

# REPORT OF THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

## 2014 Pacific Northwest District Convention

To the honorable Pacific Northwest District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod assembled for its 49th Biennial Convention at Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Washington, June 12-13, 2014.

In the ancient past, when Lyndon Baines Johnson was our nation's president and America was stuck in an endless war in Vietnam, back when preachers in the WELS still spoke in King James-ese and wore only black gowns, way back then in 1972, I was assigned out of seminary as pastor to the new mission in Bremerton, Washington. The internet was still twenty years in the future, so I had to go to the local library to find our future home on a Washington State map. My young bride and I came west in our almost-new 1971 Ford Galaxie 500, nicknamed "the tank" and purchased for a whopping \$2,800. Over 170 people from around the PNW District crowded into the basement of the fire station where our little congregation met for my ordination. The following Sunday reality set in as the twenty-one people who actually comprised Christ the King congregation gathered for worship. It was a lonely feeling for one who had only once been as far from Wisconsin as the Black Hills of South Dakota.

That fall I met the pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Port Orchard. He had just brought his sizeable congregation in tact out of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. They were in the process of joining the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. More than once he reflected on those tumultuous times in the LC-MS. He said he would return home from a convention physically ill, mentally upset for weeks by the wrangling and strife. Never having attended a church convention, I wondered what to expect at a convention in the WELS.

Flash forward forty-two years from those dark ages. I've attended twenty-one PNW District Delegate Conferences, twenty-one PNW District Conventions, and eight synod conventions. I have never returned home ill or upset. Though there have been occasions when differing opinions were strongly expressed on various issues, the discussions never degenerated into wrangling or divisive behavior. Even a change of hymnal and debate over newer English translations never led to questioning the historicity of the Scriptures, or the inerrancy of that divine Word. No discussion or memorial to any WELS convention I've attended has ever promoted abortion or gay marriage or open communion or theistic evolution. And though I confess to grumbling more than a little about sitting on hard chairs for days in a row, and sleeping in less than comfortable motel rooms, time after time I have returned from conventions spiritually refreshed, invigorated for ministry, and more appreciative than ever of what God has given to us in the WELS. The latter is what I would have you all remember, what I pray we never take for granted — such unity as we are experiencing here is nothing less than a precious gift from God!

It is the nature of things in this world to fracture and break apart, for the world in its fallen state is a reflection of the sinful nature that lives in us and every human being. The same sins that cause disruption in families, the dismemberment of nations in violence and war, or discontent between people who work in the same office, are the same sins which would dissolve any hope of living in harmony with one another in a church body, and much less so, living at peace with an all-holy God.

"But God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself," St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (*2 Cor.5:19*). This is the gospel, that unbelievably good news that in Christ Jesus God has healed the breach caused by our sins. He did so at the cost of making Jesus "who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (*2 Cor.5:21*). In Christ we are the children of God. In Christ we are the most blessed of all creatures in God's universe!

It is God's will that we celebrate our individual blessedness in Christ together, in the church. And as we rejoice together, God wills that we also encourage one another, and then collectively share this gospel with the world. This is the end purpose Paul has in mind when he writes to the Ephesians, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called" (*Eph. 4:3-4*). We are joined together in the church that united we might better share the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus. But it takes effort to preserve the unity we enjoy in the church. It requires that we be firmly grounded in God's Word, ever watchful of Satan's attempts to cause disharmony, always dependent on the Holy Spirit to keep us bonded to our Savior, never taking for granted this precious gift of grace God has given us.

So, I am delighted that in this convention we are going to do what has become part of every conference and convention in the WELS, we are going to spend time in the Word. We are going to talk about Christ's love and his passion for us. We will rejoice in the ministry being done among us, and fuel our zeal for reaching the lost. My prayer is that every one of us would return home from these two days of convention with the same thankful heart the psalmist had when he wrote, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity" (*Psalms 133:1*). God keep it ever so among us!

Now I will turn to the report required of your district president.

### ***District Update***

At present every Call in the Pacific Northwest District has been filled, with the exception of one half-time teacher vacancy which is expected to be filled soon. A few months ago I would not have dreamed that such would be the case. But God has been very good to us moving His servants to accept Calls to our district. As a result, there will be a number of new faces arriving over the summer. Returning to our district for the third time to serve another three month stint, this time at Divine Savior, Pullman, WA, is retired Pastor Richard Winters and his wife, Sheri. This congregation will be served by retirees on an interim basis until its future course becomes clear. The same is true of Grace, Zillah, WA, which will meet this Sunday to assess its future following the move of Pastor Kenley Mann who accepted a Call to serve the Lutheran Home Association in the Midwest.

This spring Jason Kelley of Libertyville, IL, accepted the Call to serve as principal at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA. At the end of April, Paul Leifer of Penryn, CA, accepted the Call to serve as principal at Faith, Tacoma, WA. That same day, Pastor Kevin Schultz of San Diego, CA, accepted the Call to serve as associate pastor with emphasis on outreach at St. Matthew, Spokane, WA. At the end of March, Pastor Edward Frey of Kingston, WI, accepted the Call to serve as associate pastor with emphasis on family ministry at Messiah, Nampa, ID. The latter two will both be installed on June 29th at their respective congregations. Recently Mrs. Shanna Kurbis accepted the Call to serve as ECE director and teacher for Faith, Tacoma, WA. Last week Pastor Geoff Cortright of Red Deer, Alberta, CAN, accepted the Call to serve as pastor of the new mission in Vancouver, CAN, Saviour of the Nations.

And then there are the new assignees who will all be ordained and/or installed later this summer: Pastor candidate Noah Herrmann was assigned to Calvary, Bellevue, WA. Pastor candidate Benjamin Workentine was assigned a one-year Call to serve as assistant to the next PNW District President. MLC graduate Ryan Schmeling was assigned to teach at Grace, Portland, OR. Miss Jennifer Keller was assigned as teacher to Little Lambs of Peace Preschool, Eagle River, AK. And Miss Laura Miller was assigned as teacher to Immanuel, Salem, OR, where her husband-to-be, Jason Schlee, has also been called by the congregation as a new teacher. Our district will also welcome one vicar. Seminarian Justin Pomije was assigned as vicar to Immanuel, Salem, OR. This August two current PNW vicars, Christopher Johns and Timothy Matthies, will return to the seminary for their final year of studies.

It is with great joy that I present to this convention the names of seven pastors and three male teachers applying for district membership. These come to us, some by transfer and some through first-time Calls. Their names are listed in the pages at the end of this report and require a motion from this body for acceptance. May we receive them gladly and warmly and may God bless their ministries in our midst!



The new mission in Vancouver, B.C., Saviour of the Nations, together with its pastor-to-be, Pastor Geoff Cortright, has applied for membership in our district. Our constitution committee reviewed the constitution they submitted and they are approved for reception. SOTN is represented here by Pastor Cortright and their delegate, Chris Scattergood. I would like to move at this time that SOTN be received as a congregation of the PNW District and its delegates be recognized as voting delegates to this convention. So moved.

I also report to you the retirements of district pastors and teachers since our 2012 district convention. Last summer Pastor Neal Schroeder retired from active ministry, having served Divine Peace of Renton, WA, for 28 years. During his ministry, Pastor Schroeder also served on the synod's Board of Trustees and for many years on the constitution committee of our district. He and his wife, Marilyn, are staying in the PNW in retirement. Pastor Douglas Weiser of Calvary, Bellevue, WA, will step aside from his Call to Calvary, Bellevue, WA, on July 2nd. On June 22nd he will be commissioned as non-resident missionary to Nigeria. For the past twelve years he has served as the WELS liaison for our two sister synods in Nigeria. His new post will mean more direct contact with those two church bodies each year. Pastor Weiser has served in our district the past 32 years and also held the offices of circuit pastor, presidium officer and constitution committee chairman in our district. He and his wife, Hollie, are staying in Bellevue. Principal Stephan Rodmyre of Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA, is retiring June 30th after teaching there the past 27 years. Mr. Rodmyre has also served our district on various committees and as past chairman of the Board of Evergreen Lutheran High School. He and his wife, Jane, who likewise retired from teaching at Holy Trinity, will remain in the area. Last, yours truly, will retire July 15th, and, no, we don't plan to leave the region either, which appears to be the refrain of those who serve any length of time in this great district. The ministries of the four retirees above total 129 years given to the Pacific Northwest District.

### ***In Memoriam***

Pastor Douglas Scherschel was called to his heavenly home by our Lord in September 2013. Pastor Scherschel was assigned from the seminary to St. Matthew, Spokane, WA, in 1979, and faithfully served St. Matthew his entire ministry. For the last seventeen years he also served the preaching station, Divine Savior, of Pullman, WA. Pastor Scherschel held the office of circuit pastor several times and also served on the district mission board and the board of ELHS. He encouraged the calling of a second pastor at St. Matthew in order to focus on outreach in the greater Spokane area. A church filled with friends gave praise to God for this faithful servant of the Lord on September 16, 2013. His wife, Louise, remains in their home in Spokane. The Holy Scripture comforts us with the reminder, blessed are all those who die in the Lord. We add our own, "Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the blessings you granted your church and many of us personally through your servant, Pastor Doug Scherschel."

In other districts they have established a tradition which I propose we initiate at this time. As we give thanks to God for the lives of those from our district who have been called home to heaven in the past biennium, please rise and join in singing the verses of "For All the Saints" (CW 551) printed below.

1. For all the saints who from their labors rest,  
All who their faith before the world confessed,  
Your name, O Jesus, be forever blest.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!
2. You were their rock, their fortress, and their might;  
You, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight  
And in the darkness drear their one true light.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!
3. Oh, may your soldiers, faithful, true, and bold  
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old  
And win with them the victor's crown of gold.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

## ***The Work before this Convention***

The primary purpose of our biennial district convention is to review the work we do together as a synod. So permit me to repeat what I have said at previous conventions, especially for the sake of those who are new to this convention. The synod constitution, which our congregations have all adopted, calls for an annual review of the synod's activities. This review is done at district conventions in even-numbered calendar years. In odd-numbered years, when the synod meets in convention, delegate conferences are held throughout the twelve districts to prepare the delegates to the synod convention for the work they will do together at that convention.

The district conventions also allow the voices of our congregations to be heard. Synod leaders attend the district conventions in order to hear the opinions, suggestions, concerns and sentiments of every district. With resolutions and memorials, district conventions may provide input to the synod conventions. So this is important work we are here to do.

Very shortly you will hear the report of our Synod President, Pastor Mark Schroeder. He will also report for the Conference of Presidents, of which he is the chairman, and for the Synodical Council. We also have a number of other guests and presenters with us at this convention, and we will hear from most of them yet today. We thank Professor Paul Koelpin for his message from God's Word that opened our convention this morning. He has already been with us the past two days to lead our Pastors Institute in a study of the *Postexilic and Intertestamental Times*. Professor Koelpin teaches in the history and theology departments of Martin Luther College, so he will also serve as reporter for the college.

Pastor Donald Patterson of Round Rock, TX, is our special presenter at this convention. He will lead us in four sessions today and tomorrow as he presents "*The Passion of the Christ*." His presentation will direct us to Christ's work on our behalf as our most precious gift from God and the motivation for our lives and our congregational ministries. Eight men will also serve as discussion leaders for the break-out groups that will be part of this presentation. Pastor Patterson serves as the South Central District President and pastor of Holy Word, Austin, TX. The South Central District just completed their convention, so we thank Pastor Patterson for leading this study for us despite his full schedule.

We have several guests who will address our convention for the first time. Pastor Jon Bauer will present the Hymnal Committee Report. Pastor Joel Gaertner is here to familiarize us with the work of the Lutheran Home Association & Jesus Cares. And the President of Northwestern Publishing House, Bill Ziche, will provide the NPH report. We will also view a special video produced by the seminary as part of its 150th anniversary.

Returning to the PNW District because they enjoy the warm reception you've given them in the past are Dr. Dan Johnson, the president of Wisconsin Lutheran College, Mr. Jim Holm, representing WELS Investment Funds, our District Mission Counselor, Pastor Peter Kruschel, and probably some others that I have missed. As you can see, we have a packed agenda and we will be doing our best to push it along in a timely manner.

If there are other visitors from outside our district present with us, I would ask them to rise, introduce themselves at this time and tell us in what capacity they are here.

A read-through of the *Report to the Twelve Districts* (RTTD) reveals that there are no major issues confronting our Synod at this time, for which we give praise to the Lord of the Church. The Synod Convention of 2013 addressed the translation issue and a follow-up report is printed on pages 36-37 of RTTD. To address the work before us, I have appointed individuals to lead us through the RTTD during plenary sessions this afternoon and tomorrow. These reporters will reference the RTTD in their reports, calling attention to items that require our response or call for expressions of thanksgiving. At the end of their reports, opportunity will be given for floor discussion.

I have also appointed a Resolutions Committee to be chaired by Pastor Thad Bitter. This committee will draft any resolutions coming from this body and will forward said resolutions to the appropriate synod committees appointed to study such matters.

This convention will elect the district presidium, which will most certainly result in changes for the first time in the past six years. Our six district circuits will gather separately this afternoon to elect their circuit pastor. As the role of the circuit pastor is of great importance to our called workers, district congregations and the work of the synod, I would ask you to give this position careful consideration. For this purpose the time allotted for the circuit meeting has been extended. Pastor Andrew Schwartz, chairman of the district Nominating Committee, will serve as Elections Committee chairman and will be reporting to us throughout this convention.

We will also hear from our Registration Committee chaired by Principal Ryan Holper, early this afternoon, so we ask that every pastor, male teacher, and congregation delegate check in with this committee to be certified as voting delegates. And finally, I have also appointed a Report Review Committee to be chaired by 1st Vice President, Pastor John Steinbrenner, to review this report and others for accuracy and any inclusions that were overlooked. If you notice something which is inaccurate or missing, particularly in the statistical information for the past biennium attached to this report, please inform this committee. It is especially easy to miss in-house anniversaries because I am not always aware when these take place.

### ***Miscellaneous Notes***

The 2014 Pastor Assessment Forms were previously distributed by the circuit pastors to each pastor who is a member of our district. The information on this form is used to update the synod's database. District presidents use the database in developing call lists, so it's important that we have up-to-date, accurate information about the men in our ministerium. Please return the completed forms to your circuit pastor before you leave this convention. The circuit pastors are to return the completed forms to me.

As in the past convention travel expenses will be equalized to compensate those coming from great distances. Our District Secretary, Pastor Mark Schewe, emailed a form for this purpose to every district congregation. If your congregation has not filled out the form nor sent a check with you, pastor or lay delegate, please speak to Pastor Schewe that arrangements may be made to cover those expenses. All checks are to be turned in to the District Secretary prior to the close of this convention.

### ***And Afterward -***

I would remind all the lay delegates present that your service doesn't conclude with the close of this convention. You are here as the representative of your congregation and afterward you are to report to the same regarding this convention. To help you do so, a summary of this convention's activities will be prepared to assist you. We would encourage you to seek more than one forum in your congregation at which to share your report. Please make use also of the materials in your folder and other display items available here to supplement your report. There are many exciting things happening throughout our district and synod and we want all our fellow saints to enjoy what the Lord is doing.

With thanks to God and to all of you have allowed me to serve as your district president these past twelve years,

Pastor Ted Lambert



## **Official Acts of the Past Biennium: July 2010 - June 2012**

### ***Ordinations: Pastors***

Pastor Christopher Ewings - as associate pastor of Faith, Anchorage, AK, July 29, 2012  
Pastor Matthew Kimmel - as associate pastor of St. Matthew, Spokane, WA, August 4, 2013

### ***Installations: Pastors***

Pastor Joseph Johnson – pastor of Amazing Grace, Milwaukie, OR, November 18, 2012  
Pastor David Salinas – associate pastor at Grace, Yakima, WA, January 20, 2013  
Pastor Raymond Beckmann – pastor of Good Hope, Ellensburg and Good Faith, Cle Elum, WA, June 16, 2013  
Pastor Joel Hoff – pastor of Divine Peace, Renton, WA, July 14, 2013  
Pastor Scott Mews – pastor of Beautiful Savior, Hillsboro, OR, May 4, 2014  
Pastor Edward Frey – associate pastor of Messiah, Nampa, ID, June 29, 2014  
Pastor Kevin Schultz – associate pastor of St. Matthew, Spokane, WA, June 29, 2014

### ***Installations: Male Teachers***

Mr. Philip Kurbis – teacher at Faith, Tacoma, WA, September 2, 2012  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai - teacher at Grace, Yakima, WA, September 8, 2013  
Mr. Perry Lund – instructor at Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, WA, September 8, 2013

### ***Installations: Female Teachers & Staff Ministers***

Mrs. Stephanie Roth - 1/2 time preschool teacher, Immanuel, Salem, OR, August 2012  
Mrs. Heather Walther - 1 yr. call as teacher, Immanuel, Salem, OR, August 2012  
Miss Rachel Wendland – preschool develop. director and teacher, Faith, Anchorage, AK, July 29, 2012  
Miss Kristen Koepsell – staff minister at Cross of Christ, Boise, ID, September 9, 2012  
Miss Nicole Trebesch – preschool teacher at Light of Life, Covington, WA, September 1, 2012  
Mrs. Sarah Schwartz – teacher at Christ the King, Bremerton, WA, August 26, 2012  
Miss Kelsey Steffens – teacher at St. Matthew, Spokane, WA, August 18, 2013  
Mrs. Andrea Dolan - 1/2 time preschool teacher, Immanuel, Salem, OR, August 2013  
Miss Katherine Rath – instructor at Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, WA, September 8, 2013

### ***Transfers to the Pacific Northwest District:***

#### ***Pastors:***

Pastor Joseph Johnson from the Minnesota District  
Pastor David Salinas from the Arizona-California District  
Pastor Raymond Beckmann from the Nebraska District  
Pastor Edward Frey from Northern Wisconsin District  
Pastor Kevin Schultz from Arizona-California District  
Pastor Geoff Cortright from the Dakota-Montana District

#### ***Male Teachers/Staff Ministers:***

Mr. Philip Kurbis from the Arizona-California District  
Mr. Shu-Ting Lai from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

### ***Transfers from the Pacific Northwest District:***

#### ***Pastors:***

Pastor Christopher Cordes to the Minnesota District, January 2014  
Pastor Kenley Mann to the Minnesota District, June 2014

***Teachers:***

Mr. Philip Adickes to the Nebraska District, June 2014

***Received as PNW District Members at the 2013 Synod Convention:***

Pastor Joel Hoff, Divine Peace, Renton, WA – from WLS, Mequon, WI

Pastor Matthew Kimmel, St. Matthew, Spokane, WA - from WLS, Mequon, WI

***Requesting PNW District Membership at this Convention:***

Pastor Scott Mews, pastor of Beautiful Savior, Hillsboro, OR

Mr. Perry Lund, instructor at Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, WA

***Deaths:***

Pastor Douglas Scherschel of Spokane, WA, September 7, 2013

***Retirements:***

Pastor James Ruppel, Good Hope, Ellensburg, and Good Faith, Cle Elum, WA, July 1, 2012

Pastor Neal Schroeder, Divine Peace, Renton, WA, June 30, 2013

Teacher Stephan Rodmyre, Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA, June 30, 2014

Teacher Jane Rodmyre, Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA, June 30, 2014

Pastor Douglas Weiser, Calvary, Bellevue, WA, July 2, 2014

Pastor Theodore Lambert, Christ the King, Bremerton, WA, July 15, 2014

***Resignations:***

Pastor Scott Mews, Amazing Grace, Milwaukie, OR, June 15, 2012

Mrs. Rebecca Bishop, as teacher at Christ the King, Bremerton, WA, December 9, 2012

Mr. Charles Flunker, as teacher at Immanuel, Salem, OR, December 2012

Mrs. Andrea Dolan, as teacher at Immanuel, Salem, OR, June 2012

Mrs. Heather Walther, 1 yr. call expired at Immanuel, Salem, OR, June 2013

Mr. Christopher Becker, as principal at Grace, Yakima, WA, June 30, 2013

Mrs. Sara Lange, as teacher at Light of Life, Covington, WA, July 15, 2013

Mr. Jeffrey Kurbis, as instructor at ELHS, Des Moines, WA, July 2013

Mrs. Becky Swanson, as teacher at Grace, Portland, OR, May 10, 2014

Mrs. Tricia Hackmann, as preschool dir. & teacher, Peace, Eagle River, AK, May 31, 2014

Mrs. Andrea Dolan, one yr. call expired as teacher at Immanuel, Salem, OR, June 2014

Mrs. Stephanie Roth, as teacher at Immanuel, Salem, OR, June 30, 2014

***Position Eliminated:***

Mrs. Nancy Anderson, preschool dir. & teacher, Faith, Tacoma, WA, June 23, 2013

***Reappointments:***

None

***New Appointments:***

Mrs. Sarah Lange, District Early Childhood Education coordinator, May 2013

Pastor Thomas Gumm, coordinator for Special Ministries, April 2014

Pastor Matthew Zimpelmann, chairman for Ministry of Christian Giving, June 2014

***Anniversaries:***

Good Hope, Ellensburg, WA, 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, September 9, 2012  
St. Matthew, Spokane, WA, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, October 14, 2012  
Light of Life, Covington, WA, 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, November 24, 2013  
Pastor Theodore Lambert, Bremerton, WA, 40<sup>th</sup> in ministry, summer 2012  
Pastor Joel Nitz, Lacey, WA, 25<sup>th</sup> in ministry, August 19, 2012  
Pastor Kenley Mann, 25<sup>th</sup> in ministry, summer 2013  
Mrs. Tammy MacDonald, 25<sup>th</sup> in teaching ministry, June 2013  
Pastor Emeritus Warren Widmann, 50<sup>th</sup> in ministry, 2013 (celebrated January 5, 2014)  
Pastor Raymond Beckmann, 40<sup>th</sup> in ministry, summer 2014

***Dedications:***

Peace in Jesus, Boise, ID, dedicated a church, September 30, 2012  
Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, WA, dedicated permanent campus, September 8, 2013  
Grace, Portland, OR, sanctuary renovation, January 5, 2014

***New Mission Openings:***

Saviour of the Nations, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, March 17, 2013. Applying for membership in the PNW District at this convention.

***New School Openings:***

None

***Closures:***

None