



# Pacific Northwest DISTRICT

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

## **District President's Report**

ELS & WELS Fall Pastor/Teacher Conference  
Great Wolf Lodge, Grand Mound, WA  
October 15-17, 2014

### **Thankful Service**

With thanks to Pastor Kimmel for his morning devotion, we briefly touch on one of the Apostle Paul's many loving encouragements for thankful service found in 1 Corinthians:

*"...thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (15:57-58).*

God reminds us that Jesus' victory over sin and Satan is *our* victory by grace through faith. Gratitude overflows from our hearts. May God continue to bless all of our unique gospel ministries throughout the Pacific Northwest as we give ourselves fully to his work!

This report consists primarily of updates that have taken place since the District Convention in June, with brief highlights from our COP meeting this week.

### **New to the District**

*(please share changes, omissions, corrections)*

*We warmly welcome...*

#### **Pastors**

Pastor Edward Frey (Christiana) came to us from Kingston, WI, and he now serves God's people at Messiah in Nampa, ID. He was installed as Associate Pastor on June 29.

Pastor Kevin Schultz (Miriam) was serving in San Diego, CA. He was also installed on June 29 as Associate Pastor at St. Matthew, Spokane, WA.

Pastor Noah Herrmann (Elizabeth) was a Tutor at LPS in Watertown, WI for two years and, since his installation on August 3, leads the saints at Calvary, Bellevue, WA.

Pastor Ben Workentine (Kim) – graduated from WLS this past May and was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor at Cross of Christ, Boise, ID on August 24.

Pastor Geoff Cortright (Alicia) was serving north of the border at Red Deer, Alberta, Can. and now carries out gospel ministry at Saviour of the Nations in Vancouver, BC. His installation was held on September 14.

Vicar Justin Pomije – was installed on August 17 as a vicar in our District, serving and training this year at Immanuel, Salem, OR.

## **Teachers and Staff Ministers**

Principal Jason Kelley, in addition to his principal duties, is the upper grade teacher at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA. His wife...

Teacher Alyssa Kelley, is the new Kindergarten teacher at Holy Trinity. Both were serving in Libertyville, Illinois and both were installed on August 17, 2014.

Principal Paul Leifer (Nancy) came to us from Penryn, CA and now leads the school staff at Faith, Tacoma, WA, as principal and upper grade teacher. His installation took place on July 6, 2014.

Teacher Ryan Schmeling (Kimberly) was assigned out of MLC (2014) to serve as middle grade teacher, Ath. Dir. and principal apprentice at Grace, Portland, OR. Ryan was installed on September 7, 2014.

Teacher Jason Schleef was assigned to teach middle grades and PE at Immanuel, Salem, OR and his wife...

Teacher Laura Schleef (nee Miller) was assigned as a lower grade teacher at the same school. They both graduated from MLC in May of 2013, taught in China (Friends of China), were married on July 12, 2014, and were both installed on August 17.

Teacher Jennifer Keller, a 2013 MLC grad, was assigned to Peace, Eagle River, AK and serves as their Preschool teacher. She was installed on July 13.

Staff Minister Ashley Mozak, a 2010 MLC grad (2010-14, China) was installed on September 14, at Saviour of the Nations in Vancouver, BC. Her early childhood training and international focus will have her reaching out to the Chinese and families of other cultures. Her duties will include ESL, cooking classes, women's small group Bible studies, etc.

May God bless SON and all of our new district pastors, teachers and staff ministers as they take up the work to which they have been Called.

## **Divine Calls, Vacancies, Retirements, Ministry Changes, Appointments, Etc.**

**Pastor Korey VanKampen** (King of Kings, Kennewick, WA) – in late June, received a Call to be the shepherd at Mt. Calvary in Flagstaff, AZ. He accepted that Call on August 6. His last Sunday at King of Kings was Oct. 5. By Oct. 7, Pastor Korey, Amanda and their children were safely in Flagstaff to begin service there. We pray God blesses his new ministry in Arizona.

**Pastor Joel Nitz** (Messiah, Lacey, WA) – in early July, received a Call from the Native Amer. Admin. Cmt. to be the Director of the Apache Christian Training School (ACTS). He returned that Call August 2.

**Pastor Tom Voss** (Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA) – in early July, received a Call to Green Valley LC in Henderson, NV to be an Associate Pastor. He returned that Call on Aug. 8.

**Pastor Rob Guenther** (Grace, Kenai, AK) – in mid-August, received the Call to Green Valley LC in Henderson, NV to be an Associate Pastor. He returned that Call on Sept. 6.

**Pastor Jeremy Schulz** (Faith, Tacoma, WA) – in late August, received the Call to be an Associate Pastor at Redeemer in Tucson, AZ. He returned that Call Sept. 12.

**Pastor Daniel Lange** (Light of Life, Covington, WA) – in late August, received the Call to pastor God's people at St. Matthew in Benton Harbor, MI. He returned that Call on Sept. 16.

**Pastor Fred Schleg** (Beautiful Savior, Everett) – in mid-September, received the Call to be pastor at Our Savior in San Antonio, TX. He returned that Call on Oct. 8.

**Pastor Jim Turriff** (Grace, Yakima, WA) – in mid-September, due to the departure of Pastor VK, was Called to be the Vacancy Pastor of King of Kings in Kennewick, WA. Pastor Turriff has some latitude to cover preaching/teaching ministry needs there. His Call extends to the end of the calendar year. Depending on how the Lord directs the affairs of his Church, his Call could be renewed or King of Kings could be served by a retired shepherd. **Pastor Jay Bickelhaupt** (Apostles, Billings, MT) was Called to King of Kings in mid-September. He returned that Call on Oct. 3. **Pastor Noah Bater** (Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, UT) was Called to King of Kings this past Sunday. Please keep Pastor Bater and King of Kings in your prayers that God would bless deliberations for his glory and their good.

There were some **retirements** in our District this past summer. **Pastor Ted Lambert** officially stepped down from the ministry on July 15, after 42 years of service to Christ the King in Bremerton, WA and 12 years of service to our beloved PNW District as President. In a special celebration on July 20 in Bremerton, God was praised and thanked for Pastor Lambert's faithful service. We pray he and Deb enjoy their years of retirement with good health and, in due time, other opportunities to serve him. **Pastor Doug Weiser** retired from his many years of serving the Lord at Calvary in Bellevue, WA. On June 22 he was commissioned as our part-time WELS liaison to Nigeria. We thank Doug for his many years of faithful service. **Stephen and Jane Rodmyre** retired this past summer (June 30) from the teaching ministry. We wish God's blessings to these cherished Called workers as they now serve him in their roles during their golden years.

A few **ministry changes** took place among our teachers. **Anna Flunker** (MLC 2009), who for a couple of years taught at Immanuel in Salem, OR, has been Called and installed (Aug. 17) as their Preschool teacher. **Shanna Kurbis** (MLC 2011), the wife of Philip Kurbis, was installed on Aug. 31 at Faith in Tacoma, WA, as Early Childhood Director and teacher.

In mid-August, at **Divine Savior in Pullman, WA**, I met with the leaders there to discuss their future. After almost 20 years of functioning as a "preaching station" and being served by retired pastors, and after summer assessments from our DMB, we discussed the reality of "closing the church." Concerns centered around finding a home to serve the souls of the remaining communicant numbers (5 adults and two teenagers); losing an "outpost for the gospel" in the Pullman/Moscow area; being faithful with Jesus' assets in the small piece of land and building that remain. The group can no longer support a worker, retired or other. I will continue to speak with their chairman, B. Steele. We are grateful to retired Pastor Russell Schmidt and his wife Heidi for serving DS until the end of this calendar year.

Shortly after convention, Pastor Steven Wall of **Christ in Juneau, AK** was working with his congregation and the preaching station of **Grace in Sitka, AK** to unite them into a "dual parish." By early July, the leaders at both churches agreed with the terms and are now officially working together in gospel ministry (dual parish) on the southern coast of Alaska.

At June's Distr. Convention there was an oversight in one election. Pete Naumann *was serving* as our District's Lay Rep on the Governing Board at Michigan Lutheran Seminary. His position was accidentally omitted in our election process and in a correspondence days after convention, he decided not to serve again. Therefore, by constitution, I needed to appoint a new lay-leader to serve on MLS's Gov. Bd. from present until 2020. With his consent, I have appointed **Mr. Keith Kriewall** (Holy Trinity) to this position. According to the rotating schedule per our Synod's constitution, in 2020 we will need to elect a District Pastor to serve on the Governing Board at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Looking ahead – I have been made aware of changes at Christ the King in Bremerton, WA. Teacher **Bruce Babler** will be stepping down after this school year. CtK has been forward thinking in their planning and will look to Call after the “calling window” opens for teachers (Nov. 1). Principal/Pastor Nate Seiltz has alerted me to some staff changes and general staff needs for **Evergreen LHS** after this school year. In early 2015, they will decide what Calls they may want to extend. *Other than that*, I know of no Calling needs at this time. If you know of changes for you personally or for your staff – Call needs or retirement plans (even if your situation needs to be kept confidential) I appreciate knowing as soon as possible for kingdom planning purposes.

## News and Notes

### *Health*

**Karl Gurgel** – in mid-August former WELS Pres. Karl Gurgel came down with an infection in his pancreas that spread to other internal organs. His condition was quite serious until they got the infection under control. Then, during a subsequent surgery they nicked another organ and the infection was once again on the loose. As of this past weekend, he was walking with the assistance of a walker and clearly weakened by two months of enduring procedures. He is scheduled to be back to Winona this week (Thur.) for rehab. Currently, he is on the mend, slowly, but surely. Please keep Pres. Gurgel in your prayers that his strength increases and his health continues to improve.

**Jim Oldfield** – on Sept. 16, Pastor Oldfield (Faith in Anchorage, AK) underwent back surgery which included fancy words like “decompression and disc fusion,” and household items like screws and rods. This all happened at *The Mayo Clinic* in Phoenix. As most know, his back had been ailing him for years. After a couple days in the hospital and a couple of weeks rehabbing in Chandler, AZ, Jim and Colleen returned to Anchorage on Oct. 3. Now Jim must rehab carefully and take things very slowly until the end of the month. Thanks much to retired Pastor Mark Wendland for covering at Faith during this ‘leave of absence’ (to Nov. 2). Thanks also to the Faith members/Staff and area pastors (Anch.) for excellent support – and, to all of you for your many prayers and other assistance. Please continue to pray for Jim’s speedy recovery.

### *District Communications and Events*

Our **PNW District has a new website**. Cross of Christ (Boise, ID) secretary, Deb Arstein has spent considerable time getting this up and running, adding information and calendar items. She will keep the site current along with regularly distributing district emails. Please remember a couple of things about this website. First, it is NOT completely finished – but we wanted to make it available sooner, rather than delaying its launch for cosmetic reasons. Secondly, its sole purpose is that of being a clearing house of district reports, general communications and calendar items that will take place in the year to come. Thirdly, on our Presidium’s behalf, District Secr./Treas. Pastor Mark Schewe will be using this site as one of his main tools for form retrieval, conv./conf. communications and archived documents. As such, questions, constructive comments and corrections can be directed to Pastor Schewe <pastorschewe@htlc-wa.org> or Deb <secretary@cocboise.org>. Thanks to Pastor Jer Schulz for his great work on our new district logo. <welspnw.weebly.com>

For my email – District President and District correspondences can be sent to [pnwdp@wels.net](mailto:pnwdp@wels.net) and my personal mail can be sent to my other address at [john.steinbrenner@cocboise.org](mailto:john.steinbrenner@cocboise.org)

**Marriage Retreat** ~ 35 district couples met in Hood River, OR, this past weekend to focus on Jesus and his gift of marriage. The theme was “Distracted Marriage” and offered helpful encouragement, advice and practice at identifying distractions and giving attention to God’s holy gift. There were

opportunities to meet other Christian couples, study God's Word, plan and enjoy a 'date night' with your spouse, and worship together. Feedback was positive and the likelihood of another future retreat taking place is very good.

### **Latest COP Meeting Summaries...**

- 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation – A committee led by Rev. John Braun is planning the celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in our Synod. With the help of a grant, the production company of Boettcher-Trinklein will be producing a two hour documentary on Martin Luther and the impact of the Reformation on modern day America. It will be aired on PBS and will be distributed through Lutheran publishing houses. Study guides and workbooks will also be produced. Other types of materials are also in the works. We hope that conferences and districts will be looking ahead at their own celebrations of this event.
- CMO – had a solid September, is always appreciated by our Synod-funded organizations as they do their work on our behalf, and continues to deserve our full congregational attention.
- WELS VEBA – is reacting to the national health care changes. The temptation exists for congregations to choose other insurance carriers for younger Called workers, because the premium costs for younger workers may be less than the VEBA premiums. Since the premiums for older Called workers is better in the VEBA program, congregations who are apt to jump back and forth then opt for VEBA. If this becomes common-place among our congregations, WELS VEBA may become unsustainable. While other insurance systems look out for themselves first, VEBA strives to be a system that has the congregations' and Called workers' best interests in mind (consistent premiums for all workers for budgeting purposes, allows for accepting Calls and moving from state to state without changing coverages or re-setting deductibles, worker-friendly open enrollments). Congregations who are studying their benefits for workers or considering leaving VEBA will FIRST want to call the WELS Benefit Plans Office to understand all the pitfalls of the tax credits and the new health care options. VEBA is also studying changes to their open enrollments and their policies for insuring "all or no staff." WELS VEBA is a good choice for our churches and our called workers with better, consistent coverage. Calling bodies: please study the issue carefully. WELS Benefit Plans Office; 414-256-3860 or 1-800-487-8322 (option 5) [bpo@wels.net](mailto:bpo@wels.net) [www.welsbpo.net](http://www.welsbpo.net) Joshua Peterman 414-256-3248 [joshua.peterman@wels.net](mailto:joshua.peterman@wels.net)
- Wartburg Project – It was reported that a group of WELS pastors and professors who are translating the Bible on their own now have the following books finished and available on Amazon: Matthew/Psalms; For those interested, their website is <wartburgproject.org>.
- Request was made and granted to allow the next Worship Conference to be held week of June 12-16, 2017; there were challenges to venue availabilities on later dates. This will probably mean 2017's PNW Delegate Conference will be moved a week up or back. Stay tuned...
- Next year's Fall COP Mtg. – Oct. 12-15, 2015; P/T Conf. dates will be looked at to try to avoid conflicts. Stay tuned...
- Retired Pastors Behaving Badly?? – A loving reminder to our retired pastors from around the Synod (and/or those planning on retiring) – "Pastoral Theology 101" – if, in retirement, a pastor stays a member in the congregation he served – then "for the good of the gospel ministry..." hold up the hands of the new pastor, direct members TO HIM for shepherding, etc. Most retired pastors remain a wonderful blessing to the support of their churches and their full-time pastors... let's continue to do what's in the best interests of the kingdom – thank you!

- Pastor Jonathan Hein will have his Call as Director of CCC (Commission on Congregational Counseling) extended by a year (July 2016).
- WELS Historical Institute – has asked for representation in each district... to capture documents, records, history and events on local levels. If you have a passion for history and for our district, please speak with me.
- MCG will forge ahead with their Synod Convention kick-off of a “Debt Elimination Campaign for 2015-2016” to move gifts to our Lord from “bricks and mortar to gospel missions and ministries” ... this could realize a savings of \$1.6M to our annual Synod budget.
- COP Doctrine Cmt. – Work is being done on a Fellowship Study (special application to HS student bodies); Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage (dealing with applications of unfaithfulness/adultery in these end times).
- Additional Stats Requested – In the future, there will be additional statistics gathered in our annual reports. On a yearly basis, the Synod is interested in gathering information about ethnic populations in our congregations, especially those coming from other countries. Once every five years, an effort will be made to include statistics on the age levels represented in the membership of our congregations. These statistics will help our Synod plan for future ministry needs in our church body.
- WELS Reps to meet with LCMS Reps – In December, President Schroeder and other COP members will meet with representatives of the LCMS and ELS to discuss the doctrine of fellowship as it is practiced in each Synod. Our goal is always to represent what the Bible teaches and to have influence in the church at large for the truth of God’s Word.

**Coming Up...**

*(please share changes, omissions, corrections)*

January 11-15	COP Meeting
January 26-28	PNW Winter Pastors’ Conference (Hood River, OR)
February 12-13	ACPaT – Light of the World (Fairbanks, AK)
LWMS Spring Rally	(?)
March 19-20	Spring Teachers Conference (Bethany, Port Orchard, WA)
April 8-10	COP Meeting
April 17-19	PNW Men’s Retreat (Port Townsend, WA) Prof. J. Brug: “Fellowship”
May 14-15	MLC Assignment Mtgs.
May 16	MLC Commencement & Call Services
May 19	WLS Vicar Assignment Mtgs. & Call Service
May 20	WLS Pastor Assignment Mtgs.
May 21	WLS Call Service
May 22	WLS Graduation Service
June 6	ELHS graduation (2pm)
June 9-10	Pastoral Institute (Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA)
June 11-12	District Delegate Conference (ELHS, Tacoma, WA)
July 27-30	Synod Convention (MLS Saginaw, MI)
October 12-15	COP Meeting

**Thanks and Patience** – I was and continue to be deeply humbled by June’s election that has made me your DP. I ask for your patience as I learn the duties of this new role and for your prayers as I work to carry them out... and that I do so faithfully. I’m privileged to serve you and to serve our Savior together with you,

*Pastor John Steinbrenner, PNW District President*