



# Pacific Northwest DISTRICT

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

## District President's Newsletter

December 2018

It was only four days before Christmas. The joy of the season eluded me, even though cars packed the parking lot of our local discount store. Inside the store, it was worse. Shopping carts and last-minute shoppers jammed the aisles.

Why did I come today? I wondered. My feet ached almost as much as my head. My list contained names of several people who claimed they wanted nothing but I knew their feelings would be hurt if I didn't buy them something. Buying for someone who had everything and deploring the high cost of items, I considered gift-buying anything but fun – certainly not "Holiday Joy!"

Hurriedly, I filled my shopping cart with last minute items and proceeded to the long checkout lines. I picked the shortest line but it looked as if it would mean at least a twenty-minute wait. In front of me were two small children – a boy of about six or seven years old and a younger girl, apparently his little sister. The boy wore a ragged coat. Enormously large, tattered tennis shoes jutted far out in front of his much too short jeans. He clutched several crumpled dollar bills in his grimy hands. The girl's clothing resembled her brother's. Her head was a matted mass of curly hair. Reminders of an evening meal showed on her small face. She carried a pair of gold house slippers. As the Christmas music sounded in the store's stereo system, the girl hummed along, off-key, but happily. While maintaining a half-pleasant appearance on the outside, on the inside I wondered what kind of parents wouldn't shower their children and occasionally teach them how to use a comb.

When we finally approached the checkout register, the girl carefully placed the slippers on the counter. She treated them as though they were a treasure. The clerk rang up the bill. "That will be \$9.09," she said. The boy laid his crumpled dollars atop the counter while he searched his pockets for more. He finally came up with \$6.12. "I guess we will have to put them back," he bravely said. "We will come back some other time, maybe tomorrow!"

With that statement, a whimper from the little girl, "But Jesus will love these slippers." "Well, we'll go home and I'll shovel Mr. Meier's snow some more and I'll get some more money! Don't cry. We'll come back," her brother promised.

It was some combination of compassion and guilt that struck me. I handed a \$5 bill to the cashier. These children had waited in line for a long time. And it was Christmas, after all. Suddenly a pair of arms came around me and a small voice said, "Thank you Sir!"

"What did you mean when you said Jesus will love these slippers?" I asked. The boy answered, "Our Mom is sick and going to heaven. Dad said she might go meet Jesus even before Christmas." His sister added, "My Sunday School teacher said the streets in heaven are shiny gold, just like these slippers. Jesus will love them."

My eyes began to moisten as I looked at her tear-streaked face. Suddenly, I was starting to understand this whole picture better. "Yes," I answered, "She will look wonderful in heaven with these slippers!"

As I walked out to my car, I thanked God for using these children to recalibrate my heart and ponder the true meaning of Christmas. I came into the store focused on "things" and distracted by my selfishness. Then two underprivileged children reminded me what life is all about. God's Son, Jesus, came in poverty as a little baby in Bethlehem. He left his throne on high to live a holy life that God demands of me. I fall woefully short of God's demand to be perfect. But through simple child-like faith in him, Jesus gives me his holy robe to wear. I deserve punishment today and forever for my many sins. But I won't be punished because Jesus willingly accepted my punishment when he suffered and died on the cross. Jesus came to earth to bring us all to the golden streets in heaven. God is gracious. Christmas is God's gift to me that I might walk the streets of gold for Jesus' sake!

There are many distractions in this world. Let's try our best to keep a proper perspective on life not only this Christmas season, but every day. Thank God from the bottom of our hearts for his unending love. And thank two small children for the needed reminder.

May God bless your Christmas celebrations and another year of his grace in 2019!

*(adapted)*

**PNW District Workers** – some of these updates were reported in Fall Conference Reports at October's Cascades P-T Conference in Centralia, WA and at November's ACPaT Conference in Kenai, AK. There have been changes since then and they are included below:

#### **PNW Pastors**

Cale Mead	May 2018 WLS	Christ LC, Juneau, AK (Ord./Inst. 7.12.18)
Benjamin Phelps	May 2018 WLS	Grace LC, Kenai, AK (Ord./Inst. 7.15.18)
Ret. David Neumann	September 2018	Good Hope/Good Faith LC, Ellensburg, S. Cle Elum, WA (Inst. 9.16.18)
Jonathan Leach	July 2018	Truth in Love Ministries, Nampa, ID (Inst. 10.21.18)
Nathan Wagenknecht	October 2018	Faith LC, Anchorage, AK (Inst. 11.4.18)
Kent Reeder	<i>coming in 2019</i>	to Seattle, WA (DMB mission restart with Grace/Salem)
Brad Snyder	<i>coming in 2019</i>	to Boise, ID (DMB 2 <sup>nd</sup> site mission at Cross of Christ, Boise, ID)

#### **PNW Pastor Vacancies (5)**

Divine Peace LC, Renton, WA	<i>discussing options, not calling at this moment</i>
Holy Trinity LC, Des Moines, WA	<i>discussing options, not calling at this moment</i>
Gethsemane LC, Tigard, OR	<i>discussing options, not calling at this moment</i>

Asia Luth. Sem., Hong Kong	Nov. 29, 2018	<i>HOLDING: Professor Thomas Kock at Wisc. Luth. Seminary</i>
Faith LC, Tacoma, WA	Dec. 9, 2018	<i>HOLDING: Pastor Nickolas Haasch from Trinity LC, Sturgis, SD</i>

#### **PNW Pastor Call Activity** (since District Convention last summer)

Dan Moll	June 2018	<i>ACCEPTED to Abiding Faith in Fort Worth, TX</i>
Ben Workentine	July 2018	<i>ACCEPTED to Associate at St. Mark in DePere, WI</i>
Fred Voss	August 2018	<i>RETURNED to Trinity in El Paso, TX</i>
Jason Strong	September 2018	<i>RETURNED to Associate at Christ/St. John LaCrosse, WI</i>
Bryan Schwarz	October 2018	<i>RETURNED to Christian Giving Counselor, S.Atl./SC Districts</i>

<i>Thad Bitter</i>	<i>October 2018</i>	<i>RETURNED to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, WI</i>
<i>Andrew Schwartz</i>	<i>November 2018</i>	<i>RETURNED to Recruiter at Mich. Luth. Sem., Saginaw, MI</i>
<i>Matthew Zimpelmann</i>	<i>December 2018</i>	<i>RETURNED to Associate at St. Paul LC, Onalaska, WI</i>
<i>Brian Hackmann</i>	<i>Nov. 18, 2018</i>	<i>HOLDING to Associate at Grace LC, Milwaukee, WI</i>

### **PNW Teachers**

<i>Heidi Kruger</i>	<i>May 2018 MLC</i>	<i>Faith LS, Anchorage, AK (Inst. 7.1.18)</i>
<i>Heidi Moldenhauer</i>	<i>May 2018 MLC</i>	<i>Faith LS, Tacoma, WA (Inst. 8.26.18)</i>
<i>Megan Lemke</i>	<i>May 2018 MLC</i>	<i>Grace LS, Portland, OR (Inst. 7.15.18)</i>
<i>Vincent Hallwas</i>	<i>May 2018 MLC</i>	<i>Christ the King LS, Bremerton, WA (PTP – 3yrs.) (Inst. 7.15.18)</i>
<i>Travis Kretsch</i>	<i>May 2018 MLC</i>	<i>Immanuel LS, Salem, OR (1 yr.) (Inst. 8.5.18)</i>
<i>Elizabeth Henning</i>	<i>May 2018 MLC</i>	<i>Holy Trinity LS, Des Moines, WA (1 yr.) (Inst. 9.9.18)</i>
<i>Molly Phelps</i>	<i>June 2018</i>	<i>Grace LS, Kenai, AK (part-time K)</i>
<i>Jason Gibson</i>	<i>July 2018</i>	<i>Holy Trinity LS, Des Moines, WA (Inst. 9.9.18)</i>
<i>Beth Humann</i>	<i>July 2018</i>	<i>Holy Trinity LS, Des Moines, WA (permanent) (Inst. 9.9.18)</i>
<i>Nicole Habeck</i>	<i>July 2018</i>	<i>Faith Preschool, Tacoma, WA (1 yr.) (Inst. 8.26.18)</i>
<i>Nicole Hintz</i>	<i>July 2018</i>	<i>Christ the King Preschool, Bremerton, WA (Inst. 7.15.18)</i>
<i>Terri Morris</i>	<i>July 2018</i>	<i>Immanuel PreK Director, Salem, OR (1 yr.) (Inst. 8.5.18)</i>
<i>Joanna Hafner</i>	<i>August 2018</i>	<i>From LH PreK, Redmond, WA to Grace (lower gr.), Portland, OR (Inst. 9.16.18)</i>
<i>Joe Schudlach</i>	<i>October 2018</i>	<i>Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA (final 3 quarters, 1 yr.) (Inst. 10.23.18)</i>

### **PNW Teacher Vacancies (4)**

<i>Holy Trinity LS, Des Moines, WA</i>	<i>Dec. 2, 2018</i>	<i>HOLDING: George Hella II, Carlsbad, CA, Gr. 5-6, AD, Coach</i>
<i>Holy Trinity LS, Des Moines, WA</i>	<i>Dec. 2, 2018</i>	<i>HOLDING: Jessica Martinez, Milwaukee, WI, Gr. 2, Coach</i>
<i>Grace LS, Kenai, AK</i>	<i>Dec. 16, 2018</i>	<i>HOLDING: Daniel Busch, Burton, MI, Principal, 5-8</i>
<i>Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA</i>	<i>Dec. 18, 2018</i>	<i>HOLDING: Joe Schudlach from ELHS, Span., Recr., Coach permanent call</i>

### **PNW Teacher Call Activity**

<i>Kristen Koepsell</i>	<i>August 2018</i>	<i>RETURNED to Staff Min., Christ the Lord LC, Cottage Grove, MN</i>
<i>John Sebald</i>	<i>September 2018</i>	<i>ACCEPTED to Developm. Dir., Wisc. LHS, Milwaukee, WI</i>
<i>Ryan Holper</i>	<i>November 2018</i>	<i>ACCEPTED to Recruiter/Teacher, Manitowoc LHS</i>
<i>Katie Rath</i>	<i>November 2018</i>	<i>RETURNED to Apostles LS, San Jose, CA, Gr. 4</i>
<i>Paul Leifer</i>	<i>Nov. 28, 2018</i>	<i>HOLDING to St. Paul LS, Livonia, MI, Principal</i>
<i>Rachel Taasaas</i>	<i>Nov. 29, 2018</i>	<i>HOLDING to Mt. Calvary LS, Redding, CA, K-1</i>

### **District and Synod Notes**

**Earthquake in Alaska** – This past November 30, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck just north of Anchorage in what has become known as the Ring of Fire which sees over 80% of the world’s largest earthquakes. Many aftershocks are still being recorded. Despite the power of this quake, national news coverage was minimal. This is likely because there wasn’t a great loss of life. The damage caused to property, however, is still being assessed. I reached out to the group of pastors in Alaska shortly after the initial quake. Workers and members from our churches and schools seem to be doing okay. There were a fair amount of bookshelves spilled,

cupboards emptied, and wall-hangings that fell. Many members seemed to endure some structural bumps and bruises at their homes. Peace LC in Eagle River got hit with heavier building damage. The drywall in their church cracked and many pieces fell off. Not only were they relatively close to the center of the quake, but Peace sits on a cliff and overlooks the town/bay. So, their vibrations were probably amplified a tad. Estimated damage at Peace was ~\$40,000. Without earthquake insurance, WELS Christian Aid and Relief was willing to approve assistance for the majority of that request. We thank God for that blessing and we continue to keep Peace and all our AK brothers and sisters in our prayers as they recover.

**Multi-Site Considerations** – With ongoing pastoral vacancies on the rise in WELS and a handful of empty pulpits in the PNW, several of our churches are studying their options which include partnering with one another or our District Mission Board. The second WELS multi-site conference was held this past November. A couple of our pastors attended the conference in Pewaukee, WI, to glean ideas. Grace/Salem in Seattle has already partnered with our District Mission Board. Pastor Kent Reeder, who accepted that call will also be collaborating with a WELS church on the east coast in efforts to share ideas as they spread the gospel to the urban professionals in Seattle. Divine Peace in Renton and Holy Trinity in Des Moines are talking about what positive staff and outreach possibilities exist in partnering (Pastor Tom Voss is the vacancy pastor at Renton). Our District leadership has met with members at Tigard, OR as they continue to wrestle with their options and plans (Pastor Thad Bitter is the vacancy pastor in Tigard). We continue to pray for these churches that their plans will be blessed to further the proclamation of the gospel in efficient ways by sharing staff and being creative with limited funds.

**East Asia World Mission Field** – Pastor Jon Leach accepted the call to be associate missionary at Truth in Love Ministry in Nampa, ID. He will be working alongside Pastor Mark Cares. He also happens to be the Chairman of the EAsia Administrative Cmt. As such, the oversight of this WELS World Mission field falls under the PNW District. For this reason, we will list calling activity from this field in our reports. It so happens that Pastor Aaron West, our new pastor at St. Matthew in Spokane, WA, also came to our district from Asia Lutheran Seminary. He is also a good resource for the work we are doing in this world field and in Hong Kong at ALS. Feel free to ask either of these men for more details or to discuss our gospel work in China.

**Gospel Opportunity in Vietnam** – The Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC), a Christian church body in Vietnam which had been without trained pastors for 50 years, has become an unexpected opportunity for the spread of the gospel. Through WELS Pastor Bounkeo Lor, who traveled to Vietnam at their invitation, over 60 of their leaders have been in training the past several years to learn Biblical truth and the true meaning of the Gospel.

In the meantime, the HFC has swelled from approximately 65,000 to 100,000 members. The construction of a facility to train leaders and instruct them in Scriptural truth is in the planning stages. Construction may begin soon and may be completed in early 2019 at the cost of approximately \$500,000 with an annual budget for training of about the same amount. The Vietnam government has given its approval and support for this training. While we recognize there is a risk to this commitment, there is also agreement that this Gospel opportunity is too good to pass by.

**World Mission Milestones** – The Ukrainian Church recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the Apache World Mission its 125<sup>th</sup>. The Apache Mission consists of eight congregations, one preaching station and two Lutheran elementary schools on the White Mountain Apache Reservation and the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona. History of the missions begins during the closing days of Geronimo with the arrival of WELS missionaries Adascheck and Plocher. You can learn more on their website: [www.nativechristians.org/](http://www.nativechristians.org/) The Apache Lutheran churches are currently training future leaders for work as evangelists, teachers, and pastors through the Apache Christian Training School located at the East Fork Mission.

**WELS Mission Journeys** – Mission Journeys is a program for WELS members over the age of 13. This program is designed for both lay people and called workers, to give all members the opportunity to experience a

mission trip. This program for short-term mission trips to WELS mission fields at home and abroad has a link that answers questions about who, what, where. Applications are also available here. This new effort provides opportunities for members to engage in Christian service. Visit: [wels.net/missionjourneys/](http://wels.net/missionjourneys/)

**WELS Ministerial Ed School Enrollment** – Enrollment this year at WELS schools is stable. We note with thanksgiving that 70 students are enrolled in the pastor track at Martin Luther College, the highest enrollment in years.

Year	Vacant Parishes	Total Pastoral Vacancies	Retirements
2013	45	55	33
2014	55	64	30
2015	62	77	42
2016	85	98	43
2017	98	115	47
2018	106	121	31 - YTD

**Pastoral Vacancies** – You can see the steady increase in pastoral vacancies. The need to encourage our young people to consider the preaching or teaching ministry is evident. Consider the gifts of the young people in your congregations. Just as we encourage Christian education on every level, continue to encourage our grade school and high school students to consider service in the public ministry of the Gospel. Thanks for being an encourager!

**Teacher Vacancies (?) Requests and Forms** – teacher vacancies in the district, like the Synod, are too difficult to tabulate. Current needs are being covered at this time. In some cases, current staffing is temporary. (Considerations that affect teaching vacancies: retirements, part-time service, grade / staff adjustments, 1 yr. call expirations. Schools will be studying and determining their local needs over the next months in preparation for the next year 2019-2020) This is a good time to remind church/school leaders that with the teacher call window opened (as of Nov. 1, 2018), **requests** for teacher call lists should be submitted online at <http://wels.net/callrequest> and I should be notified ahead of time that you are requesting a list and submitting that form. We would set up a call meeting date at that time. Thanks in advance for that good communication.

**Pastor and Teacher Self-Assessment Forms** – This is also a good opportunity to bring to mind that our Synod data-base for pastors and teachers serves as one key tool in developing call lists and providing accurate information for calling bodies at call meetings. If you haven't already done so, please update your contact info whenever there is a change (address, phone, birth, etc) and also update your self-evaluation forms annually with review by your Circuit Pastor, Principal or ECE Director. Go to: <http://cloud.wels.net/me>

**Mission & Ministry Sunday** – Intended to be a celebration of God's blessings to and through his church, and also an opportunity to renew our commitment to "go and make disciples of all nations." *Mission and Ministry Sunday* was recommended to be held on Sunday, October 21, 2018. Of course, if you didn't have the chance to enjoy this emphasis in worship or Bible class – it's not too late. You may choose to identify a Sunday this winter during the Epiphany Season. Some resources are available at: [mcg.welsrc.net/download-mcg/mission-ministry-general/](http://mcg.welsrc.net/download-mcg/mission-ministry-general/)

**Evangelism** – New WELS Director of Evangelism, Pastor Eric Roecker, is getting his feet on the ground after being installed in August. He indicates that a focus on personal evangelism is one of his goals for WELS members. He'd like to make sharing faith and personal invitations to worship or Bible study as natural to our members as attending on Sunday morning and offering our gifts to God. We are also thankful for the many years of service that Pastor Mike Hintz gave to our Synod in this role.

**Calvary Academy** – Located near Lakeland, Florida, Calvary Academy was a boarding school for troubled teens. It was a para-synodical ministry, meaning that while its ministry was carried out and supported by WELS members it was not operated by the synod or a part of the synod's ministry or budget. Several months ago, Calvary Academy ceased operations and declared Chapter 128 bankruptcy. A lawyer has been appointed by

the court to liquidate assets in order to pay creditors. If you (or someone you know) are currently sending gifts, please *do not send gifts any longer!* The court has indicated that any gifts received will be forwarded to a different organization. Likewise, if you (or someone you know) have included Calvary Academy in an estate plan, we strongly encourage steps to remove Calvary Academy from your will. Thank you!

**Christian Standard Bible (CSB) Review** – Translation Review Committee, through more than 100 reviewers (WELS pastors and professors), has concluded its review of CSB. The report indicates that it is a translation that is highly faithful to the original texts and speaks in clear, readable English. While no translation meets every standard, it is clear that the translation team regarded the entire Greek and Hebrew Scriptures as the very words of God and sought to reproduce them in English without letting their personal beliefs and opinions unduly color their work. Chairman Pastor John Vieths: *“We believe we can recommend the Christian Standard Bible for reading, preaching and teaching in our church.”* A full report will be available in the future.

**ELS / WELS Forum** – A forum was held at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM), October 16-17. The bi-annual forum is intended to offer opportunity for communication between the two church bodies in various areas of ministry, doctrine and church work. Representatives gathered for worship, study and discussion.

**Church of the Lutheran Confession** – The CLC in convention tabled the statement on fellowship adopted by the WELS and ELS in order to discuss it further at their conferences and circuits.

**LCMS – ELS – WELS** – A seventh meeting with LC-MS leaders was held about a month ago. The agenda included world mission updates and creation among other topics. All involved recognize that there is still a very lengthy distance to cover before *any* hope of restored fellowship could be contemplated. For a more detailed summary of the meeting, go to: <https://wels.net/leaders-els-lcms-wels-meet/>

**WELS Retirement Program** – A committee has been tasked with providing a recommendation on a future benefit retirement program that most effectively serves the synod and its workers. A proposed revision of the current pension plan, which will include both a defined benefit and a defined contribution plan, will be presented to the Synodical Council for reaction and response. Future information based upon that response will be available in the coming year.

**Congregation Mission Offering (CMO)** – We thank congregations for their generous gifts to support WELS mission and ministry! Please remind your treasurer to send in your congregation’s offerings monthly. This past October 1, all district pastors received materials for CMO subscription setting, a video, deadline info, forms and contact info to assist with all forms. If you have further questions or need that email resent, please email Pastor Matt Zimpelmann or me. We’d be happy to assist you or forward that information again.

**Two District Coordinators Appointed** – One of the challenges of a smaller district and increased vacancies is our ability to staff district positions. At its recent Praesidium Mtg. in Seattle, district leaders approved the appointment of two pastors to vacant district coordinator positions. Both have accepted their appointments: Pastor Kurt Wetzel (Cross of Christ in Boise, ID) was appointed to be our new District Worship Coordinator. Pastor Ben Zuberbier (Trinity in Eugene, OR) was appointed to be our new District Evangelism Coordinator. We thank these men for their willingness to serve and we pray for the wisdom and strength all our district leaders.

**Two Upcoming District Conferences** – All pastors received information for our upcoming Missionaries’ Conference at Suquamish Resort in Suquamish, WA. This conference will be held at the end of January (dates below). If you need that information again, please email Pastor Craig Wasser or Pastor Brian Hackmann and they will be happy to forward that info to you. Also, pastors and teachers, keep the first Sem/MLC Summer Continuing Education Conference at ELHS (replaces our Distr. Delegate Conf.) on your radar. This will take

place the week of June 10. More information will be shared soon. Pastor Joel Nitz and Teacher Chris Hintz can provide up-to-date information if you have questions.

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

*For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. – Isaiah 9:6*

### **Important WELS and PNW Dates**

November 1, 2018	Teacher Calling Window Opens
December 9, 2018	Pastor Calling Window Closes for Christmas/NY
December 10, 2018	MLC midyear teacher grad assignments
January 6, 2019	Pastor Calling Window Opens
January 6-10, 2019	COP Winter Meetings
January 28-30, 2019	PNW Missionaries' Conference, Suquamish Resort, Suquamish, WA
March 14-15, 2019	Cascades Conference Teachers' Conf., St. Matthew, Spokane, WA
April 4-6, 2019	COP Spring Meetings, Center for Mission and Ministry
April ???, 2019	PNW Men's Retreat ??? (stay-tuned...)
May 10-11, 2019	COP Assignment Meetings at MLC
May 12, 2019	MLC commencement, assignment service
May 22, 2019	COP Vicar assignments at WLS, Vicar Call service at WLS
May 23, 2019	COP Pastor assignments at WLS
May 24, 2019	WLS assignment service, WLS graduation concert
May 25, 2019	WLS graduation
June 2, 2019	Teacher Calling Window Closes
June 8, 2019	Evergreen Luth. HS Graduation Service – 2PM
June 10-14, 2019	PNW District Pastor/Teacher Continuing Educ. Conference, ELHS
July 29 – Aug. 1, 2019	WELS Synod Convention, MLC, New Ulm, MN
October 8-11, 2019	COP Fall Meetings, Center for Mission and Ministry
October 16-18, 2019	P/T Conference, Cascades Conf., ??? (stay tuned...)
November 1, 2019	Teacher Calling Window Opens
November ???, 2019	ACPaT, Alaskan Conf., ??? (stay tuned...)