

# WELS NEWS

February 2019

## **2019 Synod Convention Planning Underway**

Planning has begun for the 65th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, which will be held at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., July 29-Aug. 1, 2019. More than 400 delegates and 50 advisory members will be meeting under the theme "For the Generations to Come."

"Looking back on the history of God's blessings to his church is always a good thing to do. But looking ahead to the opportunities God is giving us to carry out our mission is equally important," says Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president. "The convention theme will help us to focus on the opportunities God is giving us now and the challenges we face in an increasingly hostile society. It also reminds us of the responsibility we have to pass our rich heritage of faith to our children and grandchildren so that God's church will continue to be built by the power of his gospel."

During the convention called workers and lay members will hear presentations, discuss issues, and make decisions related to the synod's work, including setting a ministry plan (budget) for the next biennium. Two offices to be filled by election are the synod president and second vice president. Delegates will also elect others to serve on various boards and commissions. Voting members of WELS are encouraged to nominate qualified individuals to serve on these boards and commissions. A list of positions and descriptions is available online.

The primary source of the convention's business is the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM), which contains various departmental reports as well as formal petitions to the synod convention called "memorials." A memorial outlines a particular item of business for consideration by the delegates. The deadline for submitting memorials to be printed in BORAM is Jan. 15, 2019. Memorials submitted after Jan. 15 will not be printed but will be posted at the discretion of the synod presidium on the convention website if they are received by June 1, 2019. More information about submitting memorials can be found online.

Keep up-to-date with the synod convention at its website, [wels.net/2019synodconvention](http://wels.net/2019synodconvention).

## **Hundreds Gather To Celebrate 125 Years Of Apache Mission Work**

Over 1,200 attended the Apache 125th anniversary celebration at Peridot Lutheran church and school, Peridot, Ariz., Oct. 26–28. The

event commemorated the 125th anniversary of WELS World Missions work in the Apache reservations of Arizona.

Since its humble beginnings in 1893, the Apache ministry has grown, now serving over 3,600 people in a variety of ways. Five missionaries, two Apache pastors, and one Apache evangelist serve the nine congregations on the reservations. The Apache Christian Training School (ACTS)

provides education and resources to prepare leaders for sharing God's Word on the reservations and beyond. Two schools serve over 275 students, giving them a foundational Christian education. These are just a few of the services for which attendees gave thanks at the celebration last month.

To begin the celebration, visitors spent Fri., Oct. 26, touring the San Carlos and White Mountain Apache reservations, admiring the nine WELS churches. This included Peridot Lutheran church and school, where the first missionaries, John Plocher and George Adascheck, began to share the gospel message of Jesus Christ among the Apache people.

Plocher's great-grandson, Andrew, principal and teacher at Emmaus, Phoenix, Ariz., attended the anniversary and expressed thanks for all the people who came to the reservation to celebrate. When Plocher was asked what he thinks his great-grandfather would say about the celebration, he said, "He would just praise God."

On Saturday, Rev. Gary Lupe, Gethsemane, Cibecue, Ariz., hosted visitors in Peridot as they enjoyed traditional Apache food and crafts. Rev. Dr. William Kessel and Rev. Eric Hartzell gave two historical presentations. Photos and artifacts from across the mission's 125-year history were displayed along with information about future outreach plans for Native Christians.

A special worship service followed that evening at San Carlos High School. Choirs from the reservations' churches led the visitors in worship. WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder gave the service's closing lesson.

"Humanly speaking, the initial efforts to reach the Apache nation with the gospel seemed to be an impossible task," says Schroeder, reflecting after the event. "Now, 125 years later, the Apache people are still hearing the good news, are still having their faith nourished, and are still thankful for those who brought the gospel to them."

On Sunday, all of the reservations' congregations joined together to hold seven "Rally Day" worship services.

"The most encouraging thing about the work among the Apache people is that they are recognizing that the work of missions and ministry belongs to them," says Schroeder. "While we are still there to help and assist, it is gratifying that the Apache people are embracing the idea of training members of their tribe to serve as pastors and teachers, looking ahead to the day when all called workers on the reservation will be Apache."

Learn more about the Apache mission and its work at [nativechristians.org](http://nativechristians.org). Download Bible studies related to Rev. Dr. William Kessel's presentation. Learn more about WELS Missions at [wels.net/missions](http://wels.net/missions).

## **New Magazine Series Explores Witnessing**

This month's issue of *Forward in Christ* magazine (FIC) is featuring a new series on witnessing. "Ambassadors: Help them see Jesus" will offer tips and strategies to help readers as they proclaim the gospel message to others.

"When we come to faith, we discover the love of God; he has forgiven us and given us heaven. We want to tell others about what we have, but we sometimes don't know how to do it," says Rev. John Braun, FIC executive editor. "We created the 'Ambassadors' series to provide some practical strategies for opportunities when we feel awkward telling others about Jesus. It will show how to give a simple witness about Jesus and his love."

Authors for this 12-part series often will share personal stories as they discuss topics such as examining every unique situation, abandoning Christian jargon, avoiding arguing, and dealing with intimidators and know-it-alls. Articles will also look at the importance of praying, studying the Word, and knowing your limitations.

This series is just one part of FIC's direction to help its readers with outreach. "We are sent to make disciples of all nations, including our relatives, friends, and neighbors. In the past months FIC has focused on the gospel, the one tool God has given us to extend his kingdom. The gospel is the power of God to salvation," says Braun. "We have also explored the ministry of Jesus and found lessons for our evangelism efforts in his ministry."

This emphasis directly connects with the synod's goal to reach one million souls with the gospel message by this Christmas Eve. The Christmas Eve service theme, "A Light in the Darkness," highlights that Jesus is the light at a time when studies suggest that many are experiencing depression and anxiety. "Our goal is simply to help our readers to speak the gospel to those still in darkness," says Braun.

*Forward in Christ* also wants to highlight readers' efforts to share Jesus. "We want our readers to share their stories about the successful witness opportunities and the failures," says Braun. "Every opportunity to speak about Jesus is different, but we can learn from each other." Readers can submit their stories directly to FIC by e-mailing [fic@wels.net](mailto:fic@wels.net), with the subject line: "How I shared Jesus." *Forward in Christ* plans to print these stories in upcoming issues. Read the first article in the series. Subscribe to *Forward in Christ* to continue reading this series and other inspirational and informational articles.

## **Christian Aid And Relief Update**

When Hurricane Michael made landfall, Amazing Grace, Panama City, Fla., took a direct hit. Rev. Jerry Enderle, pastor at Amazing Grace, reports the church and parsonage suffered extensive damage, as did several members' homes, along with the entire community. Rev. Joel Russow, pastor of Faith, Tallahassee, Fla., also reports trees down in the neighborhood, but the church and parsonage are okay.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief chairman, Rev. Robert Hein, reports:

"We have mobilized relief trailers from Mobile, Ala., and Jacksonville, Fla., to assist in cleanup and recovery efforts. Right now, some areas are still hard to reach and power is still out. For the short term, Risen Savior, Navarre, Fla., served by Rev. Craig Born, is serving as the relief staging area. Members of the local WELS congregations in Florida and Alabama are eager to help out once it is feasible to go into the affected areas. We have also made funds available to local pastors to provide immediate aid to those in need and to purchase needed supplies. Efforts are underway to provide temporary housing for those displaced from their homes.

"Many homes suffered roof damage, so our first priority is putting plywood and tarps on top of the parsonage and sanctuary at Amazing Grace and salvaging sanctuary furniture, and then repeating those steps for members with major loss. We will bring in a project manager soon to help us assess damage and opportunities for assistance throughout the community. We also made a \$10,000 gift to Direct Relief, which provides immediate assistance to people affected by this hurricane."

While Christian Aid and Relief is working to assess and help with the recent hurricane damage, it is also conducting ongoing rebuilding efforts in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of last fall's Hurricane Maria. Missionary Larry W. Schlomer accepted a call to Puerto Rico in June 2018 to assist in coordinating the rebuilding and repairing of churches and pastors' homes as well as aiding in the ongoing training of our sister church body's future called workers.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief approved a \$150,000 hurricane relief grant for phase one of repair and rebuilding in Puerto Rico, which includes rebuilding the church building in Humacao, repairing the church in Guayama, and repairing pastors' homes. Schlomer reports that rebuilding in Humacao began earlier this fall.

To support WELS Christian Aid and Relief hurricane relief efforts, you can donate online (select "Hurricane Disaster Relief" in the designation field) or send it to WELS Christian Aid and Relief, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr. Waukesha, WI 53188, and designate it for the "Hurricane Fund." If you'd like to volunteer to help with clean up and repair work, visit [wels.net/relief](http://wels.net/relief)