

Report to the Twelve Districts

May 2018

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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President's message

Unity—being of one mind and joined together in one purpose—is a good thing in so many areas of life. Think of how important unity is between a husband and wife. When husbands and wives are united in a common faith, share common values, and strive for common goals, a marriage can't help but be stronger. What about the importance of unity in a family? When parents and children are united, there are few bonds stronger than those in a home. Arguments and strife and disrespectful behavior are rare when families are united in their love for each other and in the values they share. Unity in a workplace results in employees and employers working together in harmony to make a successful business. Who doesn't long for unity in a nation like ours, where basic common values and principles would transcend political and racial differences and bind people together as citizens of one country?

As important as unity may be in all those areas, there is one place where it's even more important, and that place is in God's church. The Psalm writer said it so clearly: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! . . . For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133:1,4).

The Lord has surely blessed our synod with unity in many ways. By his grace, we have been united with him and with each other as members of his family through faith in Jesus Christ. Together we stand united on the truth of God's Word, confessing that the Scriptures that he gave to us are fully and completely the true and inerrant words of God himself. With united hearts and voices we proclaim the teachings of the Bible even when those teachings are not popular in our culture and even when they are beyond human understanding.

Together we confess that human life is a creation and gift of God that needs protecting from conception to death. We jointly profess that we believe that God created the universe in six normal days. We share a common conviction that marriage has been instituted by God as a lifelong union between one man and one woman, and that God's gift of sex is to be used in the way that God designed it. We hold to the belief that worship, while certainly an opportunity for us to praise God and to lift up our voices in prayer, is primarily a time for God to proclaim his saving truth to us. We recognize the importance of showing Christian love to those in need. With one accord we believe that Christians practice fellowship with one another when they hold to a common and united faith. We are joined together in our unwavering appreciation that the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are gifts of God intended to strengthen our faith and to convey God's forgiveness to sinners like us.

The unity that God has given to us as a synod goes farther. We are blessed to be united not only in who we are and in the doctrines we believe, but we are also united in our understanding of the work that we do together. We recognize and have stated with one voice that our priorities as a synod are to hold to the Word, to proclaim that Word to all, and to train future messengers who will shepherd and teach future generations. The members of our synod share a commitment to Christian education of our youth and to the continuing Christian education of adults. We recognize together that all we have belongs to God and commit ourselves to wise and faithful and generous stewardship of his blessings.

Is our unity perfect and without cracks? No, it isn't. We know that we will not see perfect unity in all things this side of heaven. But despite those imperfections, no one can deny that our synod—especially when compared to many other Christian church bodies, has truly been blessed with an amazing unity that comes only from God.

Does this unity mean that we will always share the same opinions on every matter or that we will always agree on the best ways for the synod to carry out its work? Not at all. When it comes to matters that have not been decided by God's Word, there will always be room for different viewpoints and different opinions. In practical matters and matters of adiaphora, it is good and healthy to hear and discuss differing viewpoints. That's how wise decisions are made. It's after such thorough discussion, when all sides have been heard, that brothers and sisters can unite with joy and commitment to carry out the work that God has given us to do.

This is one of the purposes of our district conventions. At your district convention you will hear reports of the work that we have been doing together, and you will hear of the plans that are being made for the synod's future mission and ministry. You will hear of efforts that turned out exactly as planned as well as work that ended in disappointment. You

will hear of the many opportunities God is placing before us as well as the challenges we face as God's church in a fallen world. There will be discussions about finances and manpower. This convention is your opportunity to learn, to ask questions, to debate issues, to offer advice and guidance to those you have called to serve you. In the end, when all of that has taken place, when you have shared in worship and the Lord's Supper together, when you have used your sanctified human wisdom and expressed it, then you will have the opportunity to see God at work, uniting us in a stronger faith and in a greater commitment to carrying out his work together.

The unity that we enjoy is never something to be taken for granted. The history of the church is riddled with examples of churches where the precious blessing of unity was lost or squandered. Pray that God continues to bless our synod with unity in doctrine and unity in our mission. Continue to be students of his Word and stand firmly on it. Cherish the fellowship that God has given to us, and express it with joy and confidence. Walking together in a common faith and mission—the very meaning of the word “synod”—is a blessing that is ours by grace and will continue to be ours through the unchanging power of the gospel.

Serving with you in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Schroeder". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rev. Mark Schroeder
WELS president

Organizational chart

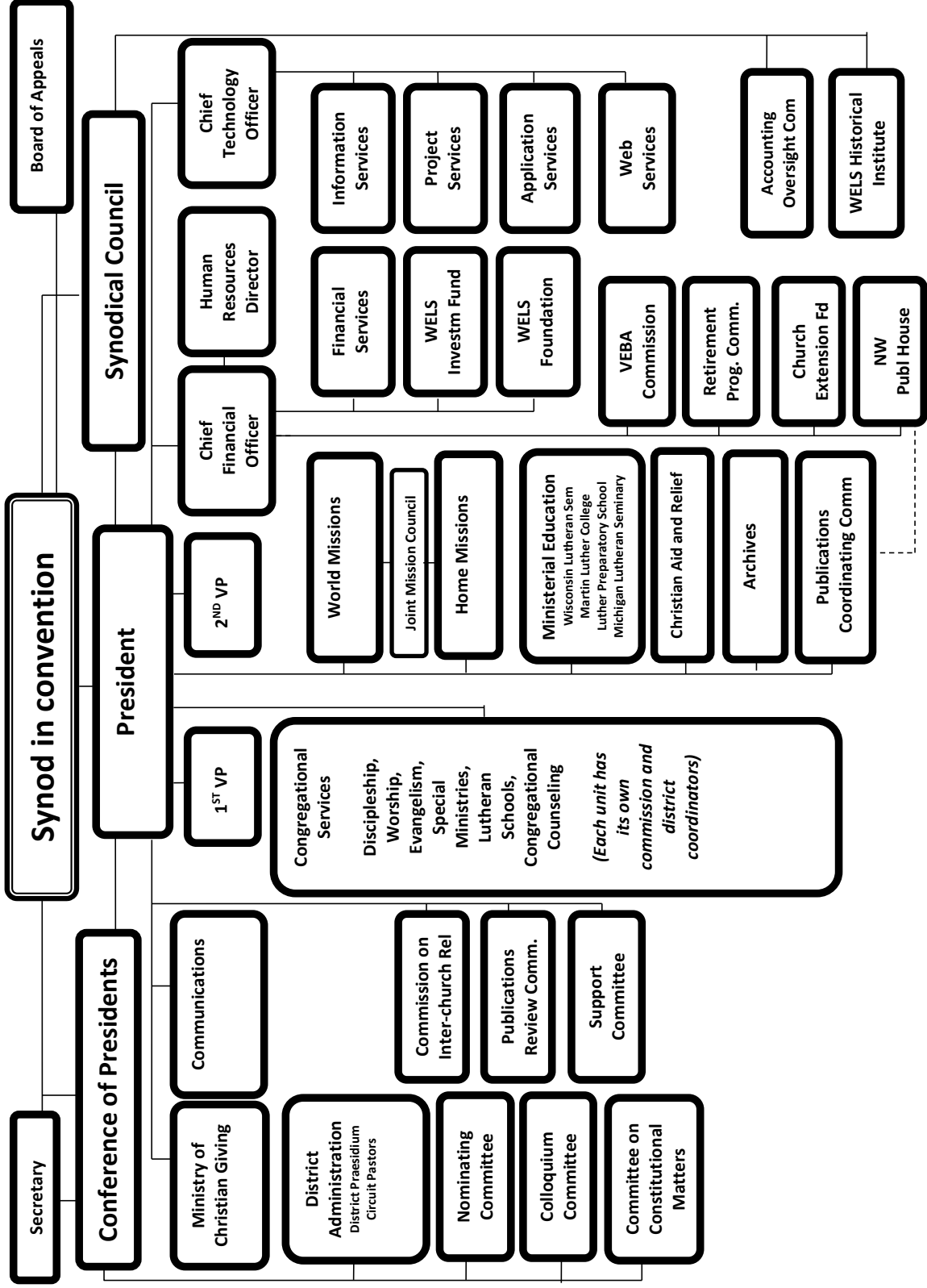


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Additional reports from other synod committees, schools, subsidiaries, and affiliates can be found at wels.net/rtttd2018.

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

Ministry of Christian Giving:

- Salaries and travel expenses
- Counselor training and consultation
- Promotions and appeals

Communication Services:

- *WELS Connection, WELS Connection Close-up, "Together"* electronic newsletter, 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

Congregational Services:

- Commission on Congregational Counseling
- Commission on Worship
- Commission on Evangelism
- Commission on Special Ministries
- Commission on Discipleship
- Commission on Lutheran Schools

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 publishers

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; the synod president; and the two synod vice presidents. The synod president serves as the chairman of the COP. The synod secretary, 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 Congregational Services
- 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.

Doctrinal statements

The COP has received questions regarding the status of our WELS doctrinal statements.

When we enter the public Ministry of the Gospel, we confess the full inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures and their binding authority in all matters of doctrine. The three ecumenical creeds, the primary creedal statements of historic Christianity, summarize well our faith. In addition, we wholeheartedly subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions (contained in the Book of Concord of 1580) because they are correct expositions of biblical truth. Since our Lutheran forefathers have bequeathed us such accurate and comprehensive doctrinal affirmations, we seldom feel the need to draft additional ones—although at times that does become necessary.

In addition to our subscription to the Creeds and Confessions, our synod has formally adopted seven doctrinal statements in the 20th century. (Our church body has also prepared a pamphlet with the title *This We Believe* to summarize what we believe and teach.)

Under the Holy Spirit's blessing, the additional confessional statements we have adopted as a synod testify to the world what we believe, teach, and confess and therefore promote harmony in the church.

Congregational constitutions

Some congregations have expressed an interest in adopting congregational structure and governance that differs from the synod's model constitution and bylaws. A special committee has been appointed to discuss alternate constitutions and to create guidelines that will assist congregations in developing structures and governance that uphold biblical principles while still allowing for freedom and flexibility. The guidelines will be shared with congregations and with district constitution committees when completed and adopted by the COP.

Every congregation and organization in the synod has proposed and adopted a constitution and bylaws as governing documents. These documents direct many aspects of an organization's governance and organizational structure. It is

extremely important that organizations operate in accord with those governing documents. It may be easy to forget about them or to view them as an unnecessary impediment or impractical nuisance, but operating according to the adopted governing documents is a legal and fiduciary requirement. Failure to do so could prove extremely costly, could result in legal penalties, could jeopardize the property and assets of the organization, and could compromise its tax-exempt status. Leaders of all organizations should determine if the organization follows its constitution and bylaws, and, if not, should take steps either to return to compliance or to make necessary changes to the documents. It should be noted that any changes to the governing documents must be approved by the district constitution committee before they are adopted and implemented. Organizations are encouraged to be sure that the district constitution committee has a copy of their current constitution and bylaws.

WELS/ELS meetings

Our synod maintains frequent contact with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) to maintain and strengthen the fellowship bond between us. The WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations meets every other year with the Doctrine Committee of the ELS. In alternating years, both synods send administrators of various areas of ministry as representatives to the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Forum, where items of mutual interest and doctrinal matters are fully discussed. In addition, the Doctrine Committee of the WELS COP has held ongoing discussions with the Doctrine Committee of the ELS to address and clarify doctrinal and practical issues. We are thankful for the God-given fellowship we enjoy and continue to work to strengthen our unity in both doctrine and practice.

Review of the Evangelical Heritage Version

With the completed Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV) Bible translation soon to be published, the COP has directed that a review be conducted with the results to be shared with the synod's constituency. This review will be conducted by a committee in a way similar to the review that was carried out of the Christian Standard Bible (see p. 8).

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 has begun to address this issue in a number of ways. MLC has established programs to increase funds available for student assistance. The Congregational Partnership Grant Program provides matching funds for tuition assistance provided by congregations to their students who attend MLC. In most cases this assistance is given in addition to any other financial assistance the student might receive. Congregations are reminded that such grants should be over and above their normal Congregation Mission Offering. The COP expressed its support for the program when it was proposed. MLC has since expanded it and has provided the COP with updates on its effectiveness and benefits.

Martin Luther College funding efforts

The COP approved two requests from Martin Luther College relating to funding efforts. The first was approval for MLC to carry out appeals to congregations and individuals to support the Congregational Partnership Grant program that provides matching grants for student financial aid (mentioned earlier). In addition, the COP authorized a two-year synodwide capital campaign to provide campus improvements and additional financial aid. The special effort will begin in July 2019.

Special offering authorized

The Joint Mission Council has been overseeing theological training for church leaders in Vietnam. These leaders are connected with a church body that has requested such training with the goal of the church becoming a confessional Lutheran church body.

The government of Vietnam is fully supportive of these efforts. In fact, the government has invited WELS to build a training center and has even offered to provide the land.

The Synodical Council asked the COP to authorize a special offering to raise the \$500,000 needed for this project. The COP approved the request, and the offering will take place in the spring and summer of 2018.

Request from WELS Canada

WELS Canada has formally requested that seminary candidates assigned to serve in Canada be given the opportunity to weigh the many implications of serving in Canada and to decline such an assignment, if appropriate, after prayerful consideration. Given the many factors involved (government regulations, tax implications, health care implications, cultural differences, etc.), the COP agreed that WELS Canada should be regarded as a foreign mission field and that those assigned to serve in Canada be given the opportunity to accept or decline the assignment.

New Commission on Discipleship

The Commission on Youth and Family Ministry and the Commission on Adult Discipleship have both been carrying out their assigned work faithfully, even though neither has had the benefit of a full-time director. The 2015 convention passed a resolution asking that the position of director of Youth and Family Ministry be given a high priority.

As the COP was considering the best way to proceed in its oversight of these two commissions, the commissions themselves recommended that they be combined into a single Commission on Discipleship with a single director. The Conference of Presidents, which has oversight over all the commissions that comprise Congregational Services, agreed and approved this change given the many areas of overlap and the similarity of their work. The synod's bylaws will be amended to reflect this new structure at the 2019 synod convention. Parallel combining of the two district commissions will also be implemented.

Pastor Donn Dobberstein accepted the call to serve as the director of Discipleship. Pastor John Boggs was appointed by the COP as chairman of the Commission on Discipleship.

Mission and Ministry Sunday

The COP has designated Oct. 21, 2018, as the synod's Mission and Ministry Sunday. The COP will work with WELS Communication Services, Congregational Services, and the Ministry of Christian Giving to produce materials for congregations to use. It is the intent that Mission and Ministry Sunday will be held annually as a means to emphasize the work that we do together as a synod and to encourage congregations and individuals to participate in and to support that work.

Workload of the presidents of large districts

The COP is concerned that the workload of the presidents of the largest districts has increased significantly in recent years. Called worker and congregational issues, as well as the pastor and teacher vacancy levels, prove to be very time-consuming and have presented growing burdens on the presidents of the large districts. The COP is considering options that will help to relieve some of this burden in a way that enables district presidents to remain connected to congregational ministry. There may not be a single "one size fits all" solution to this problem; it could be that solutions may vary from district to district. The COP will decide how to proceed once the study is complete.

Assisting congregations considering closing or merging

An increasing number of congregations are considering closing or merging with nearby congregations due to demographic changes. The COP has asked the Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC) to develop resources to guide congregations in this process. The CCC hopes to have these resources available by the fall of 2018.

Parasynodical committee

The synod has been blessed with dozens of WELS-affiliated parasynodical organizations that carry out specific types of ministry. (These organizations are listed in the synod's Yearbook under the heading "Church-related and Charitable Organizations.") Maintaining good communication with these organizations is vital to the work of the synod and to the work carried out by the organizations. To ensure that good communication is maintained and to strengthen the synod's relationship with parasynodical organizations, the COP has appointed a committee of three district presidents to meet and communicate regularly with parasynodical groups. The committee has the following goals:

- Build trusting relationships with parasynodical organizations through mutual listening and through the sharing of plans.
- Help the COP to grow in its understanding of how parasynodical organizations utilize the calling process for called workers.
- Work to avoid potential misunderstandings and conflicts.
- Relay any positive input or concerns that the COP might have as they relate to the parasynodicals' ministries.

In addition to the work done by this committee, the COP also regularly invites parasynodical organizations to meet with the COP to help the COP have a good understanding of the work that they are doing.

Scouting review

The COP is currently overseeing a comprehensive review of the Scouting organizations to answer the question, "Has Scouting changed in ways that would permit participation by WELS members?" Once the review is complete, the COP intends to provide a Bible study to enable scripturally-based discussion of the issue. The review and Bible study should be available later this year.

Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association

There are many benefits that result when congregations participate in the WELS Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association (VEBA) 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. While it is not mandatory that congregations offer health insurance coverage through WELS VEBA, the COP recognizes the many benefits of doing so. The coverage offered by WELS VEBA is excellent, and having workers covered by WELS VEBA ensures that health insurance coverage does not become an impediment to workers as they consider calls. The COP continues to encourage congregations to participate in the plan for all called workers.

Staff ministry program guidelines

Because staff ministers are listed in the synod's Yearbook and regarded as a part of the synod's recognized roster of called workers, the COP resolved in February 2016 that the staff ministry program needed to be administered 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. The following guidelines have been in place since 2016 to ensure that calling bodies and staff ministers are aware of the policies that govern staff ministers:

- Staff ministers are individuals who have been called to serve in a limited form of Means of Grace ministry, whether full time or part time.
- All individuals listed in the 2016 Yearbook as staff ministers will be grandfathered and continue to be listed in the Yearbook at least until June 1, 2022.
- Grandfathered staff ministers shall fall into one of two categories: 1) Certified staff ministers are those who have been synod certified after completing the staff ministry program of Martin Luther College (MLC) or who have been trained as WELS pastors or teachers. 2) Uncertified staff ministers are those who have not completed the staff ministry program of MLC and have not been trained as pastors or teachers. Grandfathered uncertified staff ministers will be designated in the yearbook with an asterisk. Grandfathered certified and uncertified staff ministers will continue to be eligible for participation in the pension program, provided they serve for 20 hours per week or more.
- Uncertified staff ministers listed in the 2016 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 Yearbook and will no longer be eligible to participate in the synod pension program. They will be referred to as congregational assistants. 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.
- 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 Yearbook. They will not, however, be removed from the Yearbook simply because they are not directly involved in Means of Grace ministry.
- Beginning May 1, 2016, workers added to the synodical called worker roster as staff ministers shall include only those who
 1. are involved directly in Means of Grace ministry;
 2. have completed the staff ministry program at MLC and are certified by MLC as trained staff ministers or have been trained as WELS pastors or teachers;
 3. 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 and are not eligible to participate in the synod's pension program.
- Individuals not involved directly in Means of Grace ministry are to be hired rather than called.
- Individuals who have not been certified as staff ministers are sometimes called by their own congregations or federations of congregations to carry out a limited 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 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 MLC will become a staff minister upon certification by MLC. Once certification is received, the individual will be listed in the Yearbook as a staff minister and be eligible to participate in the synod pension program.

- Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC) will continue to certify workers serving at the college as staff ministers. Individuals certified as staff ministers by WLC but who have not been certified by MLC are not eligible to be called to another place of service.
- Those not trained as pastors or 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 teachers are already synod certified and will be listed in the Yearbook in the pastor or teacher categories.
- 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.
- MLC is responsible for defining the requirements of staff ministry certification (for those who have not been trained as pastors or teachers).
- Based on input from MLC, 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 MLC.
- 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.
- Only those individuals listed in the Yearbook as called workers (pastors, teachers, staff ministers) are eligible to participate in the pension program.
- 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.
- Congregational assistants normally are not permitted to preach in a worship service, although they may lead devotions in smaller gatherings such as committees, school assemblies, or congregational organizations, as determined by the local pastor.

Note: Uncertified teachers will continue to be listed as teachers in the synod Yearbook, since they have training as teachers and since there is an extensive formal structure in place to oversee their progress toward synod certification.

Calls issued by the COP and accepted

- Ministry of Christian Giving counselor: Mr. Mark Arnold
- Director of Discipleship: Rev. Donn Dobberstein
- Ministry of Christian Giving counselor: Rev. Jerry Ewings

Appointments

- Rev. Jeffrey Enderle (*Forward in Christ* devotional writer)
- Rev. Glenn Schwanke (*Forward in Christ* editorial writer)
- Rev. Timothy Westendorf (*Forward in Christ* interactive Bible study writer)
- Rev. Doug Tomhave (chairman, Commission on Evangelism)
- Rev. John Boggs (chairman, Commission on Discipleship)
- Rev. Brett Brauer (Support Committee)

Mid-year assignments

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

- Sarah Mose to Peace Lutheran School, Sun Prairie, Wis. (Western Wisconsin District)
- Mackenzie Rothfuss to Divine Savior Academy, Doral, Fla. (South Atlantic District)

Synod certification and re-certification of teachers and staff ministers

The COP regularly approves certification and re-certification of teachers and staff ministers upon the recommendation of Martin Luther College. A list of these certifications and re-certifications since July 2017 is available from Martin Luther College.

One-year assignments

There are times when assignments of candidates are made for a period of one or two years, with the candidate

returning to the Assignment Committee after the specified time period is completed. Reasons for limited duration assignments have included an assignment of a candidate who has not been specifically prepared for the duties of that call, uncertainty regarding the need for the position due to enrollment and staffing needs, and assignments to positions involving dormitory supervision at prep schools and area Lutheran high schools. One-year calls are never intended to be a “trial period” for the person assigned.

One-year calls can be renewed upon the mutual agreement of the calling body and the worker. To prevent misunderstanding and to ensure good communication, the COP has asked the Commission on Lutheran Schools and the director of the New Teacher Induction program to draft a letter to congregations that receive a graduate for one year. The letter will outline the regular communications that are to occur between the congregation, the teacher, and the teacher’s mentor regarding the status of the one-year call and the congregation’s plans.

Completing service

Pastor John Seifert, president of the Michigan District, and Pastor Charles Degner, president of the Minnesota District, are completing their time of service at their respective district conventions. We thank God for providing them to his church, and we thank them for their years of faithful service.

Rev. Mark Schroeder, reporter

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

Advisory:

Rev. Robert Pasbrig, secretary

Translation Liaison Committee

Our calling

The Translation Liaison Committee (TLC) was established in November 2013 by the Conference of Presidents to carry out a resolution of the 2013 WELS convention. The purpose of the 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 *WELS Proceedings*, p. 68). The TLC consists of seven professors and parish pastors who were appointed by the Conference of Presidents.

Our current situation

Christian Standard Bible

On Oct. 20, 2017, two representatives from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) visited the Milwaukee area to become

acquainted with WELS leaders, in meetings arranged by the TLC. The CSB representatives were Trevin Wax and Brandon Smith, and they visited with WELS leaders both at Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Wax and Smith reported that the publishers of the CSB are eager to have the CSB used by as many people as possible, and they would be happy to help NPH with publication projects involving the CSB, including a Lutheran Study Bible, if WELS were interested. Three publishing houses other than Broadman & Holman have already become licensed to publish the CSB: Baker, David Cook, and Dayspring.

It was also reported that the text of the CSB will continue to be overseen by the same committee that produced the 2017 CSB revision. This committee will undoubtedly do some revising in the future, but there is no timetable at this point. WELS was invited to continue to submit recommendations for improvement.

As for what is next with the CSB, the TLC is awaiting the report of the WELS CSB Review Committee (see Appendix, below) and its discussion in WELS. If desired, the TLC could devote time to the CSB once again.

Because the TLC was heavily involved in submitting recommendations for the CSB, the TLC did not participate in the WELS review of the CSB in 2017. As reported previously, the TLC in 2014–15 submitted 56 pages of global recommendations and 1,031 recommendations on individual passages for the CSB. If anyone is interested, these recommendations are still posted on the WELS website under the TLC.

New International Version

In 2017–18, the TLC resumed its work of writing up translation recommendations for the New International Version (NIV), and we are expecting to submit about 30 recommendations in early June. This will be our second batch of recommendations, after sending 33 recommendations in May 2016. Included this year will be recommendations on some of the passages that have been most commonly criticized in WELS, including Psalm 2:2, Psalm 8:4-6, and Jeremiah 23:6/33:16. After submission, the TLC will post the recommendations on the WELS website, so anyone who is interested will be able to see them.

Communication about the NIV remains the same. The Committee on Bible Translation continues to meet every summer to work on its backlog of recommendations, and our recommendations will certainly be included in its work. There are no immediate plans for another revision, but at some point a new edition with minor changes will be published.

A look ahead

The TLC remains open to direction from WELS, especially in regard to the CSB. At this point, we are planning to continue our work with the NIV in 2018–19, since we have an open door and we have not done a complete review of the NIV yet as a committee. If anyone in WELS has a translation suggestion for the NIV, we would be happy to consider it. Please share it with any member of the committee.

Prof. Thomas Nass, reporter

Prof. Thomas Nass, chairman

Rev. Brett Brauer

Prof. Kenneth Cherney Jr.

Prof. Joel Fredrich

Rev. Geoffrey Kieta

Rev. Glenn Schwanke

Prof. Paul Zell

Appendix: Christian Standard Bible Review Committee

Our calling

In late 2016 the WELS Conference of Presidents appointed five pastors to serve on a committee to review the Christian Standard Bible translation (CSB). The CSB is a major revision of the translation formerly known as the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). The purpose of this committee is to evaluate the CSB for its faithfulness to the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures and for the quality of its English style, and in this way to help advise the synod about the usefulness of this translation for its publications.

Our current situation

Over the past year the Christian Standard Bible Review Committee has been gathering reviews of portions of the CSB translation from members of the WELS ministerium. Like the comparative, three-translation review of the NIV, ESV, and HCSB that took place in 2012, this review of the CSB has engaged the participation of 102 WELS pastors, professors, and administrators. The text of the Bible has been divided into 34 sections. Three men serve as reviewers of each section. Their reviews are submitted to the CSB review committee for analysis. The last of these reviews was submitted to the committee in early 2018, and the committee is currently in the process of analyzing this information and forming its conclusions. In addition, the committee is receiving input from the systematics department at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and the Doctrine Committee of the Conference of Presidents regarding particular passages that support some of the chief doctrines of our faith.

Preliminary reports from our reviewers have been generally positive. The CSB has notably improved the English style of the translation compared to its predecessor, the HCSB. While reviewers have pointed out places where the English could be rendered in a still more fluent and natural way, readers of the CSB should find the translation generally easy to read and understand. The way that the CSB handles pronouns and words addressed to mixed groups of men and women generally reflects the way people speak in English today more closely. In a few cases, however, the attempt to use inclusive terminology has gone further than we would prefer. The translation “Brothers and sisters” in Acts 1:16 is a case in point (King James has “Men and brethren” in a very literal reflection of the Greek. The 1984 revision of the NIV has simply “Brothers”). Reviewers have identified about 40 passages across the length and breadth of the Bible in which the choices made in translating have led to a reading that could potentially confuse a reader over a matter of doctrine. Few if any of these, however, force the reader to make a wrong conclusion. In this the CSB compares favorably with just about any other English translation.

The CSB Review Committee asked those involved in the review to rate the CSB on the same two criteria used in the three-translation review six years ago: the appropriateness of the English style and the overall acceptability for WELS publications. On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 meaning “unacceptable” and 10 “outstanding,” pastors gave an average score for English style as 8. The average score for acceptability in our publications was 8.2.

A look ahead

While this report should not be considered the final report of our committee, we do hope to conclude our work soon. We will then distribute a more thorough and detailed evaluation of the CSB. All but one member of the committee (Pastor Ray Schumacher) will serve on another review project in 2018. With the addition of Pastor Bruce McKenney, we will oversee a similar study of the Evangelical Heritage Version, published by Northwestern Publishing House.

Rev. John Vieths, reporter

Pastor John Vieths, chairman

Prof. Samuel Degner

Pastor Adam Mueller

Pastor Ray Schumacher

Pastor Mark Voss

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 for regular meetings. In addition, the commission meets with the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) once every two years for theological discussion, information sharing, and mutual encouragement. The CICR also assists individuals and churches around the world that are seeking to take confessional Lutheran stances. 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.

Our current situation

WELS continues to receive more and more inquiries from established and emerging churches from around the globe who are looking for fellowship with WELS and for assistance in educating pastors in their countries. The CICR and the Board for World Missions (BWM) have fielded these many requests on a case by case basis. But both groups are becoming more aware of the need for a strategy in how to vet these church bodies and provide the theological education that they are seeking. At the March 2018 CICR meeting, World Missions Administrator Larry Schlomer proposed a plan that would make the BWM responsible for oversight of all financial matters dealing with these contacts (since it's best equipped to handle these matters) and yet give the CICR representation in each of the fields. Six members of the CICR will be assigned each to one of the pertinent six administrative committees of the BWM, and they or their assigned liaisons will have direct contact with each of the churches that are overseen in each administrative committee. This will allow the BWM to deal with the financial aspects of these emerging relationships and allow the CICR to have direct communication in regard to the theological and doctrinal support that these young churches need. The seminary's three-man PSI (Pastoral Studies Institute) Team will be responsible for the various aspects of theological education that these church bodies require or request, including development of individual study plans, teaching, coordinating of instructors, etc.

Examples of churches that have begun this process of inquiry into fellowship with WELS and of receiving theological education assistance from us include:

The Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam—a church of approximately 100,000 members that came into contact with WELS after reading the sermons of one of our Hmong pastors, Rev. Bounkeo Lor of Kansas City, online. Lor and several members of the PSI Team made visits to the church in Vietnam in response to the contact. Lor has now been called by the Global Hmong Committee to carry out the work of training Hmong church leaders in Vietnam and China. The PSI Team assists him with planning, course resources, and arranging visiting professors.

The Lutheran Church of Ethiopia (LCE)—through its founder and president, Dr. Yigezu Kebede, the LCE inquired about fellowship and theological education assistance from WELS about three years ago. Emerging from a church body called Mekane Yesus, Dr. Kebede is committed to building a solidly confessional Lutheran church in Ethiopia. The LCE was welcomed into fellowship with WELS at our 2017 convention and became an associate member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference at its 2017 convention.

As more churches on the continent of Africa seek us out with a desire to find confessional Lutheran partners in the gospel, the CICR directs them first of all to the One Africa Team made up of our WELS ex-patriot missionaries in Africa. A similar thing is happening in Latin America as Academia Cristo reaches more and more Spanish-speaking individuals through social media and through their online academy. See the Board for World Missions report on p. 50 for more information on these developing situations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

As more and more of these church bodies emerge and confessional relationships with WELS are established, the CICR encourages these bodies to join the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC). In addition to the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia, the CELC welcomed the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) and the East Asia Lutheran Synod into associate membership at its 2017 convention in Germany.

CICR members also continue to stay in contact with European Lutheran churches that are in fellowship with WELS in Germany, Scandinavia, Portugal, Latvia, and Ukraine as well as with other church bodies with which we have had long-term relationships, such as the ones in Puerto Rico and Japan.

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference

The CICR interacts regularly with the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC), which consists of 32 confessional Lutheran church bodies throughout the world that are in fellowship with WELS.

On June 28–July 2, 2017, CICR Chairman John Brenner as well as WELS President Mark Schroeder and WELS First Vice President James Huebner attended the 2017 convention of the CELC, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Free

Church (ELFK) in Grimma, Germany. A festival service celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation was a highlight of the convention. Various delegates from the representative church bodies recorded a public reading of the “95 Theses for the 21st Century,” prepared by the CELC. The theses confess the fundamental teachings of the Lutheran church as well as address some of the challenges facing the church in the 21st century. The video of the reading of the theses as well as the full text of the convention essays can be found on the CELC website at celc.info.

Plans are underway for the 2020 CELC convention in Seoul, Korea. The CELC has asked the CICR to work together with them to urge church bodies within our fellowship who have not joined the CELC to become members of this worldwide organization. Also, at its 2020 convention the CELC will propose changing its constitution to eliminate the distinction between full and associate membership in the conference.

The CELC is in the process of creating a travel assistance fund for representatives of CELC member churches who need help paying for the travel costs involved with participation in CELC conventions. The CELC planning committee asked the CICR in March if they would be willing to use their Ministry of Christian Giving appeal for 2019 as a way of beginning to promote the fund. The CICR agreed to do this.

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) is our sister synod in America with whom we have been in fellowship since its organization in 1918. The CICR interacts with the ELS on a regular basis in order to foster the unity of faith that we treasure with this church body. Pastor Steven Lange will attend the 2018 ELS convention to help celebrate the milestone of their centennial.

Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

The CICR continues to monitor developments in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS). The latest in a series of informal meetings between leaders of WELS, the ELS, and the LCMS was held in December 2017 near Jacksonville, Fla. Topics of discussion were the doctrine of the divine call and a review of the three new Catechisms produced by the three church bodies. Although all three churches’ representatives at these informal meetings agree that fellowship between the ELS and WELS on the one hand and LCMS on the other does not lie in the near future, all three agree that there is benefit in continuing the informal talks. Topics for the 2018 meeting will be creation and fellowship. Professors John Brenner and Bill Tackmier will be the CICR members who attend the 2018 meeting of the three church bodies.

Church of the Lutheran Confession

CICR Chairman John Brenner has been involved in talks with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) for the past few years. In 2015 he was involved along with leaders from WELS, the ELS and the CLC in drafting a document entitled “Joint Statement Regarding Termination of Fellowship,” which, it was hoped, would be an initial step in the path to establishing fellowship between WELS/the ELS and the CLC. Although the drafters of the statement, including the representatives of the CLC, agreed on the principles articulated in the document, the CLC’s General Pastoral Conference in 2017 recommended that the 2018 CLC convention not adopt the statement. If that happens, talks with the CLC are unlikely to continue.

A look ahead

The CICR will be working closely with the Board for World Missions (BWM) in the coming years to implement our new strategy (outlined earlier) of having individual CICR members as advisors to six of the BWM administrative committees and of matching CICR members or their liaisons with each of the established or emerging churches within each of the administrative committees’ purviews. Because the Lord is blessing us with so many opportunities in the various parts of our world, the suggestion has surfaced in our last CICR meeting of having a full-time administrator for the work of inter-church relations. Whether or not the latter becomes a reality, we ask for the prayers of the 12 districts as we undertake this exciting time of growth in the worldwide mission of WELS.

Prof. Bill Tackmier, reporter

Prof. John M. Brenner, chairman

Rev. Bart Brauer, vice chairman

Prof. Bill Tackmier, secretary

Rev. Jonathan Balge

Prof. James Danell

Rev. Thomas Fricke

Rev. Steven Lange
 Rev. Benjamin Tomczak
 Prof. Keith Wessel
 Prof. Bradley Wordell

Ex officio:

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Advisory:

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president

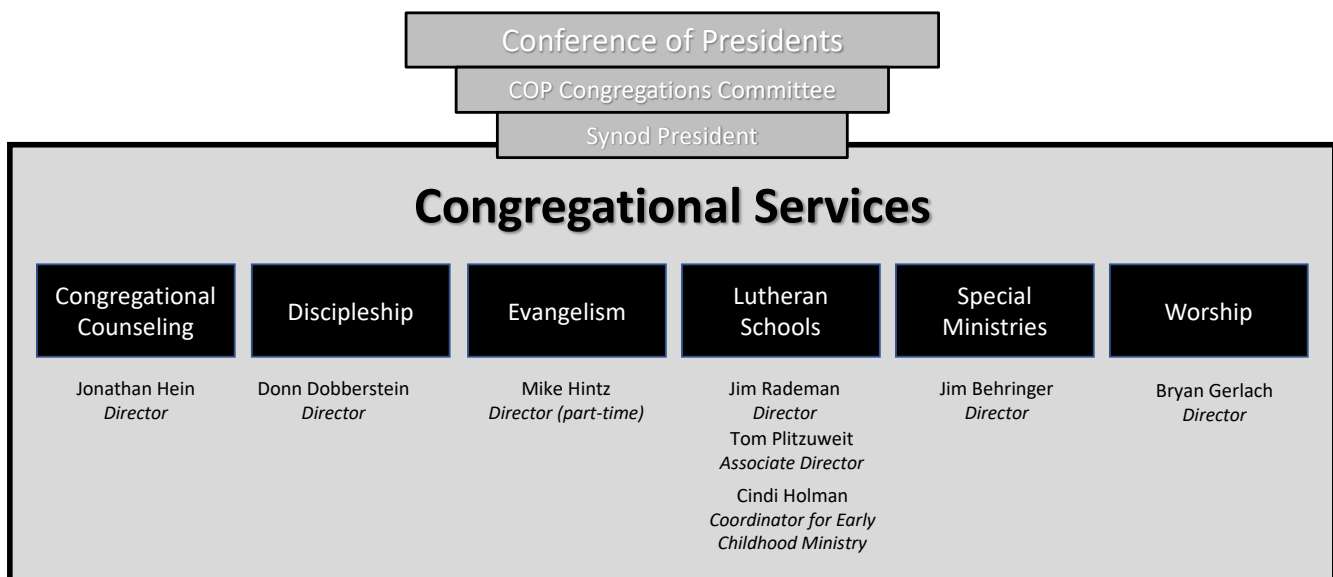
Congregational Services

Our calling

WELS Congregational Services exists to encourage and equip congregations for faithful and fruitful gospel ministry.

Congregational Services serves under the Conference of Presidents. It consists of six commissions: Congregational Counseling, Discipleship, Evangelism, Lutheran Schools, Special Ministries, and Worship. Each commission works with district coordinators and utilizes Congregational Counseling reports to identify common needs within WELS parishes and schools. Those commissions then provide resources, training, and personal assistance to help meet those needs.

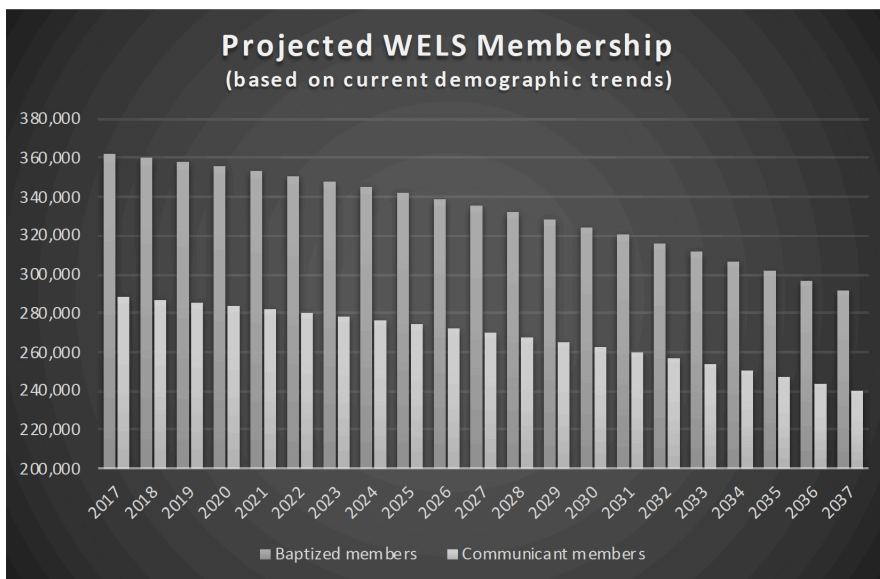
For the synod to carry out its ministries, it needs to have the support of a broad swath of healthy congregations. WELS' ministerial education system, world mission efforts, and home missions work is all predicated upon having a base of strong congregations. Thus, by serving local congregations, Congregational Services hopes also to assist in the worldwide mission of WELS.



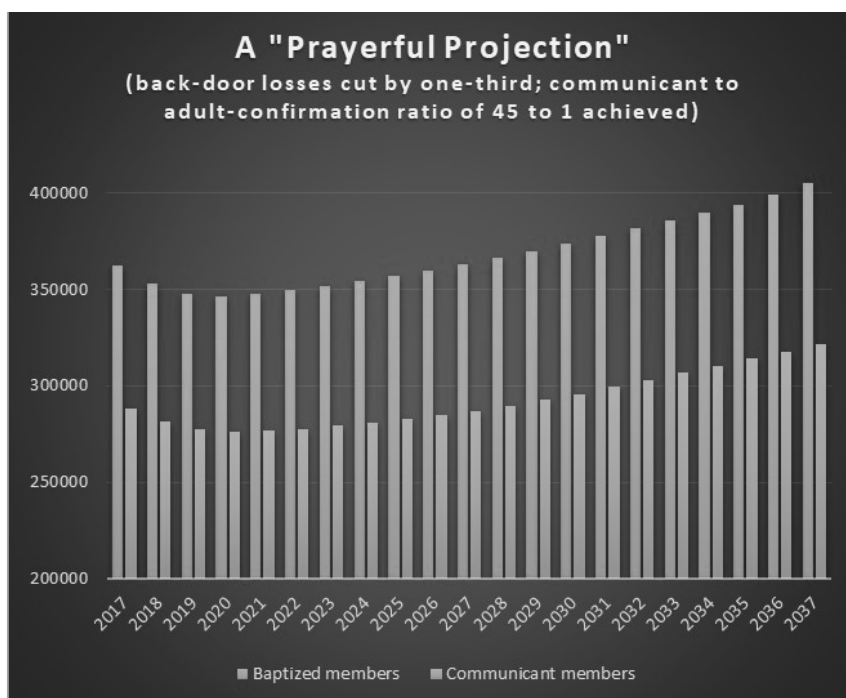
Our current situation

Congregational Services has undergone some big changes in the past two years, beyond changing the name of the “Congregation and Ministry Support Group” to the more succinct “Congregational Services.” The catalyst for the changes is the findings of a comprehensive demographic study that began in 2015 at the request of the Conference of Presidents. Those findings were presented at the 2017 synod convention.

The study demonstrated that if current statistical trends in WELS continue, within two decades WELS would lose approximately 73,000 members and 300 congregations. It also examined congregations facing “The 50/60 Challenge,” where a church has an average worship attendance of 50 or less and an average age of 60 or higher. The study demonstrated there are currently more than 110 congregations in that situation. That number is projected to grow to more than 200 congregations in the next five years. Most of these congregations are in highly rural areas.



The demographic study also contained “prayerful projections,” potential forecasts that could be realized if a) WELS congregations could increase gospel ministry efforts and b) the Holy Spirit would bless those efforts. For example, the study demonstrated that if, within five years, WELS congregations could cut “back-door losses” (the loss of WELS members by something other than death) by a third and improve the ratio of communicant members to adult confirmations from 83-to-1 (the average for the last couple years) to 45-to-1, over the next 20 years WELS would add approximately 42,000 new members.



In 2016, the directors of Congregational Services began a strategic planning process to determine how best to help congregations meet the challenges before our church body. The following are some of the actions that are part of a five-year plan that grew out of that process.

- Congregational Services was reorganized to operate as one unit, rather than six independent and autonomous commissions. Annual objectives for Congregational Services are now set in a joint meeting of all the directors and chairmen of the commissions. The commissions' responsibility is to fulfill the objectives that pertain to their areas of ministry.
- Congregational Services has prioritized programs that have as their goal "opening the front door" (adding new members through outreach) and "shutting the back door" (preventing members from leaving their congregation and synod). Please see the individual commission reports at wels.net/rttd2018 for a more detailed list of the initiatives.
- Congregational Services established the goal that, by making better use of technology, congregational assistance would be provided instantaneously, asynchronously, and at little to no cost.

The past two years also have seen some staffing changes. Pastor Jonathan Hein had been serving part time as the director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC) while also serving in a local parish. The Conference of Presidents called him to work in the CCC full time, running that commission out of the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry and serving as coordinator for Congregational Services. He began that expanded role in September 2017. Additionally, the Conference of Presidents called Pastor Donn Dobberstein to be the director of both the Commission on Adult Discipleship and the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry. Those commissions had operated without a director for a decade. However, given the challenges before the synod, the 2015 synod convention passed a resolution asking the Synodical Council to call a director. Pastor Dobberstein accepted the call and began his work in December 2017. He has reorganized the two commissions to operate as one—the Commission on Discipleship. After 15 years of faithful service as the director of the Commission on Evangelism, Pastor Michael Hintz retired in December 2017. He is serving half time until a replacement director accepts the call.

While the demographic report has served as a driving force for Congregational Services initiatives over the past two years, it must be stressed that the ultimate goal of Congregational Services is not numeric/statistical growth. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Rather, the ultimate goal of all six commissions is to help congregations do all they can with the gospel—to preach it, teach it, confess it, and witness with it—as zealously as humanly possible.

A look ahead

You can find the initiatives of each commission listed in their individual reports online. What follows are some broad goals for Congregational Services for the next biennium.

Congregational Services Resource Center

One major initiative that came out of the Congregational Services strategic planning was the production of an online resource center that would provide tools to help congregations address commonly identified challenges. Having these resources online allows congregations to access these resources at any time and at little to no cost to them. WELS Technology and Communication Services personnel have been constructing the resource center in recent months. It will launch in a beta version in time for it to be shared with district conventions.

The six commissions are currently producing the first round of modules for the resource center. These modules contain resources that help congregations meet some specific ministry need such as how to increase volunteerism; how to utilize small groups; how to produce a harvest strategy for your preschool; how to utilize compassion ministry for outreach; how to retain and gain individuals from the Millennial generation.

Every six months, the next round of modules will be uploaded and promoted synodwide. This is part of our five-year vision to provide timely resources that help congregations a) throw the front door of the church wide open, and b) shut the back door tightly.

C18: A synodwide campaign

The goal of C18 is that synodwide we might witness to one million unchurched souls prior to and on Christmas Eve 2018. Each commission is working on different aspects of C18: worship resources, evangelism materials, training for Lutheran schools, VBS resources, etc. The "prayed-for-results" of this effort: Five percent of that one million would join a WELS congregation for Christmas Eve services (50,000 people). Five percent of those individuals would

subsequently end up in Bible information classes (2,500 people). Sixty percent of those in Bible information classes would subsequently join a WELS congregation (1,500 people). Those results are up to the Holy Spirit, but we will pray for them and work zealously to achieve them. We will also attempt to track these prayed-for results.

We envision C18 to be the first of multiple campaigns where, walking together, WELS congregations proclaim the gospel boldly to a wider audience.

National Leadership Conference

In early 2020, Congregational Services will host a national leadership conference in a central location (possibly Chicago), allowing midwestern congregations to drive and offering affordable flights from outlying districts. The goal of the conference will be to discuss some of the challenges before Christian churches today as well as sharing some “best practices” among us, i.e., ministry tactics the Holy Spirit seems to be blessing. This conference will also provide attendees an opportunity to preview some of the contents of the new hymnal. Conference worship and devotions will all utilize materials from the Hymnal Project.

The vision is that Congregational Services will offer this national conference every three years (similar to the WELS Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts). It would then host traveling “niche conferences” in the intervening years such as WELS EdTechLead Summit, a rural church conference, a large church conference, a conference for congregations with cross-cultural ministries, etc.

More information will be available this fall.

For additional information about Congregational Services, please see the commission reports online at wels.net/rtd2018 or contact Pastor Jonathan Hein, 414-256-3227 or jonathan.hein@wels.net.

Rev. Jonathan Hein, reporter

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

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: Expenses related to the maintenance and operation of the Center for Mission and Ministry, including property insurance costs

Synod Archives

WELS Historical Institute

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, 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 Convention Compliance listing is included as an appendix to this report (p. 24) 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 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 ministry 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 the human resources and technology areas, 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.

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, in place since 2011, 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.

2017 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. 24 as Appendix 1.

Long-range planning

The 2017 synod convention adopted a long-range plan entitled, "Our Great Heritage." The plan is to serve as a guideline and roadmap for ministry and financial planning through the year 2025, the year in which, God-willing, our synod will celebrate its 175th anniversary. The plan can be found on p. 25 as Appendix 2.

The long-range plan outlines in broad terms the direction and focus of our synod's work in the coming years. Following its adoption by the 2017 convention, areas of ministry began to develop and undertake strategic plans to carry out the broad directives of the long-range plan. All areas will report their plans to the district conventions in 2018 and the progress they have made in implementing those plans.

Compensation Review Committee

The 2015 synod convention directed the Compensation Review Committee to conduct a comprehensive examination of the synod's compensation guidelines. The committee completed its work, which was approved by the 2017 synod convention. The Synodical Council will incorporate the approved guidelines into the ministry financial plan that will be presented to the 2019 synod convention.

At its April meeting, the SC clarified how the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) feature of the guidelines will be applied to synodical workers. The clarification was intended to avoid financial hardships imposed on workers when the COLA numbers would cause salaries to be lower than what are considered minimum salaries as listed in the compensation guidelines. The clarification is: (1) all synodical workers would be paid at a salary level no less than the national average (i.e., the numbers set forth in the salary matrix), (2) actual salary for a called position will be set based on what the calling body has established as its applicable COLA for all workers at that calling institution at the time of the call, (3) salaries would be adjusted annually across the calling body if COLA goes up from the previous year, and (4) exceptions, for synodical workers, could be granted if approved by the synod president. In order to ensure proper vetting of this new COLA application before it is implemented, final authority to implement these changes is vested in the Executive Committee of the Synodical Council at such time as it determines that implementation is appropriate. Prior to such implementation of these new COLA practices, the COLA practices presently in place (not those in the revised Compensation Guidelines that would go into effect July 1, 2018) will continue to be followed.

The intent of this application of the guidelines is to ensure that called workers' salaries do not fall below what is considered the floor salary as outlined in the salary schedule, that called workers' compensation is not reduced in instances where COLA drops from the previous year, and that all workers serving in a multiple called worker situation are compensated at the same level.

Financial results (2017) and Congregation Mission Offering subscriptions (2018)

Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) finished calendar year 2017 at \$21,358,000, an increase of nearly \$300,000 (1.4 percent) over 2016 and \$138,000 (0.7 percent) greater than subscriptions. Five of the last six years actual offerings exceeded congregational subscriptions.

Subscriptions for 2018 decreased 0.5 percent from 2017 receipts. Through March, receipts are down 1.0 percent compared to the prior year, and while this is disappointing, it is early in the year and it generally takes until the end of May for timing differences associated with Lent and Easter to work their way through remittances.

Overall, unrestricted special fund support and revenue continue to trend ahead of plan, and expenses are tracking below plan and are anticipated to be less than plan at year end based on past experience and projections. Collectively, unrestricted support at the four ministerial education schools is also tracking better than plan and expenses less than plan. Most notable is MLC, which is now projecting a surplus of about \$600,000 versus a planned deficit of \$600,000. The improvement is primarily the result of higher enrollments, the Congregational Partnership Grant Program, and lower expenses.

Temporary restricted support in WELS special funds and at the schools is also tracking above plan due to investment income and higher than planned gifts. More than \$700,000 has been added to the permanently restricted or endowment funds through March.

Because of the increased offerings and the healthy balance in the Financial Stabilization Fund, the SC voted to fund the top three items on the Unfunded Priority List as adopted by the 2017 synod convention. An additional \$150,000 was allocated to Martin Luther College (MLC) for financial aid and for efforts to reduce student debt. Home and World Missions received an additional \$200,000 for new mission starts and programs. The Publication Coordinating Commission was given \$50,000 to assist in the publication of theological works and resource material for congregations.

We thank God for the financial blessings he has provided through the gifts of his people.

A continuing concern and challenge is that CMO has remained flat over the past 10 years. An increase in expenditures of 3.0 to 3.5 percent is necessary simply to maintain the current operations of WELS, but CMO has not kept pace with that level of increase. In that same time period, grants from the Schwan Foundation have decreased from \$8 million to \$2 million annually. In addition, the Financial Stabilization Fund is being drawn down at a higher rate than the SC would like. This highlights the need for congregations to do all they can to increase CMO from current levels. Since CMO has not increased sufficiently to cover inflationary increases or to enable the synod to address new mission opportunities, the SC wants to encourage WELS members to consider remembering the work of the synod through individual gifts and through estate plans that include the work of the synod.

Despite less than needed CMO levels and the decreased funding from the Schwan Foundation, revenue from individual gifts and bequests and the Church Extension Fund grant to Home Missions as well as concerted efforts by the SC to increase efficiency with fewer workers has enabled WELS 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 "Financial results and ministry financial plan" report on p. 33.

Modifications of the ministry financial plan (budget)

The ministry financial plan adopted by the synod in convention sets the spending limits for all synodical entities. Generally, 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. In exceptional cases, additional synodical operating funds will be used. The SC has approved the following modifications that are funded by the Financial Stabilization Fund and with special or reserve funds:

- \$165,000 for asbestos abatement at Luther Preparatory School (Luther Preparatory School reserves),
- \$65,000 for Michigan Lutheran Seminary bleacher replacement (MLS Foundation grant),
- \$75,000 for planned gifts coordinator in FY19 (Financial Stabilization Fund),

- transfer the cost of the Pastoral Studies Institute from Home Missions special funds to World Missions special funds beginning in FY19,
- \$515,000 for Christian Aid and Relief to reflect increased expenses of \$515,000 for hurricane relief (all from existing special funds).

The SC approved the addition of a position in World Missions to coordinate the new “Mission Journeys” program. The action did not require a modification to the Ministry Financial Plan (since World Missions has the necessary funds), but, in keeping with SC policy, SC approval is needed for any addition to existing manpower.

The SC 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.

Northwestern Publishing House

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) is a self-sustaining ministry. It receives no funding from the synod and is dependent on its sales to support its operating budget. The Synodical Council has been kept informed about the financial challenges faced by NPH and directed NPH to consider options and develop a plan to ensure its sustainability.

NPH is implementing plans to address the financial challenges it is facing and to sustain its ministry into the future. The plans, approved by the Synodical Council, will be carried out over the next 36 months and include closing of the Milwaukee retail store, outsourcing shipping to a distribution facility, selling its current building, and moving NPH staff to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry. While NPH will remain a separate entity, the move will create greater opportunities for collaboration with WELS commissions and areas of ministry. NPH will continue to produce new materials and serve WELS churches, schools, and members through its website, nph.net, and its telephone customer service.

More complete information about these changes can be found in the report of Northwestern Publishing House on pp. 60 and 61 under the heading “Future ministry of NPH.”

Michigan Lutheran Seminary finances

The SC reviewed a report outlining accounting errors that were discovered at Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) during the transition between business managers. In February, two errors combined to overstate unrestricted net assets by \$154,000. Subsequently additional errors that occurred over a number of years were also discovered, which resulted in an understatement of net assets by \$325,000 and \$35,000. The net results of these errors is that unrestricted net assets have been understated by approximately \$200,000.

In February, it was also reported to the SC that MLS was experiencing operational financial challenges in FY18. These challenges are due to fewer than expected students and approximately \$100,000 less in gifts than what had been anticipated in the “Tomorrow’s Ministry Begins Here” effort. The result is that MLS will have an operating deficit of \$184,000, which is \$345,000 worse than what had been planned for FY18. Due to these same factors (fewer students, lower than planned gifts), MLS is projecting a deficit for FY19 of \$503,000, which is \$546,000 worse than planned.

In view of these circumstances, the SC directed its Executive Committee to work with the Board for Ministerial Education and with MLS to address the current financial challenges. These efforts should include a discussion about the involvement of the MLS Foundation, a reduction in operating expenses, and the involvement of the Board for Ministerial Education in determining solutions to these issues.

Pension plan

After consultation with the COP, the SC has appointed a special committee to review the current synod pension plan and to explore options to improve the plan for both the synod and its workers. The committee will bring its recommendations to the SC when its work is completed. The committee members are Mr. Paul Holzhueter (chairman), Mr. James Bren, Mr. Warren Ehlke, Rev. Douglas Free, Mr. Scott Heins, Rev. David Kolander, Mr. Joshua Peterman (advisor), and Mr. Todd Poppe (advisor).

Tax matters

A federal court has ruled that the housing allowance deduction for clergy is unconstitutional. The ruling has been appealed. As a member of the Church Benefits Association, WELS has expressed to the appeals court its support of this appeal as a “friend of the court.” It is likely that if the decision of the lower court is upheld, the matter will be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The recently passed tax overhaul requires that moving expenses for employment are now considered a taxable benefit. To prevent moving expenses from interfering in the call process, the SC has asked calling bodies to include an additional reimbursement of 20 percent of moving expenses for workers considered to be self-employed for tax purposes and an additional reimbursement of 16 percent for other workers.

Health reimbursement account savings

The SC was informed that the synod has experienced substantial savings (\$485,000) in a program that had been established to self-insure a portion of synodical workers' health care costs. These savings have been returned to areas of ministry, schools, Northwestern Publishing House, and synodical departments.

Schwan Foundation

WELS has been blessed for many years with grants from the Marvin Schwan Charitable Foundation. Recent annual grants have been just under \$1.9 million.

Historically, the Schwan Foundation has provided this financial support as a block grant, which was placed into the Financial Stabilization Fund and used to support the overall work of the synod. In recent years, the foundation has expressed its desire to move away from block grant funding to a more targeted approach, with grants given for specific ministries and programs. WELS administration is working with the Schwan Board of Trustees to facilitate this change in a way that will not create difficulties in the synod's biennial ministry planning.

The Schwan Foundation is also setting aside a portion of its annually distributed funds to be used to support special ministry efforts. Each of the seven beneficiaries was asked to submit proposals, which would then be considered for funding from the dollars set aside by the foundation. The Schwan Foundation will inform us of which, if any, of these proposals will receive funding. Some of the projects listed will be carried out with other funds if not selected for funding by the foundation.

Capital Projects Committee

The Capital Projects Committee, chaired by Synodical Council member Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, has worked 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 (see p. 28). This includes capital projects for upgrades, maintenance, and new 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. Any capital project at a ministerial education school with a cost of more than \$100,000 requires the approval of the Synodical Council.

Unfunded Priority List

When the synod convention adopts a ministry financial plan, it is also required to adopt a prioritized list of 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.

At its February 2018 meeting, the Synodical Council funded the top three items from the Unfunded Priority List (see p. 19 for more details). These included:

- Martin Luther College financial aid (\$150,000);
- Home and World Missions new starts and enhancements (\$200,000); and
- Publication Coordinating Commission projects (\$50,000).

The Synodical Council then adopted the following new Unfunded Priority List:

1. World Missions: Vietnam ministry training center, \$500,000
2. World Missions: Ethiopia/Sudan worker training support, \$50,000
3. Ministerial Education: MLC financial assistance, \$150,000
4. Synodical Council: funding for first two items on the capital projects priority list
5. Special Ministries: WELS Military Services Committee, \$50,000
6. Home Missions: new Home Missions start, \$125,000
7. Special Ministries: WELS Prison Ministry Committee, \$50,000
8. Synodical Council: Publication Coordinating Commission (Catechism and Bible history curriculum), \$100,000
9. Home Missions: new Home Missions start, \$150,000

It should be noted that the Conference of Presidents, with the encouragement of the SC, has authorized a special synodwide offering to provide funding for item #1 (the Vietnam ministry training center).

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 CMO results 0.5 percent greater than planned and CMO 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.

Ministry financial plan for the next biennium

Work has already begun on the ministry financial plan for the next biennium. A support forecast estimates the amount of financial resources that will be available to support WELS' various ministries. On the basis of that forecast, the Finance Committee of the SC establishes the overall spending levels as well as the planning assumptions that will be followed (compensation levels, cost of insurance and pension, etc.). At its February meeting, the SC authorized a three percent wage increase each year of the coming biennium. This decision can be revisited and amended later in the planning process if necessary.

Each area of ministry and WELS department submits its proposed ministry plans and requested support amount to the president. The president, in view of the established priorities of the synod and the long-range plan, crafts a draft comprehensive ministry financial plan. This draft is reviewed by the President's Advisory Council (PAC), in which representatives from all areas of ministry and synodical departments review the plan proposal and make suggestions for modifications. The PAC then adopts the plan with amendments and recommends it to the SC. The Ministry Committee of the SC then reviews the plan and makes any necessary or beneficial changes. After discussion and further input, the SC adopts the plan and forwards it to the synod convention for discussion and approval.

This process has been followed for eight years and has served the synod well. All areas of ministry have demonstrated a great deal of brotherly cooperation and the ability to consider the overall needs of the synod.

Thanks

Two members of the SC are completing their time of service this summer. Mr. Paul Holzhueter and Mr. Warren Ehlke have served on the SC for 12 years as lay representatives from the Minnesota District and the Pacific Northwest District, respectively. Advisory member Pastor Bryan Gerlach has completed his service as the representative of Congregational Services. We are thankful to 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
Mr. Paul Holzhueter, Minnesota District
Rev. Paul Janke, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions
Rev. Joel Jenswold, pastor-at-large
Mr. Bradley Johnston, South Central District
Dr. Timothy Kriewall, Michigan District
Mr. James Moeller, teacher-at-large
Mr. Dale Pohlman, Nebraska District
Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
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. Wayne Uhlhorn, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions
Rev. Charles Westra, Conference of Presidents
Rev. Joel Zank, Conference of Presidents

Advisory:

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions
Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of Congregational Services
Mr. Lee Hitter, director of WELS Communication Services
Rev. James Huebner, first vice president
Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving
Mr. Dennis Maurer, director of WELS 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 R. Voss, second vice president and secretary of the Synodical Council
Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

Appendix 1: 2017 WELS convention compliance listing

Committee, Resolution	Responsible group	Resolution description	Due by:
Res 2-03	COP	2019 convention at Martin Luther College	<i>July 2019; planning begun</i>
Res 2-04	President	Convention offerings to the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia, East Asia Lutheran Synod, and the South Asian Evangelical Lutheran Mission	<i>Completed August 2017</i>
Res 3-01	President	Translation Liaison Committee made a standing committee	<i>Completed</i>
Res 4-04	CICR	Following adoption of the Joint Statement on the Termination of Fellowship, there should be continued discussions with the Church of the Lutheran Confession	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 5-01	COP	Add one full-time Christian Giving counselor in the second year of the biennium (2018-19) if funding is available	<i>To be implemented in July 2018</i>
Res 5-04b,c	MCG, COP	Continue to encourage congregations to make use of the Ministry of Christian Giving's resources and that MCG should continue to work closely with the COP as it manages CMO and other funding opportunities	<i>Ongoing</i>
Rpt 6-01	COP	District presidents asked to continue to encourage CMO	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 6-01	COP/SC	Begin implementation of the "Our Great Heritage" long-range plan	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 6-02	SC	The adopted unfunded priority list is to guide the SC in the event of additional available funding	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 7-01	SC	Ministry financial plan adopted to fund WELS missions and ministries	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 8-01	SC	Guidelines for compensation recommended by the Compensation Review Committee and approved by the convention to be implemented	<i>Completed July 2017</i>
Rep't 13-01	COP, Congregational Services	Endorsed plan to call a director of discipleship	<i>Completed December 2017</i>
Rep't 13-01	Commission on Discipleship	Encourage the strengthening of Sunday schools and the planning for Sunday school institutes	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 14-02b	Commission on Lutheran Schools, COP, MLC, SC	Lutheran Principal Initiative to be promoted and reviewed; funding to be considered a priority	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 14-02c	Commission on Lutheran Schools	CLS to encourage calling bodies to enact synod-adopted guidelines for principal administrative release time and compensation	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 14-03	Commission on Lutheran Schools	Encourage congregations to participate in the Voluntary Supplemental Contribution to CLS	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 18-1	COP	Encourage pastors to promote NPH to their members	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 20-01 through 20-16	President	Make changes to the bylaws and implement changes as approved	<i>Completed August 2017</i>

Appendix 2:

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 authentic 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 missions 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 sharing the gospel through the establishment of 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), including the option to buy and renovate existing buildings.
- 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, building on our current Pastoral Studies Institute program.
- 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.
- More comprehensive training and certification of principals and early childhood directors.

Congregation and District Ministry

Recognizing the vital importance of congregational health, by 2025, under the direction of the Conference of Presidents (COP), Congregational Services 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 for personal witnessing 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 both elementary and secondary Lutheran schools as well as early childhood ministries.

What may look new

- A new printed hymnal and psalter completely supported by electronic worship planning resources.
- The activities of all of Congregational Services 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.
- An emphasis on reclaiming wandering sheep.

“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, WELS Communication Services, and the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving to encourage CMO gifts as well as 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.

Capital Projects Committee

Our calling

By resolution, the 2013 synod convention created the Capital Projects Committee (CPC) to ensure that the synod's capital needs, both maintenance and new or improved facilities, were a component of the synod's ministry plans in the near term and longer term.

Our current situation

The Capital Projects Committee has been blessed with an unprecedented spirit of cooperation and collaboration. Praise God for blessing this collaborative planning effort.

The Capital Projects Committee believes that the synod's facilities are generally well maintained and updated when funds are available. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Martin Luther College (MLC), and Luther Preparatory School (LPS) through a use of their operating funds, reserves, synod support, distributions from the ministerial education building endowment fund and gifts can adequately keep up on minimal maintenance projects and modernization of their facilities and grounds. Michigan Luther Seminary (MLS) has limited reserves and thus relies primarily on distributions from the Ministerial Education Building Endowment Fund and gifts from the MLS Foundation for their facility maintenance and modernization needs. Collectively, these sources have proven to be moderately adequate for the maintenance of the ministerial education facilities and grounds. WELS 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.

The 2017 synod convention supported the Capital Projects Committee's work to evaluate ministerial education needs at MLC and to identify funding sources for those needs. The convention also was concerned by the marginal spending for the maintenance of ministerial education schools and grounds.

A look ahead

Looking forward, the Capital Projects Committee, the Synodical Council (SC), and the school governing boards have concerns about the synod's longer-term ability to maintain and modernize the facilities and grounds at its schools. These concerns are predicated on a funding model that relies heavily on Congregation Mission Offerings, which have been flat for a decade while operating costs such as wages, benefits, utilities, and insurances have continued to rise. In addition to facility maintenance, development of campus master plans has identified facility expansion and building programs as well as major system updates at the ministerial education schools.

Martin Luther College is working with consultants to determine facility needs—both modernization and expansion—and donor interest in such projects. It was hoped that the consultant reports and recommendation would have been ready for the Board for Ministerial Education's consideration by spring 2018, but the projects are taking a little longer than expected. The Board for Ministerial Education sent its review results on to the Synodical Council, and, since it includes a synodwide funding appeal, to the Conference of Presidents for consideration. The Conference of Presidents approved this synodwide appeal at its April meeting. The appeal will begin in July 2019 (for more details, see Martin Luther College's appendix to the Board for Ministerials Education's report on pp. 57 and 58).

The MLS Foundation has kicked off a capital campaign, called The Big Backyard, for MLS. Included in the campaign is office space renovation and reorganization to increase effectiveness and reduce costs. The program also includes substantial improvement to outdoor athletic spaces. The Synodical Council has not yet considered if it will approve these projects but has the projects on its agenda for consideration at a future meeting.

Also, Luther Preparatory School has entered the initial stages of assessing the need for expanded fine arts and sport facilities in the next seven to ten years.

The Capital Projects Committee will propose a policy regarding capital project planning to the SC at the April SC meeting. The policy provides guidance on the announcement of and funding for projects or their study when costing \$100,000 or more.

Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, reporter

Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, chairman

Mr. Matt Burow

Mr. Chris Eubank

Mr. Todd J. Poppe

Rev. Paul Prange

Mr. Steve Thiesfeldt

Mr. Brian Treichel

Mr. Jim Waack

Mr. Dean Waldschmidt

Advisory:

Ms. Carla Hulke

Ms. Jamie Ristow

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Our calling

WELS Christian Aid and Relief serves as our 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 to 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 through our churches and missions. We bring in volunteers when requested to assist in the recovery effort.

Our current situation

Christian Aid and Relief is not funded through the WELS budget but by the special gifts of WELS members.

From Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2017, our total expenditures for relief projects were \$559,854, including \$405,221 expended for domestic relief efforts and \$154,633 for foreign relief efforts. In addition, \$327,475 was designated for humanitarian aid projects for fiscal year 2017-18.

General aid was provided to food pantries, inner-city relief, and general aid for called workers and congregation members suffering from extreme medical and financial burdens, totaling \$295,000.

Hurricane Relief was a major focus of our efforts this past year with grants totaling \$415,000 as of Feb. 28, 2018.

Humanitarian aid projects

At its June 2017 meeting, WELS Christian Aid and Relief approved \$327,475 for humanitarian aid grants for FY 2017–18. These projects help our missionaries reflect Christ’s love to people in need and also open doors to share the gospel. Major items include health clinics, borehole drilling to provide clean water, support for a women’s skill center, home-based care for the chronically ill and dying, food assistance to the needy, adult literacy classes, food and nutrition to orphans, medical equipment, and health clinics.

Grants have increased recently to more Home Missions congregations, especially those welcoming new legal immigrants in cross-cultural situations. Home missions receiving grants this year include Las Vegas, Nev.; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Texas; and Boise, Idaho.

World mission fields receiving grants this year include Africa—Zambia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Central Africa Medical Mission; Asia Pacific Rim—Thailand and Indonesia; Europe—Russia, Albania, Bulgaria, Ukraine; South Asia—Nepal, Pakistan, and India; Latin America—Mexico.

For more information on the individual humanitarian aid projects, visit wels.net/rtttd2018 and view Christian Aid and Relief’s online report.

Medical and financial emergencies

Our committee also assists local congregations as they reach out to display Christian love and compassion to their members facing natural disasters, medical emergencies, and financial crisis. Contact our chairman, Pastor Robert Hein, to learn more about how we can match or even exceed your local efforts. This includes supporting congregational efforts to provide aid and relief to your community recovering from a natural disaster.

Hurricane and disaster relief

Christian Aid and Relief personalizes its efforts by working through WELS congregations and missions in the affected areas. We work through our pastors and synod and congregational leaders to make assessments and distribute aid. We bring in volunteers when requested to assist in the recovery effort.

Puerto Rico

Our liaison to Puerto Rico, Pastor Tim Satorius, keeps in contact with pastors and leaders of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico. Satorius and a representative from Christian Aid and Relief made a personal assessment visit to Puerto Rico in October. One church there was completely destroyed, another was damaged, and several homes of members were damaged. Groceries were provided to families in need. We sent an immediate gift of \$5,000 through Direct Relief to assist those in need. We also sent \$5,000 to provide meals for people in the church and community suffering from this disaster. This enabled members of the national church to provide meals for 50 people a day for four weeks.

In January 2018 President Mark Schroeder, World Missions Administrator Larry Schlomer, Director of Missions Operations Sean Young, and Pastor Tim Satorius made a personal visit to Puerto Rico to meet with national leaders and further discuss ways we can help. Christian Aid and Relief approved their proposal to engage a Spanish-speaking WELS pastor for one year to serve as a consultant with the national leaders in developing a specific plan for recovery efforts and also strengthen our relationship with this national church, assisting them with ministry enhancement and worker training. Pastor Larry Schlomer Sr. accepted this position. Specific rebuilding plans will be brought to Christian Aid and Relief for approval. Then we will recruit and organize volunteers to assist from our volunteer database.

South Atlantic District

Volunteers, with the help of Christian Aid and Relief’s disaster relief trailers, assisted with the cleanup efforts in several affected communities. Those who have received assistance are most appreciative and wish to express their gratitude for a job well done. Pastors in the affected areas brought requests to us for immediate aid for their members through South Atlantic District President Chuck Westra. This included generators and equipment, rental assistance while being displaced from home, and assistance with cost of repairs and replacement of furnishings. We assisted Abiding Grace, Covington, Ga., as their church suffered water damage from the storm and brought in volunteers to repair a roof at Calvary Lutheran Academy in Florida.

Texas

Volunteers from neighboring churches helped with the initial cleanup efforts in several affected areas. The equipment included in our disaster relief trailers was put to good use. We have been blessed with wonderful volunteers and

a project coordinator who came in to help with rebuilding efforts. They did great work putting in countless hours repairing a parsonage and church at Christ our Savior, Angleton, Texas; the school at Sienna Plantation Academy; and about 17 member homes in the Friendswood, Texas, area. The volunteers often express the joy they experience serving their Lord as they serve these people. We have also received wonderful expressions of gratitude from the families we assisted. We also provided grants to replace furnishings and appliances to homes that were ruined by the flooding. Volunteers will complete a few more home repair projects in the Houston area in spring 2018.

Antigua, Barbuda, and Dominica

Assistance was provided to families displaced from Barbuda who are staying with members and friends of our WELS mission, St. John, Antigua. Twenty-nine families received \$18,000 in immediate aid so far. Funds were also distributed to assist families in Dominica affected by the hurricane. Our liaison, Pastor Thomas Spiegelberg, has visited Antigua and is helping us to further assess needs and opportunities.

We express our appreciation to many volunteers, including those from Builders for Christ, who have been a tremendous blessing to these recovery efforts.

A look ahead

Annually, Christian Aid and Relief reviews humanitarian aid grant requests forwarded to us from the Board for World Missions and Board for Home Missions. We also partner with other WELS agencies such as Kingdom Workers, Christian Family Solutions, and WELS Nurses Association to coordinate volunteers to assist in relief efforts when appropriate.

Action items:

- Pray for God to bless our ministry.
- Visit wels.net/relief for more information, to view a *Lifeline* video, or to become a partner of this ministry.
- Remember our ministry with special offerings.
- Contact us to schedule a presentation for your church, school, or organization.
- Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/WELSCChristianAidAndRelief.
- Sign up to become a WELS Christian Aid and Relief volunteer at wels.net/relief.

For more information, contact Pastor Robert Hein, chairman, at revrhein@gmail.com.

Rev. Robert Hein, reporter

Rev. Robert Hein, chairman

Staff Minister Tom Hering, secretary

Rev. Bruce Marggraf

Rev. Richard Warnecke

Mr. Steve Wright

Mrs. Elizabeth Zambo, administrative assistant

Financial results and ministry financial plan

Overview

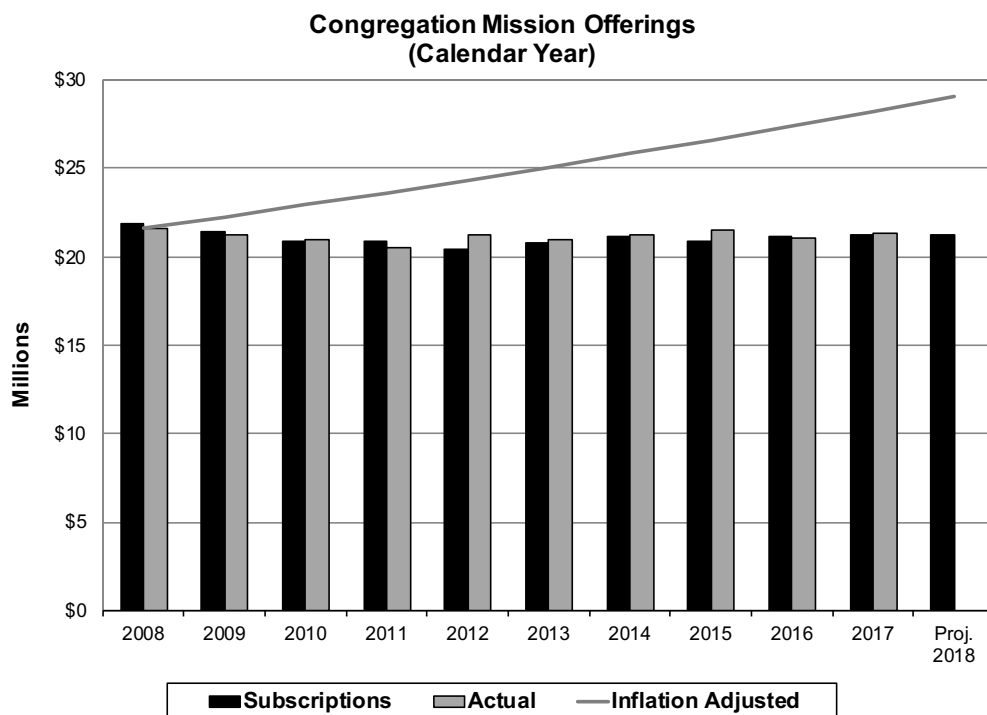
The Lord continues to bless the synod with financial support for missions and ministry through congregations, members, and supporting organizations. This support funds many mission and ministerial education ministries, as well as a variety of district and congregational programs.

The synod operates on a fiscal year (FY) that runs from July 1 to June 30. Financial reports include the synod's operating and special funds, as well as the synod's four ministerial education schools' operating and special funds. To provide a more comprehensive financial picture, starting with the 2017–19 biennium, the ministry financial plan reports include three of the support services subsidiaries—WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF), WELS Foundation (FND), and WELS Investment Funds (WIF). Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) will be added to the plan beginning with the 2019–21 biennium. The support services subsidiaries are self-supporting organizations that do not receive financial support from the synod's operating plan. These subsidiaries cover their operating costs through fees and revenues as well as gifts and bequests.

In addition to transparency improvements made over the years, the predictability of support for the ministry financial plan was enhanced by the establishment of the Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF). The FSF holds all non-CMO (Congregation Mission Offering) sources of support until the year after receipt. Establishment of this fund has worked as hoped; as a result, mid-year plan adjustments due to non-CMO support decreases have not been necessary during the fund's existence.

Fiscal year 2016–17 (FY17)

CMO—the cornerstone for financial support—has been flat for the past ten years. In 2016, CMO receipts were 0.3 percent below subscriptions and 2.1 percent below 2015 receipts. Subscriptions for 2017 increased 0.8 percent, which was less than receipts in 2014 and below the planned increase of 1.0 percent. For fiscal year 2016–17 (FY17), CMO ended the year at \$21,184,613, approximately \$14,000 short of plan.



An unrestricted grant of \$3.0 million to World Missions from the termination of a gifted interest in an LLC, along with higher than planned gifts, bequests, and investment earnings, and lower than planned expenses contributed to an unrestricted surplus of \$5.2 million. A deficit of \$1.1 million was included in the plan.

The final payment on the synod's debt was made during FY17. Also, temporarily restricted reserves ended FY17 with a surplus of \$5.0 million compared to a planned deficit of \$3.1 million, due mainly to investment earnings resulting from favorable market conditions and gifts that were higher than planned.

The FSF was also blessed during FY17, reflecting a surplus of nearly \$4.2 million due to several one-time events. A large bequest, proceeds from a closed church's property sale, and higher than planned grants from WELS Foundation contributed to the surplus. Also, transfers out of the FSF were below plan due to lower operating expenses.

A detailed report on the financial results for FY17 is available online at cloud.wels.net/finance. Also, please refer to pp. 36-40 for the FY17 consolidating schedules of financial position and activities that provide the results for the year by entity (WELS, its four ministerial education schools, and the ministry support subsidiaries) on a consolidated basis.

Fiscal year 2017–18 (FY18)

The plan for FY18 was developed on the following assumptions: 2017 Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) subscriptions would be met and CMO would increase 0.5 percent in 2018; other sources of support would remain relatively flat; synod funding for ministry and ministry support would increase 1.0 percent to accommodate ministry needs; and Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) reserves would be reduced by \$1.5 million.

Midway through this fiscal year, there are a few updates to share.

- In 2017, CMO receipts were 0.7 percent greater than subscriptions and 1.4 percent above the prior year, but subscriptions for 2018 are 0.5 percent less than 2017 receipts. The net effect is CMO of about \$25,000 more than the original plan.
- Investment earnings continue to be higher than planned through the first half of FY18.
- Gifts for Christian Aid and Relief approached \$2 million dollars in the first six months of the fiscal year, mostly for hurricane relief efforts. Related expenses are nearly \$700,000 through December, almost the same amount as Christian Aid and Relief's plan for the year.
- Support into the FSF is anticipated to be \$500,000 higher than planned due to increased distributions expected from WELS Foundation and receipt of the final proceeds from the sale of a closed church's property.
- Expenses are anticipated to be lower than planned due to cost containment efforts.

Although CMO outperformed subscriptions in 2017, receipts have, on average, increased 0.1 percent annually over the last five years while costs have been increasing about 3.5 percent. 2018 CMO subscriptions are in line with receipts from 2009, 2012, and 2014 and 1.7 percent below 2008 CMO. So, while the results for FY18 appear to be better than planned, significant longer-term challenges remain if the cornerstone of financial support, CMO, does not grow at least as fast as costs are increasing.

Fiscal year 2018–19 (FY19)

The plan for FY19 was developed on the following assumptions: 2017 CMO subscriptions would be met and CMO would increase in 2018 and 2019 by 0.5 percent; other sources of support would remain relatively flat; synod funding for ministry and ministry support would increase 2.0 percent to accommodate ministry needs; and FSF reserves would decrease \$1.7 million.

As in FY18, there are a few updates to share.

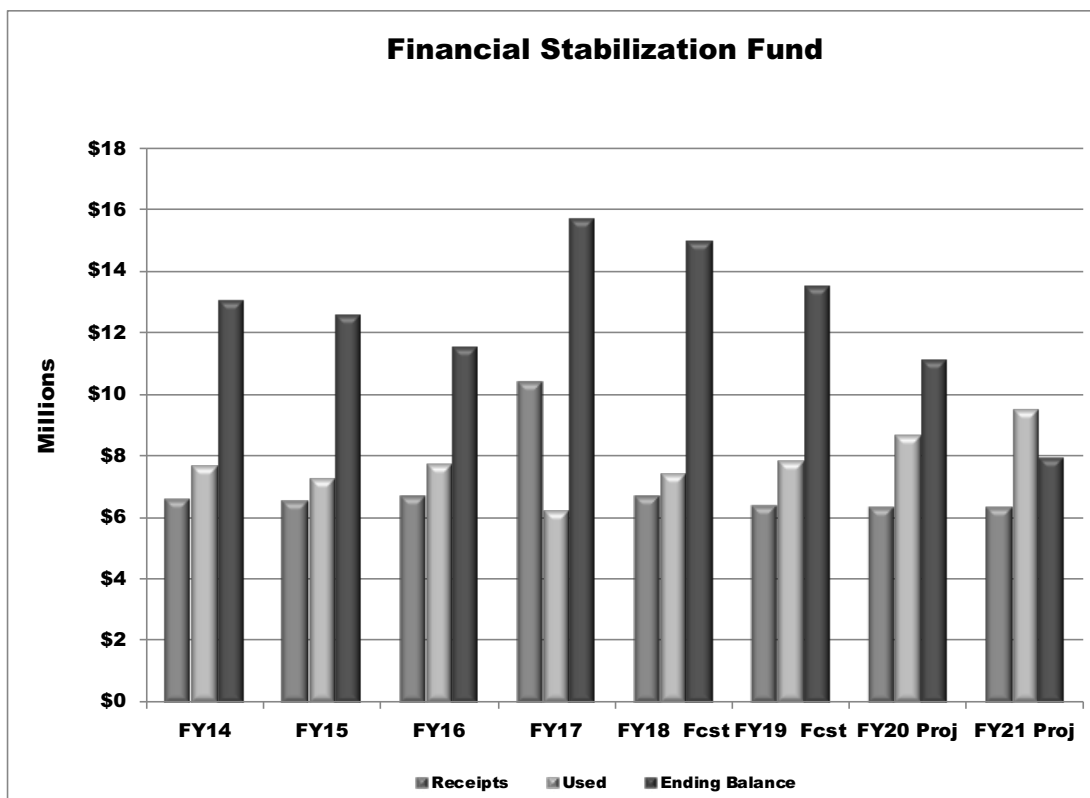
- In 2017, CMO receipts were 0.7 percent greater than subscriptions and 1.4 percent greater than the prior year, but subscriptions for 2018 are 0.5 percent less than 2017 receipts. CMO is projected to increase 0.5 percent in 2019. The net effect is CMO about \$100,000 less than the plan.
- An additional transfer out of the FSF in the amount of \$400,000 was approved by the Synodical Council (SC) for the first three items on the Unfunded Priority List—\$50,000 for the Publication Coordinating Commission; \$150,000 to Martin Luther College for student aid; and \$200,000 for Home and World Missions' new mission starts and programs.
- It is unknown if the expense savings expected for FY18 can be sustained into and through FY19.

As noted previously, CMO—the 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. Looking

forward into the next biennium, more significant drawdowns of the FSF will be needed to maintain ministry with anticipated cost increases of 3.5 percent annually. If this trend is not changed, other sources of support will need to be identified and developed or costs will need to be 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 Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) has been blessed. A bequest of \$3.2 million in FY12 and several one-time events contributing to a \$4.2 million surplus in FY17 provide a solid foundation for overcoming unanticipated changes in unrestricted support levels. Due to flat CMO over the last 10 years and increasing costs, transfers out of the FSF are projected to average \$1.2 million above receipts annually in the current biennium and \$2.8 million above receipts annually in the next biennium. Continuing to have FSF uses exceed receipts is not sustainable and could cause funding model changes with undesirable consequences. The Synodical Council 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 2019–21 biennium.



WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Schedule of Financial Position
As of June 30, 2017

ASSETS

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	CEF	Foundation	WIF	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 24,143,240	\$ 8,089,049	\$ 1,772,026	\$ 57,430	\$ 1,216,645	\$ 22,622,626	\$ 4,703,465	\$ 1,808,325	\$ 1,396,619	\$ (1,676,794)	\$ 64,132,631
Cash restricted for gift annuities and trusts payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	785,847	-	-	-	785,847
Investments	-	3,854,953	66,954	29,703	-	26,583,593	129,547,948	199,107,279	2,565,642	(156,873,838)	204,882,234
Accounts receivable, net	445,910	66,076	23,974	101,684	1,492	14,799	-	-	521,783	-	1,175,718
Gifts and bequests receivable, net	214,828	11,400	-	-	93,685	27,447	375,168	-	-	-	722,528
Accrued interest receivable	20,531	-	-	-	-	391,552	-	-	-	(20,531)	391,552
Inventories	-	118,503	-	37,276	13,607	-	-	-	1,837,293	-	2,086,764
Loans to students, net	-	1,038,492	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,038,492
Property and real estate held for sale, net	-	-	-	-	-	1,473,175	1,443,923	-	-	-	2,917,098
Loans receivable from congregations, net	-	-	-	-	-	146,279,431	-	-	-	(67,477)	146,211,954
Cash surrender value of life insurance policies	-	28,415	37,635	13,238	-	-	1,148,800	-	-	-	1,228,088
Assets held in trust - outside WELS	621,886	1,179,997	-	176,726	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,978,609
Other assets	471,632	215,231	79,876	8,271	67,651	7,227	-	-	81,875	-	931,763
Interest in net assets of WELS Foundation	13,394,882	1,899,223	1,332,180	2,190,353	201,490	1,185,960	-	-	-	(20,204,088)	-
Beneficial interest - assets held by WELS Foundation	14,840,583	2,337,825	2,071,377	311,270	527,737	-	-	-	-	(20,088,792)	-
Property, plant and equipment, net	7,737,619	24,114,218	3,822,819	5,558,103	8,220,454	-	-	-	1,502,215	-	50,955,428
Investment in CEF certificates	16,866,859	-	1,389,062	-	-	-	-	-	775,228	(19,031,149)	-
Interest in assets of WELS Foundation	19,979,338	11,364,189	13,581,808	1,375,712	1,890,286	-	-	-	-	(48,191,333)	-
Due from related party	2,295,502	-	-	-	-	(74,291)	(33,057)	-	-	(2,188,154)	-
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 101,032,810	\$ 54,317,571	\$ 24,257,796	\$ 9,859,766	\$ 12,233,047	\$ 198,511,519	\$ 137,972,094	\$ 200,915,604	\$ 8,680,655	\$ (268,342,156)	\$ 479,438,706

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Schedule of Financial Position (continued)
As of June 30, 2017

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	CEF	Foundation	WIF	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
LIABILITIES											
Accounts payable	\$ 683,942	\$ 380,458	\$ 87,726	\$ 18,500	\$ 135,741	\$ 1,093	\$ 1,697	\$ -	\$ 172,442	\$ (2,781)	\$ 1,478,818
Accrued expenses and other liabilities	2,942,470	375,019	80,255	81,603	222,287	3,247,447	374,396	318,581	262,037	6,836	7,910,931
Deferred revenue	103,678	384,880	49,497	10,386	149,874	-	-	-	605,023	-	1,303,338
Retiree health benefits payable	1,486,195	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,486,195
Certificates payable	-	-	-	-	-	94,129,457	-	-	-	(19,031,149)	75,098,308
Liabilities to other beneficiaries	-	1,338,738	-	-	-	-	13,215,157	-	-	-	14,553,895
Deposits held in custody	-	12,477	673	142,715	70,705	-	-	-	-	-	226,570
Liabilities to outside agencies and organizations	2,050,597	306,787	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41,926,870	44,284,254
Gift annuities and trusts payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	25,879,632	-	-	-	25,879,632
U.S. government grants refundable	-	858,872	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	858,872
Due to WELS and Schools	-	-	-	-	-	-	48,055,496	-	-	(48,055,496)	-
Due to related party	94,922	1,490,485	188,971	(165,364)	(330,609)	1,006,196	-	-	-	(2,284,601)	-
Total Liabilities	<u>7,361,804</u>	<u>5,147,716</u>	<u>407,122</u>	<u>87,840</u>	<u>247,998</u>	<u>98,384,193</u>	<u>87,526,378</u>	<u>318,581</u>	<u>1,039,502</u>	<u>(27,440,321)</u>	<u>173,080,813</u>
NET ASSETS											
Unrestricted	39,196,621	6,056,514	7,055,448	78,827	1,494,097	72,357,785	9,535,317	200,597,023	7,590,453	(159,524,252)	184,437,833
Temporarily restricted	29,283,345	32,805,671	8,344,193	8,616,246	9,328,306	2,686,654	21,731,848	-	50,700	(62,998,480)	49,848,483
Permanently restricted	25,191,040	10,307,670	8,451,033	1,076,853	1,162,646	25,082,887	19,178,551	-	-	(18,379,103)	72,071,577
Total Net Assets	<u>93,671,006</u>	<u>49,169,855</u>	<u>23,850,674</u>	<u>9,771,926</u>	<u>11,985,049</u>	<u>100,127,326</u>	<u>50,445,716</u>	<u>200,597,023</u>	<u>7,641,153</u>	<u>(240,901,835)</u>	<u>306,357,893</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS											
	<u>\$ 101,032,810</u>	<u>\$ 54,317,571</u>	<u>\$ 24,257,796</u>	<u>\$ 9,859,766</u>	<u>\$ 12,233,047</u>	<u>\$ 198,511,519</u>	<u>\$ 137,972,094</u>	<u>\$ 200,915,604</u>	<u>\$ 8,680,655</u>	<u>\$ (268,342,156)</u>	<u>\$ 479,438,706</u>

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Schedule of Activities
As of and For the Year Ended June 30, 2017

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	CEF	Foundation	WIF	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
Unrestricted											
MEMBER SUPPORT AND REVENUES											
Member support											
Offerings from congregations	\$ 21,184,613	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 21,184,613
Gifts and memorials	10,518,917	726,897	525,926	165,150	133,792	179,589	491,809	-	50,500	(6,585,142)	6,207,438
Bequests	2,922,016	182,122	629,754	-	6,372	136,953	300,851	-	-	-	4,178,068
Total Member Support	<u>34,625,546</u>	<u>909,019</u>	<u>1,155,680</u>	<u>165,150</u>	<u>140,164</u>	<u>316,542</u>	<u>792,660</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>50,500</u>	<u>(6,585,142)</u>	<u>31,570,119</u>
Revenues											
Student tuition and fees, net	4,639	11,435,916	817,368	1,482,478	3,822,359	-	-	-	-	-	17,562,760
Activity fees and retail sales	2,346,456	946,393	88,425	202,706	177,264	-	-	12,115,177	5,266,346	(12,748,505)	8,394,262
Interest and dividends	796,548	229,892	171,594	1,417	44,004	6,368,733	111,325	3,989,424	99,913	(3,618,528)	8,194,322
Net realized and unrealized gain on investments	-	182,340	516,506	-	43,471	1,022,219	433,137	17,502,631	188,598	(17,502,631)	2,386,271
Change in value of trust agreements	-	(173)	-	507,332	-	-	169,000	-	-	(506,852)	169,307
Net change in value of endowments below historical gift value	8,878	-	9,992	-	-	-	15,042	-	-	-	33,912
Other	189,233	89,797	693	1,917	81,198	352,701	687,517	-	303,951	(51,835)	1,654,542
Transfers from other funds	8,003,352	3,480,639	2,039,093	1,511,043	2,817,248	-	-	-	13,651	(17,865,026)	-
Total Revenues	<u>11,349,106</u>	<u>16,364,804</u>	<u>3,643,041</u>	<u>3,706,893</u>	<u>6,985,544</u>	<u>7,743,653</u>	<u>1,416,021</u>	<u>33,607,232</u>	<u>5,872,459</u>	<u>(52,293,377)</u>	<u>38,395,376</u>
Donor redesignation	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1,346)	-	-	-	(1,346)
Net assets released from restriction	6,907,996	2,646,483	1,366,927	456,757	888,778	195,769	3,193,434	-	169,150	(3,868,672)	11,956,622
Total Member Support and Revenues	<u>52,882,648</u>	<u>19,920,306</u>	<u>6,165,648</u>	<u>4,328,800</u>	<u>8,014,486</u>	<u>8,255,964</u>	<u>5,400,769</u>	<u>33,607,232</u>	<u>6,092,109</u>	<u>(62,747,191)</u>	<u>81,920,771</u>
EXPENSES											
Program services											
Ministerial education	8,936,000	20,384,334	5,334,975	4,000,301	7,738,775	-	-	-	-	(11,151,614)	35,242,771
World missions	8,999,165	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(250,806)	8,748,359
Home missions	8,675,912	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(761,130)	7,914,782
Congregational and district ministries	6,586,195	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(487,688)	6,098,507
Northwestern Publishing House	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,485,621	(118,920)	6,366,701
Total Program Services	<u>33,197,272</u>	<u>20,384,334</u>	<u>5,334,975</u>	<u>4,000,301</u>	<u>7,738,775</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,485,621</u>	<u>(12,770,158)</u>	<u>64,371,120</u>
Support services											
Ministry support - subsidiaries	-	-	-	-	-	5,838,198	1,573,177	391,571	-	(1,130,591)	6,672,355
General and administrative	13,010,422	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(7,957,003)	5,053,419
Transfers to other funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,042,125	11,758,945	-	(18,801,070)	-
Total Support Services	<u>13,010,422</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,615,302</u>	<u>12,150,516</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(27,888,664)</u>	<u>11,725,774</u>
Total Expenses	<u>46,207,694</u>	<u>20,384,334</u>	<u>5,334,975</u>	<u>4,000,301</u>	<u>7,738,775</u>	<u>5,838,198</u>	<u>8,615,302</u>	<u>12,150,516</u>	<u>6,485,621</u>	<u>(40,658,822)</u>	<u>76,096,894</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS											
6,674,954	(464,028)	830,673	328,499	275,711	2,417,766	(3,214,533)	21,456,716	(393,512)	(393,512)	(22,088,369)	5,823,877
NET ASSETS (DEFICIT) - Beginning of Year	<u>32,521,667</u>	<u>6,520,542</u>	<u>6,224,775</u>	<u>(249,672)</u>	<u>1,218,386</u>	<u>69,940,019</u>	<u>12,749,850</u>	<u>179,140,307</u>	<u>7,983,965</u>	<u>(137,435,883)</u>	<u>178,613,956</u>
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	<u>\$ 39,196,621</u>	<u>\$ 6,056,514</u>	<u>\$ 7,055,448</u>	<u>\$ 78,827</u>	<u>\$ 1,494,097</u>	<u>\$ 72,357,785</u>	<u>\$ 9,535,317</u>	<u>\$ 200,597,023</u>	<u>\$ 7,590,453</u>	<u>\$ (159,524,252)</u>	<u>\$ 184,437,833</u>

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Schedule of Activities (continued)
As of and For the Year Ended June 30, 2017

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	CEF	Foundation	WIF	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
Temporarily restricted											
MEMBER SUPPORT AND REVENUES											
Member support											
Gifts and memorials	\$ 5,273,042	\$ 991,925	\$ 666,448	\$ 158,076	\$ 490,907	\$ -	\$ 1,583,026	\$ -	\$ 85,350	\$ -	\$ 9,248,774
Bequests	206,420	243	233,176	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	439,839
Total Member Support	<u>5,479,462</u>	<u>992,168</u>	<u>899,624</u>	<u>158,076</u>	<u>490,907</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,583,026</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>85,350</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>9,688,613</u>
Revenues											
Interest and dividends	399,770	380,436	156,310	27,608	28,341	204,078	1,451,714	-	-	-	2,648,257
Net realized and unrealized gain on investments	1,837,764	887,346	712,790	128,691	131,049	1,296,628	6,049,316	-	-	39,127	11,082,711
Change in value of trust agreements	2,332,085	569,425	(223,789)	235,102	78,652	138,269	(4,598,506)	-	-	(2,941,573)	(4,410,335)
Redesignated fixed asset additions	-	1,096,514	90,454	88,706	238,490	-	-	-	-	(1,514,164)	-
Net change in value of endowments below historical gift value	(8,878)	-	(9,992)	-	-	-	(15,042)	-	-	-	(33,912)
Other	52,484	-	3,021	-	-	-	(82,662)	-	-	-	(27,157)
Transfers from other funds	-	-	39,431	-	-	-	(81)	-	-	(39,350)	-
Total Revenues	<u>4,613,225</u>	<u>2,933,721</u>	<u>768,225</u>	<u>480,107</u>	<u>476,532</u>	<u>1,638,975</u>	<u>2,804,739</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(4,455,960)</u>	<u>9,259,564</u>
Donor redesignation	-	-	-	-	-	-	(74,885)	-	-	-	(74,885)
Net assets released from restriction	<u>(6,907,996)</u>	<u>(2,646,483)</u>	<u>(1,343,273)</u>	<u>(456,757)</u>	<u>(888,778)</u>	<u>(195,769)</u>	<u>(3,193,434)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(169,150)</u>	<u>3,868,672</u>	<u>(11,932,968)</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS											
NET ASSETS - Beginning of Year	3,184,691	1,279,406	324,576	181,426	78,661	1,443,206	1,119,446	-	(83,800)	(587,288)	6,940,324
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	<u>26,098,654</u>	<u>31,526,265</u>	<u>8,019,617</u>	<u>8,434,820</u>	<u>9,249,645</u>	<u>1,243,448</u>	<u>20,612,402</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>134,500</u>	<u>(62,411,192)</u>	<u>42,908,159</u>
	<u>\$ 29,283,345</u>	<u>\$ 32,805,671</u>	<u>\$ 8,344,193</u>	<u>\$ 8,616,246</u>	<u>\$ 9,328,306</u>	<u>\$ 2,686,654</u>	<u>\$ 21,731,848</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 50,700</u>	<u>\$(62,998,480)</u>	<u>\$ 49,848,483</u>

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Schedule of Activities (continued)
As of and For the Year Ended June 30, 2017

	Permanently restricted										
	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	CEF	Foundation	WIF	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
MEMBER SUPPORT AND REVENUES											
Member support											
Gifts and memorials	\$ 16,852	\$ 319,006	\$ 253,674	\$ -	\$ 3,615	\$ -	\$ 384,837	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 977,984
Bequests	5,619	1,538	15,000	-	-	-	61,010	-	-	-	83,167
Total Member Support	<u>22,471</u>	<u>320,544</u>	<u>268,674</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,615</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>445,847</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,061,151</u>
Revenues											
Change in value of trust agreements	152,544	138,843	59,042	76,939	3,557	-	9,513	-	-	(361,335)	79,103
Other	-	-	(274)	-	-	-	1,280	-	-	-	1,006
Total Revenues	<u>152,544</u>	<u>138,843</u>	<u>58,768</u>	<u>76,939</u>	<u>3,557</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,793</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(361,335)</u>	<u>80,109</u>
Donor redesignation	-	-	-	-	-	-	76,231	-	-	-	76,231
Net assets released from restriction	-	-	(23,654)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(23,654)
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	<u>175,015</u>	<u>459,387</u>	<u>303,788</u>	<u>76,939</u>	<u>7,172</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>532,871</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(361,335)</u>	<u>1,193,837</u>
NET ASSETS - Beginning of Year	<u>25,016,025</u>	<u>9,848,283</u>	<u>8,147,245</u>	<u>999,914</u>	<u>1,155,474</u>	<u>25,082,887</u>	<u>18,645,680</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(18,017,768)</u>	<u>70,877,740</u>
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	<u>\$ 25,191,040</u>	<u>\$ 10,307,670</u>	<u>\$ 8,451,033</u>	<u>\$ 1,076,853</u>	<u>\$ 1,162,646</u>	<u>\$ 25,082,887</u>	<u>\$ 19,178,551</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ (18,379,103)</u>	<u>\$ 72,071,577</u>

Called worker compensation guidelines

Synodical salary range assignments

Early childhood ministry teacher (no degree)	A
Early childhood ministry teacher (associates degree)	B
Teacher (BS or BA base)	C - F
Secondary teacher	D - G
Early childhood ministry director	D - G
Prep professor	D - G
Staff minister	D - G
Principal	E - H
Christian giving counselor	E - H
Prep vice president	E - H
Prep dean	E - H
College professor	E - H
Pastor	E - H
Home missionary	E - H
World missionary	E - H
Center for Mission and Ministry associate administrator	E - H
Center for Mission and Ministry associate director	E - H
Center for Mission and Ministry national coordinator	E - H
Mission counselor	E - H
Center for Mission and Ministry administrator	F - I
Center for Mission and Ministry director	F - I
Prep president	F - I
College vice president	F - I
College dean	F - I
Seminary professor	F - I
Seminary vice president	F - I
College president	G - I
Seminary president	G - I
Synod president	J

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 adjustment.

Above base compensation components for called workers

1. Cost of living adjustment using Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) 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 2017-18 and 2018-19 this adjustment would be .75%).
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: Salary matrices and a web-based called worker compensation calculator tool are available at wels.net/cwcompcalc. Additional called worker compensation resources are available at welsrc.net/human-resources.

Compensation for synod president and congregational support for vice presidents

The synod president is compensated with a salary based on column "J." In addition to the base salary and the other components of compensation listed with the compensation guidelines, in 2017–18 the president received above base compensation the amount of \$41,742, which reflected a .75% increase from 2016–17. In 2018–19, this component of the president's compensation will be increased by .75% to \$42,055.

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.

Synod Schedule

0.75% Inflation Rate Adjustment

WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

**Salary Matrix
2018/2019**

			14,646	15,378	16,110	16,842	17,575	18,307	19,039	19,772
Range Spread			14,646	15,378	16,110	16,843	17,575	18,307	19,039	19,772
Service Incr.	391	415	488	513	537	561	586	610	635	659
Ranges	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Experience</i>										
0	23,433	24,897	29,291	30,756	32,220	33,685	35,149	36,614	38,078	39,543
1	23,824	25,312	29,779	31,269	32,757	34,246	35,735	37,224	38,713	40,202
2	24,214	25,727	30,267	31,781	33,294	34,808	36,321	37,834	39,347	40,861
3	24,605	26,142	30,756	32,294	33,831	35,369	36,906	38,445	39,982	41,520
4	24,995	26,557	31,244	32,806	34,368	35,931	37,492	39,055	40,617	42,179
5	25,386	26,972	31,732	33,319	34,905	36,492	38,078	39,665	41,251	42,838
6	25,776	27,387	32,220	33,832	35,442	37,054	38,664	40,275	41,886	43,497
7	26,167	27,802	32,708	34,344	35,979	37,615	39,250	40,886	42,520	44,156
8	26,557	28,217	33,196	34,857	36,516	38,176	39,836	41,496	43,155	44,815
9	26,948	28,632	33,685	35,369	37,053	38,738	40,421	42,106	43,790	45,474
10	27,339	29,047	34,173	35,882	37,590	39,299	41,007	42,716	44,424	46,134
11	27,729	29,461	34,661	36,395	38,127	39,861	41,593	43,327	45,059	46,793
12	28,120	29,876	35,149	36,907	38,664	40,422	42,179	43,937	45,694	47,452
13	28,510	30,291	35,637	37,420	39,201	40,983	42,765	44,547	46,328	48,111
14	28,901	30,706	36,126	37,932	39,738	41,545	43,350	45,157	46,963	48,770
15	29,291	31,121	36,614	38,445	40,275	42,106	43,936	45,767	47,598	49,429
16	29,682	31,536	37,102	38,958	40,812	42,668	44,522	46,378	48,232	50,088
17	30,072	31,951	37,590	39,470	41,349	43,229	45,108	46,988	48,867	50,747
18	30,463	32,366	38,078	39,983	41,886	43,791	45,694	47,598	49,501	51,406
19	30,853	32,781	38,566	40,495	42,423	44,352	46,280	48,208	50,136	52,065
20	31,244	33,196	39,055	41,008	42,960	44,913	46,865	48,819	50,771	52,724
21	31,635	33,611	39,543	41,521	43,497	45,475	47,451	49,429	51,405	53,383
22	32,025	34,026	40,031	42,033	44,034	46,036	48,037	50,039	52,040	54,042
23	32,416	34,441	40,519	42,546	44,571	46,598	48,623	50,649	52,675	54,701
24	32,806	34,856	41,007	43,058	45,108	47,159	49,209	51,260	53,309	55,360
25	33,197	35,271	41,496	43,571	45,645	47,720	49,794	51,870	53,944	56,019
26	33,587	35,686	41,984	44,084	46,182	48,282	50,380	52,480	54,578	56,678
27	33,978	36,101	42,472	44,596	46,719	48,843	50,966	53,090	55,213	57,337
28	34,368	36,516	42,960	45,109	47,256	49,405	51,552	53,701	55,848	57,996
29	34,759	36,931	43,448	45,621	47,793	49,966	52,138	54,311	56,482	58,655
30	35,150	37,346	43,937	46,134	48,330	50,527	52,724	54,921	57,117	59,315
31	35,540	37,760	44,425	46,647	48,867	51,089	53,309	55,531	57,752	59,974
32	35,931	38,175	44,913	47,159	49,404	51,650	53,895	56,141	58,386	60,633

Missions

Board for Home Missions

Our calling

Ring Atlanta are seven WELS churches. Over the course of time, some of the WELS members living in the Suburbs have moved into the heart of Atlanta. Working with the South Atlantic District Mission Board, a request was presented to the Board for Home Missions to start a mission in the city. While the mission was authorized in spring 2016, the first pastor didn't arrive until August 2017. Upon his arrival, the core group and pastor started to make connections. What follows is from a blog the mission pastor wrote.

On the weekend of my installation, our core group of lay members set up a booth at a local festival, where they gathered information from nearly 700 people via a brief survey. Over 100 people asked to be included on our email list, and several dozen indicated interest in a Bible Basics class. One of them was a woman we'll call "Rachel." What made Rachel particularly intriguing was that in the "church background" box on her survey, she had written atheist. Why would an atheist be interested in a Bible class? I was about to find out. . . . I soon met Rachel in a local coffee shop for our first Bible Basics lesson. As we discussed the topic of sin, Rachel expressed a great deal of anger. Anger at God for setting an unreachable standard of perfection. Anger at Christians for insisting that their way to heaven was the only way. Anger at her childhood church, which had bombarded her with rules and crushed her with guilt. However, as we moved on to the topic of God's unconditional love for sinners, Rachel's anger began to soften. She confessed, "I've never heard God described that way before. I understand what you're saying, . . . but I don't know that I can believe it." Over the course of the next few weeks she attended more Bible classes and had many questions. Through the teaching of law and gospel, by the Spirit's working a heart was changed.

As the pastor noted, "she expresses the gospel in her own words and talks of sharing it with friends and family. She looks forward to upcoming Bible study lessons, to our worship launch next summer, and to attending church for the first time in years." The mission pastor concluded, "I don't know what Rachel's future holds, or if she will end up joining our congregation. But I do know this: after only a few short weeks in the city, God has already used our ministry to add a new member to his invisible Church. He has called a self-professed atheist out of the darkness and into his wonderful light. Praise God for his powerful Word and pray that he sends many more 'Rachels' our way!"

This blog is a reminder of why it is important for WELS to have a Board for Home Missions. By starting more missions, God's people have more opportunities to rescue souls from the fires of hell directing them to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Home Missions has a wonderful responsibility from our church body to start and support missions so more "Rachels" can joyfully confess faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our current situation

Through Congregation Mission Offerings, individual gifts to Home Missions, and an annual endowment payout from WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., Home Missions supports and serves 99 subsidized missions; 26 of these missions are cross-cultural ministries. In addition, there are another 33 unsubsidized missions being served by Home Missions. Unsubsidized missions are missions in every way except they receive no direct ongoing financial support. Also included in the Home Missions budget is financial support for 12 larger campus ministries and some 20 smaller campus ministries (larger campus ministries usually mean they are reaching more students).

The above totals include the new mission starts and ministry enhancements that the Board for Home Missions (BHM) approved at its April 12 and 13 meeting. Acting on behalf of the BHM, the BHM Executive Committee reviewed 24

requests for new missions and new ministries (enhancements). Of those 24 requests, 14 were approved. Of the 14 approved, 7 are new mission starts and 7 are enhancements to existing ministries. Of the remaining 10 requests, 1 was denied, 1 was given to the Joint Mission Council for its attention, and 8 requests were deferred. A deferred request means the respective district mission boards may submit that request again as more work needs to be done to develop the request. Funding for the 14 approved requests in 2018–19 totals \$770,000.

The ministries receiving financial support for a new mission include:

- Reno, Nev.—Two area congregations are partnering to start this congregation in the Northern Valleys area of greater Reno.
- Phoenix, Ariz.—Crosswalk, Phoenix, is opening a second site in downtown Phoenix.
- Joplin, Mo.—A strong core of WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod members from two nearby churches are helping support this mission.
- Brandon, S.D.—Near Sioux Falls, this new congregation includes core members from two WELS churches and an Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation.
- Milwaukee, Wis.—Grace in downtown Milwaukee, one of WELS’ original congregations, is establishing a new location in the area known as the Third Ward.

Two new multi-site starts are being subsidized by their original congregations. Home Missions will provide assistance through its district mission boards, mission counselors, and synodical support staff but will not provide direct funding. These include:

- Hobart, Wis.—Mount Olive, Suamico, Wis., is starting a second site in Hobart. The congregation is calling a second pastor to begin this new ministry.
- Horicon, Wis.—Members of St. John’s, Juneau, Wis., see an opportunity to reach out in nearby Horicon, where 90 members of St. John’s live.

Home Missions is also financially supporting mission-minded enhancements to these existing congregations:

- Crown of Life, Corona, Calif.;
- Faith, Anchorage, Alaska;
- Grace, Seattle, Wash.;
- Ascension, Harrisburg, Penn.;
- Shepherd of the Hills, Knoxville, Tenn.;
- Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.; and
- Epiphany and First, Racine, Wis.

Missions staff and committees

In supporting and serving the subsidized and unsubsidized missions and campus ministries, we give thanks for the seven Missions staff members working from the Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis. The Missions staff is supervised by Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations (Sean serves both Home and World Missions).

Fourteen district mission boards are comprised of two to four pastors and two to four laymen on each board.

Serving in a voluntary capacity, the men on these mission boards work to start new missions as well as to support existing missions. Serving our campus ministries is the Campus Ministry Committee. In a way, the Campus Ministry Committee is like a fifteenth mission board.

Home Missions is also blessed with three mission counselors—Pastors Mark Birkholz, Ed Schuppe, and Matt Vogt—as well as Hispanic Outreach Consultant, Pastor Tim Flunker. Serving full time, these men offer a great deal of expertise and experience in assisting mission boards, mission pastors, and mission members. Rounding out the Missions team is the Board for Home Missions chairman, Pastor Wayne Uhlhorn. Uhlhorn was elected to a four-year term as the chairman of the Board for Home Missions at the 2017 synod convention. He also serves as a full-time pastor at Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.

Home Missions offers a special thank you to Pastor Peter Kruschel, who retired from full-time pastoral ministry in March. For most of his ministry, Kruschel served in Home Missions—as a mission pastor, a district mission board chairman, associate administrator for Home Missions, and a mission counselor. His God-given gifts allowed him to further the cause of Home Missions in significant ways. May our gracious God richly bless Pastor Kruschel and his wife, Christine, in their service to the Lord during their retirement years.

Strategic plan

Home Missions recently began using the Vision Traction Organizer (VTO) model to produce a strategic plan. The Board for World Missions and its administrative committees have been using the VTO model, and it has been serving the needs of World Missions well. One of the key features found in the VTO is the accountability process it requires.

In October 2017 the Board for Home Missions Executive Committee worked through the VTO process. A six-year strategic plan was put together. Here are some of the six-year goals:

- Healthy fiscal Mission Program Support Agreement (MPSA) management tool completely implemented for all missions.
- A total of 50 new quality mission and ministry starts.
- Fully implemented plan for identifying and defunding missions when necessary.
- Fully optimized campus ministry with an additional 18 locations with active campus ministry programs.
- Process in place to secure outside annual gifts of \$3 million above and beyond the support Home Missions receives through Congregation Mission Offerings.

At the winter district mission board training meetings, the VTO document along with the VTO process was shared with district mission board members. Later in 2018 there will be a special two-day meeting for all district mission board members to help them more fully understand and implement the VTO model.

On July 30 and 31, 2018, there will be training for newly elected and appointed district mission board members. Training will be at the Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis. Pastor Keith Free, administrator of Home Missions, and Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations, will lead the training. The training will overview all that goes into starting a mission through the time a mission reaches self-support status.

Multi-site conference

On Nov. 14–16, 2016, there was a WELS National Multi-Site Conference in Tucson, Ariz. A follow-up to that conference will take place on Nov. 12–14, 2018, in the Milwaukee area. Committee members are Pastor Nathan Strutz, Pastor John Dorn, and Mr. Ron Demulling. Serving in an advisory role is Mr. Sean Young.

While still a newer strategy, the multi-site mission is all about reaching more people and bringing mission work to many more congregations by helping to start new churches in new locations. The potential for this relatively new strategy among WELS congregations is tremendous. While multi-site churches may have many practical benefits such as shared resources, efficient organization, cost-effective programs, and more, the greatest blessing possible is that God would use them to reach more people with the gospel.

Some congregations are already multi-site churches. Others could benefit from considering multi-site ministry or learning from those who have multi-site church experience. For these reasons, the national multi-site conference for WELS churches has been organized and attendance is open to everyone. There will be beneficial information for churches that are already doing multi-site ministry as well as churches that are considering multi-site ministry to reach more people with the gospel.

WELS Church Extension Fund

WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF) is a valuable Home Missions partner. Through the ministry of CEF, loans are made to mission churches to purchase land and help build worship facilities. Not only does CEF give loans, but through its grant program, mission churches receive additional financial support that allows them to pay less than what the loan would have been. Since 1993, more than \$33 million in grants have been given to mission congregations.

At the 2013 synod convention, Section 7.10 of the Synod Bylaws (“WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.”) was changed. In addition to loans and grants for land and facilities, the CEF Board of Directors can also make “grants to Home Missions” to help support additional Home Missions ministry (p. 203, *Book of Reports and Memorials*). The bylaw change allows the CEF Board of Directors flexibility in helping to financially serve Home Missions. Since that time, following a formula relating to CEF funds, the CEF Board of Directors has approved distributions of \$833,000 (FY16) and \$843,000 (FY17). With these financial blessings, Home Missions authorized two mission churches in the spring of 2015, planning on these funds of \$1,676,000 to cover the majority, if not all, of the subsidy needed for those two missions.

On Feb. 14, 2017, the CEF Board of Directors approved setting up an endowment from the permanently restricted assets of CEF (\$25 million). Each year the payout from this endowment is anticipated to be around \$1 million. From that amount, around \$800,000 will go to Home Missions and \$200,000 will go to CEF’s grant program. The first payout was in August 2017 and was \$837,000.

Per the CEF bylaws, two of the men who serve on the CEF board are recommended by the Board for Home Missions. Mr. Rod Christ and Mr. John Tappe have been serving as the Home Missions reps on the CEF board. Now, both have indicated their service will end on June 30, 2018. Home Missions thanks these men for their dedicated service.

What follows are mission churches that have/will have dedications of their worship facilities. In each of these missions, the CEF loan committee approved a loan, and in 10 of the 12 missions a grant was also approved.

Mission dedications—2017

The Word, Stevens Point, Wis.—Jan. 27
Our Shepherd, Cornville, Ariz.—March 19
Redemption, Watertown, N.Y.—May 21
Peace, Aiken, S.C.—May 21
The Springs, Sparks, Nev.—June 4
Crown of Life, Riverside, Calif.—Aug. 27
Grace Hmong, Kansas City, Kan.—Aug. 27
King of Kings, Tulsa, Okla.—Dec. 3

Mission dedications—2018

Divine Peace, Rockwall, Texas—March 25
Risen Savior, Lakewood Ranch, Fla.—March 25
Bethel, Menasha, Wis.—May 20
Shepherd of the Hills, Las Vegas, Nev.—Aug. 19
Divine Savior, Delray Beach, Fla.—To be determined

Campus ministry

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven is the chairman of the Campus Ministry Committee (CMC). On an annual basis the Campus Ministry Committee has two face-to-face meetings, one usually taking place at a WELS campus ministry site. The Campus Ministry Committee continues to look at ways to expand campus ministry. Contact Vannieuwenhoven if you can identify a college where there currently is not a campus ministry.

Every two years the Campus Ministry Committee sponsors a conference in May. In between that two-year conference, the Campus Ministry Committee is going to have a Pastor's Campus Ministry Conference. Keeping in mind the six-year goals of Home Missions through its VTO, the CMC is looking to expand campus ministry locations.

WELS Campus Ministry recently introduced a new campus ministry student management system. Contact cm@wels.net with questions.

One way in which all WELS members and congregations can assist Campus Ministry is to submit names of WELS college students. The Campus Ministry Committee would like to receive the names, e-mails, and cell phone numbers of high school seniors heading off to college or young adults already at a college. Student information may also be submitted by clicking the registration button at wels.net/campus-ministry. Currently there are 6,500 names of WELS students in our Campus Ministry database. Thank you for helping to make that number grow.

Partners

Home Missions has valuable partners. In addition to the Church Extension Fund, Home Missions gives thanks for the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS), WELS Christian Aid and Relief, Praise and Proclaim, Ministry of Christian Giving, Kingdom Workers, WELS Foundation, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, military ministry, women's ministry, and Multi-Language Publications.

The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society's 54th National Convention was held in Orlando, Fla., at the end of June 2017. Through offerings given to special projects plus the worship offerings, close to \$142,000 in gifts were offered to Home and World Missions projects. We thank the LWMS for this generous support.

The LWMS is an active partner with both Home and World Missions. The LWMS has prayer calendars for WELS missions. The LWMS supports the Befriend a Missionary program. At spring and fall rallies, the LWMS features mission work around the world. At the rallies, offerings are collected. Both Home and World Missions special project funds receive financial support so missions can carry out "extra ministry" over and above their budgets. We give thanks to the Lord for the continued generous support of the LWMS. The LWMS's 55th National Convention will be held in Green Bay, Wis., from June 21–24, 2018.

Learn more and promote WELS Missions

Both Home and World Missions want to help more WELS members hear about the blessings the Lord is giving through mission efforts. A new and improved process is in place for churches or schools to request a speaker for a mission festival. The form is easy to use, and Missions will make every attempt to honor specific topics/speakers requested. The information is submitted directly to the Missions office, where the event organizer is connected to the best possible choice for a speaker. Missions will also send out promotional materials for the event along with a mission kit if requested. If your church or school would like a Missions speaker, visit wels.net/speaker-request.

To subscribe to Missions Blogs, visit wels.net/subscribe.

For promotional materials (videos, blogs, fact sheets, PowerPoints, photos etc.) to use in making Home Missions presentations, visit the WELS Resource Center at missions.welsrc.net.

A look ahead

Home Missions continues to plan to reach more souls with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The primary way this is done is by opening new missions/new ministries. To assist in this process, Home Missions is implementing the strategic plan as laid out in the VTO document. Our prayer is that with a clear plan in hand, the Board for Home Missions, its administrative leaders, and its church planting partners throughout North America will be able to know and enthusiastically support mission expansion with their specific prayers, generous gifts and offerings, heartfelt encouragement, and abundant human and other resources.

Partnering congregations are vitally important as Home Missions struggles to have funds to open all the missions and support all the ministry enhancement requests that are submitted. Many years ago, sainted Pastor Wayne Schulz wrote a manual titled "Prepared to Daughters." More recently, Pastor Peter Krushel updated that document. Titled "Who Will Go? We Will Go!", this document allows interested congregations the opportunity to thoroughly study the option that they might be a partner with Home Missions to start a mission church. You can find "Who Will Go? We Will Go!" at missions.welsrc.net. Choose "U.S. Home Missions" and then "BHM General Documents."

Scripture is very clear that it is only the work of the triune God that saves people lost in their sins. We give thanks that the Lord uses and allows Home Missions to play a role in this work. To read more about how the Lord is working through Home Missions, visit wels.net/missions.

Rev. Keith Free, reporter

Rev. Wayne Uhlhorn, chairman
Rev. Timothy Bode, Minnesota Mission District
Mr. Bruce Burger, Nebraska Mission District
Mr. Ronald Demulling, Western Wisconsin Mission District
Rev. John Dorn, Northern Wisconsin Mission District
Mr. Dwayne Coryell, North Atlantic Mission District
Mr. John Deschane, Northern Wisconsin Mission District
Mr. Matthew Dettmann, Colorado Mission District
Rev. Matthew Frey, Colorado Mission District
Rev. Mark Gabb, South Atlantic Mission District
Dr. August Gabert, Pacific Northwest Mission District
Rev. Harland Goetzinger, WELS-Canada Mission District
Mr. Mark Greiner, Michigan Mission District
Mr. Thomas Hansen, Dakota-Montana Mission District
Mr. Mark Hartman, South Central Mission District
Rev. Robert Krueger, Michigan Mission District
Mr. Paul Kuske, WELS-Canada Mission District
Mr. Noel Ledermann, Arizona-California Mission District
Rev. Jeffrey Mahnke, Western Wisconsin Mission District
Mr. Jude Peck, South Atlantic Mission District
Mr. David Sauer, Minnesota Mission District
Rev. Caleb Schoeneck, South Central Mission District
Rev. John Stelter, Nebraska 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 Wattles, North Atlantic 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 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 partnership with churches in 50 different nations;
- is celebrating 125 years of mission work in 2018, as WELS sent its first missionaries to the Apache tribes back in 1893;
- is in fellowship with 105,465 Lutherans around the world;
- serves 75,000 baptized members in Lutheran churches on our fields;
- has 44 missionaries in the field conducting outreach and training national pastors;
- supports 13 teachers and more than 60 laypeople as they reach out to children and adults with the gospel;
- is exploring outreach opportunities in 14 prospective new mission fields;
- reaches more than 1,000,000 people in Latin America with the gospel through the Academia Cristo Facebook page;
- continues to partner with Multi-Language Publications (MLP), which has printed more than 2.9 million items in more than 52 languages;
- serves 60,000 more souls through correspondence and workshops; and
- is training more than 170 men to become pastors in their own countries.

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 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. 9).

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.

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.

125 years in the Apache Nations

Before Arizona was one of the United States of America our synod sent missionaries to bring the Good News to the Apache tribes located in the mountains in northeastern Arizona. National leaders have now been trained who partner with WELS missionaries to care for over 3,000 souls in several churches and two schools. We invite you to join our Apache brothers and sisters to celebrate 125 years of God's grace in this field and to explore how the Apache leaders can help us reach into other Native American tribes.

Academia Cristo passes one million followers

God led us to a simple way to share the Gospel online in Spanish. Over one million people now receive a daily update in their Facebook feed that highlights a Gospel gem. This connects them to a website where over 2 million individuals have downloaded our Spanish resources. These connections have led us to partner with leaders in several new countries. Exploratory trips have been taken to Argentina, Ecuador, Venezuela, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Paraguay where national leaders are now at work sharing the Truth with people starved for true grace.

Africa outreach

Our One Africa Team is engaging leaders in several new countries. A partnership with our existing churches in Zambia, Malawi, Ethiopia, Cameroon, and Nigeria gives us cultural partnerships that are poised to help investigate and train the growing number of contacts in places like Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Congo, and more. Our reputation as a conservative Christian church is leading many African churches to explore a partnership as much of American and European Christianity have lost their Bible compass.

Vietnam

Over this past year we have explored a request for help from a large group of Hmong Christians living in Vietnam. Through careful effort and cultural insight, our Hmong leaders in WELS USA have received permission from the Vietnamese government to train leaders in the 100,000-member Hmong Fellowship Church of Vietnam. We are currently exploring the possibility of building a training center and coordinating with our WELS Pastoral Studies Institute Team to set curriculum and find visiting professors to send to Vietnam. In addition, efforts with Vietnamese immigrants in Boise, Idaho, have started a program called Friends of Vietnam to send teachers into this country to establish gospel connections where a few short years ago none of this seemed possible.

A look ahead

Our World Missions work has put us in touch with more than 200,000 people who continue to need the new life the gospel provides. This does not mean that our global work is done. The world's population is growing and stands at more than 7 billion people, the vast majority of whom do not know 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 ever seen.

This leads us to constantly consider additional opportunities to reach out with the life-saving power of Jesus' gospel. World Missions will always need flexibility to meet new opportunities that the Lord lays before us. What follows are a sample of open doors the Lord has set before us and where exploratory work has begun.

Build a training center in Vietnam

The Vietnamese government has offered us a first chance to build a Christian training center. They have been impressed with the consistency and transparency of our Lutheran doctrine and work. This facility would be used to train the leaders of ethnic minority Christians in Vietnam including the 100,000-member Hmong Fellowship Church.

Mentoring in East Asia

Rules that limit the work of foreign missionaries have been a challenge in the world's largest country. By God's grace, national pastors are now trained and on the ground. Over the next year, missionaries will leave traditional pastoral roles as local pastors step in. Our mentoring will assist them and give them the tools they need to mentor future leaders.

Outreach in Africa

Planning is underway to adapt and enhance our current worker training system to meet the needs of new areas that are pleading for our help. Possibilities are before us in Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Congo, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

Outreach in Latin America

Millions of contacts online have led us to several leaders that are ready to use our WELS materials to reach out in their homes and neighborhoods. New churches are being established in places like Venezuela, Paraguay, Ecuador, and Argentina. To get boots on the ground where they are needed most, two missionaries will relocate to Ecuador this summer for a new mission start.

Outreach in English

Spanish online outreach has given us a proven model that we are replicating in English. English is the most studied language in the world and estimates place the number of English speakers in the world at 1.5 billion, about 20 percent of the world's population. Only 300 million reside in the United States. This new resource will provide materials and connections for English speakers around the world to share the truth about Jesus in their communities.

Your World Missions team rejoices in the ongoing support of WELS members. Your prayers, attention, and gifts allow us to continue this work, which is at the heart of being a Christian church body. The number in our fellowship in the USA may be stable, but the number overseas is booming. The Lord is using us to share the gospel in expected and unexpected places. God still opens doors. 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. Paul Janke, chairman
Dr. Robert Anderson, secretary
Mr. Arlin Bornschlegl
Rev. Glen Hieb
Mr. Mark Schulz

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 the Boards for Home and World Missions, the administrator of ministerial education, the director of Missions Operations, and a representative designated by each Missions board.

The Joint Mission Council has established the following six core values in which to operate.

- Since the gospel is for all people, we do not want to miss anyone, even if it's difficult.
- Cooperation and trust will make the best use of WELS and WELS-affiliated resources.
- Connecting outreach opportunities in the U.S. and overseas.
- We need to be flexible so structure serves the gospel.
- We recognize the bravery of individuals from other people groups who are willing to stand with us.
- Cultural competence is good; a national worker is even better.

Our current situation

The JMC recognizes that the world is continually shrinking, and WELS' ability to reach more people groups seems never-ending (people groups are those who are connected by common language and culture, yet are in multiple locations). We have committed ourselves to connecting our resources to reach all peoples both stateside and abroad. Our niche is to provide a platform for partnerships in our worldwide fellowship to design unique international mission programs.

One of the top priorities of the JMC in addressing these opportunities is to continue strengthening our partnership with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) in support of the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) Team. The PSI Team is comprised of three pastors, two of whom are professors at WLS (Prof. E. Allen Sorum and Prof. Brad Wordell) and one (Pastor Jon Bare) who is the international recruitment director for the PSI Team. While the PSI was established well before 2017, the real change came with the expansion from a one-man team to a three-man team. By expanding these efforts, we have become better suited to work not only with training the leaders of the people groups referred to in this report but also work with the leaders in the country of origin from which these people come.

The PSI Team works with men from specific people groups who are already confessional Lutherans and want to become pastors. It also works with men who are already pastors and want to become confessional Lutherans.

The Joint Mission Council continues to focus on the various cross-cultural ministries it has traditionally supported.

Hmong ministries

As reported in the report of the Board for Home Missions (p. 45), the JMC helps to oversee and work with missions in North America that may be reaching the same people groups in other parts of North America or may be reaching back to their country of origin. One committee that was formed at the request of the JMC in support of these efforts is the Global Hmong Committee. Organized in July 2015, this committee of one Hmong pastor and two Anglo pastors is working to oversee all Hmong ministry under WELS. Thus the Global Hmong Committee is working with six Hmong missions in the U.S. as well as Hmong ministry in China, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

In March 2017 the Global Hmong Committee issued a two-year call to Pastor Bounkeo Lor to serve as the Hmong Asian Ministry Coordinator in Southeast Asia. Lor accepted the call and was commissioned on May 21, 2017. Over the next two fiscal years (FY 18 and 19), working closely with the Pastoral Studies Institute Team, Lor will make four to six trips to Southeast Asia each fiscal year to train spiritual leaders in the truth of God's Word. In Vietnam, Lor is working primarily with spiritual leaders in the Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC). The HFC is under the Vietnamese Fellowship Church, which is recognized by the Vietnamese government. On each trip, Lor also plans to continue the training of 50 Hmong spiritual leaders in southern East Asia who take the truths of Scripture back to their respective villages and towns.

The Global Hmong Committee has been working with how best to use the resources designated for Hmong ministry globally speaking. The Global Hmong Committee is serving as this special committee through June 30, 2019. At that time, the Boards for Home and World Mission will evaluate what the next step for the Global Hmong Committee will be.

Hispanic outreach

In order to assist Hispanic Outreach Consultant Pastor Tim Flunker, Pastor Tim Satorius and Prof. Sam Degner were brought onboard to create the Hispanic Mentor Corps in 2016.

Currently in Hispanic ministry, 20 places hold worship in both Spanish and English.

- Six locations have only one bilingual man (Anchorage, Alaska; Denver, Colo.; Santa Ana, Calif; Edna, Texas; Yakima, Wash.; Las Vegas, Nev.).
- Eight locations have one English speaker and one bilingual man (St. Peter and Risen Savior in Milwaukee, Wis.; Green Bay, Wis.; Falls Church, Va.; Watertown, Wis.; Houston, Texas; St. Peter, Minn.; Waukegan, Ill.).
- Four locations have two (or more) bilingual men (Menasha, Wis.; Doral, Fla.; Woodside, N.Y.; Christ, Milwaukee, Wis.).
- Two locations have one bilingual man and one Spanish-speaker (Detroit, Mich.; Phoenix, Ariz.).

South Asian outreach

The JMC is working with a Pakistani national here in the United States to focus attention on South Asian outreach at the congregational level in areas with high-density South Asian populations. Christ, Pewaukee, Wis., is the location for the pilot program for the International Friendship Center (IFC). Classes are being planned around sewing, cooking, and English as a second language (ESL) classes that will enable the congregation to build relationships with the various people groups in the neighborhood. In addition, funding will continue to be directed toward World Missions efforts in countries with Muslim populations such as Nepal and Pakistan.

Sudanese outreach

In February 2018, the Global Sudanese Committee, consisting of five South Sudanese leaders and their Anglo pastors, held a five-day working conference in which they reviewed all of the various ministry being done to reach the Sudanese refugees here in North America as well as in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. The Global Sudanese Committee set before themselves an aggressive plan to achieve their collective goals for the next three years.

One of those major goals is to have three new Sudanese pastors trained and working in the field to share the gospel both in North America and the various African countries they've targeted. They already have the men identified and are working with the PSI Team in getting them through the first two years of the training needed to become pastors. The Global Sudanese Committee is also looking to have 15 men in Africa complete evangelist training and move them into pastoral-level classes.

Although opportunities exist in the country of South Sudan, ongoing fighting and brutality are still interfering with possible mission trips into this area. The Lord continues to bless outreach opportunities throughout the United States and Canada to reach more and more Sudanese refugees with the gospel.

Vietnamese ministries

With the ever-growing outreach efforts to reach the people groups within Vietnam (both Hmong and Vietnamese), the JMC is working closely with "Friends of Vietnam," a ministry of Peace in Jesus, Boise, Idaho. The ministry plan comes out of Peace in Jesus' efforts to share the gospel with the Vietnamese in and around Boise with the goal of reaching back into Vietnam through those individuals and their families. With God's blessings, these efforts will work to reach out through supplying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to universities in Vietnam and assisting students who desire to come to the United States to study at WELS schools. Through these two areas of outreach, new opportunities to share the gospel are now available in Vietnam starting in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

A look ahead

As we look further down the road, the PSI Team will continue focusing on various training opportunities in Russia, Vietnam, and Liberia while supporting ongoing training efforts in East Asia, Nepal, Cameroon, and Nigeria. Our goal is to establish 15 healthy people group ministries and have identified 15 new people group ministry opportunities.

The Lord continues to bless the work of the Joint Mission Council and our various mission committees and boards as they share the gospel message.

The Joint Mission Council works with WELS Communication Services to continue sharing all the exciting things that the Lord has allowed. Check out wels.net/missions for timely information and a convenient way to donate online toward Missions. Missionaries, committee members, and administrators are willing and able to make presentations to various church and school groups to tell our stories, letting WELS members know about the needs and opportunities to support the efforts of the JMC. Contact jmo@wels.net to learn more.

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. Paul Janke, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions
Mr. Jude Peck, representative of WELS Board for Home Missions
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions
Rev. Wayne Uhlhorn, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions
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 scriptural purpose of our ministerial education program 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 this biennium has been to partner with people groups looking for distinctively Lutheran training for their existing pastors, teachers, and evangelists across the nation and across the world. Our report gives you an overview of the efforts to coordinate the work.

Our current situation

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) offers one of the finest theological training programs in the world for men who intend to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS, and in recent years has significantly expanded opportunities for theological and professional growth to called workers who already are serving in the ministry of our confessional fellowship. For the sake of its United States programs of continuing education and to offer support for our sister seminaries overseas, WLS has taken one step on the path of exploring accreditation from the Association of Theological Seminaries. While it is still some distance away from accreditation itself, it looks very much as if WLS will be accepted—as a preliminary move—into associate membership with the Association of Theological Seminaries this summer.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC) is very clear on its mission. As the WELS College of Ministry, it is 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. MLC is putting a lot of resources into reducing the educational debt of its graduates, not just in the preseminary track, but also those training to be teachers and staff ministers. There is emphasis right now on the training of principals, early childhood directors, and urban educators. Looking ahead to its 25th anniversary in 2020, MLC is planning to stress recruitment, financial aid, and facilities as it works with the Ministry of Christian Giving to present the vital role of MLC to every member of the synod.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Pastor Mark Luetzow has accepted the call to serve as the new president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), leading the school in its single mission of preparing high school students for the public ministry of the gospel and encouraging them to enroll at Martin Luther College. He will be responsible for a faculty and staff with many new members in the new school year. MLS gives thanks to God for the blessings of synodwide support this past year, especially the partnership with the Ministry of Christian Giving in the “Tomorrow’s Ministry Begins Here” program. It also thanks God for the blessings of local support from the MLS Foundation and the beginning of the Big Backyard Project. One of the immediate goals of the new administration will be improvements in fiscal accounting and planning.

Luther Preparatory School

Luther Preparatory School (LPS) continues in its single mission, encouraging and preparing young people for a lifetime of service in the public ministry of WELS. It is delighted to report some of the largest numbers in its history of boys entering the preseminary track at Martin Luther College. LPS is participating in the Racine, Milwaukee, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs offered by the State of Wisconsin. In these Parental Choice Programs, parents

receive a voucher from the state that pays the cost of education (tuition only) at participating private and religious schools. Thirty-five families made use of these programs this past school year. LPS is pleased to report that all who participated last year and those who will participate this coming year are WELS members.

Finances

The Board for Ministerial Education (BME) distributes subsidies to the ministerial education schools from a block grant supplied by the Synodical Council (SC). The model has resulted recently in stable reserves and normal annual tuition increases. Recognizing concern expressed from the districts and the synod convention, the BME and the Synodical Council have begun to partner with Martin Luther College (MLC) to reduce the educational debt of its graduates.

Recent business manager vacancies at the preparatory schools and accounting errors at MLS have highlighted the challenges of finding candidates with accounting and the other expertise called for in these positions. The Accounting Oversight Committee believes that it is inefficient and unnecessary to duplicate accounting and financial reporting expertise at the ministerial education schools and WELS headquarters. MLC has begun assisting MLS with its accounting, financial reporting, and planning functions and WELS has started reviewing how it can provide assistance that may be needed by LPS. Also, WELS and the schools will begin studying opportunities to consolidate functions, like was done with payroll, to reduce costs and increase quality. The current status of MLS's finances is documented in the Synodical Council report on p. 20.

Vacancy rates

Pastoral vacancies in WELS stabilized in 2017 but there are still more than 100. Average graduating classes at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) are around 30. Corresponding trends in the numbers of teacher graduates mean that vacancies in principal and early childhood director positions are often difficult to fill. The trends that caused those vacancy rates are being addressed, and we may see the graduating classes at WLS return to around 40 in 2023. The preparatory schools, Luther Preparatory School and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, are seeing increasing numbers of their graduates entering the preseminary course at MLC. The 21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative, approved by the 2017 synod convention, is a process to recruit and fully train experienced teachers to serve as principals and should help with the principal vacancy rate.

Capital projects

Capital campaigns for buildings at the schools are conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Christian Giving and are reviewed and adopted as a regular part of the synod ministry planning process. The Conference of Presidents has approved a partnership of MLC and the Ministry of Christian Giving in 2019–21. For more details, see the appendix following this report (p. 57). MLC will also provide more information about this partnership to the district conventions. The synod in convention has established a Capital Projects Committee to work on the long-range capital plans of the ministerial education schools (see p. 28). The Lord gives us our daily bread, and we are grateful that the synod campuses are well maintained, with very few immediate projects unfunded in the ministry plan for the second year of the current biennium.

Partnerships

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 develop their particular ministerial education programs. In the past couple of years, we have seen a dramatic increase in requests to the Pastoral Studies Institute at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for help in training existing pastors and evangelists of various people groups to become confessional Lutherans. The report of the Joint Mission Council details some of those efforts (see p. 52). Our domestic ministerial education schools are working on plans to increase the numbers of underrepresented minorities on their campuses and in their programs. A special emphasis in the next biennium is likely to be the strengthening of our partnerships with the congregations serving urban Wisconsin populations that are using Parental Choice vouchers to enroll in their Lutheran elementary schools. The rapid expansion of the schools using this model has strained their ability to staff their classrooms with synod-certified teachers, especially black and Hispanic men and women, who are trained to work with students living in poverty.

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 proclaiming 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.

The online reports from the four ministerial education schools further demonstrate how they are carrying out their mission on your behalf. Visit wels.net/rtttd2018 for those reports.

Rev. Paul Prange, reporter

Rev. Duane Rodewald, 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

Appendix:

Martin Luther College capital campaign

Equipping Christian Witnesses: A celebratory capital campaign to observe the silver anniversary of Martin Luther College

The mission of Martin Luther College (MLC), the WELS College of Ministry, is to train a corps of Christian witnesses to meet the ministry needs of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. As a synod, we have carried this precious mission for 153 years, beginning with Northwestern College and Dr. Martin Luther College, and continuing since 1995 at Martin Luther College. What an awesome privilege entrusted to us: training future pastors, teachers, and staff ministers to share the unconditional gospel of the living Savior Jesus.

The WELS Conference of Presidents granted permission for MLC to conduct a two-year capital campaign in conjunction with the 2020 silver anniversary. The title of this celebratory campaign, *Equipping Christian Witnesses*, not only reflects the mission of our institution but also the foundational goals of the campaign. The governing board and administration have already begun prayerful planning, seeking only to glorify the Savior and enhance the college's mission.

The campaign has three pillars.

Recruitment

This is the most important pillar—and the most distinctive one. We will ask God's people—in every visit and meeting—to pray for more workers in the harvest field, as Jesus directed, and also to identify and encourage young

Christian adults who could serve in this way. The time is now for each WELS member to not only be a witness for Christ but also to prayerfully and intentionally help us recruit the next generation of called gospel witnesses. We want to share this Word of Life—that Christ is the only Savior—all over the world, knowing it brings eternal benefits to every precious soul who receives it.

Financial aid

We will ask God's people to consider a financial partnership with MLC on behalf of their sons and daughters. Specifically, we'd like to establish a solid foundation for the Congregational Partner Grant Program (CPGP), fully funding it for years to come. Through the CPGP, MLC matches dollar for dollar, up to \$1,000, the gift a congregation gathers to apply to the tuition of its student(s) at MLC. As a renewable effort, the CPGP can provide four years of financial aid support, totaling \$8,000, to each student—in addition to the other financial aid provided to the student through MLC's financial aid office.

Facilities

We will ask God's people for gifts to repair and augment campus spaces for learning, student life activities and intramural events, athletics, and the arts. This year we engaged two consulting firms to assist with our planning. One firm carefully studied the feasibility of our campaign. Another firm analyzed facility usage. The majority of MLC's facilities are more than 50 years old. The Christians of that generation who gave so generously to the existing campus have been such a blessing to this ministry. Unfortunately, buildings are not timeless, even if what is spoken within them is. Now is our generation's turn. We want to create a site plan to guide the college through the next five decades, providing for both programmed maintenance and the construction of new ministry training facilities. Naturally, such a bold vision will be phased in over the years. In the next few months, we will carefully prioritize our ministry needs so we can utilize the thank offerings we receive in the wisest way.

Our Savior Jesus is not willing that any should perish. He is showering our church body with mission opportunities at home and abroad. Never before in our synod's history have so many people from so many countries approached our synod for instruction in the Word and for help in reaching the lost. Never before in the history of our synod have we had the technology to teach the gospel in countless homes and many different countries.

We need workers, not only to fill our current vacancies but to take advantage of these other opportunities, to seize the day the Lord has provided us to impact the world with his Word. And we dare not overlook the fact that today's young Christians are travelers, eager to take the gospel throughout our country and around the world. We can prepare them do so.

Equipping Christian Witnesses is a celebration of God's goodness to our synod—not only for 25 years of MLC ministry but for more than 150 years of the unconditional gospel in our midst. Pray boldly that we use this celebration to recruit with rigor countless Christian witnesses. Pray boldly that we increase our financial support of every student training for gospel ministry. Pray boldly that we provide the necessary facilities to equip our students for their future ministries.

Subsidiaries and affiliate

A number of subsidiary groups and one affiliate serve the synod, including Northwestern Publishing House; WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.; WELS Foundation, Inc.; WELS Investment Funds, Inc.; WELS Benefit Plans; Publication Coordinating Commission; and WELS Historical Institute. 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. Included here is Northwestern Publishing House's report. To see reports from the other entities, visit wels.net/rtttd2018.

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."

Therefore, 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. Our calling, then, is to continue to proclaim God's saving love in Christ through the careful use of the resources God grants to us.

Our current situation

Reformation 500

As the 500th anniversary of the Reformation has now wrapped up, we are thankful to God for the opportunity to share his Word through celebration of this milestone event. In association with this event, NPH provided resources on several different levels, including publishing five new books, rereleasing seven books, and introducing two adult Bible studies and a Christmas kit. NPH also participated in development of the film *A Return to Grace* and a children's version of the film, as well as a related grade-school curriculum unit. Along with these resources, NPH developed several Luther/Reformation memorabilia items and distributed a selection of materials from other publishers.

Publishing program

NPH continues to focus on developing resources that we pray will benefit those we serve. In the last year, NPH published five books for pastoral growth, six books for layperson growth, four adult Bible studies, one vacation Bible school course, five youth curriculum resources, a Bible story book for children, four worship resources, eighteen sheet music titles, and the WELS Yearbook. In addition, NPH published the periodicals *Meditations Daily Devotional*, *Forward in Christ*, *Parents Crosslink*, and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*.

NPH continues to seek ways to achieve greater efficiencies and reduce printing expenses through just-in-time printing of short print runs, pursuing multiple print bids, and, where appropriate, printing offshore.

Digital publishing program

NPH continues its commitment to delivering content in ways that customers consider relevant to their needs with 182

eBooks, 118 titles in Logos format, 532 downloadable resources, digital *Forward in Christ*, and the *Meditations Daily Devotional* app. While digital publishing is an important strategy for NPH, distribution of digital products represents a small portion of sales, and therefore print versions will continue to remain a critical part of NPH's ministry.

New catechism curriculum and teaching resources

The new edition of Luther's Catechism, which was released last summer, is being very well received. Concurrent with the catechism, NPH released two related resources: Catechism Diagrams (download), which is a teaching resource, and Catechism Connections, a workbook for students. This summer NPH will release two new catechism curriculums. Growing in Grace is a traditional catechism-based curriculum. Growing in the Word is a Bible history curriculum that draws catechism truths from each Bible history lesson and applies them to students' lives.

Adult Bible studies

NPH released four new adult Bible studies in the past year. NPH also rereleased in digital format the entire suite of Training Christians for Ministry, which is designed to instruct leaders from congregations on the reasons and methods for serving the mission of the church. Two additional Bible studies are planned for release in fall 2018. These Bible studies will follow the new approach NPH is applying with more flexibility for customized lessons and a promotional toolkit to encourage attendance.

NPH, in collaboration with the WELS Commission on Discipleship and the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary education department, produces a popular monthly "Teach the Word" e-newsletter, which provides practical advice and information to help pastors better understand and apply relevant adult learning principles.

Evangelical Heritage Version

NPH printed the Wartburg Project's Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV) New Testament and Psalms last summer in a paperback edition. The New Testament and Psalms is also now available on biblegateway.com. Release of the full Bible in a hardcover edition is scheduled for summer 2019.

Collaborative projects

NPH and several WELS commissions have enjoyed a long history of working together on many joint projects, particularly in the areas of worship, adult and youth discipleship, family ministry, evangelism, and special ministries. Multi-Language Publications and NPH work together in a variety of ways to distribute translations of NPH books and other materials. As Congregational Services, Multi-Language Publications, and NPH plan for future ministry, we remain committed to fostering good communication and working together where our various areas of responsibility intersect.

A look ahead

WELS Hymnal Project

The Hymnal Project committees remain fully engaged in their work and continue to make progress in developing the content of the new hymnal and accompanying resources. Production schedules and timelines for the project have been refined and set, with a release date of fall 2021. More information on the WELS Hymnal Project is available at wels.net/rttd2018.

Hymnology curriculum

A subcommittee of the WELS Commission on Worship has turned over to NPH the first year of a three-year curriculum on hymnology. The curriculum is being prepared for use in Lutheran elementary schools. The release date for year one of the curriculum is scheduled for the fall 2020 school year. The curriculum will reflect the contents of the new hymnal.

Future ministry of NPH

In April it was announced that Northwestern Publishing House will be taking a number of steps to sustain its ministry in the future. Just as in 1983 when NPH discontinued its printing and binding operations, NPH today must respond to the significant challenges it faces. These challenges, related to changes in purchasing by churches and laypeople, availability of funds from sources outside of NPH, and trends in our synod membership and school enrollment create an unsustainable reality for NPH. While NPH will continue to work diligently and invest its resources wisely to maximize its ministry reach, it will be making changes over the course of the coming months.

NPH has been impacted by the broader consumer trend toward purchasing online. With the retail store in Milwaukee, Wis., now only representing 17 percent of total sales, the store will be closed in fall 2018. In anticipation of this change, the NPH website, nph.net, was upgraded to provide an improved customer experience and better search capabilities. Telephone customer service will continue to be available for those who prefer to speak directly with

someone. In spring 2019, NPH will move its warehousing and distribution to a fulfillment partner that will ship orders to customers. This shift provides NPH with a more economical approach while still maintaining direct contact with its customers. Finally, NPH will sell its current building and relocate its staff to the synod headquarters at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry by May 2019. While NPH will remain a separate entity with its own Articles of Incorporation and Board of Directors, the move will create even greater opportunities for collaboration with WELS commissions and areas of ministry.

As these changes are implemented in the months ahead, please keep the ministry of NPH and those impacted by the changes in your prayers. Please also continue to be an advocate for the ministry of NPH among the members of your church. NPH provides trustworthy resources that, God willing, will help strengthen the faith of those we serve. You as a pastor, teacher, or leader within your church are the critical link between your church members and the resources NPH makes available for them.

Our thanks

We thank the many pastors, staff ministers, and teachers who make NPH a part of their ministry. By distributing the awareness materials NPH sends out or by simply recommending a book or other resource published by NPH, you are making a statement about the importance of seeking out trustworthy materials that will enrich your members' faith. Thank you for the work you are doing and the important role you are fulfilling.

Mr. Bill Ziche, reporter

Prof. John Hartwig, chairman
Rev. Joel Schroeder, vice chairman
Mr. Edward Wolf, treasurer
Mr. Christopher Snyder, secretary
Mr. Matthew Groth
Mr. Michael McCormick
Mr. Joel Raasch
Rev. Luke Werre
Prof. Keith Wessel

Ex-officio:

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

Administrative officers:

Mr. Bill Ziche, president
Rev. Curtis Jahn, vice president, Publishing Services
Mr. Eric Krueger, vice president, Finance and Accounting
Mr. Todd Rebillot, vice president, Human Resources and Operations

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 2017 convention, the committee has been asked to address seven specific questions on constitutional matters since the convention to the date of this report.

We thank Pastor Paul Naumann for 12 years of faithful service as the chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Matters. His wisdom and advice on constitutional matters will continue to be a blessing as a new chairman is acclimated.

The current editions of the WELS Constitution and Bylaws and the Constitution for the Districts are available at wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports. You may also contact the President's Office to request a printed copy.

Rev. Eric Steinbrenner, reporter

Rev. Eric Steinbrenner, chairman

Mr. Kenneth Gosch

Rev. Steven Korth

