



# Pacific Northwest DISTRICT

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

## PNW District President's Report, Summer of 2021

Dear Co-Workers in Gospel Ministry,

Everyone is under a different stress these days. This period of "covid recovery" means we need to personally push ourselves to get our lives back on track, returning to normal schedules and doing things the way we had been. We also need to encourage our spouses and children to return to a normal pace. But then, some communities and their partial restrictions force us to pump the brakes, then start, then maybe stop. Some businesses are open, others have revised hours, but some are still closed. These groups are functioning at full speed, those have restrictions. Gasoline, chlorine, pickle jars and pet food are in short supply. Blood and oxygen is in high demand. I would have never guessed we'd see a shortage of hot dogs or bacon. And have you seen the prices of rental cars? All this as we look for ways to get back to ordinary.

Pastors and teachers who are called to shepherd their congregations and classrooms have the additional charge of encouraging their flocks to move back to good routines. But how and when do pastors lovingly urge God's people to return to gathering in-person for worship and Bible classes? What do principals and teachers do with parents and students who have their own opinions of school policies and procedures? Summer has come at a good time. Restrictions are relaxing. Reset buttons can be pushed for better, more normal September starts to school years. Reminders from pastors have the summer to sink in – our wonderful Savior-God wants and deserves that we personally meet together, personally encourage one another (He. 10). In all of this, some aren't comfortable moving as quickly as we are. Others are moving too fast, we think. But as the body of Christ, we all must move together. It's true that there is a different stress as we recover from covid. May we all return to our routines prompted by the love of Jesus, with the patience of Jesus and with the passion to share Jesus.

Here's a thought to ponder. When we stop and think of our points of friction over the past year and a half, how much frustration came from what others are or are not doing? What percentage of our stress was/is a result of what others are posting online or the imposed guidelines of state and community leaders? At times like these when public proclaimers of God's love need to work around unique challenges, don't forget to find great joy in being personal proclaimers of God's love.

I read a story about the turbulent climate of screen productions and the stress and pressures of movie deadlines for the "box office." A man named Glen Keane is a lead Disney animator. This gifted artist drew Ariel *The Little Mermaid*, the Beast *Beauty and the Beast* and Aladdin. In those years, *Premier Magazine* listed Keane in the top 100 most powerful people in Hollywood. The pressure of his job was magnified by a different stress – a guilty conscience. Raised as a Roman Catholic, Glen Keane felt condemned by his sins and was quietly suffering from a lack of peace. Amid the din of Disney deadlines and hassle of Hollywood hubbub was a man named Ron Husband, Glen's friend... and a personal proclaimer of God's love. Ron often carried a Bible in

his stack of work things. On their lunch hour one day, Glen Keane asked Ron Husband what the Bible said “about getting to heaven.”

Ron was not a trained theologian. He simply shared what he knew. John 3:16 was his “go to” passage. God loved the world. God paid for all sins and guilty consciences by his death on the cross. Simple faith in Jesus Christ secures eternal life in heaven. It’s not something we can earn. The Holy Spirit caused the gospel truth, this comfort of forgiveness to sink in. Glen Keane is now a Christian (even *Wikipedia* says so... so it must be true). “I’m secure... I don’t need to fear judgment or hell or anything anymore,” Kean confesses. In the middle of a hostile, liberal environment and during a time of added stress, one Christian personally proclaimed God’s love in Christ to his confused friend. What joy, what peace, what victory!

The point comforts us. We’re not going to fix our world’s problems through a big mass movement. God has fixed our world’s biggest problem by sending his Son. God will continue to guide and govern this world for his glory and our good. We hold on to his promises, find comfort that we are his baptized children and thankfully and continually proclaim his gospel.

† *“Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him” (Ps. 115:3)*

† *“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more” (Is. 43:25)*

† *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt. 28:20b)*

† *“As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20)*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, may God bless us with stamina, wisdom and love as we navigate the waters of public ministry in our communities and return to a more normal schedule. Meanwhile, never stop personally proclaiming the simple gospel message in one-on-one conversations. Shut-ins, prospects over coffee/phone, parents researching new schools for their kids, unchurched friends – people are looking for peace – in Christ Jesus we have what they need.

May God bless our summers of resting in and proclaiming Jesus,

jws

*Wikipedia, Glen Keane, Personal Life*  
*“The Man Who Brought Pocahontas to Life” Christian Reader, July/Aug. 1995, p. 41, Kevin Dale Miller*  
*“Once Upon a Time,” Interview, Christianity Today, March 29, 2011*

## **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** – while several teachers are serving in provisional calls until they complete their WELS certification, we have no reported teaching vacancies among our schools in the PNW. Of course, we have recently passed Assignment Day at MLC where we were once again blessed with a team of gifted teachers to our district. Likewise, by now schools have worked to finalize their faculty positions in preparation for next school year. But in summary, we praise God for blessing our district with full staffs at the time of this writing.

**Preaching Ministry** – two churches report a pastor vacancy:

1. Trinity LC in Omak, WA (vacancy being handled by Pastor Bryan Schwartz)
2. Divine Peace LC in Renton, WA (vacancy being handled by committee – SeaTac are pastors)

The dual parish of Good Hope/Good Faith, Ellensburg/S. Cle Elum, WA has been functioning as a preaching station served by the Yakima pastors (vacancy coordinating shepherd: Pastor Nathan Zastrow, Grace, Yakima).

To my knowledge, at present time **no called workers from our district are holding calls.**

**All Called Workers Nov. 1, 2020 to June 15, 2021 (picking up from October's Fall DP Report)**

**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)**

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)

**Pastors Leaving the PNW**

Pastor Noah Herrmann	Calvary LC in Bellevue, WA to Our Savior LC in Longmont, CO (4.30.21)
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**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 Made Permanent (5.15.21)**

Teacher Emily Muir	Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA (5.15.21)
PTP Vincent West-Hallwas	Christ the King LS in Bremerton, WA (5.15.21)

**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 (8.29.21)
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

**Teachers Leaving the PNW**

Teacher Megan Rodmyre	PreK Director/Teacher at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA, (resigned – 12.31.20)
Teacher Carissa Friebe	PreK Teacher at Little Lambs of Peace, Eagle River, AK, (1 yr. – 6.30.21)
Teacher Stephanie Rockhoff	PreK Director/Teacher at Faith, Anchorage, AK (resigned – 6.30.21)
Teacher Amanda Edwards	PreK Dir./Teacher at Calvary, Bellevue, WA to Peace, Sun Prairie, WI (6.30.21)
Teacher Phil Bunkowske	Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA to St. Croix LHS, W. St. Paul, MN (6.30.21)

Teacher Mary Kurbis	Faith, Tacoma, WA, retiring, 6.30.21
Teacher Beth Humann	Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA, retiring, 6.30.21
Teacher Dave Habeck	(Vacancy Principal) Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA, retiring, 6.30.21

Please note corrections, errors, omissions and email them to me at [pnwdp@wels.net](mailto:pnwdp@wels.net)

### Teachers, MLC Assignment Day and Graduation 2021 “By the Numbers”

- † Inside the calling window Oct.-Apr., 888 teacher call lists were populated throughout the Synod for active teachers (over 900 total); ~40 principal vacancies in the Synod leading into MLC’s Assign. Days;
- † At MLC, there were 92 teacher candidates who could go anywhere (Cat. 1) and all of them were assigned;
- † In addition, 74 teacher candidates were limited geographically (marriage, etc., Cat. 4), they too received calls;
- † Finally, 2 staff ministry candidates were also assigned;
- † 168 candidates were blessed to be assigned and have the privilege of teaching in God’s full-time gospel ministry;
- † After the Assignment Committee met, there were a minimum of 90 total vacant classroom positions for teacher-trained men and women synod-wide;
- † Of those 90, 57 schools brought call requests to the 2021 Assignment Cmt., but went home empty;
- † On June 1, 2021, the final emergency teacher request was made and accepted from MLC’s allotted number in the senior class (2022);
  
- † 35 men graduated in the pre-seminary program (pastor-track; 33 with a Bachelor of Arts degree and 2 with Seminary Certification);
- † 20 WELS teachers received their Master’s Degrees in Education.

### WLS Assignment Day and Graduation 2021 “By the Numbers”

- † In the Assignment Committee at WLS this year, there were 74 requests for pastor candidates;
- † There were 33 candidates available and all of them were assigned;
- † 41 churches’ requests went unfilled;
- † After the Assignment Committee did its work, there are still 95 vacancies synod-wide for pastor-trained men, an ~8% vacancy rate.

We continue to trust the Lord to bless our ministries and supply us with workers as he sees fit. This also, however, again highlights our Savior’s encouragement to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field. *“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few”* (Mt. 9:37b-38). **Recruitment is our privilege.** I forwarded to you an email from MLC Admissions/Coach, Mark Stein (also at bottom of report). Our pastors and teachers have a close connection to all, especially home-schooled or public school students in our congregations. Please encourage ALL and consider forwarding names to MLC / Mark Stein.

### PNW, COP and Synod News and Notes

- ✓ **God is good!** We thank God during these challenging times that the ministry of our congregations has continued, though in a unique and differing way than we’re accustomed to. There have been challenges, but none have been insurmountable for our generous and powerful God. 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 half of 2021. I don’t have up-to-date figures, but God’s people in WELS have given ~2.0% increase to our Savior for his work during this time. That, coupled with some reduced expenses, has been a blessing to our joint work. O Give thanks to the Lord for he is good! *Many reasons to be thankful!*

- ✓ **Christian Aid & Relief** is working with congregations to provide matching funds up to \$2,500 for pandemic relief to those in your community in need. 414-256-3204 daniel.sims@wels.net
- ✓ **Congregational Services Resources** - <https://welscongregationalservices.net/> **Stewardship Initiative, A God-Lived Life**, on the Congregational Services website. It's recommended that congregations make use of the "10 for 10" initiative before employing a "God Lived Life." The response to "10 for 10" has been encouraging. **Return to Worship - God's People Gather** will include a paper for pastoral circuits to study and a talk-piece for church leaders to assist with encouraging a return to worship. **Hymnal Introduction - The Foundation** is an effort to launch our new hymnal. It will include worship planning resources, evangelism, discipleship and school resources for every weekend of the year.
- ✓ **Synod Convention** website is active. The Book of Reports and Memorials (BORAM) is available online and, by now, you should have received a hard copy as well. Pastors who have delegates, please touch base with them to be sure they have access to the sections pertaining to their floor committee. By now, those meetings have been scheduled/starting.
- ✓ **Statistic Gathering** - Nearly 95% of our congregations complied with our statistical submission effort. We thank congregations for their efforts in providing information on God's blessings.
- ✓ **CMO subscriptions** submitted for 2021 was nearly same as last year. We thank our congregations for their encouragement and gifts.
- ✓ **"Minister of the Gospel"** status applies to Teachers (male and female) and to Congregational Assistants who are called by the local congregation and have completed or are in the process of completing ministry certification through MLC. This means that those meeting this qualification are entitled to the Minister of the Gospel Housing Allowance under section 107 of the IRS Code.
- ✓ **Teacher Call Window** change has been made permanent. The specific dates will be set by the COP for each year. The dates for the 2021-22 school year will be October 10 – April 14.
- ✓ **Social Media** – Remember our primary callings as servants of the gospel. Use social media for outreach and posting blessings. However, don't let a viewpoint on \_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) undermine our ministry and chief calling of bringing Christ to others and serving as his mouthpiece. We don't want to put an obstacle in anyone's way of the gospel.
- ✓ **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 a new field house which has been fully funded. Campaign toolbox is available on MLC's website for ECW promotional materials.
- ✓ **WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership** is being planned for January 2023 in Chicago.
- ✓ **Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC)** plans to coordinate with Circuit Pastors to provide materials later this summer for assisting congregations who are looking to review their ministry. The materials will offer: 1) Bible study 2) Review/Analysis 3) Ministry Discussion 4) Planning Activity.
- ✓ **Member Assistance Program** – Christian Family Solutions offers counseling services to members of our congregations and called workers. The hourly rate for sessions has increased to \$75 – 1st increase since this program began in 2007. Sessions are invoiced quarterly to congregations. Prompt payments by congregations are appreciated; gifts from members can be encouraged; called workers can also email my office if they have questions.
- ✓ **WELS Convention** – Floor Committees are meeting now (June, via Zoom) in order to complete their work by July 4 so that resolutions may be reviewed prior to the convention. Elections will be held online. There will be approximately 75 delegates in-person. The entire convention will be live-streamed.
- ✓ **Pension Plan Proposal** – per an email I sent out a couple of weeks ago, Synodical Council has provided a pension video to called workers to answer and address questions and concerns at: <https://welsbpo.net/proposed-changes-to-wels-retirement-program-2021/>. Please review and list any questions you may have that are unaddressed by the video. Questions can be forwarded to [Joshua.Peterman@wels.net](mailto:Joshua.Peterman@wels.net) The proposal will be presented to the 2021 WELS Convention seeking approval.

- ✓ **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.
- ✓ **Church and School Records** - Pastors and Principals are reminded to keep your church and school records accurate and current. This will assist your ministry planning and annual stats submission.
- ✓ **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@cocboise.org](mailto:deb.arstein@cocboise.org) and cc District Secretary Dan Kramer [peaceinjesuspastor@gmail.com](mailto:peaceinjesuspastor@gmail.com) and me [pnwdp@wels.net](mailto:pnwdp@wels.net) please, thank you.
- ✓ **Male and Female in God's World** – The COP has spent (and will spend more) time reviewing and revising the document based on feedback. We want to “do it right” rather than “do it quickly.” Please pray for those who are working directly with the document. May God give them wisdom to be faithful to the Scriptures and speak clearly to our culture.
- ✓ **The COP Discussed the Equality Act** – a bill before Congress that could potentially place serious restrictions on our ability to preach and teach the Word of God faithfully. A letter was e-mailed to all called workers and to lay members on the synod's e-mail list alerting them to this potential threat and encouraging WELS members to exercise their rights as Christian citizens to contact their representatives, pray, vote. The COP will be monitoring this law and responding to government action when necessary.
- ✓ **World Missions** - had a wonderful year in that God moved his people to be very generous with special gifts to our world division. A world missionary from the Seminary class (2021) was assigned to Thailand.
- ✓ **Home Missions** - likewise, due to strong individual and CMO gifts, is providing funding for 4 new mission starts (Waco, TX; Durham, NC; Parrish, FL; Dickinson, ND) and offering financial support to 3 existing (Willoughby, OH; Hutton, TX; Summerlin, NV). Please keep both Home and World Mission efforts in your prayers as we look ahead.
- ✓ **Worker Training** (Bd. for Ministerial Education) at our 4 schools is being blessed. Fall enrollments have been impacted by COVID concerns. Financially, all our schools are on solid ground. PPP funds and CMOs have contributed to this blessing.
- ✓ **Christian Funerals** – for those old-timers who went to school at Northwestern Prep/College, they recall the names of God's servants, Rev. Edward Lindemann and Mr. Willis Hanke. Dean Lindemann was called home to heaven on April 29, Christian funeral on May 7; Chef Hanke was called home to heaven on May 18, Christian funeral on May 24. Jesus is our peace and our victory!
- ✓ **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

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

### **Important Dates, Upcoming Events**

June 14-15, 2021	Teacher's MLC Continuing Educ. Course, Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA
June 15-17, 2021	Pastors' Missionary Conference, Suquamish, WA
July 26-28, 2021	WELS Conv., LPS, Watertown, WI (virtual, committee leaders in-person)
August 13, 2021	PNW New Teacher Welcome Seminar, Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA
October 5-8, 2021	COP Fall Meetings

October 10, 2021	WELS Teacher-Professor Calling Window Opens
October 13-15, 2021	Past./Teacher Cascades Conf., Great Wolf Lodge, Centralia, WA
October 25-26, 2021	ACPaT, (P/T Conf., AK Conf.), King of Kings, Wasilla, AK
January 2-6, 2022	COP Winter Meetings
Jan. 24-26 OR Feb. 7-9, 2022	Pastors' Missionary Conference ??
March 17-18, 2022	Cascades Conf. Teachers' Conference, Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA
April 4-6, 2022	COP Spring Meetings
April 14, 2022	WELS Teacher-Profess. Calling Window (closes midnight, active teachers)
April 2022	PNW Men's Retreat TBD

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## RECRUITMENT EMAIL

## NAMES REQUESTED

## MLC's OFFER TO VISIT

Gentlemen:

My name is Mark Stein. I am the Head Football coach at MLC.

Thank you for your support of MLC ministry and MLC Football! God has truly blessed our ministry through football. What a blessing to serve in this new role as the full-time Head Football Coach at MLC!

As the MLC Admissions Director and MLC Head Football Coach, I have focused on the ALHS and Prep schools for football/ministry recruitment in the past five years. The goal has been and will continue to recruit male leaders for the church using football.

Pres. Gurgel (MLC) asked me to become the first full-time Head Football Coach in October 2020. I started in that new role this summer. As part of this new endeavor, I will be focusing on **public school and homeschool** WELS football players not attending an ALHS or Prep school. The vast majority of our WELS high school students go to a public school or are homeschooled. Estimates say that about 7000 students attend our ALHS/Prep school system, and 15,000 students attend public school or are homeschooled.

**This email aims to ask you and your district/circuit for contact information and/or a personal meeting with potential MLC students interested in playing college football.**

Please know that the focus of this is to use the blessings of a successful football program as the "carrot" for young men to consider ministry. Also, please know that this is a common practice at the university/college level. We are also hoping to continue this in other programs throughout MLC Athletics.

MLC Football is currently the 2-time defending **UMAC Champion**, has been in the **NCAA Championship playoffs** the last two years, and we are currently ranked in the **Top 25 in the country in D3**. We are truly blessed!

What is more exciting than any of that is that we have many young men considering to be pastors, teachers, or staff ministers in the WELS. In 2015 the program had 27 players; now, **we are blessed to have between 60-70 young men going into the 2021 season.** All of these young men are considering ministry!!! We need more!!!

I hope you understand the purpose and direction the MLC Football program is built on and pray that we continue to go. Our three **GOALS** are:

**Serve.**  
**Trust.**  
**WIN!**

Those three goals have been successful in the MLC Football program. But even more, they lead into ministry.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you can support our endeavor with contact information and/or a meeting with these young men. I can be in the Pacific NW District this summer! **Contact me at this email or on the number below with any questions or prospects.** Individual (or individual family) meetings work best. According to the NCAA, I can speak with students that will be Jr or Sr next school year (2021-22). If there happens to be someone unsure where they will go next fall and are candidates/players, I would love to talk to them!

God Bless and GO KNIGHTS!!!

Mark Stein  
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Martin Luther College  
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