

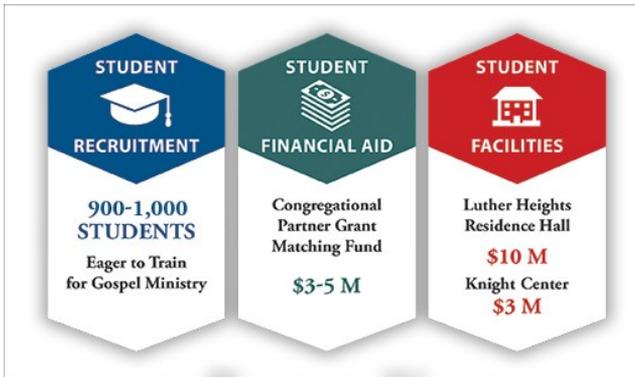
# WELS NEWS

November 2019

## Equipping Christian Witnesses Effort Underway

Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., is embarking on a two-year synodwide offering called "Equipping Christian Witnesses."

Martin Luther College (MLC) is our WELS college of ministry. It prepares nearly all of our called workers, training teachers and staff ministers to serve when they graduate and providing college-level training to young men who will enroll at the seminary to prepare to serve as pastors. Our synod is experiencing a great need for more called workers, and that is what this effort intends to help address.



The offering will provide resources to increase recruitment efforts around the synod.

In addition to that, it will address one barrier to enrollment at MLC: the cost of education. Even though MLC strives to keep educational costs down (and is widely considered to be successful in doing that), the prayer is that this offering will assist in recruitment by providing additional resources for student financial aid, reducing the need for students to borrow for their education.

Another goal of this offering is to provide funds that will help the college improve its facilities, particularly student housing and recreation facilities. While certainly not the main motivation for studying for the ministry, campus facilities do play an important role in recruitment.

We pray that God will move the hearts of our congregations and their members to take part in this opportunity to support the important work that MLC is doing on behalf of us all.

To learn more, visit [mlc-wels.edu/mlc-campaign](http://mlc-wels.edu/mlc-campaign).

Serving with you in Christ,

WELS President Mark Schroeder

## **COP Addresses Major Topics At Its Fall Meeting**

The Conference of Presidents (COP) held its fall meeting last week at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis.

Two years ago a special committee was appointed by the Synodical Council to consider ways to improve the WELS pension plan for called workers. That committee has completed its work; its recommendation will be considered by the Synodical Council in November. Since the Conference of Presidents has a vital interest in the called workers of the synod, the committee shared the details of its proposal with the COP. The COP expressed its support for the recommendation and will forward its endorsement to the Synodical Council. If the Synodical Council adopts it, the detailed proposal will be made public and sent to the districts for consideration at their conventions this summer.

The COP adopted a document entitled "Human sexuality, Personhood, Identity, and the Historic Christian Faith: A Confession on Human Sexuality." This document was written to address the current controversy and unbiblical views of the transgender issue. A shorter pastoral brief on the issue is also being prepared to help pastors as they address this issue in their ministry. These documents will be ready for publication as soon as they are placed into final form.

Another major decision of the COP was to accept the work of a committee that has produced a restatement of our synod's doctrinal position on the God-given roles of man and women. "Male and Female in God's Word" does not represent any change in our synod's position; rather it is intended to clarify and expand on several aspects of the issue that are not fully addressed in the current WELS doctrinal statement. An accompanying Bible study has also been produced. These materials will be made available later this fall for study and discussion at pastor and teacher conferences and in congregations. Input and questions will be sought during the next year, and the statement will be presented to the synod convention for approval in 2021.

The COP is continuing its work on revisions to the synod's bylaws that deal with the process of discipline for called workers and congregations.

Finally, the COP is also continuing to investigate whether the IRS provisions allowing ministers of the gospel to deduct their housing expenses applies to female teachers. There are some questions about whether the IRS and the courts have changed in their interpretation of this law and whether female teachers qualify for the deduction. The COP will report its findings as soon as they are available.

Serving in Christ,

WELS President Mark Schroeder

## **Seminary's Annual Symposium Features Apologetics**

Nearly 400 people attended Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's annual fall symposium from Sept. 21-22 in Mequon, Wis. Pastors from across the U.S. and Canada heard three papers presented on apologetics— responding to arguments hostile to the claims of Christianity and presenting positive arguments that vindicate the claims of Christianity. The timely topic was chosen because the worldview of North Americans has changed dramatically in the last two decades. Christian beliefs and morals are becoming increasingly foreign and unfamiliar to the majority of people. Outreach approaches developed in the 20th century often don't result in engaging 21st-century prospects in conversation when a pastor is reaching out with the gospel. Three pastors who have ministered exclusively in the 21st century prepared this year's essays, and three seasoned seminary professors served as their sounding boards. Rev. Michael J. Berg, class of 2005, began the symposium with his paper, "An Introduction to and Defense of Apologetics." "Apologetics at its best shows that Christians care. We care about the skeptic's questions. We care about the doubts of believers. We care about the future doubts of young believers," wrote Dr. Berg, a theology professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.

Rev. Luke Thompson, a 2013 seminary graduate who serves at St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, presented the second paper, "Disclosing the Hidden God: Confessional Lutheran Doctrine and Christian Apologetics." "The goal of the Lutheran engaged in apologetics is never to show how reasonable our faith is, but rather to point out that the unreasonable did, in fact, take place. There is nothing reasonable about Jesus dying and rising for my sins (the unempirical truths of justification and reconciliation), but that does not change the fact that it happened and was documented for my benefit (the empirical facts of the execution of

Jesus of Nazareth and his bodily appearances),” he wrote. For the final presentation, Rev. Justin Cloute, class of 2002 who serves at St. Luke, Watertown, Wis., spoke on “Apologetics in a Postmodern World.” “Just 30 years ago, many Americans rarely encountered someone with a different worldview. Now, daily, with a couple of clicks on their computers or a swipe of their phones, they are brought into contact with people from a plurality of cultures, religions, and belief systems (narratives),” he wrote. “We can be sure that if parents, pastors, and teachers are not addressing the questions, others will be.” The video archive of the symposium is available as well as the written essays for those who are interested.

## **Registration open for WELS Lutheran Leadership Conference**

Registration is open for the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership, Jan. 21-23, 2020, in Chicago, Ill.

The conference will have five keynote presentations that deal with major cultural challenges before every WELS congregation. In addition 25 breakout sessions on a variety of topics will be available for attendees to choose from.

The National Conference on Lutheran Leadership is open to all: called workers and lay volunteers, men and women, lifelong Lutherans and new congregants. Congregations are encouraged to send multiple participants to the conference.

## **Welcome Home**

The Welcome Home initiative encourages all of us to consider someone we know who has strayed from their church home, from the Word. Who do you know? Who’s not here?

View the video and visit [welscongregationalservices.net/welcome-home](https://welscongregationalservices.net/welcome-home) for simple ideas and resources specifically created for teachers. Who can you “Welcome Home?”