



# Pacific Northwest **DISTRICT**

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

## **District President's Report PNW District Delegate Conference June 11-12, 2015**

### **Dear District Delegates and Co-workers:**

*“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things” (6:30-34).*

Jesus had tremendous passion for people. It was a passion for people that led him to share his message, *“Repent and believe the good news”* (Mark 1:15). He encouraged people to examine their lives to see the wrong they had done and to turn back to him for forgiveness. Jesus’ message also came with authority and power. The blind received their sight, the lame walked, those who had leprosy were cured and the good news was preached to the poor (Mt. 11:5). People couldn’t seem to get enough of Jesus’ message and his miracles.

It was a passion for people that moved Jesus to enlist the help of his apostles. They went throughout the countryside and shared Jesus’ message and performed miraculous signs as well. The work was becoming so overwhelming that Jesus tried to get his apostles some rest. They went by boat to a place on the far side of the Sea of Galilee, but the people even followed them there. His passion for people, lost in the darkness of sin and death, moved him to give up his personal quiet time to lead them into the wonderful light of God’s forgiveness and life.

Jesus’ passion for people led him to the cross of Calvary. It was there that Jesus suffered and died to pay for the sins of all people, people he so dearly loved... people like you and me. Three short days after he was punished in our place, Jesus walked out of his tomb and declared victory over sin and death forever. This victory is one that Jesus shares with all mankind. So, he equips and sends his servants to share it.

Today, Jesus’ passion for people changes our hearts by his Spirit, draws some to prepare for full-time gospel ministry, draws others to work as congregational leaders, moves him to extend Calls to workers to spread his saving message. This past May, 86 teachers and 44 pastors presented themselves for assignment – filled with passion to begin their gospel ministry. What is more, about 42 schools and 12 churches wanted a teacher or pastor – but didn’t get one because while the harvest is plentiful – the workers are few. It’s at times like these that we remember to thank God for the blessing of Called workers. It’s at times like these that we remember

to consider encouraging more young men and women to consider full-time service for the Lord. And it's at times like these that we pastors and teachers reflect on what a privilege it is to hold a Divine Call as "full-time enlisted workers" for our Savior. We who follow Jesus Christ continue to have a passion for people and we thankfully continue to strive for excellence in our work. The Holy Spirit fuels our hearts to see the physical and social needs of others and want to help them, and more than that, we are passionate about sharing Jesus' good news of forgiveness. This good news not only brings comfort in this life, but a promise of eternal life with God in heaven. Brothers, as we do God's work at this conference, may we do so with great passion for our Savior, for his Baptized people and for the lost!

### **The Goals of This Conference – "One in Christ!"**

"One in Christ" is this year's Synod Convention theme. So we gather under the same theme here as a District. We cherish our unity in faith, unity in mission and unity in Christian love for one another. Our goals for this conference are straight-forward:

**We are here to be enriched** – Per our church's mission and the Means of Grace which defines and motivates us to carry out our mission – we are here to spend some time in God's Word. Some of us were able to arrive a little early this week and enjoy the study of Ezekiel with Prof. Doug Lange (MLC). The Pastors' Institute on Tue. and Wed. reminded us of "God's Faithfulness in Troubled Times." We were blessed to gather – "one in Christ" – in our worship service this morning with God's gift of Holy Communion. And we have invited Prof. Jeff Schone to lead our Conference Presentation – noting God's love in the OT laws, God's love in fulfilling them for us in Christ and what we can learn from them for our lives as thankful NT believers.

**We are here to build each other up** – Fellowship has always been an important blessing of district conferences. Here we are able to trade ideas, pick each other's brains, confess our struggles, lift up, support and get to know one another better. Whether during a break, over a meal or at our evening after-glow – we hope everyone will take advantage of our unity of faith and join together in love for one another.

**We are here to inform and be informed** – A primary task of this PNW District Delegate Conference is to review the work that will come before our Synod's Convention later this summer. That work is summarized in the *Book of Reports & Memorials* (BORAM). Everyone has been encouraged to read BORAM (online / booklet).

There are a variety of ways to discuss BORAM. Some districts do this at the circuit level. Some convene and form floor committees and discuss it in "small group" format. Because of our District's manageable size, we have – of late – taken to reviewing it as one body in plenary session. This particular year appears to be, as one person put it, a "quiet year." This is a good thing. Not too many years ago at these conferences, we prepared for our Synod's Conventions by wrestling with painful subjects like budget cuts, proposed school closures, heart-wrenching decisions on Bible translations, etc. This year we are thankful for God's continued blessings on our church body and that no major changes are being called for. There will be the regular budget proposed by the Synodical Council for the next biennium. There are some minor recommendations suggested by the "Ad Hoc 2 Commission" and 4 memorials suggested for consideration.

It's important for us to note that any official decision that will be made from issues in BORAM will be made at the *Synod Convention*. Our role is to be informed. Our role is to pray for our leaders and our Synod. Should there be an issue where we, as a District, feel so strongly about – then we could choose to craft and pass our own memorial to the Synod. When no major changes are being called for, however, then generally it's sufficient for our own PNW Delegates who are attending the 2015 Synod Convention to be informed on the issues and perhaps hear our district brothers' express pros and cons on the issues. All of this, so our PNW Synod Delegates can be informed and prepared for their upcoming service at the next level and cast informed votes.

## Our PNW District Delegates to the 2015 Synod Convention

So then, it's important that we note our own District's Delegates to the upcoming Synod Convention. The Convention will be held at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, MI from July 27-30, 2015.

**PASTOR DELEGATES:** Tom Gumm – Grace, Seattle, WA / Salem, Edmonds, WA  
Gary Kraklow – Peace, Vancouver, WA  
Fred Voss – Shepherd of the Hills, Anchorage, AK  
Dan Kramer – Peace in Jesus, Boise, ID

**TEACHER / STAFF MINISTER DELEGATES:** Allen Ash – Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, WA  
David Malnes – Truth in Love Ministries, Nampa, ID

**LAY-LEADER DELEGATES:** James Bennington – Calvary, Bellevue, WA  
Harold Wellnitz – Grace, Kenai, AK  
Brian Saatkamp – Grace, Portland, OR  
Lance Barton – Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA  
Earl Lackey – King of Kings, Wasilla, AK  
David Stuhlmiller – Our Savior, E. Wenatchee, WA  
Kim Starling – Salem, Edmonds, WA

All of you, our PNW District Delegates at this gathering, are invited and encouraged to share your thoughts regarding items in BORAM with the above PNW Synod Delegates who will be attending July's Convention. While no Synod Convention Delegate is bound by decisions from his summer district gathering (all are free to vote as they choose) – still, a wise and loving delegate will listen to his district brothers and weigh carefully the comments that are made. And so, we pray that at this conference, the Lord will:

- guide the discussions we share here;
- enrich our faiths through his Word, and;
- build each other up through our fellowship in Christ...

...for we, by God's grace, are "One in Christ!"

## PNW District Called Worker Updates

Officially, we record our District's assignments, installations, dedications and anniversaries at our District *Convention* (in even years). But so that I can keep accurate records, below is listed the activity of this past year. I ask that you look through the lists and note any omissions, corrections or additions, deletions. Please share any changes *by writing them on a piece of paper and giving them to our 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, Pastor Jeremy Schulz*. He will then turn those corrections in to me.

The following PNW Pastors and Teachers have held one or more Divine Calls since July 2014. They have returned those Calls to remain in the PNW and serve at their current locations of service and for this – we are thankful. **PASTORS Joel Nitz, Tom Voss, Rob Guenther, Jeremy Schulz, Daniel Lange, Fred Schleg, Matt Zimpelmann, Tim Schwartz, Brian Hackmann, Howie Mohlke and TEACHERS Angela Schwartz, Rachel Taasaas, Ryan Holper and Josh Roth.**

### **Pastors INTO the PNW**

Edward Frey to Messiah, Nampa, ID as Associate Pastor (June 29)  
Kevin Schultz to St. Matthew, Spokane, WA as Associate Pastor (June 29)  
Noah Herrmann to Calvary, Bellevue, WA (August 3)  
Ben Workentine to Cross of Christ, Boise, ID as Grad. Associate Pastor (August 24 – ord./inst.)

Geoff Cortright to Saviour of the Nations, Vancouver, BC (September 14)  
Timothy Wilkens to King of Kings, Kennewick, WA (March 8)  
David Salinas to Grace, Yakima, WA (April) Call made permanent  
James Getka to Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA as Campus Pastor and Spanish Teacher (TBD)

*Assignment of Candidate Ben Zuberbier to Trinity, Eugene, OR (TBD)*

2014-2015 Vicar Justin Pomije to Immanuel, Salem, OR (August 17)  
2015-2016 Vicar Philip Janisch to Immanuel, Salem, OR (TBD)  
2015 Summer Vicar Erik Janke to Peace, Eagle River, AK

#### **PNW Pastors Retired**

Ted Lambert from Christ the King, Bremerton, WA and DP (July 2014)  
Doug Weiser from Calvary, Bellevue, WA (part-time WELS liaison to Nigeria) (June 2014)  
Jay Blum from Trinity, Eugene, OR (Summer 2015)

#### **Pastors OUT of the PNW**

Korey VanKampen to Mt. Calvary, Flagstaff, AZ (August 2014)  
James Turriff to Gloria Dei, Memphis, TN (November 2014)  
Nathan Seiltz to CMM, BWM, WELS, Multi-Lang. Public. (January 2015)

#### **Teachers and Staff Ministers INTO the PNW**

Jason Kelley to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA as Principal, upper gr. teacher (August 17)  
Alyssa Kelley to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA as Kindergarten teacher (August 17)  
Paul Leifer to Faith, Tacoma, WA as Principal, upper grade teacher (July 6)  
Ryan Schmeling (MLC 2014) assigned to Grace, Portland, OR as Prin. Apprent., teacher, AD (September 7)  
Jason Schleef (MLC 2013) assigned to Immanuel, Salem, OR as teacher, PE (August 17)  
Laura Schleef (MLC 2013) assigned to Immanuel, Salem, OR as teacher (August 17)  
Anna Flunker (MLC 2009) to Immanuel, Salem, OR as ECE (August 17)  
Jennifer Keller (MLC 2013) assigned to Peace, Eagle River, AK as Preschool teacher (July 13)  
Ashley Mozak (MLC 2010) to Saviour of the Nations, Vancouver, BC as Staff. Min. for ESL, women's ministries (September 14)  
Chris Hintz to Christ the King, Bremerton, WA as Principal, upper gr. teacher (TBD)  
Brian Humann to Faith, Tacoma, WA as middle gr. teacher (TBD)  
Amanda Humann to Faith, Tacoma, WA as ECE (TBD)  
Marilee Nolte to Grace, Yakima, WA (finish 2015 school year) limited Call  
Marilee Nolte to Grace, Yakima, WA (2015-2016 school year) 1-yr. Call

*Assignment of Candidate Rebecca Hussman (MLC 2014) to Grace, Yakima, WA (TBD) 1-yr. Call*  
*Assignment of Candidate Melissa Mittelstadt (MLC 2015) to Faith, Anchorage, AK (TBD) ECE Dir.*

#### **Teachers and Staff Ministers OUT of the PNW**

Janine Turriff to inactive, Memphis, TN (March 2015)  
Philip Kurbis to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy in Doral, FL (February 2015)  
Shanna Kurbis to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy in Doral, FL (February 2015)  
Shu-Ting Lai to Bethany, Port Orchard, WA (ELS) (February 2015)  
Rachel Wendland to Mt. Olive, Delano, MN (March 2015)  
Jeff Dolan to Manitowoc LHS (May 2015)  
Bruce Babler to Friedens, Kenosha, WI (June 2015)

## **PNW Teachers Retired**

Stephen and Jane Rodmyre from Holy Trinity LES (Summer 2014)  
Stan Cole from Evergreen LHS (Summer 2015)

## **PNW workers currently holding Calls (as of June 10, 2015)...**

Pastor Rob Guenther (Grace, Kenai, AK) being Called as Associate at St. John's, Milwaukee, WI (68<sup>th</sup>)  
Pastor Jer Schulz (Faith, Tacoma, WA) being Called as Pastor to Abiding Faith, Smyrna, TN (Nashville)  
Pastor Jer Schulz (Faith, Tacoma, WA) being Called as Pastor to Zion, Monroe, MI  
Teacher Rachel Taasaas (St. Matthew, Spokane, WA) being Called to Bay Pines, Seminole, FL

## **PNW current vacancies... (1)**

For pastor-trained – 0  
For teacher-trained – 1, Evergreen LHS Principal, History Teacher  
(*Mr. Ted Klug of Lakeside LHS is holding this Call*)

**Church Closure:** Divine Savior in Pullman, WA – December 28, 2014

**Church Merger:** Christ in Juneau, AK and Grace in Sitka, AK to a dual parish – July 2014

**Pastor Anniversaries:** David Birsching – 25 years in ministry; Jim Humann – 50 years in the ministry

**Teacher Anniversaries:** Chris Poetter – 25 years

**Home to Heaven:** Pastor Harold Hagedorn, April 17, 2015 (member of Peace in Jesus, Boise, ID)

## **DP Appointments:**

Mr. Keith Kriewall (Holy Trinity) Lay Rep on Michigan Luth. Seminary's Gov. Bd. (present until 2020)  
Pastor Robb Robbert (King of Kings, Wasilla, AK) PNW WELS Historical Institute Rep.  
Pastor Rob Guenther (Grace, Kenai, AK) Alaska Circuit Pastor to relief Pastor Jim Oldfield  
Pastor Kevin Schultz (St. Matthew, Spokane, WA) Distr. Miss. Bd. to fill Pastor Jim Turriff's spot

*District Web: [welspnw.weebly.com](http://welspnw.weebly.com) District Contact Emails: Deb Arstein [secretary@cocboise.org](mailto:secretary@cocboise.org)*

## **COP Summaries**

There was considerable time spent this past year discussing, studying and/or developing materials to better assist our Synod's churches and schools in "walking together" in a loving, biblical way.

- ✠ In love for churches and schools across our Synod, we have strengthened the process for pastors and teachers who have resigned for "personal" or "good of ministry" reasons, to minimize harm to congregations if workers regain eligibility and move on to new stations of service;
- ✠ While God's love doesn't change for his people, our sinful flesh and culture invent new wrappings for old temptations. The Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage document has been revised and will be available soon;
- ✠ A Bible study with Fellowship principles and applications has been shared with our WELS high schools. They often need to balance the teaching of students outside of our fellowship while at times asking students to represent our schools where expressions of faith are called for. It's wise for them to constantly review principles and applications on this subject so all may be done to God's glory;
- ✠ Free conferences have been clearly defined, and organizing and attending them is to be done with great care and communication with the district's leadership;
- ✠ We are thankful for strong CMO's and wish to continue to ask pastors and teaches to promote them. A special video version (WELS Conn.) should be coming to you this fall as a more meaningful encouragement to consider the blessings of Synod tailored to districts. Your cooperation is sought in showing the blessings of our Synod to your members and using this as a way of discussing a strong, thankful CMO commitments this next year;

- ✠ Upcoming and ongoing work includes monitoring the Hymnal Project, encouraging continuing education for all Called workers; keeping eyes on declining communicant membership in our Synod; working with the Commission on Congregational Counseling to help congregations grow stronger and healthier through the Means of Grace and with an outreach focus; rejoicing for the many blessings God gives through our “walking together.”

### **Many Thanks**

On behalf of our PNW District, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank a few people. Our District Praesidium (1<sup>st</sup> VP Pastor Joel Nitz, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Pastor Jer Schulz) are a true blessing throughout the year with their counsel and assistance. At a big conference like this – a very special thanks to our Secretary Pastor Mark Schewe. He puts in many hours of behind-the-scene service to organize, set-up, communicate and tabulate. He's a true teammate and a blessing. Thanks to Deb Arstein also, our Admin Assistant in Boise. And many thanks to:

- Evergreen and Ryan Bishop for hosting us – it's nice to have a place to sit and write;
- Perry Lund for tech and AV – it's nice to be able to see and hear;
- Matt Henning and his food preps – thanks for feeding our bodies;
- Pastor Dan Lange and his Devotion Leaders – thanks for feeding our faiths with the Means of Grace;
- Prof. Doug Lange and Prof. Jeff Schone – thanks too for feeding our faiths at the Pastoral Institute and this Conference respectively;
- Synod Visitors – for making the trip west and for the work you do for our larger church;
- To Pastor Ted Lambert – keep answering your emails, I have lots more questions;
- To all the delegates and presenters – for your service to our Savior and your partnership in the gospel, it's a blessing to be “One in Christ” with you all – To God Be the Glory!

*Pastor John Steinbrenner,  
PNW District President*