

# WELS NEWS

July 2018

## **Synodical Council Spring Meeting Recap**

- Through March, congregational offerings are down slightly from the previous year, but the picture will become clearer in May after Lent and Easter offerings have all been received.
- Due to higher enrollment, lower expenses, and blessings on the new Congregational Partnership Grant program, Martin Luther College is projecting a surplus of \$600,000 compared with a deficit of \$600,000, which had been anticipated.
- The Synodical Council (SC) reviewed a report from Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) that outlined financial challenges resulting from lower than planned enrollment, lower gift totals, and several accounting errors that were discovered during the transition between business managers. The SC Executive Committee will be working with the new president of MLS, its governing board, and the Board for Ministerial Education to address these financial challenges. The SC deferred consideration of several capital improvement projects planned as a part of the MLS Foundation's recent capital campaign until the financial challenges are addressed.
- Significant savings were realized due to the 2016 decision to self-insure a portion of the health care costs of synodical workers. These savings were returned to the ministerial education schools, areas of ministry, and departments.
- The SC expressed its thanks to the board and administration of Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) in the way it implemented recently announced changes to NPH operations.
- The SC agreed on how the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the synod's compensation plan will be applied. To prevent sudden decreases in compensation and levels of compensation that would fall below the salaries listed on the salary schedules, the SC determined that all synodical workers will receive no less than the numbers set forth in the salary matrix approved by the synod in convention; 2) the actual salary for a called position will be based on what the calling body has established as its applicable COLA for all workers at that institution; 3) salaries will be adjusted annually only if COLA increases from the previous year; and 4) exceptions to these policies for synodical workers can be granted in unusual cases by the synod president. The Executive Committee of the SC will continue to analyze how these policies will play out in actual practice prior to implementation on July 1, 2018. Salary matrices and a web-based called worker compensation calculator tool is available at [wels.net/cwcompcalc](http://wels.net/cwcompcalc).
- Paul Holzhueter and Mr. Warren Ehke each completed 12 years of faithful service as Synodical Council lay representatives of their districts. We thank them for their service.

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder

## **Pastoral Assignments At Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary**

A senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary was talking to a coworker at his part-time job. The student mentioned that he was about to graduate and would soon learn where he would be serving as a pastor. "What do you mean when you say that you 'will learn' where you will be serving?" The student replied, "In our synod, you are assigned to your first congregation; I don't get to decide where I will go." Needless to say, the coworker found that incredible.

What a blessing it is, and what an expression of faith, that our pastor and teacher candidates for ministry don't insist on deciding where they will go. They put themselves into God's hands, and the Lord of the church, working through his church, calls them to serve in the very place where he wants them to serve.

We experienced this gracious working of the Holy Spirit on May 24, when 34 men were assigned (or reassigned) as pastors and 26 men were assigned as vicars. All available pastoral candidates were assigned. In fact, after the assignments were made more than 40 requests for graduates could not be filled.

Anyone who has ever attended a call service at Martin Luther College or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is moved by the way that God provides workers for his harvest field. And even if you were not able to attend, you joined with our entire synod in thanking God for his gift of called workers.

With the many pastoral vacancies that remain, we are reminded of the important role that each of us plays in encouraging young men to consider preparing for the pastoral ministry and in praying for more ministers of the gospel. The harvest is still plenty, and the workers are still few.

A complete list of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary assignments can be viewed at [wls.wels.net](http://wls.wels.net).

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder

## **Changes At Northwestern Publishing House**

Last week Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) announced that it will be closing its Milwaukee retail store in October. While it's sad to say good-bye to this brick and mortar store that served thousands of WELS members over the years, we can be thankful that the scripturally sound books and church resources will still be available to purchase online at [nph.net](http://nph.net).

It was becoming increasingly evident that our publishing house was being affected the same way so many other Christian bookstores, and retailers in general, have been—more and more people are making their purchases online. In response to the challenging realities they face, Northwestern Publishing House had to make some difficult decisions with the objective of exercising good stewardship of its limited resources.

NPH remains committed to its mission of developing biblically sound, Christ-centered, and trustworthy resources and will continue to publish new books, music, and other materials for our pastors, teachers, and WELS members. Last year, NPH launched a newly redesigned website that makes it easier to search for and find the books and products you value. If

you haven't done so lately, I'd encourage you to visit [nph.net](http://nph.net) to see all it has to offer.

### **Review Of Scouting Completed**

The Conference of Presidents was asked to review the current Scouting organization to determine whether Scouting has changed in a way that would remove the objectionable features.

Our synod has consistently voiced its objections to Scouting for several reasons:

- Scouting promotes a religion that contradicts the Scriptures. A Scout is to "do his duty to God" without the means or motivation that faith in Christ provides.
- Scouting urges each Scout to "do his duty to God" without naming who this God is or urging that honor be given alone to the triune God of the Scriptures.
- Scouting promotes prayers, devotions, and worship that refuse to insist that Christ is the only way to salvation and that without him there is no salvation.
- Scouting promotes a religious unionism that does not distinguish between Christian denominations nor between Christian and non-Christian churches.

In a 12-lesson study on Scouting prepared under the auspices of the Conference of Presidents for use in our congregations, Scripture and quotations taken directly from Scouting resources point out that essentially nothing in Scouting has changed. In fact, some changes in the organization have added new concerns. Scouting has taken the step to open its doors to participants and leaders who espouse a view of sexuality that contradicts the Scriptures.

While public documents and manuals of the Scouting organization have been scrubbed and sanitized to remove many references to Scouting's religious nature and practices, it is evident that in substance nothing has changed. Scouting still contains religious elements and espouses a religious philosophy that runs counter to the Scriptures and promotes the worship of a deity that is not the God who has revealed himself to us in his Word.

The Bible study can be found online at [welscongregationalservices.net](http://welscongregationalservices.net).

Parents and congregations that are looking to provide their children with an experience similar to Scouting (but based on biblical principles that are consistent with our beliefs), should consider Lutheran Pioneers or Lutheran Girl Pioneers. These are WELS organizations that provide materials and resources to enable congregations to conduct a ministry that features activities, skills training, leadership development, and devotional opportunities to boys and girls within our fellowship. Your congregation may already have a chapter; if not, anyone interested in starting a chapter can learn more at [lutheranpioneers.org](http://lutheranpioneers.org) or [lgp.org](http://lgp.org).

### **New Director For The Commission On Evangelism**

Rev. Eric Roecker has accepted the call to serve as the director for the

WELS Commission on Evangelism, a ministry of WELS Congregational Services. He will transition to this new role in August, replacing Rev. Mike Hintz who has retired.

Roecker has been serving as pastor at Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis., for five years. Prior to serving at Pilgrim, he served Resurrection, Chesapeake, Va., for 15 years.

Roecker says, "One of the things that affected my decision to accept the call was that I had the opportunity to serve in an outlying district as well as the opportunity to serve here in the Midwest in a congregation with a grade school. I thought that's probably a good thing for this position, to have experienced both, because I've discovered there's some major differences in the area of outreach between those two ministry settings."

He says he's looking forward to working with a broader segment of WELS members and energizing and helping them share the good news of Jesus.

"Every WELS member wants to evangelize, and we know that because Christ lives in them and Christ wants us to evangelize. All of us want to tell others about Jesus, but there are things that get in the way of that, whether it's our own sinful natures or our fear of not having answers or not knowing how to do it. The two things I'd like to encourage the members of WELS to do are, first of all, just start reaching out. As you do it, you'll learn how to do it better through experience. And second, prepare yourselves to do it. That's where we hope we can help by providing resources to help people prepare to evangelize," says Roecker.

Roecker will continue to reside in Menomonee Falls with his wife and two children.

### **Changes At Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary**

Rev. Paul O. Wendland, president at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., has announced that he will transition from the position of president into a purely teaching role at the end of the 2018–19 school year.

"I am grateful to the Lord Jesus for the privilege of serving him as president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for the past 15 years, and I look forward, as he wills, to go on serving him by teaching full time. I pray the next year will allow for an orderly transition," says Wendland.

Wendland has served on the seminary faculty since 2001 and was called to serve as president in 2004. He has served congregations in Mwembezhi, Zambia; Hopkins, Michigan; and Salt Lake City, Utah. From 1994 to 2001 he taught at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis., and Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

"A grateful synod gives thanks to the Lord for Paul Wendland's leadership as president," says Rev. Paul Prange, administrator for WELS Ministerial Education. "Please join me in praying for God's blessing as seminary students continue to benefit from his insight and encouragement as a full-time professor for many years to come."

A call for nominations to fill the seminary president position will be sent out soon.