



Pacific Northwest **DISTRICT**

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

District President's Report PNW District Delegate Conference June 8-9, 2017

Dear District Delegates and Co-workers:

There was an interesting story in the May 19, 1982, issue of *The Wall Street Journal* concerning Richard Bloch, cofounder of H. & R. Block. When he was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1978, he made a personal commitment that if he would be *saved from it*, he would devote his life to fighting *against it*. His was a frightening scenario. The symptoms were advanced, reports from specialists were discouraging, and ultimately the heavy announcement from one physician, "If I were you, I would get my estate in order."

Well, jumping forward, by the mid 80's he was well enough to play tennis again. More importantly, Richard spent that decade opening a cancer management center in Kansas City. Bloch set up a nationwide communication linkup to give rural physicians the latest information on the treatment of cancer. He thankfully established a hotline for cancer patients. His efforts led to a program where newly diagnosed cancer patients are matched with volunteers who have been treated for the same kind of cancer. Predictably, Bloch spent time in the 90's on national cancer advisory boards and receiving oncology awards. He died of heart failure in 2004. But Bloch's mission during his life can be characterized like this: "I got help beating my cancer – I'm going to help the next person to beat their cancer!"

That sounds familiar, doesn't it? Among other troubles we face in this sin-riddled life, our most deadly cancer is the sin that lives in our nature. The dark spots can be seen in our hearts and minds. The symptoms are detected on our tongues and with our hands. The report would appear beyond discouraging... **"for the evildoer has no future hope..."** (Prov. 24:20).

But then the Great Physician of our souls offers more than an encouraging report. He offers *himself*! Peter put it this way, **"the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God"** (1 Pt. 3:18). Jesus Christ, bore the pain and punishment of our spiritual cancer for the very purpose of bringing us to God. Now, wearing his holiness by faith and cleared from our deadly diagnoses, we ponder forgiveness, grace, love and a new life with eternal benefits.

We so much understand what the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to write: **"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God"** (2 Cor. 1:3-4). And we so much echo Bloch's life-mission characterized like this: "I got help beating my cancer – I'm going to help the next person to beat their cancer!" And we didn't just get "help" – Jesus did it all! It was

his holy life alone. It was his selfless sacrifice once for all. It was his resurrection to declare us innocent. Our salvation is through faith alone. Our certainty of heaven is by grace alone. Our strength and guide is from the Scriptures alone. Yes, Jesus Christ the Great Physician of our souls did it all. And he showed us such great love for the very purpose of bringing us to God. And one more purpose... ***so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.***

With a thankful song on our lips, ***"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"*** Jesus points us to his mission field, ***"be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth"*** (Acts 1:8). Our mission: to help the next person beat spiritual cancer. We do this by proclaiming the gospel. We do this by sharing the love of Christ with all who will listen. May God give the Called workers and laypeople of our Pacific Northwest District the strength to work resolutely toward the goal of Baptizing all nations and teaching them the gospel of Jesus Christ!

The Goals of This Conference:

"Our Great Heritage" is this year's Synod Convention theme. Since this theme emphasizes the blessings of the Lutheran Reformation in this 500th anniversary year, this district conference highlights the three Reformation "solae" for our souls. 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 Christian Doctrine in the Reformation Periods. Prof. Em. Frosty Bivens (Sem) led us in that time of spiritual growth. We were blessed to gather in our worship service this morning with God's gifts of Word and Sacrament. And we have invited Prof. Tom Kock to lead our conference presentation – noting what God's Word says about being "apt to teach" and also growing in our *love for* and our *abilities to* teach the truths of God's Word to others.
- ✓ **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 task of this PNW District Delegate Conference (especially for the Synod Conv. delegates) 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 familiarize themselves with the content of the 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, lately we have reviewed it as one body in plenary session. This year appears to be another blessed, 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 large 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. As such, we will listen to a few reviews on sections of BORAM. We will look at the memorials. But mostly, we will enjoy our spiritual growth presentations.

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 pass our own memorial to the Synod. But generally, it's sufficient for our own PNW Delegates who are attending the 2017 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 2017 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 Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, WI, from July 31-August 3, 2017.

PASTOR DELEGATES: Edward Frey – Messiah, Nampa, ID
James Getka – Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, WA
Joseph Johnson – Amazing Grace, Milwaukie, OR
Joel Nitz – Messiah, Lacey, WA

TEACHER DELEGATES: Jason Kelley – Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA
Thomas Zarnstorff – Faith, Anchorage, AK

LAY-LEADER DELEGATES: John Bleasdale, Faith, Tacoma, WA
Bruce Frazier, Beautiful Savior, Hillsboro
Rich Holt, Beautiful Savior, Corvallis, OR
Gordon Peters, Immanuel, Salem, OR
Bill Ruthford, Living Hope, Redmond, WA
Craig Wiebusch, Peace, Vancouver, 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!

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, additions, or items needing deletion. Please share any changes *by writing them on a piece of paper and giving them to our 2nd VP, Pastor Jeremy Schulz OR Pastor Ben Zuberbier*. They will then turn those corrections in to me.

Pastors INTO the PNW: *(those assigned and ordained at their installations are in italics)*
Candidate Isaac Cherney assigned (May 2016) to Redeemer, Yakima, WA (July 10, 2016)
Candidate Caleb Schultz **ORDAINED ONLY** *at Peace in Jesus, Boise, ID, June 26, 2016*
Luke Tembreull to Beautiful Savior, Corvallis, OR (Sept. 18, 2016)
Candidate Kurtis Wetzel assigned to Cross of Christ, Boise, ID (Sept. 25, 2016)
Candidate Geoffrey Rue assigned (May 2017) to St. Paul, Tacoma, WA (TBD)

Pastors OUT of the PNW:

Tim Schwartz to Zion, Columbus, WI (June 2016)
David Salinas to Sure Foundation, Woodside, NY (January 2017)
Howie Mohlke to ACTS, Native Amer. Missions, AZ (February 2017)

PNW Pastors Retired:

James Oldfield from Faith, Anchorage, AK (June 30, 2016)

Vicars in the PNW:

Summer 2016 Vicar Andrew Ewings at Peace, Eagle River, AK

Teachers and Staff Ministers INTO the PNW: *(those assigned are in italics)*

Candidate Leah Snyder (May 2016) to Faith, Anchorage, AK – (Aug. 7, 2016)
Andrea Cherney to Redeemer Preschool, Yakima, WA (Aug. 28, 2016)
Naomi Getka to Faith, Tacoma, WA - 1 yr. (Aug. 28, 2016)
1 yr. (Feb. 22, 2017)
Candidate Megan Ungemach (May 2016) to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA – (Sept. 11, 2016)
Erin Plocher (MLC Senior) 1 yr. emergency to Holy Trinity for 2016-2017 (Sept. 11, 2016)
Erica Hoffman, Christ the King, Bremerton, WA to Full Time (Jan. 1, 2017)
Joel Plocher to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA (Feb. 23, 2017)
Kelli Plocher to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA (Feb. 23, 2017)
Ryan Schmeling to Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA, (April 12, 2017)
Joanna Hafner to Living Hope, Redmond, WA – 1 yr. (April 18, 2017)
Amy Natalie, Light of Life, Covington, WA to Full Time (July 1, 2017)
Candidate Jacob Biebert (May 2017) to St. Matthew, Spokane, WA (TBD)
Candidate Phillip Bunkowske (May 2017) to Evergreen LHS (TBD)
Candidate Martin Santos (May 2017) 1 Yr. – to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA (TBD)
Candidate Micah Wendt (May 2017) to Immanuel, Salem, OR (TBD)

Teachers and Staff Ministers OUT of the PNW:

Nicole Schwartz (resignation from Redeemer, Yakima, WA, June 2016)
Anna Flunker (resignation from Immanuel, Salem, OR, June 2016)
April Cohrs (resignation from Precious Lambs EC, Grace, Portland, OR, August 2016)
Jason Schleef (resignation from Immanuel, Salem, OR, June 2017)
Nicholas Trebesch to Luther Prep School (June 2017)
Nicole Trebesch (resignation from Light of Life EC, Covington, WA, June 2017)
Tim Fischer to Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, WI (June 2017)
Patrick Cortright to Sienna Lutheran Academy, Missouri City, TX (June 2017)

PNW Teachers / Staff Ministers Retired:

Carol Cole from Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA (June 30, 2016)
Stan Bauer from Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA (June 30, 2016) part-time; (June 30, 2017)
Beth Humann from Evergreen LHS, Tacoma, WA (June 30, 2017)

PNW current vacancies: (4)

For pastor-trained – 3 (Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA; Faith, Anchorage, AK; Grace, Yakima, WA)
For teacher-trained – 1 (Grace, Portland, OR)

Holding Calls in the PNW:

Pastor Stephen Kuehl from Shepherd of Peace, Powell, OH, is holding the Call to Grace in Yakima (June 4) and Pastor Isaac Cherney has been Called to be Grace's vacancy pastor. To my knowledge, there are no other Called workers holding Calls to or from the PNW.

Church Closures:

Church Mergers:

Pastor Anniversaries: Bryan Schwartz – 25 years in ministry (Summer 2016)
Fred Schleg – 25 years in ministry (Summer 2016)
John Steinbrenner – 25 years in ministry (Summer 2016)

Teacher Anniversaries: Marilyn Baer – 40 years in ministry (Summer 2016)

Church / School Anniversaries: 25th Anniversary of Messiah, Olympia, WA (July 2016)

Home to Heaven: Retired Pastor Jim Oldfield, Faith, Anchorage, AK (April 2017)

DP Appointments:

WELS Call Summary:

This past May (2017), the churches in the WELS brought 66 requests through their District Presidents for pastor assignments from our Seminary; 36 were filled. We now have 99 pastoral vacancies in the synod: 83 full-time parishes, 10 part-time, 1 foreign missionary vacancy, 3 professor vacancies and 2 "others."

This past May (2017), the schools in the WELS brought 127 requests through their District Presidents for teacher assignments from MLC; 117 were filled (from 2017 and previous graduating classes); 7 more since May have been filled. This past Sunday, the Calling window for teachers closed until Nov. 1, 2017. We currently have 65 teaching vacancies across WELS that still need to be filled. We have 17 unassigned MLC candidates (Cat. 4, limited places); our inactive teacher pool is dwindling quickly in this time of shortages; a notable stat: 81 "inactive" teachers became "active" and were Called into service during this past year's Calling window (11-1-16 to 6-3-17)!

The COP has discussed the recruitment of future Called workers in our congregations and schools. If any of the brothers in our district have some "best practices" they would be willing to share, please pass them on to our circuit pastors and principals. Please join me in thanking God for providing current workers and praying that the Lord of the harvest would send more workers in to his harvest field. The harvest field is plentiful, but the workers are few!

District Web: welspnw.weebly.com *District Contact Emails:* Deb Arstein deb.arstein@cocboise.org

COP Summaries

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium – October 1-3, 2017. Four essays on the Lutheran Reformation will be presented. Symposium festivities will include a Sunday evening Luther Hymn Festival.

CMO promotional videos – Each district president recently recorded a brief video that will be available to the congregations of his district as they begin to plan their Congregational Mission Offering for 2018. This year the videos will be available digitally on the WELS website. Congregations will be given access through a password protected link. Details will follow.

Synod Delegate Preparation – A booklet has been sent to all delegates who will be serving at the 2017 WELS Convention (Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, WI – July 31-August 3, 2017). All convention delegates and male called workers should be able to find a featured link to a video by President Schroeder in which he explains convention procedures as well as a brief outline of matters to be decided at the convention. The email will also have a link to a digital copy of the Book of Reports and Memorials. A recent “Together” video is supposed to be available to the general membership and will present some of the same information. For more information at this time, visit WELS.net. First-time delegates will appreciate the FAQ section: <https://wels.net/news-media/2017synodconvention/>

Principal Training – The COP is working with the Commission on Lutheran Schools to better prepare male teachers for the role and work of elementary school principal. The goal is to Call teachers who are currently serving so that we no longer need to assign young men as “principal apprentices” right out of MLC. We hope to have a full complement of trained individuals in the next few years. Meanwhile, CLS is working with district presidents and schools to fill principal vacancies with limited duration calls and retired principals, etc.

Pastor-Trained Teachers serving at WELS High Schools – will now only be eligible for Divine Calls in the same calling window that applies to teacher-trained faculty (November 1st through the 1st Sunday in June). This calling window assures that the pastor-faculty members who accept Calls generally will not leave during the middle of the school year and so create a staffing problem for the school at which they had been serving.

New Committee – the COP formed a new “Para-synodical Committee.” A group of three DPs will serve as liaisons with the various para-synodicals and in this way strengthen our ties to those organizations.

Continuing Education for Pastors – Professor Richard Gurgel has informed us of some changes coming to our current Summer Quarter offerings. In the summer of 2018, the seminary will begin offering campus summer quarter *only every even numbered year*. In the odd numbered years, beginning in 2019, the seminary hopes to offer a satellite Summer Quarter in each of the 11 districts beyond the Southeastern Wisconsin District. At each of these satellites, the seminary would hope to have at least 2 course options from which pastors could choose. There is also a plan to partner with MLC to offer at least 2 courses from which teachers could choose. Your district officers are working with Professor Gurgel and giving thought to opportunities we might have to make use of course offerings in the PNW.

Personal Biography Information – A Personal Biography link is now available to all WELS Called Workers via My WELS Cloud (<http://cloud.wels.net/me>). The link is found in the center column labeled “View My WELS Cloud Reports.” The Biography includes all pertinent data stored in WELSource on the user’s Soul record. Providing it to My WELS Cloud users will allow them to review their Profile and Self-Assessment data in one place to determine if updates are needed. Making the biographical data available adds value to My WELS Cloud since it is a useful document for users’ personal reference. The biography is available in a downloadable PDF format.

Compensation Review Committee – one item that we wrestled with last year at our convention is the new compensation formulas and what we often refer to as “synod code.” In our joint efforts to give our workers “double honor” and stay somewhat consistent with baselines (Calling bodies can always do more) in our churches’ and schools’ compensation formulas, our Synod will be offering an education tool. The calculator can be found at www.wels.net/cwcompcalc. There is a link to an instructional video in the upper right hand corner of the calculator. This topic will receive a review here at this convention and a greater discussion at Synod Convention in July.

Many Thanks

On behalf of our PNW District, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank a few people. Our District Presidium (1st VP Pastor Joel Nitz, 2nd VP Pastor Jer Schulz, Secr. Pastor Rob Guenther) are a true blessing throughout the year with their counsel and assistance. At a big conference like this – a very special thanks to them since many hours of behind-the-scene service go into organizing, setting-up, communicating and tabulating. Also, many thanks to:

- Evergreen and Ryan Bishop for hosting us – it's nice to have a place to sit and write;
- Perry and Eric Lund for tech and AV – it's nice to be able to see and hear;
- Matt Henning and Pastors Joel Nitz and Jer Schulz for food preps – thanks for feeding our bodies;
- Devotion Leaders Ben Zuberbier, Luke Tembruell, Isaac Cherney – thanks for feeding our faiths with the Means of Grace;
- Prof. Em. Frosty Bivens and Prof. Tom Kock – thanks too for feeding our faiths at the Pastoral Institute and this Conference;
- Synod Visitors – for making the trip west and for the work you do for our larger church;
- To all the delegates and presenters – for your service to our Savior and your partnership in the gospel, it's a blessing to be serving in a Synod with you all;
- Most of all – to our gracious God for his providence, protection and countless spiritual blessings: To God Be the Glory!

*Pastor John Steinbrenner,
PNW District President*