



# Pacific Northwest DISTRICT

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

## WELS PNW District President's Report

Fall Pastor/Teacher Conference (ACPaT)

King of Kings, Wasilla, AK

October 26-27, 2015

### **Fellow Called Workers in the PNW: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2**

The ministry of the gospel is filled with some days when we're glad we're doing nothing else. Pastors see an adult confirmand taking Communion for the first time... or they see a father's eyes water while his newborn child is being Baptized. A teacher watches a student as they passionately retell a Bible History account they remembered from class the week before... or they watch an 8<sup>th</sup> grader get their diploma – shocked at how the Holy Spirit transformed that child over the past 5 years. Yes, as the ministry of the gospel brings blessings to those to whom we minister, it brings joy and satisfaction to the Called worker as well!

But, of course, there are also those "other days." Days when we see no outward fruit from our labors. Days when the ministry seems more trial than triumph. Days when our patience wears thin. Days when our zeal to re-teach the strong-willed child or visit the cold-shouldered, unchurched prospect is tempered and tempted by the thought, "Will it really do any good?" There are days when it just isn't "fun" to be in the gospel ministry. On those days we need to be reminded that God doesn't promise us that we will *always* see some great outward demonstration of the Spirit's power.

Regardless of the day we're having, the promises of God remain true. The Savior is our *Good Shepherd*, even when pastors, teachers and lambs in His flock stumble. The cry from the cross, "It is finished!" testifies that our Savior is *perfect* – all our sins are paid for – our eternal life with Him is won! And our Risen Savior's *gospel* will never return to Him empty. Called workers get to see exciting fruits of the gospel's victory. But even when we see very little fruit on given days or weeks, never forget that *faith is being fed* and the *Holy Spirit is doing His work* as the gospel is faithfully preached and taught.

This is also why we are blessed through the fellowship and friendship of brothers and sisters in the ministry. When we forget these truths and get caught up in gauging ministry success by looking only to outward fruits – then God's gracious promises can quickly slide into the back seat. Then sometimes sinful pride prances... but more often, despair disheartens us. When students disappoint or worship attendances don't meet expectations, we all benefit from fellow workers who lovingly remind us that God's grace needs to be brought back into the front seat. Fellow pastors and teachers avoid the gossip and pity parties. Instead, they pray for us, confront us, uplift, restore and rejoice with us. When Called workers support one another in these ways, they "*carry each other's burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ*" – that is, the law of love!

May we, who have learned to treasure the love of Christ and preach/teach it weekly to those entrusted to our care, also love and care and support one another as Christian co-workers. Be available for each other... in thanks to Jesus for always being there for us... God bless all of your ministries throughout the PNW!

## **Called Workers, Congregations and Schools in the PNW**

Since my summer newsletter, I share the following Called worker updates:

- Teachers Brian (middle gr.) and Amanda (ECE) Humann installed at Faith, Tacoma, WA – 7.12.15
- Principal Chris Hintz (upper gr.) installed at Christ the King, Bremerton, WA – 7.26.15
- Although announced earlier, Pastor Jay Blum officially retired from Trinity in Eugene, OR – 7.31.15
- Pastor Ben Zuberbier ordained and installed at Trinity, Eugene, OR – 8.2.15
- Teacher Melissa Mittelstadt (ECE) installed at Faith, Anchorage, AK – 8.9.15  
(in conjunction with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniv. of Faith Lutheran School)
- Teacher Rebecca Hussman (upper gr., 1 yr.) installed at Grace, Yakima, WA – 8.23.15
- Teacher Marilee Nolte (lower gr., 1 yr.) installed at Grace, Yakima, WA – 8.23.15
- Pastor James Getka installed at Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA as Campus Pastor and Spanish – 8.30.15
- Principal Ted Klug (history) installed at Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA – 8.30.15
- Vicar Philip Janisch arrived in August and is serving under Pastor Craig Wasser at Immanuel, Salem, OR
  
- Pastor Jason Strong (Light of the World, Fairbanks, AK) received and returned a Call to Trinity in Kaukauna, WI – 8.2.15 / 8.29.15
- Pastor Rob Guenther (Grace, Kenai, AK) received and returned a Call to be Associate at Peace in Sun Prairie, WI – 8.23.15 / 9.12.15
- Pastor Fred Voss (Shepherd of the Hills, Anchorage, AK) received and returned a Call to serve at St. John's, Sturgis, MI – 9.8.15 / 9.25.15
- Pastor Craig Wasser (Immanuel, Salem, OR) received and returned a Call to serve at Cross of Glory in Peoria, AZ – 9.13.15 / 10.16.15

We are thankful for the service of the aforementioned Called workers. This also gives a moment to pause and thank all of our faithful pastors, teachers and staff ministers who serve in the PNW.

Please also keep the following in your prayers as they prayerfully deliberate their future roles in God's kingdom:

- Pastor Mark Schewe (Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA) is holding a Call to St. Peter in Clovis, CA – 10.4.15
  
- Pastor Duane Vanselow (Beautiful Savior, Corvallis, OR) has announced his retirement for the end of this November. Due to retirement plans, that may now move to just after the turn of the new year. I had the opportunity to meet with the congregation on Oct. 4 to go through pre-Call materials. At their last communication, they would like to move forward in Dec. and extend a Call to replace Pastor Vanselow.
- Pastor Dan Moll and Gethsemane, Tigard, OR lost a number of members recently which has challenged their ability to be financially stable beyond 2015. Circ. Pastor Thad Bitter and I have met with them once in August. I returned to meet with their leaders in early October. As they wrestled with future plans and options, it looks like their funding will hold through the Dec./Jan. They are working with our DMB on some good outreach plans for the Fall and Holidays and are open to partnering with the DMB for a "re-start" IF such a plan could be packaged and approved. We wait to learn how the Spirit will bless and direct over the next couple of months.
- Tony Natalie tendered his letter of resignation from Evergreen LHS on October 24. The Faculty and Bd. are weighing their options for covering classes for the remainder of this semester and next semester. Please pray that God bless Tony and Amy. Also prayers for Evergreen as they proclaim the gospel to our high sch. students.
- Carol Cole is officially retiring from teaching 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> gr. at Holy Trinity in Des Moines, WA at the end of 2015-2016 school year. We thank God for the 25 years of service she offered to our Savior at HT. They are also studying their future plans.

Please keep these fellow saints and congregations and all our District's churches and schools in your prayers!

Synod-wide, there are 62 vacant parishes; 77 total vacancies requiring pastorally trained men. The "Calling window" for teachers opens on Nov. 1. If pastors or principals know of changes for you personally or for your staff (that includes any Call needs or retirement plans) please share with me as soon as possible for kingdom planning purposes.

**Home in Heaven** – On the morning of October 8<sup>th</sup>, the Lord in his wisdom called the soul of our brother – retired Pastor Darryl Bruemmer – to eternal glory. He left this life confident in his Savior and looking forward to being with his wife Rochelle and all the saints who have gone before him. Pastor Bruemmer had served as pastor at Gethsemane in Tigard

for many years. We are thankful to Pastor Dan Moll for ministering to him with the gospel during his retirement. The funeral took place Oct. 17 at Gethsemane in Tigard. *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord..." Rev. 14:13*

### **WELS and Other Notes for the PNW from the COP**

- † In addition to the 5-7 previously planned, **Home Missions may be able to open 2 additional** missions with assistance from ~\$800K in CEF funds; manpower now becomes a concern with mild pastoral shortages;
- † **Hire vs. Call:** churches and schools are to extend Divine Calls to men and women for gospel ministries; as such both compensation and fellowship guidelines will want to be honored; support ministries may hire;
- † **Commission Chairmen** Pastors Gary Pufahl (**Adult Discip.**) and John Boggs (**Youth Discip.**) are filling out their commissions and beginning work to serve our Synod in these important areas; emphasis on adult and youth Bible classes, stewardship, and International Youth Rally at Colorado St. Univ., Ft. Collins, CO, June 28-July 1, 2016
- † **CMO materials** should be in all pastors' hands, please view the PNW video, rejoice in Synod blessings and, based on God's grace, plan CMO early in congregations; beginning in Jan. 2016 the plan is to have monthly "promotional packets" emailed to you with links to the WELS Resource Center (videos, PP presentation, annual reports, printable bulletin blurbs, prayers, etc.) CP's are to view and encourage monthly use of some/all of the materials as appropriate;
- † **"One in Christ"** to-date 75 gifts... < \$100K thus far; this is our Synod's capital fund campaign to eliminate our synodical debt. If we reach our goal of \$5M, we will be able to add ~\$1.6M annually to our ministry budget. You have received information for this in the mail. Please present this information to your congregations – to be completed by next summer's conventions; contact your MCG rep for more information;
- † **REJOICE**, we are ~\$100K ahead in **CMO** for 2015 over 2014 at this time of year; (deadlines: Jan. 8, 2016 for 2015 CMO; Fri., Feb. 5 for submitting 2016 CMO subscriptions);
- † Review of our congregation's **Constitutions/Bylaws** is being discussed; while Christian freedoms in leadership is acknowledged, brotherly, Scriptural and wise governance leads us to ask that "voters' assemblies" be in existence and function for Calling workers, discipline cases and other ratifications as are appropriate; in fact some states demand at least one assembly meeting per year for non-profits to elect officers, etc.;
- † **A Synod Reformation 500** (2017) Plan allows for districts to celebrate on their own 10/29; an invite to join in worship at the Bradley Center (Milwaukee, WI) on Tue. evening, Oct. 31 is extended to the entire Synod; hotel blocks, potential travel subsidy and other plans will be forthcoming; while some districts may choose to use this in place of their Fall Conferences – there are no expectations for involvement (especially for outlying districts);
- † **Pastor Assessment Forms** (teacher too...) new process... beginning winter 2016; info to log on and then do your assessments ONLINE; CP's will be alerted and then they can discuss and adjust; DP's will vet; also, beginning this year, the congregational statistical form will have a few more entries. Once every five years, for example, information will be gathered regarding the AGE of our members and the ETHNIC background of our members. These statistics will help our Synod plan for the future (outreach approaches, training, materials provided, etc.);
- † **Safeguarding religious freedom for WELS congregations** – a template letter will be available (2016), written by an attorney, regarding facility usage for churches and schools by outside groups; congregations are asked to begin now paying close attention to their usage and rental policies;
- † **VEBA and other health insurances;** is your congregation thinking of getting "cheaper" insurance from the exchange? You can probably find cheaper insurance with your younger called workers, but if you have to insure mid to older called workers, it is just the opposite. Also, be sure you compare apples to apples. Do the other providers have vision benefits and disability insurance? WELS VEBA does. A link to a video explaining the benefits of staying with VEBA will soon be made available. Make sure you consider these things carefully before your congregation looks to save a few dollars by going to another insurance. Also, VEBA may need to implement an "all in or all out" policy to remain sustainable. **There will be a full, open enrollment in VEBA this fall, available until 1/1/2016;** finally, districts will be polling congregations to better understand compensation levels to assist VEBA in their planning AND to be sure compensation for Called workers is adequate;
- † **WELS Foundation/WELS Inv. Fund** – are investigating how these two boards can be recombined under a single director. One area that will be evaluated whether or not we will continue to offer these services to congregations and other institutions in our Synod;
- † **Uncertified staff ministers and teachers** - it is recommended that the 2<sup>nd</sup> VP of each district be responsible for obtaining the list of uncertified teachers from the CLS office annually. He will communicate with those individuals regarding their progress toward certification and remind the calling body about the requirement for one year

provisional calls until certification has been achieved. The Called Worker Cmt. of the COP recommends that the 2<sup>nd</sup> VP of each district contact uncertified staff ministers annually regarding their progress toward certification and remind the calling body about the requirement for one year provisional calls until certification has been achieved.

- ✠ **MLC Congregational Partnership Grant Program** – this program will allow congregations to assist students of their congregation with their tuition at MLC. Up to \$1,000 will be matched by the scholarship fund on campus. We are happy to see that the contributions by the congregations would actually augment the tuition assistance and not just replace what was already being done.
- ✠ **Implementation of Pastor Partners** – beginning with the graduating class of 2016, congregations which have a pastor assigned to them from the seminary will be required to fund the three year mentoring program for that new pastor (we already have this in place for the teachers who are assigned). The cost of this should be carried by the congregation and not the called work. The benefits to both the congregation and the called worker are worth the investment.
- ✠ **Our Ministry of Christian Giving** will participate in an overall review of their work, beginning in January. The review will engage people from outside of our administration in order to review our work and look at what are best practices should be. The review is scheduled to be completed by next summer.
- ✠ **Statement on physician-assisted suicide** – Joel Gaertner from the Lutheran Home Association presented to the COP a simple statement opposing physician-assisted suicide. It explains clearly why as God’s people we have a respect for life that keeps us from “playing God” at the end of our life. The Lutheran Home has developed relationships with other like-minded groups to develop ways to impact elected officials who will consider legislation on this issue. You can get a copy of this statement from the Lutheran Home.
- ✠ **Home and Word Mission Campaign** – in the year 2016-17, the MCG will carry out a fund raising campaign for Home and World Missions. They are taking their “turn” in a more recent rotation with the ministerial education schools.
- ✠ **Synod Archives** – a committee has been working and discussing this issue. We are looking for an architect who can plan the needs for the archives and facility upgrades at CCM; plans moving slowly, but forward;
- ✠ **The doctrine committees of the WELS, ELS, and CLC** met and formulated a joint statement that will be studied by each church body. We pray that God will bless these efforts;
- ✠ **LCMS** - the fourth meeting with representatives of the LC-MS is schedule for December. The subject matter of the discussion has not yet been determined.
- ✠ **Christian Giving Counselor Called** – the COP called Kevin Hundley to serve as a gift counselor for the SE Wisc. Distr.;
- ✠ **District Admin Ass’t, Deb Arstein’s new email address** – [welspnw@gmail.com](mailto:welspnw@gmail.com) District Web: [welspnw.weebly.com](http://welspnw.weebly.com)

*Serving our Savior Together,  
Pastor John W. Steinbrenner, PNW District President*

## Dates

October 12-15, 2015	COP Fall Meetings, CMM
October 14-16, 2015	Fall Pastor / Teacher Conference in Leavenworth, WA
October 26-27, 2015	ACPaT (Alaska P-T Conf.) King of Kings, Wasilla, AK
November 6-7, 2015	Pastors’ Wives Renewal
January 11-15, 2016	COP Meetings, Ft. Myers, FL
January 25-27, 2016	WELS PNW Missionaries’ Conference, Hood River, OR
Mar. 17-18, 2016	Spring Teachers’ Conference, Faith, Tacoma, WA
Mar. 30 - Apr. 1, 2016	COP Spring Meetings, CMM
May 12-13, 2016	COP Assignments at MLC
May 14, 2016	MLC Grad. / Call Services
May 16-18, 2016	COP Assignments at WLS
May 17, 2016	Vicar Assignment Service, WLS
May 19, 2016	Pastor Assignment Service, WLS
May 20, 2016	WLS Graduation Service
June 11, 2016	Evergreen LHS Graduation
June 14-15, 2016	WELS PNW District Convention, Evergreen LHS
September 20-23	COP Fall Meetings, CMM
October 12-14, 2016	Fall Pastor / Teacher Conference in <i>Leavenworth, WA??</i>
Oct.? Nov. 2016?	<i>Fall ACPaT in ??</i>