Mission District
Rev. Robert Krueger, Michigan Mission District
Mr. Noel Ledermann, Arizona-California Mission District
Mr. Jude Peck, South Atlantic Mission District
Mr. David Sauer, Minnesota Mission District
Rev. Caleb Schoeneck, South Central Mission District
Rev. Nathan Strutz, Western Wisconsin Mission District
Rev. Wayne Uhlhorn, Colorado Mission District
Rev. Matthew Vogt, Arizona-California Mission District
Rev. Mark Wagner, Southeastern Wisconsin Mission District
Rev. Craig Wasser, Pacific Northwest Mission District
Rev. Kevin Wattle, North Atlantic Mission District
Mr. Byron Weihmann, WELS–Canada Mission District
Rev. Jonathan Werre, Dakota-Montana Mission District
Mr. Steven Wolf, Southeastern Wisconsin Mission District

Advisory:

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

Board for Ministerial Education

Our calling

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2).

The continuing scriptural purpose of our ministerial education schools is the preparation of candidates for the public ministry of the gospel to proclaim Christ’s love in the congregations, schools, and mission fields of our fellowship. The schools also include in their purpose the continuing education of those who already serve in the ministry of the gospel. A special emphasis of the last biennium has been to identify and strengthen the partnerships with all of the areas and groups in our church body. Our report gives you an overview of the efforts to facilitate the coordination of that work. The reports from the four ministerial education schools demonstrate how they are carrying out their mission on your behalf.

Our current situation

The Board for Ministerial Education (BME) distributes subsidy to the ministerial education schools from a block grant supplied by the Synodical Council. The model has resulted in stable reserves and normal annual tuition increases for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) and Martin Luther College (MLC). In fact, MLC was able to lower its planned tuition increase for school year 2016–17. This year the model gives more emphasis to the prep schools building up stable reserves as well.

The BME has a working group on financial assistance with the goal that no student is denied the ability to train for the ministry of the gospel for financial reasons. The ministerial education schools are developing their partnership with the Ministry of Christian Giving to be sure that financial assistance programs are adequately supported. The largest project continues to be reducing the educational debt of Martin Luther College graduates.

The BME has a working group on programmed maintenance to address capital needs on our campuses. Capital campaigns at the schools are conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Christian Giving, reviewed and adopted as a regular part of the synod budget process. The synod in convention has established a Capital Projects Committee to work on the long-range capital plans of the ministerial education schools.

With the blessing and encouragement of Home and World Missions administrations, the ministerial education schools are establishing increasingly close partnerships with the world mission fields in our fellowship in order to help in the development of their individual ministerial education programs.

Over the last biennium, the ministerial education schools have put considerable effort into partnerships with the Conference of Presidents and the Congregation and Ministry Support Group, especially the Commission on Lutheran Schools, to expand current efforts in continuing education of called workers. See the separate report of the Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee on p. 10.

A look ahead

We give thanks that the Lord of the Church continues to supply our synod with young men and women who are willing to serve anywhere that the Church needs them, who believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, who treasure the precious Lutheran heritage of the unconditional gospel that has been passed to our generation with remarkable clarity, and who present themselves for service as faithful ministers of the gospel who subscribe without reservation to the Lutheran Confessions. We also give thanks for the individual congregations and members in those congregations who still think—contrary to the practice of just about every other national church body—that the

investment of energy and financial resources in the thorough preparation of candidates for the public ministry of the gospel and the deepening of those who are already serving is a sound and wise synodical commitment.

Rev. Paul Prange, reporter

Rev. Philip Hirsch, chairman

Rev. John P. Bortulin

Rev. Kenneth Brokmeier

Rev. Gregory Gibbons

Teacher Richard Gibson

Mr. Hogey Holtz

Mr. Kyle Koltz

Teacher Kurt Rosenbaum

Mr. Brian Scheele

Mr. Dean Waldschmidt

Rev. Thomas Westra

Teacher Jon Woldt

Rev. Michael Woldt

Advisory:

Pres. Matthew Crass, Luther Preparatory School

Pres. Joel Petermann, Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Mr. Todd J. Poppe, WELS chief financial officer

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Pres. Paul O. Wendland, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Pres. Mark Zarling, Martin Luther College

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Our calling

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) prepares pastors for the worldwide mission of WELS. The seminary also offers continuing spiritual and professional growth opportunities for pastors.

Our current situation

Enrollment

Traditional students

This year we had 30 juniors, 26 middlers, and 33 seniors on campus. Two students served in emergency assignments. In addition, 29 vicars are serving in congregations throughout the United States and Canada this year. One man from Nepal studied on campus for two months.

In May we look forward to placing 32 candidates into permanent fields of ministry and 26 vicars into congregations for a year of practical ministry experience.

Enrollment projections

For the 2016–17 school year we anticipate 35 juniors, 30 middlers, and 28 seniors. One student will be doing emergency service. With 26 vicars in the field, this would put our total student enrollment at 120.

Educational costs

The total cost of education is around \$25,000 per student per year. Only part of this cost is borne by the student, however. This year, tuition was \$9,185. Dormitory students paid an additional \$7,380 for room and board. The rest of the educational cost is funded through Congregation Mission Offerings and gifts from individuals. In addition, students receive gifts and grants from the seminary's financial aid funds.

This year, 88 of 91 students (97 percent) received grants averaging \$4,250. We disbursed \$374,050 in grants and awards as follows:

- scholarship grants, awarded on the basis of declared financial need: \$311,850;
- campus service awards that acknowledge student faithfulness in carrying out tasks for the well-being of our whole campus family: \$23,700; and
- academic achievement awards, which recognize classroom performance as reflected in student GPAs: \$38,500.

The seminary's financial aid represents somewhat less than half of the total package of financial aid received by our students. Generous grants from foundations such as Siebert and Salem combined with direct gifts from congregations and individuals raise the average amount of aid to those students receiving aid to an amount equal to or even exceeding tuition.

Overall student indebtedness experienced a substantial drop per student. Average debt per student in debt in 2014–15 was \$27,406. In 2015–16, the figure is \$24,717. Spousal educational debt is included in these figures. For 2015–16, students owed a total of \$1,067,569 in government loans. Of that, \$664,050 was student debt and \$403,519 was spousal debt.

Winterim

This two-week period between first and second semester gives students and professors an opportunity for both academic and practical enrichment. Specialized classes that are not part of the regular curriculum are offered. A student can propose his own independent study plan. Others sign up for off-campus mission trips and study tours.

This year

- 51 took courses on campus.
- 4 participated in outreach opportunities in Tennessee.
- 9 students went on a study tour of Mexico to improve their knowledge of Spanish.
- 19 students participated in outreach opportunities in Utah.
- 9 conducted independent research.
- 6 pastors participated in a variety of Winterim opportunities.

Field services

Vicars

It costs about \$39,000 to fund a vicar. Currently, the vicar year is funded in part by congregations, some of which pay all or a substantial part of the cost. Because the expenses of this vital program exceed the financial ability of many churches, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has identified additional sources of funding to enable more congregations to consider hosting a vicar. Our desire is to present to our students the broadest possible range of experiences in different districts and settings. Through \$50,000 in grants provided by the Conference of Presidents, the seminary is able to work with several congregations to make hosting a vicar feasible. In addition, for many years the seminary has been working in partnership with the Board for Home Missions through the Vicars in Missions program to provide substantial funding to ensure vicars get experience in mission settings. This year the seminary has budgeted \$240,000 to fund this program. We are grateful for all the supervising pastors who act as adjunct faculty for WLS.

For the first time in 13 years, the seminary sponsored a Vicar Supervisor Seminar on Aug. 7–8, 2015. All except three of the pastors serving as supervising pastors were able to attend, and those who had to miss watched most sessions via livestreaming. A number of faculty speakers reviewed the training, skills, and attitudes pastors can expect in vicars when they arrive onsite and encouraged methodology that advances the vicar to the next level of his pastoral training. Pastors themselves led breakout groups and summarized various procedures for dealing with problems and challenges. The seminar, the first funded completely by the seminary, was greatly appreciated by the supervising pastors.

Summer assistants

Eight juniors and two middlers served this past summer in our Summer Student Assistant program. This program is a joint effort by the seminary and the Board for Home Missions in which students gain valuable parish and outreach experience before their vicar year in both mission congregations and self-supporting ministries. The congregations are located in Alaska, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Nevada, Wyoming, Indiana, New York, and Washington.

Early field training

Each year, juniors and middlers are assigned to nearby congregations to participate in our Early Field Training Program. This program intends to provide a practicum for the various practical theology classes students take during their first and second years at the seminary. Under the supervision of the local pastor, students complete a list of

assignments that includes both observation and actual ministry, e.g., leading the liturgy, assisting with communion, teaching Sunday school and teen Bible classes, visiting the sick, making evangelism calls.

Senior assistants

About half the members of the senior class serve part time in local congregations and area ministries to both assist pastors and gain additional experience.

Recruiting

Senior Matt Rothe served as the seminary's first student recruiter. On average, he made two presentations a week at area grade schools and reached out to high schools.

The seminary hosted students from several area Lutheran high schools for a focus on ministry weekend in March. The high school students interacted with our students in an informal setting, attended some classes, and had a more formal presentation on the seminary.

Mandarin scholarships

Two students are auditing Mandarin classes at Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC). They receive scholarships from both WLC and WLS that allow them to devote themselves first and foremost to their WLS student work, then secondly to the Mandarin study without having to find additional part-time employment.

Seminary Chorus

This year, the 50 members of the choir completed a 12-day tour to 15 congregations in Illinois, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

Pastoral Studies Institute

Our Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) guides and assists non-traditional students through their pre-seminary and seminary training. This year, seventeen are taking classes through the PSI. In addition, a dozen Anglo pastors are working with PSI pastors and students.

In June 2015, the Global Mission Committee and the PSI hosted a Tool Kit Conference that shared a philosophy and tactics that would help WELS members who are immigrants take the gospel back to their homelands.

In fall 2015, Prof. E. Allen Sorum accompanied PSI graduate Pastor Peter Bur to Ethiopia on behalf of the Board for World Missions. There they spent time learning how WELS might support Sudanese refugees in Gambela. They also made contact with Pastor Kebede Yigezu to discuss the potential for membership in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) or fellowship with WELS. They also spent a week in Nairobi, Kenya, to meet four South Sudanese spiritual leaders from the refugee camps in Karthoum.

In February 2016, a Sudanese conference was held at the seminary to focus on the doctrine of church fellowship, preaching, and strategic planning for North American congregations and leadership training in East Africa.

World mission seminary professor

In 2015–16, seven different members of the WLS faculty taught and consulted on curriculum and instruction for theological training programs of our fellowship around the world. Included were pastor training programs in East Asia, Ethiopia, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, and Zambia. Ten different courses were administered to more than 100 pastoral candidates as well as 100 pastors and laypeople.

At the request of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference's Theta Commission, the World Seminary Digital Library (a digital library of public domain resources) has been launched and is being populated. To facilitate the exchange of materials and teaching methods between fields, a private discussion board has also been set up.

Prof. Bradley Wordell arrived at the seminary in summer 2015 and, in addition to attending classes on- and off-campus, has assumed the responsibilities as the world mission seminary professor. He also attended the first CELC Asia-Oceania regional conference in Seoul, two modules of the Asia translation course at Asia Lutheran Seminary, and a conference of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education in Turkey.

Grow in Grace

Grow in Grace is the seminary's institute for pastoral growth. Grow in Grace partners with pastors for lifelong growth in all their callings by offering courses and events, retreats and mentoring, study packages, and informal resources.

The institute's comprehensive report from the pastoral side of continuing education can be found in the Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee report on p. 10.

Faculty and staff

Anniversary in ministry celebrations

Prof. Bill Tackmier celebrated his 25th anniversary in the ministry in October 2015.

In 2016, Professors James Korthals and James Tiefel will both celebrate their 40th anniversary in the ministry.

2015 service anniversaries

In 2015, six people celebrated anniversaries of their service to the seminary campus.

30 years:

Ms. Joanne Vandeventer, food service director

Prof. James Tiefel, worship/homiletics

20 years:

Prof. John Hartwig, homiletics/German/library director

10 years:

Prof. Stephen Geiger, New Testament/education

Mr. Ted Saxe, maintenance supervisor

Mr. Kevin Keller, Director of Mission Advancement

2016 service anniversaries

30 years:

Mr. Curtis Wenthur, buildings and grounds director

25 years

Prof. John Brenner, dean of students/church history/systematic theology

20 years:

Ms. Linda Wenthur, buildings and grounds

Mr. Brian Treichel, business manager and treasurer

15 years:

President Paul O. Wendland, New Testament

10 years:

Ms. Lori Guse, mission advancement coordinator

Prof. Kenneth Cherney, Old Testament/systematic theology

Faculty studies

Prof. Stephen Geiger is pursuing a doctorate in classics. Prof. Bill Tackmier is completing his dissertation.

Prof. Earle Treptow is enrolled in doctoral courses. Prof. Bradley Wordell is pursuing a doctorate with a concentration in missions and evangelism. Prof. Joel Otto is working on his thesis for his Masters of Theology in Church History. Prof. Thomas Kock will complete his masters courses at the end of 2016.

Faculty/staff changes

Prof. Bradley Wordell joined the faculty as the world mission seminary professor in summer 2015. He will teach systematics and Old Testament

Prof. Earle Treptow accepted the call to teach Old Testament and systematics and was installed on February 3, 2016.

Prof. John Brenner has asked to be relieved of his responsibilities as dean of students. He will continue teaching in the classroom. Prof. Joel Otto will assume the office of dean on July 1.

Archives

The move of the synod archives from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry should be complete by fall 2016. The seminary has committed \$200,000 towards the funding of the archivist position.

Governing board

The board has experienced a number of changes over the past year. Pastor John Dolan, Mr. David Wilson, and Pastor Eric Hartzell have all concluded their official service on the board. Pastor Dolan retired from the ministry, and Mr. Wilson and Pastor Hartzell both accepted calls outside their districts. We are truly grateful to the Lord for providing us men who serve as unstintingly as these men have done. Pastor Jon R. Bitter from the Minnesota District was appointed to fill the remaining term vacated by Pastor Dolan. May the Lord of the Church bless his ministry on the board and all who serve the Church in this unique capacity! Finally, the board would be remiss if it did not recognize the many years of wise and faithful service as an advisory member rendered by Southeastern Wisconsin District President David Rutschow.

Finance

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary depends on three sources of funding to carry out its calling. The first is the regular support we receive from the synodical budget in the form of subsidy and other support. The second is the money we receive from students' tuition and room and board. The third source is from gifts, which provide operating support and student financial assistance.

Through December, WLS reported unrestricted support, revenue, and satisfaction of restrictions of \$2,303,000 and expenses of \$2,696,000 for a deficit of \$393,000 compared to a planned deficit of \$54,200 for the year. The current deficit is mainly due to negative investment activity, the timing of capital purchases, and lower than planned bequests.

The generous gifts from our donors are essential to carry out our calling.

	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016 thru 12/31/2015
Unrestricted	413,000	429,000	273,000
Temporarily restricted	1,414,000	667,000	397,000
<u>Permanently restricted</u>	<u>118,000</u>	<u>653,000</u>	<u>113,000</u>
Total	\$1,945,000	\$1,749,000	\$783,000

Temporarily restricted gifts in FY2014 and FY2015 includes gifts received for the seminary's 150th anniversary appeal.

In addition, many of God's saints, now gone to glory, have remembered the seminary in their wills, leaving behind a living legacy and testimony to their faith. We have received bequests totaling \$1,158,000 for FY2014; \$726,000 for FY2015; and \$35,000 for the first six months of FY2016.

These gifts and bequests allow the seminary to

- offer generous financial aid to our students,
- support the Vicar in Missions program,
- subsidize off-campus experiences for students,
- support professors' continuing education,
- subsidize the Grow in Grace program,
- respond to unexpected opportunities and requests, and
- establish strong reserves for future financial assistance and operating needs.

Accreditation Exploration Committee

The seminary's governing board has authorized the appointment of a faculty committee to explore the wisdom of seeking accreditation for our programs of study. Because a key question that will be asked as part of the accreditation process is the question of the faculty's workload and the seminary's mission, the board decided it was best to deal with these questions first before proceeding further on exploring accreditation. Once issues involving workload and mission have been clarified, the committee will resume meeting regarding accreditation.

A look ahead

Workload and Mission Committee

The governing board authorized the appointment of this committee after reaching consensus that we need to revisit faculty workload and the mission of the seminary in a systematic way. After a period of creative innovation, in which the seminary has been asked by our synod to add continuing education responsibilities, the world mission seminary professor position, and the Pastoral Studies Institute, the question can legitimately be asked if some recalibration of workload and mission is necessary.

We want to achieve an appropriate balance between our tasks as we have always understood them and the new opportunities that the Lord is placing before us. The Workload and Mission Committee's goal is to assess all aspects of our work to determine whether we are in fact carrying out the mission that we have been assigned by WELS. Three areas in particular are being addressed:

1. Faculty workload: We recognize that our faculty in general seems to be putting in more hours and finding less discretionary time for things like writing articles, reviewing books, keeping up with current scholarship, among other things. Of particular concern are the assignments our faculty members take on outside the scope of their regular calls.
2. Grow in Grace: We need to gauge the level of support there is in our fellowship for online education and for the seminary partnering with others to offer spiritual encouragement to pastors once they have graduated. Conversations on this with our synodical partners are beginning but are in a very early stage as of this writing.
3. Pastoral Studies Institute/world mission seminary professor: The seminary already supplies well over a year's service in efforts to provide pastoral training overseas. What is truly exciting is that this service represents an astonishing expansion of opportunities that now exist. More and more people are seeking pastoral training both at home and abroad. Conceivably the seminary could be involved in partnering with others in offering training to more than three hundred pastoral candidates off campus. We are looking at how best to respond and how this plays a role not only in the seminary's mission but also with other areas of administration. This has involved discussions between the seminary and the Joint Mission Council. The result has been the authorization of calling an international recruitment director by a special board—the International Operations Group (composed of the WLS president and vice president; and the administrators for WELS Ministerial Education, World Missions, Home Missions, and the director of Missions Operations).

WLS international recruitment director

We have spoken about the overwhelming expansion of opportunities that now exist for offering pastoral training off campus. More and more people are seeking help both at home and abroad. The type and scope of service being requested is beyond the ability of current mission fields to follow up on. It is beyond the current configuration of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to respond to. That is why the Joint Mission Council, working with the administration of WLS, has responded by requesting that an international recruitment director be called to the seminary to serve these needs. While not a professor teaching in the classroom, the international recruitment director would help the seminary begin to address some of our financial and manpower issues so that we can respond to fellow Christians worldwide without detriment to our current programs.

In its February meeting, the Synodical Council voted to provide funding for this position "to coordinate the theological training of the increasing number of people desiring to serve as confessional Lutheran pastors in their home countries" ("Together," March 2016).

Pres. Paul O. Wendland, reporter

Rev. Thomas Westra, chairman
Rev. Jonathan Balge, vice chairman
Teacher David Wilson, secretary
Rev. Jon Bitter
Dr. Arthur Eggert
Rev. Eric Hartzell
Mr. Daniel L. Shinnick
Mr. Gerald Zimpelmann

Advisory:

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. David Rutschow, president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Pres. Paul O. Wendland, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Martin Luther College

Four times! Four times in one psalm the Holy Spirit inspired the hymn writer to repeat this refrain: “Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men” (Psalm 107). A careful review of any area of ministry, when done by eyes opened by the Spirit’s grace, will quickly echo the refrain. In spite of the efforts of frail humans, our Savior God unleashes his unfailing love through the gospel and continues to do amazing things. This accounting of the WELS College of Ministry—presented to the 12 districts in their conventions—attempts to recount for God’s people the unfailing love of the Savior God showered upon Martin Luther College. God also showers his love upon us through the faithful people of WELS. Martin Luther College is grateful to Christ that we serve a synod whose people offer countless prayers and generous offerings to support dedicated schools that train gospel servants for public ministry. We thank you. Indeed, Jesus loves us in abundance. Abundant blessings and abundant challenges lead us to an abundance of prayers. As you read this report, join us in prayers of gratitude and prayers asking for guidance, all to the Good Shepherd who is appointed to be head over everything for the church.

Our calling

The mission statement of Martin Luther College (MLC) clearly communicates our calling.

The mission of Martin Luther College is to train a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord.

To meet the current ministry needs of WELS, Martin Luther College

- Prepares men for pastoral training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary;
- Prepares men and women for service as teachers and staff ministers in the synod’s churches, schools, and other institutions;
- Prepares men and women for other church ministries, both full and part time, responding to the needs of WELS;
- Prepares international students for ministry in partnership with WELS mission fields; and
- Provides programs of continuing education that meet the ministerial needs of the WELS.

Please join the governing board and campus family of MLC in praying that Jesus bless our labors and keep us clearly focused on our purpose: we exist to use the Word of life to proclaim the LORD’s “unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.”

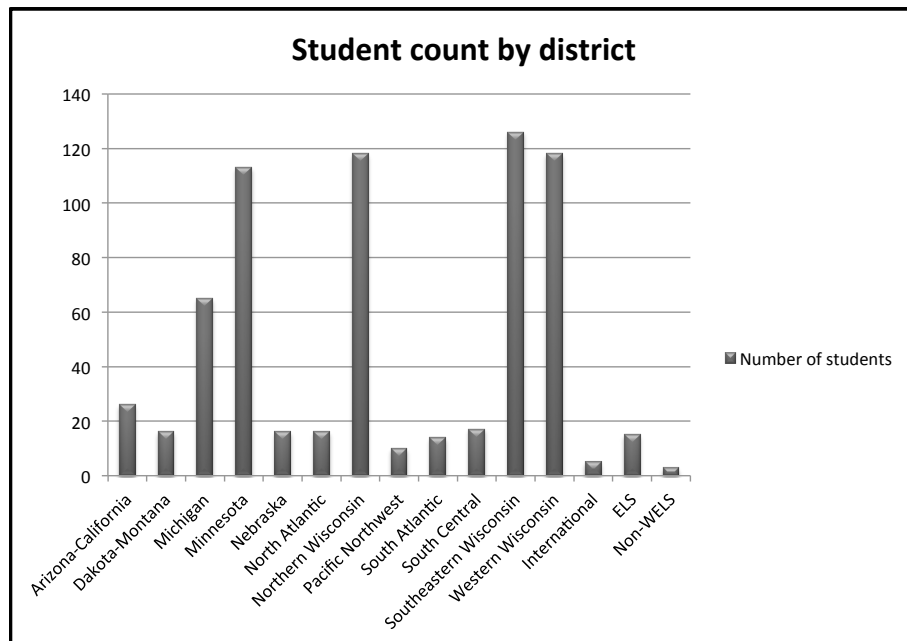
Our current situation

God’s gifts to MLC: Students—undergraduate

The fall opening on-campus enrollment at MLC was 723, down four from the previous year. The second semester opening enrollment in January 2016 was 685, down 24 from the previous year. However, not counted in the January 2016 enrollment numbers are 6 emergency teachers and 11 students who have taken a leave of absence. Of special note, however, is the large freshman class of 55 in the preseminary program, down only one since the fall opening. Please join us in praying that the Lord of the harvest send more students to train for gospel service. The last two years saw significant numbers of unfilled requests for candidates during assignment days at both Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and MLC. (There were approximately 35 unfilled requests for pastors over the last two years, and about 80 unfilled requests for teachers over the last two years.) It is heartening, then, to see that applications for next fall are up considerably. As of early March, there are currently 40 more applications than last year at the same time.

The following charts reflect the enrollment as of Jan. 21, 2016.

Program of study	Number of students
Double major—early childhood education and elementary	35
Double major—elementary and secondary	149
Double major—elementary and parish music	2
Double major—staff ministry and education	7
Double major—early childhood education and special education	9
Double major—early childhood education and staff ministry	1
Early childhood education	61
Educational studies	13
Elementary education	161
Pre-seminary studies	167
Unclassified	7
Secondary education	67
Staff ministry	6
Total	685



High school origin

High school type	Number of students
Area Lutheran high school	371
Home school	2
Other	11
Preparatory school	208
Public	93
Total	685

Enrollment trends over five years

School year	Semester 1 enrollment	Semester 2 enrollment
2011-12	697	665
2012-13	708	693
2013-14	714	694
2014-15	727	709
2015-16	723	685

God's gifts to MLC: Students—graduate, continuing education, and New Teacher Induction

Graduate studies

For the past 11 years, Martin Luther College has provided graduate degrees designed specifically for WELS teachers and administrators via an online master's degree program. At the time this report was written, MLC had 127 graduate students. Since 2008 MLC has conferred a total of 72 Master of Science in Education degrees in the areas of leadership, instruction, special education, and educational technology.

Training WELS principals and early childhood directors

Both the current WELS long-range plan and the 2013 synod convention called upon MLC to expand its training for principals and early childhood directors. We have. Of the 72 graduates just mentioned above, 36 have been school leaders. In the past year, MLC added the Master of Science in Educational Administration degree with tracks for the full training of WELS principals and early childhood directors. Graduates of this new degree meet the WELS Principal and Early Childhood Director Standards.

Continuing education

MLC offers a variety of formats, locations, and costs for continuing education for called workers and lay leaders—making our high-quality, professional development both affordable and convenient. In the last academic year 980 different individuals participated through online webinars, in-service programs, trainings, and courses via Internet, satellite, and on campus.

New Teacher Induction

The 2011 synod convention authorized that a system of new teacher induction be provided to all beginning WELS teachers. Martin Luther College coordinates the program in all 12 synodical districts. An experienced and trained mentor is paired with each beginning WELS teacher to coach and guide the teacher through the first two years of teaching. Mentors receive seven training sessions and provide new teachers with instructional coaching through bi-weekly conferences and four formal classroom visits. Schools contribute \$1,000 for each of the two years of mentoring services, which covers about two-thirds of the program costs. Last school year, 130 beginning teachers were mentored by more than 100 trained mentors.

God's gifts to MLC: Personnel

During the academic year 2015–16 the following professors celebrated ministry milestones:

- Paul Tess—40 years
- Keith Wessel—25 years
- Jeffery Wiechman—25 years

The following professors have announced their intention to retire on June 30, 2016:

- Lyle Lange (theology)
- Wayne Wagner (music)

These men have begun service to the college in this school year:

- Prof. Peter Baganz (history)
- Pastor Isaac Crass (tutor and instructor)
- Prof. Daniel Fenske (science)
- Mr. David Roekle (admissions counselor)

Faculty calling activity for school year 2015–16:

- Mr. Craig Hirschmann has accepted the call to serve as professor of music.
- Pastor David Scharf has accepted the call to serve as professor of theology and began his service to MLC in late spring 2016.
- Mr. Greg Holzhuetter has accepted the call to serve as professor of physical education and men's basketball coach.

Early Childhood Learning Center lead teachers:

- Natalie Borgwardt continues to work toward her early childhood license and has accepted another one-year call as lead teacher.
- Heather Kressin has accepted the permanent call to serve as a lead teacher.
- Melissa Nehls is completing her first year as lead teacher.

Early Childhood Learning Center calling activity for school year 2015–16:

- At the time of writing, calling continues to fill the director position.

God's gifts to MLC: Facilities

Facility needs and upgrades

The college has an annual allocation of approximately \$500,000 in capital and building maintenance funding in its ministry plan. While we are thankful for that provision, it falls short of what is needed to maintain and improve a campus with a replacement value of more than \$100,000,000. In addition to ongoing annual allocations for parking lot and sidewalk upkeep, exterior lighting upgrades, classroom furniture replacement, exterior tuck-pointing of buildings, and dormitory restroom renovations, our auditorium is nearing completion of its first major overhaul in 50 years. The 800 seats have been repaired and recovered, the floor repainted, and the stage curtains replaced.

Technology

Our Network Services Office has had the integration and coordination of campus software systems as its primary focus over the past year. The work includes streamlining how data is gathered, reported, and disseminated. The development of online forms to simplify data collection has been a key part of this work.

The college launched a new website in early February following more than 12 months of careful preparation. One of its new features is a mobile-device-friendly format that automatically adjusts to the device.

The Technology Advisory Committee conducted a technology summit in May 2015 to gather feedback from all campus users. The results were used to develop a strategic technology plan that can be updated each year by continuing to use the technology summit mechanism. Summer 2015 saw expansion and enhancement of wireless access in all academic buildings on campus, and a one-to-one learning initiative was launched by the Technology Advisory Committee.

God's gifts to MLC: Finances

There are many reasons for MLC to be grateful to the Lord. The chart below highlights a few of the many areas in which MLC has been blessed.

	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016*
Opening enrollment	708	714	727	723
Tuition, board, and room	\$16,340	\$17,160	\$18,020	\$18,920
Synod subsidy	\$3,016,053	\$3,193,500	\$3,079,300	\$3,011,660
Gifts and bequests	\$3,232,578	\$2,450,051	\$2,618,340	\$1,443,614
Unrestricted net assets at end of fiscal year	\$6,482,306	\$5,926,056	\$6,595,755	\$7,332,291

*as of January 2016

Financial aid—student cost and indebtedness

MLC continues to focus efforts on raising tuition assistance for students while limiting increases to tuition, room, and board. For fiscal year 2016–17, the MLC Governing Board approved a three percent increase to tuition, room, and board and a five percent increase in tuition assistance. In addition, the MLC Mission Advancement Office summary given below will highlight God's blessings upon recent efforts to increase financial aid resources for our students.

Funding specifically directed toward tuition assistance has grown significantly over the last few years, as illustrated in the chart below:

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Temporarily restricted net assets	\$1,393,528	\$1,766,677	\$2,601,674	\$2,837,791
Permanently restricted net assets	\$3,568,133	\$4,330,767	\$4,558,852	\$5,669,497
Total restricted net assets	\$4,961,661	\$6,097,444	\$7,160,526	\$8,507,288

Even with these increased efforts in place, tuition assistance has not been able to keep pace with the reduction in WELS subsidy (see chart on next page).

	MLC tuition assistance	Average per student receiving aid	WELS subsidy per student
2009–10*	\$1,934,896	\$3,257	\$5,128
2010–11*	\$1,914,100	\$3,112	\$5,085
2011–12*	\$2,036,105	\$3,434	\$4,574
2012–13*	\$2,147,421	\$3,366	\$4,260
2013–14*	\$2,221,348	\$3,072	\$4,473
2014–15*	\$2,321,000	\$3,224	\$4,236
2015–16*	\$2,437,050	\$3,385	\$4,165
2016–17**	\$2,558,910	\$3,554	\$4,165

*Actual

**Budgeted (estimated enrollments used for budget years)

MLC remains concerned about student debt. The following chart indicates a disturbing trend in national college graduate debt.

	% MLC graduates with debt	Average amount of debt	National debt average
2010–11	78%	\$22,176	\$26,600
2011–12	80%	\$21,671	\$27,850
2012–13	84%	\$21,997	\$28,400
2013–14	73%	\$21,463	\$28,950
2014–15	71%	\$25,519	unavailable

While MLC graduate debt is below the national average, consideration must also be given to compensation levels after graduation. At the same time, let us thank the Spirit's work through Christian parents who have taught biblical stewardship to their children. MLC students glorify their Savior with an outstanding repayment rate. The latest report from the Department of Education (received in February 2016) shows that of the 158 MLC students who entered Federal Student Loan debt repayment between 10/01/2012–9/20/2013, only 1 has defaulted on his loan repayment. This equates out to a 0.6 percent cohort default rate. The national average cohort default rate is 11.8 percent. To God be the glory for this Christian witness.

Use of MLC unrestricted funds

As of June 30, 2015, the unrestricted fund balance at MLC totaled \$6,595,755. The MLC Governing Board has designated a large portion of these toward specific needs at MLC as follows:

Fund	Amount	Description
Economic Sustainability Fund (ESF)	\$3,139,913	Board designated funds to be spent at the approval of the MLC Governing Board. In particular, funding has been set aside to offset deficit spending during the current biennium as well as address the Higher Learning Commission directives. The goal of this fund is to reach 25 percent of the MLC operating budget or approximately \$5 million.
Scholarship Fund	\$2,410,000	Amounts designated for scholarships are the equivalent of two years of MLC's internal funding for student scholarships. Should there be an economic downturn or change in eligibility for the federal financial aid program, these funds will provide MLC time to react without necessarily reducing student assistance.
Program maintenance	\$100,000	The MLC campus has great need for many facility improvements, many of which have a cost that exceeds what the operating budget can support. This funding is established to build a reserve to address larger projects or emergency needs that may arise on campus.
Operating and other	\$945,842	This funding represents net assets that have been designated for other operating functions such as the library, financing costs, etc.

Our current financial situation

MLC anticipates ending the 2016 fiscal year with a substantial deficit of about \$650,000, which is in line with the modified plan. MLC has experienced a drop in enrollments, in particular the second semester of the current year. However, increased donations and support from WELS, along with controlled spending will allow the college to finish the year close to plan. MLC's plan for the second year of the biennium also includes deficit spending of about \$330,000.

MLC has begun the planning process for the 2017–19 biennium. A staffing needs analysis has been completed over the last five months. This analysis will govern the staffing levels for the 2017–19 biennium. Although many staffing needs have been identified, only essential positions will be maintained or implemented due to budgetary constraints.

Over the past year, MLC has participated on the WELS Capital Projects Committee. Through this work, immediate capital needs as well as long-range needs have been identified and will be built into the biennial plan. Again, funding limitations may require facility needs to be postponed or addressed at a later time. Recognize this is not a long-term solution for maintaining facilities, let alone improving them.

God's gifts through Mission Advancement

The Office of Mission Advancement is responsible for overall development, public and community relations, alumni relations, and advancement efforts at MLC. Although it is difficult to quantify all of the blessings that MLC receives through the efforts of Mission Advancement, as of Jan. 31, 2016, we have received \$1,368,953 in gifts, which represents 74 percent of our FY 2015–16 goal of \$1,843,900. Those gifts were received from 1,084 donors. We have conducted 192 face-to-face visits in 13 states. Twenty MLC Sundays have also been conducted during that same time.

We are also pleased to report that in FY 2014–15 the percentage of MLC's operating costs supported by donations, scholarships, and grants grew from 13 percent (FY 2013–14) to 18 percent. This reduced the burden on students and their families from 53 percent to 51 percent. We offer sincere thanks to those who have given so generously to make this happen.

Another significant factor in helping to ease the burden on students can be seen in the number of endowed and annual scholarships established in this biennium. We joyfully report that 15 scholarships (6 annual and 9 endowed) were established since July 1, 2014.

We are also excited to report that for the 2016–17 school year Mission Advancement has partnered with Admissions to offer the Congregational Partnership Grant Program. It is a pilot program designed to encourage congregations to increase their financial support of their "sons and daughters" preparing for public ministry. MLC will match whatever funds congregations apply to their students' accounts up to \$1,000 for each student. This school year the program only applies to those students enrolling at MLC as traditional freshmen.

A look ahead

Strategic planning, strategic staffing plan, master site plan

A final review of the action plans for Compelled to Speak, the current strategic plan of the college, was concluded this past December. The foundation for development of the next plan was laid last summer in consultation with Credo, a comprehensive higher education consulting firm serving private colleges and universities around the country. A Strategic Think Tank was established to conduct four "listen and learn" sessions with faculty and staff in reaction to the data gathered through the Credo consultation. Student input is also being sought. The data from these sessions was compiled and used to identify issues that will inform the development of a new strategic plan that will project goals, initiatives, and action plans for the next six years.

The college has completed master site planning at the direction of the WELS Capital Projects Committee. This plan projects facility needs for the next 8–10 years. The study began with a survey of all faculty, staff, and students to identify and prioritize facility needs. In addition to the development of plans to maintain existing facilities using SchoolDude facilities management software, the site planning process has identified the need for a field house on the main campus; locker rooms and an outdoor track at our Boettger Road athletic fields; remodeled and expanded music facilities; cosmetic and functional upgrades to our existing dormitories, including air conditioning; and construction of additional dormitory space. Conceptual drawings and construction estimates are being prepared for all new construction. Once completed, an integrated plan for a capital campaign conducted in cooperation with the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving to fund the upgrades will be presented to the MLC Governing Board for approval.

Human Resource Manager Andrea Wendland led the development of a master staffing plan. This plan, initiated by the Human Resources Office at the direction of the MLC Governing Board, has several purposes. They include

identification of staffing needs through meetings with department heads; consideration of alternative approaches and budgetary impacts; and prioritization of identified positional needs for both faculty and support staff. Following approval by the MLC Governing Board in April, the plans will be used in the development of the ministry plan of the college for 2017–19.

The Human Resources Office has implemented semi-annual performance reviews for all staff within the past year in cooperation with the WELS Human Resources Office and will be conducting a comprehensive wage analysis once the master staffing plan has been completed. Responsibility for campus safety was also recently transferred to the Human Resources Office.

Accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission

In fall 2018 the Higher Learning Commission will make an onsite visit of Martin Luther College for the purpose of continued accreditation. MLC has already been at work in preparation for the visit. Last spring we received approval from the Higher Learning Commission to conduct our Quality Initiative. The Quality Initiative is entitled *Enhancing the Retention of Underrepresented Student Populations*. Prof. Larry Czer chairs a committee now working at four areas of student retention:

- provisionally accepted students and students on academic probation,
- non-traditional students (including older, military veterans, and/or married students),
- international students, and
- minority students.

Work also continues with MLC's effort toward preparing its Quality Assurance Argument for the comprehensive visit in 2018. Committee team members report to co-chairs Dr. John Meyer and Dr. Jeffery Wiechman as they submit documentation that all five Higher Learning Commission core components and the 21 sub-components under them are met and/or continue to show improvement on our campus.

In conclusion

Thank you for perusing this report. We join with God's people in placing ourselves in the Savior's gracious care. Whether as individuals or as a WELS ministry, we join King David in confident hope, proclaiming, "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this" (Psalm 37:5).

Pres. Mark Zarling, reporter

Rev. Michael Woldt, chairman
Rev. Jonathan Kolander, vice chairman
Teacher Steven Rosenbaum, secretary
Teacher Joe Archer
Teacher Drew Kock
Mr. Dale Krause
Mr. Timothy Petermann
Mr. Barry Price
Rev. Duane Schmeichel
Rev. Michael Seifert
Teacher David Uhlhorn
Mr. Michael Valteau
Teacher Steven Vasold
Rev. Mark Wessel

Advisory:

Rev. Charles Degner, president of the Minnesota District
Mr. Randy Matter, board appointed advisory member
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of the WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Pres. Mark Zarling, Martin Luther College

Luther Preparatory School

Our calling

Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., has a single mission: To encourage and prepare young people for a lifetime of service in the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

LPS is owned and operated by WELS. The synod has given LPS the privilege and responsibility to carry out this important work. The LPS Governing Board is grateful to our church body, which supports the work of LPS with its prayers and gifts.

Historically, 55 percent of LPS graduates have enrolled at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., since LPS was formed in 1995. Over the past 12 years 37 percent of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) graduates were once LPS students.

Sixty-eight (60 percent) of the 112 graduates from the LPS class of 2016 will enroll at MLC this fall. Twenty-six of the 68 will enter the pastor track. We are grateful for those continuing at MLC as well as the other 44 graduates who considered the public ministry during their time at LPS.

Our current situation

Enrollment

Enrollment has increased six of the previous seven years. LPS opened school year 2015–16 with an enrollment of 442, an increase of 33 percent from seven years ago.

Our students hail from 28 states, nine foreign countries, 187 congregations, and all 12 WELS districts. More than two-thirds of our students come from lay families.

Recruitment to LPS, with an eye on future full-time gospel ministry, remains a top priority. We always invite and welcome all WELS upper-grade students to visit our campus, “shadow” a prep student, and spend a night in one of the dormitories to get a feel for prep life. Every school year we host “Phoenix For A Day,” a fall play, a musical, children’s theater, grade school basketball tournaments, etc. These events bring more than two thousand WELS grade school students on our campus. Over the summer we offer several basketball, volleyball, and music camps that afford hundreds of WELS grade school students and their parents an opportunity to take a close look at their synod school.

Preparing for the mission

The LPS curriculum is designed to prepare students to meet or exceed the requirements of MLC. LPS recognizes the need and desire for future musicians in our Lutheran congregations and classrooms. More than 90 percent of our students take piano lessons, with several of them advancing to take organ lessons. Many are involved in the string, brass, and wind ensembles. Because the biblical languages are critical for the work of future pastors and in order to prepare all students for language studies, all freshmen take first year Latin, and all students take at least three years of Latin, German, or Spanish.

LPS has received accreditation from both WELSSA (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation) and AdvanceED-NCA. LPS will continue to meet the standards set forth in the accreditation process to maintain our accredited status.

Because we are a mission-driven school for gospel proclamation, LPS offers age-appropriate experiences in speaking the gospel. All of our seniors take part in our Taste of Ministry program, in which prospective pastor students spend two days with an area WELS pastor and our prospective teacher students spend two days in a classroom with an area elementary school teacher. Project Timothy is a program designed to provide mission, ministry, and cross-cultural experiences to LPS students. Fifty students will assist with outreach and education programs of mission congregations in Antigua, St. Lucia, Georgia, Texas, California, Virginia, and Canada. Also, senior boys are given the opportunity to prepare and speak an evening devotion to the student body.

Each year the entire junior class visits Martin Luther College. By the time our students graduate each one will have met at least four times with an MLC recruiter. An array of missionaries, professors, teachers, pastors, and MLC and

WLS students present topical ministry workshops at our annual Ministry Day. The entire student body takes part in Ministry Day. Sophomores also take an annual trip to the seminary. Seniors in the LPS pastor track visit the seminary each fall for worship, class visitation, and a tour. A gospel ministry atmosphere permeates campus life.

The Word is central in all we do. Worship services are held twice daily; all classes are taught from a scriptural perspective; and students are encouraged in their personal devotional lives. The Holy Spirit working through the means of grace continues to encourage and prepare our young people for lives of gospel ministry and service.

Other school news

Having served faithfully as LPS recruitment director for the past eight years, Pastor Nate Scharf accepted a call to serve as associate pastor at St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn. LPS is currently calling from the field to fill this vacancy.

For the past four years Luther Prep has been able to livestream its morning chapel services, concerts, football and soccer games, and many athletic events held in the gymnasium. Family members and friends—the vast majority living a distance away from Watertown—have greatly appreciated this service. The quality of livestreaming has improved immensely over the last two years.

Luther Prep celebrated 150 years of ministerial education on the synod's Watertown campus with a service of thanksgiving to God on Nov. 15, 2015. (The original school was established in 1865 to serve as a seminary, a college, and a prep department). Synod President Mark Schroeder delivered the sermon based on Psalm 115:1. The four synodical school choirs and the presidents of each school participated in the worship service.

In fiscal year 2014–15 Luther Prep was privileged to join in a special relationship with WELS Ministry of Christian Giving. LPS President Matthew Crass accompanied WELS Christian giving counselors from September through December of 2014, visiting approximately one thousand WELS members and telling the story of Luther Prep. During this year of the sesquicentennial celebration, special gifts totaling more than \$600,000 were given toward long-term student financial aid and chapel refurbishment.

Technology use in the classroom also increased this year as each LPS student was given a Chromebook, which is used for one-to-one computing in several classes. Moving forward all new students will continue to receive a Chromebook.

A look ahead

We rejoice that our synod, under the hand of a loving, saving, guiding God, plans to open several home missions each year for the foreseeable future. World mission opportunities continue to knock on the door of WELS. WELS has also witnessed an increase in the need for WELS trained teachers inside and outside of America. It naturally follows: The more congregations we start and the more schools of varying types open, the more called workers we need.

We ask and pray that the members of our church body continue to identify grade school boys and girls who might someday with appropriate encouragement and preparation become “beautiful feet who bring good news and proclaim salvation” (Isaiah 52:7).

LPS Latin/German Prof. Robert Krueger will be retiring this summer after serving 43 years in the public ministry, with 36 of those years at a synodical prep school. Pastor Souksamay Phetsanghane has accepted the call to serve as our new Latin/German professor.

To potentially benefit WELS parents of modest means who desire to send their children to LPS, the governing board is exploring the Parental Choice Program in place in Wisconsin. This program gives state funds to parents who fall below a certain income level to send their children to a private school of their choosing. The governing board is ever mindful of the integrity and mission of LPS as it explores this program.

The LPS chapel was built in 1955. If all goes according to plan, the refurbishment of the chapel will be completed by June 30. This will include new chancel furnishings, new tile flooring, new pews, enhanced lighting, and repaired/refurbished stained glass windows. LPS has contracted with Massmann Studios for the design and renovation.

The chapel organ was purchased and installed in 1963. No work has been done on it for more than 50 years. Berghaus Pipe Organ Builders will be refurbishing and enhancing our 1963 Schlicker organ to meet the needs of the chapel, which was expanded in 1995. The total cost will be approximately \$500,000. LPS received approval from the Synodical Council to undertake this project, with the understanding that special gifts would need to be gathered.

The LPS Governing Board considered such an expense to be worthwhile because 1) the chapel (worship) is the heartbeat of Luther Prep's life, 2) the organ remains the chief instrument in Lutheran worship, 3) this ministerial

education campus has enjoyed the blessing of an organ for more than 50 years, 4) an appreciation for Lutheran worship is instilled in our students, and 5) Luther Prep produces more organists for service in the church than perhaps any other high school in America.

If all goes according to plan the, the refurbished and enhanced organ will be installed in July and August. As of March 31, \$400,000 (80 percent) of the \$500,000 total cost has been contributed.

The WELS Capital Planning Committee asked all schools to provide a master site plan. The Board for Ministerial Education covered the expenses associated with making this plan. Luther Prep engaged the services of Zimmerman Architectural Studios. Zimmermann recognized \$12.5 million in conceptual costs that could be done on the synod's Watertown campus, \$10 million of which was for a new music auditorium to replace the existing 104-year-old auditorium. The old auditorium would be repurposed to its original use as a gymnasium.

Through the labors of the saints who have gone before us, the Lord of the Church has blessed our synod for the past 150 years with a campus in Watertown, Wis., committed to ministerial education. Luther Prep remains dedicated to the same purpose. We are grateful to our synod for her prayers, support, and gifts. We are grateful to the parents who offer their sons and daughters as gifts to Christ's gospel ministry by enrolling them at LPS.

Pres. Matthew Crass, reporter

Rev. Kenneth Brokmeier, chairman
Rev. Timothy Spaude, vice chairman
Dr. John Meyer, secretary
Rev. John Eich
Teacher Adam Glodowski
Rev. Stephen Hein
Mr. Martin Madson
Mr. Joel Scott

Advisory:

Pres. Matthew Crass, Luther Preparatory School
Rev. Philip Hirsch, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Herbert Prah, president of the Western Wisconsin District
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Our calling

Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich., serves WELS as part of its three-tier, four-school ministerial education system. MLS serves as one of two schools at the high school level forming the first tier of training future ministers of the gospel. As students are trained, MLS encourages them to continue their preparation upon graduation at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn.

MLS also enrolls international students as a partner with the Board for World Missions. In this role, MLS offers training to young international boys and girls who are recommended as students for further training in the Lutheran faith. The goal is that they might serve as possible future gospel ministers in the public preaching or teaching ministry or as dedicated lay members of growing foreign mission fields.

God's blessing on our mission is seen in the fact that on average 42 percent of our students have continued their training for the public ministry at MLC over the past decade. We also have 13 international students currently enrolled.

Our current situation

Enrollment

MLS began the 2015–16 school year with an enrollment of 201. This was a significant decline in enrollment due primarily to a declining pool of students in the area Lutheran elementary schools as well as a very large graduating class compared to incoming freshmen (65 versus 51). At the time of this writing MLS has received 58 applications for the 2016–17 school year. This appears to be running stronger than last year, and the pool of eighth graders is larger in the current year. Our recruitment department anticipates more applications still to come, which would suggest a possible larger class size for freshmen next year than the 44 seniors who will be graduating. Since statistics are not complete for enrollments in local grade schools and because we are increasing the number of students attending MLS from outlying districts, it is difficult to predict with accuracy the enrollment trends for the future. We are studying enrollments in the lower grades to determine what to expect in future years. We have also stepped up our recruitment in the lower grades as well as in outlying districts with the hopes of enrolling more students from both the Michigan District as well as elsewhere in WELS. Below is a breakdown of our 2015–16 opening enrollment.

<i>Grade level</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>
9	21	30	51
10	33	16	49
11	22	32	54
12	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>47</u>
TOTAL	99	102	201

Dorm students: 121 (60%)

Commuting students: 80 (40%)

International students: 13

Districts represented: 6 of 12

States represented: 10

From Michigan: 176 (86%)

Faculty: 28

Staff: 31

The 13 international students represent three foreign countries including South Korea (from Canaan Lutheran Academy), China (connected with Friends of China and China Partners), and Hong Kong (SALEM). The MLS Governing Board has encouraged our international recruiter to continue to actively seek out students in many foreign countries who meet our criteria for WELS affiliation and who would benefit from our program.

Preparing for our mission

Encouragement and preparation for the public ministry occurs on campus, in local congregations, and through field experiences.

All of our students learn God's Great Exchange and how to share their faith with others. All of our students take piano lessons and some go on to organ playing, which is a recognized need in our synod. Seniors are visited regularly by the admissions counselors from Martin Luther College. Sophomores enjoy a special banquet called "Sophomore Night" at which representatives of both Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary talk to them about the next levels of training for public ministry and what to expect. Juniors go on "college tour" for a week to see the other three ministerial education schools of our synod. Freshmen attend Ministry Day at which local pastors and teachers share their stories, joys, and challenges of the ministry to get them thinking about whether they too might serve Jesus in this special way. The entire student body participates in an annual Mission Seminar in February that highlights some area of our synod's gospel outreach at home and abroad.

Taste of Ministry is an opportunity for our girls and boys to spend time with an experienced teacher or pastor in the area. Getting into the classroom or seeing what goes on in a pastor's life beyond the pulpit often has a profound effect on our student's ministry decisions.

Project Titus is the name given to MLS's program of early field experience that takes place during the summer months and school breaks at times. Each year students have the opportunity to sign up for one or more experiences. This

might include canvassing, helping with a vacation Bible school or soccer or music Bible camp, or helping with a summer program at one of our Lutheran elementary schools. In the recent past students have participated in Project Titus trips to North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Virginia, Maryland, and Wisconsin. In addition there were foreign trips to Colombia, China, and Germany. These trips provide not only ministry experiences but also a sensitivity and understanding of other cultures.

Most recently we have added Project Titus-Saginaw to our ministry experiences for our students. This program connects students all year round with ministry opportunities right here in Saginaw. Students have assisted at a pregnancy counseling center, participated in a special needs children's program, visited at a nursing home, and helped with local outreach events done by the Saginaw WELS churches. We hope that this new program will continue to evolve and expand over the coming years.

All of these enable MLS students to make informed, mature, and Spirit-led decisions about full-time service in the public ministry.

Faculty and staff

We have moved a part-time staff member to full time to supplement our housekeeping/maintenance staff. His name is Mr. James Rohloff. He replaces Mr. Steve Todd.

Prof. and Vice President Norval Kock accepted a divine call to be president of Manitowoc Lutheran High School. His wife, Prof. Kathy Kock, will accompany him to this call. So MLS was left with two significant vacancies in many different subjects including Latin, Church History, International Work, Art, Art History, Biology, and several extra-curricular responsibilities. They will both complete the current school year and then head to Manitowoc, Wis., in June 2016. We thank both Prof. Norv and Prof. Kathy Kock for their many years of faithful service at MLS. We wish them God's blessings as they establish a new home and take up new ministries in service to Jesus our Savior and Lord.

Prof. Terry Vasold continues to serve us in retirement as a professor of history teaching government and economics courses. Mrs. Cheryl Kopp accepted our call to teach Art, Art History, and Geography as well as heading our academic success center. She will also oversee our yearbook.

Finally, MLS thanks the Lord for the faithful service of Prof. Len Proeber who celebrated his 40th anniversary in the ministry. We are also grateful for the service of Tutor Justin Eternick, Tutors Nathan and Erin Moldenhauer, and Tutor Emily Chandonnet who completed their service on our campus during the biennium. Tutor Chandonnet has accepted a call to Christ the King Lutheran School in Palm Coast, Fla., to which she will be heading at the close of the current school year. The other tutors will stand for reassignment in May.

Facilities

The Lord has provided MLS with excellent facilities through WELS. MLS was privileged to host the 63rd biennial convention of WELS on its campus during July 2015 so that delegates were able to enjoy the facility that is provided by Congregation Mission Offerings. In preparation for this event some minor upgrades were completed on campus buildings and grounds. Our parking lot was also repaired and resealed. This helped to slow down deterioration and postpone the full replacement, which will be needed in the future. Shortly after the convention, the tile in the 1950s academic building was replaced. In the fall of 2015 some structural deterioration in the entry area of our campus was repaired along with a new gate on our football field fence.

MLS still maintains three homes. One is reserved for the president and his family. One is currently occupied by one of our professor's families, and one is currently vacant. The vacant home will be offered to new faculty members when calls are accepted.

Finances

The lower enrollment for this past year coupled with a slightly lower number of students living in the dormitory for the fiscal year has led to some difficult times for MLS financially. With no reserves to speak of, a downturn such as this has a significant effect on MLS's ability to carry out its projected plans. Our business manager has done his best to keep expenses down, but with the lost revenue it will be difficult to do anything other than cut back and try to end the year in the black. Much needed maintenance projects have been funded primarily by the MLS Foundation. The foundation is also committed to providing \$100,000 per year to our student financial aid fund beginning in the 2017-2018 school year.

The future of our mission

MLS continues to keep its eyes focused on its purpose. Despite the lower enrollment, MLS is still committed to a second person to work on recruitment in our grade schools locally and throughout our synod. Therefore MLS will again seek a recruitment tutor at assignment day at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary this year. The goal of the recruitment department is to continue to add students from outside our district to our enrollment. The Lord has been blessing their efforts toward this goal with areas such as Alabama and Georgia beginning to send students to MLS.

MLS is currently calling a professor to teach Spanish, Latin, and Church History. The call is currently being held, and we pray that the Lord would soon fill this need. The governing board determined that this professorship should be filled by a pastor-trained individual so that he can continue to hold out the parish ministry before our boys as a glorious way of serving the Lord Jesus. MLS also needs a professor for some science courses, but a decision to call for this position was postponed due to financial considerations. MLS hopes to fill these positions creatively with current personnel and with teaching responsibilities for our newly assigned tutors. We pray for an improved financial situation so that we can call this professorship as well in the near future.

MLS has undertaken master plan development to be completed by March 2016. It is not anticipated that MLS needs to expand its footprint at this time. However, there is a need to repurpose some areas on campus and reorganize some teaching and administration areas to improve instruction and flow on campus. Utilizing the services of a local architect, MLS is nearing the end of this process. Accomplishing any of these plans will be dependent on the funding needed and what amount of that funding is able to be secured.

MLS continues to encourage boys and girls to consider attending Martin Luther College with the goal of becoming a pastor, teacher, or staff minister for our synod. The next few years the percentages look more promising as 18 of 44 are already committed from this year's senior class and another 10 are strongly considering this. The junior class is also showing promise as 30 of 54 in that class are strongly considering going to MLC. May the Lord bless these young people to both will and do according to his good pleasure. The future of our church body lies with these young souls and minds. They are truly a blessing and gift from our God.

To him be the glory!

Pres. Joel Petermann, reporter

Rev. Greg Gibbons, chairman, Michigan District
Rev. Philip Paustian, vice-chairman, Northern Wisconsin District
Teacher Steven Carlovsky, secretary, Southeastern Wisconsin District
Prof. David Bauer, Minnesota District
Mr. Mark Eubank, Michigan District
Mr. Keith Kriewall, Pacific Northwest District
Mr. Loren Mathison, Western Wisconsin District
Rev. Marc VonDeylen, South Central District

Advisory:

Pres. Joel Petermann, Michigan Lutheran Seminary
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Rev. John Seifert, president of the Michigan District

Subsidiaries and affiliate

A number of subsidiary groups and one affiliate serve the synod. These entities do not receive support from the synod's operating budget. Each is governed by a board that is accountable to the synod via the Synodical Council.

Northwestern Publishing House

Our calling

The WELS constitution states, "The object and purpose of the synod shall be to extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church." As outlined in the constitution, Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) fulfills this object and purpose "by printing, publishing, purchasing, selling, and disseminating literature that maintains Lutheran doctrine and practice" and "by furnishing appropriate literature for parish schools, Sunday schools, missions, institutions, and churches."

The mission of Northwestern Publishing House is to deliver biblically sound, Christ-centered resources within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and beyond. NPH develops materials that are consistent with this mission and aligned with Lutheran doctrine and practice. NPH does this without receiving funds from the WELS operating budget for ongoing operations. The WELS constitution dictates that the proceeds NPH receives from sales of materials to individuals, congregations, and schools shall be used to develop and publish new materials. It also directs NPH to assist in funding joint synod publishing projects with the synod's boards and commissions. Our calling, then, is to continue to proclaim God's love in Christ through the careful use of the resources God grants to us.

Our current situation

125th anniversary

The year 2016 marks the 125th anniversary of Northwestern Publishing House. From its beginning as a combined bookstore and printing operation, NPH has supported the synod's publishing needs. Early publishing included periodicals, a catechism, a primer, "reading books," a treasury of songs, a hymnbook, a theological quarterly, and a three-volume dogmatics. While we use words like curriculum, hymnals, and theological works to describe what we do today, the focus of materials developed by NPH remains the same. While the delivery of materials from print alone has changed to include digital downloads and apps, the Christ-centered message remains central to everything NPH publishes. And while the language has changed from German to English, God's Word, shared through the materials NPH produces, remains timeless and unchanging. We are thankful for that Word and for the blessings God has bestowed upon Northwestern Publishing House over the past 125 years. We ask that you join us in prayer for God's continued blessing on our mission and ministry as we carry out our service to him and to those he has placed before us.

Business and ministry

Northwestern Publishing House is a self-funding ministry. This means that NPH reinvests the returns it receives from sales of materials and resources it develops for our WELS pastors, teachers, and church members. NPH also makes available for sale, after careful review, resources from other publishers and again reinvests the returns from these materials to develop materials and resources for WELS. Another component of NPH's business and ministry is participation in joint synod publishing projects like the Christ-Light curriculum, the hymnal, and the catechism. These joint synod publishing projects benefit a broad group within WELS and carry with them significant, multi-year development costs. For this reason, joint synod publishing projects have historically been jointly funded between NPH and other synod funding sources. It is important to NPH in carrying out its mission that all three of these sources of ministry funding be available to NPH.

Today NPH faces challenging business dynamics:

- NPH's primary customer base, WELS members, is not growing in number.
- Church budget pressures have led to declining sales of church supply materials, such as periodicals, bulletins, and offering envelopes.

NPH is working hard and investing its resources in programs to maximize its business and ministry reach as it addresses these challenges. At the same time, NPH is solely funding development of the new hymnal and new catechism. While this will require significant financial resources, we are grateful for the resources we have and trust that God will provide for the ministry needs of NPH into the future.

An investment in marketing and expanded distribution has resulted in encouraging business gains and expanded ministry reach.

- Whether by e-mail, direct mail, in-store events, or promotions, customers are increasingly responding to our efforts to reach them.
- We continue to see success with our Facebook presence in establishing an ongoing conversation with our customers. All measures of engagement continue to grow.
- NPH Christian Books & Gifts Store and the NPH website have seen an increase in both number of customers and sales.
- Distribution through Amazon and Barnes & Noble continue to increase with sales to date of more than 8,000 print and eBooks. Most importantly, this represents a significant number of people that we may not have reached with God's Word if we were not in these channels.
- Digital content is showing promising performance with nearly 41,000 downloads (more than 1,500 annual subscribers) of the *Meditations* daily devotional app in more than 150 countries.
- Book fairs continue to grow with more than 250 events hosted, providing an opportunity to directly reach our church members.

Publishing program

NPH continues to focus on developing products that we pray will provide a benefit to those we serve. Since the last report to the districts, NPH published three books for pastoral growth, twelve books for layperson growth, four personal devotionals, twelve Bible studies, seven worship resources, six vacation Bible school kits, Christ-Light Lutheran elementary school and Sunday school curriculum, and twenty-four music titles. In addition, NPH published *Meditations*, *Forward in Christ*, *Parents Crosslink*, and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*.

Digital publishing

NPH continues to deliver content in ways that are relevant today with more than 160 books in e-Book format, distribution of more than 115 titles through Logos, more than 500 downloadable products, digital *Forward in Christ*, and launch of the *Meditations* daily devotional app. While digital publishing is an important strategy for NPH, distribution of digital products represents a relatively small portion of a publisher's sales, and therefore print versions will remain critical to NPH's success as a ministry.

Bible studies

In response to extensive research with pastors, NPH has introduced a number of improvements to its Bible studies. All previously released Bible studies have been reorganized and received new covers to make navigating them and finding the topic of interest easier. A "Teaching Index" on all Bible studies now provides a clear way of determining the level of experience and knowledge needed to lead the Bible study. New Bible studies include more flexible lessons for a customized teaching approach and a promotional toolkit to encourage attendance.

In collaboration with WELS Adult Discipleship and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, NPH is offering a free monthly *Teach the Word* e-newsletter that provides practical advice, information, and encouragement to help pastors better understand adult learning.

Broader reach

Aligned with its mission "to deliver biblically sound, Christ-centered resources within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and beyond," NPH is placing an emphasis on developing materials for broader reach. This work, begun recently, is beginning to bear fruit with new books being developed to share our witness to the gospel with Christians beyond WELS and to non-Christians.

Collaborative projects

NPH is currently engaged in a number of exciting collaborative projects with WELS commissions, committees,

and parasynodical agencies. The list of projects includes new *Forward in Christ* content, *Parents Crosslink* school distribution, *WELS Connection* church distribution, hymnology curriculum, Bible studies, *Teach The Word* e-newsletter, worship education materials, new catechism, Reformation 500, and of course, the Hymnal Project. NPH also participated in the development of the new video *My Son, My Savior* and commissioned authors to create complementary materials tied to the video.

Close collaboration continues between NPH and Multi-Language Publications (MLP), with NPH providing content translated by MLP for use throughout the world. This content includes a number of books and other materials along with Christmas and Easter for Kids. NPH further supports MLP's efforts by providing warehousing, e-commerce, distribution, and customer service facilities and expertise.

Marketing programs

In addition to ongoing product marketing, the NPH Marketing Department has adopted an omni-channel marketing campaign approach to reach customers with a consistent and compelling message regardless of the NPH channel they visit. We appreciate the many pastors who spread the word about NPH. A pastor's advocacy for NPH is critical to our ability to reach his church members with the books and other materials we develop for them.

Technology and infrastructure

NPH is in the process of launching a new e-commerce website to provide a better customer shopping experience and a broader assortment of books and other materials.

Printing efficiencies

NPH continually seeks ways to achieve greater efficiencies and reduce operating expenses. NPH is reducing print costs through just-in-time printing of short print runs, pursuing multiple print bids, and where appropriate, offshore printing. These efforts have resulted in significant cost of goods savings.

A look ahead

As we look ahead, we thank and praise God for the blessings he has provided. Certainly the future is not for us to know and rests securely in the Lord's hands. Nevertheless, we look ahead with a desire to be good stewards of the resources God has graciously given, a positive—even hopeful—attitude, and a willingness to work while we have the opportunity.

Hymnal Project

The Hymnal Project is comprised of seven subcommittees and one executive committee that remain fully engaged in their work. The project is entering two important phases of activity in the coming months. The first includes testing and gaining feedback on the resources being developed. The second phase includes finalizing the breadth of resources to be offered and developing initial production timelines. Concurrent with these phases, the seven subcommittees continue to develop content for the various print and digital resources.

For more information on the Hymnal Project, see p. 35.

Christ-Light curriculum

NPH completed a revision of the Christ-Light Lutheran elementary school curriculum and introduced Christ-Light curriculum for Sunday schools. Looking to the future, NPH conducted extensive research with pastors, school principals, and teachers, which identified a need for technology tools within the Lutheran elementary school curriculum and greater differentiation between the Lutheran elementary school and Sunday school programs. We will reach out to the Commission on Lutheran Schools and the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry to discuss steps to address these opportunities.

Hymnology curriculum

Mr. Carl Nolte, the sacred music and worship editor at NPH, is working with a subcommittee of the WELS Commission on Worship that is preparing a hymnology curriculum for Lutheran elementary schools. The three-year curriculum will include hymns from the upcoming hymnal. The next step in moving this project forward is determining the hymns to be included in the curriculum.

Worship education material

Pastor Daniel Schroeder, Bible studies editor at NPH, and representatives of the WELS Commission on Worship (Pastor Jon Zabell, Pastor Aaron Christie) are developing the next generation of worship education material. The last product, *Come Worship Christ*, is in need of updating. With the introduction of the new hymnal, we believe there

will be renewed interest in the area of understanding our Lutheran worship. This project is in its early stages of development with a planned release in spring 2021.

Personal Bible studies

With people feeling pressed for time, the thought of spending time in personal Bible study may be a goal but not a reality for many. With this in mind, NPH is developing a new line of books called *5-Minute Bible Studies*. *5-Minute Bible Studies* will allow adults, teens, couples, or families to spend time in a study that seems doable to them. These books will provide pastors with resources they can recommend to encourage their members to be in the Word at home. The *5-Minute Bible Studies* books are scheduled for release in Spring 2018.

Forward in Christ

Forward in Christ now includes a parenting column titled *Heart to heart: Parent conversations*. In collaboration with the WELS communications director, content for the column is being leveraged and expanded upon in blogs, the WELS website, the WELS and NPH Facebook pages, and *Parents Crosslink* magazine. Research will be pursued to better understand readership of *Forward in Christ* and ensure content is relevant and best serves WELS members.

Catechism

Pastor John Braun, vice president of editorial services at NPH, and Pastor Ray Schumacher, curriculum editor at NPH, are working with two members of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Education Department, Prof. Joel Otto and Prof. Stephen Geiger, on a new exposition of the catechism. Field testing of specific sections has been completed with feedback incorporated. Release of the catechism is anticipated in spring 2017.

Wartburg Bible translation

Work by the Wartburg Project has continued to progress with potential release of a New Testament and Psalms edition in fall 2017.

Reformation 500

NPH is supporting synodwide efforts to observe the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation with resources for districts, congregations, schools, and individuals. NPH plans to release new titles and several books from past Luther offerings with an updated look. The objective of the mix of materials is to emphasize the continuing importance of the Reformation among our pastors, called workers, and Christians at all levels of maturity.

For more information on Reformation 500, see p. 54.

Our thanks

Finally, we pause to give thanks for the many pastors and teachers who make others aware of the resources NPH provides. Our ability to reach those we serve is determined in no small part by how you advocate for NPH among your members and school parents. On behalf of the NPH Board of Directors and the entire NPH ministry, we thank you. May God bless you in your service to him.

Mr. Bill Ziche, reporter

Prof. John Hartwig, chairman
Rev. Joel Schroeder, vice chairman
Mr. Edward Wolf, treasurer
Mr. Christopher Snyder, secretary
Mr. Michael McCormick
Mr. David Neujahr
Mr. Matthew Plocher
Rev. Luke Werre
Prof. Keith Wessel

Advisory:

Mr. Todd J. Poppe, WELS chief financial officer

Administrative officers:

Mr. Bill Ziche, president
Rev. John Braun, vice president, editorial
Mr. Eric Krueger, vice president, finance and accounting
Mr. Todd Rebillot, vice president, human resources and operations

Publication Coordinating Commission

Our calling

The Publication Coordinating Commission (PCC) has the task of coordinating and prioritizing the publishing and media production of the synod's boards and commissions and Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) in order to avoid duplication of effort. In the past we have solicited publishing proposals for material that would not recover the cost of production and yet are deemed by the boards and commissions of the synod to be important. We have also evaluated publishing proposals of NPH that were deemed valuable but could not recover the cost of production. We reviewed and evaluated those proposals and awarded funds from the Publication Fund to those we considered vital.

Our current situation

The commission has diminished financial resources to direct toward materials deemed important, so it has awarded only minimal assistance to projects needing additional funds. There simply are no funds for large projects.

With its limited financial resources, the PCC has concentrated on theological works that could not recover the cost of development and publication. These works are intended, first of all, for our professional clergy so that they can continue their ongoing growth through the use of these materials. In addition, these materials fulfill the need for solid confessional Lutheran resources in a world where such resources are difficult to find. In addition these works provide a witness to those who do not share our confessional Lutheran position. Two projects recently have received grants to permit their publication: *A Defense of the Lutheran Faith* (J.W. Montgomery, translator) and *Studies in the Smalcald Articles* (J.P. Meyer, updated by J. Brenner).

Additional theological works are already in the process of development, including a new pastoral theology text for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Such projects will need funding to ensure publication. In addition, limited funds have been set aside for future video productions in the pattern of *Road to Emmaus*.

Larger publishing projects exceed the resources available to the PCC. For example, the synod resolved to develop a new hymnal, but the PCC had no funds to contribute to the project. NPH agreed to fund the development of the hymnal without the assistance of additional funding from the PCC or other sources in the synod. As the development has proceeded for the hymnal, additional components, including digital tools, have become part of the planning. The development costs for such components are being studied, but NPH is not in a position to fund those costs. For more details, see p. 60 of the Synodical Council Report under the heading "Hymnal Project funding."

NPH also assumed funding of a new exposition of Luther's Small Catechism. In the development of this project, additional components were identified to help pastors and teachers provide a better learning experience for students. These include new curricula that will use contemporary methodology and digital tools. More students are learning with digital tablets and other mobile devices. Providing such resources will help engage the contemporary generation of students, but development of them will also require additional funding beyond what is currently available.

In the light of these realities, the PCC agreed with an NPH proposal to return to the funding model that produced the 1982 catechism exposition (Kuske), the first Christ-Light curriculum, and *Christian Worship*. That model was a partnership whereby NPH and WELS jointly funded such projects. Returning to that model would help clarify funding for future large projects that benefit our congregations as well as the additional components to current projects. Not only does the past practice suggest this approach, but the synod bylaws also suggest a sharing of costs: "NPH shall . . . assist in funding joint publishing projects with the synod's boards and commissions."

Currently no funds are available to assist with the new additions to either the hymnal or the catechism. To address this issue, President Schroeder appointed new members to the PCC and directed it to plan for additional funding. The revived PCC met in January 2016 and resolved to designate the additions to the hymnal and catechism as "Unfunded Projects" so those projects can receive the attention of the Conference of Presidents and the Ministry of Christian Giving. Future meetings will work toward finding and implementing strategies for additional funding.

Rev. John Braun, reporter

Rev. John Braun, chairman and vice president of Northwestern Publishing House

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, Congregation and Ministry Support Group
Rev. Curtis Jahn, Northwestern Publishing House
Prof. Thomas Kock, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
Rev. Bruce McKenney, parish pastor
Rev. Nathan Seiltz, WELS Multi-Language Publications
Rev. Jonathan Werre, Board for Home Missions

Advisory:

Mr. Lee Hitter, director of communications
Mr. Todd J. Poppe, WELS chief financial officer

WELS Historical Institute

Our calling

Our calling as WELS Historical Institute is to “preserve and present the story of God’s grace to WELS.” Our calling brings to mind the stone monument God directed Joshua to build when the nation of Israel had crossed the dry riverbed after God had cut off the flow of the Jordan River. Forever after when children asked, “What do these stones mean?” they would hear the account of this special manifestation of God’s grace.

Our current situation

The members of WELS Historical Institute work to provide a lasting witness of how God has worked among WELS with his blessing as we have proclaimed the message of his grace in Christ. To that end, our work over the last year focused on several projects, including:

- Publication of two *WELS Historical Institute Journals* each year (30 to 40 pages each). Each journal contains articles that focus on leaders, institutions, or events used by God to shape the course of Lutheranism and the history and work of WELS.
- Publication of two issues of the newsletter for members each year, which offer information about the work of the Historical Institute.
- In September, the WELS Historical Institute was part of a weekend event called Doors Open Milwaukee. During this event hundreds of historical buildings in Milwaukee are open to the public for free. The Landmark Museum was one of the sites available to visit and brought many people to the museum for a tour.
- Since 2010 the WELS Historical Institute and Friends of the Landmark Church have hosted presentations during the summer and fall. The presentations this year were once again very well received with record attendance. This year we held our first presentation through livestream so members from around the country could enjoy participating in one of our live events. Steve Gurgel shared his presentation “The War to End All Germans.” This presentation is still available and can be viewed at vimeo.com/138085553. Other presentations included “Hymns Old and New” by Michael Schultz and Carl Nolte; “Historic West Granville Cemetery Tour” by James Moeller; “Genealogy Study: How One Family Traced Their Genealogy to Martin Luther” by Gerald Vanselow; “The Life of Martin Luther—Portrayed by Historian” David Wiedenkiller; “Mission Work in Hong Kong and the History of Asia Lutheran Seminary” by Prof. John Lawrenz.
- Past presentations offered through the WELS Historical Institute are available on DVD. An order form can be found on our website at welshistory.org.
- Continued restoration of the Landmark Church Museum back to its original 1863 condition. This year’s project included the restoration of the hanging chandelier pendant lights.

A look ahead

In 2016 a number of events and presentations are being planned including a bus tour of historic Lutheran congregations in the Milwaukee area. Please visit welshistory.org for updates and information on upcoming events.

This year our goal is to raise the remaining funds needed to complete the restoration and stenciling of two side walls in the Landmark Church sanctuary. The project will begin once the remaining \$10,000 in donations have been raised.

The WELS Historical Institute is excited to work collaboratively with a new synod archivist and assist in the relocation of our synod's archives from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to the Center for Mission and Ministry. This important work of preserving our synod's history provides an opportunity to promote the story of God's grace to WELS.

WELS Historical Institute continues to offer tours of the grounds and building of Salem Lutheran Landmark Church and Museum, the site of the constituting convention of the Wisconsin Synod in May 1850. Tours can take up to an hour and are normally conducted between March and November. Special arrangements can be made for out-of-town visitors any time of the year. Individuals, families, congregations, schools, and organizations can arrange a tour by contacting the tour coordinator, Dr. Joel Pless, at 414-443-8930 (office), 262-677-2109 (home), or joel.pless@wlc.edu. The institute is actively recruiting new tour guides for the Landmark Church. Individuals giving tours of Salem need to live within convenient driving distance of the church, which is located on 107th Street and Fond du Lac Avenue on Milwaukee's northwest side—and need to be readily available for tours during the spring, summer, and fall. Information and training will be provided. If interested and available, contact Dr. Pless.

This important work is done entirely by volunteers who wish to help us fulfill our calling to “preserve and present the story of God's grace to WELS.” WELS Historical Institute is not included in the synod's budget. You have the opportunity to join us and help with event planning, writing, research, restoration, and gathering of gifts or donations. Consider becoming a member of WELS Historical Institute.

Prof. Robert Bock, reporter

Prof. Robert Bock, president
Mr. Daniel Nommensen, vice president
Mrs. Naomi Plocher, secretary
Mr. Ryan Haines, treasurer
Mr. Ken Artlip
Rev. David Dolan
Prof. James Korthals
Mr. Duane Kuehl
Rev. Joel Leyrer
Mr. Steve Miller
Mr. Carl Nolte
Dr. Aaron Palmer
Dr. Joel Pless

Advisory:

Prof. John Brenner
Prof. John Hartwig
Ms. Charlotte Sampe

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.

Our calling

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc. (CEF), is a self-supporting, not-for-profit corporation, and a wholly owned subsidiary of WELS. Its primary purpose is to provide financing for mission congregation projects under the direction of the Board for Home Missions. WELS CEF provides loans and grants to qualified mission and mission-minded self-supporting congregations so that they can acquire parsonages, land, and facilities to serve as tools for gospel outreach.

Our current situation

CEF funding to carry out our mission comes primarily from three sources—member investments, gifts and bequests,

and operating revenue. Individual members, congregations, and affiliates of WELS may invest in CEF certificates and savings accounts. Presently 3,551 investors have entrusted WELS CEF with more than \$80.7 million as of February 2016. These member investments provide funds for the Loan Program. Gifts and bequests made directly to WELS CEF and revenues in excess of expenses from operations provide for the Grant Program.

Loan Program

WELS CEF's loan portfolio remains strong at more than \$137.3 million consisting of loans to 203 individual WELS congregations. Currently our "pipeline" of new loan originations for the remainder of fiscal year 2016 is 16 new loans for roughly \$23.4 million. CEF's interest rate structure is published annually in our Offering Circular—presently, our "base rate" for lending is 3.75 percent for eligible mission congregations looking to obtain initial land and facilities.

Grant Program

WELS CEF provides matching grants to eligible mission congregations after they have provided a minimum 10 percent down payment for land purchases, existing facility purchases, or new facility construction projects. A congregation's down payment combined with a CEF matching grant allows the mission congregation to move forward with a more manageable loan payment. \$432,000 has been approved for matching grants through the first half of fiscal year 2016. We anticipate up to \$2.7 million of additional grant approvals to 11 congregations by the end of the fiscal year. Since 1993, more than \$28.6 million in CEF matching grants have been disbursed to mission congregations across North America and the West Indies.

Special grant to Home Missions

WELS CEF has distributed \$3.3 million to the Board for Home Missions in the past seven fiscal years and in FY 2015 has adopted an Unrestricted Net Assets Policy that systematically measures CEF performance and has resulted in grants totaling at least \$1.4 million for the 2015–17 biennium.

A look ahead

We pray by God's grace that WELS CEF will continue to benefit from positive operational results and be able to continue to provide special grants over and above our matching grant programs to assist more mission congregations and Home Missions through our Unrestricted Net Assets Policy.

We anticipate that our loan portfolio will see significant growth in FY 2016 and into the future if we can continue to maintain a healthy and disciplined approach with regard to operations and a fair and competitive interest rate environment for investors and borrowers.

We continue to encourage individual WELS members, congregations, and affiliated organizations to consider investing in CEF loan, savings, and retirement/IRA certificates and to consider gifts and bequests to WELS CEF to help support our mission and close partnership with Home Missions.

For more information on WELS CEF's loan and investment programs, contact us at 866-511-7793 or cef@wels.net. You may also visit cef.wels.net for more information on our programs, resources, and work with Home Missions.

Mr. Scott Page, reporter

Mr. Seth Hansen, chairman

Mr. Paul Beitlich, vice chairman

Mr. Kenneth Zehm, secretary

Mr. Brad Beal

Mr. Timothy Boerneke

Mr. Rodney Christ

Rev. Timothy Gauger

Mr. Tim Gensmer

Mr. David Hirons

Mr. John Tappe

Mr. David Waldek

Advisory:

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions

Mr. Todd J. Poppe, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

WELS Foundation, Inc.

Our calling

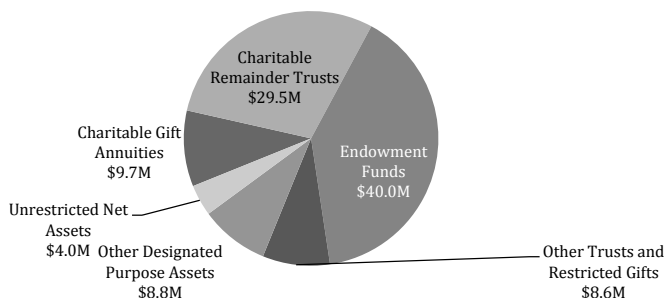
WELS Foundation exists to help God's people support gospel ministry through WELS. It provides planned giving services and administrative support for gifts benefiting WELS congregations and ministries.

Established in 1965, WELS Foundation, Inc., is one of seven Support Services entities of WELS. As a WELS Support Service subsidiary corporation, WELS Foundation serves God's kingdom by providing gift administration for complex gifts that ultimately benefit WELS congregations and ministries. WELS Foundation does not receive financial support from the synod's operating budget but instead relies primarily on unrestricted gifts and administrative fees to cover its operating costs.

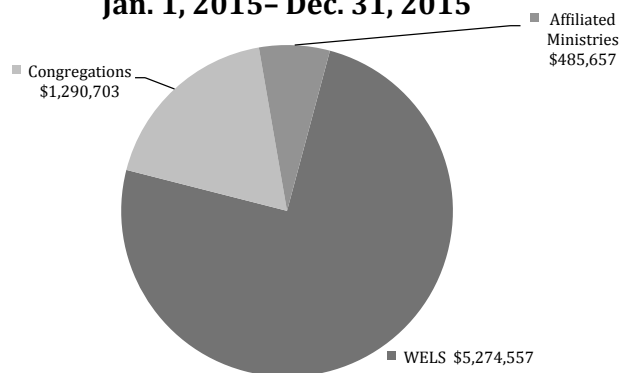
WELS Foundation is the foundation of choice for members, entities, and affiliates of WELS. It is the only foundation whose purpose is to facilitate donors' desires to support WELS ministries. During the calendar year 2015, WELS Foundation had the privilege to administer and distribute \$7.1 million in donor directed gifts.

Our current situation

**Total Assets of \$100.6M
as of Dec. 31, 2015**



**Distributions to ministries of \$7.1M
Jan. 1, 2015– Dec. 31, 2015**



WELS Foundation provides various giving opportunities including charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, donor advised funds, and endowment funds. It currently administers more than 900 charitable gifts on behalf of WELS members.

As of Dec. 31, 2015, the total assets were \$100.6 million with net assets of \$48.0 million. The net assets held by WELS Foundation are managed for the benefit of the WELS ministries as designated by the donor. These ministries include WELS synodical ministries (i.e. missions and ministerial education schools), congregations, and numerous affiliated ministries such as area Lutheran high schools.

Charitable gift annuities

A charitable gift annuity is a contract between a WELS member and WELS Foundation by which the member makes a gift of cash or securities in exchange for fixed quarterly annuity payments for life. After the Lord calls the member home, the remainder of the gift annuity will be distributed to the congregation or ministry as designated. Income payments from a charitable gift annuity may begin immediately, may be deferred until a specific date in the future, or may be deferred until an unspecified date in the future.

As of Dec. 31, 2015, WELS Foundation administered 658 charitable gift annuities with a total market value of \$9.7 million.

Charitable remainder trusts

A charitable remainder trust is created when a donor transfers cash, securities, or real estate into a charitable trust but keeps a specified income interest—usually for life. When the trust ends per the donor's designation, the assets in the trust pass to the designated beneficiaries such as the church and/or synod.

As of Dec. 31, 2015, WELS Foundation serves as trustee for 160 charitable remainder trusts with a combined market value of \$29.5 million.

Donor advised funds

A donor advised fund is a charitable giving vehicle wherein an individual, family, or corporation makes an irrevocable, tax-deductible contribution of cash, securities, or other property to WELS Foundation and at any time thereafter can recommend grant distributions to qualified WELS ministries. The fund can be established with current gifts, deferred gifts (i.e. charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts), and testamentary gifts (i.e. wills, living trusts, beneficiary designations of life insurance policies, or retirement accounts).

The WELS Foundation donor advised fund program provides an alternative to a private family foundation. WELS members can accomplish many of the same goals but with far less administrative work and expense.

As of Dec. 31, 2015, WELS Foundation administered 48 donor advised funds with a total market value of \$2.2 million.

Endowment funds

Endowment funds are permanently restricted funds established to receive and administer all gifts that are designated by the donor(s) for an endowment from sources such as cash, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, bequests, life insurance, charitable gift annuities, insurance policies, trusts, real estate, personal property, or any other gift, whether current or deferred.

Lord willing, expenditures from endowments further the work of the church by providing ongoing financial support for ministry until the Lord returns.

Donor designated endowments can be established through the WELS Foundation for the benefit of WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, or other WELS affiliated ministries. WELS Foundation also administers synodical endowment funds for WELS Home and World Missions, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary.

As of Dec. 31, 2015, WELS Foundation administered 59 endowment funds with a total market value of \$40.0 million.

Other gift administration services

The WELS Foundation also provides gift administration for letters of instruction, gifts of securities, IRA charitable rollovers, real estate gifts, life insurance contracts, agricultural crops, and other donor designated gifts.

Educational webinars

In 2015, WELS Foundation hosted a series of 12 educational webinars. The monthly webinars were timely presentations on various planned giving topics and made available by WELS Foundation at no cost to WELS Christian giving counselors, advancement officers, and congregational planned giving committee leaders. Contact WELS Foundation for recordings of past webinars or to participate in future sessions.

A look ahead

To carry out its mission WELS Foundation will continue to identify the most cost effective means to:

- Provide knowledgeable planned giving support to members through WELS Christian giving counselors and other WELS advancement representatives.
- Provide various planned giving opportunities including charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, donor advised funds, and endowment administration.
- Provide printed and online educational material regarding planned giving opportunities benefiting WELS ministries.

Director Donald F. Schuppe fell asleep in Jesus on Feb. 12, 2016. We are grateful for his nearly 12 years of faithful service as a member of the WELS Foundation Board of Directors.

Mr. James Holm, reporter

Mr. James Brenn, chairman

Mr. Mark Schulz, vice chairman and secretary

Mr. Paul Beitlich

Mr. Nathan Birkholz

Mr. Tim Boerneke

WELS Investment Funds, Inc.

Our calling

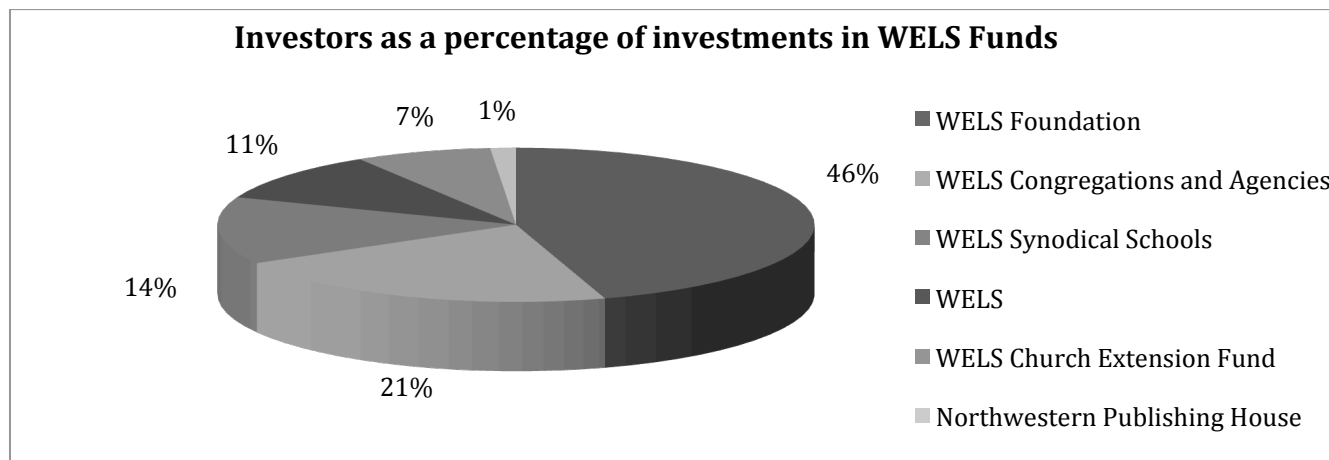
The mission of WELS Investment Funds, Inc. (WIF), is to strengthen and enhance the congregations of WELS and WELS-affiliated organizations by providing cost-effective, professionally managed investment portfolios. WIF serves as the administrator of two investment portfolios: WELS Equity Fund and WELS Income Fund.

The WELS Equity Fund seeks long-term capital growth by investing in a portfolio of equity securities that is well diversified geographically, by industry and company size. The WELS Equity Fund may be appropriate for participating organizations who have a long investment horizon and who are prepared to accept volatility associated with equity securities.

The WELS Income Fund seeks to provide current income by investing primarily in investment quality debt securities. The Income Fund may be appropriate for participating organizations having a desire for current income.

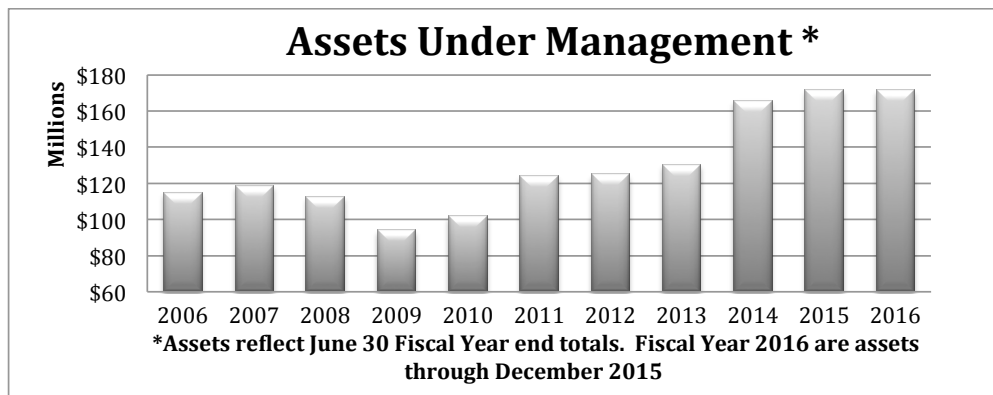
The WELS Balanced Allocation is not a WELS Fund but allows participating organizations to have their accounts automatically allocated, at the beginning of each calendar quarter, between the WELS Equity Fund (60 percent) and the WELS Income Fund (40 percent). As of June 30, 2015, approximately 90 percent of the total assets of the WELS Funds were allocated pursuant to the WELS Balanced Allocation.

Our current situation



More than 200 WELS organizations invest in WELS Funds. WIF has welcomed eight new participant members during the first six months of fiscal year 2016.

As of Dec. 31, 2015, WIF's assets under management totaled \$171.3 million.



Performance summary

AVERAGE ANNUAL TOTAL RETURN for the period ending Dec. 31, 2015					
		1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years
WELS Balanced Allocation*		-2.1%	6.2%	6.2%	5.2%
WELS Equity Fund		-3.2%	9.5%	7.7%	5.3%
WELS Income Fund		-0.8%	1.1%	3.5%	4.5%
<p>Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Investment return and principal value will fluctuate so that fund units, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost.</p> <p>*Hypothetical returns that would have been received on an investment of 60% WELS Equity Fund and 40% in the WELS Income Fund for the period indicated.</p>					

A look ahead

WELS Investment Funds focuses on three primary factors when managing investment portfolios: 1) controlling market risks through asset allocation, 2) selection of quality investment managers, and 3) controlling direct and indirect costs. To assist the board in these matters, WELS Investment Funds has retained Vanguard Institutional Advisory Services to manage the investment portfolios for WELS and WELS affiliated ministries effective July 1, 2016.

What is the impact for ministries invested with WELS Investment Funds? The change will result in a significant reduction in both direct and indirect expenses. The new operating model is anticipated to save hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. Ministries will continue to have access to a fixed-income portfolio, an equity portfolio, and a balanced portfolio, but starting July 1 investments and redemptions will only be processed at the end of each month.

In addition, the board, as a cost-saving measure, combined the executive director position with WELS Foundation. This resulted in the elimination of one position. We heartily thank Mr. Mark Arnold for his faithful service over the past eight years.

We look forward to continuing to serve your ministry.

Past performance is no guarantee of future results. The performance data is current as of Dec. 31, 2014, and is subject to change at any time based on market and other conditions. Participating in a WELS Fund or the WELS Balanced Allocation is subject to investment risks, including possible loss of the principal amount invested. Withdrawals are payable by WELS Investment Funds exclusively from the net assets of the WELS Fund in which you participate. Accounts are not protected or insured by the FDIC or SIPC and are not guaranteed by WELS; WELS Foundation, Inc.; or any other person or entity. This is not an offer to sell or request to buy securities. The offering is made solely by the Offering Circular. At this time, the WELS Funds are NOT available to WELS-affiliated organizations located in Connecticut, Maryland, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, or Virginia.

Mr. James Holm, reporter

Directors:

Mr. Dennis Walters, chairman

Mr. Joel Luehmann, vice chairman
Mr. James Abitz
Mr. Jon Bruss
Mr. Ronald Schmitz
Mr. Max Wenck
Dr. Ronald White

Advisory:

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving
Mr. Todd J. Poppe, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

WELS Benefit Plans

Our calling

The WELS Benefit Plans Office serves synodical workers and organizations through the administration of the WELS Voluntary Employee Benefits Association (VEBA), the WELS Pension Plan, and the WELS Shepherd Plan. Oversight of each plan is the responsibility of separate commissions appointed by the Synodical Council. Each commission is composed of four laymen, a pastor, and a male teacher from the called worker roster. Contributions toward the cost of plan benefits and operations are held in separate trusts, each invested in diversified accounts with outside money managers overseen by an independent investment advisory firm. The plans employ outside professionals providing benefit design, actuarial, consulting, banking, legal, and auditing services.

Our current situation

Over the past year, Benefit Plans has continued to position the VEBA, Pension, and Shepherd Plans for long-term stability and to make the plans more accessible to the individuals and calling bodies we serve.

The 2015 synod convention resolved that the commissions should continue to educate WELS members and congregations regarding the value of the WELS benefit plans and importance of continued participation. As a first step in that process, the Benefit Plans website was redesigned in 2015 to provide enhanced functionality for mobile and media content, as well as more robust resources for health care reform and retirement benefits. The new website will be used as a platform for future communication efforts.

The 2015 synod convention also approved a change to the WELS bylaws that places formal oversight of the WELS Shepherd Plan under the responsibilities of the Retirement Program Commission (formerly named the Pension Commission). This change will enable Benefit Plans to more effectively communicate with our participants the retirement benefits available through WELS as well as financial preparedness for retirement. Shepherd Plan information has already been added to the newly-redesigned Benefit Plans website.

Benefit Plans has continued to monitor significant developments in implementation of the health care reform law (the “Affordable Care Act” or “ACA”). Americans are now able to purchase individual health insurance plans through public exchanges operated by federal and state government agencies. Even with these new options WELS VEBA has maintained its strong membership levels, as more than 80 percent of all eligible workers and WELS calling bodies currently participate in the VEBA Plan. Total WELS VEBA Plan membership increased by 150 covered lives during the November 2015 open enrollment as significant interest in the Plan and appreciation was expressed as a result of the lower-than-market 4 percent rate increase for 2016, which was primarily due to continued improvements in Blue Cross Blue Shield network discounts and an overall reduction in recent high-dollar care episodes.

The Pension Plan, while currently funded to more than meet its benefit obligations to in-benefit participants, faces long-term funding challenges primarily caused by longer life expectancies, aging participant demographics, a

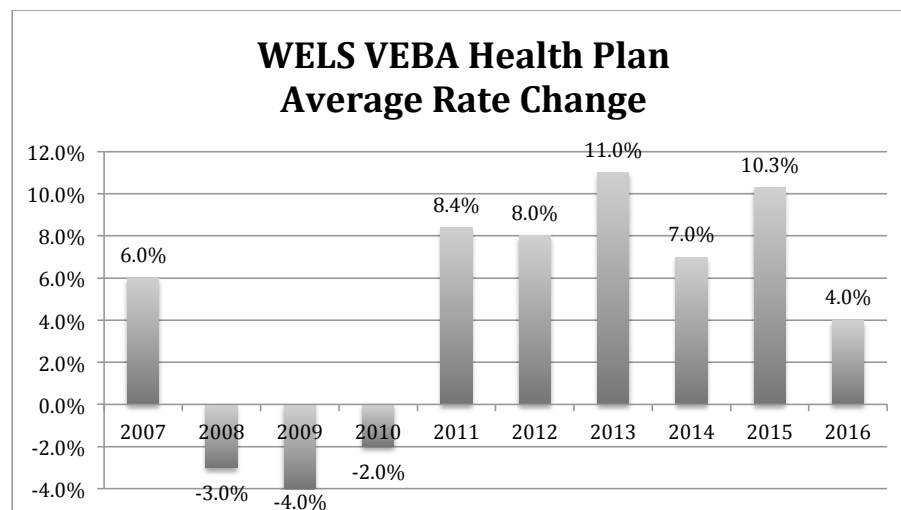
reduced number of active participants, and volatile financial markets. These factors have caused the plan's funding status (which compares the plan's assets with the benefit payments earned by participants) to remain in the mid-60 percent to mid-70 percent range since the economic downturn of 2008–09. The Retirement Program Commission's adoption of a new mortality table as of Jan. 1, 2016, which generally finds that Pension Plan participants are living approximately five years longer than the previous table, has added benefit liabilities to the plan and reduced its funding status by 8 percent in 2016.

In light of these challenges, the Retirement Program Commission has continued its recovery plan, which includes the following actions to improve the plan's funding status:

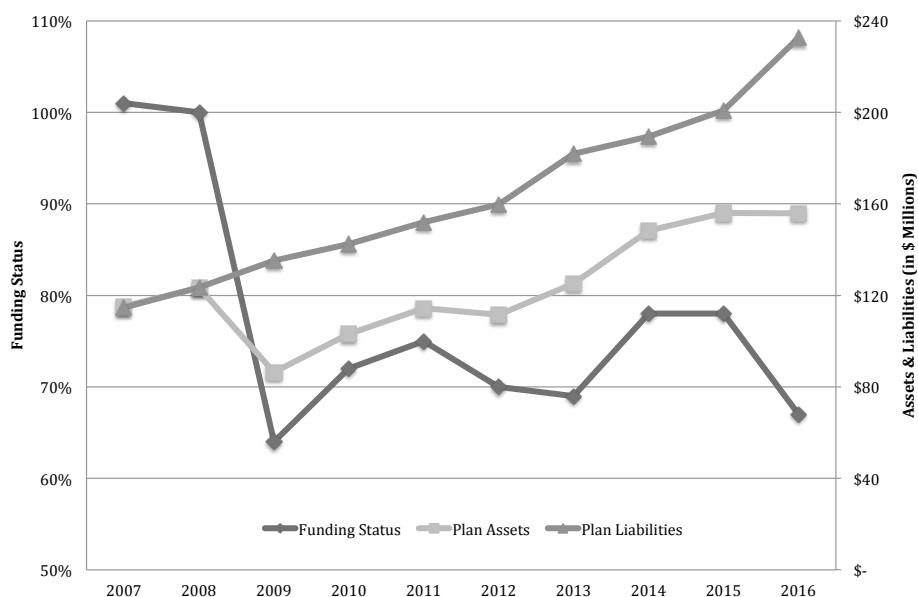
- Contributions charged to sponsoring organizations have increased by a total of 78 percent since 2009. The 2017 annual contribution rate will increase to \$3,504 for a full-time worker (+12.3 percent).
- Contributions paid after the due date are subject to a late payment penalty that recoup lost investment earnings to the Pension trust.
- To slow the long-term growth rate of benefit liabilities, the benefit basis for new retirees has not increased since 2012.
- The overall volatility of investments in the Plan trust portfolio has been reduced to protect against future market downturns.

These changes have been made in order to preserve the security of benefits for current and future retirees while minimizing the financial impact on workers and calling bodies.

Both the VEBA and Pension trusts realized investment performance gains in the 4 to 5 percent range for each trust in 2014, while the trusts achieved relatively flat returns in 2015. Final audited results from the 2014 plan year shows net assets available for benefits in the VEBA and Pension trusts as \$24.9 million and \$155.7 million, respectively. In comparison, unaudited results from the 2015 plan year show net assets available for benefits in the VEBA and Pension trusts as \$23.4 million and \$155.9 million, respectively. Both commissions continue to evaluate investment allocation and diversification strategies that are expected to achieve target returns with reduced risk.



Comparison of Pension Plan Assets, Liabilities, and Funding Status



A look ahead

Benefit Plans will continue its dual-emphasis on maintaining long-term stability for the VEBA, Pension, and Shepherd Plans while improving accessibility to the plans for individuals and calling bodies.

Although VEBA Plan membership levels were largely unaffected by the initial rollout of the public exchange plans, the VEBA Commission and its advisors will carefully consider the long-term effects that public exchanges may have on WELS VEBA. In addition, the VEBA Commission and Benefit Plans will be more closely observing worker participation in the VEBA Plan and health care arrangements at each sponsoring organization to protect the plan's long-term sustainability in the rapidly-changing health care environment. Providing an affordable health plan with consistent nationwide benefits is essential to supporting synodwide mission and ministry activities.

Maintaining compliance with often-changing federal regulations and mitigating the impact of new costs imposed on the VEBA Plan will be necessary for the plan's continued operation. Benefit Plans and the VEBA Commission will closely monitor developments with the Cadillac Tax provision of the ACA, which is scheduled to be effective in 2020.

The Retirement Program Commission will begin an exploratory study on the feasibility to transition to a defined contribution plan arrangement for called worker retirement benefits. While this study is underway, the commission will focus its efforts on better engaging workers and calling bodies on the importance of planning for retirement and utilizing both the Pension and Shepherd Plans in this process.

Benefit Plans, as well as the VEBA and Retirement Program Commissions, are acutely aware of the need to keep benefit plan costs as low as possible to allow calling bodies to preserve valuable assets to fund ministry efforts. The primary goal for the benefit plans going forward is to strike the best balance between acceptable costs to calling bodies and meaningful benefits to participants.

Mr. Joshua Peterman, reporter

WELS VEBA Commission:

Mr. Richard Hudock, chairman

Mr. Charles Adrian, vice chairman

Mr. Jeff Timm, secretary

Mr. Robert Bullens

Mr. Douglas Dast

Rev. David Kolander

Advisory:

Ms. Christine Hitter, membership manager

Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of Benefit Plans
Mr. Todd J. Poppe, WELS chief financial officer
Ms. Lori Schrank, claims manager

WELS Retirement Program Commission:

Mr. Gene Szaj, chairman
Mr. Scott Heins, vice chairman
Mr. David McCulloch, secretary
Teacher Robert Fischer
Rev. Philip Hoyer
Mr. Thomas Medema

Advisory:

Ms. Christine Hitter, membership manager
Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of Benefit Plans
Mr. Todd J. Poppe, WELS chief financial officer

Committee on Constitutional Matters

Our calling

The Committee on Constitutional Matters (CCM) serves under the Conference of Presidents (COP) to interpret the constitution and bylaws for the synod and its constituency. It is responsible for maintaining and distributing accurate updates of these documents as changes are made by the synod in convention.

Our current situation

In addition to revising the document to incorporate the amendments approved by the 2015 convention, the committee has been asked to address eight specific questions on constitutional matters since the convention to the date of this report.

The current editions of the WELS Constitution and Bylaws and the Constitution for the Districts are available on the WELS website at wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports. You may also contact the President's Office to request a printed copy.

Rev. Paul Naumann, reporter

Rev. Paul Naumann, chairman

Rev. Steven Korth

Mr. Kenneth Gosch