

## **WELS NEWS** **February 2016**

### **Update On The “One In Christ” Offering**

In keeping with resolutions passed by the previous two synod conventions, the Conference of Presidents has asked the Ministry of Christian Giving to facilitate the “One in Christ” special offering to completely retire the synod’s debt.

As of the 2015 convention, the debt stood at about \$4.7 million. Materials were sent to congregations in the fall, with the encouragement that congregations would begin the effort prior to the end of the year and would conclude by June, 2016.

God is already blessing the efforts. Even though it is still only about a month since the suggested start of the offering, as of Tues., Dec. 15, congregations and individuals have given \$504,000.

We pray that all congregations and members will participate in this effort. Once the debt is completely retired, the \$1.6 million now budgeted annually for debt service will help us to continue the ministry that God has so richly blessed for us. Learn more at [wels.net/oneinchrist](http://wels.net/oneinchrist)

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder

### **Congregations Reaching Out With My Son, My Savior**

More than 75,000 copies of WELS’ newest outreach movie, *My Son, My Savior*, have been sold since its release in October. Congregations across the United States and around the world are using this film as an Advent outreach tool.

*My Son, My Savior* portrays Mary experiencing and pondering the miracle of Jesus’ coming and then humbly growing in her understanding that her son is also her Savior. The main message for viewers is that Jesus is their Savior too.

Congregations are ordering bulk quantities of the DVD and distributing them to members and prospects. Some congregations are handing the DVDs out before or after services. St. Luke, Watertown, Wis., handed them out to community members during the local Christmas parade. St. Paul, Mauston, Wis., gave the DVDs to neighbors as they canvassed in nearby Adams and Friendship. Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz., gave the movie to each person who drove through the congregation’s live nativity.

Other congregations are sponsoring showings of the movie. Our Savior, Grafton, Wis., hosted two free showings of *My Son, My Savior* on Dec. 13 at a local theater.

WELS created a number of free resources to complement the movie, and congregations are taking advantage of those as well. Living Hope,

Brighton, Colo., held an Advent by candlelight event on Dec. 5 with the program released by WELS Evangelism. As Judi Sullivan, a member of Living Hope, notes, “We are a small mission congregation and have never put together our own Advent by candlelight, so this was a very uplifting event for our group of 18 women. To have the entire program written along with suggested hymns for each scene and the readings from the Bible for lighting each candle is just marvelous. Thank you. . . This is so beneficial for all WELS women.”

The Spanish-language version of *My Son, My Savior* has been well received in Mexico. On Dec. 13, Glorified Christ in Puebla, Mexico, one of WELS’ sister churches, hosted a showing of the film. In addition to viewing the film, attendees learned how to share the movie with others and use the corresponding Spanish-language Bible study.

The Latin America mission team also released *My Son, My Savior* on its Spanish-language outreach site, [academiacrismo.com](http://academiacrismo.com). In the first 60 hours after its release, the site had 3,929 views of the movie and 2,234 downloads of the movie along with 790 views of the corresponding Spanish-language Bible study. Missionaries and pastors had 115 live chats with visitors to [academiacrismo.com](http://academiacrismo.com).

Rev. Mike Hartman, WELS coordinator for Latin America, says that the reaction to this movie has been “extraordinarily positive in Latin America. Latinos who have seen the movie have repeatedly said, ‘This movie meets a huge need for Latin America.’ Latinos are very devoted to the virgin Mary, but few actually know her.”

If you or your congregation would like to use *My Son, My Savior*, visit [wels.net/mysonmysavior](http://wels.net/mysonmysavior) to find links to purchase the movie and to see all the resources available to assist you. A bulk discount is available so that the purchase price is only \$2 per DVD when bought in boxes of 100.

*My Son, My Savior* is the third in a series of four outreach movies that are planned as a collaboration between WELS Commissions on Evangelism and Adult Discipleship, Northwestern Publishing House, WELS Multi-Language Publications, and Boettcher+Trinklein Television, Inc. The first two movies, *Road to Emmaus* and *Come Follow Me*, have been distributed worldwide and received critical acclaim from a number of Christian film groups.

### **New Group Forms To Help Serve The Military**

A new organization—the Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG)—will be working closely with WELS Military Services and local congregations to strengthen the church’s ministry to the military.

While WELS Military Services oversees ministry to deployed troops, including enabling and encouraging 125 military contact pastors, the Lutheran Military Support Group will be supporting the needs of

military veterans. Part of that ministry is helping address post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans through online counseling and local congregational support groups that offer spiritual help as well as support. “The LMSG addressed a need that we as a synod just have not addressed,” says Rev. Paul Ziemer, national civilian chaplain and liaison to the military. “That need is specific ministry to veterans.”

Ziemer worked closely with WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) veterans from across the country to put together the group. Now the group is an independent nonprofit organization run by WELS and ELS veterans.

Besides working to support veterans, the group will offer funding and expertise to WELS Military Services and its work with active duty service members and their families. It also is working with local congregations to create awareness and activity. One of its goals is to have a liaison—either an active military person, a veteran, or a military family member—in every WELS and ELS congregation who can help educate and encourage members. “We want our congregations through their liaisons to open their eyes and look around their congregations and community and say, ‘This is a mission opportunity we haven’t thought of before,’” says Mr. Philip Mowry, LMSG president and member at Living Savior, Valrico, Fla. “We’re driving awareness, which will stimulate individual congregational activity.”

Both Mowry and Ziemer note that the LMSG also will offer veterans a unique opportunity to serve their Savior and their fellow military members. “Our new organization and its programs provide an opportunity to engage veterans, to reconnect them to their passion for serving others, which was developed through their military experience,” says Mowry. “And serving your Lord is as good as it gets.”

Learn more about WELS Military Services, a part of WELS Special Ministries, at [wels.net/military-services](http://wels.net/military-services). Discover more about the Lutheran Military Support Group at [www.lutheranmilitary.org](http://www.lutheranmilitary.org).

### **New Executive Director For WELS CEF**

Mr. Scott Page, 58, has been named president and executive director of WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF). Page joined CEF a year and a half ago to assist temporarily with policy and procedure writing. He then took a full-time position in loan servicing and last month was named president and executive director.

Prior to joining CEF, Page worked for JPMorgan Chase in loan servicing quality assurance management as a retail mortgage risk director as well as a host of other credit and loan management positions.

Page says he was drawn to this position because of the purpose behind the work. “You know the purpose; you know the reason why, not just for making money and bringing wealth to shareholders, but to actually see

God's Word spread and for those brick and mortar facilities going up for congregations all across the country and the Caribbean and Canada—to have their worship homes—it's really fulfilling," he says.

"The reason WELS CEF exists is to help mission congregations with loans for facilities, land purchases—and to get those congregations off the ground, out of rented space, and into permanent worship facilities—that's kind of cool work if you ask me. And a lot of times, these are loans that no other financial institution would make," says Page.

Page has been married for 35 years and has two adult daughters and two large dogs he likes to walk daily. He lives in Oconomowoc, Wis., where he is a member at St. Matthew's. To learn more about WELS CEF, visit [wels.net/cef](http://wels.net/cef).

### **CELC Asia-Oceania Regional Conference**

WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) church leaders from the United States and across Asia and from Australia gathered in Seoul, South Korea, Oct. 28-30, for the first Asia-Oceania regional conference of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC).

This historical gathering provided the opportunity for the sharing of ideas and serious study of God's Word. Through the essays, devotions, sermons, and services, all in attendance grew in knowledge as well as had their faith strengthened.

Of vital importance to all participants was the opportunity for fellowship with their brothers and sisters in the faith. Many of the leaders were from small church bodies and new mission fields where there is little, if any, contact with fellow believers outside their own congregations. Many also live in areas of the world in which Christianity is almost non-existent or even illegal. They were able to share with one another, for the first time, their joys and struggles as they carry out the work the Lord has given to them.

The conference focused on the theme of Baptism and featured an essay on the institution and blessings of Baptism written by Rev. Takeshi Nidaira of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church of Japan and an essay on the power and meaning of Baptism by a pastor from Gereja Lutheran Indonesia.

On the final day of the conference, Seoul Lutheran Church, celebrating its tenth anniversary, provided a tour of various historical sites around the city.

The desire for this regional conference to be held on a regular basis was expressed by all. Conference leaders hope to bring the various churches together every few years to continue nurturing this precious fellowship.

The CELC—composed of 29 member churches worldwide—provides a forum for confessional Lutherans who are in fellowship. Learn more about the CELC and our sister church bodies at [www.celc.info](http://www.celc.info).