

WELS NEWS

July, 2017

MLC Celebrates Graduation

On May 13, 145 students earned degrees marking the completion of their ministerial training at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. This included 29 bachelor of arts (preseminary) degrees, 89 bachelor of science in education degrees (including 16 early childhood education), 5 bachelor of science degrees, and 4 seminary certifications.

In addition, 18 students received their master of science in education degree.

The commencement service was conducted by presiding minister Rev. Paul Koelpin. MLC President Rev. Mark Zarling presented the commencement sermon on the theme, "Courage for the Commission," and Dr. Jeff Wiechman, vice president for academics, assisted with the distribution of diplomas.

The sermon text chosen by the class, John 16:33, states: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

In his sermon, Zarling emphasized where the graduates can look for their strength and courage to face the challenges of this world. He explained: "You've been taught that it's all about Christ's power, not your strength. It's all about Christ's message, not your smarts. It's all about Christ's saving love, not your emotional friendliness. You go forth for one reason: Jesus, always Jesus. As you step forward to carry Jesus' name on your lips and in your lives, the words you choose will bring you courage. Courage is needed, for the task is impossible without the courage Christ provides."

Zarling continued by describing the commission the graduates have received. "It's not just a commission, but the Great Commission. It is a commission to go with the love of Christ to those lost. It is a commission empowered by the love of Christ, a love that found each of us, a love undeserved that brings us to the Father. This is the only commission ever given that has an eternal and unending impact for each and every soul you meet."

He reiterated to the graduates the challenges and the blessings connected to this commission. "It will not be easy. This commission will bring difficulty, hardship, suffering, and perhaps even death. But don't be frightened. It is a commission that will bring you blessing.

Listen to Jesus, and you will always have peace in him. In love Jesus tells you what to expect, so you are prepared with the sword of the Spirit and the power of prayer.”

To view a list of assignments, visit mlc-wels.edu.

A Lifelong Christian Resource

Northwestern Publishing House has released a new edition of Luther’s Catechism. While retaining the strengths of the familiar blue catechism in use for many years, this completely rewritten exposition promotes a lifelong study of the catechism for a new generation.

Rev. Stephen Geiger, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and one of the contributors to the new catechism, says, “The catechism takes divine teachings found in so many places in Scripture’s 66 books and arranges truth in an orderly way, with key Bible verses leading the reader to God’s answers for catechetical questions. Where helpful, lengthier explanations probe and explain key points of understanding.”

New to this edition of the catechism is a section titled “Connections” at the end of each unit. As Rev. Joel Otto, Geiger’s colleague at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and a fellow contributor to the new catechism, notes, “The ‘Connections’ section is meant to be devotional in nature. There is a short paragraph introducing a larger section of Scripture, usually from Bible history. Then, there are a couple of thought questions designed to elicit discussion. A quote from Luther follows and then a few stanzas from a hymn. This is my favorite addition to the new edition. It is my prayer that this can become the basis for home devotion with catechism students and their families or serve people in a lifelong use of the catechism.”

The new catechism also includes color images and diagrams for visual learners. It is available with Bible passages in both English Standard Version and New International Version (2011) translations. A student workbook titled “Catechism Connections” and a downloadable file with the book’s diagrams are available for those who use the book during confirmation instruction. An e-book version of the catechism itself will be released later this year. Other contributors to the new catechism include Rev. Ray Schumacher and Rev. John Braun, both editors at Northwestern Publishing House.

Geiger reminds Christians, “The Small Catechism is for you. It always has been. With this new edition, you can rediscover those treasures that are and, with God’s gracious blessing, always will be the foundation of your faith.”

To learn more and to order your copy, visit nph.net/catechism or call 800-662-6022.

Luther Movie Screenings A Success

Hundreds of WELS congregations and groups have already hosted screenings of the Martin Luther film *A Return to Grace: Luther's Life and Legacy* in their local communities, and hundreds more are planning showings in the upcoming months leading up to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation this October.

Mr. Lee Hitter, director of WELS Communications, says he is thrilled to see WELS congregations take advantage of this opportunity to highlight God's grace and the anniversary of the Reformation in their communities. "The reaction from our members that have seen the film is tremendous," he says. "Every Lutheran should make it a priority to see it on the big screen. Celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation is one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences."

Congregations can still host local screenings of the film. Find out how at wels.net/reformation500.

Northwestern Publishing House is offering many resources connected to the film, including DVDs of the actual movie. Coming out in November, the DVDs are available for preorder now.

Other resources available for preorder include:

- *A Return to Grace* four-week Bible study. This resource will use film segments to help viewers explore the life, times, and importance of Martin Luther. Available early summer.
- *Reformation: Grace, Faith, Scripture* Bible study. This resource includes 12 three-to four-minute vignettes highlighting important truths of the Reformation. The vignettes can be used for a five-minute or a full-length Bible study (both included). They can also be used at the beginning or end of the worship service to celebrate the treasures of our Lutheran heritage. Available early summer.
- *God's Plan for Luther and Me*, a children's film to help children explore what it means to be a Lutheran Christian today as well as a curriculum of classroom activities to go with the film. Available in fall.

Learn more at nph.net/returntograce.

WELS Missionaries' Kids Meet For Retreat

Twenty-three missionary kids (MK)—ranging in age from 16 to 50—along with spouses and children attended a WELS MK Retreat in April. Organized by missionary kids, this retreat offered support and encouragement for adults who grew up in a WELS mission field.

“When you come back from a mission field, your sense of identity can be lost,” says Anna Sherod, a co-organizer of the retreat who spent much of her childhood in Japan. “People who grew up highly mobile and with highly intercultural childhoods have a unique set of challenges for understanding their place in the world.”

Sherod says the retreat is a way to help people process their pasts as they look forward to their future. “We want to provide a way for people to connect and to feel part of a community that understands that unique experience and also unleash people to use their unique experiences and gifts within God’s kingdom now,” she says.

Sena Yerges, a licensed professional counselor at WLCFS–Christian Family Solutions who specializes in missionary family support, agrees. “We’re all different, and we know about some common struggles with third-culture kids,” says Yerges, who grew up in various mission fields. “To be able to get together and acknowledge those differences but also talk about . . . how God has used our backgrounds to his glory is really exciting,” she says. “It’s great to see what comes from this unique upbringing.”

Yerges says retreats like these also offer a sense of belonging. “When MKs get together no matter if they never met before, it feels like an extended family reunion. Everybody just gets everybody else,” she says. “It feels very comforting and relaxing and reassuring. Instead of being the one who is different, you have a sense of belonging that you maybe haven’t had very often in your life.”

At the retreat, attendees discussed their unique challenges and blessings, networked, and worshiped together. They also worked on a collaborative art piece, in which they created individualized pie charts on slices of tree limbs showing all the places where they lived. These pieces will be arranged into an art piece that may be displayed at the Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis.

WELS World Missions helped fund this retreat. “Our World Mission team understands that overseas work is a whole family experience,” says Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of World Missions and also a missionary kid himself. “The effects of the transition to a country and back to a passport country can leave kids reeling in many ways. These retreats give us the chance to offer needed support for these third-culture kids who as WELS members have much to offer the mission of the church.”

If you grew up on a WELS mission field, join the online community at facebook.com/WELSMKs. Learn more about WELS mission work at wels.net/missions.