

WELS NEWS **March 2016**

Conference Of Presidents Holds Its Winter Meeting

The Conference of Presidents (COP) met for its winter meeting on Jan. 11-15. Here are some of the highlights:

- The COP said farewell to Nebraska District President Rev. Earle Treptow, who was attending his last meeting before beginning his work as a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Rev. Phil Hirsch is serving as the interim district president. Rev. Joel Zank, president of the Northern Wisconsin District, was appointed to replace Treptow as a COP representative on the Synodical Council.
- With five months remaining in the One in Christ debt retirement effort, \$1.4 million had been received from congregations and individuals (the total is now above \$1.5 million). The district presidents will continue to encourage congregations to continue this effort through the end of June.
- The COP authorized the appointment of a special committee to discuss the work of the Ministry of Christian Giving and to bring recommendations for any changes to the COP. The review is not in response to any problem but is simply an effort to be sure that the Ministry of Christian Giving is functioning in the most beneficial way.
- The COP resolved that a special committee will review the staff ministry program, especially with the purpose of clarifying definitions and policies and ensuring consistency throughout the synod in how staff ministers are trained, called, and utilized.
- The COP has asked the synod president to bring recommendations for ways to improve the preparation of delegates for synod conventions.
- The COP adopted “364 Days of Thanksgiving” (developed by Rev. Andrew Schroer) as the synod’s stewardship emphasis for 2016.
- There are 81 vacancies for full-time pastor positions, with 71 of those in congregations. The remaining 10 are vacant missionary, professor, or other pastor-trained positions. This number of vacant pastor positions is still well below the level at which it would become a concern.
- The 2015 synod convention passed a resolution asking the Synodical Council to give high priority to the calling of a

director for Youth and Family Ministry. After consultation with the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry and the Commission on Adult Discipleship, the COP was convinced that a director should be called to serve as director of both commissions. The COP is asking that the Synodical Council give this position high priority on the list of unfunded programs.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

Play Ball!

The third annual WELS Night at Miller Park will be held Fri., July 29, 2016. Mark your calendars and plan to join thousands of WELS members for the Milwaukee Brewers' game against the Pittsburgh Pirates. Game time is 7:10 p.m.

The Brewers are again offering WELS members 50 percent off the price of tickets. Seating will be in a block for WELS members. The pricing is Field Outfield Box for \$21/ticket, Loge Outfield Box for \$17/ticket or Terrace Reserved for \$9/ticket. The web link to purchase discounted tickets for WELS Night at Miller Park will be available in March.

Last year more than 3,400 members enjoyed an evening of baseball and fellowship together as they watched the Brewers defeat the Philadelphia Phillies.

New Weekly Devotions For Teens

New in 2016, the WELS Commission on Youth and Family is introducing "Transformed: Devotions connecting teens to Christ," a weekly devotion tailored specifically for the Christian teenager.

Rev. Nathan Bourman, a member of the committee producing the devotions, says, "We recognize a need to address devotions and topics pertinent to the lives of teens. They face unique challenges and we want to try to bring God's transforming Word to them. We recognize the challenges and changes in their lives and want to connect them to the one thing that never changes."

Each Sunday, a new devotion is published online at wels.net/transformed. Or, they can be delivered via e-mail by subscribing at wels.net/subscribe.

Bourman says, "These devotions could be used simply to share and pass on to the teens and youth leaders for their own personal devotions. That's really the intended purpose. But beyond that

simple purpose, they could also be used in group settings and perhaps could even be a starting point for a Bible study.”

The devotions for teenagers join an offering of devotions already available on wels.net that were developed to meet WELS members’ needs. The most popular, WELS Daily Devotion, reaches tens of thousands of people every day via e-mail, [facebook.com/welslutherans](https://www.facebook.com/welslutherans), and the WELS mobile app. Women’s devotions, weekly devotions for military service people, and weekly devotions for early childhood educators also are available at wels.net/devotions.

Global Hmong Committee Meets

Members of the Global Hmong Committee were in Thailand Jan. 5-8 to join Hmong national pastors and lay leaders for a leader conference in Chiang Rai. The purpose of the conference was to share ministry developments both in Thailand and the United States, to introduce the concept of the Global Hmong Committee, and to discuss further opportunities on working together.

“Our Hmong brothers [in Thailand] were appreciative that we came to hear what they are doing and that we shared the purpose and background for the Global Hmong Committee,” says Rev. Keith Free, Home Mission administrator and chairman of the Global Hmong Committee.

This committee, authorized as a one-year pilot project by the Joint Mission Council in April 2015, “works with all Hmong ministry and is considering recommendations as to where funds for Hmong ministry should be spent,” says Free. Representatives from both Home and World Missions are on the committee, including two U.S. Hmong pastors. Developing committees like this signifies a new focus for the Joint Mission Council, which is working to minimize geographical borders and instead work on reaching a certain culture or “people group.”

While at the conference, the Global Hmong Committee shared its plan to call a Hmong Asian developer to work with Hmong congregations in Thailand and other Asian countries. This person would work with Missionary Ken Pasch, who currently is the mission’s field coordinator.

Free says that even though they have had seminary training, Hmong pastors in Thailand have little practical experience in being a pastor. Most also support themselves through farming and need guidance as they work to share the gospel with those in their villages. “It’s a

good time to transition to having a Hmong-speaking individual who can help them take ministry to the next level,” says Free.

Besides working with Hmong pastors in Thailand, the Hmong Asian developer also will spend time training and working with Hmong contacts in Vietnam and East Asia. He will live in the United States and develop training materials when he isn't traveling to Asia for his work.

Twenty-one Hmong pastors, evangelists, and lay leaders from Thailand and nearby areas attended the conference in January along with the Global Hmong Committee and several others. “My favorite part of the trip was the opening devotion,” says Free. “Even though I don't know the Hmong language, it was singing the Hmong hymn that was projected on the screen and just being together with these brothers in Christ, realizing what they've all gone through and how the Lord has brought them into the Christian fellowship and how we're Christian brothers.”

Worldwide in WELS, there are 25 Hmong pastors who serve eight ministries in the United States and 15 congregations and preaching stations in Thailand and the surrounding area.