

## **WELS NEWS**

February 2018

### **Intersynodical Meetings Continue**

On Nov. 28-30, representatives from the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS), the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) met in Jacksonville, Fla., for the sixth annual meeting for informal discussions. The main topics covered were the Doctrine of the Call and a comparative review of the recently published catechisms by WELS and the LCMS. The last version of the catechism for the ELS (2001) also was used in discussing the new editions of the explanations to the Small Catechism. In this 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation we especially treasure the work of Dr. Martin Luther in composing his Small and Large Catechisms of 1529.

The three synod presidents provided updates on the respective work of their church bodies. Challenges and blessings also were noted in respect to pastoral training, the filling of congregational vacancies, and the relationships with international churches. The LCMS is part of the ILC (International Lutheran Conference), while the ELS and WELS are members of the CELC (Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference).

None of the participants at these informal meetings anticipate a restoration of church fellowship between ELS/WELS and the LCMS in the near future. Yet, the sessions themselves were once again helpful as areas of agreement, as well as specific differences, were addressed in a cordial but candid manner. The representatives of the three synods have decided to gather once again in the fall of 2018.

Also in November, representatives of WELS and the ELS met with counterparts from the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). The CLC was formed in the 1950s when a number of congregations left the Wisconsin Synod because they believed that the synod was not acting quickly enough to break fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The meeting was a continuation of formal doctrinal discussions intended to determine if fellowship between the synods can be restored.

In 2015 the group had composed a document entitled "A Joint Statement on the Termination of Fellowship." Agreement on this joint statement is seen as a necessary first step in the doctrinal discussions. The ELS convention approved the statement in 2016; the WELS convention approved it last summer. The CLC

convention discussed it and recommended further study by its pastoral conferences. The CLC will consider the statement again at its next convention.

Even if the Joint Statement is adopted by all three synods, other issues remain to be more fully discussed and resolved before fellowship can be reestablished. We pray for God's blessings on these efforts to establish fellowship based on a full agreement in doctrine.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

### **God's People Respond**

WELS members have demonstrated their Christian love and concern for hurricane victims in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico with over \$1.5 million in gifts to WELS Christian Aid and Relief. We thank God for this generous response to these disasters. WELS Christian Aid and Relief has been working with local congregations to provide funding for repairs to churches, schools, and homes, as well as for efforts to help the people of the communities in which congregations are located. An assessment visit to Puerto Rico shortly after the hurricane identified immediate needs and paved the way for quick assistance for repairs and supplies.

Since so much of the infrastructure in Puerto Rico was still not repaired at that time, another assessment visit took place during the first week of January. The visiting team included Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of World Missions; Mr. Sean Young, director of Mission Operations; Rev. Tim Satorius, WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations contact for Puerto Rico; and me. We visited all three congregations of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico and met with leaders of our sister church.

The purpose of our visit was to determine what kind of assistance would be most helpful now that power has been restored to much of the island, building supplies are more available, and travel between cities is now possible. The leaders of the Puerto Rican church were encouraged by our visit, clearly recognized that the Lord will bring blessings even through the tragedy of the hurricane, and were eager to share their optimistic plans for the future. It was heartening to see their strong faith and to hear of their confidence in God's continuing care for them and their small church body.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief will be considering recommendations from the visiting team for continuing relief efforts that will address both short- and long-term needs of our sister church.

Even though life is returning to normal in many of the areas affected by the storms, there is much work to be done. There may be additional opportunities for volunteers to help in the coming weeks and months. Your continuing prayers are encouraged.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

### **New Director Of Discipleship Joins Congregational Services**

"Encouraging and equipping congregations for faithful and fruitful gospel ministry." That's how Rev. Donn Dobberstein describes his new position as the director of discipleship for WELS' Congregational Services. In this new role, Dobberstein will serve the WELS Commissions on Adult Discipleship and Youth and Family Ministry. These commissions coordinate WELS Women's Ministry, the Interactive Faith online Bible study series, marriage enrichment programs, the biennial international youth rally, the *Kids Connection* video series, and other ministry resources.

Dobberstein is not a stranger to Congregational Services, having served as the chairman of the Commission on Evangelism for the past 10 years. He also says, "Twenty-two years in parish mission settings have given me ministry experiences showing the importance of and the connection between 'making disciples' and 'continuing to disciple.' Evangelism and nurture are not at odds with each other but are complementary."

Dobberstein served as pastor at Our Savior's, Port Orange, Fla., for the past 17 years. He and his wife, Beth, moved from Port Orange to the Milwaukee, Wis., area in November as he began his work at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis. The couple have four children, two of whom still live at home.

Dobberstein clearly feels a sense of urgency for this ministry. He notes, "After years of the position being 'dormant,' clarifying a sense of direction and vision will be a priority. Evaluating and prioritizing resources needed for WELS congregations will help us set goals for the next five years. My intention is to listen and learn, support and serve my fellow coworkers and God's people. I

believe God has given us a unique moment in his kingdom that can be seized that, God-willing, can lead to ministry activity.”

### **Save The Date For The 2018 WELS Night At Miller Park**

The date for the fifth annual WELS Night at Miller Park has been determined. Mark your calendars and plan to join thousands of WELS members for the Milwaukee Brewers’ game against the Colorado Rockies on Fri., Aug. 3, 2018. Game time is 7:10 p.m. The Brewers are again offering WELS members up to 50 percent off the price of tickets. Seating will be along the third base line this year and in a block for WELS members. The pricing is Field Outfield Box sections 126 – 131 for \$21/ticket, Loge Outfield Box sections 228 – 232 for \$17/ticket, or Terrace Reserved sections 433 – 437 for \$9/ticket.

The web link to purchase discounted tickets for WELS Night at Miller Park won’t be available until March. More details will be released in the March 6, 2018, issue of *Together*.