



Dress yourself with...Kindness

They often embarrassed their mother by the way they acted in public. It seemed to her that her sons were always arguing.

At the supermarket, the brothers would fight about which cereal she should buy. When they were home they could never agree which movie to watch. Sometimes she doubted that her two boys would ever survive their childhood together.

While they often bickered, the brothers were also fiercely loyal to each other. If another child from the neighborhood made fun of one of them, the other was sure to come to his defense. It baffled their mother!

How could they quarrel so, yet a short time later seek to protect their would-be rival? Blood truly must be thicker than water!

This scenario is a reality for many of us. Sibling rivalry, it seems, is universal. And for the most part, defense of one's own family is equally universal. Playground conversations usually prove this true.

God has another scenario he wants us to follow. He encourages us in the Bible to treat all people as though they were family. "Make every effort to add to your faith ... brotherly kindness" (2 Peter 1:5,7).

There are dozens of things that make each of us different from everyone else in the world. They include where we live, the color of our eyes, our talents, the size of our paycheck, and so on.

Even though we enjoy associating with people who are like us, God wants us to treat everyone the way we would treat an idolized brother or sweet sister. After all, God's love prompted him to send his Son, so that *everyone* who believes in him has life in his name.

Blood is not always thicker than water.

Every person who is made a child of God through his Word and the water of baptism also becomes our brother or sister in Christ. They are family.

Why don't you stop by for a visit at church some weekend and meet some of your spiritual family?

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First Vice President, Other Synod Position Members Elected

Election results for various synodical positions—including first vice president and recording secretary—were announced Tuesday morning. Elections were conducted electronically prior to the convention, making it easier for virtual delegates to participate.

Delegates reelected Rev. James Huebner to his fourth term as the synod's first vice president.

"It is a privilege to be able to continue serving as WELS' first vice president, a very humbling privilege at that," says Huebner, pastor at Grace, Milwaukee, Wis. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve our Savior and our synod as we stand together on the Holy Scriptures and go forward together in our mission to proclaim Jesus' forgiving love to all."

They also reelected Rev. Robert Pasbrig as recording secretary. He has served in this role since 2005.

Various other synodical positions—14 in all—also needed to be filled. These positions ranged from chairman of the Board for Home Missions (BHM) to members (pastor, teacher/staff minister, and layman) of the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) to at-large representatives on the Synodical Council.

Members of synodical boards and commissions provide valuable input to administrators as they make important ministry decisions. "When the leaders of our boards are people active in parish and school ministry, it keeps the whole ministerial education program up-to-date in addressing the needs of the church body," says Rev. Paul Prange, BME administrator.

Rev. Keith Free, BHM administrator, stresses the importance of the partnership between the board chairman and the Missions staff, which includes weekly phone calls and multiple meetings throughout the year. "The BHM chairman role is not a figurehead role," says Free. "There is real time and input these men offer in support of Home Missions. We are grateful to their spouse and the church they serve for allowing these men to have the time to serve in this ministry role." Rev. Mark Gabb, pastor at St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla., was elected as chairman for the Board for Home Missions.

New Home Missions Goal Set For 2023–2033

On Wednesday morning, delegates approved an ambitious new Home Missions initiative that will begin in 2023.

“Being fully convinced that grace received is grace to share,” reads the resolution, “we commemorate the 175-year milestone of our synod’s history (1850–2025) by challenging ourselves, under God’s grace and with his blessing, to set a goal of establishing 100 new missions and 75 new or enhanced ministries throughout North America over the next 10 years, starting July 1, 2023, under the auspices of Home Missions, working together with WELS areas of ministry and their traditional mission partners.”

A task force of WELS Home Missions is exploring the challenges and opportunities that this initiative presents.

“The task force’s work has already been rewarding,” says Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions. “It’s clear that we have men and women in all areas of ministry of our synod who are dedicated to this initiative. They want to do their part in reaching more souls with the gospel. In fact, we can see how we stand on the shoulders of present and past leaders who have encouraged and supported worker training, home missions, world missions, and all the other important areas of our synod.”

“Starting and supporting missions in North America doesn’t just happen through the efforts of those in Home Missions,” notes Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Home Missions. “Home Missions needs and appreciates the support of many in WELS to reach many outside of WELS with God’s Word.”

To learn more about WELS Home Missions, visit wels.net/homemissions.

World Missions Shares Updates And Blessings

WELS World Missions has been able to continue the Christian’s Great Commission to spread the Word throughout the world, even during a global pandemic, reported WELS World Missions Chairman Rev. Paul Janke and WELS World Missions Administrator Rev. Larry Schlomer.

While COVID-19 certainly impacted in-person mission work and travel, Janke says, “To paraphrase Isaiah, this has been a time for strengthening the stakes so we can lengthen the cords. So when things open up it can be a time of sharing the gospel with more and more people. Because so much of our work these days has been able to go online, this has actually been a time when world mission work has been able to flourish through vehicles like *Academia Cristo* and TELL, the English-language version of *Academia Cristo*.”

Janke says the number of people being reached through these two gospel and outreach training apps from Multi-Language Productions—more than three million—is “evidence that the Lord is using these difficult times to turn people to his Word and to the

living hope that we have in Jesus Christ and his resurrection of the dead.”

Janke concludes, “I want to speak a word of thanks for the generous offerings that come from congregations and individuals, even during this time of pandemic. Because of the generosity of WELS people, World Missions is well funded and can take advantage of the numerous opportunities that have been handed to us by the Lord.”

Schlomer continued the World Missions presentation by providing an overview of the work and blessings around the world.

He reported that in East Asia, a particularly dark place for the gospel where few people have heard the Word, the number of house churches has doubled—throughout the pandemic.

In Vietnam, more than 60 future pastors are being trained to reach the Hmong people in that country. Throughout the shutdowns, these men were able to continue their training digitally. This first group of pastors is about a year away from graduating. There are about 135,000 members that make up the Hmong Fellowship Church.

In Latin America, online outreach efforts through *Academia Cristo* have connected the Latin America missions team with potential church planters in many different countries. Additional manpower is needed to follow up with these contacts and continue training new Christians in grace-starved Latin America. Plans are underway to add up to five new positions to the team, which could be made up of pastors, staff ministers, teachers, and laypeople.

World Missions has plans to send missionaries to two new fields, London and Senegal. The London area is already home to more than 50 WELS families who could serve as a nucleus for outreach. In addition, due to government policy changes, more than 20 percent of members from WELS’ partner church in Hong Kong have moved to the United Kingdom, including two pastors.

Schlomer says Senegal is a “raw” mission, but it appears that the country is open to missionaries and mission work. “We are not going here because we have a contact; we don’t have an invitation. We are going because we know those people don’t have the gospel.” Two missionaries will go to learn the language, meet the people, and seek opportunities to share the gospel.

Schlomer says that it is possible, especially with the growing church in Vietnam, that the number of Christians in our fellowship around the world could exceed the number of members in North America.

“We think this is significant for us as a confessional Lutheran church body, standing on the rock-solid Word of God, and now with the privilege of having these connections all around the world.”