

# **WELS NEWS**

## **July 2016**

### **Synodical Council April Meeting**

#### **Developing the Ministry Financial Plan (budget) for 2017-2019**

At its April 2016 meeting, the Synodical Council (SC) approved the support forecast. Based on the best available information, the support forecast indicates that the areas of ministry will need to plan for no increase in financial support from the synod's operating budget. Support from Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) is conservatively projected to increase by 0.5 percent in each year of the biennium, with support from other sources projected to be flat. With the assumption of no increase in support from the synod's operating budget, areas of ministry will either need to identify other funding sources or reduce spending. If actual CMO receipts exceed projections or if other support is greater than projected, the SC has the ability to make adjustments to synod support throughout the financial plan development process.

#### **Hymnal project funding**

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) agreed to produce a new hymnal using funds that it had on hand. Those funds are adequate to produce both the hymnal and other accompanying resources that a hymnal requires. The WELS Hymnal Committee and NPH have since identified other worship tools (primarily digital) that would be highly desirable and would result in a more widespread use of the new hymnal. The SC allocated \$400,000 of undesignated funds to the Commission on Worship to be set aside for use for these projects if funding is needed. Actual expenditure of the funds will require the approval of the SC Executive Committee.

#### **Director for Commission on Youth and Family Ministry and Commission on Adult Discipleship**

The 2015 convention approved a resolution that placed the calling of a director for Youth and Family Ministry high on the unfunded priority list in our continuing effort to strengthen congregations and their ministries. Since that time, both the Ministry Committee of the SC and the Conference of Presidents have expressed strong support for calling a director who would serve both the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry as well as the Commission on Adult Discipleship. Because of the many areas in which these two commissions have common tasks, there has been some discussion about combining the two commissions into a single entity.

At its April meeting, the Synodical Council discussed a request to approve this position immediately, using dollars from the commissions' special funds and from the Financial Stabilization Fund to provide funding for the position for the rest of the current biennium. Given the current uncertainties in the financial situation, the SC decided not to

approve the position immediately, but rather to reconsider the proposal in November. Regardless of what decision is made in November, the new position will be given high priority in the planning process as the Ministry Financial Plan for the next biennium is developed.

#### **“One in Christ” debt retirement**

The “One in Christ” debt retirement effort continues to be blessed. As of the end of April, the gifts toward debt retirement nearly reached the \$2 million mark. Some congregations are still in the process of gathering the offering, and the Ministry of Christian Giving, along with the Conference of Presidents, will continue to communicate the importance of the offering until it comes to a close at the end of June 2016. It is assumed that some congregations and individuals will continue to bring offerings for the effort even after the end of June. At its April meeting, the SC determined that if the offering itself does not completely retire the debt, regular payments will continue to be made from the synod’s budget, with the entire debt expected to be eliminated by the 2017 synod convention. Individuals and congregations that have not yet participated are encouraged to do so in the coming weeks and months. Additional envelopes and other resources can be ordered and downloaded at [wels.net/oneinchrist](http://wels.net/oneinchrist).

#### **Synod archives**

At its April 2016 meeting, the SC authorized \$300,000 to be transferred from undesignated unrestricted reserves to the Synod Building Fund. The SC also authorized a modification to the Ministry Financial Plan that would enable these funds to be spent to prepare space for the synod archives and visitor center on the lower level of the Center for Mission and Ministry. The project is expected to be completed this summer, with the actual move of the archives materials scheduled to take place in the Fall.

#### **Compensation Review Committee**

The SC reviewed the Compensation Review Committee’s report of its progress in reviewing the synod’s compensation guidelines. This report includes several ideas for consideration and will be presented to the district conventions this summer for input and reaction. After receiving input from the districts, the committee will submit its final report and recommendations to the SC for consideration. The SC will then forward its recommendations to the synod convention in 2017.

Serving in Christ  
President Mark Schroeder

#### **Latin American Lutherans Meet For First Conference**

Twenty-three men from eight different countries attended the first Latin America regional conference of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) in Medellín, Colombia, April 3–7.

While at the conference, attendees were able to grow together through a series of essays on “The church under the cross.” They also learned about mission work in Spanish-speaking countries and in other areas

around the world and encouraged each other in that gospel ministry. The conference highlighted [academiacrismo.com](http://academiacrismo.com), an online teaching and training tool for Spanish speakers developed by WELS in 2015. Rev. Mike Hartman, field coordinator for Latin America, talked about what is available now as well as discussed future video-based leadership courses. Attendees then were asked to provide feedback on upcoming potential courses.

“We want to get input on how it is going, how we can use this better, and how we can use this to reach more people and plant more churches in Latin America,” says Rev. Nate Seiltz, director of Multi-Language Publications and conference attendee. “It has to be driven by the nationals.”

Attendees—as well as members from Most Holy Trinity, the local congregation sponsoring the conference—also practiced singing new culturally relevant Spanish songs and parts of liturgy that are being developed to add as resources through [Iglesialuteranacrismo.com](http://Iglesialuteranacrismo.com), a live-streamed, Christ-centered worship site.

While attendees were mostly leaders of missions and national church bodies in Latin America that are in fellowship with WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, two attendees—one from Argentina and one from Colombia—were contacts made through Academia Cristo and online worship.

“What was really encouraging to me was [the attendees’] excitement to work together using Academia Cristo to share the gospel wherever they are,” says Seiltz, “and to see them talking with each other about challenges. It’s hard to get that any place else than at a conference like this. And then their realization: ‘We’re not alone. We have other people whom we can connect with, and we can encourage each other.’ ”

The CELC—composed of 29 member churches worldwide—provides a forum for confessional Lutherans who are in fellowship with one another. The next triennial international conference will be held in 2017 in Germany. Learn more about the CELC and our sister church bodies at [www.celc.info](http://www.celc.info).

### **Changes To WELS Investment Funds**

WELS Investment Funds (WIF), which provides investment portfolios for WELS and affiliated organizations, has retained Vanguard Institutional Advisory Services to replace Marquette Associates as its primary investment advisor effective July 1, 2016.

The change is expected to benefit all investors through a significant reduction in both direct and indirect expenses. Ministries will continue to have access to a fixed-income portfolio, an equity portfolio, and a balanced portfolio.

WIF Executive Director Mr. Jim Holm says, “Under the direction of the WELS Investment Funds’ board of directors, Vanguard Institutional

Advisory Services will provide professional oversight for our WELS Funds and access to lower-cost, institutionally priced investment portfolios on an easy-to-use platform, which will allow us to reduce our overall operating expenses.”

Holm, who has served as executive director of WELS Foundation since 2008 and has previously served as executive director of WIF, is now helming both entities. WELS CFO Mr. Todd Poppe says of former WIF executive director Mr. Mark Arnold, “We thank Mark for his many years of faithful service and ask for God’s blessings as he looks for new opportunities to serve.”

The mission of WIF is to strengthen and enhance the ministry of WELS and WELS-affiliated organizations by providing professionally managed portfolios. WIF provides investment vehicles so that funds can be pooled and invested to achieve the desires of the organizations and their donors. WELS Investment Funds are designed primarily for the investment needs of endowment funds, scholarship funds, and charitable trust funds that strengthen and enhance ministries through long-term investing.

Holm says, “Since 1997, WELS Investment Funds has strengthened and enhanced the ministries of WELS and WELS-affiliated organizations by providing cost-effective, professionally managed investment portfolios. Today more than 200 ministries including our synod, congregations, and many area Lutheran high schools are investing their endowments and scholarship funds with WELS Investment Funds.”

To learn more about WELS Investment Funds, call 877-888-8953, e-mail [welsfunds@wels.net](mailto:welsfunds@wels.net), or visit [wels.net/wif](http://wels.net/wif).