

WELS NEWS

January 2019

Leaders Of ELS, LCMS, And WELS Meet

About 20 leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) met in Florida on Nov. 27-28 to continue the informal discussions begun in 2012.

At this seventh annual meeting, participants updated each other on news from their respective synods. They also spent time discussing the doctrine of creation and its relation to science—a topic about which they found themselves in agreement on the key issues.

Looking ahead to the future, participants debated whether or not it is proper to begin formal doctrinal discussions with a view to restoring fellowship between ELS/WELS and the LCMS. Given the issues that separate us, it was decided that such a move would be premature at this time.

Rather, the group decided to continue with informal discussions, with another meeting planned for December 2019. At this meeting, the group will discuss the doctrine of justification. They also will precisely articulate and commit to writing some of the specific points of controversy between our synods.

These intersynodical discussions, conducted outside of the framework of church fellowship, have been useful in clarifying our synodical positions and in sharing information on topics of mutual interest. This latest meeting was no exception. Many participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to get together and to keep the lines of communication open.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

Ministering to Millennials

In November, WELS Congregational Services launched a new set of resources aimed at helping congregations minister to Millennials, those born from 1980-2000.

“The Commission on Congregational Counseling has worked with so many churches that have identified that the Millennial

generation is opting out of church on a large-scale basis," says Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services and director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling. "I hear it from individuals too. They have a relative in their late twenties who still confesses faith in Jesus but who does not see the benefit in being a member at a church."

Hein continues, "The Ministering to Millennials resources are meant to help congregations think through how they might better retain and gain members from this largest generation in America. However, I think individuals might benefit from it too. It can help them learn how to better understand ways to personally witness to Millennial-aged friends or neighbors. So we are hoping that everyone—congregational leadership and individual Christians—goes to welscongregationalservices.net and utilizes the Ministering to Millennial resources."

Four videos with accompanying discussion guides are available as well as a playbook that outlines 10 important ministry behaviors to consider to retain Millennials in our congregations and when reaching out to share the gospel with them. To view these materials, visit welscongregationalservices.net, choose the "Modules" dropdown menu, and then choose "Discipleship Modules."

For more information about ministering to Millennials, watch this "Together" video update featuring Rev. James Hein, who serves at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis., which has a thriving ministry to Millennials. Hein helped coordinate the video modules on this topic for WELS Congregational Services.

One In Jesus In Asia-Oceania

In early November, 60 Asian national church delegates and guests attended the second meeting of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) Asia-Oceania conference. The CELC comprises 32 member churches worldwide (including WELS), all of which are united by a common faith and confession.

Sponsored by South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) in Hong Kong, the conference brought together people from CELC church bodies in Japan, Indonesia, India, South Korea, East Asia, and Hong Kong as well as from future member churches in Taiwan and the Philippines. Mission partners from WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod also attended.

The conference theme "One in Jesus" was reflected throughout the meeting, including in the papers presented on the historical practice and current practice of the Lord's Supper and on

evangelism. Group discussion after each paper enabled workers to learn from one another's experiences.

One participant noted, "I appreciated the opportunity to talk with missionaries and local workers in other fields and know their struggles and pressures. I really care about what is happening in other countries near mine."

A number of churches shared that there is increasing pressure to suppress Christianity in Asia, but our churches are undeterred. One participant remarked that even though "they try to mow the grass, the grass keeps coming back."

The first Asian regional conference was held in Seoul, South Korea, three years ago. Another Asian regional conference is being planned for 2021. Other regional CELC conferences held in 2018 include a European regional meeting in Plzen, Czech Republic. The next worldwide meeting of the CELC will be held in Seoul, South Korea, in 2020.

To learn more about the CELC, visit celc.info.

An Amazing Mission Opportunity: Grace—Hmong Outreach In Vietnam

WELS has been given the opportunity to take the gospel to the Hmong people living in the country of Vietnam. Not only has the Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC) asked WELS to teach and train its pastors in Lutheran doctrine and practice, but WELS has also been invited by the Vietnamese government to establish a theological training facility in Hanoi.

On Dec. 1, 2018, WELS launched a special synodwide offering to support Hmong outreach in Vietnam. Through this opportunity, God's grace can be shared with the more than 100,000 members who make up the HFC and the 2 million Hmong living in Vietnam and the surrounding countries. The goal of the "Grace—Hmong outreach in Vietnam" offering is to receive gifts totaling \$2 million by June 30, 2019, to fund the land purchase, building construction, and the first two years of operational costs for the theological training facility in Hanoi.

Promotional resources have been created for use in congregations, schools, and other church groups. Learn more about this opportunity in the December 2018 *WELS Connection* and through a special brochure that was mailed to each WELS congregation. Schools can participate by designating mission offerings to "Grace—Hmong outreach in Vietnam."

Many other resources are currently available for download or will be made available during the month of December. These resources include:

- PowerPoint presentation with notes
- Promotional poster
- Bulletin inserts
- Informational text to copy and paste into church bulletins as well as church and school newsletters
- Online version of the December 2018 *WELS Connection*, featuring Hmong outreach in Vietnam
- “Grace—Hmong outreach in Vietnam” logos
- Digital display and PowerPoint graphic
- Digital files of various print pieces: eight-page congregational brochure, four-page informational flyer, and a larger eight-page congregational brochure

Progress updates about the work in Vietnam will be shared through Together newsletter stories, weekly Missions blogs, and through WELS social media accounts. Follow the WELS and WELS Missions pages on Facebook to stay up-to-date.

To learn more about this mission opportunity, visit wels.net/vietnamhmongoutreach.