

MCG and Congregational Services (RTTD p. 20-34)

Ministry of Christian Giving (p.20-23)

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving helps God's people offer gifts to Jesus for his work in their congregations, the synod, and WELS-affiliated ministries. The MCG manages funding from Congregational Mission Offerings, along with direct gifts from individuals, groups, and foundations. The following points are noteworthy regarding their current situation and their future initiatives.

- In addition to a 99% participation rate this year, the CMO has reached a record high for the fourth year in a row.
- Over the past three years, the Lord has allowed for over \$3.05 Million to be gifted towards the 100 missions in 10 years synodwide initiative.
- The MCG contracted with consulting firm BWF from 2020-2023, which resulted in the COP establishing two new recommended roles, prospect analyst and database specialist, which has only further helped their work.
- The MCG has partnered with LPS and WLS to help pursue possible capital campaigns.
- In the future, the MCG will look to add a mid-level donor giving counselor to their office team
- In the future, the MCG will work with the Conference of Presidents to call a current giving counselor for the Western Wisconsin District.
- The MCG also will expand the use of their database to enhance online donations for WELS members.

We thank the leaders of the MCG and all of our WELS congregations who have worked faithfully to help our synod fund a variety of ministry opportunities in connection with our desire to proclaim Jesus' name to more people. We praise God for the generous financial gifts as well as pray that God allows us to be good stewards of the resources the Lord of the Church has entrusted to our care.

Communication Services (p.23-26)

Communication services are responsible for a clear and consistent communication of the synod's mission from the synod's national office and explores, supports, and expedites innovative media usage and shared communication for WELS ministries and congregations. It also reviews and authorizes all new communication originating in the synod's national office. The following points are noteworthy regarding their current situation and their future initiatives.

- Communication services produced, printed, and digitized resources such as *Forward in Christ* magazine, WELS Connection, and the *Together* newsletter.
- WELS Connection is phasing out the DVD copies in favor of downloaded media.
- Communication services added an online live Bible study in 2024 to *Forward in Christ*, which is connected to its written study.
- In the future, Communication Services plans to work on publishing material for the following upcoming conferences: 2024 WELS International Youth Rally, the Taste of

Mission at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, WELS Women's Ministry Conference, and the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts.

- Several ongoing communication initiatives that Communication Services will continue to work with will be: the production of a CMO encouragement video, the editorial development of the synod social media sites, management of all synod-wide electronic communication tools, and video production for synod ministry initiatives and events.

We thank Communication Services for faithfully developing multi-platform content that helps communicate the priorities of a variety of areas of ministry to WELS members. We praise God for Communication Services using their gifts so that WELS members can be informed on areas of ministry as well as have the gospel presented to them through a variety of media. We encourage congregations to reach out to communication services for specific, local congregational needs.

Congregational Services (p.26-34)

WELS Congregational Services exists to encourage and equip congregations for faithful and fruitful gospel ministry. They produce a wide variety of resources that churches and schools can utilize in their efforts to feed the faithful, reach the lost, and pursue the straying. Through the studying of statistical trends, Congregational Services also produces an annual summary of the relevant information. Six commissions—Congregational Counseling, Discipleship, Evangelism, Lutheran Schools, Special Ministries, and Worship—serve their individual disciplines in our churches and schools and provide a variety of means to meet the needs of our churches and schools within those disciplines. The following points are noteworthy regarding their current situation and their future initiatives.

- WELS Congregational services continues to provide a variety of consultation opportunities, training, programs, and resources such as Everyone Outreach, Telling the Next Generation, Stewardship Legacy, Preach The Word/Worship the Lord/Teach the Word, Heart Imprints, Freedom for the Captives: Abuse prevention training, Let's Go: Personal Witnessing Training, along with a variety of special ministries resources (Military, Prison, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Visually Impaired, and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities)
- In the future, WELS congregational services will continue to identify the needs of our congregations and schools and help to meet those needs. They are currently planning a number of endeavors, including evangelism training, an updated version of Everyone Outreach, Madeknown.net (a website for truth and resources for those struggling with questions of identity), a module for giving and receiving ministry feedback, as well as the preparation for a number of conferences and gatherings.
- By the year 2025, Congregational Services hope to have the capacity to serve 20 percent of congregations in regards to consultation programs in a year if requested.
- Congregational Services will look to fill the role of director of WELS Commission on Worship as Bryan Gerlach plans to retire after three decades of helping the WELS with worship leadership, expertise, and encouragement.

We thank Congregational Services for their tireless efforts in working with us to build healthy

churches and schools and improve our existing ministries. We praise God for the benefit that their work has been to the WELS, and pray to our gracious God to give wisdom and understanding, insight and foresight to these leaders and our congregations in our service to Christ and his Church. We encourage Congregational Services to include small group Bible study discussion questions in connection with The Foundation.

Appendix: 2023 statistical summary highlight (p.34-35)

WELS Congregational services collect data and provide statistics from within the synod. This appendix highlighted a handful of trends regarding attendance and membership, and congregational debt:

- The percent of WELS members attending in-person weekly worship is close to pre-pandemic levels.
- Overall WELS total membership continues to trend down, while worship and Bible study attendance have risen.
- Due to a number of ministry opportunities, our overall debt has risen to the tune of \$1,800 for each communicant member or \$3,800 for each weekly worshiper.

Welscongregationalservices.net can be used to access these statistics and more in detail.