

# **WELS NEWS**

April, 2018

## **New WELS Catechism And Personal Bible Study**

You may not be aware that our synod, as a part of our celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, has recently produced a revision of Martin Luther's Small Catechism. The revision is not a revision of the chief parts of the catechism or Luther's familiar answers to the question, "What does this mean?" What have been revised are the detailed questions and answers that expand on what Luther wrote.

Luther often encouraged faithful Christians to study and review the catechism as a part of their daily devotional lives. With that in mind, the newly revised WELS catechism is formatted in such a way to encourage our members to use the catechism on a daily basis, long after they have been confirmed. As in the previous version of the catechism, Scripture passages are included to provide the clear biblical basis for the doctrines we believe, and a continuing review of those teachings is always helpful in strengthening faith and increasing our knowledge of what the Bible teaches.

But in addition to those passages, the new catechism has been designed to flow for a more natural read. Each section begins with an introduction and transitional thoughts and concludes with a "Connections" section that provides application and could also serve as the basis for personal or family devotions. The new catechism provides additional guidance through Bible history narratives. It also features illustrations, thought questions, and applications of biblical truths in a way that makes it a practical and easy-to-use tool for continuing study of God's Word.

The catechism is not just for kids. Consider getting a copy for your own devotional use. Copies are available for purchase from Northwestern Publishing House at [nph.net/catechism](http://nph.net/catechism).

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder

## **New Movie Focuses On Outreach**

Filming is complete for the movie *To the Ends of the Earth*, an upcoming outreach film that will follow the apostle Paul and his work in Philippi.

This movie is the final installment in a series of four outreach movies that are a collaboration between WELS Commission on

Evangelism, WELS Commission on Discipleship, Northwestern Publishing House, WELS Multi-Language Publications, and Boettcher+Trinklein Television, Inc. "Our goal for this movie is to show in a dramatic way how the gospel is spread into the world following the command of Jesus and to show how it impacted people's lives," says Rev. Mike Hintz, who recently retired as director of WELS Evangelism but continues to serve as a member of the movie production team. The film's title is taken directly from Jesus' command to his disciples at his Ascension: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Filmed in Ouarzazate, Morocco, from Jan. 29–Feb. 3, the movie highlights four major events from the book of Acts—the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, the conversion of Lydia, the casting out of a demon from the slave girl, and Paul and Silas in prison followed by the baptisms of the jailer and his household.

The filming location, in a setting where many other Bible-era movies have been shot, allowed the production team to make use of already available sets, beautiful scenery, and local talent. The production team is the same crew that worked on the recent Luther film, *A Return to Grace: Luther's Life and Legacy*. "Our goal was authenticity, and, honestly, I felt like I was back in that time," says Hintz, who served as a consultant on set. "The way the people looked and sounded, the scenery, the sets—I think people are going to feel like they're in Philippi."

The goal is to have the movie available by the end of summer 2018 in time for congregations initially to use the film and accompanying materials as an option for celebrating a synod-wide Mission and Ministry Sunday on Oct. 21. Plans are to show a movie trailer at the district conventions in June.

Hintz says the movie would not be possible except for funding help from Church Mutual Insurance Company Foundation; WELS Foundation's Shared Blessings donor advised fund; Multi-Language Publications; and gifts from groups, congregations, and individuals.

"It is our goal that this not only be a movie that will hold our attention but also move us with our hearts and minds to continue to follow the Lord's will to take the gospel to the ends of the earth," say Hintz.

## **Seminary Students Learn About WELS Missions And Ministry**

From Feb. 6–8, presenters with experience in mission work in North America and around the world spoke at Mission and Ministry, an annual three-day event at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., to introduce seminary students to the worldwide work of WELS.

Under the theme “Building on the Rock,” participants heard from world and home missionaries as well as congregational leaders. This provided future pastors a big-picture view of synod work. Because assignments, calls, and ministries will vary, three breakout sessions are offered each day, allowing students to learn more about areas of personal interest. Some of these topics included beginning a mission church, evangelism for the busy pastor, using teens in outreach, compassion ministry, getting involved in the community, Multi-Language Publications, and an update on the new hymnal.

In addition, more than 30 WELS areas of ministry and organizations set up display booths. This allowed students the opportunity to learn more about what synodical resources are available. “Mission and Ministry is important because it connects students training to be pastors with the work that is being done throughout their synod,” says senior Noah Willitz, one of the event organizers.

Not only does Mission and Ministry help students learn more about their synod, the organizers learned personal lessons that will carry into their ministry. “Mission and Ministry is like a light at the end of the tunnel. It’s good to hear presentations and rub shoulders with pastors doing some great evangelism,” says Thomas Gorzalski, another senior and organizer. “It is a good reminder that every church is a mission church. No matter where I am sent in a few months, I know evangelism will be a priority.”

Seminary students are not the only ones who benefited from the event. On Feb. 6, the junior class of pastor-track students at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., attended presentations, and the entire student body of Bethany Evangelical Theological Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) attended sessions on Wednesday and Thursday. In all, almost 200 students, professors, and guests participated.

For photos of the event, visit the seminary’s Facebook page.

## **New Counselor Will Help Support Mission Outreach**

In January, Rev. Matthew Vogt accepted the call to serve as a mission counselor. He is replacing Rev. Peter Kruschel, who is retiring after serving in that position for almost 10 years.

Vogt previously served as pastor at Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nev. He also was chairman of the Arizona-California Mission District.

"He's going to bring a fresh perspective to the mission counselor role since he's been serving as a mission pastor and dealing with cross-cultural ministries right in his own backyard," says Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Home Missions. "He will have that practical understanding as he works with others in the mission fields."

Kruschel has been a fixture in Home Missions, not only serving as a mission counselor but also as a mission pastor in Florida and as the associate administrator of Home Missions from 1988–2000. A special service of thanksgiving for his years of ministry will be held at Beautiful Savior, Las Vegas, on Feb. 19.

"We in Home Missions appreciate the dedicated approach Peter displayed as a mission counselor," says Free. "His gifts, organizational skills, ministry experience, and passion for the lost will be missed."

Four mission counselors—one of whom consults with churches on Hispanic outreach opportunities—work with the Board for Home Missions and district mission boards to develop "big picture" strategies to reach more people in the U.S. and Canada. "They're the voice of the lost—the people who are unchurched or who don't have faith in Jesus Christ—in that they keep the focus on reaching more people with the saving gospel message," says Free.

The mission counselors also stay on top of current cultural trends, help district mission boards explore new opportunities, provide training and counsel for new missionaries, and work with mission congregations.

Rev. John Dorn says the counselors have been "indispensable" in his work as chairman of the Northern Wisconsin District Mission Board. "Not only working with the counselors on the board level but also having the privilege of working with them in establishing a congregation, I would have been lost without them," says Dorn, who serves as pastor at Living Water, Oshkosh, Wis. "The counselors share ideas that have worked and not worked in other churches. The mission counselors bring experience in working with the Board for Home Missions and a special expertise in church planting. No price tag can be given to the time the counselors save our boards and the congregations."

Learn more about WELS Missions at [wels.net/missions](http://wels.net/missions).