

Report to the Twelve Districts

May 2022

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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President's message

In the name of Jesus, the One who was, who is, and who is to come,

There is no doubt: We are living in the last days.

All the signs that Jesus told us about are there. We've endured two years of a worldwide pandemic. Earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and tornadoes bring devastation and destruction around the world. "There will be great famines and earthquakes and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven."

Rebellions in the Middle East bring about vicious attempts to quell them. Terrorists fire missiles into neighboring countries. China threatens Taiwan. Europe, after 70 years of peace, has once again experienced the horror of war. "You will hear of wars and rumors of war," Jesus said. "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom." In these last days, that is exactly what we are seeing.

Mainline Christian denominations are abandoning long-held biblical truths with mind-numbing speed. The inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture is a quaint fading memory for most Christians. Doctrine—the teaching of the truths of God's Word—is seen as hateful and divisive and destructive. Members of the younger generations seem to have less time for and interest in religion and the church. American culture encourages individuals to pick and choose their own beliefs from a wide array of ideas and philosophies. Societal values and morals that have been the norm for centuries are being discarded. Many of those who look for salvation look only to themselves, while many more adopt the satanic lie and imagine, as the song goes, that there is no heaven, no hell, no religion, no God. "For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many . . . Many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people." In these last days, that is exactly what we are seeing.

Greed and materialism infest every corner of our society. Children are raised without respect for parents, authority, or peers. Self-interest has replaced love of country and community. The work ethic has given way to a demand for others to provide for the basic needs of life. Human life itself has lost its sanctity, easily disposable at the very beginning, at the end, or when things become just too difficult to endure. Violent crime and destructive riots have shattered the peace. "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold." "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal . . . lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." In these last days, that is exactly what we are seeing.

These words of Scripture describing the last days sound frightening. But this is not all that Jesus said about the times in which we live. He said to his disciples, "See to it that you are not alarmed." Far from being frightened and filled with a sense of pessimism and doom, we are invited by our Savior to place our trust completely in him. We can do that because of his promises: "He who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations." "My Word will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Armed both with his promise and with his message, in these last days, we have been perfectly positioned by God to continue to carry out the mission he has given to his church of all ages. We have the promise that he will continue to do all things for the good of those who love him. We have the precious saving gospel and the unchanging truth of his Word—to treasure for ourselves and to proclaim to the world. As the time for Jesus' return draws near, what better for us to do than to recommit our efforts, our resources, ourselves to clinging to his Word and to being the witness to the world that God intends us to be.

That means, in these last days, continuing to seize opportunities to proclaim the gospel to people who have not yet heard it. God continues to bless our proclamation of his gospel in more than 30 countries around the world, with new opportunities presenting themselves every day, with a growing number of present-day Macedonians crying out, "Come over to us and help us!" God has blessed the seed of the gospel. Our task is to continue to sow the seed.

That gospel seed also needs to be planted and nourished in places closer to home where the truth is only an occasional visitor. Home mission congregations can be those islands of truth in a sea of Satan's lies and deceptions. The new effort led by the

Board for Home Missions to open 100 missions in 10 years represents a renewed commitment to reach more people with the saving message of Christ.

In these last days, many churches have long ago abandoned a thorough biblical training of those who serve in the public ministry. By contrast, our synod has been blessed with a ministerial education system that continues to supply workers who will feed those who are already members of God's flock and who will share law and gospel with those who are still outside the fold.

It is no surprise that all WELS congregations face challenges in a sinful and dying world. Those challenges can be cultural, demographic, financial, and spiritual. But every congregation in our synod has the perfect remedy for any problem, the perfect defense for any of Satan's attacks, and the perfect offensive weapon to carry out the mission God has given us. In your congregation, God's Word is preached and proclaimed faithfully. There the comfort of the gospel brings hope and comfort to the sin-burdened, to the guilt-stricken, to the struggling, to the sick and dying. There in our congregations we commit ourselves to train the next generation of faithful believers who will continue to serve their Savior and proclaim his Word from one generation to the next.

And, not least, in these last days when many Christian churches are resorting to gimmicks to "grow the church," we reaffirm our heritage as confessional Lutherans every time we emphasize that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, with the message that comes from Scripture alone. That emphasis cannot just be one of words. Lip service to the principles of the Reformation is not sufficient. Our faithful use of the means of grace, our confidence that only the means of grace can convert sinners, our recognition that our doctrine and teaching will be carried out faithfully and consistently in our practice, is the foundation and center of all we do.

As we consider how God has blessed us and where he is now leading us, we dare never assume that the success of our labors depends on us, on our strength, on our talents, on our gifts, or on our efforts. Speaking by inspiration, the apostle Paul reminded us that we may plant and water, but in the end, only God makes it grow. He builds his church one soul at a time as his Word does its powerful work in sinners who need a Savior. Trusting in the power of his Word, standing firmly on the truth of his Word, and rejoicing in the blessings of his Word, we move forward as a synod "in Christ alone." There is no better place to be in these last days.

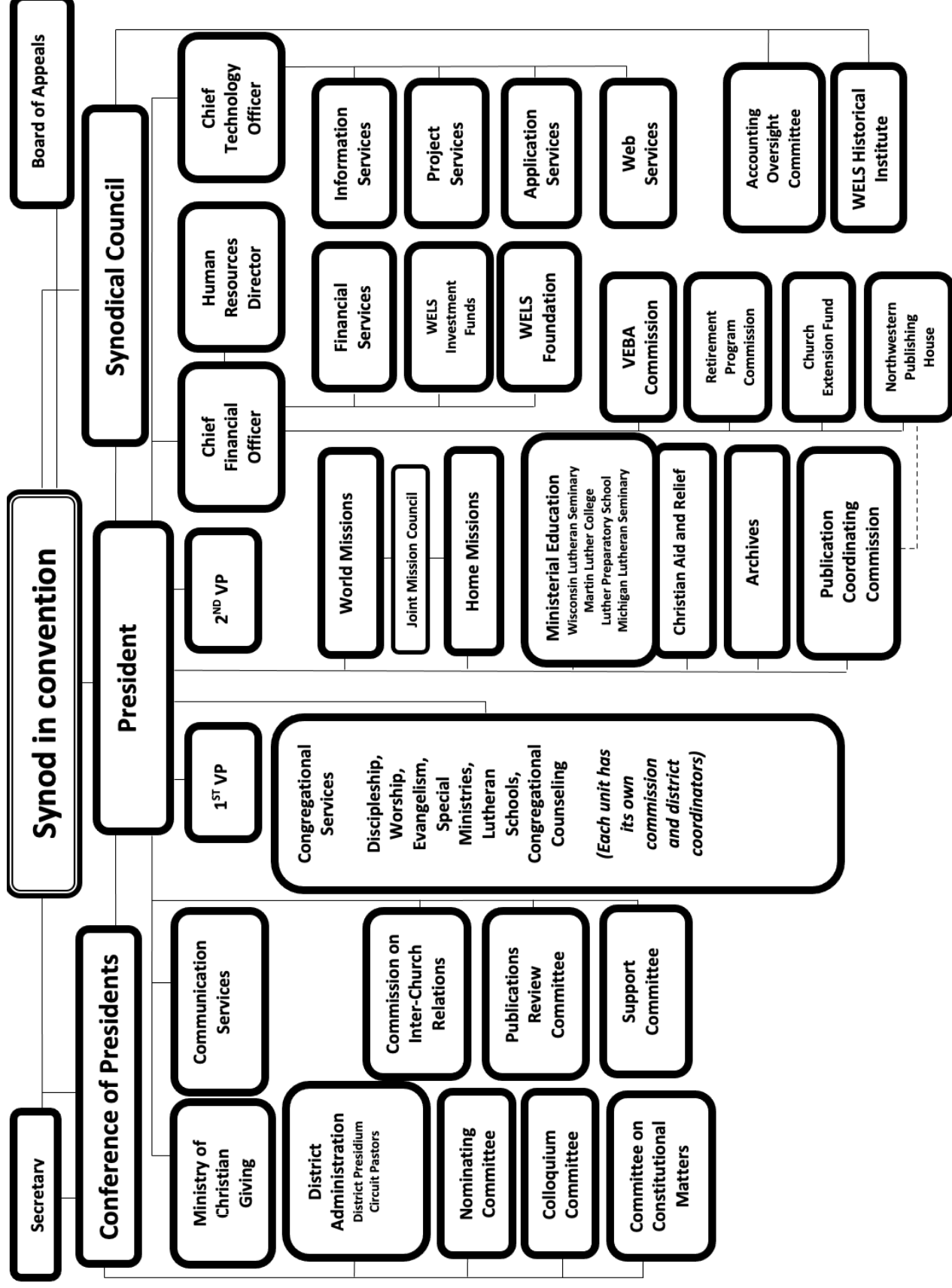
Serving you in Christ,

Rev. Mark Schroeder
WELS president

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Organizational chart



Congregation and District Ministry

The Congregation and District Ministry portion of WELS' ministry financial plan (budget) includes the Conference of Presidents (COP) and all entities overseen by the COP. These include:

Conference of Presidents

- Regular and special meetings of the Conference of Presidents and the Assignment Committee
- Travel and other expenses related to the district presidents' work
- Pastoral assistants provided to the congregations served by the district presidents
- Partial cost of the vicar program

Support Committee

Grants and assistance provided to needy retired called workers and their spouses

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

- Regular and special meetings of the commission
- Travel expenses related to inter-church relations
- Annual support for the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC)
- Financial support for sister church bodies as appropriate

Ministry of Christian Giving

- Administration and staff salaries and office expenses
- Salaries and travel expenses for current and deferred Christian giving counselors
- Expenses of counselor training and consultation
- Cost of promotions and appeals

Communication Services

- Content production and management of WELS' web presence, including wels.net and social media outlets
- Graphic design, editorial, and video production services to create WELS communication pieces and to assist all areas of ministry, subsidiaries, and one affiliate with their communications
- Coordination of public responses and communications of the synod
- Partial funding for editorial staff of *Forward in Christ*

Synod Nominating Committee

Selection of nominees for convention elections

Congregational Services

- Commission on Worship
- Commission on Evangelism
- Commission on Special Ministries
- Commission on Lutheran Schools
- Commission on Discipleship
- Commission on Congregational Counseling

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

Coordination of efforts to help called workers grow in faith, knowledge, and skill

Translation Liaison Committee

Evaluation of major Bible translations and communication with their editors and publishers, including suggestions for improvements to translations

Synod convention

District ministries and functions

- Costs related to the functions of the districts, district presidia, and circuit pastors
- District conventions and other meetings
- District committees

Conference of Presidents

The Conference of Presidents (COP) is composed of the 12 district presidents, elected by their respective districts, as well as the synod president and the two synod vice presidents, all of whom are elected by the synod in convention. The synod president serves as the chairman of the Conference of Presidents. The synod secretary, also elected by the synod in convention, serves as a non-voting advisory member of the Conference of Presidents.

The Conference of Presidents meets in person three times annually for regular meetings and monthly between meetings via teleconference. The Conference of Presidents also meets twice in May each year in its role as the Assignment Committee of the synod.

The Conference of Presidents is responsible for the following areas:

- Supervising, maintaining, and strengthening biblical doctrine and practice.
- Overseeing the calling process by providing calling bodies with call lists for pastors, teachers, and staff ministers as well as counsel and advice pertaining to the divine call.
- Serving as the Assignment Committee to assign graduates of Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to their first calls into the public ministry.
- Working with congregations, often through circuit pastors, to care and provide for the physical and spiritual needs of called workers and their families and to help address issues between congregations and their called workers.
- Encouraging congregations and individuals in their financial support of the synod, primarily through Congregation Mission Offerings.
- Overseeing the work of the Ministry of Christian Giving, Communication Services, and Congregational Services.
- Promoting the synod's mission and ministry in the districts.
- Promoting the general welfare of the synod.
- Providing counsel to the synod president as he carries out his responsibilities.

The COP is organized into three standing committees: the Doctrine Committee, the Congregations Committee, and the Called Worker Committee. Matters for discussion and action are assigned to one of these three committees, and the committees forward reports and recommendations to the entire COP for action.

The COP spends significant time at each meeting discussing specific questions of doctrine and practice and issues formal statements and guidelines in these areas as needed. The COP also addresses practical issues that affect congregations and called workers. The group functions primarily as a "conference," with district presidents and the synod presidium conferring with each other, both seeking and offering advice for the good of the synod and its people.

Doctrinal statements and pastoral guidance

The Conference of Presidents is responsible for overseeing the doctrine and practice of the synod. In that role from time to time it offers guidance to pastors in the form of pastoral briefs on subjects that need addressing. In January 2022 a pastoral letter dealing with Christian freedom and evangelical pastoral practice was produced and sent to all pastors.

The 2021 synod convention asked the Conference of Presidents to provide a Bible study on the doctrine of the divine call. This study was developed by the COP in late fall 2021 and distributed to all pastors. In keeping with the same convention resolution, the COP also requested the editor of *Forward in Christ* to reprint a fine series on the call by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary President Earle Treptow. The series is appearing in *Forward in Christ* in the May through

August issues. Congregations are also encouraged to provide questions and feedback regarding the divine call and the call process to their district presidents. It should be noted that the COP is continually discussing ways to streamline and improve the call system, as well as working for as much consistency as possible from district to district.

Finally, the COP has continued to work on the restatement of the synod's doctrinal position on the role of men and women. The document that is being prepared has undergone several revisions after a draft was shared with the synod for discussion and input. The latest draft is entitled "God's beautiful and balanced design for male and female." The COP is working hard to have the document ready for release in late summer 2022.

Hymnal Committee completes its work

After a decade of faithful work, the WELS Hymnal Committee presented the completed new hymnal, *Christian Worship*, to the 2021 synod convention. Since Pastor Michael Schultz had been called by the COP to lead the project, the COP expressed its thanks to him and to the committee for a job well and faithfully done. Schultz has since accepted a call to Faith, Tallahassee, Fla.

To call or to hire

The COP has been discussing the matter of calling versus hiring in early childhood programs. In general, the COP has maintained that if a person is involved in means of grace ministry, the position should be a called position. The COP continues to develop policies that will guide congregations as they make these decisions.

Long-range plan

The COP recognizes that it is the responsibility of the Synodical Council to develop a long-range plan for the synod's mission and ministry. Since the current plan ends in 2025, the COP encouraged the Synodical Council to begin developing the next plan. The Synodical Council has done that and appointed a committee to begin work on this project.

Statistics and Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) subscriptions

97.7 percent of WELS congregations submitted their statistics to the synod. 98 percent of WELS congregations submitted CMO subscriptions. The COP is thankful to all the congregations that submitted statistics and CMO subscriptions.

In 2021, WELS congregations provided the highest level of Congregation Mission Offerings in our synod's history. We thank our members for their generous gifts of faith, and we thank the Lord of the Church for motivating his people to support our synod's mission and ministry so generously.

COP Doctrine Committee and the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Until recently, the Doctrine Committee of the COP met every other year with the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod to discuss doctrinal issues and other subjects of mutual interest. Currently annual meetings are being considered. The meeting last fall included a discussion of Luther's Commentary on Galatians, the 2021 convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and the need to monitor the status of the proposed Equity Act. There was also discussion regarding the dangers of the influence of American Evangelicalism on WELS and ELS worship practices.

Staff Ministry Certification Program

The Staff Ministry Certification Program had required staff ministry students to attend classes on Martin Luther College's campus during a two-week period over the course of four summers. This had also been a requirement for those involved in the Teacher Certification Programs but is no longer required. The COP determined that the requirement of the Staff Ministry Certification Program be the same as that of the teacher program. This means that the on-campus attendance will no longer be required for staff ministers.

The COP is also working with Prof. Lawrence Olson of MLC to develop a certification program for musicians who are being asked to serve their congregations in the areas of music and worship beyond playing organ or piano for worship.

NPH proposed new K-12 religion curriculum

Mr. Bill Ziche, president of Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) until his retirement at the end of 2021, presented a proposal for a new K-12 religion curriculum to replace the Christ Light® curriculum now in use. Ziche reviewed the reasons why a new curriculum is needed and reported that surveys of teachers taken by NPH indicated a desire for new curricular religion materials. Since some synodical funding was being requested to partially subsidize the project, the COP recognized that a decision to proceed would need the approval of the Synodical Council (SC). The COP expressed its support for the project and passed a resolution encouraging the SC to give its approval.

When the SC met in February 2022, it agreed that the proposal for a new curriculum has merit but concluded that additional study would need to be done regarding the scope and cost of the project. The SC also believed that the initial curricular planning should be carried out under the auspices of the Commission on Lutheran Schools and encouraged the COP to direct the commission to move forward with such planning. The Commission on Lutheran Schools will now form a task force, under the direction of a lead curriculum developer, to proceed with planning and study. The task force will work with the Commission on Lutheran Schools, Martin Luther College, and Northwestern Publishing House as it carries out its assignment.

Change in assignment procedure

Every year, a few candidates for the teaching ministry graduate from Martin Luther College without completing some final requirements for state licensure, usually due to scheduling problems involving the final tests administered by the state. Until now, such candidates were assigned to one-year provisional calls, with their calls made permanent when the work is completed. Starting in May 2022, candidates who have not completed their licensure requirements will be given one-year emergency calls outside of the assignment process. Once they have completed all requirements, they will be eligible to be assigned permanently.

Vacancies

As of the April meeting of the COP, there were 167 pastoral vacancies in the synod, with 146 of those being parish pastor positions. With a 2022 seminary graduating class numbering in the mid-20s, the vacancy situation will not improve in the near term. Larger classes at the seminary in the coming years, however, will begin to provide some relief next year. In the meantime, the COP asks every WELS congregation and member to encourage young men to consider training for the pastoral ministry.

A similar high vacancy rate is taking place in teacher positions. WELS school enrollments have increased significantly in the last two years—a real blessing—but that has caused a need for more teachers than are currently available. It's estimated that even after 200 teacher candidates are assigned at Martin Luther College in May, there will still be approximately 100 to 150 vacancies in teaching positions. The Commission on Lutheran Schools will be working with congregations to find ways to fill the vacancies for next school year. At the same time, Martin Luther College will be redoubling its efforts to recruit both traditional and non-traditional teacher candidates. It will also be exploring other ideas to provide more teacher candidates. Congregations, called workers, parents, and grandparents are in the best position to recruit and encourage young people for the teaching and preaching ministries.

Retaining the Lutheran character of our worship

If the Lord blesses the 100 missions in 10 years initiative, those new missions will comprise nearly 10 percent of WELS congregations in 2033. The COP desires to ensure that when new missions are planted, the distinctively Lutheran character of our worship is not lost or eroded. In March 2022, the COP arranged for a meeting of representatives from the COP, Home Missions, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to identify what characteristics are essential to preserving the Lutheran character of worship in WELS congregations, while at the same time upholding the Christian freedom that we enjoy. The committee will identify principles and how those principles can best be applied in WELS congregations. The committee's work will be incorporated into pastoral training done at the seminary and in the vicar year and will also be used by district mission boards and mission counselors as they provide assistance to new missions.

Child-abuse protection policies

The COP was given a presentation by Dr. Victor Vieth, a nationally recognized expert on child abuse. Vieth gave a strong encouragement to the COP to assist WELS congregations to adopt policies that will serve to help congregations to identify potential victims of child abuse. District presidents will be making resources available to congregations to help them be more informed about the issues and to take steps toward prevention and providing needed spiritual care.

Retirement

Pastor Donald Tollefson, president of the North Atlantic District, has announced that he will retire at the end of June 2022, bringing an end to his service as a member of the Conference of Presidents. We thank him for his faithful service and pray for God's blessings in his retirement.

Rev. Mark Schroeder, reporter

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president and chairman

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president

Rev. Joel Voss, WELS second vice president
Rev. Jon Buchholz, Arizona-California District president
Rev. Douglas Free, Dakota-Montana District president
Rev. Philip Hirsch, Nebraska District president
Rev. Michael Jensen, Western Wisconsin District president
Rev. Dennis Klatt, Minnesota District president
Rev. David Kolander, Southeastern Wisconsin District president
Rev. Donald Patterson, South Central District president
Rev. Snowden Sims, Michigan District president
Rev. John Steinbrenner, Pacific Northwest District president
Rev. Donald Tollefson, North Atlantic District president
Rev. Charles Westra, South Atlantic District president
Rev. Joel Zank, Northern Wisconsin District president

Advisory:

Rev. Robert Pasbrig, WELS secretary

WELS Support Committee

Our calling

You must rise in the presence of gray hair and show respect in the presence of an elder, so that you fear your God. **I am the LORD**” (Leviticus 19:32, EHV). Our heavenly Father reminds us that we reflect our Christian faith by the way we show respect for our elders. In our Wisconsin Synod, one way we strive to show such respect and loving care is through the WELS Support Committee. This committee has the privilege of providing financial assistance to retired called workers and/or surviving spouses who don’t have adequate financial resources for everyday living expenses.

“Religion that is pure and undefiled in the sight of God the Father is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (James 1:27, EHV). Another privilege of our WELS Support Committee is that we are called to help surviving spouses and dependent children of called workers. What a joy to be able to provide financial support and care during their times of crisis.

The following principles guide our committee as we seek to carry out our calling:

- The fund is not an entitlement program.
- The fund is not an extension of the synod’s Pension Plan.
- The financial assistance received is a charitable gift from the synod to those in need.
- The fund is not established to provide temporary assistance for those who resigned from the ministry.
- The fund does not grant financial assistance to those who need assisted living and nursing home care.
- The fund is not intended to be the main source of income. Assets and other means of income are expected to be used first, with Support Committee assistance supplementing those resources.

Our current situation

The committee is composed of five district first vice presidents of WELS. The first vice president in every district is the contact person for the Support Committee. Each year the district vice presidents reach out to local pastors, circuit pastors, and district officers to request their help in alerting the Support Committee to retired called workers and/or their surviving spouses or dependents who may need financial help. Once a possible recipient is identified, a simple application form is used to help determine the level of need. The Support Committee then reviews all the applications received and must approve them before assistance begins. The annual amount budgeted for this work is \$300,000. In 2021, there were 18 individuals or couples throughout the synod receiving support. This resulted in a monthly

expenditure of \$16,775 and an annual expenditure of \$221,700. It also often happens that during the course of the year new requests are made to the Support Committee. What a blessing that our Lord allowed our synod to take care of all those who sought assistance in 2021.

A look ahead

The Support Committee continues to provide assistance to retired called workers and/or their surviving spouses and dependents as long as synod finances make it possible. In the first months of 2022, 19 individuals and/or couples were receiving support, calling for a monthly expenditure of \$22,886 and an annual budget for approved requests of \$269,532.

Subscriptions to *Forward in Christ*, *Meditations*, and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* are also provided to those recipients who request them. The Support Committee thanks Northwestern Publishing House for covering the costs of these subscriptions.

Rev. Glenn Schwanke, reporter

Rev. Glenn Schwanke, chairman

Rev. Brett Brauer

Rev. Timothy Ehlers

Rev. Michael Enderle

Rev. Stephen Helwig

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

The Continuing Education for Called Workers (CECW) Committee coordinates our synod's efforts to assist called workers to grow in faith, knowledge, and skill in order to carry out their unique vocations. Growth for our called workers is not about self-centered goals like advancing in a career, gaining recognition, or increasing compensation. Growth for our called workers is about growing in the gospel in order to be a clearer presenter of God's mercy wherever God has called, whether that is in the home, the church or school, or the community.

The CECW works to help synodical leaders and calling bodies clearly understand why it is wise for calling bodies to invest in the continued growth of all their called workers in order to let Christ's love be ever more clearly seen. To that end the CECW also seeks to urge lay leaders to understand the importance of investing in assisting current called workers toward growth.

The CECW includes representatives from the Board for Ministerial Education, Martin Luther College (MLC), and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), as well as representatives from WELS Congregational Services. By the synod's constitution, our chairman is the first vice president of the synod, and we report to the Conference of Presidents. Our report is divided into the CECW's work for pastors, for teachers, and for staff ministers.

Pastors

Our current situation

We thank God for the good work that is being done by so many entities in our church body in regard to encouraging pastors to grow. A considerable part of the work of encouraging the ongoing growth of pastors has been entrusted to WLS. The seminary carries out most of this work through Grow in Grace, the seminary's institute for pastoral growth. Grow in Grace seeks to partner with pastors for spiritual and professional growth in informal (not-for-credit) and formal (for-credit) ways.

To supplement informal study by pastors of our fellowship, Grow in Grace provides the following: a monthly digital newsletter called *Grace Notes*, a monthly digital newsletter called *Four Branches*, periodic book reviews called *Shepherd's Study*, study packets, a three-year mentoring program called Pastor Partners, and Celebrations of Ministry retreats for men who have served in the pastoral ministry for 3, 10, 25, and 35 years. Pastors are also able to audit satellite Summer Quarter courses in their districts in odd-numbered years.

Grow in Grace also offers formal courses in a certificate program and a Masters of Sacred Theology (STM) degree program. A certificate or an STM degree can be earned in one of nine focus areas: Biblical Theology—New Testament, Biblical Theology—Old Testament, Church History, Education, Missions and Evangelism, Pastoral Care, Pastoral Leadership, Preaching and Worship, and Systematic Theology. Pastors may take these for-credit courses through on-campus Summer Quarter in even-numbered years, satellite Summer Quarter courses in the districts in odd-numbered years, online courses in any year, and WLS Winterim courses in January. Qualifying credits from partner institutions and guided research under the supervision of an advisor may also contribute to a certificate or an STM degree.

On campus Summer Quarter in 2020 had to become virtual. Nevertheless, attendance was excellent. One thousand eighty-four pastors participated in eight courses. This is the highest “on-campus” attendance in years. All classes were offered online—some synchronously, some asynchronously, and some a hybrid of the two. WLS plans to offer Summer Quarter on campus June 20–July 1, 2022.

In 2021, more than 500 pastors participated in at least one course in seven district satellites. In 2021, 210 pastors took at least one Grow in Grace course for credit. More than 40 pastors have indicated their intention to pursue an STM degree and have been assigned an advisor. In May 2022, three pastors will be awarded their STM degrees.

Because Celebration of Ministry retreats had to be postponed in 2020 and 2021, 12 classes are invited to the retreats in 2022, with more than 225 pastors registering and planning to attend along with their wives. That is about one out of every seven WELS pastors.

More than 160 pastors have been mentored by Pastor Partners, a program formally adopted by the synod in 2015 that provides new seminary graduates with three years of focused encouragement from a trained pastoral mentor. God is blessing us with retaining a higher percentage of new pastors than we have seen since the 1980s. There may be many reasons for this; humanly speaking the mentoring program seems to be a key component. Prof. em. Forrest Bivens has served as the coordinator for Pastor Partners, working with a Mentor Leadership Team of seven pastors. On July 1, 2022, Prof. em. John Brenner will assume the role of coordinator.

Three essay/workbook resources were prepared under former WLS Prof. Rich Gurgel's leadership to help pastors plan for growth. “Guard What Has Been Entrusted to Your Care” encourages pastors to guard the gifts of time, faith, health, and brothers/sisters. “Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage” helps pastors strengthen their devotional life. “Fan God's Gifts into Flame” helps pastors approach planning for growth from a biblical perspective. WLS continues to offer these resources on its website at wisluthsem.org/grow-in-grace.

About 30 parish pastors partner with *Shepherd's Study*, an e-newsletter that shares several book reviews each month. Pastors Luther Zuberbier and Aaron Jensen are the current editors. About 20 pastors partner in *The Four Branches*, an e-newsletter shared with all pastors each month that offers a brief article of interest in each of the four areas of theological study. Pastor Jeremy Belter serves as the current editor. Each month, each newsletter is opened by about 900 pastor recipients with a 35 percent click-through rate.

A look ahead

Prof. Bradley Wordell of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has assumed leadership of Grow in Grace. Here are some things that Grow in Grace could be working on in the next biennium.

WLS will be seeking to strengthen its on-campus Summer Quarter each even-numbered year. One idea is to give special invitations and incentives to those men who have graduated five or six years previous. In addition to returning to campus for classes, special worship and fellowship events could be planned to seek to duplicate some of what has made our San Antonio retreats so popular by capturing a bit of a class-reunion atmosphere for those younger pastors.

Grow in Grace will continue to work with the WLS faculty and with valued adjunct instructors to provide a quality formal continuing education program that will serve the needs of WELS pastors and congregations in the 21st century.

Staff ministers

The analogy of physician assistants and physicians may help in understanding the difference in roles between a staff minister and a pastor. A physician assistant is not a doctor, and physician assistant training is not as broad and deep as the training doctors receive in medical school and their residencies. However, physician assistants are provided with the academic knowledge and clinical skills to provide health care services under the direction and supervision of a physician.

The relationship between staff ministers and pastors is quite similar. In some ways, it follows the pattern of Levites working with the priests in the Old Testament and of deacons working with the elders-overseers, the pastors, in the New Testament. Staff ministers are not pastors; they do not receive the same extent of training that our pastors do. However, many of the continuing education resources that are available for pastors, as noted above in this report, can be profitably used by staff ministers for their spiritual and professional growth.

There are regular informal opportunities for continuing education available for staff ministers on the circuit, conference, and district levels. One continuing education event specific for staff ministers is the three-day Staff Ministers Conference held each year at the end of April. A graduate-level opportunity now in place at MLC is a Master of Arts in Theology degree program that is open to staff ministers and teachers alike. Twelve individuals are currently in the program, a relatively small but growing number. To put that in context, that number is higher than were ever enrolled at one time in the former Master of Arts in Religion program once offered by WLS that has now, in essence, been replaced by the Master of Arts in Theology at MLC.

Teachers and staff ministers

Our current situation

As schools recover from two years of COVID protocols, there are many ways your synod is providing spiritual and mental renewal for called workers.

Resources for educators from Christian Family Solutions

The prolonged nature of the pandemic has tested even the strongest among us. The counseling staff at Christian Family Solutions wants educators to know that Christian Family Solutions stands ready to help those who are struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns as a result of these seemingly unrelenting challenges.

Christian Family Solutions has partnered with the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools to deliver presentations and other resources that support those serving in ministry. One of those resources is Cornerstone, which empowers congregations to embrace mental wellness education as a ministry. The program provides congregations with the opportunity to reach people with mental wellness strategies while opening the door for the gospel to be shared. Cornerstone shares the game-changing grace of God through the teaching of practical resilience skills in six modules. It can be offered as a member service and a community outreach program. Other resources are regularly updated on the WELS website and can be found at cls.welsrc.net/connect.

Continuing education resources from Martin Luther College

MLC strives to offer relevant, high-quality, affordable courses to help meet the needs of teachers and staff ministers. Thanks to the hard work of its extraordinary instructors, MLC offers a long list of courses, including several new courses, to help you do just that. Courses are available in:

- Early Childhood
- Educational Technology
- Graduate Studies
- Ministry Certification
- Pastors' Courses
- Special Education

These are available as satellite courses or synchronous online courses.

2022 Education Conference: United in Christ, diverse in service

Dr. Eric Jensen, author of many books on learning and teaching with the brain in mind, is the featured speaker. The June 20–22 conference is at the Ingleside in Pewaukee, Wis. For teachers, it will keep in mind that your ministry is unique. In many ways, your role, setting, and audience is unlike any other within our school system. Yet, you remain

united in Christ (Philippians 2:1-2) with every called brother and sister serving our Lord. Different, but the same. You may be serving in a large school, small school, rural setting, suburban setting, or urban setting. Your school may be located in the South, Southwest, Pacific Northwest, East Coast, West Coast, or Midwest. Your students may be early childhood, elementary, middle school, or high school. They may be exceptionally gifted or have special needs. Your families may be ethnically diverse, wealthy, poor, or simply searching for belonging.

No matter your setting, we pray that this conference may better equip you to serve his lambs in your important calling.

Two new graduate degree programs at MLC—Special education licensure and Technology Director
MS Education—Special Education with Minnesota Learning Disabilities Licensure

This program is designed for teachers who want to serve learners with special needs in WELS schools.

The program provides Minnesota licensure in Learning Disabilities both as a stand-alone license for existing WELS teachers and an add-on for MLC undergraduates completing their Academic Behavioral Specialist (ABS) license.

Graduate students in this program follow a prescribed set of special education courses, complete a 12-week internship, and take two state-required licensure tests. We've also coordinated the program with our undergraduate special education major, enabling undergrad students to earn their master's degree and specialty license at a faster pace and a lower cost.

MS Educational Administration—Technology Director

This program expands on the existing educational technology emphasis to target the activities and skills specific to directors, including managing infrastructure, budgeting, and leading technology professional development. A new elective focuses on enhancing all areas of ministry with technology.

A look ahead

The Commission on Lutheran Schools is looking for future school leaders.

The Principal Credential Cohort equips veteran teachers to serve as principals before they receive a principal call.

Members of the Principal Credential Cohort receive encouragement and support from mentors and other cohort members and attend at least three leadership training events, including a national leadership conference. They also enroll in MLC's MS in Educational Administration program and/or demonstrate competence in the WELS Principal Standards.

Those enrolled in MLC's master's program receive a 50 percent scholarship for their coursework.

New cohorts begin each summer. Nominate a teacher for the Principal Credential Cohort. The teacher should have at least three years of teaching experience and the gifts to serve as a future school leader. Visit cls.welsrc.net/school_leadership or contact lutheranschools@wels.net.

In Ecclesiastes 4:12, Solomon writes, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." These words of Solomon suggest that there is indeed strength in numbers. Serving in ministry can be extremely demanding, and the events of the past two years have made it even more challenging for many. Do you know a person or two who could use some encouragement? Are you in need of a support system yourself? Consider the idea of forming a triad with two other colleagues to provide mutual support and encouragement to one another.

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president and chairman

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education and secretary

Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services

Prof. John Meyer, director of continuing education and graduate studies, Martin Luther College

Prof. Lawrence Olson, director of staff ministry, Martin Luther College

Teacher Jim Rademan, director of WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

Prof. Bradley Wordell, director of continuing education, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

Our calling

The WELS Bylaws charge the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) to “serve under the Conference of Presidents by representing the synod in doctrinal discussions with other church bodies who are, or are not, in fellowship with the synod” and to “keep itself informed on the doctrinal trends in other church bodies.” This function is in keeping with the object and purpose of the synod: to “extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church” (WELS Constitution, Article IV).

To carry out its calling, the Commission on Inter-Church Relations meets twice each year for regular meetings. Members and representatives of the CICR assist individuals and churches around the world who are seeking to take confessional Lutheran stances. Finally, commission members stay abreast of happenings in other Lutheran church bodies around the world through the reading of periodicals and with visits to church conventions, conferences, and symposia.

Our current situation

Organizational improvement

WELS continues to receive inquiries from established and emerging churches around the globe who are looking for fellowship with WELS. Because in the past these inquiries so often overlapped with our foreign mission work and the work of our sister churches in the various parts of the world, the Board for World Missions (BWM) administrator, Pastor Larry Schlomer, was appointed in 2020 to serve also as our CICR administrator. Schlomer oversees and coordinates this interaction between our overseas presence and the churches that are requesting education from and fellowship with WELS.

Shortly before Schlomer’s appointment to the CICR, the commission had developed a “Four-Stages” document that outlines the steps that the CICR and its representatives are to take to assist church bodies that are inquiring about fellowship from their initial inquiry to fellowship with WELS. This document continues to be adapted and used by WELS representatives in various parts of the world who conduct the talks and interviews with leaders from these inquiring churches. Many of the inquiring churches are looking for education for their clergy, many of whom have never received thorough theological training. This gives WELS the opportunity to ground these church bodies in sound biblical and Lutheran theology. Instrumental in this coordinated effort has been our seminary’s Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI), which has taken on the leadership in educating the pastors in these inquiring churches.

Under Schlomer’s guidance, the members of the CICR have been assigned as representatives to the various mission “One Teams” into which World Missions is now organized. The CICR representative(s) attend the regular meetings of the various One Teams and have a voice in the work on the various continents of our world. While the One Teams primarily have oversight of mission work in these regions, the CICR representative is there to give theological advice to the mission churches in the region and to carry on dialogue with established sister churches in the region. CICR representatives by region are:

- Asia One Team: Pastor John Koelpin, Pastor Benjamin Tomczak
- One Latin America Team: Pastor Bart Brauer
- One Africa Team: Prof. Bradley Wordell
- One Europe Team: Prof. James Danell and Prof. Keith Wessel

In addition to the CICR representatives to the One Teams, many of the individual churches we are in fellowship with abroad have an individual WELS representative who is familiar with and in regular contact with the church’s leaders on a regular basis. This new arrangement is working well.

Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference

As more and more church bodies clarify their doctrinal stances and confessional relationships with WELS are established, the CICR encourages these bodies to join the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC). The CELC is the international association of churches that are in fellowship with WELS.

The CELC held an online convention spread over six days from May 25 through June 10, 2021, after the face-to-face meeting that was planned for Seoul, South Korea, had to be cancelled both in 2020 and 2021. Two churches were received as members: Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ–Kenya and Christian Lutheran Evangelical Church–Taiwan. This brings the membership of the CELC to 34 confessional Lutheran churches. In other business, the convention established a CELC Travel Assistance Fund and a new commission called the Global Theological Education Commission.

Now the CELC is making plans for a 2023 convention in Seoul, South Korea, and beyond that, the CELC has accepted an invitation to Zambia for 2026.

Starting in 2021, the CELC has been sending “news briefs” to share information from the churches of the CELC. Anyone interested in the CELC is invited to sign up to be put on the distribution list. The signup, along with other information about the CELC, can be found on the CELC website at celc.info.

Our work in North America

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) have been officially in fellowship since the organization of the ELS in 1918. Our relationship with the ELS actually reaches back even further than this to 1872, when WELS and the ELS’ parent church body, the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, became charter members of the Synodical Conference. 2022 marks the 150th anniversary of this fellowship. The CICR interacts with the ELS on a regular basis in order to foster the unity of faith that we treasure with our American sister church. We look forward to our next meeting with the ELS at the WELS/ELS Forum in October and encourage our pastors and congregations to get to know their neighboring ELS pastors and congregations. The current CICR contact person for the ELS is Pastor Thomas Fricke.

Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

The CICR continues to monitor developments in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), with whom WELS suspended fellowship in 1961. The latest in a series of informal meetings between leaders of WELS, the ELS, and the LCMS was held in December 2021. Topics of discussion were the scriptural *sedes doctrinae* on ministry, the historical development of the LCMS’ practice of prayer fellowship, and the documents WELS and the ELS are developing on the roles of men and women. While all three churches’ representatives at these informal meetings agree that fellowship between the ELS and WELS on the one hand and LCMS on the other is not imminent, all three agree that there is benefit in continuing the informal talks. The CICR’s contact person with the LCMS, Prof. Bill Tackmier, attended the meeting, as well as WELS representatives Pastors Mark Schroeder, Earle Treptow, James Huebner, Joel Voss, Paul Wendland, John Brenner, Thomas Nass, and Paul Prange.

Church of the Lutheran Confession

Talks with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) remain at the same point they have been the last few years. At their last convention, the CLC declined to adopt the Joint Statement that CLC representatives had drawn up a number of years ago with representatives of WELS and the ELS concerning the termination of fellowship. The convention recommended instead seeking a different approach to continuing the talks. They appointed a four-man committee to define from a CLC point of view what is necessary for a settlement of what they consider to be the doctrinal difference between the CLC and the ELS and WELS. They directed the four-man committee to work with their Board of Doctrine to address additional questions that remain unresolved within the CLC, such as the role of admonition in the termination of church fellowship, and to bring their findings before their 2022 convention. They also directed the four-man committee to continue to meet with the ELS and WELS to “settle these doctrinal differences on the basis of Scripture.” Accordingly, WELS awaits contact from this newly-established CLC committee. CICR representative Prof. Joel Otto will attend this summer’s CLC convention.

Our work throughout the world

Latin America

The CICR this past year reviewed the constitution and bylaws of *WELS Internacional* and gave its advice and feedback on the wording of these founding documents of this new international church body that spans most of Latin America. The leaders of this new church body incorporated this feedback into these founding documents and into their plans for the future. The church body, which is the fruit of our BWM’s *Academia Cristo* online learning program, officially came into existence in October 2021. The CICR representative who is involved with our relations with *WELS Internacional* as well as with our sister churches in Mexico and Puerto Rico is Pastor Bart Brauer.

Europe

CICR representatives Prof. James Danell and Prof. Keith Wessel are involved in our relationships with sister churches in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Portugal, Germany, Czech Republic, Latvia, Albania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Russia. Gifts have begun to pour in for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine following the Russian invasion. The prayers of our synod are implored for our brothers and sisters in both Ukraine and Russia.

Asia

The BWM is gradually merging the two Asia teams that it had originally created (the Asia One Team and the East Asia One Team) into the Asia One Team. Pastors Benjamin Tomczak and John Koelpin are the CICR representatives on this team. The COVID pandemic, unrest in some countries, and government repression in others have made it difficult for us to have personal contact with many of the churches that we are working with in this region. These impediments have caused WELS missionaries and educators in several of the countries to relocate to Thailand. Much of the work of education and relationship building in this region has had to take place online. The seminary we were hoping to build in Vietnam has been delayed due to COVID, although travel restrictions have started to ease as this report is being written. We pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ in this far-flung part of the world. The church bodies we are working with are in Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Laos, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, India, Taiwan, South Korea, and East Asia.

Africa

WELS continues to get fellowship inquiries from all over Africa. The One Africa Team's responses sometimes lead to serious engagement with these groups, while at other times they do not. Using the Four-Stages document as a guideline, the One Africa Team is in the third stage of discussions with the Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda. It is in the initial stage of discussions with the African Missions Evangelical Church in Tanzania, the Confessional Lutheran Church Liberia, and Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Cameroon. Missionary Howard Mohlke, One Africa Team leader, has been instrumental in these talks. His work has been coordinated with our long-time sister churches in Zambia and Malawi. The CICR representative to the One Africa Team is Prof. Bradley Wordell, who is involved with our relationship with our other African sister churches in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Sudan.

A look ahead

The past two years of the COVID pandemic have complicated the work of staying in touch with our sister churches in the world and of following up on inquiries from churches that are looking for guidance and education from WELS. But the Lord has blessed us with technological advances that have allowed us to continue such communication and education via the Internet. With the continuing unrest in the global community and the repression of Christian communication in some parts of our world, we are sometimes tempted to be fearful of the future. But as our God has sustained us in the past two years, we are confident that he will allow us to continue to foster relationships with church bodies throughout the world who seek to spread the pure gospel of Jesus Christ as we do. We know that the church often grows strongest during times of persecution and hardship. And so we confidently look forward to building stronger relationships with our brothers and sisters throughout the world. We pray God's blessings on our efforts with our sister churches throughout the world to build one another up in the faith.

Prof. Bill Tackmier, reporter

Prof. James Danell, chairman

Prof. Bill Tackmier, secretary

Rev. Jonathan Balge

Rev. Bart Brauer

Rev. Thomas Fricke

Rev. John Koelpin

Prof. Joel Otto

Rev. Benjamin Tomczak

Prof. Keith Wessel

Prof. Bradley Wordell

Ex officio:

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Advisory:

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president

Rev. Paul Nitz, World Missions One Team counselor

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations and WELS Board for World Missions

Prof. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Ministry of Christian Giving

Our calling

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) serves on behalf of the Conference of Presidents to encourage every WELS member to “excel in the grace of giving” through Christ. It is our privilege to help God’s people offer gifts to Jesus for his work in their congregations, synod, and WELS-affiliated ministries.

The Ministry of Christian Giving assists the Conference of Presidents with its responsibility to fund the Lord’s work through our synod. This funding is provided through Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) as well as direct gifts to WELS from individuals, groups, and foundations.

- In the area of CMO, our efforts are focused on informing congregations of ministry opportunities and needs, particularly as they prayerfully set their annual commitments. We also send congregations quarterly reports of their offerings to WELS.
- In the area of direct gifts from individuals, we regularly mail and e-mail appeals highlighting our gospel work and encouraging support. We provide information to donors about Christian estate planning and other planned giving options that allow them to give in a way that is beneficial for them, their families, and the ministries close to their hearts. WELS Christian giving counselors—currently 14.4 full-time equivalents (FTEs), including 1 semi-retired and 14 full-time—assist God’s people across all 12 districts of WELS. Their services are free and confidential.
- Gifts from foundations often result from consultation between the Ministry of Christian Giving director, other synod leaders, and the foundations regarding their goals for supporting WELS ministry.

Our current situation

Bentz Whaley Flessner review

The Conference of Presidents contracted with consulting firm Bentz Whaley Flessner (BWF) to provide a “top to bottom review of WELS MCG.” BWF reported its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the COP in early summer 2020. BWF commended MCG and its partners for their diligent, mission-focused service to donors. At the same time, BWF recommended directing personnel and practices to focus more on nurturing relationships with prospective major and mid-level gift donors and helping to connect donors’ Christian giving interests with our areas of ministry rather than approaching donors with rotating, institutionally focused campaigns.

The first step in this enhanced service to donors was expanding MCG’s office staff to include a prospect analyst (hired early 2021) and a database specialist (hired early 2022). These positions enable MCG to segment and intentionally nurture each family according to their Christian giving interests, giving frequency, and how the Lord has blessed them.

In April and May 2021, MCG composed our Prospect Development Policy, which describes how MCG and our area of ministry teammates communicate and coordinate as we discover and serve potential major donors. We, along with our BWF partners, introduced this policy to our Christian giving counselors and area of ministry solicitors in early June 2021. Highlights of this policy include a commitment to Christ-based, donor-centric, non-competitive, coordinated gift assistance; a prospect management process; guidelines to nurture all expectancy donors; and many of our time-tested procedures.

During June, July, and August 2021, we carefully reorganized the portfolios (comprised of potential major donors) for all Christian giving counselors and area of ministry solicitors looking at giving history, willingness to offer potential major gifts and deferred expectancies, and geographic area.

Since September 2021, we have held monthly portfolio review meetings to review counselors' recent donor service and God's blessings on their efforts as well as to provide encouragement and assistance for future donor nurture.

We are continuing to work with BWF through June to focus on nurture of mid-level donors, segmenting mailed and e-mailed appeals and communications according to donor interests, training for our counselors, and establishment of an advisory engagement committee to provide input to WELS President Mark Schroeder regarding matters that are of strategic importance to the synod. BWF will also provide a progress report on its work with us over the past two years.

Congregation Mission Offerings

The Ministry of Christian Giving coordinates with WELS Communication Services to share Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) updates and ministry impacts through WELS media. Each year the Ministry of Christian Giving oversees the process of collecting congregational offering subscriptions beginning in late summer and lasting through the first Friday of February. This involves mailed and e-mailed communications as well as direct follow up by our Ministry of Christian Giving district chairmen. We are happy to report a 98 percent participation rate in the subscription-setting process for 2022 (the average participation rate over the past ten years has been 97 percent).

In addition, we collaborate with Communication Services to develop an annual video as well as the WELS annual report, *Your gifts, God's blessings*, to inform members of the work being done through congregational offerings. We praise our Lord and thank our congregations for another record-setting year of Congregation Mission Offerings in 2021, a generous response to Christ's love. (For details on CMO pledged and received, see the report of the ministry financial plan on p. 47.)

Christian giving counselors

Through visits and presentations (more of which were done via phone calls and web conferences during the pandemic), our Christian giving counselors (CGCs) invite faith-prompted support of WELS ministries. During each one of the past 14 fiscal years (FY08–FY21), the CGCs (averaging 12.8 FTEs) have made an average of 265 meaningful face-to-face donor visits and have nurtured \$517,661 in immediate gifts (14-year total of \$93 million) and \$2,313,567 in new/revised deferred expectancies (14-year total of \$419 million).

In the first seven months of FY22, WELS Christian giving counselors conducted 1,984 meaningful contacts with donors in their portfolios; made 626 meaningful contacts with donors beyond their portfolios; presented 52 times on WELS' mission and ministry, Martin Luther College's "Equipping Christian Witnesses" campaign, and tax-wise giving and Christian estate planning; and identified 130 opportunities for major gifts and expectancies (of those, 88 have been solicited and 87 funded, totaling \$19.65 million). We have received by God's grace \$8.5 million in immediate gifts from those to whom our CGCs are assigned, \$9.6 million in new/revised expectancies arranged, and \$732,000 in new irrevocable expectancies (charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts).

For the 2021–23 biennium, WELS will annually invest approximately \$1.5 million in giving counselors and about \$900,000 in office staff, which includes appeals, CGC materials, and database fees, so that we may serve Jesus, his gifted people, and our areas of ministry. In view of the 14-year totals for immediate gifts and deferred expectancies mentioned above, we thank our Lord for the generous return he's given our investment in the Ministry of Christian Giving.

Pastor Rich Kogler retired as of the end of 2021 after ten years of service. Pastor Phil Gieschen and Pastor Phil Spaude will retire on June 30, 2022, after five years and nine years of service, respectively. We are calling to fill CGC vacancies in the Arizona-California/Pacific Northwest, Michigan/North Atlantic, and Minnesota/Nebraska Districts.

Office staff

Reuben Schmitz was hired in early 2021 to serve first as our WELS database specialist before he was promoted to the prospect analyst position. Shelly Schink was hired in March 2022 as database specialist. May the Lord bless their labors with us.

"Equipping Christian Witnesses"

WELS Conference of Presidents approves special offering partnerships between the Ministry of Christian Giving and areas of ministry. From July 2019 through June 2022, the Ministry of Christian Giving is partnering with Martin

Luther College to present “Equipping Christian Witnesses” (ECW) to both congregations and individuals. Donor visits (including contacts with more than 300 potential major donors) continue, congregations are being encouraged to participate, and mailed and e-mailed appeals were sent. Thanks to our Savior, we’ve already received the names of 76 prospective students. WELS and Martin Luther College have received 7,371 gifts from 3,407 individuals and groups totaling \$9,273,390. There is still time for congregations to participate in the campaign by going to mlc-wels.edu/mlc-campaign, clicking on the ECW Campaign Toolbox, and downloading the ECW Sunday materials. We thank our Lord for all the gifts to this special synodwide offering.

Appeals

The Ministry of Christian Giving works closely with our WELS areas of ministry and ministerial education schools to send about 13 mailed appeals as well as 4 to 12 e-appeals each year. Each of the synod’s four main areas of ministry receives two of the annual mailed appeal slots and several e-appeals, while other initiatives (e.g., Commission on Inter-Church Relations, Christian Aid and Relief, Mission and Ministry, and WELS endowments) receive one mailed appeal slot per year. Another annual appeal encourages charitable gift annuities managed by WELS Foundation. The appeals coordinate with other WELS media including *WELS Connection*, *Forward in Christ*, WELS’ websites, and the “Together” e-newsletter. Over the past ten fiscal years, the appeals have produced an average net income of \$1.2 million each year.

WELS endowment funds

In 2005, synod convention delegates prayerfully considered how WELS could support gospel ministry in a predictable and ever-increasing manner. One answer was to establish the WELS endowments, which benefit the Lord’s work in WELS Home, World, and Joint Missions and at our four ministerial education schools. Out of gratitude for God’s love and a desire to help more people know Jesus as their Savior, WELS members have faithfully contributed to these endowments over the last 16 years, resulting in more than \$105 million in gifts received (\$35.7 million) and expected (\$69.7 million). In July 2021, the annual distribution from the WELS endowments surpassed \$1 million. We praise God for these blessings!

Encouragement of planned gifts

The Ministry of Christian Giving’s congregational planned giving manual helps congregations promote planned giving opportunities to members. It also provides guidance on setting up a planned giving committee as well as establishing and administering an endowment fund. Our Christian giving counselors are available to introduce the planned giving program to congregational leaders.

We continue to send our *Grace of Giving* newsletter to WELS members eligible for supporting ministry through planned giving instruments. The newsletter includes inspiring stories of faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, ministry updates, and planned giving opportunities.

In recent years qualified charitable distributions from IRAs have become a popular way for anyone 70.5 or older to support ministry. These distributions are free from federal and potentially state income tax, so donors can direct distributions to their church, synod, or other WELS ministry to save on taxes, then use the cash they would have given for other needs. The Ministry of Christian Giving is working with WELS Foundation to inform donors and churches of this opportunity and to provide resources to assist at wels.net/qcd.

Development counsel to other organizations

The Ministry of Christian Giving annually offers development training to Christian giving counselors, Ministerial Education mission advancement staff, Missions administrators, and anyone serving a WELS-/ELS-affiliated ministry in development. One goal of such training is to encourage a consistent approach to God’s people that’s Christ-centered and donor-sensitive and that minimizes potential donor fatigue and the impression that we are competitors or trying to “get” something from our fellow Christians. Nineteen people participated in our 2022 training.

WELS-affiliated ministries can arrange a part-time collaborative partnership with the Ministry of Christian Giving where our counselors represent their organizations on visits with members. This allows both WELS and its affiliated ministries to broaden their audiences of prospective supporters. At the present time, the Ministry of Christian Giving has collaborative partnerships with Arizona Lutheran Academy and Great Plains Lutheran High School.

A look ahead

God willing, WELS Ministry of Christian Giving will continue all the initiatives listed above while pushing forward in the following areas:

- MCG is working with WELS Home Missions on the 100 missions in 10 years initiative that was approved at last year's synod convention and is being launched this September. The campaign runs through June 2024.
- MCG is working with Luther Preparatory School on a capital campaign feasibility study for the school's proposed new music center.
- We are looking forward to filling three Christian giving counselor vacancies and training these men for service in WELS.
- We will work to promote our services to our congregations through our districts and new pastors.
- We are researching the latest technology to enhance the work of our Christian giving counselors.
- We will do more to follow up with and assist WELS members who have an expected gift to synod ministry.
- Our next WELS Christian Giving training for WELS/ELS advancement personnel is tentatively scheduled to take place Jan. 9–13, 2023. Contact us to register or receive more information (800-827-5482 or mcg@wels.net).

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving is privileged to serve our Savior and you by helping God's people to fund the ministries that touch their hearts. We are happy that these gifts in response to Christ's love are helping us as a synod to fulfill our calling of proclaiming Jesus' name to more and more people.

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, reporter

Communication Services

Our calling

Communication Services exists to assist the Conference of Presidents in communicating WELS' mission to the members of the synod. It is responsible for a clear and consistent communication of the synod's mission from the synod's national office and for exploring, supporting, and expediting innovative media usage and shared communication for WELS ministries and congregations. It is also responsible for reviewing and authorizing all new communications originating in the synod's national office.

Our current situation

The Communication Services staff is focused on creating and promoting the following communication initiatives to support the ongoing mission and ministry of the synod.

Forward in Christ

A major initiative this biennium continues to be new print and digital resources created for *Forward in Christ*, WELS' official monthly magazine. For more than 108 years WELS has published a monthly synodwide publication. We have a faithful and dedicated group of readers with more than 31,000 monthly subscribers.

The *Forward in Christ* staff continues to improve the magazine through monthly meetings that are focused on maintaining the goals established during the 2020 redesign process, new marketing initiatives, content review, and the development of digital resources. *Forward in Christ* has taken on a more contemporary look, with brighter and thicker paper, with more pictures from our congregations and mission fields to make it more interesting and appealing.

We also enhanced our approach to marketing the magazine to new readers. The enhancements include a more robust encouragement for subscriptions and ways to improve the subscription process and suggested ways to help congregations distribute *Forward in Christ* to their members. With each bulk shipment to our congregations, we include a special highlight page for pastors entitled "Share what's inside" so that pastors can refer to these highlights when the magazine is delivered to their congregation each month. The dedicated *Forward in Christ* website and social media pages launched in January 2020 continue to offer readers a digital platform to interact with monthly articles

as well as share their own stories. The **forwardinchrist.net** website is another way to engage with readers, and with the addition of *Forward in Christ* Facebook and Instagram social media sites, our members now have multiple ways to access and share the engaging content delivered each month by the magazine. Readers can also sign up to receive a free weekly e-newsletter filled with articles, photos, and sneak peeks. Sign-up is available at **forwardinchrist.net**. Annually, **forwardinchrist.net** has had more than 150,000 pageviews, and that number is increasing steadily. Many visitors are directed to the site from social media, primarily Facebook. Since the launch of its Facebook and Instagram accounts, the magazine has reached more than 200,000 unique users with its social media posts that highlight content from *Forward in Christ*.

WELS Connection

WELS Connection, the monthly video viewed in more than 800 congregations, is entering its 35th year of providing stories that highlight the important work happening as a result of your Congregation Mission Offerings to the synod. *Forward in Christ* and the *WELS Connection* video have the proven ability to reach tens of thousands of people each month with uplifting stories and important information every member should know. We truly appreciate the strong partnership we share with our congregations that choose to subscribe to these inspirational products.

“Together”

“Together,” a bi-weekly e-newsletter, is e-mailed to more than 8,000 subscribers the first and third Tuesday of each month. This newsletter reports on the news and events within our synod that every WELS member should know. We also produce a bi-weekly “Together” video update the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. We highlight important and interesting synod news in a short video that features an interview with a WELS newsmaker.

Annual report

Your gifts, God’s blessings: An annual report to our members is now available online and in print. The annual report highlights the blessings that God has showered on WELS through Congregation Mission Offerings and individual donors. Print copies were mailed to every congregation and to all WELS donors that made a gift in 2021. Free print copies are available from Northwestern Publishing House. We see this report as being a communications tool that can be used year-round to encapsulate WELS’ ministry and clearly show our members how the synod is supporting ministry through their Congregation Mission Offerings. An online version of the annual report is created and shared with all parish pastors via e-mail in January, with an encouragement to forward the e-mail to their congregational leaders. To view the report online, visit **wels.net/annualreport**.

A look ahead

The Communications team created promotional print materials, logos (if requested), and videos for use on WELS social media channels along with written stories in “Together” and *Forward in Christ* for these upcoming WELS campaigns and events:

- Creative services coordinator Briana Lambrecht designed the logo and related branding materials for the 100 missions in 10 years Home Missions initiative. A major donor case statement was produced for one-on-one visits. Other promotional materials will be produced in the coming months. A dedicated website is in development for the 10-year initiative.
- The 2022 WELS International Youth Rally will be held this summer at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. The goal is to have more than 2,500 people in attendance for the three-day rally in June. Monthly promotional videos began in February along with stories in “Together” and *Forward in Christ*. We will provide partial live coverage of the event via our social media channels. New this year is an online youth rally store featuring many swag and souvenir items featuring the rally theme, “Here and Now, Royal People—Momentous Purpose.” Visit **welsyouthrally.orderpromos.com** to see what is available.
- The eighth annual WELS Night at the Brewers is Friday, July 8, 2022. Tickets for WELS members and guests are discounted up to 50 percent and are reserved all together in a block of seats. Visit **brewers.com/wels** for tickets.
- Taste of Missions will be held on Saturday, June 11, 2022, on the campus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis., as well as virtually. WELS Communication Services is helping edit videos for the event, which will be livestreamed, as well as providing graphic design and promotions help.
- Communication Services in partnership with Martin Luther College staff continues to highlight the “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign with stories in “Together,” *Forward in Christ*, and *WELS Connection* as well as on **wels.net** and WELS’ social media platforms. We continue to encourage our churches and individuals to participate in supporting the three campaign pillars—student recruitment, tuition assistance, and updated facilities.

WELS Church Extension Fund

Communication Services continues to help promote monthly WELS CEF rates and activity to investors through website updates, broadcasts, bulletin inserts, rate sheets, activity updates, and the annual Offering Circular. In addition, a graphic was created to attract new investors that was placed in *Forward in Christ* magazine and on forwardinchrist.net.

WELS Foundation

Communication Services assists WELS Foundation in supporting our WELS Christian giving counselors and mission advancement partners by providing access to monthly planned giving newsletters and free educational webinars, in addition to a quarterly newsletter with content to help them serve their donors. Marketing support also includes creation of the annual report, quarterly conference reports, and donor stories for the *Grace of Giving* newsletter. In addition, four WELS Foundation videos were produced that focus on the benefits and blessings of planned gifts. Upcoming marketing efforts include additional video content, more resources on the WELS Foundation resource center, and an upgrade of the WELS Foundation webpages. Marketing efforts also include coordination of the mission advancement sectionals at the annual WELS Association of Lutheran High Schools conference.

WELS Investment Funds

Communication Services' support of WELS Investment Funds includes the creation of the annual report, dissemination of the quarterly WELS Fund Fact sheets and conference reports, and execution of the live quarterly update webinars. Future marketing efforts include the production of a third WELS Investment Funds video and brief Q&A videos regarding topics impacting our investors.

Congregation Mission Offerings

The Ministry of Christian Giving staff with Communication Services produced a special Congregation Mission Offering encouragement video called *Doing more together*. The video featured First Vice President Jim Huebner, who listed the amazing blessings and opportunities God is granting our churches through the WELS area of ministries' synodical work. The video highlighted the ministry opportunities the Lord made available to us during the pandemic. An e-mail was sent to all parish pastors with the video file link in September 2021. The Ministry of Christian Giving mailed a DVD to each congregation with its annual Congregation Mission Offerings informational packet, which included print resources and weblinks to guide congregations in their discussion of their 2022 Congregation Mission Offering commitment.

WELS Retirement Plan changes

Working with the WELS Benefit Plans Office, Communication Services prepared the final stage of the retirement program communications that needed to be completed before the first pension contributions were made to workers' Shepherd Plan accounts at the end of April 2022. There were two primary communication efforts:

- The first was a website by WELS Technology that allowed each Pension Plan participant to view an estimate of their own vested pension benefit amount and review their contact information and service record history on file with WELS. To communicate the availability of this website, we mailed a letter to each Pension Plan participant with the web address and a unique passcode to access their customized estimate. The participant letters were sent in early March.
- The second effort included two video updates that provided an overview of what to expect during the months leading up to the first Shepherd Plan contributions. The worker video included actions that pension participants needed to take to get ready for the contributions and referenced the availability of the pension benefit estimate website. Another video was sent to all WELS sponsoring organizations informing them of the billing and payment process to fund the synod allocations to be contributed to the participants' Shepherd Plan accounts. The availability of these videos was included in a March 2022 "Together" article and a broadcast e-mail to participants in April. The communication materials are available on the Benefit Plans website at welsbpo.net.

In conclusion

Communication Services remains committed and able to continue developing content for all other essential internal communication tools, including *Book of Reports and Memorials*, *Report to the Twelve Districts*, and *Proceedings*—the official record of each synod convention.

Mr. Lee Hitter, reporter

Congregational Services

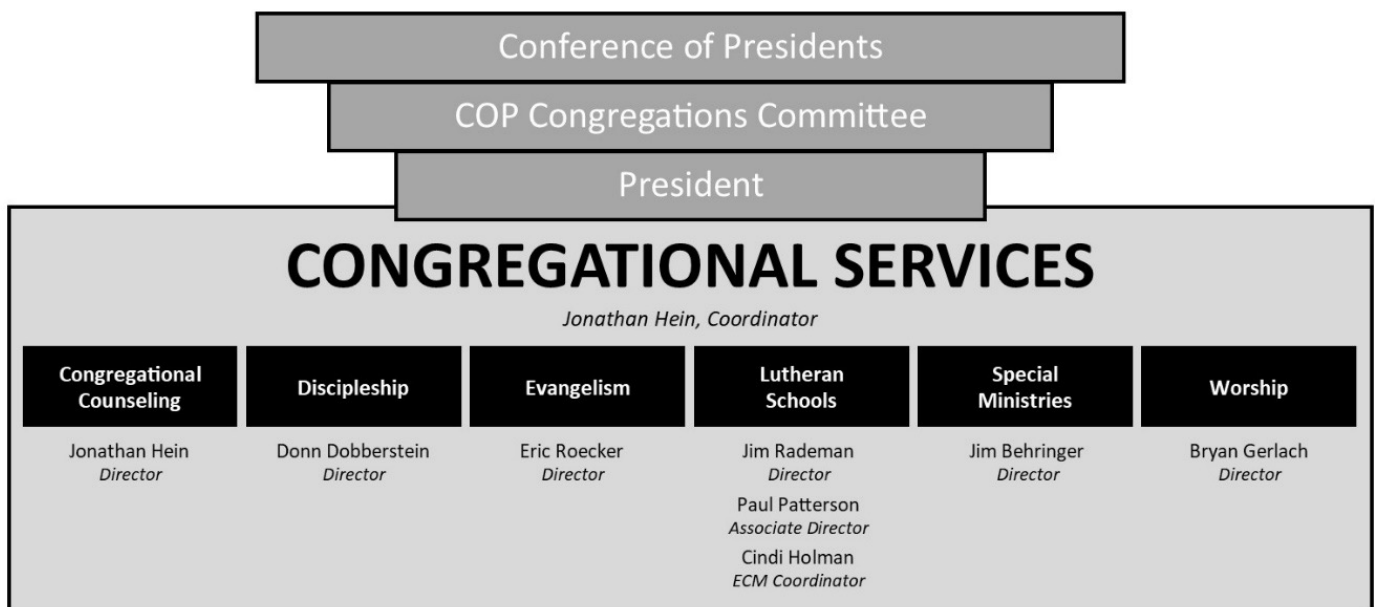
Our calling

WELS Congregational Services exists to encourage and equip congregations for faithful and fruitful gospel ministry.

Congregational Services serves under the Conference of Presidents (COP). It consists of six commissions—Congregational Counseling, Discipleship, Evangelism, Lutheran Schools, Special Ministries, and Worship—that give focused attention to specific areas of congregational life. Commissions work with district coordinators and utilize Congregational Counseling reports to identify common needs within WELS parishes and schools. Those commissions then provide resources, training, and personal assistance to help meet those needs.

Congregational Services is also responsible for analyzing statistical trends within WELS. Congregational Services analyzes the data and shares the relevant information that is needed to make good decisions.

For the synod to carry out its global mission, it needs to have the support of a broad swath of healthy congregations. WELS' ministerial education system, world mission efforts, and home mission work are all predicated upon having a broad base of congregations to support those efforts. Thus, by serving local congregations, Congregational Services hopes to also assist in the worldwide gospel efforts of WELS.



Our current situation

There are multiple ways that Congregational Services attempts to encourage and equip WELS churches and schools for ministry.

Onsite programs

Congregational Services provides a number of boots-on-the-ground-type programs to help churches and schools assess and plan their ministry efforts. Some examples:

Self-Assessment and Adjustment (SAA)

The Self-Assessment and Adjustment program allows for a thorough assessment of a congregation's community and current ministry. It includes demographic analysis, ethnographic interviews, SWOT analysis of current ministry efforts, and a pulse survey of the congregation. During the program, an assigned congregational counselor leads

the congregation in a day-long Bible study about various aspects of congregational ministry: worship, outreach, discipleship, youth ministry, fellowship, stewardship, etc. The members of the congregation then brainstorm ways they could adjust or expand their local ministry in those areas.

AXIS

AXIS builds upon the Self-Assessment and Adjustment program. AXIS helps congregations produce a long-range plan aimed at ministry revitalization or redevelopment. The assigned congregational counselor helps the congregation define and commit to mission, clarify core values, and envision a desired future. He works with the various teams and leadership groups within the congregation to produce the long-range goals and annual objectives that help move the congregation in that direction. Those leaders also map out all the necessary ministry systems called for in the plan.

Everyone Outreach

Everyone Outreach is designed to help congregations build a culture of outreach so that every ministry and every member is thinking about and participating in outreach. The program kicks off with a two-day onsite workshop where participants discover thought habits that may be keeping them and their congregation from reaching out with the gospel as well and as often as they would like. Following the workshop, resources are provided that help create new thought habits resulting in new behaviors and, Lord willing, more outreach.

WELS School Accreditation

WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA) is an onsite process in which the school evaluates its current education practices and seeks sound methods to build on its strengths and determine new ways to grow and strengthen the educational ministry of the school for the benefit of the students and parents to the glory of God. Protocols at all levels have been reviewed over the past year, with adjustments made to several of the standards. WELSSA is a sanctioned member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation.

School consultations

School consulting exists to partner with congregational consulting to help support the overall ministry of a congregation. It also provides onsite support for both congregations seeking to start a new children's ministry or receive consulting support for an existing ministry.

Early childhood ministry consultations

Early childhood district coordinators continue to provide onsite consultations for congregations and early childhood ministries in each of the districts. These consultations often include training and support for early childhood ministry directors or aspiring directors.

Telling the Next Generation

This one-day seminar is focused on effective outreach practices for WELS schools and early childhood ministries. This seminar comes at a time when nationwide 16 percent of Lutheran elementary school children and 33 percent of our early childhood ministry children live in homes that report having no church membership. The seminar is designed for pastors, principals, early childhood directors, teachers, and church and school lay leaders of the congregation to gather for interactive presentations. The seminar is available onsite or online.

Merging for Mission

Church mergers are becoming more common in WELS. The Merging for Mission (M4M) program brings together multiple congregations that are considering merging either into a single entity or a multi-site church. The program begins with an exploratory meeting of potentially interested congregations located in geographic proximity. In that meeting the assigned congregational counselor explains the various options and considerations for mergers. If any congregations in that exploratory meeting are interested in taking further steps, the assigned counselor helps them work through the necessary analysis, planning, and training to allow for a smooth merge.

Online resources

Congregational Services also produces many free resources, available online, to help churches in their gospel efforts to feed the faithful, reach the lost, and pursue the straying. Most of these are disseminated at **welscongregationservices.net**. Some examples:

The Foundation: Weekly ministry resources

St. Paul tells us the Church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20). Thus, we rightly look at the opportunity to gather around Word and Sacrament as the

highlight of the week. Ultimately, the gathering of the saints is the foundation of a congregation's ministry. It is where the sheep are fed. It is where the universal priesthood gets the encouragement to be light and salt to a dark and dying world. The Foundation is a suite of resources that attempts to build upon the importance of public worship both on Sunday morning and throughout the week and includes seasonal thematic worship plans, weekly worship plans, WELS Preachers Podcast, worship series promotional graphics and videos. In addition to these free resources, all the Congregational Services devotions—family devotions, school devotions, WELS online daily devotions—capture the worship themes from the previous Sunday.

Worship resources

This year, the WELS Hymnal Project completed the production of its suite of resources for the new *Christian Worship*. In addition to the publication of a new hymnal and psalter, the online Service Builder program was launched. That program allows congregations to produce high-quality worship folders quickly and easily. A soft launch of the Musicians Resource is planned for spring 2022. That online resource will provide a wide variety of musical scores. Thus far adoption of both the hymnal and Service Builder are well above projections. For more information, go to **christianworship.com**.

WELS Ministerial Growth and Evaluation Process

These video-based training modules and materials assist the growth of all WELS teachers through a ministry development plan. New teacher growth tools and evaluations are also now available. More information and all the resources can be found at **cls.welsrc.net/mgep**.

Marriage and family resources

Studies have shown there is a correlation between what happens in the homes of our members and congregational health. WELS Family Devotions are published three times a week and include age-appropriate discussion questions. The family altar is strengthened as parents engage their children in God's Word and prayer. Marriage Moments is a weekly video-based devotional that encourages couples to deepen their marital relationship with each other and God.

Congregational Evangelism Kit

This resource provides video-based training for congregational evangelism leaders and teams. It explains the importance of various aspects of a congregational evangelism program: capturing prospect information, creating a welcoming worship atmosphere, "come" and "go" strategies, etc. It also provides tools to help congregations plan and implement their evangelism program. A pastor or evangelism team can work through the kit, putting each tool in place and, when finished, have all the basic evangelism elements functioning.

In Season and Out of Season

This Bible study, based on the apostle Paul's evangelism experiences in the city of Philippi, seeks to encourage and equip God's people to share the gospel in any and every situation. The three-lesson, video-based Bible study can be used in large or small group settings.

Conquerors through Christ

Conquerors through Christ helps Christians who struggle with the temptations of pornography, a growing problem now that the Internet brings such temptations to the privacy of a computer or mobile phone. Its website, **conquerorsthroughchrist.net**, has been effective in motivating people to seek help from their pastors or professional counselors. A Bible study, "Bought at a price"; downloadable parenting resources; a preaching camp; and a steady stream of new resources can also be found on that website.

Ministry training

Congregational Services also offers ministry training to help individuals (both called workers and laity) carry out their ministry efforts. Some examples:

Let's Go

The Commission on Evangelism has provided this video-based personal witness training, which teaches a simple, three-part approach that any Christian can put into practice. 1) Love the unchurched people God has brought into your life. 2) Listen carefully to their thoughts, beliefs, concerns, etc. 3) Lead them to the gospel. Let's Go can be used by both large and small group Bible studies as well as by individual Christians.

WELS chaplain certification

This continuing education initiative is a joint effort of the Commission on Special Ministries and Martin Luther

College (MLC). It requires ongoing education to renew the certification every three years. In an era of increasing security procedures in institutions, it has become difficult for local pastors to minister in prisons, military bases, and large health care facilities. Chaplain certification will be increasingly useful, especially if a pastor or layperson wants to reach out to more than one's own members. Online courses are taught through MLC. Visit **wels.net/chaplain-certification-program** for more information.

Training for school leaders

The Commission on Lutheran Schools supports, mentors, and provides training for new and aspiring school leaders through Principal Apprentice Mentoring and the Principal Training Program and partners with Martin Luther College on the Principal Credential Cohort. A business certificate program was also launched thanks to grants from the Milwaukee School of Engineering and the Kern Foundation.

Welcome Home elder training

Welcome Home was not just the name of a return to worship effort. It is the name of the Commission on Discipleship's online video-based elder training program. It allows pastors and elders (current or new) to gather together and work through the training resources at a pace that best fits their timeline. Accompanying guide sheets facilitate discussion and enable the planning of a step-by-step approach toward greater shepherding activity.

Freedom for the Captives—Abuse prevention training

The Commission on Special Ministry's Freedom for the Captives Committee improves the ability of our churches, schools, and leaders to address the needs of abused children and adult survivors of abuse in our congregations and communities. It produced an online abuse prevention training course titled "Standing Up for Children." That training and other materials are available at **freedomforcaptives.com**. The committee urges church and school leaders to not only receive training but also adopt policies to protect children.

Assistance with special ministry needs

Through its Commission on Special Ministries, Congregational Services also offers spiritual and practical guidance to congregations and individuals as they bring the gospel to those with needs or circumstances that prevent them from being served or serving with their gifts through the congregation's usual ministry. Some examples:

Military Services

The WELS Military Services Committee provides spiritual services to WELS members and others who serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. The committee carries out its mission through a full-time civilian chaplain in Europe and a national civilian chaplain and liaison to the military who coordinates stateside ministry and communicates with WELS members who are deployed in military service.

Prison Ministry

WELS Prison Ministry administers an extensive ministry-by-mail program and provides training opportunities and resources for laypeople and pastors who would like to begin a local jail or prison ministry. Prison Ministry serves 1,500 correctional facilities nationwide. Through a ministry-by-mail program, Prison Ministry has reached more than 70,000 inmates.

Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing seeks to help congregations share the gospel of Jesus Christ with members of WELS and others who are deaf or hard of hearing. Addressing the needs of these individuals will improve gospel ministry in worship services and Bible classes.

Mission for the Visually Impaired

The Mission for the Visually Impaired helps people who are unable to read normal-sized print, whether they are blind or have impaired eyesight. The mission produces devotional and other materials in Braille, large print, and online audio files. These materials are distributed free throughout the world to WELS and non-WELS people who are visually or print impaired.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry

The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry promotes and encourages sharing the gospel with those who have special education needs or developmental disabilities. The ministry urges churches to provide a supportive Christian network for people with special needs in our synod and encourages their active participation in the congregation. The ministry develops resources and provides information to parents, caregivers, children, adults,

pastors, teachers, and congregations about education programs, mentoring networks, support groups, and printed and digital materials.

Conferences and gatherings

Finally, as part of its mission to encourage congregations in their ministry efforts, Congregational Services also operates a number of different conferences and gatherings for WELS members. Just this summer, there are the following opportunities:

“United in Christ, Diverse in Service”

We look forward to joining together and both celebrating our work in Christian education and learning together at the WELS Education Conference, held in Pewaukee, Wis., on June 20–22. Learn more at **welsedconference.com**.

“Here and Now”

For almost half a century, thousands of WELS youth and youth leaders have gathered every other year at the WELS International Youth Rally for this worship and education experience that also includes fellowship, recreation, and service opportunities. This summer’s event is June 28–July 1, at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Learn more at **wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/discipleship/youth-rally**.

“Won to be One”

WELS Women’s Ministry Conference will be held at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis., on July 21–23. Women from all walks of life are invited to attend. The conference will identify barriers of our disattached, fragmented culture that get in the way of unity. Then, with a focus on the book of Ephesians, it will help us cultivate the richness of grace and unity to stand firm in the face of conflict and extend grace in our everyday relationships. Learn more at **wels.net/event/2022-wels-womens-ministry-conference**.

For more information about any of these onsite programs, online resources, ministry training, special ministry efforts, or conferences, contact Congregational Services at congregationalservices@wels.net.

A look ahead

WELS Congregational Services will continue to identify common needs within our congregations and schools and produce the resources or programs that help meet those needs. Here are some upcoming efforts, events, and resources.

WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership

This conference will be held Jan. 16–18, 2023, at the Chicago Hilton. The five plenary sessions will deal with broad strategic issues that face every confessional Lutheran congregation in our post-Christian nation. The 25 breakout sessions will share “best practices” for a broad spectrum of ministry issues: shaping healthy congregational culture, cross-cultural ministry, making better use of the gifts of women, retaining and gaining younger members, equipping members for service, utilizing small groups, large church management, rural evangelism, using social media, etc.

This conference was first held in January 2020. Not certain how many would attend this first conference, the steering committee set the ambitious goal of 500. Registrations eventually had to be capped at 800, with another 300 on the waiting list. More information is available at **lutheranleadership.com**.

Human Sexuality/Identity Task Force

Our church and school ministries will increasingly encounter an ideology and culture causing gender/identity confusion. Church members, students, called workers, faculties, and church leaders are struggling with how to handle a wide range of issues associated with it. How do we help them? How is it cloaked in Christian love? This task force brings together experienced called workers and lay leaders in key areas (counseling, classroom, church and school leaders, legal consultation) to clothe firm beliefs in Christian love and with resources that will support and equip called workers, faculties, and families.

Shadow of the Leader: The pastor’s role in shaping healthy congregational culture

A congregation’s “culture” consists of the underlying thought habits of the members that shape how the congregation carries out ministry. Culture is shaped, in part, by “the shadow of the leader.” People in any organization are heavily influenced by what their leaders say and do. And no one’s shadow is larger in a congregation than the pastor’s. This suite of resources will help pastors understand their vital role in shaping their congregation’s culture so that gospel ministry can be carried out by members with both joy and a sense of urgency.

School religious curriculum task force

A limited-time call will be extended for a coordinator to oversee the work of a task force that will develop the standards and parameters for a new religious curriculum, spanning kindergarten through high school seniors. The task force will also look at the benefits of a dynamic curriculum versus a static curriculum.

School financial sustainability planning

Many of our Lutheran schools operate on a funding model with low/no-cost tuition by relying on an inverted population pyramid, a strategy that is problematic long term. This module will help congregations assess the long-term financial sustainability of their current education model and make any necessary adjustments.

“Entertaining Angels”: Hospitality evangelism

The early Christians were easily identified in their pagan culture by the way they showed love not only to one another but to their pagan neighbors. As our culture becomes less religious and views religion more negatively, it will be important for Christians to distinguish themselves by the way they demonstrate love to their unbelieving neighbors. The Commission on Evangelism plans to produce resources to assist congregations and their members in demonstrating Christ-like love and hospitality to those who live around them with the goal of connecting those lost souls to the saving gospel.

Preaching with outreach in mind

Beginning in spring 2022 both of the Commission on Worship’s newsletters—*Preach the Word* and *Worship the Lord*—will focus on a variety of outreach themes: preaching that raises outreach culture and encourages personal witnessing and “worship and outreach” stories from a variety of congregations.

WELS marriage website

This website will contain a suite of marriage resources—Bible studies, devotionals, video archives, Q&A—to maintain and strengthen marriages through various seasons and challenges of life.

Online small group ministry module

Surveys of our WELS members show that many lack a strong connection to their church and to each other. This module will share various ways to approach using small groups to help address that need. Step-by-step instructions will help churches structure small groups in a way that makes sense for their ministry setting.

Effective soul care partnership with a focus on mental health

Special Ministries’ WELS/ELS Christian Therapist Network has partnered with Christian Family Solutions to offer a series of distance learning discussions to benefit both WELS or ELS therapists and pastors. A panel of pastors and therapists will virtually present on mental health topics to small groups of pastors and therapists. These presentations will include interactive discussions to foster networking, partnership, and trust between pastors and therapists.

Summary

This does not describe everything the commissions of Congregational Services have done or are doing. For more information, contact any member of WELS Congregational Services.

Finally, WELS Congregational Services is here to serve you. This is a grassroots organization. As mentioned previously, every program or initiative developed by any of the six commissions is the result of multiple congregations asking for help with some ministry effort. Please don’t hesitate to let us know how we can do that better.

Rev. Jonathan Hein, reporter

Rev. James Behringer, director of WELS Commission on Special Ministries

Rev. Donn Dobberstein, director of WELS Commission on Discipleship

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, director of WELS Commission on Worship

Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services and director of WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling

Teacher Cindi Holman, coordinator of WELS Early Childhood Ministries

Teacher Paul Patterson, associate director of WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

Teacher James Rademan, director of WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

Rev. Eric Roecker, director of WELS Commission on Evangelism

Ministry Support

The Ministry Support area of the ministry financial plan includes the Synodical Council and all entities overseen by the Synodical Council. These include:

Synodical Council

- Expenses for all regular and special meetings of the Synodical Council
- Expenses for the Accounting Oversight Committee
- Some insurance expenses

President's Office

- Compensation for the synod president
- Stipends to the congregations of the first and second vice presidents
- Office staff serving the president and the Synodical Council
- Travel expenses for the synod presidium
- Colloquy expenses

Facility Services

Expenses related to the maintenance and operation of the Center for Mission and Ministry, including insurance costs

WELS Archives

WELS Historical Institute (see p. 95)

Publication Coordinating Commission (see p. 107 in the report of Northwestern Publishing House)

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Expenditures related to humanitarian aid and relief programs; funding for the programs of Christian Aid and Relief is provided by gifts from individuals, congregations, and other organizations

Technology Services

Financial Services

Human Resources

Synodical Council

The Synodical Council (SC) is responsible for the implementation of all decisions and resolutions made by the synod in convention and for overseeing all activities of the synod in pursuit of its mission (other than those that are the specific responsibility of the Conference of Presidents). In keeping with the WELS Constitution and Bylaws, the Synodical Council also has the authority to act on behalf of the synod between conventions when proper and necessary.

As it carries out the broad oversight described previously, the Synodical Council is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and overseeing all programs of ministry carried out by the synod. Part of that oversight is the management of all financial activities of the synod, assuring fiscal soundness, preparing and updating support forecasts, and monitoring expenditures to maintain a balanced financial plan. In the years when the synod meets in convention, the Synodical Council is responsible for working with all areas of ministry to develop and propose a balanced biennial ministry financial plan (budget) that supports the work of the synod in keeping with its long-range ministry plan.

Standing committees

The Synodical Council is organized into three standing committees. The Finance Committee is responsible for establishing the support forecast and for recommending the overall level of spending for budgetary planning. The Finance Committee also monitors financial performance and works closely with the synod's chief financial officer to oversee the risk management, banking, and general financial situation of the synod. The Administration Committee is responsible for developing and implementing general policies and procedures, providing oversight of WELS' subsidiary organizations, overseeing WELS Human Resources and Technology, and providing recommendations for WELS called worker compensation (with the input of the Compensation Review Committee). The Ministry Committee oversees and coordinates the plans and activities of all areas of ministry and works to monitor and evaluate how the various areas of ministry are carrying out their tasks in keeping with the synod's long-range ministry plan.

The Finance Committee establishes the recommended spending levels based on the support forecast. The Ministry Committee then determines what portion of the available resources are allocated to each area of ministry. This arrangement, in place since 2011, has proven to be very beneficial as the areas of ministry work together cooperatively rather than competitively to allocate the levels of financial support.

The Compensation Review Committee is a special standing sub-committee that reports to the Administration Committee. The Compensation Review Committee reviews and recommends adjustments to the synod's compensation guidelines for called workers.

2021 convention compliance

The Synodical Council has the responsibility to monitor compliance to the resolutions passed by the synod in convention. A progress report on convention compliance can be found on p. 33 as "Appendix 2."

Long-range plan

The SC continues to be guided by the synod's long-range plan, which was adopted in 2017 and extends to the year 2025. The SC has appointed a committee to develop a new long-range plan, which will be presented to the 2023 synod convention.

Final financial results for the year ending June 30, 2021

In November, the SC reviewed the financial results of FY21. Results showed great blessings on the financial position of the synod. Those results can be found in the financial section on p. 47.

In February, the SC also reviewed the financial results for the current year and projections for the coming year. That information can also be found in the financial section.

During the past years a continuing concern was voiced that Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) have increased only slightly over the past decade. This poses a problem because an increase in expenditures of 2 to 3 percent is necessary simply to maintain the current operations of the synod. The last conventions of the synod have passed resolutions encouraging congregations to increase CMO to meet the ministry needs of the synod. We are happy to report that CMO for calendar year 2021 showed a significant increase and represented the highest CMO annual total in the synod's history. CMO subscriptions for 2022 continue an upward trend in CMO. We commend God's people of WELS for their faithful support of our synod's mission and ministry.

Financial Stabilization Fund

The Financial Stabilization Fund enables timely adjustments to the synod's ministry financial plan in a way that helps to avoid sudden reductions to the synod's mission and ministry. All revenues received by the synod (other than Congregation Mission Offerings and tuition at the ministerial education schools) flow into this fund and are planned to be spent only in the year after they are received. The SC closely monitors this fund to assure that the

fund does not fall below necessary levels and does not expand to the point where available funds are not used to carry out ministry.

In November 2021 the SC created a new financial vehicle called the Ministry Opportunity Fund by transferring \$5 million from the Financial Stabilization Fund. The Ministry Opportunity Fund will be used to support new ministry initiatives that could not otherwise be funded. It is intended to replace the previous practice of creating an “unfunded priority” list, which often became outdated and needed continuing adjustments. The first identified recipient of money from this fund will be Home Missions to help support the 100 missions in 10 years initiative through a total of \$3 million to be distributed over a four-year time period.

Paycheck Protection Program

The synod, along with the four ministerial education schools and Northwestern Publishing House, all received loans from the federal government via the Paycheck Protection Program that was implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The schools and Northwestern Publishing House received \$4.7 million in loans; the synod received \$2.7 million. All of these loans were forgiven by the federal government. The synod’s portion was placed into the Financial Stabilization Fund; forgiven loans to the other entities were added to their net assets in special funds.

Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel in Madison, Wis.

Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel was established as a campus ministry serving students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. In 2004, the synod deeded 50 percent of its ownership in the property to Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel in exchange for the Chapel’s commitment to undertake construction of a new chapel on the property. Recently, the Chapel desired to refinance its loan (with an external financial institution) to take advantage of the low-interest-rate environment. To help make this possible, the Synodical Council approved the transfer of the 50 percent WELS ownership of the property to the Chapel.

Modifications to the current ministry financial plan

The SC is authorized to make necessary and/or prudent modifications to the ministry financial plan adopted by the synod in convention. Entities that desire to exceed that level of spending may request that the SC modify the approved spending level, in most cases provided that the entity can demonstrate that it has the funds available and that no additional synodical operating funds will be used. At its November 2021 and February 2022 meetings, the SC approved a number of additional expenditures for various areas of ministry and ministerial education schools. None of these modifications required additional synod support.

In February 2022, recognizing the impact of inflation on called workers, the SC approved a plan modification that adjusted the planned salary increase from 2.0 percent to an average of 3.5 percent for the second year of the biennium (beginning July 1, 2022). While not covering the full inflationary increases within the economy, this action is intended to provide called workers with at least some relief and is consistent with projected wage increase expectations for U.S. employers. The salary matrix has been adjusted to reflect this change.

Ministry financial plan for the next biennium

Even though the next ministry financial plan will not be adopted until the 2023 synod convention, work has already begun to develop the plan that will be recommended by the SC. An initial support forecast is prepared early in the process (a forecast that is reviewed and modified as necessary) as the ministry financial plan is developed. Based on the support forecast adopted by the SC at its February 2022 meeting, the SC directed the president and the areas of ministry to proceed with the following assumptions:

- Congregation Mission Offerings projected to increase by 0.5 percent each year of the biennium.
- Wage increase of 2.5 percent for each year of the biennium.
- Health care cost increase of 7.0 percent for both years.
- No increase in retirement contributions in either year.
- Insurance and utilities expenses are projected to increase 5.0 percent each year.
- An increase in operational/program expenses and school subsidy of 3.0 percent each year.

Once the support forecast is established and the SC adopts spending levels, each area of ministry and synodical department submits its proposed ministry plans and requested support amount to the president. The president, in view of the established priorities of the synod and the long-range plan, and with input from the areas of ministry, crafts a draft comprehensive ministry financial plan. This draft is reviewed by the President’s Advisory Council (PAC).

The members of the PAC—as representatives from all areas of ministry and synodical departments—review the plan proposal and make suggestions for modifications. The president, taking into consideration the input of the PAC, recommends a complete plan to the SC. After discussion and further input, the SC adopts the plan and forwards it to the synod convention for discussion and approval.

This process has been followed for 12 years and has served the synod well. All areas of ministry have demonstrated a great deal of brotherly cooperation and the ability to consider the overall needs of the synod.

Pension Plan

In 2017 the SC appointed a special committee, chaired by Mr. Paul Holzhueter, to explore the question of whether WELS should change its retirement program from the defined benefit Pension Plan to defined contributions made to workers' accounts in the Shepherd Plan. As a result of the committee's work, the SC recommended to the 2021 synod convention that this change be made. The recommendation was approved by the convention, and the change was made as of January 1, 2022. The transition has gone very smoothly.

Northwestern Publishing House K-12 religion curriculum proposal

At its February 2022 meeting, the SC heard a detailed presentation of the Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) K-12 religion curriculum proposal. The original proposal was received favorably by the 2021 synod convention. The SC was in favor of the development of a new curriculum, but it was not in a position to commit the necessary dollars without additional information and details of the plan. The SC asked the Conference of Presidents, working through WELS Congregational Services, to assume overall responsibility for the project; to make plans to identify the objectives, scope, and format of a new curriculum; and to estimate the time and funding needed to carry out the project. NPH will continue to play an active role in the process.

Subsidiaries

The SC has final oversight over the synod's four subsidiaries (Northwestern Publishing House, WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds, and WELS Benefit Plans Office). The SC also has final oversight over WELS Human Resources, Communication Services, and WELS Technology. Reports from all of these entities are included in *Report to the Twelve Districts*.

Appointments

Mr. Seth Hansen, Mr. Tim Gensmer, and Mr. Ron Kerr were reappointed to the WELS Church Extension Fund Board of Directors. Mr. Joel Luehman, Mr. John Wenker, and Mr. Seth Hansen were reappointed to the WELS Investment Funds Board of Directors. Mr. Joel Raasch, Mr. Matthew Groth, and Prof. Steven Pagels were reappointed to the Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors. Mr. John Pratt was newly appointed to the Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors. Mr. Lee Miller was reappointed and Pastor James Turriff was appointed to the Retirement Program Commission. Mr. James Gabriel was appointed to the WELS VEBA Commission.

Thanks

Four voting members of the Synodical Council are completing their time of service this summer. Dr. Timothy Kriewall, lay representative from the Michigan District, has decided not to run for another term. Mr. Brad Johnston, lay representative from the South Central District, is completing ten years of service and is stepping down from his position due to other responsibilities. Pastor Paul Janke, chairman of the Board for World Missions, will retire this summer. Pastor Donald Tollefson has served as a representative of the Conference of Presidents on the SC and will retire at the end of June 2022. Finally, advisory member Pastor Keith Free has accepted a call into the parish ministry, completing his service on the SC. We sincerely thank God for these faithful servants, and we thank them for their service.

Rev. Mark Schroeder, reporter

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president and chairman

Mr. Pete Aisbet, Southeastern Wisconsin District

Mr. John Fowler, South Atlantic District

Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions

Mr. Kenneth Gosch, Dakota-Montana District

Mr. Steven Hansen, Arizona-California District

Rev. Joel Heckendorf, pastor-at-large

Rev. Paul Janke, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions

Rev. Joel Jenswold, pastor-at-large

Mr. Bradley Johnston, South Central District
 Dr. Timothy Kriewall, Michigan District
 Mr. Jake Lemke, Western Wisconsin District
 Mr. Brent Masters, Pacific Northwest District
 Dr. Ryan Olson, North Atlantic District
 Teacher Thomas Plitzuweit, teacher-at-large
 Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
 Mr. Kurt Sames, Minnesota District
 Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, Northern Wisconsin District
 Rev. Donald Tollefson, Conference of Presidents
 Rev. Charles Westra, Conference of Presidents
 Mr. Chip Woods, Nebraska District
 Rev. Joel Zank, Conference of Presidents

Advisory:

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer
 Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions
 Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services
 Mr. Lee Hitter, director of WELS communications
 Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president
 Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving
 Mr. Dennis Maurer, WELS director of WELS human resources
 Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
 Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions
 Mr. Martin Spriggs, WELS chief technology officer
 Rev. Joel Voss, WELS second vice president (serves as the secretary of the Synodical Council)
 Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations

Appendix 1: WELS Long-Range Plan (Adopted 2017)

“Our Great Heritage” UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory.’ ” (Revelation 14:6-7a).

We exist to proclaim the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ. We affirm that only that gospel can create and sustain faith. Thus, spiritual results related to the growth of the Holy Christian Church in every nation, tribe, language, and people are completely in the hands of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the means of grace to accomplish the results that only he can work, and he has entrusted the means of grace to human beings as his messengers. We fear God, preaching and teaching the law. We give him glory, preaching and teaching the gospel. We do that as individuals and as congregations working together in a confessional Lutheran church body, that is, we carry out our gospel ministry together while standing squarely on all the truths of Scripture as expressed by the Lutheran Confessions. At all times and in all we do our focus is the cross of Christ Jesus.

“To Spread Its Light From Age To Age Shall Be Our Chief Endeavor” FOUNDATION FOR LONG-RANGE PLANNING—OUR PURPOSE

For the purposes of making it clear that we are an outreach organization, for planning and marshalling resources as good stewards of God’s blessings, and for encouraging unity in spirit, the leaders of our synod have noted the constitutional priorities articulated by recent synod conventions and have summarized the purpose of our work as a synod with this planning guide:

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to give all glory to God by upholding, defending, and proclaiming the truth of the Holy Scriptures as articulated in the Lutheran Confessions, and by providing a means for congregations and their members to extend the reach of their God-given mission of proclaiming the gospel in Word and sacrament through joint mission efforts at home and abroad, the training of called workers, and coordination of gospel applications to encourage spiritually healthy called workers in spiritually healthy congregations and schools.

“Through Life It Guides Our Way”

THE PICTURE IN 2025

Under God’s blessing and by grace alone, we hope to see the following ambitious and realistic snapshot of our work in 2025.

Worldwide Identity as Confessional Lutherans

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 and the 175th anniversary of WELS in 2025, we are engaging Christian leaders around the world to join with confessional Lutherans in North America and beyond so that by 2025 the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) will be more widely known as a confessional Lutheran church body firmly founded on the Holy Scriptures and joyfully partnering to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ in Word and sacrament to as many people as possible around the globe.

What you will recognize

- WELS materials will present the gospel with remarkable clarity as an authentic voice of the confessional evangelical Lutheran church.

What may look new

- Existing Christian church bodies around the world will be training their pastors and other called workers with WELS materials and personnel in order to become authentic Lutherans.

World Missions

Recognizing the need for every soul to hear the gospel, by 2025 the Board for World Missions (BWM) will be working with all of the other areas of the synod to serve more than 1,000,000 souls worldwide (160,000 souls in 2016).

What you will recognize

- A world mission team that agrees on a scriptural Lutheran understanding of missiological terms and philosophy, using planning tools to keep the work focused on the one thing needful.
- Regional seminaries, national theological professors, functional Bible institutes, and regular on-site training from catechetical level on up supplemented by distance learning.
- Catechetical, Bible institute level, and seminary course materials in many languages.
- Expatriate missionaries increasingly in a training function.

What may look new

- The majority of missionaries, pastors, and other congregational leaders from the people groups themselves.
- Mission networks and mission support networks that transcend national boundaries.

Home Missions

Recognizing that sharing the gospel through the establishment of new gospel outposts in North America is the primary purpose of Home Missions, by 2025 the Board for Home Missions will continue to seek every opportunity to plant new ministries and to enhance gospel outreach in existing congregations in order to serve more than 300,000 communicant members and more than 400,000 baptized members in the United States (298,899 communicant members and 376,177 baptized members in 2016).

What you will recognize

- The goal of opening at least 10 new missions a year.
- Support for ministry enhancements in existing congregations.
- Coordinated support for all stages of ministry development, including repayment of building loans, with some congregations and programs achieving self-support every year.

What may look new

- Increased multi-site opportunities throughout mission fields.
- Increased flexibility in facility acquisitions (especially in high-cost areas), including the option to buy and renovate existing buildings.

- Self-supporting immigrant groups in urban areas with the majority of missionaries, pastors, and other leaders from the people groups themselves.
- Purposefully enhanced relationships with subsidiaries and parasynodicals in supporting mission opportunities.

Joint Mission Council

With the combined resources and coordination of Home and World Missions, working with Ministerial Education programs for training non-traditional workers, by 2025 the Joint Mission Council (JMC) will coordinate the networking of confessional Lutherans from at least a dozen people groups with which WELS members come into contact.

What you will recognize

- Regular meetings of leaders from people groups in our fellowship.

What may look new

- Just-in-time Lutheran training at the appropriate doctrinal level for any individual who wants to serve as a pastor, teacher, or missionary anywhere in the world, building on our current Pastoral Studies Institute program.
- Organizational structures that facilitate the new ministry.

Ministerial Education

Recognizing God's grace in the precious Lutheran heritage of proclaiming the unconditional gospel that has been passed to our generation, by 2025 the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) will be working with all of the other areas of synod to provide the right number of pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and missionaries so that annual vacancy levels remain under 10 percent (8 percent vacancy rate in 2016).

What you will recognize

- Graduates who are willing to serve anywhere that the church needs them, who believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, and who subscribe without reservation to the Lutheran Confessions.
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), offering theological training that prepares men to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS or of churches within our confessional fellowship, and endeavoring to offer opportunity for theological and professional growth to called workers who already are serving in the ministry of our confessional fellowship.
- Martin Luther College (MLC), training a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of WELS and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. These Christian witnesses include men ready for pastoral training at WLS; men and women ready for service as teachers and staff ministers in the synod's churches, schools, and other institutions; men and women ready for other church ministries, both full and part time, responding to the needs of WELS; international students preparing for ministry in partnership with WELS mission fields; and men and women in programs of continuing education that meet the ministerial needs of WELS.
- Michigan Lutheran Seminary, preparing high school students for the public ministry of the gospel, encouraging them to enroll at MLC.
- Luther Preparatory School, preparing and encouraging young men and women for the full-time ministry in WELS.

What may look new

- Declining rates of educational debt held by graduates of MLC.
- Comprehensive long-term plans to maintain and improve the physical plants of the ministerial education schools.
- Growing participation with partners in Home and World Missions to serve diverse ethnic populations in global ministry.
- Rapidly growing numbers of teachers in self-supporting Lutheran schools in major U.S. urban areas.
- More comprehensive training and certification of principals and early childhood directors.

Congregation and District Ministry

Recognizing the vital importance of congregational health, by 2025, under the direction of the Conference of Presidents (COP), Congregational Services (CS) will serve congregations and their leaders by providing resources, training, and personal assistance so that they might carry out gospel ministry in the most faithful way on the local level.

What you will recognize

- The Commission on Worship, helping parishes in their central activity of worship that glorifies God and strengthens his people.
- The Commission on Evangelism, assisting congregations and members to seize every opportunity the Lord provides for personal witnessing to evangelize lost souls.

- The Commission on Special Ministries, offering spiritual and practical guidance and training to congregations and individuals as they share God's love to those with needs or circumstances that prevent them from being served through the congregation's usual ministry.
- The Commission on Lutheran Schools, guiding and assisting congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening both elementary and secondary Lutheran schools as well as early childhood ministries.

What may look new

- A new printed hymnal and psalter completely supported by electronic worship planning resources.
- The activities of all of CS generated by the needs and priorities identified by the COP through Commission on Congregational Counseling contacts with congregations and considered requests from individuals and parasynodical organizations.
- Expanded activities of the Commission on Adult Discipleship and the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry under one director.
- An emphasis on reclaiming wandering sheep.

"Lord Grant While Worlds Endure We Keep Its Teachings Pure"

Resources

It is the stated goal of WELS leadership and the synod in convention to have Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) serve as the foundational source of financial support for synodical ministries. In order to carry out the plans and goals listed in this long-range plan, under God's blessing and by his grace alone, the Conference of Presidents (COP) will coordinate the work of circuit pastors, WELS Communication Services, and the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving to encourage CMO gifts as well as special gifts from individuals and groups for the general work of WELS and for specific gospel projects. The Synodical Council (SC) will coordinate the use of CMO, general gifts placed in previous years in the Financial Stabilization Fund, and specific gifts in each biennial ministry plan.

Resource allocation

The synod president will consult with the President's Advisory Council (PAC) to develop a biennial ministry plan for presentation to the Synodical Council and the synod convention. The ministry plan will reflect continuity in our work of proclaiming the gospel as well as considered decisions for dealing with new circumstances and opportunities as they arise.

Faithful use of resources for mission and ministry

The work of the synod takes place properly with a scriptural worldview of history. When the forces of Satan have conspired and risen up to attack God's church and the gospel itself, God has enabled faithful believers to stand firm. They listen to the Word, repent of their sin, return to the cross, and treasure the sweet news of full forgiveness in Jesus. They form visible churches to hold faithfully to the Word of God without compromise and then to proclaim the saving message of that pure Word to the world, throughout all generations.

Appendix 2: 2021 WELS convention compliance

Resolution	Responsible group	Resolution description	Status
Res 2-02	COP	2023 convention at Michigan Lutheran Seminary	<i>Planning underway</i>
Res 2-03a	COP	Bible study on divine call distributed	<i>Completed</i>
Res 2-03b	COP	Educational articles on divine call for <i>Forward in Christ</i>	<i>Articles appearing in May, June, July, August 2022</i>
Res 2-03c	COP	Create organized way to receive congregational feedback regarding the call process	<i>Discussed in April 2022; plan not available at this time</i>
Res 2-04	COP	Convention offering to the Grace Hmong Outreach in Vietnam	<i>Completed</i>
Res 7-01	SC	Adopt proposed ministry financial plan	<i>Completed and implemented</i>
Res 8-01	Board for Home Missions	Adopt plan to start 100 new missions in 10 years, beginning in 2023	<i>Planning begun</i>
Res 10-01	Ministerial Education	Commend MLC for effort to reduce student debt	<i>Completed</i>
Res 10-02	Ministerial Education	MLC to continue seeking donors for the “Equipping Christian Witnesses”	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 12-01	SC	Restore funding to WELS Military Services	<i>Consideration to be given in the next ministry financial plan</i>
Res 12-02	SC	Provide additional funding to WELS Prison Ministry	<i>Additional funding provided through special Schwan grant; consideration to be given in the next ministry financial plan</i>
Res 14-01	Support Services	Express thanks to former WELS CFO Todd Poppe	<i>Completed</i>
Res 16-01	Northwestern Publishing House	Encourage NPH to pursue completion of the Curriculum 22:6 project and to seek supplemental funding as needed	<i>NPH proposal to the SC was referred to the Conference of Presidents for overall supervision of the project</i>
Res 18-01 Res 18-02 Res 18-04 Res 18-05 Res 18-06b Res 18-07 Res 18-08	President	Changes made to synod and district bylaws	<i>Completed</i>
Res 19-01	Synodical Council	Implement approved change to the synod retirement plan	<i>Completed</i>

Accounting Oversight Committee

Our calling

The Accounting Oversight Committee serves WELS and its schools, subsidiaries, and affiliates that are under the oversight of the Synodical Council. The committee serves the Synodical Council by

- assisting management with ensuring appropriate accounting policies and internal controls are established and financial systems are efficient and effective;
- retaining external auditors;
- assisting in ensuring that financial personnel have the requisite skills; and
- assisting in ensuring that financial reports are prepared timely, accurately, and in compliance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (U.S. GAAP).

The Accounting Oversight Committee keeps the Synodical Council informed of its action through the Synodical Council's appointed member of the committee. The synod's schools, subsidiaries, and affiliate boards, commissions, and committees are informed through WELS' chief financial officer.

Our current situation

The Accounting Oversight Committee engaged the independent audit firm of Baker Tilly US, LLP (Baker Tilly), to conduct the annual audits of the consolidated financial statements of WELS, its schools, and its Support Services subsidiaries for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021. All audits were completed within four months of the fiscal year-end (consistent with historical precedent), with all entities receiving an unmodified opinion—the best you can get—on the financial statements' compliance with U.S. GAAP. The auditors did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls. Copies of the annual financial statements, quarterly consolidated financial statements, and quarterly budget reports are available at wels365.sharepoint.com/sites/finance/SitePages/Home.aspx.

WELS successfully implemented the following accounting guidance changes issued by the Financial Accounting Standards Board for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021, all of which did not have a significant impact on the consolidated financial statements of WELS:

- guidance on improving disclosures related to contributions made;
- guidance related to fair value disclosures of financial instruments; and
- guidance on aligning the U.S. GAAP definition of collections (i.e., works of art) to that used by the Code of Ethics for Museums of the American Alliance of Museums and policies related to deaccession (that is, removed from a collection).

In addition to the annual WELS financial statement audits, the Accounting Oversight Committee also engaged Baker Tilly to audit the WELS VEBA Group Health Plan and WELS Pension Plan for calendar year 2021. These financial statements received unmodified opinions for 2020, and the auditors did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls. The 2021 calendar year audits for these two entities won't be available until early summer 2022 and are expected to be similar to prior years' results.

The fiscal year 2021 audit was the fifth year in the existing audit pricing agreement with Baker Tilly, indicating that a request for proposal process related to external audit services should be conducted. However, the Accounting Oversight Committee decided to extend the current agreement with Baker Tilly for three more years due to: 1) the recent hiring and transition to a new chief financial officer in 2020, 2) better alignment of the next request for proposal to coincide with the transition of the existing Baker Tilly audit partners, 3) the avoidance of overlapping requests for proposals within the Financial Services department in the same calendar year allowing for them to be staggered going forward, and 4) the confidence in Baker Tilly that has been established given their level of expertise and service as WELS' external audit firm over the past several years.

A look ahead

The Accounting Oversight Committee will work with WELS Financial Services in assessing the impacts of new accounting guidance related to contributed nonfinancial assets, retirement benefits, leases, and credit losses.

Mr. Bill Schultz, reporter

Mr. Bill Schultz, chairman

Mr. Todd Backus

Mr. Jeff Fisher

Mr. Daniel Riebe

Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, Synodical Council liaison

Mr. Gary Schmid

Advisory:

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

WELS Archives

Our calling

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Archives is the official repository of the permanent records of WELS and its congregations, called workers, and WELS-affiliated ministries. These permanent records are those of significant historical value for the synod and its congregations, and they document all aspects of WELS administration, mission, and ministry. The mission of the archives is to preserve and protect these records and make them available for researchers as well as provide information services to the synod and its called workers and congregations.

Our current situation

In June 2021, the Center for Mission and Ministry reopened to the public and welcomed back volunteers and in-person researchers. Processing work has resumed on collections, including congregational, World Missions, Special Ministries, and personal collections. All the volunteers who came prior to the Center for Mission and Ministry being closed have returned and continue to come on a weekly basis. In 2021, nine tour groups visited. Most were large groups such as the Doctor Martin Luther College Class of 1966 reunion group and students from Martin Luther College as well as Michigan Lutheran Seminary. It is wonderful to share the archives and Visitors Center with people again.

The archivist handled over 140 research requests in 2021. These requests covered a variety of topics including congregational anniversaries, genealogical research, and academic research. Researchers have also returned to the archives. In 2021, 13 research appointments were scheduled and completed in the archives. As of writing this report, four in-person research appointments have taken place in 2022. There was also an increase in the requests relating to articles from the former *Northwestern Lutheran* and now *Forward in Christ* magazine. The archivist works closely with the *Forward in Christ* staff to handle these requests in a timely manner. Digitization was completed on all issues of *The Northwestern Lutheran* and *Forward in Christ* magazines. This collection goes back to the start of *The Northwestern Lutheran* in 1914. The archivist wishes to thank the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary students who have worked to scan these publications over the past several years. This project could have not been completed so quickly without their help.

Many ongoing projects are taking place in the archives, one of which is the work being done with the Early Presidential Collection. This collection contains the earliest records for our synod. It is crucial that this collection is preserved and made accessible to researchers. A full inventory of the more than 4,000 items in this collection was completed in 2021, and work has progressed to transcribing Professor J. P. Koehler's index on these letters. Through this work we can itemize this collection in the online catalog, ArchivesSpace, as well as reconcile Koehler's index with our own. Work continues growing the digital collections in the archives. Along with the digitization of *Northwestern Lutheran* and *Forward in Christ*, digitization has been completed on the synod convention *Proceedings* back to 1927 and on the *Book of Reports and Memorials* back to 1931. Scanning work has now transitioned to the *Report to the Districts*, which have been scanned back to 1991.

Donations arrive to the archives with regularity. Many of the donations are one-time smaller mailings of bulletins, church histories, or other items to be added to biographical or congregational files. The archives continue to be a

repository for church records of congregations that have closed. In 2021 the archives received the records of four congregations that closed as well as other accruals to existing collections.

The archivist began outreach efforts for the archives again in 2021. At the 2021 synod convention, the archives had a joint table with the WELS Historical Institute. As an advisory board member for the WELS Historical Institute, the archivist helped plan and promote the 40th anniversary for the institute. This event was held at Salem Lutheran Church in Milwaukee on Sept. 25, 2021. The archivist was in attendance to speak to those who wished to learn more about the archives and the cooperation between the archives and the institute in preserving and promoting WELS history. Two separate podcasts featured the archives and archivist in the last year. On each of these episodes listeners were able to hear about the day-to-day activities that take place in the archives as well as how the archivist is able to assist researchers and the members of our synod.

In fall 2021, the archivist was asked to speak to the senior Church History students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This presentation focused on how the archives can assist them in their future ministries and how they, in turn, can support the archives. In February 2022, the archivist was once again at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to do outreach at Mission and Ministry. Mission and Ministry provides the students at the seminary an opportunity to learn about the different areas of ministry within our synod and how these areas of ministry can support them through their careers.

A look ahead

The opportunity to continue outreach through a variety of events in 2022 will be a blessing. The archivist is scheduled to speak to several church groups in the coming months of 2022 and has plans to have an information table at a variety of conferences being held this summer. It is anticipated that the number of tours and visitors to the Center for Mission and Ministry will continue to increase as the year progresses. The archivist also plans to attend the 2022 Lutheran Historical Conference Biennial Meeting being held in St. Louis, Mo., this fall.

Work will continue to grow and enhance the digital collections. The Early Presidential Collection will continue to be itemized within ArchivesSpace and as more collections are processed and inventoried, they, too, will be added to ArchivesSpace. The archivist also hopes to be able to scan Koehler's index of the presidential letters. This is needed for preservation purposes as the bound volume where this is recorded is starting to deteriorate. Digitization will continue with the *Report to the Districts*. Once these are completed, scanning will move to the district convention proceedings. Processing and inventory work will proceed on a variety of collections with the help of volunteers.

The archivist strongly encourages our synod and its members to look ahead to our synod's 175th anniversary, which will happen in 2025. This anniversary will provide the opportunity to look back on all the blessings God has graciously granted. It also provides the chance to promote historical research and teaching opportunities concerning our synod's history. As we look back on the last year and ahead to the coming years, it is easy to see God's blessings.

Mrs. Susan Willems, reporter

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Our calling

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is one of our synod's compassion ministries, bringing physical relief to people suffering from natural disasters and severe medical and financial emergencies in the form of cash grants, food, clothing, medical supplies, and volunteer labor. Christian Aid and Relief also partners with WELS Home and World Missions to support humanitarian aid projects that lead to many opportunities to proclaim the gospel. In addition, Christian Aid and Relief partners with congregations to assist members who are going through an extreme medical or financial crisis. The theme passage that guides our mission is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (6:10). Because of God's gracious blessings to us, we are eager to reflect Christ's love and compassion to those in need. We seek to personalize our efforts by distributing funds through our churches and missions. We partner with them to

encourage local relief efforts on behalf of their own members and community. We bring in trained volunteers to assist with relief efforts when appropriate.

Our current situation

Financial matters

Christian Aid and Relief is not funded in the WELS budget but relies on the special over-and-above offerings of God's people in WELS. Thank you for your gifts of love.

From Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2021, WELS Christian Aid and Relief utilized \$650,102 of the gifts entrusted to us for foreign and domestic disaster relief. Humanitarian aid projects in WELS mission fields at home and abroad were supported with \$245,329. Personal grants amounting to \$232,798 were given to assist WELS members and prospects experiencing severe financial or medical crises.

Disaster relief

WELS Christian Aid and Relief provides disaster relief in a variety of situations and in a variety of ways. When a major disaster causes extensive damage and disruption in a community where we have a congregation, we often mobilize and deploy volunteers for onsite disaster relief operations. We go in and help the church and community to clean up after the disaster. When a disaster strikes in an area where there is no WELS ministry close by, we often work through Direct Relief (directrelief.org) to provide grants to assist the survivors of the disaster. Direct Relief specializes in providing medical assistance in the form of equipment, medications, and other medical supplies.

Haiti earthquake

On Aug. 14, 2021, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti causing multiple deaths, many injuries, and widespread destruction in one of the world's poorest countries. WELS Christian Aid and Relief responded to this disaster in two ways. First, we sent an immediate gift of \$10,000 through Direct Relief. Later we approved a grant of \$60,000 to Branch Lutheran Schools. About 30 families who have children in Branch Lutheran Schools lost their homes in the earthquake. This grant enabled them to rebuild their homes and replace their personal belongings.

Hurricane Ida

Hurricane Ida made landfall on the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29, 2021. At that time financial aid was given through our WELS congregations in New Orleans, Abita Springs, and Baton Rouge to provide necessities like food, water, ice, and fuel to those impacted by the storm. Volunteers from WELS congregations in nearby states also spent many hours helping with repairs and clean-up in the neighborhoods surrounding our churches. Copies of Christian Aid and Relief's devotion book, *An Ever-Present Help in Trouble*, were shared with those in need of comfort. This book of 40 devotions and prayers appropriate for a time of disaster was written for this very purpose. For months Christian Aid and Relief continued to assist with disaster relief in New Orleans by sending volunteers to help with repairs to homes damaged by the storms, including drywall repair and roof replacement for several homes. We also assisted Trinity in Abita Springs with a financial grant to help the congregation replace its storm-damaged roof.

Waukesha parade tragedy

On Nov. 21, 2021, the driver of an SUV killed 6 people and injured 62 others by hitting participants and observers at the annual Christmas parade in Waukesha, Wis. In the aftermath of the tragedy, WELS Christian Aid and Relief partnered with Christian Family Solutions, a WELS-affiliated counseling service, to provide crisis counseling services to those who witnessed the tragedy. Forty-two hours of Christ-centered counseling sessions were provided. In addition, Christian Family Solutions' staff provided an estimated 36 hours of consultation time with pastors, teachers, and other congregation, school, and community leaders to help guide psychological crisis response or provide other resources.

Kentucky tornadoes

On Dec. 10, 2021, a series of strong tornadoes struck the South Central part of the United States killing at least 76 people and causing billions of dollars in damage. Thankfully, no WELS congregations or members were directly impacted by the storms. Lack of a WELS congregation close to the area of impact also meant that we were unable to mobilize onsite disaster relief operations. Instead, WELS Christian Aid and Relief gave gifts totaling \$40,000 through Direct Relief to ease the suffering of those affected by these terrible storms.

Colorado fires

On Dec. 30, 2021, hundreds of homes and other structures were lost as two wildfires swept through the Boulder, Colo., area. WELS Christian Aid and Relief responded by providing a grant of \$2,500 to Peace Lutheran Church of

Boulder to assist those in need. The members of Peace purchased and distributed gift cards for basic needs such as food, clothing, lodging, and personal items in the days immediately following the fire.

War in Ukraine

On Feb. 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, causing a humanitarian crisis the likes of which has not been seen in Europe since World War II. As of this writing, more than two million refugees have fled to neighboring countries, and millions more are struggling to escape the devastating destruction. WELS Christian Aid and Relief is working closely with WELS World Missions and our brothers and sisters in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church to provide aid and relief to those who are suffering. Initial grants totaling \$50,000 were provided by Christian Aid and Relief through Direct Relief to bring much-needed medical aid to refugees. Generous gifts from WELS donors are being channeled directly to the Ukrainian Lutheran Church through a special fund managed by WELS World Missions to help them provide aid to victims of this terrible war. We expect that there will continue to be a great need for aid to Ukraine for months or even years to come.

Disaster Relief Task Force

In October 2021, WELS Christian Aid and Relief formed a Disaster Relief Task Force made up of both called workers and laypeople whose task is to expand and improve Christian Aid and Relief's disaster relief capabilities. The members of the task force are Pastor Dan Sims, director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief; Pastor Tom Spiegelberg; Pastor Wayne Halldorson; Mr. Bryan Gran; Mr. Ron Kerr; Mr. Jim Bublitz; and Mrs. Elizabeth Zambo, Christian Aid and Relief's administrative assistant. The task force is currently working on researching best practices for disaster relief, writing a disaster relief training manual, developing volunteer training procedures, and planning for disaster relief teams in all 12 WELS districts. In addition, special disaster relief management software is being investigated. Such software would be extremely useful for managing our volunteer database and disaster relief deployments. The task force has set a goal of fall 2023 to begin rolling out these resources and offering training across WELS.

Humanitarian aid

WELS Christian Aid and Relief approved \$470,882 to fund humanitarian aid grants for fiscal year 2021–22. However, mostly due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, not all approved projects were completed. Many efforts are simply postponed until the pandemic is under control. Here are some highlights from the list of approved projects.

Malawi and Zambia

The Central Africa Medical Mission (Camm) receives funding from WELS Christian Aid and Relief for medications, nutritional supplements, and other medical supplies. Camm currently provides medical care at four clinics, which also serve congregations of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa. These efforts aimed at healing bodies also lead to many conversations about Jesus, who heals souls. In addition, Christian Aid and Relief also provided funds for the purchase of a motorbike to be used to carry out various ministries in Zambia and for the drilling of nine boreholes in Zambia to provide clean drinking water.

Western Kenya and Nairobi

Christian Aid and Relief provided funds for the purchase of mosquito nets. These mosquito nets are provided to people to hang over their beds at night when the mosquitos are most active. Mosquitos spread malaria, which causes 1 in 5 childhood deaths in Kenya and affects 20 million people annually.

Nigeria

Funding was granted to assist the needy including the aged, widows, orphans, and victims of crime. Showing love in this way reminds them that God still cares for them and leads to opportunities to proclaim his saving name.

Indonesia

Christian Aid and Relief granted funds to assist the poor in Indonesia with food staples such as rice, cooking oil, eggs, instant noodles, sugar, and other basic supplies. In addition, hand sanitizer, soap, and masks were provided to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Vietnam

A medical clinic was built using funds supplied by WELS Christian Aid and Relief. This clinic serves members of the Hmong Fellowship Church and others. Those who come to the clinic receive medical care and hear about God's love for them in Christ.

Albania and Bulgaria

In Eastern Europe, funds provided by WELS Christian Aid and Relief are used to support various charitable efforts. In

Albania, one of the poorest countries in Europe, food packets are supplied to the aged, the unemployed, and others who need them. Similarly, in Bulgaria, the poor are assisted with food support.

South Asia

In South Asia, Christian Aid and Relief funding supports a number of humanitarian efforts including aid and education for persecuted Christians refugees, emergency relief for natural disasters, health clinics, training in how to grow vegetables, nutritious food for nursing mothers, mosquito nets to protect from disease-bearing insects, scholarships for poor students, vocational and technological training, smokeless stoves for cooking and heating, textbooks for secondary students, and warm clothes for women and orphans. All of these acts of kindness and compassion build trust with the people we are serving and lead to opportunities to share the good news of Jesus.

Las Vegas

WELS Christian Aid and Relief has granted funds to be used for assisting African refugee/immigrant support and outreach. As new African immigrants arrive in this area, the congregation members welcome them, provide a welcome gift (cooking pots, dinnerware, toiletries, etc.), and assist them as they settle in the community and get used to living in a new country. They also invite them to congregational events, share with them the good news of our Savior, and support them in many other ways both physically and spiritually.

Toronto

A similar ministry of care and compassion is carried out by the members of Hope in Toronto, Canada. Through their Welcome Project, members of the congregation provide valuable assistance to newcomers including immigrants from all over the world. The assistance can take the form of food, transportation costs, or medical help.

Colorado, Florida, Washington, Texas

In the United States several mission congregations receive Christian Aid and Relief funding that enables them to provide care for their communities. One effort provides school supplies for underprivileged children. Another assists African immigrants as they transition to life in America. Still another provides meals for low-income seniors. All provide opportunities to hear about the Savior who loves all people.

Community Care and Compassion Matching Grants Program

Recently, WELS Christian Aid and Relief introduced a new program that is really an expansion of our Humanitarian Aid program. This program provides matching grants of up to \$2,500 for self-supporting WELS congregations that submit an approved plan to do compassion ministry in their community. The idea is to encourage WELS congregations to reach out to those in their community who are hurting, help them with their needs, and share with them the good news of the One who cares for our every need. WELS pastors have received information about this program and instructions on how to apply for a grant.

Personal financial grants

WELS Christian Aid and Relief continues to provide grants to WELS members and prospects who are dealing with serious financial or medical crises. Our goal is to encourage and assist the efforts of the local congregations.

A look ahead

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is always looking for ways to improve communication to WELS members. Videos are regularly produced to educate people about our work and to let those who support this ministry see firsthand how their gifts are being used. More information can be found at wels.net/relief or on our Facebook page. In addition, our webpage provides a convenient way to make an online donation toward Christian Aid and Relief projects. Committee members also make presentations to various church and school groups to “tell our stories” and inform WELS members about the needs and opportunities to help people through Christian Aid and Relief. Contact us to learn more.

Thank you

We thank the Lord for moving the hearts of WELS members to show how much they care for those who are hurting by offering both prayers and generous financial gifts. We are also grateful for our volunteers who give their time, effort, and energy to our relief efforts.

We also want to express our sincere gratitude to Pastor Bob Hein, who will finish his second of two terms as chairman of the Christian Aid and Relief Commission on June 30, 2022. For 12 years Hein has guided the work of WELS Christian Aid and Relief with wisdom, compassion, and a deep commitment to help those who are in need. We thank him for his faithful service.

Rev. Daniel Sims, reporter

Rev. Robert Hein, chairman
Rev. Bruce Marggraf, secretary
Mr. Dennis Palmberg
Teacher Steve Vasold
Rev. Richard Warnecke

Advisory:

Mrs. Elizabeth Zambo, administrative assistant

Support Services

Support Services is the area that encompasses Financial Services, Technology, and Human Resources. These areas support the ministry of the synod and its four ministerial education schools.

Technology

Our calling

WELS Technology supports the work of the synod by providing a capable and secure technical infrastructure, facilitating digital communications, enabling congregations and called workers to make the best use of technology, and coordinating technology initiatives that can't be done at smaller organizational levels. Together the dedicated men and women who make up the WELS Technology team seek to help the spread of the gospel with technology tools the Lord continues to make available in the 21st century.

WELS Technology divides its work into four areas (Administration and Project Management, Information Services, Software Services, and Web Services) that are responsible for ten distinct services:

1. Information Technology administration;
2. workstations and peripherals;
3. project management;
4. disaster recovery;
5. servers and storage;
6. documentation and training;
7. end-user support;
8. network and telephony;
9. application and web development; and
10. application and web maintenance.

One of the challenges of providing the appropriate technology to meet ministry needs is determining the best choice among many that are both cost effective and future proof. It is difficult to predict if a technology chosen today will be obsolete or even "gone" tomorrow. Strategic planning is essential to being good stewards while meeting changing needs.

It should come as no surprise that security and privacy demand much of our attention. While appropriate steps have always been taken to keep the synod's digital assets secure, they are at even greater risk today given the current climate and prevalence of hacking, phishing, ransomware, and identity theft. More and more time and budget are spent in securing the data entrusted to the synod by churches, schools, called workers, volunteers, and donors.

Our primary calling is connecting gospel-sharers with the available technologies that can assist in the spread of that gospel. Time and resources are set aside to help with the process of making technologies available to those who would like to share the good news by “any means possible.” Our calling is to find those intersections between technology and ministry.

Our current situation

Security and privacy continue to be an important focus. Recent industry-wide vulnerabilities like “Log4j” caused minor disruption to daily activities, but no resources were compromised, and all instances have been patched or mitigated. In addition, our primary web host provider network was upgraded for 150-plus WELS domains giving improved Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack protection.

The team welcomed the hire of a new security analyst late in 2021. Her responsibilities will be spread across the Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM) and our four synod schools initially. Primary responsibilities include:

- Performing annual security assessments for the CMM and four synod schools using standardized tools.
- Analyzing network environment; designing, testing, and implementing security policies.
- Monitoring and analyzing threats, centralized anti-virus protection, and SPAM filtering.
- Developing recommendations and implementing defensive countermeasures to potential or realized security threats.
- Crafting policies and procedures as identified by security audits.
- Creating documentation and planning for all security-related information, including incident response and disaster recovery plans.
- Preparing security and privacy resources, templates, and sample policies for WELS churches and schools as well as addressing related questions by WELS entities.

It was in 2021 that we recognized the retirement of Mr. Daniel Rebers—longtime director of Information Services. Dan served faithfully for 30 years. It is likely that if you needed technical help from the synod offices, he was involved in some way. We wish him God’s richest blessings in the next chapter of his life.

Another important team addition was a web developer. He is a shared resource with Communication Services and strengthens the Web Services team—now better able to service more area of ministry needs. A complete Web Services team will allow better communications and promotions through engaging web properties and applications.

Web Services maintains almost 30 different websites that represent a diverse set of WELS ministries. For a sampling of key sites, visit **wels.net/wels-web-portfolio**.

Work continued this past year on the site for The Foundation, **welscongregationalservices.net/the-foundation**. This new resource from WELS Congregational Services helps worship leaders prepare and coordinate worship materials. All items are downloadable including podcasts, videos, worship planners, and images. Northwestern Publishing House plans to provide Service Builder files in the future.

In addition, several Special Ministries websites were built or upgraded. They include:

- Conquerors through Christ: **conquerorsthroughchrist.net**
- Freedom for the Captives: **freedomforcaptives.com**
- Christian Therapist Network: **christiantherapistnetwork.com**
- WELS Europe: **welseurope.net**

Two areas of focus for Software Services are WELSource, the synod’s primary database, and the Pension “freeze” with the associated defined contribution plan initiative. Key applications that support our synod data were completed in the past year that enable called workers better access to their profile information, assessments, and benefits. Congregational data, call request forms, and lists were also enhanced to better support calling bodies, the Conference of Presidents, and the Commission on Lutheran Schools. These applications along with improved security provide a solid foundation for efficient synod management and operations. Call requests can be quickly entered and fulfilled with accurate called worker data and reporting, allowing a very high volume of call activity with limited support staff.

On Dec. 31, 2021, the synod Pension Plan was officially frozen. Many hours were dedicated to accurately modifying the systems that maintain and track that data as well as creating a brand-new system to begin managing “defined contributions.” There were many complex scenarios that needed to be supported and converted from the previous system. Both current and retired called workers and synod employees should feel confident that appropriate calculations are in place and a smooth transition is well underway.

Finally, a new “Contact us” tool was launched last year that enables website visitors to easily ask questions or forward comments to WELS. The tool tracks and routes questions to those who can respond to the inquiry and provides timely reminders throughout the process. More than 1,000 questions/comments were submitted to WELS sites and responded to in 2021.

A look ahead

Often WELS churches/schools have volunteer technology assistance or part-time attention from overutilized called workers caring for an increasingly critical ministry component. In the coming year WELS Technology will continue to work in hardening security, privacy best practices, and infrastructure but also providing guidance to churches and schools on the same. Sample sets of security/privacy policies and procedures can be repurposed in local congregational settings to ensure that data is protected and shared appropriately with suggestions for modern tools and techniques.

Planning is underway to further develop mobile ministry products and upgrades to properties like What About Jesus (whataboutjesus.com). To increase the reach of this excellent outreach-themed content, installable apps will allow a richer experience, easier content discovery, and more opportunities to share the experience.

A growing majority of all visits to **wels.net** are from mobile devices. This shift away from traditional desktop or even laptop computers requires a more thoughtful approach to responsive design with simplified navigation and improved search. A redesign and relaunch of a more mobile-friendly wels.net is a priority. This effort will likely be a phased approach due to the wealth of sites and content that needs to be addressed. Related web projects will include:

- Build the WELS Missions web presentation for the 100 missions in 10 years initiative.
- Create a Women’s Ministry event website and migrate externally hosted newsletter.
- Consider establishing standalone subsidiary websites for WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds, and WELS Church Extension Fund.
- Provide web infrastructure for WELS in Spanish, a website to introduce WELS and Lutheranism to *Academia Cristo* website visitors.

The WELSource project will continue to move forward. Most work will be related to applications that manage data for called workers. Alongside the WELSource project we will continue the steady migration of paper to digital forms. These efforts together will save many hours each year in data entry and management. One of the most anticipated improvements is the ability to generate more useful analytics and reports on synod data. This enhanced data will better inform decisions and programs beneficial to overall synod ministries.

The WELS Technology team looks forward to all opportunities for service. As God has allowed new technologies available for our use, we strive to be good stewards and enable our synod’s ministries and congregations to use them to spread the precious news of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. To him be the glory.

Mr. Martin Spriggs, reporter

Financial Services

Our calling

Financial Services prepares and provides accounting and financial information and services that support and serve WELS ministries. This is done by providing timely, accurate, and complete financial statements, reports, and analyses. These reports facilitate ministry by providing God-pleasing, efficient, and effective financial services and operations that are in accordance with policies, procedures, and regulations. Financial Services also designs, implements, and maintains internal control systems that safeguard the assets God has provided.

Financial Services is led by the WELS chief financial officer (CFO) and generally provides the following services to WELS, WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF), WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds (WIF), WELS Historical

Institute, WELS Retirement Program Commission, and WELS Voluntary Employee Benefits Association (VEBA) Commission:

- financial planning and forecasting;
- accounting and auditing services, including financial statement preparation;
- transaction processing including gifts, accounts payable, and accounts receivable;
- special funds accounting;
- financial analysis and reporting;
- payroll processing;
- insurance and risk management;
- short-term investments, banking, and cash management;
- trust and other gift administration;
- coordination of corporate-wide programs including the credit card, foreign travel, and vehicle rental programs;
- non-profit state and federal compliance reporting;
- tax research, contract review, and third-party legal services coordination;
- unclaimed property management; and
- records retention.

Financial Services also provides many of these services through consultation to Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) and WELS' four ministerial education schools. Outside of Financial Services, the CFO also oversees the Human Resources and Facility Services departments. The CFO is the WELS treasurer and an advisor to the Synodical Council as well as an advisor to the Board for Ministerial Education, the Publication Coordinating Commission, the Accounting Oversight Committee, and the Compensation Review Committee. In addition, the CFO serves on the Capital Projects Committee and as an ex-officio member of the board of directors of NPH, CEF, WELS Foundation, WIF, WELS Retirement Program Commission, and WELS VEBA Commission.

Our current situation

Financial Services is blessed with a dedicated, talented staff with complementary education, training, and work experiences. The following is a summary of significant events or projects the Financial Services team worked on in the past year.

- Onboarded two new employees (an accounts payable specialist and gift processing clerk) during the winter of 2021–22 to replace vacant positions.
- Started the request for proposal (RFP) project related to the review of the synod's banking services.
- Assisted with the research and successful implementation of Paycom, an online payroll services and human resources software solution that replaced the previously used combination of ADP and Kronos software.
- Successfully led the effort in applying for and receiving forgiveness on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans for WELS, the four ministerial education schools, and Northwestern Publishing House.
- Developed the new Ministry Opportunity Fund to provide continuing support for unfunded priorities and for new ministry opportunities through an initial contribution of \$5 million from the Financial Stabilization Fund.
- Completed all audits within four months of fiscal year-end (consistent with historical precedent), with all entities receiving an unmodified opinion (the best possible) on the financial statements.
- Implemented new accounting standards issued by the Financial Accounting Standards Board, which did not have a significant impact on the consolidated financial statements of WELS, including improving disclosures related to contributions made, fair value disclosures of financial instruments, and definitions related to collections (i.e., works of art).
- Monitored the support forecast and ministry financial plan for fiscal 2022 in challenging economic times.
- Researched and executed the transfer of the synod's ownership interest in the Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel and Student Center property in Madison, Wis. The property and buildings are now fully owned by the Chapel and Student Center.
- Developed planning assumptions, preliminary support forecast, and synod support allocations for the fiscal 2024 and fiscal 2025 biennium ministry financial plan.

A look ahead

In addition to maintaining daily operations, Financial Services will continue to identify, investigate, and implement strategies that improve efficiency and effectiveness, reduce costs, and/or strengthen internal controls within the department and across WELS. Our upcoming plans include:

- Finishing the implementation of the RFP project related to the synod's banking services.
- Researching possible alternatives to the current general ledger system that could improve efficiency and effectiveness across all entities.
- Completing research on the implementation of new accounting standards related to contributed nonfinancial assets, retirement benefits, leases, and credit losses.
- Developing improvements to the synod's capital projects planning and approval process as well as the process related to the development and plan modifications for the ministry financial plan.
- Cross-training employees to ensure service continuity during vacations, vacancies, and extended absences.

The Financial Services team is honored to serve and is prepared to use the available resources and its God-given skills and abilities to support the ministries of WELS.

Mr. Kyle Egan, reporter

Human Resources

Our calling

The synod's Human Resources department oversees the personnel functions for synod personnel, including development, communication, and implementation of personnel policies; recruitment; compensation; benefits; performance management; and managing employee relations. Human Resources provides advice to supervisors on matters such as federal and state legal requirements to ensure compliance with labor laws.

Human Resources (HR) also serves as a resource to WELS congregations and to affiliated groups and entities on the matters mentioned above as well as for risk management and federal and state legal requirements related to personnel matters. Further, in addition to legally mandated reporting to authorities, any charge, report, or allegation of sexual misconduct or physical abuse that has been made of an incident involving pastors, teachers, vicars, full- or part-time employees, and volunteers in any capacity must be reported to the synod president, director of Lutheran Schools, or director of Human Resources.

Our current situation

Current WELS Human Resources staff consists of two full-time employees—the Human Resources director and a Human Resources generalist. Beyond day-to-day human resource management activities, a few key initiatives include:

- Staffed the following key lay worker positions over the last year: database specialist; web developer; security analyst; videographer; director, World Missions Operations; accounts payable specialist; Financial Services accounting clerk; technology support specialist; producer, Multi-Language Productions; director of Software Services.
- Request for proposal process completed with new vendor Paycom selected to replace ADP for payroll and HR services. Timekeeping conversion completed Feb. 16, 2022, and first payroll processing took place March 15, 2022.
- WELS HR to review background checking process for all volunteers/chaperones for the 2022 WELS International Youth Rally scheduled to take place in June 2022 in Knoxville, Tenn.
- Human Resources continues to work with the Compensation Review Committee of the Synodical Council on review of the WELS Called Worker Compensation Guidelines. Introduction of the Called Worker Compensation Calculator has been well received as a useful resource to calling bodies for both budget purposes and to assist in the calling process.
- Per Affordable Care Act (ACA) compliance requirements, large employers must file annual reports and monitor measurement periods to comply with the ACA's employer mandate. Human Resources oversees this annual reporting process for the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry and WELS' four ministerial education schools.
- Human Resources assists in the process of filling board/committee openings for positions appointed by the Synodical Council, mainly with vetting of nominees to establish willingness to serve, procuring resume and/or bio forms, and creation of a central database to maintain all nominee data and vacancy records.

- HR facilitates the process of securing Religious Worker Visas to assist Lutheran high schools with placement of Martin Luther College international student graduates in teaching positions within the United States.
- Human Resources continues to work with congregations and members of the Conference of Presidents related to risk and personnel matters as well as general compensation, benefit, and policy issues.

A look ahead

The key area of focus for the Human Resources team going forward will be to evaluate current operations and to identify where efficiencies could be implemented while maintaining effectiveness. Over the next biennium HR will, with God's guidance and blessings:

- Develop compensation guidelines, matrices, and models for the 2023–25 biennium.
- Facilitate learning and development programs for the management and staff of the synod entities.
- Update and maintain **welsrc.net/human-resources** and **cloud.wels.net/hr** to ensure information and details provided assist members from both an information as well as practical aspect.
- Perform due diligence on the vendors and systems in place within the HR structure. This will be an important step to ensure both the outcomes provided, as well as the cost, are appropriate and expected.
- Work with our areas of ministry and synodical schools in coordinating timely information and support for our workers.
- Provide continued training with synod leaders to continue to reinforce and develop the supervisory skills required.
- Work with the Synodical Council's designated committee(s) in reviewing and evaluating Human Resource policies and procedures, and compensation programs at our synod-operated organizations.
- Continue providing support to WELS organizations in areas related to our synod human resources.

For synodical salary ranges, WELS compensation guidelines, and other called worker compensation information, see pp. 55-57.

Questions can be directed to hro@wels.net or call 414-256-3268.

Mr. Dennis Maurer, reporter

Financial results and ministry financial plan

Overview

The Lord has and we pray will continue to bless WELS with gifts from congregations, members, and others. These gifts are used to reach the lost at home and abroad, train and nurture called workers, and provide services that facilitate and support ministry excellence in congregations and their schools and administration.

WELS manages and reports the gifts received, revenues generated, and how those moneys are used in various funds based on a fiscal year (FY) that runs from July 1 to June 30. The Operating Fund is used to account for ministry expenses with its largest source of support coming from Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) plus other gifts and revenues that do not have donor restrictions. These other gifts and revenues are accounted for in the Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF). The Financial Stabilization Fund was created to ensure that ministry plans did not need to be adjusted in the middle of a year if these difficult-to-predict funding sources turned out to be less than planned. The Synodical Council transfers funds from the Financial Stabilization Fund to the Operating Fund the year(s) after the gift is received. The amount transferred each year is based on the balance of the fund and ministry needs and opportunities. WELS uses Special Funds for gifts that are restricted by donors for a specific ministry. Some of these gifts are not immediately available for ministry. Planning for and use of these gifts is initiated by areas of ministry with guidance from Financial Services and approval from the Synodical Council.

WELS ministerial education schools and Support Services subsidiaries also use Operating and Special Funds for management and reporting. These entities are fully incorporated into the ministry financial plan (budget) to ensure all sources and uses of funds entrusted to WELS are reported and considered by the synod in convention. Delegates approve the ministry financial plan and prioritize ministries that were not able to be funded.

Fiscal Year 2020–21 (FY21)

WELS is financially strong. Collectively in FY21, WELS Operating Fund, Special Funds, and the Financial Stabilization Fund received support of \$48.3 million and expended \$39.5 million, which resulted in an increase in reserves without donor restrictions of \$8.8 million.

- **Congregation Mission Offerings**—CMO for FY21 was \$22.6 million, which was \$1.5 million (or 7.1 percent) better than plan and \$1.2 million (or 5.4 percent) better than FY20 driven by strong receipts in the final five months of the fiscal year. On a fiscal year basis, this is the highest level of CMO that has been seen and the first time that CMO has exceeded \$22 million, despite the general trend of either flat or declining CMO that had been seen for more than a decade.
- **WELS Operating Expenses**—WELS Operating expenses were \$1.4 million less than planned due to vacant positions; general cost savings; and lower utilities, maintenance, and travel costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Financial Stabilization Fund**—Financial Stabilization Fund inflows were \$3.3 million more than outflows, leading to a strong ending balance in the Financial Stabilization Fund of \$19.5 million. Inflows were strong due to increased gifts, bequests, and investment income, as well as savings from the VEBA/Pension premium holiday at WELS and the ministerial education schools, while outflows were \$2.5 million lower than planned due to increased CMO and operating expense savings, offset by a \$400,000 transfer out to Special Funds to fund certain items on the unfunded priority list.
- **Special Funds**—Special Funds reserves without donor restrictions increased \$5.4 million on support of \$16.2 million and expenses of \$10.8 million. Support without donor restrictions included \$1.9 million from the sale of a World Missions property, a \$600,000 special grant from WELS Church Extension Fund to Home Missions, and the \$400,000 transfer from the Financial Stabilization Fund. Special Fund expenses were below plan due to reduced travel and savings from various projects that were delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY21 increased \$3.6 million to \$11.3 million on support of \$9.7 million and expenses of \$6.1 million. The \$3.6 million increase in unrestricted net assets was primarily driven by the full forgiveness of its Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. These funds, plus accrued interest, totaling \$549,000 were recorded as a gain on debt extinguishment, directly increasing support levels for FY21. Excluding the one-time benefit of the PPP forgiveness, WLS still would have ended FY21 in a surplus position driven by increased gifts, strong investment returns, and satisfactions of donor restrictions, which offset lower tuition and fees.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC) is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY21 increased \$3.4 million to \$15.5 million on support of \$26.0 million and expenses of \$22.6 million. The \$3.4 million increase in unrestricted net assets was primarily driven by the full forgiveness of its PPP loan. These funds, plus accrued interest, totaling \$2.4 million were recorded as a gain on debt extinguishment, directly increasing support levels for FY21. Excluding the one-time benefit for the PPP forgiveness, MLC still would have ended FY21 in a surplus position driven by increased gifts, investment income, funding from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, and satisfactions of donor restrictions, which offset lower tuition and fees.

Luther Preparatory School

Luther Preparatory School (LPS) is financially stable. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY21 increased \$1.6 million to \$4.2 million on support of \$9.4 million and expenses of \$7.8 million. The \$1.6 million increase in unrestricted net assets was primarily driven by the full forgiveness of its PPP loan. These funds, plus accrued interest, totaling \$840,000 were recorded as a gain on debt extinguishment, directly increasing support levels for FY21. Excluding the one-time benefit for the PPP forgiveness, LPS still would have ended FY21 in a surplus position driven by increased investment return and satisfactions of donor restrictions.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) is financially stable. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY21 increased \$600,000 to \$1.0 million on support of \$4.6 million and expenses of \$4.0 million. The \$600,000 increase in unrestricted net assets was primarily driven by the full forgiveness of its PPP loan. These funds, plus accrued interest, totaling \$497,000 were recorded as a gain on debt extinguishment, directly increasing support levels for FY21. Excluding the one-time benefit for the PPP forgiveness, MLS still would have ended FY21 in a surplus position driven by increased gifts and satisfactions of donor restrictions, which offset lower tuition.

WELS Church Extension Fund

WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF) is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY21 increased \$3.2 million to \$81.2 million on support of \$9.6 million and expenses of \$6.4 million. The \$3.2 million increase in unrestricted net assets was driven by higher support levels from increased interest income on lending activities and lower expenses primarily due to fewer grant expenses for new mission starts due to the lending moratorium that was put in place during the peak of the pandemic.

WELS Foundation

WELS Foundation is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY21 increased \$2.7 million to \$14.4 million on support of \$9.6 million and expenses of \$6.9 million. The \$2.7 million increase in unrestricted net assets was driven by higher investment returns, increased gifts, and satisfactions of restrictions. Total distributions to ministry in FY21 were \$13.7 million, representing a \$4.9 million increase over the prior year.

WELS Investment Funds

WELS Investment Funds (WIF) continues to be financially blessed. WIF does not have reserves because it invests and administers funds for others. Assets under management increased \$69.7 million in FY21 to \$308.6 million driven by realized and unrealized market gains.

Northwestern Publishing House

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) is financially stable. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY21 increased \$2.3 million to \$9.8 million on revenue of \$4.3 million, other income of \$2.1 million, and expenses of \$4.1 million. The \$2.3 million increase in unrestricted net assets was driven by a \$1.1 million gain on the sale of NPH's former site of operations and full forgiveness of its \$425,000 PPP loan. The PPP funds, plus accrued interest, were recorded

as a gain on debt extinguishment, directly increasing support levels for FY21. Excluding the one-time benefits of the property sale and PPP forgiveness, NPH still would have ended FY21 in a surplus position driven by increased investment returns and strong sales of Christ Light Sunday school at-home and catechism products.

Fiscal Year 2021–22 (FY22)

Support and expense projections point to another strong year in FY22. CMO is projected to be \$22.3 million in FY22, approximately \$700,000 (or 3.3 percent) more than planned. This increase in CMO is being driven by strong calendar year 2021 receipts and the recently completed subscription process for calendar year 2022. In November 2021, the Small Business Association (SBA) notified WELS of partial forgiveness (98 percent) of its \$2.7 million PPP loan. The balance of the Financial Stabilization Fund exceeded \$19 million to end FY21 and the recording of the gain on debt extinguishment from the PPP loan effectively increased that balance by another \$2.7 million. The Synodical Council authorized the transfer of \$5.0 million from the Financial Stabilization Fund to establish a new Ministry Opportunity Fund to provide a consistent source of funding for unfunded ministry opportunities across the synod, replacing the previous unfunded priorities process. Upon establishment, the Synodical Council approved the commitment of the first \$3.0 million of the fund to support WELS Home Missions' 100 new missions in 10 years initiative through four annual distributions of \$750,000. Following these transactions, the balance of the Financial Stabilization Fund was reduced to \$15.8 million as of Dec. 31, 2021.

WELS Special Funds reserves for Home Missions, World Missions, Ministerial Education, Congregation and District Ministry, and Ministry Support totaled \$37.7 million as of Dec. 31, 2021, representing an \$8.9 million (or 31 percent) increase from the end of FY21 driven by the transfer of funds to establish the Ministry Opportunity Fund, increased gifts, and lower spending. Special Funds reserves are significantly higher than planned levels.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

WLS remains financially strong. Through December 2021 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$349,000 on support of \$4.2 million and expenses of \$3.8 million. Support has been trending higher than planned levels due to the return of their VEBA/Pension holiday savings from the Financial Stabilization Fund and increased gifts, while expenses have been trending in line with planned levels.

Martin Luther College

MLC remains financially strong. Through December 2021 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions decreased \$689,000 on support of \$14.0 million and expenses of \$14.7 million. Support has been trending higher than planned levels due to the return of their VEBA/Pension holiday savings from the Financial Stabilization Fund and increased gifts. Expenses have been trending under plan primarily due to the timing of spending on the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse.

Luther Preparatory School

LPS remains financially stable. Through December 2021 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$642,000 on support of \$4.7 million and expenses of \$4.1 million. Support has been trending higher than planned levels due to the return of their VEBA/Pension holiday savings from the Financial Stabilization Fund and increased gifts. Expenses have been trending below planned levels due to the timing of equipment purchases and lower travel costs.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

MLS remains financially stable. Through December 2021 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$311,000 on support of \$2.3 million and expenses of \$2.0 million. Support has been trending higher than planned levels due to the return of their VEBA/Pension holiday savings from the Financial Stabilization Fund and increased gifts, while expenses have been trending in line with planned levels.

WELS Church Extension Fund

CEF remains financially strong. Through December 2021 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$1.7 million on support of \$5.2 million and expenses of \$3.5 million. Expenses are up \$700,000 (or 25 percent) from the prior year driven by higher grant expenses, partially offset by lower interest expense on the certificate portfolio due to lower average interest rates.

WELS Foundation

WELS Foundation remains financially strong. Through December 2021 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$2.9 million on support of \$6.6 million and expenses of \$3.7 million. Deferred giving instruments increased \$8.0 million (or 4.1 percent) to a total of \$205 million driven primarily from new gifts (primarily donor advised funds) and higher investment returns.

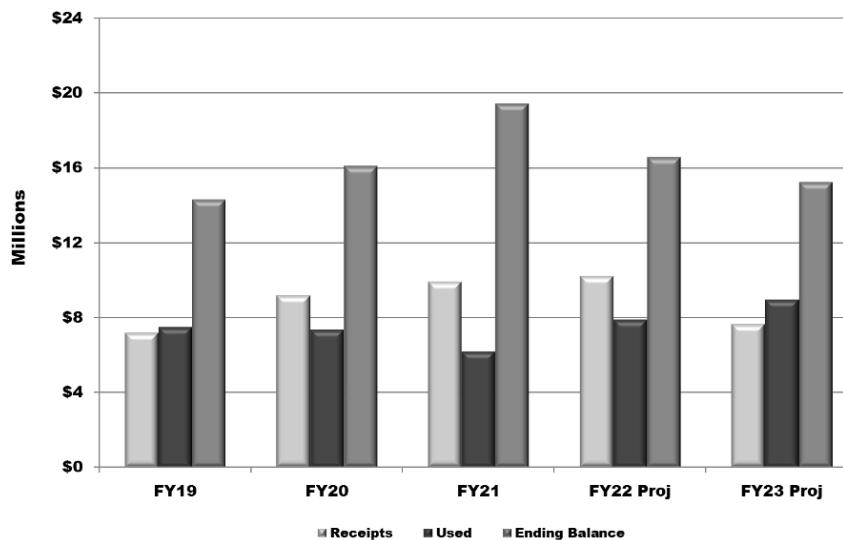
WELS Investment Funds

WIF continues to be financially blessed. Through December 2021, assets under management were \$321 million, an increase of \$12 million since the end of FY21, primarily driven by new contributions including the \$5.0 million creation of the synod's new Ministry Opportunity Fund. However, calendar year 2022 has started off with significant volatility as a result of historically elevated levels of inflation, continued supply chain pressures, continued labor shortages, wage pressures, and increased levels of geopolitical risks due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

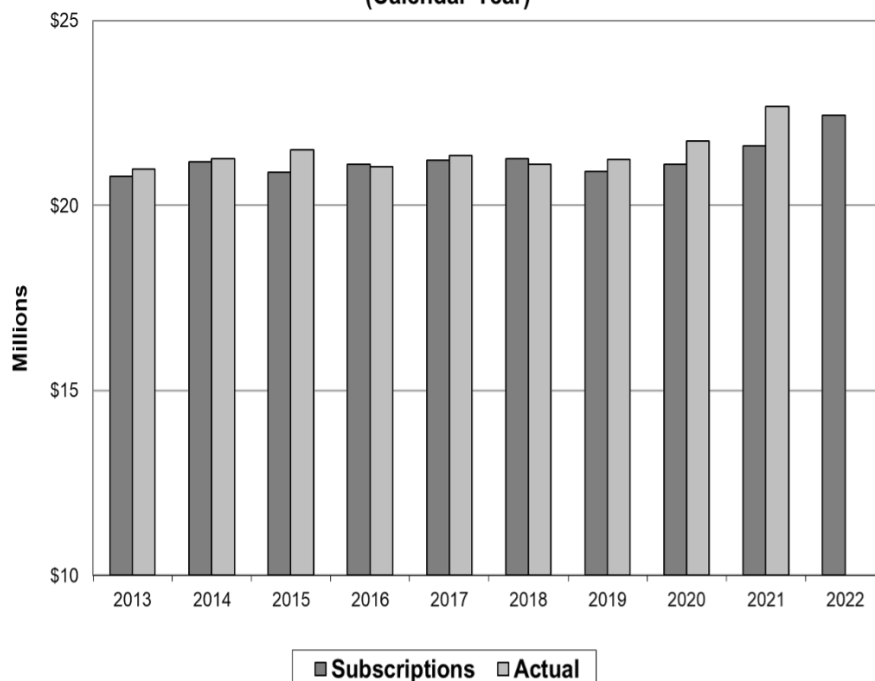
Northwestern Publishing House

NPH remains financially stable. Through December 2021 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$2.4 million on revenue of \$5.7 million, other income of \$200,000, and expenses of \$3.5 million. Increased revenues were driven by sales of the new hymnal suite of products, exceeding the prior year by \$3.3 million (or 138 percent) and in just six months have eclipsed full-year sales from FY21 of \$4.3 million by \$1.4 million (or 33 percent).

Financial Stabilization Fund



**Congregation Mission Offerings
(Calendar Year)**



WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position As of June 30, 2021

ASSETS

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
ASSETS												
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 56,184,266	\$ 3,903,896	\$ 2,916,910	\$ 1,276,298	\$ 11,585,133	\$ 13,258,874	\$ 2,872,459	\$ -	\$ 11,954	\$ 3,752,091	\$ (7,094,115)	\$ 88,667,766
Restricted cash	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,013,554	-	-	-	-	5,013,554
Investments	999,516	10,026,513	-	13,037	-	36,736,734	191,923,571	308,241,317	-	3,140,148	(240,727,570)	310,353,266
Accounts receivable, net	1,997,208	56,854	9,984	48,837	274	-	51	-	-	581,900	(46,287)	2,648,821
Gifts and bequests receivable, net	2,083,223	1,117,084	113,267	11,271	18,175	1,000	7,000	-	-	-	-	3,351,020
Accrued interest receivable	-	-	-	-	-	545,755	-	-	-	-	(1,297)	544,458
Inventories, net	-	155,680	94,801	27,717	18,317	-	-	-	-	1,686,833	-	1,983,348
Loans to students, net	-	545,013	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	545,013
Property and real estate held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,414,981	-	-	-	-	1,414,981
Loans receivable from congregations, net	-	-	-	-	-	177,991,399	-	-	-	-	-	177,991,399
Cash surrender value of life insurance policies	-	53,952	41,460	-	-	-	1,190,009	-	-	-	13,911	1,299,332
Assets held in trust outside WELS	1,762	1,367,019	-	134,203	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,502,984
Other assets	246,156	195,430	88,875	14,678	14,092	10,517	1,387	-	100	44,854	(13,911)	602,178
Interest in net assets of WELS Foundation	25,641,875	3,275,089	2,401,500	2,723,037	603,908	546,768	-	-	-	-	(35,192,177)	-
Beneficial interest in net assets of WELS Foundation	18,194,349	3,439,257	2,611,147	271,070	561,424	-	-	-	-	-	(25,077,247)	-
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,839,880	23,634,911	4,433,958	5,648,968	7,809,449	-	-	-	-	840,752	-	49,207,918
Interest in assets of WELS Foundation	28,292,581	20,427,877	23,521,787	1,794,163	3,152,492	-	-	-	-	-	(77,188,900)	-
Due from related party	-	7,000,862	1,787,538	-	2,791,279	-	-	836,285	15,539	806,630	(13,238,133)	-
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 140,480,816	\$ 75,199,437	\$ 38,021,227	\$ 11,963,279	\$ 26,554,543	\$ 229,091,047	\$ 202,423,012	\$ 309,077,602	\$ 27,593	\$ 10,853,208	\$ (398,565,726)	\$ 645,126,038

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position (continued)
As of June 30, 2021

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
LIABILITIES												
Accounts payable	\$ 954,268	\$ 585,521	\$ 86,505	\$ 104,747	\$ 212,438	\$ -	\$ 60,444	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 113,964	\$ -	\$ 2,117,887
Accrued expenses and other liabilities	2,835,510	392,255	78,487	39,501	107,013	3,577,742	-	505,551	-	261,763	(521,962)	7,275,860
Deferred revenue	6,422	583,048	277,082	39,622	63,672	-	-	-	-	647,052	-	1,616,898
Retiree health benefits payable	986,010	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	986,010
Certificates payable	-	-	-	-	-	107,403,555	-	-	-	-	(15,799,962)	91,603,593
Deposits held in custody	-	294,522	84,587	2,862	22,964	-	2,444,680	-	-	-	(285,175)	2,564,440
Liabilities to other beneficiaries	-	1,605,161	-	-	-	-	20,764,172	-	-	-	-	22,369,333
Liabilities to outside agencies and organizations	1,838,467	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77,356,168	79,194,635
Gift annuities payable, at fair value	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,942,224	-	-	-	-	8,942,224
Trusts payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	16,218,756	-	-	-	-	16,218,756
Loans payable	2,668,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,668,000
U.S. government grants refundable	-	530,921	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	530,921
Due to WELS and Schools	-	-	-	-	-	-	78,895,436	-	-	-	(78,895,436)	-
Due to related party	774,297	-	-	(58,164)	10,206,249	655,502	-	-	-	-	(11,577,884)	-
Total Liabilities	10,062,974	3,991,428	526,661	128,568	10,612,336	111,636,799	127,325,712	505,551	-	1,022,779	(29,724,251)	236,088,557
NET ASSETS												
Without donor restrictions	48,622,485	15,545,224	11,273,762	1,011,715	4,202,270	81,170,274	14,429,557	308,572,051	11,744	9,729,879	(270,396,244)	224,172,717
With donor restrictions	81,795,357	55,662,785	26,220,804	10,822,996	11,739,937	36,283,974	60,667,743	-	15,849	100,550	(98,445,231)	184,864,764
Total Net Assets	130,417,842	71,208,009	37,494,566	11,834,711	15,942,207	117,454,248	75,097,300	308,572,051	27,593	9,830,429	(368,841,475)	409,037,481
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 140,480,816	\$ 75,199,437	\$ 38,021,227	\$ 11,963,279	\$ 26,554,543	\$ 229,091,047	\$ 202,423,012	\$ 309,077,602	\$ 27,593	\$ 10,853,208	\$ (398,565,726)	\$ 645,126,038

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Activities
As of and For the Year Ended June 30, 2021

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
							WELS					
MEMBER SUPPORT, REVENUE AND RECLASSIFICATIONS												
Member support:												
Offerings from congregations	\$ 22,587,062	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 22,587,062
Gifts and grants	5,008,169	2,522,767	839,277	239,505	233,726	81,241	2,078,108	-	6,627	-	(2,581,211)	8,428,209
Bequests	2,778,463	312,552	544,500	-	21,810	224,096	967,417	-	-	-	(2,511)	4,846,327
Total Member Support	30,373,694	2,835,319	1,383,777	239,505	255,536	305,337	3,045,525	-	6,627	-	(2,583,722)	35,861,598
Revenues:												
Tuition and student fees, net	-	11,748,751	589,565	1,473,377	4,221,772	-	-	-	-	-	-	18,033,465
Activity fees and retail sales	1,788,488	909,561	77,716	70,646	98,869	-	-	15,619,874	10,046	4,264,374	(16,328,492)	6,511,082
Investment returns, net	1,206,180	889,197	2,416,683	19,870	223,862	8,103,622	1,915,980	69,153,645	4	436,249	(68,847,632)	15,517,660
Net gain on sale of property and real estate held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	16,061	4,361	-	-	1,081,899	45,632	1,147,953
Change in value of trust agreements	-	2,534	-	175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,709
Gain on extinguishment of loan payable	-	2,421,427	548,732	486,744	840,041	-	-	-	-	425,652	-	4,732,596
Other	1,964,138	128,247	18,734	41,032	93,591	111,462	728,214	-	-	-	(224,286)	2,861,132
Transfer from other funds	1,450,645	3,834,920	2,199,129	1,188,282	2,794,810	-	-	-	500	-	(11,488,286)	-
Total Revenues	6,409,451	19,934,637	5,850,559	3,290,126	8,272,945	8,231,145	2,648,555	84,773,519	10,550	6,208,174	(96,823,064)	48,806,597
Reclassifications:												
Donor redesignation	-	(27,085)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(27,085)
Net assets released from restrictions	11,518,831	3,287,465	2,431,908	1,119,532	861,015	1,088,221	3,932,223	-	2,000	212,909	(5,204,532)	19,249,572
Total Reclassifications	11,518,831	3,260,380	2,431,908	1,119,532	861,015	1,088,221	3,932,223	-	2,000	212,909	(5,204,532)	19,222,487
Total Member Support, Revenues and Reclassifications	48,301,976	26,030,336	9,666,244	4,649,163	9,389,496	9,624,703	9,626,303	84,773,519	19,177	6,421,083	(104,611,318)	103,890,682
EXPENSES												
Program Services:												
Ministerial education	8,975,187	19,198,211	5,045,762	3,414,233	6,841,040	-	-	-	-	-	(12,783,765)	30,690,668
World missions	9,375,613	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(508,422)	8,867,191
Home missions	9,107,425	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(908,902)	8,198,523
Congregational and district ministry	6,433,148	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(316,090)	6,117,058
Northwestern Publishing House	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,207,139	(57,454)	3,149,685
Total Program Services	33,891,373	19,198,211	5,045,762	3,414,233	6,841,040	-	-	-	-	3,207,139	(14,574,633)	57,023,125
Support Services:												
Ministry support subsidiaries	-	-	-	-	-	6,087,302	2,179,851	-	8,354	-	(1,729,663)	6,545,844
General and administrative	3,665,497	2,799,653	714,000	612,252	923,476	328,727	335,485	465,994	784	923,464	(598,287)	10,171,045
Mission advancement	1,981,130	671,522	289,540	18,623	65,031	-	-	-	-	-	39,808	3,065,654
Transfer to other funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,383,243	14,587,577	-	-	(18,970,820)	-
Total Support Services	5,646,627	3,471,175	1,003,540	630,875	988,507	6,416,029	6,898,579	15,053,571	9,138	923,464	(21,258,962)	19,782,543
Total Expenses	39,538,000	22,669,386	6,049,302	4,045,108	7,829,547	6,416,029	6,898,579	15,053,571	9,138	4,130,603	(35,833,595)	76,805,668
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS												
NET ASSETS - Beginning of Year	39,858,509	12,184,274	7,556,820	407,660	2,642,321	77,961,600	11,701,833	238,852,103	1,705	7,439,399	(201,618,521)	197,087,703
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 48,622,485	\$ 15,545,224	\$ 11,273,762	\$ 1,011,715	\$ 4,202,274	\$ 81,170,274	\$ 14,429,557	\$ 308,572,051	\$ 11,744	\$ 9,729,879	\$ (270,396,244)	\$ 224,172,717

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Activities (continued) As of and For the Year Ended June 30, 2021

	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS											
	WELS											
	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
MEMBER SUPPORT, REVENUE AND RECLASSIFICATIONS												
Member support:												
Gifts and grants	\$ 8,842,363	\$ 5,188,197	\$ 2,233,214	\$ 786,602	\$ 494,657	\$ -	\$ 2,666,155	\$ -	\$ 11,840	\$ 211,760	\$ 637,701	\$ 21,072,489
Bequests	626,218	257,369	194,013	-	24,561	-	390,895	-	-	-	(30,000)	1,463,056
Total Member Support	9,468,581	5,445,566	2,427,227	786,602	519,218	-	3,057,050	-	11,840	211,760	607,701	22,535,545
Revenues:												
Investment returns, net	6,921,469	4,877,432	3,153,970	426,144	578,922	8,724,887	20,212,685	-	-	-	-	44,895,509
Net gain on sale of property and real estate held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,741	-	-	-	-	7,741
Change in value of trust agreements	11,578,168	2,516,277	1,730,795	639,399	354,336	264,240	(5,547,806)	-	-	-	(16,848,391)	(5,312,982)
Redesignated fixed asset additions	-	1,772,613	330,412	539,284	257,623	-	-	-	-	-	(2,899,932)	-
Other	47,187	759,552	13,962	-	113	-	9,455	-	-	-	(773,026)	57,243
Transfer from other funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenues	18,546,824	9,925,874	5,229,139	1,604,827	1,190,994	8,989,127	14,682,075	-	-	-	(20,521,349)	39,647,511
Reclassifications:												
Donor redesignation		27,085										27,085
Net assets released from restrictions	(11,518,831)	(3,287,465)	(2,431,908)	(1,119,532)	(861,015)	(1,088,221)	(3,932,223)	-	(2,000)	(212,909)	5,204,532	(19,249,572)
Total Reclassifications	(11,518,831)	(3,260,380)	(2,431,908)	(1,119,532)	(861,015)	(1,088,221)	(3,932,223)	-	(2,000)	(212,909)	5,204,532	(19,222,487)
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	16,496,574	12,111,080	5,224,458	1,271,897	849,197	7,900,906	13,806,902	-	9,840	(1,149)	(14,709,116)	42,960,569
NET ASSETS - Beginning of Year	65,298,783	43,551,725	20,996,346	9,551,099	10,890,740	28,383,068	46,860,841	-	6,009	101,699	(83,736,115)	141,904,195
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 81,795,357	\$ 55,662,785	\$ 26,220,804	\$ 10,822,996	\$ 11,739,937	\$ 36,283,974	\$ 60,667,743	\$ -	\$ 15,849	\$ 100,550	\$ (98,445,231)	\$ 184,864,764

Synodical salary range assignments

Salary matrix is available on p. 57.

Early childhood ministry teacher (no degree)	A
Early childhood ministry teacher (associate degree)	B
Teacher (BS or BA base)	C - F
Secondary teacher	D - G
Early childhood ministry director	D - G
Prep professor	D - G
Staff minister	D - G
Principal	E - H
Christian giving counselor	E - H
Prep vice president	E - H
Prep dean	E - H
College professor	E - H
Pastor	E - H
Home missionary	E - H
World missionary	E - H
CMM associate administrator	E - H
CMM associate director	E - H
CMM national coordinator	E - H
Mission counselor	E - H
CMM administrator	F - I
CMM director	F - I
Prep president	F - I
College vice president	F - I
College dean	F - I
Seminary professor	F - I
Seminary vice president	F - I
College president	G - I
Seminary president	G - I
Synod president	J

Note: A periodic review (minimally once per year) should be undertaken to evaluate an individual's compensation level. Changing call responsibilities and educational levels may lead to a salary adjustment.

NOTES:

1. The online Called Worker Compensation Calculator at cwcompcalc.wels.net helps a calling body consider the impact of additional responsibilities and education in determining where in the suggested salary range the worker ought to be placed.
2. There is a 50 percent spread between 0-30 years of experience.
3. Columns C-J increase in 5 percent increments over column C. (For example, Rate Range E is 10 percent greater than Rate Range C, Rate Range F is 15 percent greater, etc.)
4. Each called worker's actual salary is determined by finding the applicable experience row and determining the appropriate rate range. (For example, a teacher with 10 years' experience should receive a salary between \$35,716 and \$41,074. Salaries greater than \$35,716 would recognize additional education credentials and responsibility levels.)
5. The entire salary matrix will be reviewed annually and adjusted as needed to reflect changes occurring in the economy.
6. The basis for the housing equity allowance is the entry level base salary (matrix column "C," 0 years of service).
7. The cost of living adjustment (COLA) is based on the worker's salary.

Above base compensation components for called workers

1. Cost of living adjustment using Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) or similar COLA index. Should simply be \$0 if resulting COLA is negative.
2. Cash housing allowance if not provided housing (using HUD Fair Market Rental Values established upon hire date + adjusted annually based on the percent change for the salary matrix. For 2022–23 this adjustment would be 2.2 percent).
3. Social Security (SECA) allowance (7.65 percent of salary, cost of living, and housing value/cash housing/fair market rental of parsonage-teacherage).
4. Housing equity of 2 percent of entry-level base (Column C, 0 years of service) for workers in provided housing (parsonage/teacherage). Amount is \$612 for 2022–23.
5. VEBA health insurance or similar.
6. WELS Retirement Program.
7. Reimbursement for business-related expenses such as travel and conferences.

*Note: A web-based Called Worker Compensation Calculator can be found at **cwcompcalc.wels.net**.*

*Additional called worker compensation resources including the salary matrices are available at **welsrc.net/human-resources** or on the Human Resources page under “compensation” on WELS Cloud at **cloud.wels.net**.*

2.20% Inflation Rate Adjustment
(multiply established Cash Housing
Allowances by 1.022 for new FY)

WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

Salary Matrix

2022-23

Range Spread	12,246	13,011	15,307	16,073	16,838	17,603	18,369	19,134	19,899	20,665
<i>Service Increments</i>	408	434	510	536	561	587	612	638	663	689
Ranges	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Experience</i>										
0	24,491	26,022	30,614	32,145	33,675	35,206	36,737	38,268	39,798	41,329
1	24,899	26,456	31,124	32,681	34,236	35,793	37,349	38,906	40,461	42,018
2	25,307	26,889	31,634	33,217	34,798	36,380	37,962	39,544	41,125	42,707
3	25,716	27,323	32,145	33,752	35,359	36,966	38,574	40,181	41,788	43,395
4	26,124	27,757	32,655	34,288	35,920	37,553	39,186	40,819	42,451	44,084
5	26,532	28,191	33,165	34,824	36,481	38,140	39,798	41,457	43,115	44,773
6	26,940	28,624	33,675	35,360	37,043	38,727	40,411	42,095	43,778	45,462
7	27,348	29,058	34,186	35,895	37,604	39,313	41,023	42,733	44,441	46,151
8	27,756	29,492	34,696	36,431	38,165	39,900	41,635	43,370	45,104	46,840
9	28,165	29,925	35,206	36,967	38,726	40,487	42,248	44,008	45,768	47,528
10	28,573	30,359	35,716	37,503	39,288	41,074	42,860	44,646	46,431	48,217
11	28,981	30,793	36,227	38,038	39,849	41,660	43,472	45,284	47,094	48,906
12	29,389	31,226	36,737	38,574	40,410	42,247	44,084	45,922	47,758	49,595
13	29,797	31,660	37,247	39,110	40,971	42,834	44,697	46,559	48,421	50,284
14	30,206	32,094	37,757	39,646	41,533	43,421	45,309	47,197	49,084	50,972
15	30,614	32,528	38,268	40,181	42,094	44,008	45,921	47,835	49,748	51,661
16	31,022	32,961	38,778	40,717	42,655	44,594	46,534	48,473	50,411	52,350
17	31,430	33,395	39,288	41,253	43,216	45,181	47,146	49,111	51,074	53,039
18	31,838	33,829	39,798	41,789	43,778	45,768	47,758	49,748	51,737	53,728
19	32,246	34,262	40,308	42,324	44,339	46,355	48,370	50,386	52,401	54,417
20	32,655	34,696	40,819	42,860	44,900	46,941	48,983	51,024	53,064	55,105
21	33,063	35,130	41,329	43,396	45,461	47,528	49,595	51,662	53,727	55,794
22	33,471	35,563	41,839	43,932	46,023	48,115	50,207	52,300	54,391	56,483
23	33,879	35,997	42,349	44,467	46,584	48,702	50,820	52,937	55,054	57,172
24	34,287	36,431	42,860	45,003	47,145	49,288	51,432	53,575	55,717	57,861
25	34,696	36,865	43,370	45,539	47,706	49,875	52,044	54,213	56,381	58,549
26	35,104	37,298	43,880	46,075	48,268	50,462	52,656	54,851	57,044	59,238
27	35,512	37,732	44,390	46,610	48,829	51,049	53,269	55,489	57,707	59,927
28	35,920	38,166	44,901	47,146	49,390	51,635	53,881	56,126	58,370	60,616
29	36,328	38,599	45,411	47,682	49,951	52,222	54,493	56,764	59,034	61,305
30	36,737	39,033	45,921	48,218	50,513	52,809	55,106	57,402	59,697	61,994
31	37,145	39,467	46,431	48,753	51,074	53,396	55,718	58,040	60,360	62,682
32	37,553	39,900	46,941	49,289	51,635	53,983	56,330	58,678	61,024	63,371

See pp. 55 and 56 for current synodical salary range assignments and above base compensation for called workers.

Missions

Board for Home Missions

Our calling

While each area of ministry describes its purpose under the heading “Our calling,” for a moment I am going to write about “my” call. In late January I announced the acceptance of a call to serve as the third pastor at St. John in Mukwonago, Wis. St. John also happens to be my home church. Having accepted that call, the plan is to transition from Home Missions ministry to St. John ministry on May 1.

In one sense, though, I am not leaving Home Missions, as I am going to a mission congregation. Those reading this and knowing the congregational size of St. John might say, “Keith, that isn’t true. St. John has over 1,200 souls. It isn’t a mission church.” It isn’t? While it is true Home Missions labels 132 congregations as being under the Home Missions umbrella, the fact of the matter is every church in WELS is a mission church because every church is sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Lord blessing, every WELS church wants to proclaim the greatest news ever that through faith in Christ, heaven’s door is open as sinners have been made righteous in the blood of the Lamb.

For many, many years now the purpose of Home Missions has been clearly displayed. Through God’s blessings and the work of so many in our church body, Home Missions has continued to reach more souls through the planting of new missions as well as in more recent years the enhancing of existing ministries. On its own, the previous sentence could be understood properly in our WELS circles, but it needs additional wording to make sure anyone who reads this understands we just don’t reach souls by planting churches and by enhancing ministries. What needs to happen is at each of these locations (as well as at every WELS church) the gospel of Jesus Christ needs to be clearly proclaimed so people not righteous on their own hear that their personal righteousness comes only through faith in Christ Jesus. God bless our church body to continue to reach more souls with the gospel of Christ Jesus as we plant missions and enhance ministries. And may souls once reached with the gospel continue to be strengthened and supported by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our current situation

As Home Missions looks ahead, there is a new initiative on the horizon—the goal of planting 100 mission churches over 10 years starting in the spring of 2023. Back in the fall of 2020, Home Missions leaders discussed a goal of starting 100 missions and enhancing 75 ministries with the synod’s 175th anniversary in mind. The leaders thought, “Let’s start planning now and come the 2023 synod convention, roll out the plan.” The thought was as WELS observed its 175th anniversary in 2025, one way to say thanks to the Lord would be by working to start 100 new missions and supporting 75 enhanced ministries over a 10-year period.

In January 2021 this Home Missions plan was shared with WELS President Mark Schroeder. After reading about the plan he inquired, “Why wait until 2023? Let’s roll this out at the 2021 synod convention.” Home Missions concurred with his leadership. From that point on these steps have been taken:

- In March 2021 a Home Missions Task Force was formed, led by the Board for Home Missions chairman, Pastor Mark Gabb, and made up of six other Home Missions members.
- At the April 16, 2021, Home Missions meeting, the Board for Home Missions approved a memorial to be submitted to the synod convention to launch this initiative.
- At the end of July 2021, the synod in convention unanimously adopted the memorial, and the initiative had its official beginning.

- When the Synodical Council met Nov. 5 and 6, 2021, Home Missions gave an hour's presentation about the challenges and opportunities of this venture.
- At the November 2021 meeting, the Synodical Council established a Ministry Opportunity Fund. Five million dollars was moved from the Financial Stabilization Fund to the Ministry Opportunity Fund. From that total, \$3 million was dedicated to the synod-approved directive for Home Missions. This step is a bold display as to how WELS Synodical Council leaders are supporting this plan.
- Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 2022, at an all-district mission board training meeting, the task force shared its report and recommendations. The report has now been given to the Board for Home Missions Executive Committee. The Board for Home Missions Executive Committee is working through the prioritizing and implementation of the recommendations.

Being a synod initiative, working with Communication Services and the Ministry of Christian Giving, Home Missions will be connecting with all WELS churches about this effort. An all-congregational mailing will be sent at the end of August/beginning of September 2022. In September, *WELS Connection* will highlight the plan. All WELS members and congregations will be offered the opportunity to support this effort over and above their support to their congregation and their support of WELS.

As it relates to the synod convention's memorial, Home Missions appreciates that the memorial didn't direct Home Missions to plant "x" number of churches in each district or Home Missions to plant so many churches in downtown city locations or start so many cross-cultural ministries with so many people groups. As the district mission boards and mission counselors do their work in looking to plant more missions, they continue to have the flexibility to look to plant missions where humanly speaking we believe we have the opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with more and more people.

Thinking about the vast fields before Home Missions in North America, we give thanks to the Lord for these blessings of the past 11 years:

- 70 missions have been planted and 33 ministries enhanced.
- Mission plants have been in cities like Vancouver and Houston and Atlanta.
- Cross-cultural new starts include a Chinese ministry in Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada; a Korean ministry in Las Vegas, Nev.; an African ministry in Las Vegas, Nev.; Sudanese ministries in Omaha, Neb., Renton, Wash., Phoenix, Ariz.; and Hmong ministries in Manitowoc, Wis., and Anchorage, Alaska.
- There have been enhancements of Hispanic ministries in Yakima, Wash.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Waukegan, Ill.; Waukesha, Wis.; Houston, Texas; Anchorage, Alaska; and Menasha, Wis.
- There have been enhancements of a Muslim ministry in Detroit; a Hindu ministry in Pewaukee, Wis.; Korean ministries in Des Moines, Wash., and Las Vegas, Nev.; and a Vietnamese ministry in Boise, Idaho.

As it relates to cross-cultural new starts and enhancements noted above, in addition to Home Missions financial support, the Joint Missions Council also provides financial support (see p. 67 for more information on the Joint Mission Council). Overall Home Missions and the Joint Mission Council currently support 14 Hispanic ministries; 5 Hmong ministries; 3 African ministries; a Korean, Chinese, Muslim, Vietnamese, and Hindu ministry as well as 6 multi-cultural ministries (more than 2 cultures are being served—some missions have more than 20 cultures as a part of their congregational makeup). We give thanks to the Lord that our church body is able to support these cross-cultural ministries through Home Missions and the Joint Mission Council.

In September 2021, Home Missions approved three ministries.

- A new home mission plant in Collinsville, Ill.: Christ Our Savior in Collinsville has served as a preaching station of Martin Luther in St. Louis, Mo., since 2002. Through the years the core group has maintained an average of 25 to 30 people attending worship. As this new plant was authorized, Martin Luther has committed time, manpower, and financial assistance to help Christ Our Savior grow and become its own congregation.
- An enhanced ministry in Crossville, Tenn.: Crossville is a growing area of eastern Tennessee that is attracting many retirees. A core group is committed to restarting a church in Crossville and expanding gospel outreach.
- A restart ministry in Las Vegas, Nev.: In spring 2021, Summerlin Lutheran Church was originally approved to receive a three-year enhancement of support to allow the church to support a full-time pastor. The congregation owns a large facility in a growing suburb of Las Vegas (Summerlin). In the months following that decision, circumstances changed, and a few key families within the core group moved. Thus, Home Missions is providing the congregation additional funding.

March 31 through April 1 the Board for Home Missions met. During the meeting, the board ratified the actions of the Board for Home Missions Executive Committee.

- Authorized five mission plants: Windsor, Colo.; Wichita, Kan.; Canton, Ga.; Conroe, Texas; and Lodi, Wis.
- Approved financial support to mission-minded ministries in Saint Paul, Minn.; Baton Rouge, La.; Burlington, Iowa; Killeen, Texas; and Delray Beach, Fla.
- Approved home mission status to two new unsubsidized missions in Redding/Anderson, Calif.; and Midlothian, Texas.
- Approved the renewal of 72 mission program support agreements. This means that 72 missions had their financial support approved for the coming fiscal year(s).
- Working with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary approved the requests of 16 congregations to be assigned a vicar through the Vicars in Mission Settings program.

Over the past 12 months many mission churches have dedicated their worship facilities, purchased an existing church for their worship facility, or bought a facility and renovated it for their worship facility. We give thanks to the Lord for blessing these missions.

- Lamb of God, Lafayette, Ind., moved into a church it purchased in March 2021.
- Living Word, Waukesha, Wis., dedicated its church May 9, 2021.
- Bethlehem, Richland Center, Wis., looks to renovate a school into a church and early childhood center, breaking ground in the summer of 2021.
- Beautiful Savior, Fayetteville, N.C., dedicated an addition to its first worship facility on Aug. 29, 2021.
- Illumine, Rock Hill, S.C., purchased a church and moved in Oct. 3, 2021. The dedication service was April 3, 2022.
- Risen Savior, Mansfield, Ohio, dedicated a remodeled church on Oct. 10, 2021.
- Shepherd of the Lakes, Linden, Mich., dedicated its church Oct. 31, 2021.
- Amazing Grace, South Beloit, Ill., dedicated its church Oct. 31, 2021.
- Carbon Valley, Carbon Valley, Colo., remodeled a greenhouse and dedicated its worship and education facility Nov. 14, 2021.
- Citrus Grove, Wesley Chapel, Fla., held its first public worship service on Dec. 5, 2021.
- Living Hope, Ooltewah (Chattanooga), Tenn., purchased a church in December 2021 and held the dedication service March 27, 2022.
- Good News, Mt. Horeb, Wis., broke ground Jan. 2, 2022, for its worship facility.
- CrossLife, Pflugerville, Texas, had a grand opening of its new church Jan. 23, 2022.
- Cross of Christ, North Nampa, Idaho, remodeled a facility and dedicated it as its worship facility April 10, 2022.
- Peace, Trinity, Fla., is looking to dedicate its worship facility in the summer of 2022.

The above mission churches all worked with or will work with WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF) to receive grants on land and facilities as well as receive a loan to fund the project. The grant program, initiated in 1993, has provided \$40.5 million of grants to qualifying mission churches. Give thanks to the Lord for such a remarkable blessing! In addition, CEF has allocated \$9.4 million to Home Missions through a CEF Home Missions endowment and through an unrestricted new asset policy. The vast majority of those “additional” funds have gone directly into the Home Missions operating budget, which has allowed Home Missions to plant additional missions.

As CEF supports the land and facility portion of Home Missions, our Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society (LWMS) partners offer both prayer and financial support. Through the LWMS Befriend a Missionary program, all world and home missions pastors and families receive personal attention and prayerful support. What a wonderful blessing in the challenging ministry of missions. In addition, at its spring and fall rallies and its annual international convention, LWMS generously provides gifts to help support and enhance ministry opportunities that aren’t covered through a missions budget. These gifts of love help to enhance ministry, which in essence allows Home Missions to support the next mission.

Campus Ministry has been a part of the Board for Home Missions for many years. The Campus Ministry Committee, which oversees campus ministry, is viewed as another district mission board. The Campus Ministry Committee serves campus ministries and campus pastors just as district mission boards serve missions and missionaries. The Campus Ministry Committee is composed of nine men, currently chaired by Mr. Scott Stratil. The primary purpose of campus ministry is to be a student’s “church home” while away at college. In addition to supporting our WELS members attending college, campus ministries are encouraged to strive to take the gospel to others. More and more this emphasis also means international students are hearing about the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. Assisting in this support of campus ministry is a full-time campus ministry mission counselor, Pastor Dan Lindner.

In addition to your prayers on behalf of campus ministry, a huge way churches and individuals can assist campus ministry is by sharing names and contact information of students who are attending a college. Perhaps your church can designate a family who has a senior in high school to get the names of fellow 12th graders going to college. Perhaps your church can form a committee for this or the administrative assistant can do this. The key is that each spring the name(s) and contact information of high school seniors who are going to college are shared with Campus Ministry. Send contact information to Campus Ministry Committee Secretary, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188 or e-mail cm@wels.net.

Certainly, through a report like this, one can't highlight all 132 home missions, nor share all the ways God is working through missions and gospel proclamations. Yet, the Missions staff through its promotions and advancement team members works hard to communicate what is happening. Visit wels.net/homemissions to learn about Home Missions, view an interactive map, stay up to date on new home mission churches as they're approved, and read stories from our current home mission congregations. Subscribe to the quarterly Missions Update Newsletter and weekly Missions blogs written by our own missionaries at home and abroad at wels.net/subscribe. You can also follow WELS Missions on Facebook at fb.com/WELSMissions.

We invite everyone to attend Taste of Missions, a hybrid event that will be held on Saturday, June 11, 2022, at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis. Join us in person or online to get a "taste of missions" no matter where you might be around the world. This family-friendly event kicks off with a special worship service where we plan to commission new home and world missionaries. Sample ethnic cuisine from some of our mission fields while enjoying fellowship and presentations from home and world missionaries alike. View displays, participate in outdoor family-friendly activities, and ask questions about the ups and downs of mission work during panel discussions. Virtual attendees will be able to watch events via livestream, view additional video updates from missionaries, and try their hand at making one of the many ethnic recipes shared on the website. View the full itinerary at tasteofmissions.com.

Another way to learn about Home and World Missions is through *Faces of Faith*, our annual magazine. Visit wels.net/facesoffaith to view and download a PDF of the 2021–2022 edition or request up to 50 copies for your congregation or Lutheran Women's Missionary Society circuit. Print copies are also mailed to any congregation that hosts a Missions speaker.

A look ahead

As Home Missions looks to implement the 100 mission in 10 years initiative in spring 2023, Home Missions realizes this isn't something that Home Missions can carry out on its own. This needs to be a synodwide project with many WELS members and WELS areas of ministry and WELS-affiliated ministries working together to reach as many souls as possible. Walking together, WELS members can support and pray and contribute to this initiative.

Please also pray for the WELS members who are directly involved in planting more missions. There are 14 mission districts with a total of 82 district mission board members who are on the front lines of where to plant more missions and then support the missions once planted. Mission counselors Pastors Mark Birkholz, Matt Vogt, and Wayne Uhlhorn work with district mission boards in planting and supporting missions, missionaries, and mission families. Board for Home Missions Hispanic outreach consultant, Pastor Tim Flunker, and the Joint Missions North American Ministry Consultant, Pastor Neil Birkholz, work with specific people groups in sharing the gospel of Christ Jesus. Behind the scenes is the Missions staff at the WELS Center for Missions and Ministry guided by the senior director of Missions Operations, Mr. Sean Young.

These dedicated people have the singular purpose of seeing that more souls are receiving the message of salvation found only in the Word of God.

For while we talk about planting missions and celebrate breaking ground to ultimately dedicate buildings to God's glory, the real purpose is to tell more people the message of God's love, the historical account that the eternal God sent his one and only Son to rescue us through a perfect life and a blood payment for sins. There's a mission hymn that many appreciate, titled, "I Love to Tell the Story of Jesus and His Love."

God bless our church body to not only sing that hymn with gusto but to strive with all we have to let others know of Jesus' love so many more can sing with us around heaven's throne, praising Father, Son, and Holy Ghost forever and ever.

Rev. Keith Free, reporter

Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman
 Rev. Frederic Berger, Nebraska Mission District
 Mr. Dallas Christ, Nebraska Mission District
 Mr. John Deschane, Northern Wisconsin Mission District
 Mr. Matthew Dettmann, Colorado Mission District
 Rev. Benjamin Enstad, Northern Wisconsin Mission District
 Rev. Matthew Frey, Colorado Mission District
 Rev. Harland Goetzinger, WELS–Canada Mission District
 Mr. Paul Hahm, North Atlantic Mission District
 Mr. Mark Hartman, South Central Mission District
 Mr. Mel Kam, Pacific Northwest Mission District
 Rev. Jonathan Kolander, Arizona-California Mission District
 Mr. Scott Krause, Western Wisconsin Mission District
 Rev. Robert Krueger, Michigan Mission District
 Mr. Noel Ledermann, Arizona-California Mission District
 Mr. Werner Lomker, WELS–Canada Mission District
 Rev. Jeffrey Mahnke, Western Wisconsin Mission District
 Mr. Thomas Metzger, Michigan Mission District
 Senior Master Sergeant Gerald Pepke, Dakota-Montana Mission District
 Dr. Douglas Rall, South Atlantic Mission District
 Mr. David Sauer, Minnesota Mission District
 Rev. Nathan Sutton, South Central Mission District
 Rev. Steven Waldschmidt, Minnesota Mission District
 Rev. Craig Wasser, Pacific Northwest Mission District
 Rev. Kevin Wattles, North Atlantic Mission District
 Rev. Jonathan Werre, Dakota-Montana Mission District
 Mr. Steven Wolf, Southeastern Wisconsin Mission District
 Rev. Benjamin Zahn, South Atlantic Mission District
 Rev. Michael Zarling, Southeastern Wisconsin Mission District

Advisory:

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions
 Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
 Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations

Board for World Missions

Our calling

Christ's love has done what no human being could ever imagine. He came to this world and gave himself to guarantee our eternity at his side. This love fills our hearts and by God's powerful Spirit overflows to touch the lives of those around us. Christ has called us to keep reaching even further with his love. Our calling includes being witnesses to the multitudes on this planet who still do not know what our loving Savior has done. Earthquakes, hunger, wars, and rumors of war all remind us that this world is not our home, but while we are here, Christ has given us his light to share with the lost. In response to our calling, the Board for World Missions is directed to carry out "the responsibility of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ for the discipling of all people living outside the United States of America and Canada and those people who, because of cultural barriers, have not been made the responsibility of other agencies of WELS" (WELS Bylaws, Sec. 6.1). Into a world of almost 8 billion people that desperately need it, our missionaries and national church partners bring the light of God's Word. With this powerful tool deployed and in the hands of the Lord of the Church, our work is bearing much fruit.

Our current situation

WELS World Missions conducts and encourages gospel outreach in 44 foreign countries and is exploring outreach opportunities in 18 prospective new mission fields. World Missions brings the light of God's Word through evangelism efforts, church planting, training national workers for ministry, and providing religious materials in foreign languages. Forty-five world missionaries partner with more than 400 national pastors to conduct outreach and train more than 380 seminary students for service in Christ's kingdom. The advance of technology around the world has allowed us to reach with the gospel through the Internet into places that were before unreachable.

The Board for World Missions (BWM) has four main functions.

1. Reach out to those who have not heard about Jesus yet.
2. Reach out to church bodies who contact us asking for help.
3. Mentor and train pastors and leaders to be confessional Lutherans.
4. Support this work in many languages through the production of materials such as videos, literature, publications, websites, advertising, and gospel tools through Multi-Language Productions.

World Missions teams

World Missions has been working on clarifying and making the best use of its teams. The ministry of World Missions is divided by the BWM into broad administrative areas according to geography and/or culture. Teams (often referred to as "One Teams") carry out ministry in each area.

The board establishes the teams for these administrative areas. The members of each team are the WELS missionaries called by the BWM to that administrative area and the team's administrative committee, appointed by the board. A new feature of the teams is the close integration of the following three partners.

Pastoral Studies Institute

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in collaboration with the Joint Mission Council provides representatives to each team to assist with theological education efforts.

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

The Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) has representatives on each team to assist in WELS' maintenance of relationships with sister synods.

Diaspora ministry facilitator

A diaspora ministry facilitator is being appointed to each team. In addition, calling is underway to ask one of these men to carry out this work full time and coordinate the work of the other volunteers who carry out this work in addition to other ministries. Diaspora ministries refer to the USA- and Canada-based ministries WELS does or might do with new immigrant or culturally cohesive groups, such as Hmong, Nuer, Hindu, or Native American.

Every country and opportunity has its own story. It would be impossible to report on all the work that is currently going on in this report. To give you an idea of the scope of this work, visit our website to read the latest from the far corners of the globe. While there you can sign up for blogs and reports from our World Missions team and partners. Visit wels.net/missions.

News from World Missions teams

Exploratory areas

Senegal

The circumstances of the last two years have prevented a needed exploratory trip to the Wolof tribe of Senegal. World Missions administrator Pastor Larry Schlomer will complete a trip to Senegalese people this spring as the Lord allows. If the country of Senegal is not viable, a visit to a European location where many Senegalese refugees have settled would be a second option.

London

In February, Pastor Michael Hartman was commissioned as our WELS missionary to London at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's student-led Mission and Ministry seminar. The next day a WELS planning team went on a visit to London. One of the outcomes of the visit was a plan to guide Hartman's initial work. We will be looking to work with dedicated, generous, outreach-minded Christians ("Priscilla and Aquila" types) who gather friends and neighbors around the Word.

Asia One Team

Note: We keep our work in many areas of Asia confidential for security reasons.

Leader: Pastor Stephen Wiesenauer, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Locations: Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Laos, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, India

Vietnam

Our missionaries, Pastors Boun Lor and Joel Nitz, have still not been able to move to Vietnam, but extensive online training has been going well regardless. We have begun teaching a second cohort, with the Vietnamese government's permission (yes, their permission was required). This is a second group of 60 church leaders in the Hmong Fellowship Church, a fellowship of 138,000 believers. Progress on the land purchase and building construction issue continues to go at rickshaw pace.

East Asia One Team

Leader: Pastor Matt Doebler, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Location: Large country we call East Asia

Pastors Dan Kingsbury and Tony Barthels, graduates of Asia Lutheran Seminary, were given permanent calls to the East Asia Team. Security continues to be a serious concern. Asia Lutheran Seminary continues to train leaders for service in East Asia, largely through remote training. In part, in reaction to security risks, we are looking to combine the Asia One Team and the East Asia One Team. The merge will enable us to combine the strengths of the teams and eventually use Asia Lutheran Seminary to lend aid to other Asia teams.

One Africa Team

Leader: Pastor Howie Mohlke, Lilongwe, Malawi

Locations: Kenya, Ethiopia, Liberia, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Cameroon, Nigeria, South Sudan, etc.

The team continues to make outreach trips to various countries. New opportunities are arising through the use of the TELL Network in Africa (see p. 66). A key part of our African work is the long-standing relationship with sister synods. We look forward to renewed face-to-face meetings with many of these partners this year.

At the end of the academic school year, long-term missionary and seminary teacher, Dr. Rev. Ernst R. Wendland, will retire after more than 50 years as a missionary in Zambia. His contributions to WELS World Missions and worldwide biblical translation linguistics are incalculable. Read more about his ministry at wels.net/i-have-been-a-sojourner-in-a-foreign-land.

Europe Team

Leader: Pastor Luke Wolfgramm

Locations: Russia, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Portugal, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Albania, etc.

The situation in Eastern Europe has upended many of our partners in the gospel. The Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC) was still meeting to worship, support, and encourage each other with the means of grace at the time of this writing. Support from WELS has helped with the ULC's efforts to aid refugees and those struggling for food and shelter. Our missionary to Russia, Luke Wolfgramm, has been evacuated. The Wolfgramms intend to move to Leipzig, Germany, in the future to better offer support to the several sister synods we have in Europe, while still paying attention to the Soglasie church in Russia.

One Latin America Team

Leader: Pastor Andrew Johnston, Doral, Fla.

Locations: All Spanish-speaking countries, including Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Perú

After Pastor Mike Hartman accepted the call to serve our mission in London, Pastor Andrew Johnston was appointed leader of the One Latin America Team. The team's main strategy for outreach, the *Academia Cristo* multiplication effort, continues to go very well. After only one full cycle of the program, the team has nine active group leaders in Latin America who are in full doctrinal agreement and are leading groups.

A meeting was held in Colombia to establish a new sister synod to WELS, *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*. The synod spans several Latin American countries and will be a landing spot for groups initiated through the *Academia Cristo* work.

One Latin America Team has added a dean of women, Mrs. Elise Gross, as the newest missionary on the team to better serve the women who have come through the program. Read more about her work at wels.net/opportunities-for-womens-ministry-in-latin-america. Elise's husband, Mr. Jon Gross, is also involved in the *Academia Cristo* work as a media producer for the assistance that the Multi-Language Productions arm of World Missions offers to *Academia Cristo*.

Native America Team

Leader: Dan Rautenberg, Peridot, Ariz.

The team continues to enjoy the assistance of part-time consultant, Pastor Jeff Gunn, in carrying out its plans to renew Apache churches and reach out to more of the 574 tribes in North America. The call to fill a native Christian counselor position was accepted by Pastor John Holtz.

Multi-Language Productions Team

Leader: Nathan Seiltz, Waukesha, Wis.

TELL (Think, Evaluate, Learn, Lead) is an online instruction and multiplication effort, carried out with the Multi-Language Productions (MLP) arm of World Missions. MLP has a team of videographers, producers, and translators to support its work. The team is now calling a pastor to add capacity to the TELL work being done in Africa together with World Mission's One Africa Team. TELL has more than 200 students enrolled worldwide.

World Missions administration

Members of the Board for World Missions (BWM) are chairman Pastor Paul Janke, Mr. Mark Schulz, Mr. Arlin Bornschlegl, Teacher Matthew Doering, and Pastor Jonathan Schroeder. Janke will retire in July. Schroeder was appointed to take over the chairmanship.

A look ahead

Our fellowship of believers outside of the USA is getting ever nearer the number of WELS members. As the size, scope, and complexity of World Missions increase, the Board for World Missions continues to call workers into the Lord's harvest field. This year calling is underway to fill eight additional world missionary positions. To carry out this work, the BWM has been looking for ways to fill these roles with calls to teachers and laypeople who may be willing to take on a new challenge in a gospel outreach post on a different continent. The Mission Journeys program of WELS Missions has been a great way to engage many WELS members in a hands-on experience in a world field. On top of the immediate short-term help, we pray these and other efforts can help identify laypeople who are willing to receive on-the-job training and head out to help full time in a world field. To learn more about Mission Journeys, visit wels.net/missionjourneys.

All of this is being done with an eye on what we see as a very realistic possibility. The Board for World Missions is organizing its work to be ready for a worldwide fellowship that may number a half million people outside of North America within the decade. If the Lord would bless these emerging churches with that type of growth, it will have a significant impact on what we do together as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Your World Missions team treasures the ongoing support of the members of WELS. Your prayers, attention, and gifts allow us to carry out the witnessing work the Lord has given to us all. May the Lord bless our work together as we hear his calling and take the treasure of Christ's love to share it with a world that will be lost without it.

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, reporter

Rev. Paul Janke, chairman
Teacher Matt Doering, secretary
Mr. Arlin Bornschlegl
Rev. Jonathan Schroeder
Mr. Mark Schulz

Advisory:

Mr. Stefan Felgenhauer, director of World Missions Operations
Rev. Paul Nitz, One Team counselor
Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations

Joint Mission Council

Our calling

WELS Joint Missions supports mission opportunities that are the responsibility of Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education. Much of this work centers around people group ministries, where immigrants who have joined our fellowship in the United States and Canada are able to take the gospel back to friends and family in their countries of origin. This type of work is often called diaspora ministries, and the Joint Mission Council has begun appointing diaspora ministry facilitators to help wherever they are able. The Joint Mission Council has recently asked our North American Asian mission counselor, Pastor Neil Birkholz, to take oversight of the diaspora ministry work. The Joint Mission Council administers the work of the Pastoral Studies Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, assists in other cross-cultural outreach efforts, and supervises programs like WELS Mission Journeys.

Coordination and cooperation are helpful to all of WELS and the church bodies in our fellowship. Since the gospel is for all people, we want to reach everyone even if it is difficult, and the Joint Mission Council is proactively looking for opportunities to make connections by being flexible in structure.

Our current situation

Pastoral Studies Institute

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary facilitates much of the work of the Joint Mission Council. Prof. Jonathan Bare (director), Prof. David Bivens, and Prof. E. Allen Sorum make up the Pastoral Studies Institute Team. They are called jointly by the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board and the Joint Mission Council. During the past year, Prof. Bradley Wordell finished his work on the PSI Team and began oversight of the Grow in Grace Institute at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. We thank him for his faithful service.

In Africa, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is integrated into the One Africa Team in the areas of theological education, consulting, and assisting One Africa Team's Confessional Lutheran Institute to carry out formal continuing education, seminary consultation, and professional development throughout Africa. Some examples of the work include: 1) collaboration with One Africa Team and the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA) to offer Bachelors of Divinity (BDiv) and Masters of Theology (MTh) degrees to pastors in our sister church bodies, 2) collaboration with the Global South Sudanese Committee and national churches in Kenya and Ethiopia for the training of Nuer pastors in refugee camps in those countries, and 3) consultation with One Africa Team and the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ–Kenya on the training and continuing education of pastors.

In Asia, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is similarly integrated into the newly formed Asia One Team to provide strategic coordination of the team's theological education function. Some specific areas of this work include development of curriculum, organizing the course schedule, coordination of visiting instructors, and continuing education workshops. An example of this would be an annual continuing education seminar for the pastors of the church body of our fellowship in Indonesia. The PSI Team is also helping to develop the curriculum, organize the course schedule, and arrange the visiting teachers for pastors of the Hmong Fellowship Church who have been chosen to study at the new training center in Hanoi, Vietnam. A second cohort of the Hmong Fellowship Church recently began the program.

In Latin America, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is consulting with the One Latin America Team members to determine the partners, the structure, and the program for an online seminary for all of Latin America. The Joint Mission Council is also partnering with the One Latin America Team to determine the scope and direction of further Spanish-speaking outreach in North America. Pastor Carl Leyrer has been called as the director of that pilot project.

In Europe, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is integrated into the One Europe Team. Before the recent war, the team began providing seminary training for a Russian man in Novosibirsk, continuing education for four of the pastors in Russia, and Masters in Sacred Theology course work to our missionary in Russia. In Bulgaria, the PSI Team works with Gypsy (Roma) outreach sites.

In North America, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team continues to train immigrants to the United States for service to their local people group. Twenty such men are currently enrolled and committed to completing the Pastoral Studies Institute training program. An Urban Advisory Board is coordinating efforts under the PSI to train urban black men for local urban black ministry. This new program is the Joshua Urban Ministry Program (JUMP), and a first cohort has been formed.

People group committees

The Joint Mission Council has formed the Global South Sudanese Committee so that South Sudanese immigrants of our fellowship can take administrative responsibility for outreach to Nuer speakers in the U.S. and abroad. The Joint Mission Council has also formed the North American Hmong Committee so that Hmong immigrants of our fellowship can take administrative responsibility for outreach to Hmong speakers in the U.S. and Canada. When Spanish-speaking immigrants are interested in similar efforts, the Board for World Missions' One Latin America Team has been handling those arrangements, but the Joint Mission Council has recently begun exploring forming people group committees of Spanish-speaking WELS members based on their countries of origin. Similar arrangements are being considered for Chinese-speakers and Korean-speakers.

Mission Journeys

WELS Mission Journeys, the official WELS program for short-term mission trips, provides an opportunity for all WELS members to walk together in the Great Commission. Through church- or school-based volunteer trips to WELS mission fields at home and abroad, members have the opportunity to engage in Christian service. Pre-trip training led by a congregational team leader equips volunteers to have significant impact during their trip. While volunteering, the learning and sharing of outreach ideas allows teams to explore how they can use their God-given abilities to lead an outreach event upon their return home. With the Lord's blessing, these trips will inspire a lifelong journey of service and outreach for all who volunteer.

Campus ministry for international students

In a normal year, almost 400 international students enroll at WELS schools. Connecting them to one another, to believers of our fellowship from their people group, and to WELS congregations when they transfer schools is a large undertaking. When the Board for Home Missions decided to call Pastor Daniel Lindner as a Campus Ministry mission counselor for all campus ministries, the Joint Mission Council asked whether he could direct some special attention to international students. The new North American Asian mission counselor, Pastor Neil Birkholz, is assisting Lindner in this work.

Individual efforts

The Joint Mission Council has identified people from Bangladesh, China, Colombia, Cuba, India, Korea, Liberia, Mexico, Pakistan, Ukraine, Vietnam, and other countries who have interest in training to take the gospel to their own people groups here in the United States and in their countries of origin.

Pastor Paul, a Pakistani man who relocated to the U.S. due to security concerns, leads outreach to Hindus in the greater Milwaukee area. Small group Bible studies, family fun nights, driver's education classes, and English classes are just a few of the ways Pastor Paul and his wife reach out in love to their community.

Opportunities seem to arise daily for us to take the gospel to all nations.

Rev. Paul Prange, reporter

Rev. Paul Prange, chairman

Rev. John Bortulin, secretary

Mr. Arlin Bornschlegl, representative of WELS Board for World Missions

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions

Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions

Rev. Paul Janke, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions

Mr. Thomas Metzger, representative of WELS Home Missions

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions

Rev. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations

Board for Ministerial Education

Our calling

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2).

The scriptural purpose of our ministerial education program is the preparation of candidates for the public ministry of the gospel. Pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and missionaries are prepared to proclaim Christ’s love in the congregations, schools, and mission fields of our fellowship. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College also include in their purpose the continuing education of those who already serve in the ministry of the gospel. Our report gives you an overview of the efforts to coordinate the work. The WELS Resource Center always has the most recent reports from the individual schools at **bme.welsrc.net**.

Our current situation

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis., offers a theological training program for men who intend to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS. It serves both first-career and non-traditional students. It began the year with 134 enrolled. The graduating class in May 2022 was 26, while around 40 are expected to graduate in May 2023, and around 50 are expected to enroll in the fall of 2022 as first-year students. Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at WLS, offers opportunities for the theological and professional growth of called workers already serving in the ministry of our confessional fellowship. For the sake of reviewing its domestic programs, and to offer support for our sister schools overseas, WLS is in the process of accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools. WLS is also in the middle of a strategic planning process that will guide them in determining ministry priorities and potential campus improvements like expanded classroom facilities. More information is available on p. 71 and at **wisluthsem.org**.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., is the WELS College of Ministry. It trains a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of WELS and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions. MLC began the second semester of the 2021–22 school year with 633 undergraduates. There were more than 1,000 students enrolled in continuing education and graduate studies programs. To celebrate the silver anniversary of the college, the synod conducted a three-year campaign called “Equipping Christian Witnesses” (ECW). ECW included special efforts in the areas of recruitment, financial assistance, and facilities, and resulted in more than \$9 million donated. More information is available on p. 76 and at **mlc-wels.edu**.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) is a boarding high school in Saginaw, Mich., with the single purpose of preparing high school students for the public ministry of the gospel and encouraging them to enroll at Martin Luther College. Michigan Lutheran Seminary receives grants from the MLS Foundation, including financial assistance and sponsorship of capital improvements. Michigan Lutheran Seminary began the year with 182 students. More information is available on p. 88 and at **mlsem.org**.

Luther Preparatory School

Luther Preparatory School (LPS) is a boarding high school in Watertown, Wis., with the single purpose of encouraging and preparing young people for a lifetime of service in the public ministry of WELS. LPS participates in the Racine, Milwaukee, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs, allowing some Wisconsin families to use vouchers from the state

to pay for the cost of education. Luther Preparatory School began the year with 425 students. More information is available on p. 92 and at lps.wels.net.

Finances

The Board for Ministerial Education (BME) distributes synod support to the ministerial education schools from a block grant supplied by the Synodical Council. The model has resulted in stable reserves and normal annual tuition increases at all of the schools. MLC has seen blessings on its efforts to address the educational debt of its graduates, with decreases in the average debt owed by its graduates for three straight years. The college has established programs to train students in good stewardship and to increase funds available for student assistance. The Congregational Partner Grant Program has increased its matching funds for tuition assistance provided by congregations to students who attend MLC.

Vacancy rates

Parish pastor vacancies in WELS remain a concern. The average size of the graduating classes at WLS is projected to increase in 2023. Vacancies in principal and early childhood director positions remain difficult to fill. The trends that caused those vacancy rates have been addressed. MLS and LPS are seeing increasing numbers of their graduates entering the preseminary course at MLC. The 21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative, approved by the 2017 synod convention, is a process to recruit and fully train experienced teachers to serve as principals and should help with the principal vacancy rate. A similar program is being considered for early childhood directors. A new MLC initiative to recruit and certify non-traditional students as classroom teachers using competency-based educational models should also be helpful.

Capital projects

Capital campaigns for buildings at the schools are reviewed and adopted by both the Synodical Council and the Conference of Presidents as a regular part of WELS' ministry planning process and then are conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG). WLS built an additional faculty home and is investigating improvements in both classroom facilities and gathering space. MLC is dedicating its new Betty Kohn Fieldhouse and continuing to seek donors for improved student housing. MLS improved its athletic facilities with new outdoor bleachers, restrooms, and a press box with funding provided by the MLS Foundation. LPS is investigating a new music auditorium. The Lord gives us our daily bread, and we are grateful that the campuses are well maintained, with very few immediate projects unfunded in the ministry plan for the current biennium.

Partnerships

With the blessing and encouragement of Home and World Missions, the ministerial education schools have established good partnerships with the world mission fields and self-supporting churches in our fellowship in order to help develop their particular ministerial education programs. In the past few years, we have seen a dramatic increase in requests to the Pastoral Studies Institute at WLS for help in training existing pastors and evangelists of various people groups to become confessional Lutherans. The reports of the Joint Mission Council (p. 67) and the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (p. 10) detail some of those efforts. Our domestic ministerial education schools have seen some success in their plan to increase the numbers of underrepresented minorities on their campuses and in their programs.

A look ahead

We give thanks that the Lord of the Church continues to supply our synod with young men and women who are willing to serve anywhere that the Church needs them. It's an extraordinary blessing that they believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and treasure the precious Lutheran heritage of proclaiming the unconditional gospel that has been passed to our generation with remarkable clarity. We are grateful that they present themselves for service as faithful ministers of the gospel who subscribe without reservation to the Lutheran Confessions. We also give thanks for the individual congregations and members in those congregations who still think—contrary to the practice of just about every other national church body—that the investment of energy and financial resources in the thorough preparation of candidates for the public ministry of the gospel and the deepening of those who are already serving is a sound and wise synodical commitment.

Rev. Paul Prange, reporter

Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman

Rev. John Bortulin, secretary

Rev. Gregory Gibbons
Mr. Paul Hahm
Teacher James Henrickson Jr.
Teacher Daniel Markgraf
Rev. Aaron Mueller
Prof. Jonathan Scharf
Mr. Brian Scheele
Rev. Timothy Spaude
Mr. Dean Waldschmidt
Mr. Adam Zastrow
Teacher Gerald Zeamer

Advisory:

Rev. Matthew Crass, Luther Preparatory School president
Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer
Rev. Richard Gurgel, Martin Luther College president
Rev. Mark Luetzow, Michigan Lutheran Seminary president
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Rev. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Our calling

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) equips pastors for the worldwide mission of WELS, including churches and cultural groups within its confessional fellowship. In partnership with sister seminaries and theological training programs of its fellowship, WLS accomplishes that singular purpose with two distinct emphases. Primarily, the seminary prepares men to begin pastoral ministry by providing the spiritual, theological, and professional training needed to enter that ministry. The seminary also partners with pastors in their ministry-long pursuit of spiritual, theological, and professional growth.

Our current situation

Enrollment

The 2021–22 school year began with an enrollment of 134, the same as the previous year. At the time of this writing there are 131 students preparing for service as pastors: 26 seniors, 39 vicars, 29 middlers (second-year students), and 37 juniors (first-year students). A little more than 50 percent are married. Lord willing, 26 candidates for the holy ministry will receive calls through the synod's assignment committee in May, and 29 will be assigned to a year of invaluable service as vicars.

When the number of pastoral vacancies is on the rise, questions are often asked about seminary enrollment. This is a time when it is obvious that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. All God's people rightly turn to the Lord of the harvest in prayer, asking him for more gospel servants and thanking him for the workers he has provided. The truth is that the harvest is always plentiful and there will always be a need for more to preach and teach the gospel to the world. There will always be reason to pray for more pastors and missionaries.

The 2022–23 school year promises to bring a significant increase in enrollment, with 26 graduates being replaced by a class in the mid-40s. Enrollment will, for one year at least, reach a level that hasn't been seen on the seminary campus in a dozen years. God be praised for the talented men he continues to raise up for service in his church.

Faculty

Prof. Tom Kock, who had served on the faculty since 2014, accepted a call to serve as pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis. He completed his full-time service to the seminary at the end of December 2021. That led to several other changes. Prof. Brad Wordell consented to take over the work that Kock had been doing as the director of Grow in Grace, the seminary's institute for continuing education. That made it necessary to replace Wordell on the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) Team. Prof. David Bivens accepted that call and began his service on the PSI Team in January. To cover the courses Kock was teaching, the governing board extended a call to Pastor Paul Waldschmidt, who accepted the call.

In the last five years, ten new professors have joined the seminary faculty. To say that another way, more than half of the seminary faculty has five years of experience or fewer. Three professors were installed in February. Prof. Joel Russow was installed as professor of practical theology (counseling) and systematic theology; Prof. Paul Waldschmidt was installed as professor of education and Old Testament; and Prof. Jonathan Bare was installed as professor, with no teaching duties established and director of the Pastoral Studies Institute. Bare had been serving as a member of the PSI Team since 2016 and had not been an official member of the faculty.

Lord willing, another professor will join the faculty before the beginning of next year. The governing board has adopted the practice of calling new faculty members a year before their predecessor retires, to allow the man the opportunity to audit classes for a year before he steps in front of the classroom. Prof. Paul Wendland has announced that the 2022–23 school year will be his last. Next year will be his 22nd on the seminary faculty, 15 of which he served as the president. The Lord has richly blessed the seminary and the synod through Wendland's faithful service.

Almost all the professors called in the last five years are pursuing additional coursework to help them be even better equipped for the work the Lord has entrusted to them. The governing board is committed to supporting every faculty member who desires to pursue an advanced degree, both with funding for the program and with a reduced teaching load to accommodate the additional study required of them.

This year Prof. John Schuetze celebrated his 40th anniversary in the public ministry, with 25 of those years on the seminary faculty.

Field services

Vicars

The vicar year remains a critical portion of every student's training for pastoral ministry. While extremely beneficial, the program does carry a significant cost, in the range of \$43,000 for each vicar. That amount doesn't all go directly to the vicar. It provides health insurance for all the vicars and their families, subsidizes rental costs for all, and provides a modest stipend for the vicar, so that he can give his full time to ministry and not seek other employment to cover his costs. On average, about 10 to 12 congregations that apply for a vicar have the resources to cover the full cost for the year. That means approximately two-thirds of each vicar class will be assigned to congregations that are only able to cover a portion of the cost. The seminary has worked in partnership with the Board for Home Missions (BHM) and its Vicars in Mission Settings program to identify places where a vicar could receive excellent training in gospel outreach in a mission-minded congregation. The BHM and WLS cooperate financially in the program. The seminary commits between \$200,000 and \$250,000 on an annual basis to that program. The seminary has also partnered with the Board for World Missions to support a vicar in Colombia, working with a pastor in our sister church body. The need for gifts to support the vicar year is critical, particularly as we pray that the Lord would send more students to be prepared for pastoral ministry.

Each summer the seminary provides a seminar to equip supervising pastors for the important work of overseeing vicars. Faculty members explain the training the vicars have received and outline the experiences they hope the vicars will have in their vicar congregation. Each new supervising pastor is expected to attend; experienced supervising pastors are asked to participate in a training seminar at least once every five years. We thank the Lord of the Church for providing faithful pastors and supportive congregations who are willing to invest in the training of future gospel servants.

Early field training

The early field training program has been in place for two decades. In it, first- and second-year students are assigned to a Milwaukee-area congregation. They attend services each week and get involved in different activities to gain perspective on congregational life, with the goal of preparing them for their vicar year. In recent years this has become more Sunday-focused, in recognition of the students' busy schedules during the week. Four congregations participating in the program offer seminarians with Spanish abilities the opportunity to use them in ministry.

Student ministry program

Nearly all the students at the seminary work part-time jobs during the school year to cover their living costs. Most work in secular jobs and take advantage of opportunities to witness as they work alongside others. Some of the students work in ministry positions. During the 2021–22 school year 16 seniors are serving in a ministry position, with responsibilities in preaching, teaching, and visitation. Some receive housing as part of their compensation. About a dozen underclassmen are serving in ministry positions with duties that fit the training they have received.

Education costs

The total cost of education is around \$35,000 per student per year. Thankfully no student has to cover that entire cost. Tuition and fees for the 2021–22 school year were in the range of \$12,000. The students who live in the dorm pay approximately \$9,000 for room and board. The difference in cost is addressed through the portion of the synodical Congregation Mission Offerings that is designated for the seminary and through the many generous gifts God's people offer directly to the seminary. The gifts offered this year have been extraordinary, on pace to be the most ever received in a year.

In the 2021–22 school year, thanks to the generosity of the many people who give regularly to support the seminary's scholarship fund, every student who applied for financial assistance received aid to help defray the costs of attending the seminary. All told, the seminary disbursed approximately \$695,000 from its general scholarship fund to assist students. Most of that came in the form of grants based on the student's declared financial need. There were also campus service awards, which acknowledge students who carry out tasks for the well-being of the seminary family, and academic achievement awards, which honor classroom performance as reflected in the student's grades. Donors have also provided additional gifts for students that are not reflected in the number above. Generous grants from Salem Lutheran Foundation to every student who applied, combined with direct gifts on a student's behalf from congregations and individuals, raised the average amount of aid each student received to an amount that exceeded tuition.

Student indebtedness remains a concern, though we are pleased to report that average debt per student dropped by 23 percent this year. The decrease can be attributed largely to lower average spousal debt than in the previous year. The seminary's financial aid officer, Prof. Steve Geiger, keeps careful tabs on student debt. As a rule, students do not leave the seminary with more debt than that with which they entered, though they may acquire additional debt through marriage.

Accreditation

The seminary is pursuing accreditation through the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). The ATS is a membership organization of more than 270 graduate schools that conduct postbaccalaureate professional and academic degree programs. Currently an associate member of ATS, WLS officially expressed its desire to pursue initial accreditation in October 2020. In March 2021, at the request of ATS, the seminary submitted a readiness report meant to demonstrate that we have the institutional resources and will to complete a self-study within two years. The readiness report interacted with the Commission on Accrediting's ten standards of accreditation, noting both where WLS already meets the standards and where some work will need to be done.

Dr. Stephen Graham, the ATS staff member appointed to serve as the seminary's liaison, reviewed the readiness report and is convinced WLS has the resources to complete the self-study in two years. At Dr. Graham's invitation, two faculty members participated in a self-study workshop in September. The leaders of the workshop consistently emphasized that ATS has no interest in telling schools how to carry out their mission. In fact, ATS has recently published standards that are principles-based rather than best-practices-based. In other words, they are not going to tell schools seeking accreditation, "You must have this practice in place to receive accreditation." The seminary's liaison repeatedly told us that ATS will not ask us to act contrary to our doctrinal position or the mission given us by WELS. They understand that WLS is a professional seminary, focused on preparing men for service as pastors and missionaries in WELS. They expect that a school which sees its work as "pastors forming pastors" will have a faculty whose members have significant experience as pastors and missionaries. The stated desire of ATS is to help schools become even better versions of themselves by encouraging them to assess their program in light of the principle-based standards.

The workshop provided a high-level look at the ten standards of accreditation and an overview of the self-study process. The workshop leaders also offered practical guidance on how to conduct institutional and educational assessment, how to organize for the self-study, and how to write the final report. A steering committee was appointed to oversee the process, with Prof. Kenneth Cherney Jr. serving as the chairman. The steering committee, which includes off-campus members, then appointed subcommittees, with every faculty member formally serving on one.

The subcommittees have begun their work. The steering committee's tentative plan is to submit a self-study report to ATS by December 2023 at the latest, with a proposed spring 2024 accreditation team site visit.

The seminary is seeking accreditation for several reasons. Both the governing board and faculty take seriously the responsibility to prepare men who have the character, knowledge, and skills required to serve as pastors in WELS. The self-study central to the accreditation process will require the faculty and governing board to ask for feedback from synodical stakeholders and on that basis discuss the important questions of how best to form faithful Lutheran pastors for service in the contemporary world. Those critical conversations are the first step on the road to strengthening and expanding the work being done to prepare men for service as pastors. Having objective outside eyes review the self-study report and offer suggestions regarding areas to improve will also be helpful. Additionally, becoming an accredited institution promises to be beneficial for the work the seminary does in assisting sister church bodies in providing training and degrees for their pastors.

The self-study will require substantial work, stretching faculty and staff that already have plenty to do. It will also be challenging with the significant faculty turnover that has occurred in the last six years. Perhaps what new faculty members lack in institutional memory will be balanced by the fresh eyes and new ideas they bring to the work.

Campus construction

The seminary campus now has 18 homes, with the most recent house completed in January 2022. The governing board approved the building of the house in support of its plan to call faculty members a year before they will be asked to teach. With the number of faculty members currently in degree programs and therefore teaching a slightly reduced load, it is critical to have new professors complete their year of auditing while their predecessor is still teaching. That way they can step into the classroom immediately after their predecessor's retirement to help cover the courses that need to be offered. Rather than ask a man who accepts a call to the seminary to live in temporary housing for more than a year, and then to move again when his campus home has been updated and repaired, the board wants new faculty members to move immediately to campus.

The governing board has declared the new home the president's home. Their desire is that whoever serves as president will live in that home unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

Governing board

Three men will complete their service on the seminary governing board at the end of June: Pastor Jon Bitter, representing the Minnesota District (even after he accepted a call to serve as a pastor in Florida), who was serving as the vice chairman of the board; teacher Greg Milbrath, representing the Michigan District, who was serving as secretary of the board; and layman Gerald Zimpelmann, who represented the Northern Wisconsin District for the last 12 years. God be praised for their faithful service!

Three new members of the board will be elected at district conventions this summer: a layman from the Minnesota District, a teacher from the Northern Wisconsin District, and a pastor from the Michigan District. They will receive orientation for their service this summer, Lord willing.

Pastoral Studies Institute

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of WLS, in collaboration with WELS Joint Mission Council, continues to oversee pastoral training for men from various ethnic groups—Vietnamese, Hmong, and Sudanese, to name a few—in places across North America. The PSI Team consists of Prof. Jonathan Bare, who serves as the director; Prof. E. Allen Sorum; Prof. David Bivens; and part-time administrative assistant Nola Zemlicka. Bivens has a reduced teaching load in both semesters. Sorum has a full schedule of teaching at WLS in the second semester but not the first. The PSI Team provides some of the instruction to the 20 men currently enrolled in the training program and then works with local pastors who teach other courses in the program's four levels. The prayer is that the men being prepared for ministry will not only be able to pastor a flock of their people group, but will also be able to assist in bringing the gospel to their country of origin, as the Lord provides opportunities.

The members of the PSI Team, who are called jointly by the seminary's governing board and WELS Joint Mission Council, work with each world mission field's "One Team." Their duties and responsibilities vary by field, from vetting mission opportunities to providing instruction to developing curriculum to offering counsel on various aspects of mission and ministry. (See the report from the Joint Mission Council on p. 67 for additional information.) The PSI Team collaborates with the One Team leader and the group that WELS is seeking to reach in order to determine the best way for WELS to facilitate distinctively Lutheran ministries led by solidly Lutheran native leaders.

Grow in Grace

Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, partners with pastors for lifelong growth in their callings. Grow in Grace offers courses and events, retreats and mentoring, study packages, and informal resources, all intended to encourage and equip pastors to serve where the Lord has placed them.

Traditionally, the seminary offered summer quarter courses only on campus. In 2019, Grow in Grace established a pattern of alternating between taking courses on the road in the form of “satellite summer quarter” in odd-numbered years and hosting them on campus in even-numbered years. In 2021, participation in the satellite courses was impacted by COVID. Two districts cancelled their gatherings. Others moved online. Yet, despite the challenges, enrollment in courses was over 500. While down from the 600-plus attendance of 2019, it was still excellent participation. Those who attended provided positive feedback.

In 2022, summer quarter courses will be held on campus. There is great benefit for pastors to come to the seminary campus, to spend time with brothers in ministry outside of the classroom, and to find refreshment for ministry by time focused on study. God’s people always benefit when their pastors stretch themselves with additional study, even if it doesn’t seem immediately connected to daily ministry duties.

Grow in Grace continues to work toward offering two online courses each semester of the school year. The faculty turnover and the number of professors pursuing coursework of their own have made that challenging in the short term.

The pandemic had a significant impact on the ministry retreats Grow in Grace offers for pastors (and their wives) celebrating 3, 10, 25, and 35 years since graduating from the seminary. Both the 2020 and 2021 retreats had to be postponed. Because of the cancellations, 12 classes were invited to the retreat hosted in San Antonio at the end of April 2022. Space limitations required a split between the retreats, with the 25-year and 35-year classes meeting Monday through Wednesday and the 3-year and 10-year classes meeting Wednesday through Friday.

A look ahead

Master site planning

The seminary’s strategic plan calls for the development of a plan to update or add classrooms, large- and small-group educational and gathering space, and accessible faculty and staff offices. The current classroom space is functional, but some of the rooms are rather small and do not allow for different configurations. Many of the rooms have limited outside light. There is a need for places for students and faculty to gather informally. Faculty members all have offices in their on-campus homes, but they do not have space in the main classroom building for private meetings with individual students during the school day.

An ad hoc committee worked with HGA, a Milwaukee architectural firm that had done the chapel renovation in 2005, to develop a master site plan that addresses the items mentioned in the seminary’s strategic plan. The site plan includes a proposed educational center with six new classrooms, a link between the current library and the new educational center, turning current classrooms into office space and small group meeting areas, and a gathering hall connected to the current auditorium/gymnasium. During the coming year, Lord willing, a general timeline for building and plans for funding it will be established.

Rev. Earle Treptow, reporter

Prof. Jonathan Scharf, chairman

Rev. Jon Bitter, vice chairman

Teacher Greg Milbrath, secretary

Mr. Gregory Green

Mr. Thomas Kissinger

Rev. Nathan Wagenknecht

Rev. Karl Walther

Mr. Gerald Zimpelmann

Advisory:

Rev. Jonathan Balge, adjunct member

Rev. David Kolander, Southeastern Wisconsin District president

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Rev. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Martin Luther College

Our calling

In the midst of the challenges in our nation and world this past year, it has been a great blessing to Martin Luther College (MLC) to have a clear and unchanging mission as the WELS college of ministry. Our mission has kept our eyes fixed on our reason for existence as the WELS college of ministry. That mission is to train a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the college desires

- To strengthen the student in a consecrated spirit of love for God and his Word;
- To educate the student for faithful, capable, intelligent citizenship in today's world;
- To assist the student in acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for service in the church and for lifelong learning; and
- To encourage the student in developing and demonstrating a heart for service in the church, community, and world.

To meet the current ministry needs of WELS, Martin Luther College

- Prepares men for pastoral training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary;
- Prepares men and women for service as teachers and staff ministers in the synod's churches, schools, and other institutions;
- Prepares men and women for other church ministries, both full- and part-time, responding to the needs of WELS;
- Prepares international students for ministry in partnership with WELS mission fields; and
- Provides programs of continuing education that meet the ministerial needs of WELS.

With that mission and those goals in mind, this report lays before our 12 districts the current activity and future plans of your college of ministry as we seek to raise up the next generation of faithful messengers of the gospel.

Our current situation

We are very thankful to God for his many gifts to us as your college. They truly are too many to fully enumerate, but this report seeks to list various key parts of God's gracious gifts to us at MLC.

God's gifts to MLC: Our undergraduate students

The opening enrollment for fall 2021 was 663. The enrollment at the beginning of the second semester was 633. We give thanks for each student as a unique gift of God to MLC. Yet we are also concerned for a third consecutive year of a decreasing enrollment at MLC. At the time of this report, the number of teacher vacancies in our synod numbered about 300 and the number of pastoral vacancies numbered more than 140. That underlines the significant need for more students at MLC as we look at the waiting harvest all around us in the world. We do not have to wonder why it is that Jesus so strongly urges us to pray for workers. As we consider the almost stunning new opportunities before us to reach the world with the gospel, as we ponder the miracle of God's grace that led so many of our WELS schools to grow during the pandemic, we realize how quickly the need for more workers can grow. It should not surprise us that the voice of Jesus simply continues to remind us in Scripture to lift our eyes to see the harvest opportunities all around us and then to continue to pray for workers (Matthew 9:38).

No small part of God's answer to that prayer is to open our eyes to see gifted young people in our families and our congregations whom we can encourage for ministry. Please also consider those who are older who might consider pursuing the preaching or teaching ministry as a change of career. Such non-traditional students are also a great blessing to our college of ministry.

		Semester enrollment statistics by year													
		2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
FIRST SEMESTER	Opening enrollment	723	712	724	697	708	714	727	723	742	756	764	731	714	663
	Part time	11	10	19	18	12	12	19	18	26	16	17	27	14	12
	Boarding	671	676	671	643	659	668	674	671	667	682	747	657	659	613
	December grads**	15	13	15	22	7	19	21	22	13	14	18	15	19	7
	Withdrawals	43	37	39	38	32	34	26	34	40	42	38	45	43	43
	Ending enrollment	665	662	670	637	669	661	680	667	689	700	708	671	652	613
SECOND SEMESTER	January admissions	30	22	29	28	24	33	29	18	21	29	22	26	16	20
	Opening enrollment	695	684	699	665	693	694	709	685	710	729	730	697	668	633
	Part time	14	19	19	16	14	13	18	18	24	22	24	24	11	16
	Boarding	647	640	643	616	646	654	658	640	643	658	664	633	617	583
	Withdrawals	5	5	4	13	8	6	3	10	5	10	6	11	9	
	Ending enrollment	690	679	695	652	685	688	706	675	705	*720	724	686	659	

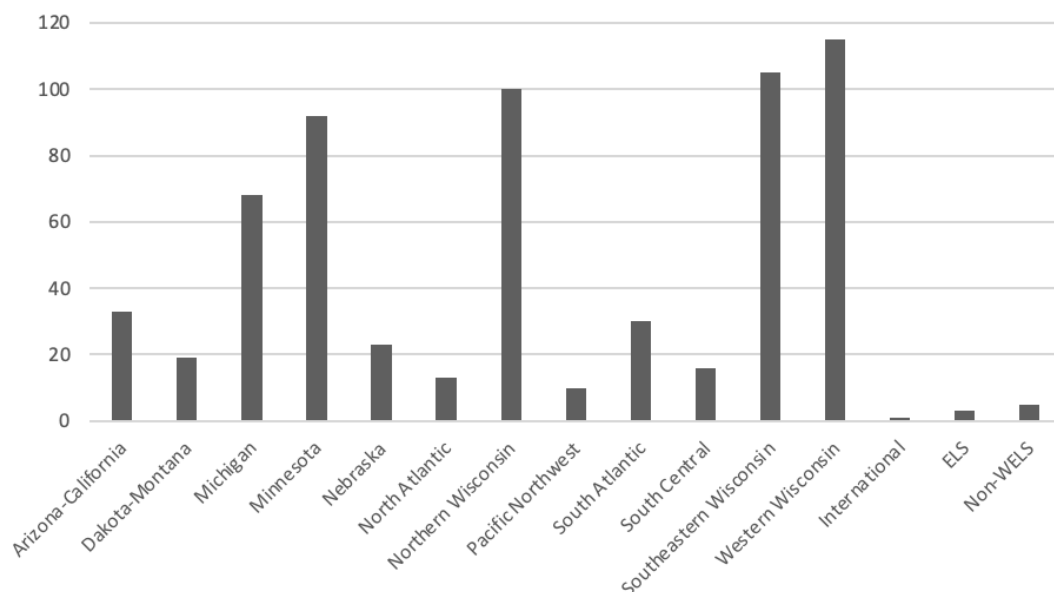
*student was readmitted in March

**on campus

Here is the breakdown of the number of students in each of our programs of study as of the beginning of our second semester:

Program of study	Number of students
Double major - Early childhood education and elementary	12
Double major - Early childhood education and special education	4
Double major - Elementary and secondary	73
Double major - Elementary and special education	10
Double major - Parish music and education	1
Double major - Staff ministry and education	2
Early childhood education	56
Educational studies	1
Elementary education	176
Parish music	1
Pre-seminary studies	171
Secondary education	101
Staff ministry	10
Synod certification	4
Theological studies	2
Unclassified	7
Undeclared	2

High school type	Number of students
Area Lutheran high school	315
Home school	5
Other	6
Preparatory school	247
Public	57
WELS	3
Total	633



God's gifts to MLC: Our undergraduate academic programs

As the WELS college of ministry, MLC continues to review its programs of study on a regular basis. Program reviews result in positive changes that occur across the curriculum to help provide a diverse and well-practiced set of skills and experiences for our ministry candidates. Examples of these results include an early ministry experience for pre-seminary students, advising enhancements for students in all majors, program plan adjustments that provide greater recruitment and retention in specialized areas, an emphasis on the agreement between the classroom and field experience curriculums in education, and new courses in middle/secondary education programs that better qualify candidates for assignments outside their chosen area of study in order to answer the call of so many teaching vacancies in our WELS school system. The staff ministry program is undergoing review currently, with graduate studies/continuing education and general education ready for review in the years to come.

MLC continues to assess in a variety of ways the effectiveness of its courses and programs both in academics and co-curricular activities. Specific goals and data to assess them are created, collected, studied, and adjusted annually to provide the most useful ministry preparation experience for our candidates.

Faculty turnover continues to be a challenge and a blessing at MLC. Between dormitory staff turnover, retirements, and new positions created to enhance and improve our ministry, we will have, Lord willing, installation numbers in the double digits at our opening service in August 2022. God continues to bless MLC with faculty members—past, present, and future—who glorify God in the way they assist in carrying out the mission of MLC.

God's gifts to MLC: Graduate and continuing education

MLC fulfills its mission by providing professional development for called workers serving “in the field” that is practical, convenient, and affordable. MLC serves more than 1,000 people annually through graduate studies and continuing education. Some highlights from this past year include the following:

- 144 are pursuing master’s degrees in education, educational administration, or theology.
- 390 participated in summer face-to-face courses at satellite locations.
- 860 attended all or part of a free online conference called Serving in Times of Crisis.
- 215 are enrolled in teaching ministry certification.
- 214 new teachers are being mentored by 148 trained mentors in our New Teacher Induction program.

Importantly, MLC also supports Lutheran schools and teachers as they seek to serve more students with mild to moderate disabilities. In addition to our undergraduate Special Education major with an Academic Behavioral Specialist (ABS) license, the Graduate Studies office provides the following supports:

- Accelerated BS > MS LD Licensure: Qualifying special education majors can take up to nine credits that apply to both their BS and MS degrees. Additionally, another nine credits can be retaken at the graduate level by completing only the additional graduate work and paying half the tuition. Students who utilize this opportunity save two years and \$4,000 on their master’s degree and learning disabilities license.

- MS Education with LD Licensure: Veteran teachers can retrain to serve as dedicated special education teachers through the MS in Education degree with Minnesota learning disabilities licensure. This program focuses on Lutheran school settings and provides unique supports to help active WELS teachers conduct their public school internship.
- MS Education with Special Education emphasis: This program is designed for classroom teachers. Participants obtain skills to support special needs students in their classrooms while also growing in other areas of ministry, like instruction, technology, leadership, or theology.

God's gifts to MLC: Staff and faculty personnel

Anniversary recognitions

The pandemic necessitated a delay in celebrating ministry milestones for the 2019–20 and the 2020–21 school years. A celebration is planned for spring 2022 and will include those years and the 2021–22 celebrants. All celebrants are listed below.

2019–20

- Peter Baganz, 25 years in ministry
- Paul Bases, 40 years in ministry
- William Pekar, 40 years in ministry
- Mark Zarling, 40 years in ministry

2020–21

- Gregory Diersen, 25 years in ministry
- Joel Fredrich, 40 years in ministry
- Jennifer Krause, 25 years in ministry
- Cheryl Loomis, 40 years in ministry
- James Pope, 40 years in ministry
- Mark Tacke, 40 years in ministry

2021–22

- Robert Klindworth, 40 years in ministry
- Theodore Klug, 25 years in ministry
- Douglas Lange, 40 years in ministry
- Thomas Nass, 40 years in ministry
- James Unke, 40 years in ministry
- Lori Unke, 40 years in ministry

Faculty retirements/conclusions of service

2021–22

- Paul Bases, professor of Spanish
- Catherine Biedenbender, Early Childhood Learning Center lead teacher, accepted a call to Trinity, Nicollet, Minn.
- Daryl Hanneman, professor of education
- Cheryl Loomis, professor of early childhood education
- Mark Stein, football coach/recruiter, accepted a call to Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.
- Steven Thiesfeldt, professor of science

Faculty additions

2021–22

- Aaron Robinson, professor of English, Cultural Diversity coordinator
- Philip Schroeder, tutor and instructor (theology)
- Orie Thomford, tutor and instructor (theology)
- Luke Thompson, professor of history and theology
- Daniel Waldschmidt, professor of Greek

Calling activity for 2021–22

- Melissa Berg has accepted the call to serve as director of the Early Childhood Learning Center.
- Isaiah Degner has accepted the call to serve as professor of Spanish.
- Heath Dobberpuhl has accepted the call to serve as professor of science.

- Katherine Gut has accepted the call to serve as professor of early childhood education.
- Adam Pavelchik has accepted the call to serve as professor of education, director of field experiences.
- Rachel Youngblom has accepted the call to serve as professor of special education.

We would be remiss if we did not also mention a hiring that took place this year that has impacted MLC's leadership team. When Pastor Michael Otterstatter accepted a call back into the parish ministry in June 2021, that opened up a vacancy in the position of vice president for mission advancement. We are thankful that Mr. Mark Maurice recently accepted that position and has now begun his work on our campus.

God's gifts to MLC: Financial

In regard to finances, there are many reasons for MLC to be grateful to the Lord. The following chart highlights a few of the many areas in which MLC has been blessed as well as some areas where the college is being challenged.

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>
Opening enrollment	756	764	731	714	663
Tuition, room & board	\$20,470	\$21,490	\$22,130	\$22,900	\$23,590
Synod operating support	\$3,300,238	\$3,300,238	\$3,469,000	\$3,469,000	\$3,672,000
Gifts and bequests	\$2,262,854	\$2,182,235	\$5,146,797	\$6,609,432	\$6,706,592*
Net assets without donor restrictions at year end	\$9,969,108	\$10,191,622	\$12,184,274	\$15,545,224	not available
					*As of 2/2022

Financial aid—student cost and indebtedness

MLC continues to focus on increasing student tuition assistance while limiting increases to tuition, room, and board. MLC annually plans for a 5 percent budgetary increase to tuition assistance. In FY 2022 MLC increased the Congregational Partner Grant Program match from \$1,000 per student to \$1,200 per student. This was the first increase in the match portion since the program started in 2017. MLC also implemented two additional financial aid awards in an effort to increase enrollment. Each student that participates in an individual on-campus visit and enrolls at MLC will receive a \$500 scholarship. MLC will also award \$500 as an early deposit incentive to any student that pays their enrollment deposit by March 1 and subsequently attends the college. MLC's commitment to tuition assistance is evidenced by the following chart:

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>
Tuition assistance—funded	\$1,458,220	\$1,722,517	\$1,845,837	\$1,916,099
Tuition assistance—unfunded	\$1,623,615	\$1,756,179	\$1,473,595	\$1,783,949
Total tuition assistance	\$3,081,835	\$3,478,696	\$3,319,432	\$3,700,048

Net assets restricted for tuition assistance have also increased in recent years:

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>
Purpose restrictions	\$4,050,264	\$3,949,369	\$4,183,468	\$7,872,118
Perpetual restrictions	\$6,633,471	\$7,141,984	\$7,939,454	\$9,688,748
Net assets restricted for tuition assistance	\$10,683,735	\$11,091,353	\$12,122,922	\$17,560,866

Even with efforts in place, increases to tuition and room and board have outpaced increases to tuition assistance and WELS operating support.

	Increase to full-time tuition, room and board	MLC tuition assistance	Average per student receiving aid	WELS operating support per student
2016-17	\$570 – 3%	\$2,999,807	\$4,456	\$4,059
2017-18	\$980 – 5%	\$3,081,835	\$4,348	\$4,365
2018-19	\$1,020 – 5%	\$3,478,696	\$4,746	\$4,320
2019-20	\$640 – 3%	\$3,319,432	\$4,576	\$4,746
2020-21	\$770 – 3.5%	\$3,700,048	\$5,073	\$4,859
2021-22	\$690 – 3%	\$2,824,080*	\$4,257*	\$5,538

*As of 2/2022—additional distributions were scheduled after the date of this report.

MLC remains concerned about student debt. The following chart indicates the ongoing challenge in educational debt for college graduates both at MLC and elsewhere in our country.

	% MLC graduates with debt	Average amount of debt per MLC graduate	National debt average per graduate
2016-17	77%	\$24,153	\$28,650
2017-18	75%	\$27,926	\$29,200
2018-19	78%	\$27,196	\$28,950
2019-20	75%	\$26,194	\$29,927
2020-21	76%	\$26,028	not available

We are thankful that the average educational debt for MLC graduates remains below the national average. We are also thankful to note a reduction in the average debt for the last three graduating classes of MLC. We believe additional gifts for student assistance, growth of the Congregational Partner Grant Program, and the MLC financial literacy program have contributed to this reduction.

We also thank God for his Spirit's work in the hearts of our students' parents who have taught biblical stewardship to their children. MLC graduates honor their Savior with an outstanding debt repayment rate. The latest report from the Department of Education (received in September 2021) shows that 175 MLC students entered Federal Student Loan debt repayment in 2018. Of students that entered repayment in 2018, only one MLC student defaulted between 2018, 2019, and 2020, which equates to a 0.5 percent cohort default rate. The draft of fiscal year 2019, to be finalized in September 2022, also indicates a 0.5 percent cohort default rate (1 of 185 students entering repayment in 2019). The national average default rate for FY 2018 is 7.3 percent.

Keeping bottom line costs down

While we still have much work to do here, MLC's efforts have been blessed to keep bottom line costs as affordable as possible for our students. The chart below summarizes the average amount paid per full-time, resident student, once all grant aid has been accounted for.

	Full-time tuition, room & board	Average paid per full-time resident student	Percentage paid per full-time student
2016-17	\$19,490	\$12,400	64%
2017-18	\$20,470	\$12,800	63%
2018-19	\$21,490	\$12,700	59%
2019-20*	\$22,130	\$12,800	58%
2020-21*	\$22,900	\$13,600	59%

*Excludes room and board refunds due to pandemic

Use of MLC net assets without donor restrictions

As of June 30, 2021, net assets without donor restrictions at MLC totaled \$15,545,224. The MLC Governing Board has designated these net assets in this way:

Fund	Amount	Description
Assets invested in library books and equipment	\$2,572,203	In fiscal year 2018, WELS transferred ownership of library books and equipment to MLC. These assets plus additions are included in net assets without donor restrictions.
Economic Sustainability Fund (ESF)	\$5,337,389	The MLC Governing Board has designated these funds for unforeseen or emergency needs. Having such reserve funds meets the best practice directives from the Higher Learning Commission who oversees MLC's continuing accreditation. The board has set a minimum balance of 10 percent of annual operating expenses (about \$2.3 million). MLC's internal goal is to reach 25 percent of the annual operating expenses (approximately \$5.7 million).
Scholarship Fund	\$3,569,313	The amount set aside equals two years of MLC's internal funding for scholarships. Should government regulations make it impossible for MLC to continue to participate in the federal financial aid programs, these funds could provide MLC time to react without immediately reducing student assistance.
Program maintenance	\$3,080,400	In an effort to update the aging campus at MLC, the board has designated reserves to allow the following capital projects to move forward: \$765,000 Betty Kohn Fieldhouse (less reserves will be needed as donations have increased since June 2021), \$560,400 tennis court relocation to the athletic fields, \$255,000 Centennial Hall HVAC (first and only air-conditioned residence hall on campus for which a \$500,000 gift was subsequently received), \$1,500,000 towards a new residence hall.
Operating support	\$985,919	This funding represents net assets that have been designated for any unforeseen operating needs.

Current enrollment and MLC's financial situation

Like many other colleges, MLC is experiencing lower enrollment, some of which can be attributed to the pandemic. Between FY 2019 and FY 2022, MLC's enrollment has decreased by about 100 undergraduate students, or 13 percent. Reduced revenue due to lower enrollment exceeded \$1.2 million in FY 2022 alone. MLC has renewed efforts in recruitment with the hopes of enrollment rebounding in the years to come.

In the near future, the college will begin the financial planning process for the FY 2024 and FY 2025 biennium. Within that plan, MLC intends to implement a robust financial aid program that will not only attract new students but reduce debt of our graduates.

While the reduction in enrollment MLC has experienced is a substantial hurdle to overcome, the college continues to be blessed in many ways. Substantial financial relief was provided to the college through the various federal COVID pandemic relief acts, which included Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF). Through the three phases of HEERF, MLC was awarded \$1.7 million in institutional aid (of which \$388,000 was given as student aid) and an additional \$1.3 million for emergency student aid, all of which has been awarded. To God be the glory for these blessings!

MLC also participated in the Paycheck Protection Program under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. The college obtained a \$2.4 million forgivable, low interest loan through the Small Business Administration. In June 2021, MLC received notice the entire loan was forgiven. To God be the glory for this blessing!

God's people continue to support the college with generous gifts in spite of instability in our nation and world. In fact, between FY 2017 and FY 2022 MLC has experienced over a 300 percent increase in donations (unrestricted and restricted) as illustrated below:

	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022*</u>
Gifts and memorials	\$1,949,803	\$1,978,002	\$1,976,249	\$3,658,519	\$6,039,511	\$5,754,401
Bequests	<u>\$ 183,903</u>	<u>\$ 284,852</u>	<u>\$ 205,986</u>	<u>\$1,488,278</u>	<u>\$ 569,921</u>	<u>\$ 952,191</u>
Total donations	\$2,133,706	\$2,262,854	\$2,182,235	\$5,146,797	\$6,609,432	\$6,706,592

*Through February 2022

The "Equipping Christian Witnesses" campaign (ECW), covering FY 2020 to FY 2022, continues to be supported by WELS members. In addition, many have remembered MLC in their estate plans. To God be the glory!

With the enrollment decrease as noted above, it is all the more imperative that the college be a wise steward of financial resources. The college has reported substantial underspending from budgeted amounts, about \$1 million or more in each of the last four years. While some of this underspending is attributed to COVID and restricted activities, the rest is a result of cautious spending in response to unstable times and a reduction in enrollment. In the areas of recruitment and facility maintenance, expenditures remain strong, with the hopes of attracting additional students.

MLC does expect to end FY 2022 with an unrestricted surplus; however, this is primarily due to the timing of costs incurred to build the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse versus the satisfaction of the donations received for the project. Costs were incurred in both FY 2021 and FY 2022, but donations can only be satisfied when the building has been placed in service (FY 2022).

Over the last several years, MLC has faced challenges beyond what anyone would have imagined prior to the pandemic. The college is dealing with loss of enrollment and an ever-aging campus during a time when construction costs are at an all-time high. At the same time the college has been blessed with substantial financial blessings resulting in the highest unrestricted reserves in the last 20 years.

As God has blessed MLC, we look to give back to our students through higher financial aid, lower tuition increases, attractive campus facilities, and controlled costs. We thank God for the blessings he has poured upon us and pray he continues to guide us as we navigate through these challenging times.

God's gifts to MLC: Campus buildings, improvements, and maintenance

Betty Kohn Fieldhouse

MLC continues to rejoice over the gifts received from individuals, congregations, and schools throughout WELS. Those gifts provided a generous financial foundation for facilities. God also moved the heart of a very generous donor to provide a transformational gift to the athletic practice facility that allowed construction to commence.

Groundbreaking for the athletic practice facility took place on April 10, 2021. This beautiful facility, now named the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse, was completed in March 2022. The building is a towering 36,000-square-foot indoor turf facility that stands prominently at the MLC Athletic Complex. It features large practice areas, baseball/softball batting

cages, golf simulators, and locker rooms. The Betty Kohn Fieldhouse is serving our student body well for athletic teams, intramurals, and physical education classes. It is also a significant beginning to our long-range plans for making our campus even more attractive to prospective students. The dedication service for the fieldhouse is planned for the start of next school year.

New tennis courts

Six new tennis courts were constructed at the MLC Athletic Complex. The old courts required annual repair to maintain a playable surface for conference competition. Keeping good stewardship in mind, relocating the courts rather than investing more into repairs was deemed the best option for MLC. The old tennis courts will be converted into parking.

Library patio

A goal of MLC's current campus master plan is to incorporate more gathering spaces across campus. A year ago, a beautiful outdoor commons area was created between Concord and Augustana Halls. This year a new patio was built between the library and the Fishers of Men statue. The patio is stylish, comfortable, and spacious. It serves as a great location for live music performances, meeting with students and colleagues, or enjoying some fresh air during a break.

Restroom renovations

MLC continues to make steady progress on restroom renovations in the Wittenberg Collegiate Center. These restrooms now have new infrastructure, fixtures, and general upgrades.

Chapel of the Christ acoustical treatments

In June 2021, two specified areas in the chapel were treated with sound-absorbing acoustical panels. In October, barrel diffusers were prepared and installed. These diffusers are designed to scatter and blend sounds, rather than absorb. The end result is significant improvement in musical definition and the intelligibility of the spoken word.

God's gifts to MLC: Training students in financial literacy

MLC has established its financial literacy program, called MLC Direction, to promote healthy financial skills so that our students can grow in being faithful stewards of God's blessings.

Many different methods are utilized to bring financial education to our students. Through the non-profit organization CashCourse, we have been able to assign students different financial topics in a simple yet educational way. Juniors have the opportunity to learn more details about the topic of credit in a group workshop. Seniors have a similar opportunity to attend a workshop covering SECA taxes and the different tax implications as a minister of the gospel. Senior financial review meetings are the foundation of this program, guiding future graduates through the process of repaying loans and preparing for future expenses with a personalized budget activity. All students can request an individual meeting to sit down and talk through personal finances. Every year in February is America Saves Week. We partner with AmericaSaves to help students understand the importance of saving funds for emergencies and major future goals. Through the use of social media and drawings for prizes, we aim to make financial education impactful and fun.

God's gifts to MLC: Gifts through our Mission Advancement office

The Office of Mission Advancement is responsible for overall development, public and community relations, alumni relations, and advancement efforts at MLC.

Although it is difficult to quantify all of the blessings that MLC receives through the efforts of the Mission Advancement Office, as of Feb. 28, 2022, we have received \$2,661,704 in gifts, which represents 87 percent of our FY 2021–22 goal of \$3,048,500. Those gifts were received from 1,560 donors. We have conducted 120 face-to-face visits in 7 different states. This gift total includes Congregational Partner Grant Program gifts. The Congregational Partner Grant Program gifts are also shown in the ECW campaign total chart (p. 85).

We are also pleased to report that the year-to-date totals in FY 2022 supported 14 percent of MLC's operating costs. Subsidy from WELS provided an additional 13 percent of operating support. We offer our sincere thanks to those who have given so generously to make this happen.

Scholarships—annual and endowed

Another significant factor in helping to ease the financial burden on students can be seen in the number of endowed and annual scholarships established at MLC. For the 2021–22 school year, there were 76 endowed and annual funds that provided monies for MLC institutional awards and 58 individually awarded scholarships provided by endowed and annual funds from donors. In the last year three endowed and five annual scholarships have been established with more in the initial steps of the process.

Congregational Partner Grant Program

Currently, through the Congregational Partner Grant Program, MLC matches dollar for dollar, up to \$1,000, the gift a congregation gathers to apply to the tuition of their student(s) at MLC. As a renewable effort, the Congregational Partner Grant Program can provide four or five years of financial aid support—up to \$10,000 to each student—in addition to the other financial aid the student receives. For the 2021–22 school year, more than 569 students from 269 congregations received congregational grants that were matched by MLC. This resulted in \$1,074,000 in financial aid to our students! Because of the success of the program and the need for continued financial aid, beginning in academic year 2022–23, the Congregational Partner Grant Program will match up to \$1,200 per year.

“Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign

Our three-year capital campaign, “Equipping Christian Witnesses” (ECW), will come to an end on June 30, 2022. However, our efforts regarding each pillar remain and will continue on. The ECW campaign has three main goals: 1) to increase enrollment at MLC; 2) to provide even more financial aid to our students, especially through our Congregational Partner Grant Program; and 3) to upgrade facilities to enable our campus to be even more inviting to prospective students.

So far, MLC representatives and the representatives from our WELS Ministry of Christian Giving have made more than 1,700 ECW visits to households within WELS. These encouragements to individuals and families, along with encouragements to our congregations, have begun to bear fruit. Here are the gifts God has given us through this campaign through February 2022:

Campaign totals	Received	Pledge balance	Total
General campaign:	\$2,212,117	\$8,050	\$2,220,167
Facilities:	\$3,789,095	\$0	\$3,789,095
Residence hall facilities:	\$1,814,235	\$10,000	\$1,824,235
Congregational Partner Grant Program:	\$1,401,124	\$25,150	\$1,426,274
Total ECW gifts and pledges:	\$9,216,571	\$43,200	\$9,259,771

God's gifts to MLC: Admissions and student retention

As we continue to see a high rate of pastoral, teaching, and staff ministry vacancies across our synod, our admissions department continues to explore and establish new methods to increase the visibility of MLC's ministry. On our campus, the admissions office has moved into a newly renovated area at the main entrance of the college, greeting all visitors with a high-quality, welcoming environment. Our admissions team continues to leverage the team's diverse ministry experiences as we encourage students to prayerfully consider training for the public ministry at MLC. We also plan to add a younger counselor to the team to diversify the department even further. We also continue to build upon the work that our co-curricular admissions counselor has completed, by God's grace, in the first two years of the position.

A look ahead

MLC's new strategic plan

We cannot sufficiently thank God for the countless prayers and generous offerings with which God has blessed MLC through his faithful people in this past year. As our “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign now draws to its close, it is our prayer that this does not mark a reduction of prayers and gifts but instead that God provides a continued growing recommitment to raising up the new generation of pastors and teachers, staff ministers and missionaries.

With that in mind, MLC is putting finishing touches on a new strategic plan that will begin guiding our ministry on July 1, 2022. The final draft of that new strategic plan is still being completed as this report is being written. That new strategic plan, *Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross*, will be our focus both on and off campus as we seek to partner with our whole synod. Here is an overview of the various emphases of the new strategic plan:

Pursuing excellence under the cross in recruitment and retention of students

We will seek to pursue excellence in recruiting a growing student body that more and more reflects the gracious reality that Christ has purchased souls “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). We

pray for God's blessings on our new Cultural Engagement Center with a full-time director (Mrs. Megan Kassuelke) partnering with our International Student Coordinator (Prof. Tingting Schwartz) and our Cultural Diversity Coordinator (Prof. Aaron Robinson). Our whole campus will be partnering with this team to make MLC an even more inviting place for students of color as well as for international students. With an ever-growing mission field of almost 8 billion people to reach across our country and around the world, it is our prayer that our own student body more and more reflects those whom we are seeking to reach.

A second key way we are working on the challenge of recruitment is through the continued efforts of our admissions department. Our director of admissions and admissions counselors continue to work with the faculties and staff of our synodical prep schools and our area Lutheran high schools to equip and encourage them as our greatest ministerial encouragers with our high school students. Through increased training for our high school teachers who serve as on-campus liaisons, increased amounts and frequency of Focus on Ministry trips, increased presence at high schools by our counselors and MLC students, and the increased usage of technology and social media with our recruits, we pray God can use these efforts to provide even more candidates for ministry. Our admissions staff continues to put a high priority on reaching out more effectively to WELS students who are home-schooled or who attend public schools. We will continue to work with pastors and congregations in outlying areas or districts to target candidates for public ministry who have not attended a WELS high school and have gifts for the public ministry. The admissions department will also increase our presence at district meetings and events across the synod as much as possible. Please continue to pray that God will bless our efforts with many students eager to consider serving their Savior in our schools and congregations.

The third emphasis as we seek to train a growing number of future gospel workers is by forging an even stronger partnership between our MLC admissions department and our entire faculty when it comes to retaining those already enrolled at MLC so that an even higher percentage persevere all the way through graduation. While MLC has one of the highest retention rates in the country, we look to strengthen current retention efforts as well as explore new ideas that can help us hold on to even more students.

Finally, we are also reestablishing the position of vice president for enrollment management on our campus to oversee all of these efforts and to provide someone who sits at the MLC Administrative Council who will make sure all administrative decisions are carefully processed through the lens of recruitment and retention of students.

Pursuing excellence under the cross in making MLC significantly more affordable

In order to help us achieve that growth in our student body, we will also seek to pursue excellence in making attendance at MLC considerably more affordable. We hope to build on the reality that the average educational debt of our graduates has gone down for three consecutive years. It is that progress we pray we can maintain into the future. Increasing the amount of financial aid available to our students, and thereby reducing the need for our students to take on as much educational debt, was the emphasis of pillar #2 of "Equipping Christian Witnesses." This will continue to be a key initiative in our *Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross*.

As evidence of that ongoing desire to increase financial aid and reduce student educational debt, in February our MLC Governing Board passed this vision statement:

A vision for the future at MLC: Increasing financial aid & reducing student debt

In order to remove as many financial barriers as possible for students to pursue gospel ministry, by June 30, 2027, we will have reduced the average educational debt of all MLC graduates so that it is at or below 50 percent of the base starting salary of a WELS first-year teacher.

Key initiatives that we pray will enable us to reach this vision:

- Increase, by 10 percent, each fiscal year the amount budgeted for need- and merit-based financial aid.
- Prioritize the allocation of that MLC financial aid so that first-year students will not normally be compelled by financial necessity to take on any educational debt.
- Reduce MLC's average net price of attendance (tuition plus room and board less financial aid) to at least match a select group of private peer colleges so that prospective students make enrollment decisions based on vocation, not finances.
- In partnership with the synod, develop options for all students so they do not need to rely solely or primarily on the government's direct loan program to cover funding gaps.

If God through the gifts of his people enables us to achieve the key initiatives underlying this vision, MLC will have

regained significant ground in being a very attractive option for prospective students and their families when it comes to the cost of education. As our vision states, we want to make sure prospective students are making enrollment decisions based on the vocation they would like to pursue, not finances.

Pursuing excellence under the cross in providing a well-rounded college experience

Another key element of *Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross* will be what will forever live in tension with the previous point—making sure we invest sufficiently in our campus facilities and programs, faculty and staff so that we offer an excellent, well-rounded college experience. In the focused area of facilities, this was the emphasis of pillar #3 of the “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign.

As we begin our new strategic plan, *Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross*, we have already begun to take several specific steps to invest in our campus’ facilities and programs, our faculty and staff.

- We are pursuing excellence by partnering with Credo High Education to revise/update the campus master plan that they assisted MLC to create in 2017. Much has happened on our campus since 2017. God has blessed us with new construction and other campus renovations and improvements that were envisioned in the 2017 campus master plan. As we move forward, MLC wants to make sure that our campus master plan still captures well the remaining facility needs of our campus. This revised/updated campus master plan will assist us in pursuing excellence in our campus facilities with confidence that we are meeting the greatest needs for MLC’s future.
- We are also pursuing excellence by beginning a new program for non-traditional students to enable us to open up another avenue to serve in our WELS schools to meet the growing vacancies for teachers. This new program will seek primarily to serve non-traditional students who, for whatever reason, are unable to attend courses and undergo field experiences in and around New Ulm. This would include both those who have often in the past been called second-career students as well as some students of color. While it remains a great blessing for our synod that MLC continues to train as many traditional students (including students of color) on our campus as possible because of the great blessing of studying and maturing together in Christ, this new program will utilize what is called Competency-Based Education. Competency-Based Education is a framework for teaching and assessment of learning. It is also described as a type of education based on predetermined “competencies,” which focuses on outcomes and real-world performance. This program, along with increased efforts in ministry certification, seeks to provide more candidates in more ways for the ever-growing need for teachers in WELS schools. For the non-traditional students in the Competency-Based Education program, all the work toward receiving certification to teach in our WELS schools, including all field experiences needed to attain a teaching license, can be accomplished from where those potential teachers currently live. This Competency-Based Education program can be compared to the Pastoral Studies Institute at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, which trains non-traditional students on the path toward pastoral ministry.
- We are also pursuing excellence by investing in sufficient faculty and staff to provide the kind of broad and excellent college experience prospective students are seeking as they make decisions about which college to attend. Especially in the area of music and the arts, as well as in athletics, we are working to make sure that our programs give a clear testimony to prospective students that MLC values all their God-given talents that they bring to campus as we help them to see how all their gifts relate to the work of the public ministry.

Pursuing excellence under the cross in leading students, faculty, and staff toward growth

While MLC has always understood the importance of helping our campus family to pursue excellence intellectually and academically, we will also seek to grow even more in helping our entire campus family to pursue excellence also as they grow in spiritual, emotional, and physical health. Included here is seeking to make sure that our campus worship is consistently excellent, as well as equipping everyone on campus with tools that can help them enrich their personal devotional life of Word and prayer. We also recognize that we can grow significantly in helping our campus family toward emotional health in the midst of the significant increase in mental health challenges facing especially the rising generation. Finally, helping our entire campus family pursue excellence in their physical health remembers that God has attached souls to bodies, and that getting sufficient rest and exercise to maintain physical health can play no small part in being able to be healthy members of the MLC family.

Pursuing excellence under the cross in other areas of academics

MLC continues to maintain accreditation approval status with the Higher Learning Commission. As a part of its 10-year accreditation cycle, MLC enters year 4 during the 2022–23 school year, where a written update is sent ensuring the continuation of our improvement objectives and plans.

MLC professors in math, science, and technology are training with Project Lead the Way for STEM extensions into our existing curriculum and specialized training/certification for undergraduate candidates in STEM education.

MLC professors in special education continue to work closely with Commission on Lutheran Schools administrators and the schools of our synod as they seek to utilize with maximum effect the candidates completing programs (undergraduate and graduate) in this ever-growing area of need in our schools.

Closing encouragement

In regard to everything this report mentions, and especially with the emphases in our new strategic plan, we remember that only what God blesses will prosper. Please join us in praying that our gracious Savior will prosper the plans MLC is making. Pray that his blessing might include giving us at MLC the courage, wisdom, and energy to improve, modify, and strengthen these plans wherever and whenever necessary. All of this reflects the importance of what our synod has asked MLC to do as the WELS college of ministry. You have given us the task of training a growing number of faithful and capable messengers to proclaim the gospel in our schools, our churches, and our mission fields across the country and around the world. As God so chooses to bless that work, what happens on our hill in New Ulm touches the world!

Rev. Richard Gurgel, reporter

Rev. Aaron Mueller, chairman

Teacher Joe Archer

Rev. Gregory Gibbons

Rev. Geoffrey Kieta

Mr. Thomas Klaudt

Mr. Dale Krause

Teacher Joel Lauber

Rev. Daniel Leyrer

Rev. Michael Lindemann

Mr. Timothy Petermann

Teacher David Uhlhorn

Mr. Michael Valteau

Teacher Andrew Van Weele

Rev. Mark Wessel

Advisory:

Rev. Richard Gurgel, Martin Luther College president

Rev. Dennis Klatt, Minnesota District president

Mr. Michael Krueger

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Mr. Thomas Walters

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Our calling

Since 1885 Michigan Lutheran Seminary has been preparing students for the full-time ministry of the gospel. In 1910, the campus in Saginaw, Mich., shifted from a seminary that solely trained pastors for the Michigan Synod to a WELS preparatory high school. Since that time the mission has remained the same with the sole purpose of preparing high school students for the public ministry of the gospel encouraging them to enroll at Martin Luther College, our WELS college of ministry. That mission is still very much at the very core of everything we do. We are grateful to the people of WELS for this single purpose and for the support that we receive to carry out that mission.

MLS seeks to fulfill that calling by providing all students with ministry experiences in each of their years on campus so they can make educated decisions on how they will use their gifts to serve the Lord. The Lord has seen fit to bless that encouragement ministry with nearly half of our graduates continuing their ministerial education in our synod's school of higher learning. Those that choose another vocation are well prepared with a classical education that holds Christ at its very center. Additionally, MLS has been blessed with confessionally minded international students who matriculate to MLC at a higher rate than any other high school. We are thankful that the Lord of the Church is fulfilling his mission to preach the gospel to all nations right here on the campus of MLS in Saginaw, Mich.

In order to fulfill our calling, MLS maintains a safe and well-equipped campus to educate our students. The 17-acre campus is owned and operated by WELS and administered through the Board for Ministerial Education and the MLS Governing Board. Fiscally sound financial practices aid in the educational experiences that produce high-quality candidates for ministry so that we can fulfill Scripture's commission to entrust the Scriptures to reliable men who are qualified to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2). WELS members support the ministry of MLS with their gifts to WELS and individual offerings to the school. The MLS Foundation, a separate 501(c)3, works collaboratively with MLS to provide additional funding for tuition assistance and capital improvements. In each of these areas of revenue, we recognize the fulfillment of God's promise to provide for those who serve the Lord, and we are grateful for his blessings through his people.

Our current situation

Enrollment

MLS opened the 2021–22 school year with a stable enrollment of 182 students. Of those, approximately 60 percent live in the dormitory and 40 percent commute daily. More than 75 percent of our students come from non-called worker families providing potential first-generation gospel ministers for the greater ministry of the Church. MLS has a lower than anticipated international enrollment of 12 students (7 percent) this year because of lingering COVID issues and restrictions on travel at the beginning of the school year. The senior class totals 37 students, the smallest on campus. However, applications for the 2022–23 school year are higher than projected, which should result in an increased enrollment in the coming school year. We are grateful for those parents who make the commitment to a ministry preparatory education in the time of rising vacancies for our synod.

Recruitment for ministry

Recruitment for the public ministry is the priority of our mission. In our small school setting, students will receive individual ministry encouragement via personal contact with professors and tutors in classrooms, the dormitory, and in extracurricular activities. Chapel in the morning and the evening is often sprinkled with gospel ministry encouragements for young believers with gifts for serving the Lord.

Because of our smaller size, experiential ministry opportunities are more available to a greater percentage of our students. Students have multiple opportunities to participate in Project Titus trips that connect students with mission-minded congregations across the United States. With COVID restrictions lifting, we have scheduled a new Project Titus trip for our Spanish-speaking students to Puerto Rico. Seniors participate in a Taste of Ministry trip with experienced pastors and teachers to explore ministry behind the scenes. Juniors have the opportunity to visit the other three ministerial education schools (Luther Preparatory School, Martin Luther College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) on their junior tour. Sophomores listen to ministry presentations from MLC and WLS recruiters on Sophomore Night in late spring. Freshmen participate in Frosh Ministry Day where classes are paused and local pastors and teachers speak to the students about the joy and challenges of public ministry. The entire student body participates in Ministry Week and Cardinal for a Day, which allow students to become teachers for the 400-plus grade school students that visit the campus to get a taste of life at MLS. These and many other opportunities give hands-on ministry experiences to aid in the students' decision to serve the Lord in the public ministry.

Mental health services

MLS continues to address the mental health needs of today's teenagers by partnering with Christian Family Solutions in a pilot school-based counselor program. In this program, a licensed counselor is available on campus at least three days a week for mental health counseling sessions for faculty and students. The counselor is also available for presentations to groups of students in classes or special periods to address certain areas of need or to simply reduce the stigma of mental health needs. With the increasing nature of mental health needs of students who are coming out of a two-year-long pandemic, we are blessed to be able to offer these services to our students, faculty, and staff right on our campus.

Curriculum

The MLS curriculum is designed to prepare students for entrance into Martin Luther College. In doing so it meets or exceeds the state standards for a high school graduate and therefore excellently prepares students for any vocation that they choose.

Of special importance is the emphasis on languages and music. Because the gospel is communicated via language, the MLS curriculum emphasizes language in preparation for communicating the gospel to all people. In addition to English courses, all students take at least one year of Latin with three additional years of Latin, German, or Spanish required for graduation. The Lutheran Church has recognized that language connected with music is a powerful combination to communicate doctrinal truths. In order to equip the church with qualified musicians to lead or enhance the worship life of a congregation, MLS gives ample opportunities for students to become proficient in the musical arts. More than 95 percent of MLS students participate in either piano or organ. Even with smaller enrollment, half of the MLC freshmen who have organ experience are MLS alumni. Many also choose to participate in choirs or the band program.

Finally, the students have enjoyed the establishment of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) course that was added to the science curriculum two years ago. This course gives students who will be teaching STEM courses in the future advanced experience within the discipline. It also gives students who may choose engineering or another vocation the experience needed to be successful at a secular college of their choosing.

Campus improvements

Major capital projects on the MLS campus in this past year include the completion of the press box and concession stand by our athletic fields. This expanded facility not only improves the viewing experience for fans of Cardinal football, but also provides a VIP suite for a viewing experience sheltered from the weather, a top-level kitchen, and indoor restroom facilities for the first time. The original 1985 gymnasium bleachers are being replaced this summer, providing motorized functionality and better handicap accessible seating. A new bus was purchased to help modernize an aging fleet. Thanks to generous gifts from God's people, we are partnering with Builders for Christ to completely renovate the MLS tutor apartments and interdorm office this summer. Finally, we have purchased all of the hymnals, psalters, and resources needed to train the next generation of church musicians with the new *Christian Worship* hymnal. Full implementation of *Christian Worship* will begin in the 2022–23 school year.

The securing of the Michigan State Police School Competitive Grant allowed MLS to make \$50,000 worth of security upgrades to our campus, providing increased control at access points and better communication in the academic portion of the building. Additionally, MLS is making significant and necessary upgrades to our technology infrastructure this summer thanks to funding provided through the CARES Act Emergency Assistance for Non-Public Schools (EANS) funds.

Financial status

Financially, MLS is in as strong a position as it has been in over the last two decades. Fiscal responsibility coupled with forgiveness of the Paycheck Protection Program loan and higher than anticipated gifts to MLS have resulted in reserves of over \$1 million. We thank the Lord for these blessings! A reserve fund policy has been created to manage those blessings in a fiscally responsible way.

Faculty and staff changes

Faculty changes continue to happen on the MLS campus. Prof. Leonard Proeber retired from the public ministry at the end of the 2020–21 school year after 26 years of service on the MLS campus. Prof. Joshua Wendt has filled that vacancy. Prof. Marcus Bode retired at the end of the 2021–22 school year after serving faithfully for 36 years at MLS. Pastor Dan Westendorf has accepted the call to replace him in the foreign language department. Teacher Matthew Prost has accepted the call to serve as our academic dean and English professor following the yearlong vacancy in that position. We continue to seek the Lord's man to fill the yearlong vacancy in the vice-president's position.

At the start of the 2022 calendar year we welcomed a new business manager, Mr. Bret Witkowski. Mr. Chuck Beach is retiring from our maintenance department at the end of the school year. He has been a constant presence on our campus for the past 42 years and will be missed. Mr. Clark Rux is also retiring from the MLS Dining Hall after 26 years of service. He has been a faithful blessing to our ministerial education system, having served at Northwestern College, Martin Luther Prep School, and Martin Luther College in addition to his many years at MLS. We wish them both well in their retirements.

Finally, we thank the Lord for the faithful service of governing board members Mr. Brent Diehm and Teacher Stephen Schultz, both of whom have served for six years.

A look ahead

With the increasing financial stability that MLS now recognizes, it is time to position the school for the next generation. A strategic planning committee is at work to strengthen the ministry of MLS. Goals and initiatives will be developed to react to current weaknesses and enhance services to our students and our synod.

The MLS mission advancement office has established a goal to have 20-plus endowed scholarships for MLS graduates who enroll at MLC by the end of the 2021–22 fiscal year. The goal of these scholarships is two-fold: 1) to continue to support MLS alumni while at MLC, reducing the concern over student debt that may be a stumbling block to their decision to enter the ministry; and 2) to make a commitment to incoming freshmen who are considering MLS that their alma mater will continue to support them even after they graduate. We feel confident that we will be able to reach that goal by the time of the district conventions.

As a preparatory high school for WELS, MLS continues to investigate opportunities to increase enrollments from all districts in WELS. Grants for students who come from other districts are available via nomination by a student's home pastor or teacher.

MLS is following legislation that seems to be gaining traction that would allow Michigan taxpayers to contribute portions of their state individual income tax or corporate tax to a scholarship-granting organization. Those dollars could then be directed to families for educational purposes, including tuition at private schools. This would be a significant blessing to many of our families who otherwise would not consider MLS as a financially viable option for their child's education. This could also be a significant shift for all of our Michigan schools that have not had the same advantage of school choice dollars that exist in other states.

MLS remains committed to never turning away a student who desires a ministerial preparatory education purely for financial reasons. That commitment can only be made because of the support that God's people across the country provide for our ministry. We thank you for that support and your prayers as we partner together to provide workers for the harvest fields of our King.

Please visit **mlsem.org** for more information about your WELS preparatory high school in Saginaw, Mich.

Rev. Mark Luetzow, reporter

Rev. Gregory Gibbons, chairman

Rev. Adam Bode, vice chairman

Mr. Brent Diehm

Rev. Craig Engel

Mr. Mark Eubank

Teacher Joshua Glowicki

Rev. Andrew Schroeder

Teacher em. Stephen Schultz

Advisory:

Rev. Mark Luetzow, Michigan Lutheran Seminary president

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Rev. Snowden Sims, Michigan District president

Luther Preparatory School

Our calling

Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., has a single mission given to it by the synod when the prep department was first established on the Watertown campus in 1865: To encourage and prepare high school students for service in the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. That mission is central to everything we do—in the classroom, in co-curricular activities, in our worship services, and in the personal guidance given to every student.

LPS is owned and operated by WELS. The synod has given LPS the privilege and responsibility to carry out this important work. The LPS Governing Board, faculty, and staff are grateful to our church body, which supports the work of LPS with its prayers, gifts, and gospel-laced encouraging words.

Our gracious God though his life-giving Word continues to bless Luther Prep in fulfilling its purpose. Year after year after year 45 percent, 55 percent, 65 percent . . . and a couple of times 70 percent of Prep's graduates enroll at Martin Luther College to continue their preparations to become pastors, teachers, or staff ministers.

That LPS fulfills its purpose is seen by the fact that since its beginning as a stand-alone prep school in 1995, 57 percent of all Luther Prep graduates have enrolled at Martin Luther College (MLC). Three years ago LPS witnessed a historical high when 70 percent of our graduates continued at MLC, with 40 young men entering the pastor track that year. Historically LPS graduates have comprised 37 percent of traditional Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) graduates. Twenty eight percent (200) of the students enrolled at MLC this past year were Luther Prep graduates. God graciously blesses the work done at LPS, which in turn benefits our synod and our calling in Christ's Church.

Luther Prep depends on three sources of funding to carry out its calling: 1) synod support; 2) payments for tuition and room and board; and 3) special gifts from congregations, groups, and individuals. We are grateful for the gospel's work of prompting such generosity and thankful hearts in God's people.

Our current situation

Enrollment

Enrollment has remained fairly stable over the past ten years. LPS opened school year 2021–22 with an enrollment of 425. Our students come from 26 states, 5 foreign countries, 178 congregations, and all 12 WELS districts. More than two-thirds of our students come from lay families. Ninety percent of LPS students reside in the dormitories. Thirteen percent are minorities.

Recruitment to LPS, with an eye on future full-time gospel ministry, remains a top priority. We always invite and welcome all WELS upper grade students to visit our campus, "shadow" a Prep student, and spend a night in one of the dormitories to get a feel for Prep life. We host annual recruitment events such as WELS area and national co-ed basketball tournaments, Phoenix for a Day, the fall play, children's theater, and the musical, as well as numerous summer athletic camps. Each year these events bring 4,500 WELS grade school students from across the country to our campus.

Because so many of God's people throughout WELS support Luther Prep's financial aid, we want all parents to know that Prep will do whatever it can to keep financial concerns from becoming a major obstacle in enrolling their children.

Preparing for the mission

The Word is central in all we do. Chapel services—the heartbeat of Prep's daily living—are held twice daily. All classes are taught from a scriptural perspective, and students are encouraged in their personal devotional lives. The Holy Spirit works through the means of grace to encourage and prepare our young people for lives of gospel ministry and service.

The LPS curriculum is designed to prepare students to meet or exceed the requirements of MLC. LPS recognizes the need and desire for future musicians in our Lutheran congregations and classrooms. More than 95 percent of our students take piano lessons. The LPS organ program produces the most organ students for MLC. All students

participate in chorus their first year, with more than 90 percent continuing thereafter. Well over one hundred students are involved in the concert band, jazz band, brass choir, and string and guitar ensembles. Our select Prep Singers group sings at worship services in area congregations throughout the year and tours outside of Wisconsin every year during our spring break. All students take at least one year of Latin and three consecutive years of a foreign language in order to thoroughly prepare them for future language studies, especially those in the biblical languages.

Because our purpose is to prepare future pastors and teachers, LPS offers age-appropriate ministry experiences to its students. All of our seniors take part in our Taste of Ministry program, in which prospective pastor students spend two days with an area WELS pastor, and our prospective teacher students spend two days in a classroom with an area elementary school teacher. Project Timothy is a program designed to provide mission, ministry, and cross-cultural experiences to LPS students. Sixty-five students will assist with outreach and education programs of mission congregations in Florida, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, Alaska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Germany, St. Lucia, and the Czech Republic. Also, senior boys are given the opportunity to prepare and speak an evening devotion to the student body. It is a common practice for their classmates to speak words of encouragement to these young men after the devotion is given.

Each year the entire junior class visits Martin Luther College. By the time our students graduate, each one will have met at least four times with an MLC recruiter. An array of missionaries, professors, teachers, pastors, and MLC and WLS students present topical ministry workshops at our annual Ministry Day. The entire student body takes part in Ministry Day. Sophomores also take an annual trip to the seminary, and seniors in the LPS pastor track visit the seminary each fall for worship, class visitation, and a tour.

Every LPS student is equipped with a Chromebook for use in class and in the dormitory using the wireless secure student network. This has allowed LPS faculty to have additional options for presentation of information in classes along with access to current information in the classroom. Our students learn to use these tools, which they in turn will utilize in their future classrooms and congregations.

The State of Wisconsin offers three Parental Choice programs for Wisconsin residents: Milwaukee, Racine, and Wisconsin Parental Choice programs. In these programs, parents who fall under a designated family-size based income threshold receive a voucher from the State of Wisconsin that pays the tuition costs of education for their children at participating private and religious schools.

The governing board approved Prep's entry into these programs in 2017. Each year the governing board reviews these programs to ensure that they are consistent with the mission of LPS. Approximately 150 students participate in these Parental Choice programs. These programs have proven to be financially beneficial to our parents who are offering their sons and daughters for ministry. They have also afforded LPS the opportunity to award additional financial aid to many other families who are not able to participate in the programs.

After 45 years of service in ministry, Prof. Steve Ehlke retired in 2022. After 43 year of service in ministry, Prof. Tom Lindloff retired in 2022. We thank God for their faithful labors in the Lord.

Capital projects/improvements

LPS strives to maintain and keep in good repair the synod's beautiful 40-acre campus and her buildings. A large project this summer and next will be the replacement of all the original windows in two of our 50-year-old dormitories.

A look ahead

Music is an integral component of our heritage, the Church, and Lutheran worship. The Lord has blessed LPS with an excellent music program and numerous musically gifted students, all preparing for service in the Church. The LPS music auditorium, built during the President William Howard Taft administration, is 109 years old. The Luther Prep Governing Board has addressed the construction of a new music center. When a new music center is built, the present auditorium would be repurposed to its original use and serve as a secondary gymnasium to accommodate our freshmen teams, wrestling team, dance team, and plethora of intramural teams, as well as functioning in other capacities. Tredo Group from Milwaukee, Wis., has provided a conceptual design for a new music center, giving an estimated cost, size, and location. Following the direction of WELS Synodical Council, Luther Prep is now engaged in a financial feasibility study.

LPS welcomes all WELS/ELS students to apply for enrollment with a recommendation from their pastor and, if applicable, teacher. We know that very few eighth grade students have a definite plan for their lives after college. They will be encouraged and prepared for full-time ministry in their years at Prep. Should they choose a different direction

after graduating, we know that they will be firmly grounded in faith and will serve the Lord Jesus and his Church in some other vocation.

Prep is grateful for all of its students. We never want finances to hinder parents in enrolling their children at Luther Prep. While all parents make some sacrifices, it is always our intent to offer ample financial aid. If after the aid is awarded and it remains insufficient, LPS administration welcomes conversations with parents to bridge the gap.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Luke 10:2). The saints have been praying that prayer for the past two millennia. With the large number of vacancies in WELS pastoral and teaching ministries, and with our desire to establish even more home and world missions, the Lord's invitation to prayer becomes even more compelling. We pray fervently that the Lord will move the hearts of parents to offer their sons and daughters for gospel ministry, and that young people will consider the high calling of gospel ministry.

Much more information can be found at **lps.wels.net** or by calling LPS at 920-261-4352.

Rev. Matthew Crass, reporter

Rev. Timothy Spaude, chairman

Rev. Kevin Westra, vice chairman

Teacher Adam Glodowski, secretary

Mr. Stephen Balza

Teacher Seth Fitzsimmons

Mr. Jack May

Rev. Thomas Moldenhauer

Rev. Daniel Schmidt

Advisory:

Rev. Matthew Crass, Luther Preparatory School president

Rev. Michael Jensen, Western Wisconsin District president

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Subsidiaries and Benefit Plans

A number of subsidiary groups and one affiliate serve the synod. These entities do not receive support from the synod's operating budget. Each is governed by a board that is accountable to the synod via the Synodical Council.

WELS Historical Institute

Our calling

The WELS Historical Institute has the privilege and opportunity to serve the synod in preserving, researching, and communicating the history of Christ's love to and through our church body. The institute has the following purposes:

1. To promote interest in the history of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Lutheranism in general.
2. To assist WELS' archivist in the collection and preservation of articles and artifacts of historical value.
3. To stimulate historical research and to publish its results in journals, newsletters, and other such publications.
4. To maintain Salem Landmark Church and the WELS Museum.

Through the work of Mrs. Susan Willems, the WELS archivist (see report on p. 35); through the publication of historical research in the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*; through presentations about events, people, and developments in WELS history; and through ongoing preservation and maintenance work on the WELS Museum at Salem Landmark Church, the institute endeavors to carry out these purposes.

The institute is thankful for the opportunities to serve WELS through researching and promoting the study of our synod's history. History, in general, is vitally important. After all, our salvation is founded on real historical events. The continuing study of church history is the study of God's work in the world, through his church and through the proclamation of his Word by his church, to gather his believers into his church. As we study WELS history, we grow in our gratitude for God's work through and for our beloved synod.

The study of history is also critical for self-identity. It helps us understand who we are and why. Through the study of our synod's history, we can understand how we have come to be who we are today and why we can be thankful that we are WELS—and not something else. We are Lutherans who stand on the inspired and inerrant Word of God alone, which centers in the work of Christ who alone is our Savior, and which proclaims the gospel about Jesus in Word and sacraments for the building up and edification of his church.

The study of history also contributes to our understanding of the present. It gives us perspective. We can be thankful for the blessings of the past, but we can also be thankful for the crosses that we and our forefathers have borne in the past. It helps us bear our crosses in the present because we learn that we are not the first people to ever endure the challenges of life right now.

Our current situation

The WELS Historical Institute is typically focused on observing important anniversaries of WELS congregations, missions, events, and other moments from our past. However, 2021 brought an anniversary celebration of our own, the 40th anniversary of the founding of the institute. A celebration was held on Sept. 25, 2021, at Salem Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, the birthplace of the Wisconsin Synod. The day began with a devotion led by WELS President Mark Schroeder. A panel discussion was then held with three former presidents of the institute: Prof. Roland Cap Ehlke, Prof. Mark Braun, and Prof. Joel Pless. Prof. John Brenner provided an overview of the *WELS Historical Institute Journal* over the years. Braun provided a presentation on the history of the founding of the institute. Tours of the

WELS Museum and West Granville Cemetery were provided, and the day ended with a hymn-sing led by Mr. Carl Nolte. More than 100 people attended or have viewed the events online. Recordings of the presentations can be viewed on Salem's website, saalemwels.net/sermons. Braun wrote "History of the WELS Historical Institute," which was published in the fall 2021 edition of the journal.

The institute is thankful for the faithful service of outgoing chairman, Prof. Joel Pless, who served on the board for 17 years and as chairman for 4 years. We thank God for the gifts he has given to Pless, which he has used in service to the institute and the research and promotion of WELS history. Pless will continue to organize bus tours and assist with giving tours at Salem Landmark Church. The new chairman is Prof. Joel Otto, a professor of church history at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

The institute is also thankful for the over 35 years of service by Ms. Charlotte Sampe as the designer and curator at the WELS Museum. She spent countless hours organizing donations and setting up various displays. That work is now being carried out by a team of volunteers headed by Mrs. Amanda Raabe.

In addition to the presentations given at the anniversary celebration, Pastor Seth Krueger of Mount Olive, Overland Park, Kan., presented at the institute's annual meeting in October 2021. He presented on Christian responses to the influenza epidemic of 1918 and how those responses could be influential as Christians have responded to the current pandemic. Given via Zoom, the presentation was based on the research he did for his senior thesis at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Work has been continuing on Salem Landmark Church. Needed waterproofing in the basement was completed during the last year. Volunteers have been cleaning up some of the classrooms in the basement with the hope of refurbishing them as meeting and storage spaces. Stenciling and painting have continued in the sanctuary with the goal of restoring the sanctuary to its approximate condition in the 1880s. The 40th anniversary project is the purchase and installment of a new HVAC system to replace the failing boiler system and provide air conditioning. Thanks to a grant from the synod and \$6,000 raised from institute members, this project, God willing, will be completed during the summer months. This new system will provide climate control for storing museum artifacts and allow for a more comfortable environment for worship and historical presentations.

A look ahead

The WELS Historical Institute is planning to pursue several avenues to increase membership in the institute and interest in WELS history. Personal recruitment, social media, a website devoted to WELS history, and possible synodwide communications promoting the work of the institute and encouragement to consider joining are all on the agenda. Anyone interested in joining the WELS Historical Institute can do so at gf.wels.net/wels-historical-institute. Members receive a subscription to the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, newsletters promoting presentations and other information about the institute's work, and discounts on bus tours.

Several presentations are being planned for the upcoming year. A tour of the West Granville Cemetery, located across the street from Salem Lutheran Church on the northwest side of Milwaukee, is being planned for June 18, 2022. This has become an annual event. The highlight of the planned presentations is the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Synodical Conference on July 10, 1872. Pastor Peter Prange will be giving a presentation on this significant event in American Lutheranism. Mr. Carl Nolte will be giving a presentation on "Great hymns of faith included in the new hymnal" sometime in the fall. A bus tour of church historical sites in Jefferson County, Wis., is being planned for Friday, Aug. 5, 2022. The annual meeting in October will feature the first in a series of presentations on the history of the WELS ministerial education schools. Pastor Paul Prange will speak on the early history of Michigan Lutheran Seminary. Future presentations in upcoming years will explore the history of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Northwestern College, and other past and present ministerial education schools. More information will be posted at wels.net/about-wels/history/wels-history.

Besides the HVAC project, the institute will continue its work of refurbishing the Salem Landmark Church as time and funds allow. Work on the steeple, windows, and flooring is on the agenda for the next couple of years. Work continues on the 19th-century pump organ.

The 175th anniversary of the founding of the Wisconsin Synod will occur in 2025. The WELS Historical Institute looks forward to the opportunity the anniversary will afford to encourage the study, research, and telling of the history of the gospel's advance in congregations, institutions, and the synod. That history continues as we carry out our various callings in response to Christ's love for us.

Prof. Joel Otto, reporter

Prof. Joel Otto, chairman
Mr. Daniel Nommensen, vice chairman
Rev. William Schaefer, secretary
Mr. Ryan Haines, treasurer
Rev. Justin Dauck
Rev. David Dolan
Mr. Steve Miller
Mr. Carl Nolte
Rev. Peter Prange
Ms. Mary Rindfleisch
Rev. Benjamin Schaefer
Rev. Paul Schleis
Rev. Robert Weiss

Advisory:

Prof. em. John Brenner, editor, *WELS Historical Institute Journal*
Mrs. Amanda Raabe, curator
Mrs. Susan Willems, WELS archivist

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.

Our calling

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc. (CEF), is a self-supporting, not-for-profit, wholly-owned subsidiary corporation of WELS. Its primary purpose is to provide loans and grants for mission congregation projects under the direction of WELS Board for Home Missions and loans to mission-minded self-supporting congregations so that they can acquire parsonages, land, and facilities as tools for gospel outreach.

Our current situation

Funding to carry out our calling comes primarily from three sources: member investments, operating revenue, and gifts and bequests. Individual members, congregations, and affiliates of WELS may invest in CEF certificates and savings accounts and as of March 2022, 2,973 investors have entrusted CEF with more than \$105 million. While our investor count reduced 3.8 percent over the prior 12 months, CEF's total investment dollars only declined by 1.5 percent this past year. CEF investments fund the loan program while net revenues from operations, investments, and gifts and bequests made to CEF provide funding for the congregational grant program and special grants to Home Missions. Although the loss of investment dollars year over year is a concern, the opportunity to use investment dollars in the loan program has been limited due to increased real estate and construction prices and the lack of loan demand.

Loan program

The CEF loan portfolio now stands at approximately 200 loans with dollars outstanding of \$179.5 million, which is a 4.8 percent decrease in our loan portfolio dollars outstanding from 12 months ago. Currently we have 16 congregations in the construction process with just less than \$18 million yet to disburse in loans and grants to complete those projects. New loan applications continue to be slow as compared to prior years. The CEF Board lifted all aspects of the April 2020 pandemic-related moratorium on lending in March 2021. Over the past 30 months, the board has decreased CEF's lending interest rate from 5.1 percent to 4.31 percent (effective 3/21/2021) as our investment portfolio continues to decrease in cost. "Mission" status congregations receive a 0.25 percent reduction off the lending rate for their initial 5-year note.

Grant program

CEF provides matching grants to eligible mission congregations after they have provided a minimum 10 percent down payment for their initial land purchases, existing facility purchase, or new facility construction projects. A

congregation's down payment combined with a CEF matching grant allows the mission congregation to move forward with a more manageable loan payment. Matching grants totaling nearly \$1.8 million for seven congregations have been approved through February of FY2021-22.

Special grants to Home Missions

WELS CEF has distributed more than \$10.5 million to the Board for Home Missions in the past 12 fiscal years through unrestricted net asset special grants (\$3.9 million) and through the endowment grant program (\$6.6 million).

A look ahead

We pray by God's grace that WELS CEF will continue to benefit from positive operational results ensuring the safety and soundness required of financial institutions and will be able to continue to provide loans and grants over and above our present lending operations and matching, endowment, and unrestricted net asset grant programs to assist more congregations and Home Missions.

We anticipate that the loan portfolio will be reduced through the end of FY22 to approximately \$175 million, and we are hopeful that Home Missions' 100 missions in 10 years church planting efforts will help to build the loan portfolio and provide CEF with lending opportunities into the new fiscal year and beyond. Maintaining a healthy and disciplined approach regarding operations and a fair and competitive interest rate environment for investors and borrowers is critical for CEF's financial health.

We continue to encourage individual WELS members, congregations, and affiliated organizations to consider investing in CEF loan, savings, and retirement/IRA certificates and to consider gifts and bequests to CEF to help support our calling and partnership with Home Missions.

Contact WELS CEF at 1-866-511-7793 or cef@wels.net. Visit our website at wels.net/cef.

Mr. Scott Page, reporter

Mr. Seth Hansen, chairman

Mr. Timothy Boerneke, vice chairman

Mr. Ron Kerr, secretary

Mr. James Bodendorfer

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Rev. Timothy Gauger

Mr. Timothy Gensmer

Mr. Mark Hartman

Mr. David Hirons

Mr. Joel Kock

Advisory:

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions

Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations

WELS Foundation, Inc.

Our calling

Established in 1965, WELS Foundation, Inc., serves the Synodical Council by organizing exclusively to provide, direct, channel, and manage funds for religious, charitable, and educational purposes consistent with the principles of the synod.

Our current situation

WELS Foundation exists to help God's people support gospel ministry through WELS. It provides planned giving

services and administrative support for gifts benefiting WELS congregations and ministries. WELS Foundation strives to be the foundation of choice for members, entities, and affiliates of WELS. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, WELS Foundation had the privilege to administer and distribute \$13.7 million in donor-directed planned gifts to various ministries throughout the synod. During the six-month period ending Dec. 31, 2021, an additional \$9.7 million was distributed.

WELS Foundation provides various planned giving opportunities, including charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, donor advised funds, and endowment funds. It currently administers nearly 1,245 charitable gifts on behalf of WELS members for the benefit of WELS ministries.

As of Dec. 31, 2021, the total assets were \$210.7 million with net assets of \$79.9 million. The net assets held by WELS Foundation are managed for the benefit of WELS ministries as designated by the donor. These ministries include WELS Missions and Ministerial Education schools (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary), congregations, and numerous affiliated ministries such as area Lutheran high schools. Assets held with a long-term time horizon are invested through WELS Investment Funds.

Endowment funds

Endowment funds are permanently restricted funds established to receive and administer all gifts that are designated by the donor(s) for an endowment from sources such as cash, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, bequests, life insurance, charitable gift annuities, insurance policies, trusts, real estate, personal property, or any other gift, whether current or deferred.

Lord willing, expenditures from endowments further the work of the church by providing ongoing financial support for ministry until the Lord returns.

Donor designated endowments can be established through WELS Foundation for the benefit of WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, or other WELS-affiliated ministries. WELS Foundation also administers synodical endowment funds for WELS, WELS Home and World Missions, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary.

As of Dec. 31, 2021, WELS Foundation administered 376 endowment funds with a total market value of \$134.3 million.

Charitable gift annuities

A charitable gift annuity is a contract between a WELS member and WELS Foundation, by which the member makes a gift of cash or securities in exchange for fixed quarterly annuity payments for life. After the Lord calls the member home, the remainder of the gift annuity will be distributed to the congregation or ministry as designated. Income payments from a charitable gift annuity may begin immediately, may be deferred until a specific date in the future, or may be deferred until an unspecified date in the future.

As of Dec. 31, 2021, WELS Foundation administered 651 charitable gift annuities with a total market value of \$14.4 million.

Charitable remainder trusts

A charitable remainder trust is created when a donor transfers cash, securities, or real estate into a charitable trust but keeps a specified income interest—usually for life. When the trust ends per the donor's designation, the assets in the trust pass to the designated beneficiaries such as the church and/or synod.

As of Dec. 31, 2021, WELS Foundation served as trustee for 130 charitable remainder trusts with a combined market value of \$32.6 million.

Donor advised funds

A donor advised fund is a charitable giving vehicle wherein an individual, family, or corporation makes an irrevocable, tax-deductible contribution of cash, securities, or other property to WELS Foundation and at any time thereafter can recommend grant distributions to qualified WELS ministries. The fund can be established with current gifts, deferred gifts (i.e., charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts), and testamentary gifts (i.e., wills, living trusts, beneficiary designations of life insurance policies, or retirement accounts).

The WELS Foundation donor advised fund program provides an alternative to a private family foundation. WELS members can accomplish many of the same goals but with far less administrative work and expense.

As of Dec. 31, 2021, WELS Foundation administered 82 donor advised funds with a total market value of \$9.6 million.

Pass-through gifts processed

Not all WELS ministries have the capacity to process complex gifts. At the request of donors, during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, WELS Foundation distributed \$3.3 million to WELS ministries from nearly 600 pass-through gifts. These gifts included assets such as appreciated securities, qualified charitable distributions from IRAs, real estate, life insurance contracts, and agricultural crops. Proceeds from these gifts are distributed to the WELS ministries designated by the donor.

Other gift administration services

WELS Foundation also provides gift administration for letters of instruction, gifts of securities, qualified charitable distributions from IRAs, real estate gifts, life insurance contracts, agricultural crops, and other donor-designated gifts.

Educational webinars

In 2021, WELS Foundation hosted a series of 12 educational webinars. The monthly webinars were timely presentations on various planned giving topics and made available by WELS Foundation at no cost to WELS Christian giving counselors, mission advancement representatives, and congregational planned giving committee leaders.

Videos

Four WELS Foundation videos have been produced that focus on the blessings and benefits of charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, donor advised funds, and endowment funds. View the WELS Foundation videos at vimeo.com/showcase/9415316.

A look ahead

The addition of an in-house WELS videographer will result in regular video content to support and benefit our WELS Foundation partners. Other marketing efforts include quarterly reports to WELS conferences and conventions and a quarterly newsletter for our Foundation partners with content to help them serve their donors. Website efforts include the addition of content to the WELS Foundation resource center (foundation.welsrc.net) and an upgrade of the WELS Foundation webpages (wels.net/foundation). WELS Foundation also coordinated the Mission Advancement sectionals at the WELS Association of Lutheran High Schools conference in March 2022 and will continue to have an in-person display presence at nationwide WELS events.

To carry out its mission, WELS Foundation will continue to identify the most cost-effective means to:

- Provide knowledgeable planned giving support to members through WELS Christian giving counselors and other WELS mission advancement representatives.
- Provide various planned giving opportunities, including charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, donor advised funds, and endowment administration.
- Provide printed and online educational material regarding planned giving opportunities benefiting WELS ministries.

Mr. James Holm, reporter

Mr. Mark Maurice, chairman

Mr. Timothy Boerneke, vice chairman

Mr. Michael Krueger, secretary

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Rev. Jonathan Kolander

Mr. Scott Neitzel

Mr. Mark Schulz

Mr. Ken Zehm

Advisory:

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

WELS Investment Funds, Inc.

Our calling

WELS Investment Funds, Inc., was established in 1997 to serve under the Synodical Council by providing investment portfolios for the benefit of WELS and its schools, congregations, and other affiliated organizations.

Our current situation

WELS Investment Funds provides cost-effective, professionally-managed investment portfolios. WELS Investment Funds currently manages approximately \$300 million for WELS ministries, including more than 245 congregations and WELS-affiliated ministries. WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, and other affiliated ministries are encouraged to utilize WELS Investment Funds for their long-term investment needs, such as endowment and scholarship funds. By pooling our God-given talents and resources with other congregations, we can take advantage of lower-cost, institutionally-priced investment opportunities that would not otherwise be available. As more congregations and organizations invest in WELS Investment Funds, the cost-reduction benefits also increase. It's another way we can help support each other.

The WELS Investment Funds Board of Directors is responsible for the overall operations of WELS Investment Funds. The directors are members of WELS congregations, nominated from throughout the synod, vetted by WELS Human Resources, and appointed by the Synodical Council. Currently there are eight qualified directors serving on the board. The day-to-day operations are carried out by WELS employees leased to WELS Investment Funds.

The board has retained Vanguard Institutional Advisory Services as the investment consultant for WELS Investment Funds. As a co-fiduciary, Vanguard Institutional Advisory Services is responsible for making investment recommendations to the board. Once the recommendation is approved by the board, the investment consultant has the discretion to implement and oversee the investment recommendations.

WELS Investment Funds offers four investment portfolios, collectively known as the WELS Funds.

The WELS Balanced Fund seeks long-term capital growth and a low to moderate level of current income. It has a target asset allocation comprised of 60 percent equity and 40 percent fixed income and has a mid- to long-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Endowment Fund seeks long-term capital growth with some current income and is designed primarily for endowment funds. It has a target asset allocation comprised of 75 percent equity and 25 percent fixed income and has a long-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Equity Fund seeks long-term capital growth by investing in a portfolio of equity securities that is diversified by industry and company size. It is composed of 100 percent equities and has a long-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Income Fund seeks to provide income by investing primarily in investment-quality debt securities. It is composed of 100 percent fixed income securities and has a short- to mid-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Balanced Fund and WELS Endowment Fund invest in differing ratios of the same underlying mutual funds as the WELS Equity and WELS Income Funds. The WELS Equity Fund and WELS Income Fund are for ministries that desire an asset allocation other than the WELS Balanced Fund and WELS Endowment Fund.

Investment performance continued to be strong through FY21. For the second year in a row, the WELS Endowment Fund's net investment return placed in the 90th percentile of the foundations that participated in the 2020 *Council on Foundations—Commonfund Study of Investment of Endowments for Private and Community Foundations®*. The investment returns for the WELS Endowment Fund were 22.39 percent and 21.22 percent in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

Calendar year 2022 has started off with significant volatility as a result of historically elevated levels of inflation, continued supply chain pressures, continued labor shortages, wage pressures, and increased levels of geopolitical

risks due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Vanguard continues to monitor WELS Funds holdings on a regular basis. In March, Vanguard suspended purchases of Russian securities across its actively managed funds and is working to further reduce its exposure to Russia across their index funds. Overall, the exposure of Vanguard funds to Russian assets is extremely limited, with Russian securities accounting for less than 0.01 percent of client assets.

Additional information, including director biographical information, the investment policy statement, audited financial statements, and the 2021 annual report to WELS ministries, is available at **wels.net/welsfunds**.

A look ahead

Marketing and communication efforts include the dissemination of the quarterly WELS Fund Fact sheets and live quarterly update webinars for investors that include a quarterly market recap, an investment performance review for the WELS Funds, and Vanguard's market and economic outlook. Each quarter, more and more WELS members are tuning in to these updates to learn how their congregation or organization's investments are making an impact on ministry. Future marketing efforts also include the production of additional WELS Investment Funds videos, brief Q&A videos regarding topics impacting our investors, quarterly reports to WELS conferences and conventions, and a continued in-person display presence at nationwide WELS events.

WELS Investment Funds is committed to continuing to serve WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, and other affiliated ministries. Those responsible for overseeing the long-term investments for their organization are encouraged to review their investment objectives, asset allocation, investment costs, and time horizons.

WELS Investment Funds is hoping to continue to grow the investment portfolios and is willing to work with ministries to review their investment needs. To schedule a free review, either in person or via conference call or video call, contact us at 414-256-3206 or jim.holm@wels.net.

Mr. James Holm, reporter

Mr. Dennis Walters, chairman

Mr. Joel Luehmann, vice chairman

Mr. John Wenker, secretary

Rev. em. Charles Degner

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Mr. Seth Hansen

Mr. Ronald Schmitz

Mr. Max Wenck

Advisory:

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving

WELS Benefit Plans

Our calling

The WELS Benefit Plans Office (the "Benefit Plans") serves synodical workers and organizations through the administration of the WELS Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association (VEBA), Pension, and Shepherd Plans. Oversight of the VEBA Plan is the responsibility of the WELS VEBA Commission, and oversight of the Pension and Shepherd Plans is the responsibility of the WELS Retirement Program Commission. The commission members are appointed by the WELS Synodical Council. Each commission is composed of a pastor and a male teacher from the called worker roster and four laymen. Contributions toward the cost of plan benefits and operations are held in separate trusts, each invested in diversified accounts with outside money managers overseen by an independent investment advisory firm. The plans employ outside professionals that provide benefit design, actuarial, consulting, banking, legal, and auditing services.

Our current situation

The 2021 synod convention passed resolutions that endorsed the transition to provide future retirement benefits to called workers through defined contributions rather than through the Pension Plan. The Synodical Council subsequently approved the Pension Plan freeze as of Dec. 31, 2021, and the creation of defined contributions through the Shepherd Plan as of Jan. 1, 2022. Much of the efforts of the Retirement Program Commission and Benefit Plans since the 2021 convention has been dedicated to implementing these decisions and ensuring a smooth transition.

An important initiative during the transition has been to communicate with workers and organizations. To that end, from fall 2021 through spring 2022 WELS produced a total of five videos that summarized the new defined contribution program and highlighted important actions for workers and organizations to take during the transition. In addition, in March 2022 WELS published a new website that allows Pension Plan participants to view estimates of their future Pension Plan benefits to assist with their financial planning and to verify their WELS service records to ensure accurate benefit calculations. Furthermore, Benefit Plans and the Shepherd Plan advisors at the Hahn Financial Group coordinated the Shepherd Plan enrollments of approximately 400 organizations, and assisted organizations to create Shepherd Plan participant accounts for their workers to ensure that all eligible workers timely received the first defined contributions.

In addition to these public efforts, much work has been done internally to prepare for the transition. Benefit Plans has worked with service providers in the areas of legal, actuarial, investments, banking, and software development to ensure the successful Pension Plan freeze and defined contribution program creation. Many thanks are due to our brothers and sisters in WELS Communication Services, WELS Technology, WELS Financial Services, and the Hahn Financial Group for their assistance in these efforts.

Beyond the retirement program transition, the Commissions and Benefit Plans have continued to support workers and organizations during the COVID-19 national public health emergency by maintaining rate stability within the plans, which is vitally important for the workers and calling bodies that we serve. Growing participation levels, better-than-expected investment returns, and enhanced cost control opportunities have supported the efforts to provide rate stability.

- VEBA Plan rates have remained unchanged for the three plan years from 2020–22, which is significantly below the national average rate change for employer group health plans in those years. More than 80 percent of all WELS calling bodies continue to participate in the VEBA Plan, and VEBA Plan membership increased by 4 percent as of Jan. 1, 2022.
- Pension Plan rates have remained unchanged for the three consecutive plan years from 2020–22.
- The ongoing administration fee paid by Shepherd Plan participants was reduced by 12 percent effective July 1, 2021, preserving assets in participants' accounts for their future needs.

In addition, the VEBA Commission amended the VEBA Plan to provide enhanced benefits, greater access to health care, and increased flexibility for participants while remaining compliant with applicable law. The VEBA Plan was amended to cover eligible costs at 100 percent to diagnose COVID-19 (including at-home diagnostic COVID-19 tests), to cover eligible costs for telehealth consultations with health care providers, to protect members from "surprise" balance billing for care obtained at certain out-of-network providers, and to extend certain timeframes for requesting special enrollment and filing claims. The Commissions are grateful that the Lord has blessed the plans with the financial flexibility to provide these relief measures to calling bodies and these benefit enhancements to participants during this unprecedented time.

The Pension Plan has achieved a funded status (which compares the Plan's assets with the benefits earned by participants) of 112 percent as of Jan. 1, 2022, based on the Retirement Program Commission's actuarial assumptions. This marks a 40 percent improvement in only three years, as the Plan's funded status was 72 percent as of Jan. 1, 2019. The substantial improvement is primarily due to strong investment returns during this period, in addition to the gradual realization of the intended effects of the Retirement Program Commission's recovery plan since 2012. The Commission's recovery plan has included the following actions:

- The contribution rate charged to calling bodies has more than doubled since 2012 (+121 percent), although rates have remained flat over the past three years.
- Contributions paid after the due date are subject to a late payment penalty that recoups lost investment earnings to the Pension Plan trust.
- To slow the long-term growth rate of benefit liabilities, the benefit basis for new retirees has not increased since 2012, and the Plan was frozen as of Dec. 31, 2021.

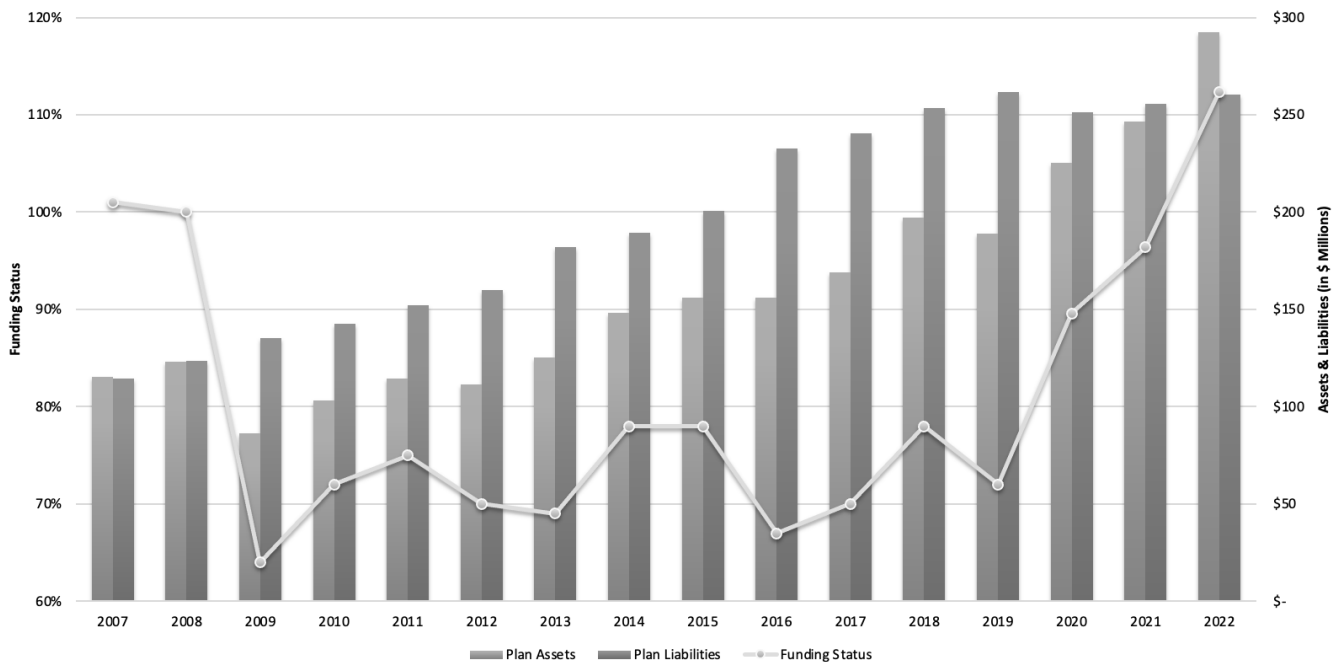
- The overall volatility of investments in the Pension Plan trust portfolio has been reduced, and the trust's target annual investment return (net of fees) was reduced to 7.0 percent in 2022, to protect against future market downturns.

These changes have been made to preserve the security of benefits for current and future retirees while minimizing the financial impact on workers and calling bodies. The Retirement Program Commission closely monitors the Plan's contribution level and its impact on the Plan's funded status, and the recent improvement to the Plan's funded status may provide the Commission with an opportunity to either increase defined contributions provided to workers, decrease the contribution rate, or both, in the future.

The Pension and VEBA trusts achieved investment gains of 16.1 percent and 10.1 percent, respectively, in 2021, while the trusts achieved investment gains of 11.6 percent and 9.6 percent, respectively, in 2020. Unaudited results from the 2021 plan year show net assets available for benefits in the Pension and VEBA trusts as \$292.5 million and \$40.0 million, respectively. In comparison, final audited results from the 2020 plan year shows net assets available for benefits in the Pension and VEBA trusts as \$248.8 million and \$40.7 million, respectively. Both Commissions continue to evaluate investment allocation and diversification strategies that are expected to achieve target returns with reduced risk.

Shepherd Plan participation continued to grow during 2021, as the Plan gained 48 new calling bodies and 451 new workers. The total market value of Shepherd Plan assets was \$225.7 million as of Dec. 31, 2021, compared to \$185.1 million as of Dec. 31, 2020 (+21.9 percent). With the new defined contribution program effective Jan. 1, 2022, all calling bodies have joined the Plan, and all called workers serving at least half-time will have Plan accounts.

Comparison of Pension Plan Assets, Liabilities, and Funding Status



A look ahead

Benefit Plans will continue its emphasis on maintaining long-term stability for the VEBA, Pension, and Shepherd Plans, while considering new ways to engage participants and calling bodies through improved communications.

Benefit Plans will focus more efforts on communications to workers and organizations regarding the new defined contribution program. The Shepherd Plan provides a diversified set of investment options and helpful financial planning resources for workers to manage the new contributions that will be made to their accounts. Increasing awareness of these opportunities will help workers to meet their financial goals for retirement. In addition, because retirement benefit contributions will be made to workers' accounts each quarter, it is more important than ever for organizations to timely report call status changes to WELS so that workers receive the correct contributions.

Given the uncertainties with the future of the Affordable Care Act, the U.S. health insurance market, and the long-term impacts of the pandemic, the VEBA Commission and its advisors will carefully monitor developments in these

areas and their impacts on the VEBA Plan. In addition, the VEBA Commission and Benefit Plans will be more closely observing worker participation in the VEBA Plan and health care arrangements at participating calling bodies to protect the Plan's long-term sustainability in the rapidly changing health care environment. Providing an affordable health plan with consistent nationwide benefits is essential to supporting synodwide mission and ministry activities.

Benefit Plans, as well as the VEBA and Retirement Program Commissions, are acutely aware of the need to keep benefit plan costs as low as possible to allow calling bodies to preserve valuable assets to fund ministry efforts. The primary goal for the benefit plans going forward is to strike the best balance between acceptable costs to calling bodies and meaningful benefits to participants.

Mr. Joshua Peterman, reporter

WELS VEBA Commission:

Mr. Kyle Koltz, chairman

Mr. Todd Poppe, vice chairman

Mr. Robert Bullens, secretary

Teacher Douglas Dast

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Mr. James Gabriel

Rev. Joel Sauer

Advisory:

Ms. Christine Hitter, membership manager

Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of WELS Benefit Plans

Ms. Lori Schrank, claims manager

WELS Retirement Program Commission:

Mr. Thomas Medema, chairman

Mr. Lee Miller, vice chairman

Mr. James Brenn, secretary

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Teacher James Hahm

Mr. Samuel Kruschel

Rev. James Turriff

Advisory:

Ms. Christine Hitter, membership manager

Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of WELS Benefit Plans

Northwestern Publishing House

Our calling

The WELS constitution states, "The object and purpose of the synod shall be to extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church." As outlined in the constitution, Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) fulfills this object and purpose "by printing, publishing, purchasing, selling, and disseminating literature that maintains Lutheran doctrine and practice" and "by furnishing appropriate literature for parish schools, Sunday schools, missions, institutions, and churches." NPH is governed by a board of directors, responsible for fulfilling this purpose through establishing employee duties and adopting policies for the operation of NPH.

The mission of Northwestern Publishing House is to deliver biblically sound, Christ-centered resources within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and beyond. For 131 years, NPH has prepared materials that are consistent

with this mission and aligned with Lutheran doctrine and practice. The proceeds NPH receives from sales of materials to individuals, congregations, and schools are used to develop and publish new materials. Our calling, then, is to continue to proclaim God's love in Christ through the careful use of the resources God grants to us through purchases of the materials we make available.

Our current situation

We humbly thank God for all he has done to protect our workers and set before us many ministry opportunities over the past 12 months. While challenges to Christian publishing remain, NPH is positioned, God willing, to provide long-term sustainable service to the Church and fulfillment of the synod's objective of publishing literature that maintains our Lutheran doctrine and practice.

Print publishing program

NPH continues to publish new books, music, and other materials. NPH constantly seeks new ways to remain good financial stewards by achieving greater efficiencies and reducing printing expenses through pursuing multiple print bids, just-in-time printing of short print runs, print-on-demand, and digital distribution.

Pastors, teachers, and WELS members can find a continuously expanding selection of new materials along with previously published NPH books, Bible studies, curriculum, church supplies, and doctrinally reviewed books and materials from other publishers at NPH's website, **nph.net**, or by calling 800-662-6022.

Over the last year, in addition to the new *Christian Worship* suite of materials, NPH published *An EHV Study Bible*, the *WELS Yearbook*, two books for pastoral growth, seven books for layperson growth, three Bible studies, seven worship resources, two vacation Bible school courses, and six music titles. In addition, NPH continues to publish *Forward in Christ*, *Meditations*, and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* periodicals. Visit the NPH website regularly to discover resources that support your ministry and materials that will strengthen the faith of you and your fellow members.

Digital publishing program

NPH continues to expand content in ways that are relevant today with 227 books in e-book format, distribution of 149 titles through Logos, 631 downloadable products, 2 audio books, digital *Forward in Christ*, and the *Meditations Daily Devotional* app for both iOS and Android platforms. While digital publishing is an important strategy for NPH, distribution of digital products represents a relatively small portion of a publisher's sales, and therefore print versions remain critical to NPH's success as a ministry.

Bible studies

NPH publishes Bible studies on a variety of subjects, including books of the Bible; current religious, moral, and social topics; and studies of our Lutheran heritage. NPH Bible studies are offered in a variety of formats to meet the needs of churches today including traditional adult group studies and small group studies, both adaptable for online virtual learning. With the objective of serving our churches with timely and relevant Bible studies, NPH released *Here We Stand* (with video content) and *10 Lies About God*.

NPH, in collaboration with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and WELS Commission on Discipleship, produces the monthly *Teach the Word* e-newsletter that provides practical advice and information to help pastors better understand adult and child learning and strengthen their teaching skills. At present, more than 900 pastors and church leaders subscribe to *Teach the Word*. To subscribe, visit **nph.net/teach-the-word**.

Christian Worship hymnal suite

In the past year, the WELS Hymnal Project led by Pastor Michael Schultz has largely transitioned from the hymnal committees developing content to NPH producing the resources (copy editing, layout proofreading, and printing) and securing copyright permissions.

Introduced in fall 2021, the new *Christian Worship* hymnal suite includes an extensive line of resources. The following have been introduced to date:

- *Christian Worship: Hymnal* (pew and gift editions)
- *Christian Worship: Psalter*
- *Christian Worship: Agenda*
- *Christian Worship: Commentary on Propers, Year C*
- *Christian Worship: Accompaniment for Services*
- *Christian Worship: Accompaniment for Hymns* (three-volume set)

- *Christian Worship: Accompaniment for the Psalter* (two-volume set)
- *Christian Worship: Altar Book*
- *Christian Worship: Gospel Acclamations for Cantors, Choirs, and Instrumentalists*
- *Our Worth to Him: Devotions for Christian Worship*

Christian Worship: Service Builder

Christian Worship: Service Builder, introduced in late 2021, greatly assists pastors, musicians, and support staff in their worship planning and production of worship materials. The web-based app provides digital access to the vast content of *Christian Worship: Hymnal* and *Psalter* while dramatically reducing time committed to worship preparation. Through May, more than 450 WELS churches are anticipated to have begun using Service Builder to plan and facilitate worship.

Christian Worship: Musician's Resource

The new *Christian Worship: Musician's Resource* is a powerful web-based tool that allows musicians to access, purchase, and print scores for a wide variety of instruments for the rites, psalms, and hymns in the new hymnal and Psalter, enabling them to contribute their talent in worship.

Church supplies

An increasingly popular auto-ship service for communion cups and wafers is now available for all churches. The program provides churches with easy and automatic replenishment of communion supplies. A full range of church supplies are available online and for pickup at the NPH office.

Publication Coordinating Commission

The Publication Coordinating Commission (PCC) helps to subsidize publishing projects of NPH that are deemed valuable but due to limited market size would not recover the cost of production. The current balance available to the PCC is \$135,000. During the last year, \$7,500 was utilized to help fund the publication of *The Scroll of Isaiah* by Dr. Seth Erlandsson.

Collaborative projects

NPH continues to collaborate with WELS commissions, committees, and WELS-affiliated ministries. Most recent collaborative projects include the *Christian Worship* hymnal suite and the *Hymns for Life* curriculum with WELS Commission on Worship and the *Christian Service Members' Handbook* with the WELS Military Services Committee (part of WELS Special Ministries). Collaboration with WELS Christian Aid and Relief produced *An Ever-Present Help in Trouble* booklet for distribution to those facing natural disaster recovery and other challenges. Ongoing collaboration continues between NPH and Multi-Language Productions (MLP) with NPH providing content that is translated by MLP for use throughout the world and customer service, marketing, sales, and distribution services for MLP's materials and resources.

A look ahead

Christian Worship hymnal suite

Christian Worship resources planned for release in the next 12 months include:

- *Christian Worship: Pastor's Companion*
- *Christian Worship: Planning Guide*
- *Christian Worship: Musician's Manual*
- *Christian Worship: Commentary on Propers, Year A*
- *Christian Worship: Commentary on Propers, Year B*
- *Christian Worship: Easy Hymn Accompaniments*
- *Christian Worship: Accompaniment for Services—Service Builder Edition*
- *Christian Worship: Foundations*
- *Christian Worship: Guidebook*

Hymns for Life curriculum

Hymns for Life is a new three-year, multileveled hymnology curriculum for Lutheran elementary schools. Through the curriculum, students study 90 hymns while learning about each hymn's background and connection to their faith in Christ. This downloadable curriculum features an extensive teacher's guide, review materials for parents to use with their children at home, accompaniment and demo files, and more. *Hymns for Life* Year A is in use by schools now and Year B will be introduced for the 2022–23 school year. Additional information is available at nph.net/hymnsforlife.

Lutheran school and Sunday school curriculum

As previously reported, a large project that has been in evaluation and planning is a new religion curriculum for our churches and schools. The new curriculum will be developed in collaboration with a broad group of areas of ministry and will include input from educators. It will be forward-focused to address significant anticipated changes in classroom composition, teaching methodology, learning styles, and technology. To date, an extensive survey of 1,600 pastors, teachers, and parents and focus groups with 160 circuit pastors, teachers, and early childhood directors have been completed to identify specific curriculum needs. WELS Congregational Services will take the lead in developing the religion curriculum standards (objectives, outcomes, developmental focus on content, apologetics, character formation, sanctification). The Synodical Council is recommending that the Conference of Presidents call a religion curriculum developer who will lead a task force made up of in-field educators, ministerial education school personnel, Commission on Lutheran Schools representatives, and a liaison from NPH.

Prepared to Answer series

An area of increased focus within our synod is apologetics. To this end, NPH is beginning work on a new series based on the popular *Prepared to Answer* and *More Prepared to Answer* books. With the pressures and faith challenges that were at one time faced by Christian adults now impacting young children, teens, and college students, each book/e-book will be written in a way that is relevant and audience-specific. The series will include:

- *Prepared to Answer for Parents of Young Children*
- *Prepared to Answer for Middle Schoolers*
- *Prepared to Answer for Teens*
- *Prepared to Answer for College Students*

Future titles aimed at reaching additional audiences facing unique challenges to their faith include *Prepared to Answer for Singles*, *Prepared to Answer for Couples*, and *Prepared to Answer for Teachers*.

Peoples Bible Devotions

Currently under development is a new series of books/e-books related to the People's Bible commentaries. Devotions are being developed to address relevant issues facing WELS members today and encourage a deeper study of God's Word through the People's Bible commentaries. The 12 books in the series will be introduced over time and will roughly align with the order of the books of the Bible. The planned organization of the series is as follows:

- *From the Beginning—God's Salvation Plan* (the Pentateuch)
- *Being People of the Promise* (Joshua–2 Samuel)
- *Faithful God—Flawed Followers* (1 Kings–Esther)
- *Wisdom and Folly* (poetical books)
- *Hope in Dark Times* (the major prophets)
- *God Has a Word for You* (the minor prophets)
- *Who Do You Say Jesus Is?* (Matthew and Mark)
- *The Gospel Knows No Boundaries* (Luke and Acts)
- *I Want to Know Christ* (Paul's great epistles)
- *Until Christ Comes—Passing on the Gospel* (Paul's mission and pastoral epistles)
- *You Are God's Special Possession* (the universal epistles)
- *We Have Seen His Glory* (books of John)

Individual Bible study

5-Minute Bible Studies is a series that confronts the reality that people today are busy and their time in God's Word is becoming increasingly compromised. Many, in fact, have simply stopped regular personal study. To address this trend, 5-Minute Bible Studies provides a "read anywhere," quick but thought-provoking study of God's Word. Each study includes an application, questions for reflection, and a simple yet meaningful prayer. Following the first two books in the series, *5-Minute Bible Studies for Teens* and *5-Minute Bible Studies for Families*, *5-Minute Bible Studies for Couples* will be released this summer.

Our thanks

First and foremost, we humbly and gratefully give thanks to our gracious God who has sustained us and has allowed us to continue serving him in his kingdom work of spreading the gospel.

One of NPH's key objectives is to help our synod's called workers combat the false doctrine and humanistic

philosophy that tempts those they serve to stray from God's truth. We work diligently to support them with trustworthy ministry tools that provide biblically sound, Christ-centered, and confessional Lutheran teaching. We thank the many pastors, staff ministers, and teachers who make NPH a trusted partner in their ministry.

We also thank Rev. Curtis Jahn for his 29 years and Mr. Bill Ziche for his 8 years of leadership and service to the ministry of Northwestern Publishing House. We pray that the Lord will bless them in their retirement and continue to use them in service to his kingdom.

Mr. Mark Buske, reporter

Rev. Luke Werre, chairman

Rev. Nathaniel Biebert, vice chairman

Prof. Brian Hennig, secretary

Mr. Dwight Luedtke, treasurer

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Teacher Matthew Groth

Mr. Jeremy Korell

Prof. Steven Pagels

Mr. Joel Raasch

Administrative officers:

Mr. Mark Buske, interim president

Rev. Chris Cordes, vice president, publishing services

Mr. Eric Krueger, vice president, finance and accounting

