

WELS NEWS

October 2019

WELS Convention Highlights

Delegates to the 65th biennial synod convention, held at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minn., three weeks ago, have much to remember and to share with others as they return to their home congregations.

Illustrating how our worldwide fellowship of confessional Lutherans continues to grow, our synod had the privilege of declaring fellowship with two overseas Lutheran church bodies. The Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ—Kenya is a relatively new Lutheran church body that is united with WELS in doctrine and practice. The Christian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Taiwan had its origin as a WELS mission in 1968 and has since become an independent church body. The convention formally declared fellowship with both Lutheran churches; delegates cast their unanimous votes with a standing ovation.

The convention approved the synod's two-year ministry financial plan recommended by the Synodical Council. No changes were made to the plan that was proposed. This plan outlines the financial support that will be provided to all areas of ministry for the next two years.

Numerous changes to the synod's bylaws were approved. Most of these changes involved bringing more consistency to the length of terms on various boards and committees. Nearly all positions are now four-year terms, with a person able to succeed himself twice.

Twenty memorials (requests for convention action) were acted upon by the convention via floor committee reports and resolutions.

Director of the WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling Rev. Jon Hein's keynote presentation provided an honest evaluation of membership trends and the challenges posed by a changing culture. He outlined the synod's plans to address these challenges making use of the means of grace and committing all results to the hands of the Holy Spirit.

After hearing reports from all areas of the synod's missions and ministries, many delegates commented that for the first time they had a real picture of the scope and nature of the many things we are doing together as a synod. They expressed an eagerness to return home to share what they had learned with their congregations.

Rev. Joel Voss was re-elected as the synod second vice president and I was blessed and honored to be elected to serve another term as synod president.

The convention was another opportunity for WELS to acknowledge the amazing grace of God as he works through us to proclaim the gospel now and, as the convention theme stated, "for the generations to come."

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

Access all synod convention news and materials at wels.net/2019synodconvention.

Serving Generations In The Future Through Endowments

WELS Foundation announced it has distributed \$2.9 million from more than 300 endowments through its endowment program this year. WELS ministerial education schools received \$1.9 million, and WELS Missions received \$508,000. The remainder was distributed to congregations, schools, or other WELS/WELS-affiliated ministries that benefit from donor-designated endowments.

WELS Foundation manages endowment funds established by individuals, congregations, or other WELS organizations for the benefit of Christ's work. These donor-restricted gifts are invested with WELS Investment Funds into its endowment allocation (a diversified portfolio of stocks and bonds). Annual distributions from the endowment investment returns provide a source of ongoing financial support for WELS ministries.

But the support isn't just for ministries; it's for people like Mr. Jonathan Neumann, who is starting his final year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis., and Rev. Adam Lambrecht, a 2019 WLS graduate and a new missionary in Laramie, Wyo. Both Neumann and Lambrecht received tuition assistance grants for their schooling from an endowment through their congregation Crown of Life, Pueblo West, Colo.

Mrs. Helen Kuehl, a WELS member who lived in the area, set up a charitable remainder trust through WELS Foundation in her will. In 2016, the Rev. Ernst Claus Kuehl Memorial Scholarship Fund—named in memory of Helen's late husband—was established with the remainder of that trust to help local students studying for the ministry. Each year, Crown of Life receives a distribution from that fund to help pay college or seminary expenses for members who are studying to become full-time called workers.

"The people who knew her talked about how she had a passion for the synod and the long-range view of people sharing the gospel," says Rev. David Wietzke, pastor at Crown of Life.

Neumann says it was a big relief to receive this help. "It's peace of mind when it comes to you," he says. "It also sets you up for the future. As you're leaving school, you don't have to be thinking about debt in the same way."

But the funding doesn't only help financially. Neumann says receiving a gift like this shows him how invested an individual and a congregation are in his future ministry, even if he may not be serving their church directly. "It's a testimony to the power of the gospel," he says. "It's an encouragement of faith."

Wietzke shares that if Crown of Life doesn't have a member currently studying for the ministry, the congregation sends the money directly to WLS for needs-based tuition assistance. "It's neat to know that we can make a difference," he says. "And this isn't a one-time thing. This is something we can do every single year."

He continues, "It's a great example of how people can be thinking past their own time on earth. They can be serving the gospel to generations in the future."

To learn more about adding to an existing endowment or setting up an endowment for a ministry close to your heart, contact your local Christian giving counselor at wels.net/giving-counselors. To learn more about WELS Foundation, visit wels.net/foundation.

New Bible Translation Available

A new translation of the Bible—the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV)—is now available from Northwestern Publishing House (NPH).

More than one hundred people—pastors, professors, teachers, and laypeople—have been working on the translation since 2013, all under the direction of the Wartburg Project, an independent Lutheran Bible translation effort by WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) pastors and professors. About 30 WELS and ELS pastors and professors were involved in translating and the technical review, and 100 people served as proofreaders and popular reviewers. "By the time it was done, at least ten people had read every book," says Rev. John Brug, general editor and Old Testament editor. All are volunteers, except Brug, who worked full time.

The EHV aims to provide a balanced translation that is good for all uses in the church, according to Brug. This means it preserves traditional familiar biblical idioms while better clarifying some language that may be confusing in other translations. Being balanced also means that "sometimes you have to be a little more literal in your translation, and sometimes you have to be a little more free," says Brug. "We tried to look at each passage in its own case and not have one rulebook that covered everything."

While only WELS members and those in fellowship with WELS worked on the translation, Brug is quick to note that this is not a "WELS Bible," and it is not just for Lutherans. "No one should be able to say there is a Lutheran slant in the translation," Brug says.

The Wartburg Project is working on content for an EHV study Bible that will provide Lutheran commentary on the passages. It hopes to have an electronic version available by the end of the year.

Equipping Women To Be "Living Stones"

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4). This was the theme passage for the WELS Women's Ministry Conference held July 18–20 at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. More than 325 women attended to learn how women thrive in any circumstance when they understand they are part of the spiritual house God is building.

"No two women are alike, which meant we needed to design a conference that would nurture, encourage, and equip women with God's Word to be 'living stones' whether that was at work, with friends, at the

park, or in church,” said Dawn Schulz, a presenter and member of the Women’s Ministry team. “Christians are unique by God’s design and united by God’s purpose all at the same time. Like the New Testament Christians Peter was writing to, we need to be encouraged that we are part of something bigger than ourselves—God’s spiritual house. We also need the reminder to have confidence to use our unique gifts and talents because what we do is acceptable through Jesus Christ.”

To accomplish that, the conference explored how women can use their God-given gifts and talents to build up God’s kingdom and be a blessing to others around them, wherever that may be. Presentation topics included understanding your spiritual gifts, working in diverse teams, speaking your faith in love, supporting Christian students on the secular campus, understanding and supporting young adults, resources for teaching women’s Bible study, and godly characteristics in the workplace.

“The conference was stimulating,” says Gail O’Keefe from Waupaca, Wis. “There were many diverse topics to choose from, and I found many I was excited to sit in on.”

“I loved being at the conference with so many amazing women,” says Lori Lorig, one of the conference’s presenters. “My prayer is each woman feels empowered to boldly live out her personal calling and that we as individuals value one another’s uniqueness.”

Naomi Schmidt reminded the attendees of God’s purpose for their lives in her presentation entitled, “God Uses All of the Legos.” “Christian women are built and resting on the solid rock of Christ,” said Schmidt “Because of that, God uses the way he uniquely designed each woman to be an integral part of a holy temple he is building here on earth. Without understanding the big picture or final goal, our daily life and struggles can be overwhelming.”

Dinah Spurgin from New Ulm, Minn., was thankful for that message. “This conference was exactly what I needed, at exactly the time I needed it. . . . I get so trapped in my world of trying to problem solve everything, that I forget daily that I am not in control. I very much needed to be reminded that I am cut from the Living Stone, that is Christ. Because of him, I am precious, and I am chosen.”

WELS Women’s Ministry, part of the WELS Commission on Adult Discipleship, holds a conference every three years. Learn more about [WELS Women’s Ministry](#). Access conference [written presentations](#) and [video presentations](#).