



Pacific Northwest DISTRICT

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

PNW District President's Report, Fall of 2021

Pastors-Teachers Conference, Icicle Village Resort, Leavenworth, Washington

ACPaT, Peace Lutheran Church, Eagle River, Alaska

Dear Co-Workers in Gospel Ministry,

Note these encouragements and promises from our gracious God through King David:

- Commit ourselves and our work to the LORD;
- Patiently trust him in all circumstances, even when times are challenging;
- God will bless us and carry us through our challenges;
- While we stumble, we won't fall, because of his gracious presence in Christ;
- History has proven that God will protect and provide;
- God's people encourage each other with promises from his Word, even those treasured in our hearts;
- In the end, salvation comes from our gracious Lord – praise him in your lives and in your work!

Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;

The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him;

though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.

*I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken
or their children begging bread.*

The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak what is just.

The law of their God is in their hearts; their feet do not slip.

Hope in the LORD and keep his way.

Consider the blameless, observe the upright; a future awaits those who seek peace.

The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.

(Psalm 37, selected verses)

PNW, COP and Synod News and Notes

- ✓ **Our Generous God!** We thank God during these challenging times that the ministry of our congregations and schools has continued. On this note, we join in praising God for moving the hearts of our WELS constituents in giving generously to our Synod's joint work (CMO) in 2020 and the first 3 quarters of 2021. Congregation Mission Offerings are ~7% above plan for 2021 and ~5% above actual giving for the same period in 2020. This, coupled with some reduced expenses (lesser travel, etc.), has resulted in financial blessings for our joint work. *O Give thanks to the Lord for he is good!*

- ✓ **Synod Convention** – the initial response to the altered format for last summer’s convention was positive. The reduced number of onsite attendees due to COVID, forced floor committee to do their work early via zoom. This introduced committee members to one another and prepped them well for their area of work prior to the convention. This may be a feature that will continue in some way for future conventions. 2023’s convention is scheduled for Saginaw. As promised, all 2021 delegates will have the option to be delegates again in 2023.

- ✓ **NPH – a new curriculum 22:6** (Proverbs) is in the initial planning stages by NPH. This would be a comprehensive curriculum for Lutheran Schools and Sunday Schools. Some goals would be: have complimentary materials (not overlapping), help our children meet 21st century challenges and equip them to share / defend their faith in today’s culture. Building a child’s foundation in God’s Word is the key to prepare and equip students in this world of change. This project would take 4-6 years to complete. Keep this planning and effort in your prayers. **The new hymnal** is completed. Over 56,000 have already been shipped out to schools and churches. Director, Pastor Michael Schultz and his entire committee have been thanked. Over 100 people and 13 different committees were involved in this extensive effort that took ~10 years to complete. Thanks to God and his gifted people for producing this tool for our worship and ministries. **Retirements:** President Bill Ziche and Vice President of Publishing, Curtis Jahn have announced their retirements for Dec. 31, 2021. They will assist until replacements are in place. On this note, the NPH Board of Directors began conducting a search for a replacement last July. However, to date no suitable candidate has been found. The greatest challenge in filling this position is that it requires the candidate to be a voting WELS member with experience in leading a business organization or business unit within an organization. The position is an important one as the NPH President, in collaboration with the NPH VP of Publishing, will lead the Synod’s publishing efforts forward through continuing publishing industry changes while pursuing new opportunities to meet the needs of our WELS pastors, schools, and members. The publishing house needs your help in getting the word out to eligible candidates who have a desire to utilize their business experience and skills to serve their Lord in a ministry setting. Please share this opportunity with your congregations as together, we consider men who may be qualified for this position and encourage them to apply in the careers area on wels.net.

- ✓ **World Missions** – there has been a COVID delay in the construction of the **Vietnam** facility to train future pastors of the Hmong Fellowship Church. During the delay ~60 pastors have been trained to preach and teach the saving gospel. We will learn more on the building progress in the coming months. The calling for missionary manpower is moving ahead in **London**. There is a current group of WELS members there and the plan is to reach more with the gospel. This effort will allow the European Chaplain John Hartwig to focus on serving others in Europe. Finally, sometimes our stateside churches connect with **overseas prospects** through online efforts. World Missions offers a loving caution that before bringing overseas personnel into membership, it would be wise to seek WM’s assistance to determine their potential status and fellowship with a foreign church body.

- ✓ **Home Missions** – An effort to plant **100 new missions in 10 years** was approved by the 2021 WELS convention. Over the past decades WELS opened ~60 new missions. Manpower and finances are two major factors in this plan, the former perhaps more challenging than the latter. We keep this vision and effort in our prayers. Recently, a new home mission plant was approved for financial support in Collinsville, IL. Enhancements were also approved for Crossville, TN and Summerlin, NV and unsubsidized mission status for Good Shepherd in Beloit, WI. May God bless all our congregations as they support mission work in their local congregations and across our Synod.

✓ **Principal Vacancies** as of early Oct. in WELS are ~35; additionally ~10 pastors are currently serving as principals in a permanent situation; teacher calls are now picking up again with the calling window opened; 60+ call meetings took place on October 10; 15 were planned for Oct 17; we thank God for the faithful service of the CLS Staff: Jim Rademan, Paul Patterson, Cindi Holman and their support staff members. We also are deeply grateful for the MLC staff who, together with CLS, offer great support to the DPs across our Synod to serve our schools. **Pastor Vacancies** across the synod remain high (see chart); the recent change in vacant parishes isn't a reflection of fewer vacancies but a net result of mergers and closures; in 2018, the acceptance rate for pastors accepting calls was ~22% (1 in 5 calls extended); in 2021, the acceptance rate for pastors dropped to ~12% (1 in 8 calls extended). These number totals are the DP's best estimate. Pray for workers for His harvest field!

Pastors: Year	Vacant Parishes	Total Pastoral Vacancies
2013	45	55
2014	55	64
2015	62	77
2016	85	98
2017	98	115
2018	106	121
2019	107	128
2020	122	136
2021	113	136

- ✓ **Congregational Services Resources** – pastors should not forget about this site for a variety of solid resources: <https://welscongregationalservices.net/> As our church leaders look to encourage members to return to worship, review their gospel-motivated stewardship, or do personal evangelism they will find great resources here. Of note is **The Foundation** – these are resources for pastors and congregations regarding the new hymnal. They are usable even if congregations don't purchase the new hymnal (all free)
- Worship plan that introduces the hymnal in two ways - a conservative or more aggressive approach
 - Series for sermons & worship for every season in the church year
 - Preacher's Podcast - parish pastors and Sem profs discussing a recommended sermon text
 - Daily devotions produced by Commission on Discipleship will follow weekly worship themes
 - Promotional and outreach material for all the series: professional graphics, promotional text & videos
 - School and chapel devotions based on the worship series
- ✓ **CMO Subscriptions and Statistic Gathering** – it's that time of year again when pastors and principals are asked to support and communicate 2021 fruits (stats) and 2022 gift plans. Both categories are vital to planning gospel ministry now and for the more distant future throughout our Synod. We thank our congregations for their encouragement, gifts and support. Please note the deadlines for submitting these numbers in upcoming communications from our MCG chairman, Pastor Chris Ewings. Pastors assist greatly in getting these numbers pulled together NOW so there isn't a last-minute rush to meet deadlines in Jan.
- ✓ **Pension Plan Approved** – The 2021 WELS convention approved the proposed plan to move away from a defined benefit pension program to a **defined contribution** pension program. Between now and the end of 2021, all congregations are asked to be sure their workers are enrolled in the new plan. BPO will also ensure that every called worker is enrolled in the new pension program. For more information, please see: *WELS Retirement Program: Overview of Changes for Organizations* <https://vimeo.com/625792130> Pension payments still go to the same place and BPO will forward those into each worker's plan at Hahn Financial under the new system. If you still have questions, you can ask Joshua.Peterman@wels.net
- ✓ **Equipping Christian Witnesses** – Congregations are being urged to consider an offering to the ECW campaign at Martin Luther College for a) student financial support b) new dorm on campus c) note: groundbreaking was held on April 10 for the new field house which has been fully funded. A campaign toolbox is available on MLC's website for ECW promotional materials.

- ✓ **Male and Female in God's World** – The COP has spent (and will spend more) time reviewing and revising the document based on good feedback. We want to “do it right” rather than “do it quickly.” Progress is being made to incorporate good input from around our Synod. Please pray for our COP's Doctrinal Cmt. and their work with this document. May God give them wisdom to be faithful to the Scriptures and speak clearly to our culture. Also, in response to the Synod's Convention resolution, the COP Doctrine Cmt. is pulling together resources that will serve as a biblical guide on the topic of **The Divine Call** and our current practice. More information will be shared in the future.
- ✓ **WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership** is being planned for January (Mon. 16 – Wed. 18?) 2023, at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago. An audience of 1200-1500 is being targeted (entire hotel). Cost would be similar to the last LL conference. Keep this in your prayers and pencil in those dates.
- ✓ **Calls Extended by COP** – at the October Fall Meetings, divine calls were extended to Rev. Matt Vogt to serve as an assistant congregational counselor; a new position approved by the SC to assist Congregational Services in serving churches; we extended divine calls to Rev. Mark Wessel to serve as a Christian giving counselor in Mich./N.Atl. and Rev. Stephen Hein in AZ-CA.
- ✓ **High Callings** – a pastor and teacher's high calling as a public servant of the gospel is to proclaim the gospel on behalf of their church or school and serve as Jesus' ambassador. Out of love for Jesus, we are wise to avoid posting personal viewpoints, political positions or opinions on medical issues involving Christian freedom such that our office or the name of our calling body is compromised. We never want to put an obstacle in the way of the gospel for others. This is a great discussion that called workers will want to have with their spouses as well. Thank you.
- ✓ **Personal Biography Info** - A link is available to all WELS Called Workers via [My WELS Cloud](#) to confirm and periodically update your contact and biographical information. 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. Updated AND completed bios are integral pieces of information to those who develop call lists. Thank you.
- ✓ **PNW Called Worker Personal Contact Updates** – if you have changed your cell number or updated an email in the past 6 months, please email all your updates to Deb Arstein deb.arstein@cochoise.org and cc District Secretary Dan Kramer peaceinjesuspastor@gmail.com and me pnwdp@wels.net Thank You!
- ✓ **Charts and Rates** – finally, there are updated resources available on our district website. There, you can reference / download, among other things, docs such as: <http://welspnw.weebly.com/district-resources>
 - 2021-2022 Substitute Reimbursement (honorarium) Rates
 - 2021 Mileage Reimbursement Rates
 - 2021-2022 Salary Matrix
- ✓ **Important Conference Reminders** – Please look ahead at the upcoming conference dates and please make **personal plans to accommodate attendance at our district's conferences.** (e.g. 2022 District Conv., 2023 Lutheran Leadership Conf., etc.); note that **conference costs are rising** together with other rising costs in our post-COVID climate. Churches and schools, please note this and consider budgeting accordingly. Please **beware of email scams** (phishing) and perhaps craft a communication to your congregation to proactively educate and deal with scams that might involve your pastors, principals or teachers and avoid the “panic scramble.” Email recipients should always verify BY PHONE CALL, TEXT or by using an EMAIL that you have in your CONTACTS (DO NOT reply to the scam). Called workers should never be asking for money via gift card handouts from district workers or congregation members.

WELS PNW Vacancies and Called Workers

One important aspect of the work of the district president is to assist our congregations and schools in supplying candidates for vacant pastor and teacher positions. The **following vacancies exist in our district:**

Teaching Ministry – We praise God for blessing our district with full staffs at the time of this writing. But the teacher calling window is now open and some teachers are blessed to deliberate a second divine call.

Preaching Ministry – 4 churches report a pastor vacancy:

1. Trinity LC in Omak, WA (semi-retired, vacancy being served by Pastor Bryan Schwartz)
2. Divine Peace LC in Renton, WA (vacancy being served by committee – SeaTac are pastors)
3. Good Hope/Good Faith in Ellensburg/S.Cle Elum, WA (dual parish)
(categorized as preaching stations, served by Pastor Nathan Zastrow and the Yakima pastors)
4. King of Kings in Wasilla, AK (vacancy served by Nate Wagenknecht and ANC pastors)
(our thanks to Pastor Robb Robbert for his years of service and God's blessings in MN)

Pastors Entering the PNW

Pastor Mark Parsons	Truth in Love Ministry, Nampa, ID (11.1.20)
Pastor Mark Swanson	Trinity LC in Eugene, OR (11.15.20)
Pastor Bart Brauer	Holy Trinity LC in Des Moines, WA (1.17.21)
Pastor Greg Hein	Cross of Christ LC in Boise, ID (1.24.21)
Pastor Justin Gran	Messiah LC in Nampa, ID (6.6.21)

WLS Assignments (5.20.21 – service begins in summer)

Pastor Erich Neumann	Calvary LC in Bellevue, WA (7.25.21)
Vicar Ross Gottschalk	Faith LC in Anchorage, AK, bishop: Chris Ewings (Aug. 2021-2022)
Vicar Paul Ritter	Christ the King LC in Bremerton, WA, bishop: Andy Schwartz (Aug. 2021-2022)

Teachers Entering the PNW

Teacher Ruth Schwark	Holy Trinity LS in Des Moines, WA (7.1.21)
Teacher Sherri Lueck	Holy Trinity LS in Des Moines, WA (7.1.21)
Teacher Charlotte Huebner	Holy Trinity LS in Des Moines, WA (7.1.21)
Teacher Michael Chappell	Faith PreK Dir./Teacher in Anchorage, AK (7.1.21)
Teacher Jen Keller	Grace LS in Kenai, AK (7.1.21)
Teacher Kyle Raymond	Evergreen LHS (Principal) in Tacoma, WA (7.1.21)
Teacher Christopher Denney	Evergreen LHS in Tacoma, WA (7.1.21)

MLC Assignments (5.15.21 – service begins 7.1.21)

Teacher Katelyn Parker	PreK Teacher at Faith in Tacoma, WA
Teacher Emma Turriff	PreK/K Director-Teacher at Calvary in Bellevue, WA
Teacher Sarah Hughes	PreK Director-Teacher at Little Lambs of Peace in Eagle River, AK
Teacher Erika Rosenbaum	Gr. 1-2 Teacher, Ath. Dir., Coach at St. Matthew in Spokane, WA

Pastors and Teachers Leaving the PNW

We are thankful for the faithful service of the pastors and teachers who served in the PNW through the 2021 ministry year (to present) and wish them God's richest blessings in their new roles (listed in my Summer DP Report)

† Pastor and DP Warren Widmann (Funeral Sept. 17, 2021, Grace in Portland, OR)

† Professor Richard Balge (Funeral Oct. 21, 2021, Christ Alone in Thiensville, WI)

“These are they who have come out of the Great Tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” – Rev. 7:14

Please note corrections, errors, omissions and email them to me at pnwdp@wels.net

Important District Dates, Upcoming Events

October 5-8, 2021	Fall COP Meetings at the CMM in Pewaukee, WI
October 10, 2021	WELS Teacher-Professor calling window opens
October 13-15, 2021	Past./Teacher Cascades Conf., Leavenworth, WA
October 25-26, 2021	ACPAT, (P/T Conf., AK Conf.), Peace, Eagle River, AK
Dec. 17, 2021 to Jan. 7, 2022	WELS Pastor calling window closed
January 2-6, 2022	COP Winter Meetings
February 7-9, 2022	Pastors' Missionary Conference, location? (Kennewick?)
March 17-18, 2022	Cascades Conf. Teachers' Conference, Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA
April 4-6, 2022	COP Spring Meetings
April 9-20, 2022	WELS Pastor calling window closed
April 14, 2022	WELS Teacher calling window closes until October (for active teachers)
April 2022	PNW Men's Retreat TBD
May 12-13, 2022	MLC assignment meetings
May 14, 2022	MLC graduation and call services
May 24-25, 2022	WLS assignment meeting
May 26, 2022	WLS call service
May 27, 2022	WLS graduation
June 4, 2022	Evergreen LHS graduation
June 7-8 (9), 2022	PNW District Convention at ELHS

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