

**District President’s Report, Winter 2017**

PNW Missionaries’ Conference

Hood River, OR

January 30 – February 1, 2017

**Fellow Called Workers in the PNW:**

The Holy Spirit once told Philip, *“Go to that chariot and stay near it”* (Ac. 8:29). One key ingredient in any mission work is this: sooner or later, we need to be “near” the unchurched. Fellow DP Joel Zank (NW) is one of several pastors at a large Wisconsin congregation. He relays how recently he couldn’t help thinking about what the Spirit told Philip. On a two-hour taxi ride, Pastor Zank and his wife listened to cab driver Charles go on and on about his life history and his political views. At one point he stopped and said, “If I’m talking too much, please say so. I tend to do that.” Charles then asked where they were from and what he did. Upon hearing the phrase “Lutheran pastor,” Charles made it easy: “Do you mind if I ask you what you believe?” “Do I mind? Not at all!” said Pastor Zank.

The rest of the cab ride was every (pastor’s) Christian’s dream. Charles listened and processed. At one point he would share things he heard in his cab rides. “So, is *that* a sin?” he would ask. “Yes, *that* would be a sin,” said Pastor Zank as he seemed to touch on more than one commandment. “But here’s what God did about sin – theirs, yours and mine…” Jesus’ perfect life, substitutionary death and victorious resurrection were summarized for Charles along with what it means for us here and here after.

In his large congregation and district, DP Zank typically rubs shoulders with mostly WELS folks. So he was grateful to have had the opportunity to share Jesus with an unbeliever. Notably, he thought of the Spirit’s direction to Philip and how important it was for him to be “near” an unbeliever. In time, opportunities will come for us to proclaim the life-saving gospel to the lost. But for all our training to reach them and for all our passion to tell them about Jesus – we often need to “intentionalize” being near those who are still living in darkness. The truth remains – we pastors mostly rub shoulders with other Christians. The Spirit reminds us that we need to “go… and stay near.” We can also invite them to “come” as long as we “stay near.” And of course we know the purpose of it all. Share the gospel at the appropriate time.

May God bless our time together at this conference where our hearts are stirred and our skills are honed to reach the lost. Good things happen when Christians gather together around the Word. But mission work won’t happen until we “go near” unbelievers. Brothers, help your flocks to focus on your mission fields. Grateful for the gospel, grateful for its clarity and power, grateful that God has used it to bring us to faith, and grateful for the opportunity to share it with others… from pulpits or taxis or outreach events or following up on prospects. May God give us all the joy of a ready answer when someone says to us: *“‘Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?’ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:34-35).*

**WELS and PNW Notes**

**One in Christ Offering:** As of earlier in January, gifts total just over $3.1 million dollars. We praise God for his grace and the generosity it produces in his people. Our Synod’s debt was eliminated as of 12/14/16.

**Family Ministry Director:** The Congregation and Ministry Support Group, the Synodical Council, and the Conference of Presidents have all gone on record supporting the Calling of a director for Family Ministry. The draft Ministry Financial Plan now before the SC includes funding for this position. The SC will be reviewing and updating the Ministry Financial Plan in February to take into account the most current financial information. This will combine the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry with the Commission on Adult Discipleship.

**Assignment Process:** Hopefully before Ash Wednesday, I will send out information to all the pastors and principals in our district as to how to request a graduate from MLC or WLS. Because the number of available candidates will be relatively low, it will be important for congregations and schools to formulate a local plan as to how vacancies will be served should the Assignment Committee be unable to fill the request.

**2017 CMO Subscriptions & Statistical Information:** Please be advised that CMO Subscriptions and 2016 Statistical Report information is due by **noon THIS Friday, February 3, 2017**. Both reports are to be submitted online. This doesn’t take long. Pastors, please take the time to do this or get your appropriate councilman to submit your information. Offer a helping hand where one is needed. Pastor Matt Zimpelmann, our district’s MCG coordinator has been sending out information on this process. Kindly contact him if you need assistance: **matt.zimpelmann@cocboise.org**

**Reformation 500:** A Confessional Lutheran version of the new Luther film… *A Return to Grace: Luther’s Life and Legacy* will be rolled out during the next few months. The goal is to encourage WELS and ELS congregations to use a theatrical showing as an outreach opportunity in their communities. Mount Olive in Appleton, WI, Holy Word in Austin, TX and Peace Lutheran (ELS) in North Mankato are pilot congregations for the roll out. This film and the other Reformation 500 topics can offer a witness conversation opportunity. 2017 also is the **100th anniversary of the Wisconsin/Minnesota/Michigan Synods merger.**A reason to give thanks for this unity in our Synod’s history.

**CLC / ELS / WELS Joint Statement:** All of our District Conventions approved the joint statement on fellowship written by representatives of the CLC / ELS / WELS. The COP has expressed support for the joint statement together with our Synod’s Commission on Inter-Church Relations. The ELS in convention also approved the statement. It has been discussed by the CLS and it will be further discussed by them over the summer, after which it will be brought up at their next convention in the summer of 2017.

**WELS Annual Report: Your Gifts, God’s Blessings** is the title of this year’s annual report. In this year’s WELS annual report you will see examples of how God is enabling us to proclaim the gospel here at home and around the world, as we work together to strengthen congregations, train future church workers, and share the gospel with all nations. Congregations have three options to present this report to their leaders or entire congregation:

1. Five print copies will be mailed to every congregation in early February

2. You can view “Your Gifts, God’s Blessings” online at [wels.net/annualreport](https://wels.net/annualreport).

3. A Powerpoint presentation can also be used during the voter’s meeting or church council meeting when discussing the annual CMO subscription.

**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 and a Monday evening banquet.

**Delegate Conference:** Our PNW praesidum is working to organize our delegate conference this June. For all of us – especially those who are or who will have lay-delegates going to the Synod convention – please plan ahead to be there. WELS Director of Communications, Lee Hitter has been assembling information to better prepare our delegates for this summer’s synod convention - **July 31-August 3, 2017** at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, WI.

**Called Workers, Congregations and Schools in the PNW -** Activity since last report (Fall P/T Conf., Oct. 2016)

 **District Calls Recently Returned, Accepted, *Vacancies*, Holding**

Pastor Dan Moll Called to Shirley/Greenleaf, WI – Returned – Nov. 2016

 Pastor Geoff Cortright Called to Edna/Victoria, TX – Returned – Oct. 2016

 Pastor Todd Goldschmidt Called to Casa Grande, AZ – Returned – Nov. 2016

 Pastor Rob Guenther Called to Saginaw, MI – Returned – Dec. 2016

 Pastor Andrew Schwartz Called to Excelsior, MN – Returned – Dec. 2016

 Pastor Jason Strong Called to Yorktown, VA – Returned – Dec. 2016

 Pastor Brian Hackmann Called to Great Falls, MT – Returned – Dec. 2016

 Teacher Allen Ash Medical Leave of Absence in Dec. 2016

 *Teacher Nick Trebesch Called to LPS Watertown, WI – ACCEPTED – Jan. 2017*

 *Wife Nicole Resigning from Light of Life at year’s end 2017*

 *Teacher Jason Schleef Announced resignation at school year’s end 2017*

 Pastor Kevin Schnake Called to DePere/Greenleaf, WI – Returned – Jan. 2017

 Teacher Pat Cortright Called to Sioux Falls, SD – Returned – Jan. 2017

 *Pastor David Salinas Called to Woodside, NY – ACCEPTED – Jan. 2017*

 *Calling in February (19?)*

 *Teacher Tim Fischer Called to Appleton FVLHS – ACCEPTED – Jan. 2017*

 Teacher Jordan Schmitzer Called to Immanuel, Salem, OR – Returned, Jan. 2017

 Teacher Erica Hoffman Increased from ¾ to full-time at CtK, Bremerton, WA – 1-1-17

 Pastor Howie Mohlke Called to ACTS, Native Amer. Missions – HOLDING – 1-11-17

 Pastor Fred Schleg Called to Palos Hts., IL. – HOLDING – 1-15-17

 Teacher Kyle Swogger Called to Immanuel, Salem, OR – HOLDING – 1-22-17

 Pastor Matt Zimpelmann Called to Harrisonville, MO – HOLDING – 1-22-17

Teacher Amy Natalie Called to Bethany in Saginaw, MI – HOLDING – 1-29-17

Teachers Joel & Kelli Plocher Called to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, WA – HOLDING – 1-29-17

**Vacancy Report:** Throughout WELS there are currently 103 pastoral vacancies (there were 71 at this time in 2016). Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will graduate 26 men this May. 30 men will be available to serve as vicars.

District Admin Ass’t, Deb Arstein’s new email address – deb.arstein@cocboise.org
 District Web: welspnw.weebly.com

*Serving our Savior Together,
Pastor John W. Steinbrenner,*

*PNW District President*

**Upcoming WELS and PNW Schedule**

Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2017 PNW Missionaries’ Conferences at Hood River, OR

March 16-17, 2017 Cascades Conference Spring Teachers’ Conf. at ELHS

April 3-5, 2017 COP Spring Meetings

April 21-23, 2017 Men’s Retreat, Port Townsend, WA (Prof. P. Koelpin, “Reformation Applications

May 11-12, 2017 Assignments at MLC for Today”)

May 13, 2017 MLC Commencement, Call Services

May 16, 2017 Vicar Assignments and Vicar Call Service at WLS

May 17, 2017 Pastor Assignments at WLS

May 18, 2017 Pastor Call Service and Graduation Concert at WLS

May 19, 2017 WLS Graduation

June 3, 2017 ELHS Graduation

June 6-7, 2017 Pastors’ Institute at ELHS

June 8-9, 2017 District Delegate Conference at ELHS

July 31-Aug. 3, 2017 Synod Convention at LPS
October 10-13, 2017 COP Fall Meetings
October 18-20, 2017 Cascades Conference Fall Pastor/Teacher Conference, ??
??? ACPaT (Alaska Conference of Pastors and Teachers), ??