

# **WELS NEWS**

## **June, 2017**

### **2017 Spring Meeting Of The Conference Of Presidents**

The Conference of Presidents (COP) met for its regular spring meeting on April 3-5 at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis.

Some of the items discussed or decided by the Conference of Presidents include:

- The COP discussed various matters of doctrine and practice and adopted several guidelines to assist district presidents as they advise congregations in these matters.
- The COP is continuing to work with the Commission on Lutheran Schools to finalize a study of how the church can make use of the talents and skills of women in administrative roles while remaining faithful to the biblical principles of authority and headship. The study will be completed in the coming months.
- Last year the COP held a meeting with the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to discuss areas of mutual interest. Since the first meeting was viewed to be beneficial and productive, a second such meeting will be held in May and is likely to become an annual event.
- The COP is working with Martin Luther College and the Commission on Lutheran Schools to develop ways to identify and train teachers to serve as principals in our Lutheran elementary schools. The goal is to have a training system in place that, in the near future, will make it possible not to assign candidates as principals.
- The COP received a report from Rev. Paul Prange regarding recent discussions about how to provide a sufficient number of qualified teachers to serve in urban schools. The committee addressing this matter will continue its work.
- The COP agreed with the area Lutheran high schools that pastors serving on the faculties of high schools be eligible for divine calls in the same calling window that applies to teacher-trained faculty members. The calling window assures schools that faculty members will not be called to another school in the middle of a school year, creating staffing problems for the schools they currently serve.
- The COP continued its discussion about the importance of having voters' assemblies in congregations. While the COP recognizes the benefit and value of having voters' assemblies, it also recognizes that how the voters' assembly functions can vary from congregation to congregation. District presidents will continue to provide guidance and counsel to congregations as they consider these matters.
- Each district president will be featured in a video presentation to his

district highlighting the blessings that God is granting to our synod's mission and ministry and encouraging congregations to support this work with growing Congregation Mission Offerings. The COP also reviewed plans for establishing a WELS Mission and Ministry Sunday in the fall of each year.

- The COP has been working with WELS Communications to develop ways to better inform and prepare delegates to the synod convention.

The COP extended the following divine calls:

- Professor David Sellnow as director of discipleship (serving the Commission for Youth and Family Ministry and the Commission on Adult Discipleship).
- Scott Wagner, Rev. Philip Gieschen, and Rev. Randall Johnson as Christian giving counselors.
- Rick Kneser as a Christian giving counselor (provisional call renewed for one year).
- Rev. John Graf, Mr. Gerry Heckmann, Rev. Michael Dietz, and Rev. Steven Staude as Christian giving counselors (semi-retired).

As it does at each meeting, the COP also reviewed the number of pastor and teacher vacancies in preparation for the May assignment meetings. As the vacancy list grows, the district presidents will continue to be encouraging congregations and individuals to encourage young people to consider preparing for the ministry.

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder

### **MLC Quartet To Sing National Anthem For WELS Night at Miller Park**

The Milwaukee Brewers have selected four students from Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., to sing the national anthem for the fourth annual WELS Night at Miller Park on Aug. 10.

The quartet members of "Four Times the Charm" include Nic Gartner, Carl Boeder, Luke Dorn, and Jacob Ungemach. Each of the young men had a similar reaction to performing in front of more than 40,000 people. "Honestly, the idea of singing in front of so many people is terrifying, but at the same time, I couldn't be any more excited to use my God-given singing ability to praise him, as well as salute this country," says Nic Gartner.

Jacob Ungemach adds, "I was so excited when I found out we were selected. It is an amazing opportunity to represent our school and use our musical gifts, and I'm looking forward to standing out on that field and singing in front of that crowd. It's gonna be nerve wracking, but it will be amazing to sing in front of all those fans."

In addition to the quartet, Prof. Steve Thiesfeldt, vice president at MLC and former MLC baseball coach, will throw out the ceremonial first pitch.

Organize your group and plan to join us for the Milwaukee Brewers' game against the Minnesota Twins. Game time is 7:10 p.m. The Brewers created a poster to assist congregations in promoting the game to their members.

"Thousands of WELS members have enjoyed an evening of baseball, fun, and fellowship the last three times we held this event," says Lee Hitter, director of WELS Communications. "Since the Brewers are playing the Twins, it seemed only appropriate to highlight MLC, our college of ministerial education located in New Ulm, Minn., in the pre-game festivities."

The Brewers are again offering WELS members up to 50 percent off the price of tickets. Seating will be along the first base line and in a block for WELS members. The pricing is Field Outfield sections 106 – 109 for \$21/ticket, Loge Outfield sections 206 – 208 for \$17/ticket, or Terrace Reserved sections 409 – 412 for \$9/ticket. The ticket service fee will be waived for groups of 20+ if you contact Greg Souza at 414-902-4492 or [Greg.souza@brewers.com](mailto:Greg.souza@brewers.com). The deadline to purchase tickets is Aug. 3, 2017.

Buy tickets online

### **Assignment Days Approach**

The next two weeks will bring two high points of the year at both Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. At both of our schools, students will graduate and receive their degrees. Probably even more notable, at both schools candidates for the public ministry in WELS will receive their first calls on Assignment Day.

At Martin Luther College, students enrolled in the pastor track will graduate from college, well prepared to continue their training for the pastoral ministry at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Students graduating from the teacher and staff ministry programs will present themselves for assignment. By doing so, these graduates express their willingness to go wherever the Lord of the church sends them through calls issued through the synod's Assignment Committee.

At Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, graduates will be assigned to their first calls in the pastoral ministry, while those who have completed two years of the seminary will be assigned as vicars.

At both schools, it appears that there are fewer candidates than needed to fill requests. It's the double responsibility of the Assignment Committee to assign candidates to places of the greatest need and to places where the skills and abilities of the candidates can best be used.

In the coming week, we will be praying fervently. We will thank God for providing well-trained and willing workers for his harvest field. We will be asking God to send his Holy Spirit to guide the decisions of the

Assignment Committee. And we will be praying that God would give these new workers strength, wisdom, and courage as they answer his call.

Both assignment services can be viewed live online. Find times and livestream links at [wels.net/events](http://wels.net/events).

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder

### **Grow in Grace ministry retreats held**

From April 19–21, Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, hosted over 140 people for the sixth annual Celebration of Ministry retreats.

Held at the Riverwalk in San Antonio, Tex., three retreats ran simultaneously for pastors and their wives who were celebrating 3, 10, and 25 years since graduating from the seminary.

These retreats build relationships with ministry peers and offer encouragement through worship, Bible studies, workshops, and presentations. Bible study topics covered Lessons at the Burning Bush, Philippians, and 1 Peter. Separate and joint workshops were offered for pastors and wives and covered topics such as time management, caring for others and yourself, focusing on your own gifts, and financial challenges and opportunities.

Though these workshops and Bible studies are a key part of the retreats, fellowship with classmates, worship services, and a beautiful location also play a part in the experience. Renewed in Grace attendee Rev. Brian Hackmann shares, “The Celebration of Ministry retreat was a great experience. My wife and I looked forward to this opportunity for some time, and I’m sure we’ll look fondly back for some time to come. Reconnecting with classmates is great. Reconnecting and recharging for future ministry is invaluable. Reconnecting with Jesus through Word and sacrament was a forever blessing.”

Next year, a fourth retreat will be added for those celebrating 35 years in the ministry. The 2018 retreats will take place in San Antonio from April 18–20 for the graduating classes of 1983, 1993, 2008, and 2015.