

WELS NEWS **April 2016**

God's Blessings On Congregation Mission Offerings

Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) for 2015 were \$21.5 million, an increase of 1.1 percent over the prior year and an all-time record high. Actual offerings were 2.9 percent higher than what congregations had indicated in their subscriptions. This marks the fourth year in a row that actual offerings were more than congregational subscriptions. We thank God for these blessings.

CMO subscriptions for 2016 show a decrease of 1.8 percent from 2015 actual receipts. No reductions in ministry are necessary, however, because of the higher than anticipated offerings in 2015.

The "One in Christ" debt retirement effort continues to be blessed. Gifts toward debt retirement have now surpassed \$1.6 million. Many congregations are still in the process of gathering the offering, and the Ministry of Christian Giving will continue to communicate the importance of the offering until it comes to a close in June 2016. We continue to be optimistic that the offering, coupled with our ongoing payments from the budget, will completely eliminate the \$4.7 million debt. Individuals and congregations that have not yet participated are encouraged to do so in the coming weeks and months. Additional envelopes and information are available from the [Ministry of Christian Giving](#).

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

Update On WELS Hymnal Project Released

The WELS Hymnal Project recently released a comprehensive update on its work of producing a new hymnal.

"It's the first indication from each committee as far as where they are heading on the key issues that each of them faces," says Rev. Jonathan Bauer, chairman of the WELS Hymnal Project Communications Committee. "It says here is where we are going and here are some of the decisions that we made already that will guide the selection of materials that we will use going forward."

The full report can be found online; it will also be posted section by section over the upcoming weeks on the WELS Hymnal Project's blog. Feedback is encouraged.

The 2011 synod convention adopted the long-range goal of producing a new hymnal by the 500th anniversary of the first Lutheran hymnal in 1524. Rev. Michael Schultz began his work as the project's director in 2012. More than 60 volunteers—pastors, teachers, and laypeople—form seven different committees in the WELS Hymnal Project that focus on the following areas: hymns, psalms, rites, occasional services, Scripture, technology, and communication.

Bauer says that already by this fall some materials will be ready for field testing. "By early May at the latest, we'll start enlisting different congregations to participate in different ways," he says. "They will have a chance to see some of the materials and the direction that we're heading and then be able to provide us with feedback on it."

According to Bauer, the WELS Hymnal Project is looking at a release date for the new hymnal in the early 2020s. Learn more about the WELS Hymnal Project at www.welshymnal.com.

Latest Heart To Heart Webcast

The newest *Heart to heart: Parent Conversations* webcast from *Forward in Christ* magazine discusses how to teach children respect. WELS Early Childhood Ministries Coordinator Cindi Holman shares four important aspects of teaching respect to your children that she's learned from her years teaching in a Christian classroom.

Check out the webcast at forwardinchrist.net.

Registration Opening For Summer Conferences

Registration is open for three synodwide conferences this summer.

The WELS International Youth Rally will take place June 28 – July 1 at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colo. Starting March 1, registration opened for the contact youth leaders. Event organizer, Mrs. Kris Snyder, says, "The contact youth leaders can fully register and pay for themselves, then simply enter the total number of people in their group. Starting March 28, additional youth leaders and youth can register and pay. In order to identify with their group they will need to choose their contact youth leader from a list."

WELS teens are encouraged to attend the rally for three days of spiritual encouragement and fellowship with other WELS teens around the country. Snyder says, "Sit alongside 2,000 others and hear what God spoke 2,000 years ago that is still true today: "Resist the devil and he will flee" (James 4:7). Still true! "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). Still true! Our God Reigns! Forever true!" Learn more at wels.net/event/wiyr-2016.

Also this summer, WELS Women's Ministry, part of the Commission

on Adult Discipleship, is holding a conference July 21–23 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Registration is now open.

The theme for the conference is “Mentors,” based on 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

Early bird registration rates and student rates are available through May 30. Several presentations and breakout sessions are available to choose from, focusing on having and being a Christian mentor. Visit wels.net/wmconference for more information.

The Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society (LWMS) is holding its annual convention June 23–26 at Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, Ill. The LWMS 2016 convention theme is “Christ Alone, our Cornerstone.” The event will highlight WELS missionaries from around the world sharing how the Holy Spirit is working in countries near and far. Watch a video about the upcoming convention. Visit lwms.org to learn more and register.

Watch the upcoming Together video updates to learn more about all these events. View the events page for even more WELS events.

Marriage Enrichment

Did you know that the WELS Commission on Adult Discipleships offers several marriage enrichment getaways and workshops every year around the country? If you're looking to strengthen your marriage in God's Word, check out the upcoming opportunities. Don't see a weekend that works for you? Check back often, as more weekends are added regularly. [View marriage enrichment events.](#)

New Worker Training Program Starting In Cameroon

The Lutheran Church of Cameroon is taking a big step toward becoming an independent church body by calling its first full-time Cameroonian teacher and dean of students for its worker training program in Kumba, Cameroon. Rev. Mesue Israel, the church’s only second-generation pastor, has accepted the call. Plans are to start the program in September.

“[Having] a Cameroonian man on campus will help to make this a truly Cameroonian worker training program,” says Rev. Daniel Kroll, missionary in Cameroon. “That means that much application will be made to ministry in Cameroon that we from WELS might not be able to understand or explain.”

Israel has been a pastor in the Lutheran Church of Cameroon since his graduation in 1999. A bone disease he contracted in 2008 makes it difficult for him to move freely, which, Kroll says, allows him to study more. “He has been outspoken and is not afraid to tackle hard issues; he is straight-forward and fair,” says Kroll. “Pastor Israel gives credit to

God for teaching him perseverance through the difficulties of his disease and his ministry.”

Israel will be responsible for teaching several of the courses as well as for enforcing rules for campus life. The campus has modest dormitories where students will live from September through mid-May, with two weeks off at the end of each quarter to go home to see their families and tend their crops. After the two-year Bible institute, students will immediately begin three years of seminary studies and then be eligible for a call.

Currently 10 pastors serve 32 congregations in Cameroon. Thirteen men have been selected from among 31 certified assistants to start classes this fall. These certified assistants have had limited training but help their supervising pastor with keeping records, teaching Sunday school, and occasional preaching.

Having a Cameroonian man involved in the training of church workers is important for the future of the Lutheran Church of Cameroon. “Funding, health issues, government regulations, and a host of other matters can create problems for us keeping a missionary here,” says Kroll. This is actually the first active called worker training program in Cameroon since 1999 because of turnover in missionaries and other issues.

He continues, “But even if there is a lack of a missionary (or inconsistency thereof), we hope to create a program that will have some consistency for many years to come.”

Learn more about the Lutheran Church of Cameroon at wels.net/missions and in the March issue of *Forward in Christ*.