



Pacific Northwest DISTRICT

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

**WELS Pacific Northwest District President's Report
Cascades Conference Pastors/Teachers Fall Conf.
Cannon Beach, OR
October 12-14, 2016**

District Website: <http://welspnw.weebly.com/>

Fellow Called Workers in the PNW:

*"...you, LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, the One who lifts my head high.
I call out to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy mountain.
I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.
I will not fear though tens of thousands
assail me on every side."
(Ps. 3:3-6)*

Our providence, our protection, our salvation comes from our Savior-God. Do not fear. Rejoice and share. Our God reigns! I trust the openings to the school years have been going well for teachers. September and October also typically kick-off Bible study series and other ministry plans for pastors. May God bless our work as we nurture God's children and proclaim the gospel in our preaching, teaching and reaching.

WELS PNW District Updates

Here are a few updates on WELS ministry in the PNW – reasons to thank our God and to remember one another in our prayers:

(picking up from my report on August 16, 2016)

- ✠ Thank God for blessing Faith in Tacoma with the opportunity to share the gospel with more children from their area. On August 28, **Mrs. Naomi Getka** was installed as the middle grade teacher at Faith.
- ✠ On August 31, **Mrs. April Cohrs** resigned (personal reasons) from being EC Teacher at "Precious Lambs" of Grace in Portland. Ongoing EC ministry at Grace is being covered by current staff.
- ✠ On August 7, **Pastor Luke Tembreull** (Our Savior, Two Rivers, WI) accepted the Divine Call to Beautiful Savior in Corvallis, OR. His installation service was held on September 18. Many thanks to Pastor Craig Wasser and the Oregon pastors for their "team vacancy" work there. May God bless Pastor Tembreull's gospel ministry in Corvallis.

- † **Pastor Daniel Lange** (Light of Life, Covington, WA) wrestled with a Divine Call (7/26) to be Associate Pastor at Resurrection in Rochester, MN. We are grateful that on September 3, he returned that Call and will continue to serve with us in the PNW.

- † Many thanks to retired **Pastors Ted Lambert** and **Kieth Kuschel** who have tag-teamed to do pastor-assistance work at Holy Trinity in Des Moines, WA. Pastor Lambert served for several weeks this past summer and Pastor Kuschel is now assisting at HT (Sept. to Thanksgiving). HT's school has been very blessed. **Miss Megan Ungemach** (EC Dir., MLC 2016) and **Mr. Geron Brown** (upper grades) are new this year (installed 9/11). We are also thankful that **Miss Erin Plocher** (MLC Senior) was willing to suspend her senior year at MLC and accept a 1-yr. emergency Call to assist with the blessing of increased enrollment.

- † On September 25, **Pastor Kurt Wetzel** was ordained and installed as the newest member of the pastoral team at Cross of Christ in Boise, Idaho. He and Pastor Matt Zimpelmann will primarily serve the ministry and mission at the Boise Campus. Pastor Ben Workentine is now working on the multi-site mission start and a second worship venue in and around Meridian, the suburbs west of Boise.

- † **Pastor Dan Moll** (Gethsemane, Tigard, OR) received a Divine Call on October 5. His Call is to shepherd the dual parish of Immanuel, Shirley and St. Paul, Greenleaf, WI. We ask God to give Pastor Moll wisdom and peace as he decides where best to put his spiritual gifts to use in service to our Savior.

- † **Retired Pastor Jim Oldfield** (Faith, Anchorage, AK) continues to battle cancer (brain). He recently had a set-back with an abdominal infection. He seems to be strengthening a bit, but still remains on hospice care. Jim and Colleen are grateful for everyone's prayers and they appreciate getting emails from friends and colleagues around the District and Synod. We are thankful for good pastoral care offered by Pastor Ewings and the greater Anchorage shepherds. We pray that God continue to hold Pastor Oldfield firm in his faith until he calls Jim home.

- † We pray for God's continued goodness to these and all of our WELS-ELS Called workers in the Pacific Northwest. May God bless Evergreen LHS and all our elementary schools with united faculties, respectful students and supportive parents and churches. We also ask God to strengthen our pastors for their Callings, whether the circumstances are challenging or flourishing. Our Lord will look with favor on the faithful proclamation of his gospel to those inside and outside our faith-families. Thanks be to him for the many great ministries being carried out among us!

District WELS Pastor Vacancies – 2

Holy Trinity in Des Moines, WA (not currently Calling)
 Faith in Anchorage, AK (not currently Calling)

WELS Estimate – 98 Pastor Vacancies, 85 Vacant Parishes

District WELS Teacher Vacancies – 0

(for current year, based on current requests from DP)

WELS Estimate – ~40 Teacher Vacancies

(more accurate picture after Nov. 1)

WELS Synod Communication and News

Congregational Mission Offering (CMO). Please review with your congregation the CMO setting packet, particularly the DVD, at the start of your CMO setting process for 2017. Consider using *An Encouraging Word* e-newsletter which provides ideas and resources for helping church leaders promote joyful stewardship. Review the WELS Annual Report which shows how God is blessing our mission offerings through our latest ministry efforts. The report also explains our goals as well as the costs of these different areas of ministry. Make use of the stewardship program entitled *364 Days of Thanksgiving* which focuses on how we can be

thankful every day for the blessings God gives us. For good stewardship and planning, all WELS congregations are kindly asked to submit their CMO's in a timely fashion together with their congregational stats. Thank you.

Synod Debt Elimination. God willing, the remaining payment on our Synod's debt will be made at the end of December 2016. Plans are in the works for a formal thanks at next summer's Synod Convention.

Reformation 500 plans. As you may know, the plans for a Synod-wide Reformation celebration at the Bradley Center in Milwaukee have been canceled. After considering accurate numbers on cost, travel-lodging complications and scheduling coordination of this huge effort – it was finally decided that it would be wiser to allow districts to enjoy their local celebrations. The organizers of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium are considering whether or not to still hold their event at the end of October 2017. The Symposium will feature four presentations on Martin Luther, a Reformation Festival Service and possibly a Reformation Banquet. Boetcher-Trinklein Productions is finishing its work on a major film documentary entitled, *Martin Luther: An Idea That Changed the World*. A full length version of the film will be shown on PBS in 2017. A shorter version is being made for use in WELS and will be accompanied by a four-part Bible study. Learn more at: <http://wels.net/reformation500/>

New Catechism. Northwestern Publishing House is on schedule to release a new catechism in time for the 2017-18 school year. The *Anniversary Catechism* will consist of 51 units covering the six chief parts of Christian doctrine. The book will be slightly smaller in size than the current catechism. It will have a "devotional" aspect to it with home use in mind. It will appear in two editions. One will use the NIV 2011. The other makes use of the ESV.

MLC Congregational Partnership Grant Program. In an attempt to assist their students with the cost of college education, MLC introduced a grant program for the benefit of this year's freshmen class. If a congregation donated a gift toward the tuition of one or more of its first-year students, MLC matched that gift dollar-for-dollar up to \$1000. The success of this pilot program surpassed all expectations. Seventy percent of incoming first-year students received their congregation's grant and MLC's match. In its recent meeting, the COP gave approval for MLC to continue the program for the 2017-18 school year. The intention is to provide matching grants on behalf of first and second-year students. Requests will be made of individual donors and congregations to consider making a gift that will help cover the cost of the program. If the more than 900 congregations without a current student at MLC could support this effort with a door offering or perhaps a gift of \$300 or more, it would help to fully fund the second year of the program.

Guidelines for Special Conferences. As a growing number of individuals and groups within our fellowship are organizing special events and conferences, the COP offers the following guidelines for the sake of love, unity and carefulness in our practices:

1. If the event is solely for your district or regional in nature, please contact your district president well in advance and actively involve him as you begin making plans for the event because he is responsible for doctrine and practice in his district. If it is multi-district in nature, contact the synod president who will, in turn, contact the Conference of Presidents.
2. Give careful thought as to whom you ask to give presentations. As much as possible, we encourage using WELS presenters. We recognize that there may be people outside of our fellowship who have expertise in a particular field that may be helpful to your audience. If you feel compelled to recruit such a presenter, you will want to determine whether false doctrine could be brought into the presentation or spiritual truths could be taught. If that is the case, such a presentation should be avoided. Be sure to instruct presenters who are outside our fellowship about not opening or closing the presentation with prayer. It may be best to ask at the outset of your planning, "Is there someone in our fellowship who can share the same information, but with a Lutheran and scripturally sound point of view?"

3. We recognize that women may well be more appropriate for teaching women in many contexts. Be careful to observe the biblical roles of man and woman so that women are not put in the uncomfortable position of possibly violating God's loving principles (teaching men in such a way as to exercise authority over them).
4. Good scriptural and Lutheran theology partnered with gospel motivation should drive all biblical presentations. Because we are rightly sensitive to "church growth" philosophy and methodology, evangelicalism, a theology of glory, and other such false teachings, be sure to ask: "Do any presentations appear to come from those backgrounds? Will people who see these promotional materials draw wrong conclusions? What message is being sent? What confession is being made?"

Finally, the COP thanks you for keeping these guidelines under consideration as you plan events. The members of the COP want to support your efforts and are confident of your brotherly cooperation. They are always willing to answer any questions about these guidelines and will gladly offer clarification. May our Lord Jesus be glorified by all we do!

Conferences outside our Fellowship. If a religious group or organization outside of our fellowship asks you to speak at a conference or seminar, I'd kindly ask that you consult with me. I'd appreciate the opportunity to have a brotherly discussion before you make your decision.

Better Preparation of Synod Convention Delegates. The COP is planning to implement the following ideas to better prepare Synod Convention Delegates prior to their arrival at Luther Preparatory School for the WELS convention to be held July 31 – August 3, 2017:

1. Send a "Welcome Letter to each delegate;"
2. Automatically subscribe all delegates to the Together e-newsletter and video updates;
3. Produce a video explaining the Convention format and delegate responsibilities;
4. Email all delegates in mid-May with a link to BORAM and a FAQ page (also posted on registration page)
5. Add a delegate thanks/expectations letter to pg. 1 of the BORAM (Convention binders);
6. Develop instructional video(s) on main topics and memorials;
7. Hold a 60-min. orientation on Mon. afternoon (7-31) to explain Convention process.

Early Childhood Directors and Teachers.

1. The COP is encouraging all congregations with hired EC directors-teachers to issue Divine Calls to them.
2. Directors and teachers who are Called need to be Synod-certified or working toward certification.
3. As with all Called teachers, those who are not certified would be issued a provisional (one-year renewable) Call and would be working toward Synod-certification.
4. The COP recommends that Synod-certification for early childhood directors include the WELS Early Childhood Director Credential that meets or exceeds the competencies outlined in the WELS Early Childhood Director Standards.

People of Grace describes itself as an "Informational – Educational" entity. While its founder and main presenter, Scott Barefoot, is a WELS member, the organization itself is not affiliated with or in fellowship with WELS. Its board includes some members who belong to church bodies not in fellowship with WELS. Even though it describes itself as an informational and educational entity, we must respectfully ask how it can adequately address the subject of same-sex attraction without using scriptural truth. In other words, if a presentation is presented from a secular and sociological point of view only, it will not be able to deal with this subject from a Christian and scriptural perspective based on Law and Gospel. If the presentation does draw on spiritual truths, the instruction and information will be provided by an organization that is not in fellowship with WELS. We encourage congregations and organizations to consider these things before extending an invitation to People of Grace to give a presentation.

Report of the Military Chaplaincy Committee. Though there have been significant, meaningful changes in the military chaplaincy since the 1950s—changes which have granted more safeguards for those serving in the military chaplaincy—it is nonetheless the recommendation of the Military Chaplaincy Study Committee that the changes are not such that would allow us to participate in the military chaplaincy at this time.

1. The military chaplaincy continues to conflict with the doctrine of the two kingdoms because in the military chaplaincy, the government has created and operates a spiritual office which exists to care for souls with the Means of Grace.
2. The military chaplaincy as currently constituted is built on, operates from, and supports the foundational idea that all religious beliefs are equally valid. Would participation on our part validate, or at the very least, not take a stand against that foundational idea?
3. The military chaplaincy also continues to conflict with the doctrine of the Divine Call because service in that office requires more than the Call of the Lord through his Church (also the approval of the military); in addition, it may require more than the Ministry of the Keys to function.

We would also like to offer our encouragement that we as a Synod do absolutely everything within our power to serve our WELS servicemen and women—both active duty and retired. In particular, the COP encourages every congregation in our Synod to seek out members of their congregation who have served in the military and to offer them any help they might need (and to assist one another). There are men and women in our congregations who are suffering—sometimes silently—from the wounds of wars they fought on our behalf.

Fellowship Study for WELS Lutheran High Schools. All our Lutheran High Schools are being asked to complete their study of the COP-produced Bible study dealing with fellowship principles and applications in our schools (if you haven't already done so). The COP looks forward to hearing reactions, questions, and input from all of the schools. Thank you.

Self-Assessment Forms. If you haven't already done so, please update your record at WELS through the new online process. Active and CRM pastors, we will need updated contact and assessment (ministry preference and ability ranking) information from you. This updated information helps district presidents prepare call lists and helps to insure that the biographical information shared at such meetings is as accurate as possible. Once you have updated your information you will be asked to share it with your "reviewer" who is your circuit pastor. He will contact you to share any suggestions he might have and then ask you to "submit" your assessment to WELS. Retired pastors, we will need only updated contact information from you for now. We will collect retirement ministry preferences from you at a later date. (<http://cloud.wels.net/me>)

Synod Archives. The COP received an update on the Synod archives project. The space for the archives has been prepared, and the archivist (Susan Willems) has been working at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to prepare the archives collection for relocation. The first phase of the move will take place this fall, with the remainder of the materials to be moved in the spring. In addition to the archives, the space on the lower level of the Center for Mission and Ministry also includes a visitor center with displays depicting Synod history and current ministry programs.

Director of Family Ministry. The COP once again reiterated its support for the Calling of a Director of Family Ministry. This position would provide leadership to the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry and to the Commission on Adult Discipleship. Some discussion has begun about whether or not it would be beneficial to combine these two commissions into a single group assisting congregations in addressing spiritual needs of both adults and youth. The Synodical Council will now consider this position as it develops the Ministry Financial Plan for 2017-19.

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

District Website: <http://welspnw.weebly.com/>

Upcoming WELS and PNW Schedule

Oct. 30 – Nov. 1, 2016	ACPaT Conf. at Peace, Eagle River, AK (Alaska Conference Pastors and Teachers)
November 11-13, 2016	Marriage Retreat, Hood River, OR
January 7-12, 2017	COP Winter Meetings
Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2017	PNW Missionaries' Conferences at Hood River, OR
March 16-17, 2017	Cascades Conference Spring Teachers' Conf. at ELHS
April 3-5, 2017	COP Spring Meetings
April 21-23, 2017	Men's Retreat, Port Townsend, WA (Prof. P. Koelpin, "Reformation Applications for Today")
May 11-12, 2017	Assignments at MLC
May 13, 2017	MLC Commencement, Call Services
May 16, 2017	Vicar Assignments and Vicar Call Service at WLS
May 17, 2017	Pastor Assignments at WLS
May 18, 2017	Pastor Call Service and Graduation Concert at WLS
May 19, 2017	WLS Graduation
June 3, 2017	ELHS Graduation
June 6-7, 2017	Pastors' Institute at ELHS
June 8-9, 2017	District Delegate Conference at ELHS
July 31-Aug. 3, 2017	Synod Convention at LPS
October ???, 2017	Cascades Conference Fall Pastor/Teacher Conf. at ???