

**District President’s Christmas Note, December 20, 2022**

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Dear Fellow Servants of the Gospel in the PNW:

*“As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says, ‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:1-2).*

This is it – Christmas is just less than a week away. Pre-Christmas week is always exciting. For children, it means the increasing anticipation of family gatherings, great food, and unexpected gifts. For us who are a bit older, Christmas remains a time of excitement but for additional reasons. Now we watch the joy in the hearts of our children and grandchildren. Gatherings bring deeper reflections and greater perspectives about what’s most important in life. Gifts become a clearer reminder of our greatest gift, Jesus Christ our Savior. Advent is a time of joyful anticipation.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul repeats Isaiah’s promise. That God’s Servant, Jesus would be sent into the world to accomplish the Father’s work of saving all people from their sins. There’s an anticipation of a special birth, but also of a substitutionary death, and a victorious resurrection. Paul was declaring that the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus have been fulfilled. God’s favor has been shown to us through Jesus’ saving work. These events were foretold from centuries before and began as historical events at the incarnation on Christmas.

Christians, taught by the Spirit, know that the day of salvation is now. We have been released from the captivity of sin and the devil, and we can rejoice in the forgiveness of sins and life in heaven with our Savior. Now we anticipate Jesus’ return to this earth to take us home to be with him. This Christmas, as we anticipate gifts and time spent with family, anticipate the return of Him who will come again. Use this weekend’s services as a time to invite an unchurched friend to hear the good news of salvation. Use this season as a time to talk with others about their memories of Christmas and their understanding of what this Holiday means. For some of us, we are preparing to proclaim the Christmas gospel. Others of us are preparing to worship and meditate. All of us are anticipating the joy of Jesus and his return. May God bless us all in these days leading up to Christmas and, in his grace, into 2023!

**November’s WELS Financial Summary**

God continues to bless our church body with strong financial support through CMO. You can read the **WELS attachment**. Included are some notes of explanation. Thanks be to God for giving his people the willingness and the means to support the WELS’ worldwide ministry so generously.

**Recent Synodical Council Report**

Brent Masters, our PNW SC Representative has been serving our district faithfully for over 4 years. At this past summer’s convention, Brent was re-elected to be our SC Rep. After each trip he makes to Milwaukee to serve, he returns and begins writing a report to sent to you, the PNW District. Inevitably, a WELS Connection video or bulletin insert recaps the SC meeting more quickly than his report can be written and sent out. **At the bottom**, you will find his **SC Fall-Winter Report**. Brent acknowledges that his report is “dated” but he wanted to correspond with the PNW workers and churches nonetheless. His email is at the end if anyone has further questions. He joins our district leaders in wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year 2023.

**2023 CMO Subscriptions and 2022 Stats**

The Ministry of Christian Giving office has sent Instructions and encouragements for setting and submitting intended CMO offerings for 2023. The online submission form Congregation Mission Offerings – MCG (welsrc.net) is open. The submission deadline is Friday, February 3, 2023. Pastor Chris Ewings chairs our district’s Ministry of Christian Giving commission. As the calendar year slowly concludes. The deadline for submitting 2022 stats is also Friday, February 3, 2023. Pastor Ewings can answer questions if you have them. (thechristbearer@hotmail.com).

**Fall-Winter DP Report**

For those who could not be present at the October Pastor-Teacher Conference at Evergreen LHS or the Alaskan Conference of Pastors and Teachers in Wasilla, AK – the latest **FULL DP Report is posted**, as always, on **our District’s Website**: welspnw.weebly.com

**Current PNW Called Workers and Vacancies**

The final Call Report for 2022, will be sent out this week (also found at wels.net). The next Call Report won’t appear until Jan. 9, 2023. You can look at this week’s report to see those workers IN the PNW, or being called TO the PNW, who are holding calls.

God blessed Christ LC in Juneau, AK, with a relatively short pastor vacancy. They began calling on Labor Day weekend and by Dec. 1, in a snowy midweek service, Pastor Brent Merten (formerly pastor at Fount of Life LC in Colorado Springs, CO) was installed. Five pastors from the Alaskan interior flew in and with seven pastors present and a full church, Christ LC celebrated the blessing of their new shepherd. We welcome Brent and his wife, Jane, to our district. We also welcome Kristine Job, a member from Light of Life LC in Covington, WA, called to be the Kindergarten teacher at Holy Trinity LS in Des Moines, WA for next year. She accepted. Finally, we welcome Pastor Bruce Schwark, a part-time pastor, to Trinity LC in Omak, WA. He was installed on Nov. 13, 2022. Thanks be to God for these and all our workers. Please keep all these men and women and these calling bodies in your prayers…

* 4 PNW Pastor Vacancies
- Immanuel LC in Salem, OR
- Beautiful Savior LC, Everett, WA
- St. Paul LC, Tacoma, WA
- TILM, Nampa, ID, Spanish Pastor-Missionary
* 5 PNW Teacher Vacancies (for the next school year)
- Immanuel LS in Salem, OR (Gr. 4-5)
- Holy Trinity LS in Des Moines, WA (Gr. 5)
- St. Matthew LS in Spokane, WA (Gr. 3)
- Christ the King LS in Bremerton, WA (Gr. 5-6 and 7-8)

**Upcoming Events**

 January 2-6, 2023 Winter COP Meetings

 January 16-18, 2023 Lutheran Leadership Conference, Chicago, IL

 February 7-9, 2023 PNW Missionaries’ Conference, Cross of Christ, N. Nampa, ID

 March 16-17, 2023 Spring Teachers’ Conference, Grace, Portland, OR

March 27-29, 2023 Spring COP Meetings

April 22-23, 2023 PNW Men’s Retreat, WA

May 11-12, 2023 MLC Assignment Meetings, New Ulm, MN

May 13, 2023 MLC Commencement and Call Services, New Ulm, MN

May 23-24, 2023 WLS Assignment Meetings, Mequon, WI

May 25, 2023 WLS Call Service

May 26, 2023 WLS Graduation

June 3, 2023 Evergreen LHS Graduation, Tacoma, WA

June 12-15, 2023 Continuing Education Week, ELHS, Tacoma, WA

July 31-Aug. 3, 2023 WELS Synod Convention, MLS, Saginaw, MI

District Web: welspnw.weebly.com

District Admin Ass’t, Deb Arstein’s email address – deb.arstein@cocboise.org

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

*PNW District President*



**Recent Synodical Council Report**

Brothers and Sisters,

May the blessings of our Savior be with you all.

I pray this letter finds you fellow servants throughout the PNW district in good health.

I’m writing as your District Representative to the Synodical Council for which I am honored to serve. In early November the Synodical Council met at the Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

I realize that some of the information below could be redundant based on other District or Synod reports. Nonetheless, I wanted to personally share some of the highlights from our meetings.

* The Synod’s “100 missions in 10 years” initiative will kick-off in CY2023. The original concerns were finances and manpower. After analysis of available funding (Mission Opportunity Fund as well as additional gifts received and anticipated), finances are not expected to be a difficult issue. Manpower is a different story. “Larger classes at the seminary in the coming years should provide the additional three to four pastors per year for mission starts.”
* The Conference of Presidents (COP) received a proposal to change from a biennial to a triennial convention. Benefits include better cycle of events (synod convention, large synod events the next year, district events in the third year) as well as annual budgeting. The annual budgeting would be done by the Synodical Council based on approval of general parameters by the convention. After input from the SC, this matter remains with the COP to be discussed in the upcoming January meetings. A change to the Convention schedule would require an amendment to the Synod Constitution. The proposal would then be presented to the 2023 Synod Convention, subsequently discussed in the 2024 District Conventions and then finally voted on during the 2025 Synod Convention.
* The Ministerial Education schools have stable enrollments, except for smaller enrollment at MLC. Schools are in solid financial shape, although MLC is looking to operate over the next two years with a deficit, thus using some of its reserves.
* WELS Lutheran Leadership Conference will take place January 16-18, 2023, in Chicago. Congregations are encouraged to send lay-persons.
* Financial Highlights:
- FY22 - Record high actual of $23.09M
- CMO support remains strong at $5.6 million for FQ1-2023 (4.3% better than FQ1-2022).
- Financial Stabilization Fund expected to end the year @ ~$17.8M.
* Biennium Budget Planning (FY24 and FY25):
- Finance Committee is projecting ~23M each year of CMO contribution.
- Expenses estimated to be a total of $88.2M for FY24 and $90.4M for FY25.
- FY24 Funding - $32.8M Synod Support; $55.4M special funds, gifts, tuition.
- FY25 Funding - $33.7M Synod Support; $56.7M special funds, gifts, tuition.
* Benefits - Given the increasing claims experience and negative investment performance, the VEBA Commission approved an increase to the medical plan rates of 9.5% for 2023.
* Christian Aid and Relief (CAR) - There is a Disaster Relief Task Force operating with the goal of rolling out the new plan for regional disaster teams by the end of 2023.

Thanks for your time and consideration to review this report. May God bless each of you as well as all ministry within our district not only this Christmas season but in 2023!

*In Christ,*

*Brent Masters,*

*PNW District Synodical Council Representative*

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