

WELS NEWS

May 2019

Recommendations For Church Fellowship

One of the highlights of this summer's 65th Biennial Synod Convention will be the formal declaration and recognition of fellowship with two confessional Lutheran church bodies. The 2019 synod convention will be held July 29 – Aug. 1, 2019, at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

The Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ – Kenya (LCMC – Kenya) was formed when the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya began to tolerate false teachings. A group of Kenyan pastors broke away and began searching for a confessional Lutheran church body. In 2015, Rev. Mark Onunda of the LCMC – Kenya met at length with the Doctrinal Committee of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa – Zambia Synod (LCCA – Zambia), a former WELS mission and now our sister synod. The LCCA – Zambia synod declared formal fellowship with the LCMC – Kenya last September. The WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations will be recommending to the synod convention that WELS also formally declare fellowship with the LCMC – Kenya.

The Christian Lutheran Evangelical Church in Taiwan began as a WELS mission and is now an independent Lutheran Church body that has always been in fellowship with WELS. Because this church is now independent, the Commission on Inter-Church Relations is recommending that the synod in convention formally recognize our fellowship with the Christian Lutheran Evangelical Church in Taiwan. Representatives from each church body will address the convention and make presentations that will familiarize the delegates with these church bodies that will be recognized formally as a part of our fellowship.

We thank God for continuing to enlarge our fellowship with Lutheran Christians around the world.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

New Task Force Focuses On Special Education

A new 20-member Special Education Task Force has been formed to provide special education resources and support to teachers and students.

“Our goal is to lay out a common, reliable, and researched path for identifying and supporting learners who struggle in academics and

behavior,” says Ms. Kelli Green, a special education professor at Martin Luther College (MLC). “How do we support these children as well as provide school leaders and teachers with the support systems they need to offer this assistance?”

The task force will be researching the special education services already happening in WELS schools as well as the needs. It will also be exploring how to educate current students as well as administrators and teachers already in WELS schools about the resources available to help those with special needs, including ways to collaborate with one another and with public schools.

“We’re looking at how we can provide more support to our schools so more kids can hear the gospel at our schools on a daily basis,” says Mr. James Rademan, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools. The group includes representatives from the Commission on Lutheran Schools, MLC, Wisconsin Lutheran College, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Bethany Lutheran College, Jesus Cares Ministries, and Christian Educators for Special Education, along with special education teachers from WELS area Lutheran high schools and Lutheran elementary schools.

Currently MLC offers two special education programs. Undergraduates can receive an Academic and Behavioral Specialist (ABS) Minnesota state teaching licensure, and graduates can return to pursue a master of science in education with a special education emphasis. Seventeen students are in the undergraduate program, and 12 are in the master’s program. MLC is working on adding a master of special education in learning disabilities.

Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis., offers special education undergraduate and master’s degree majors resulting in cross-categorical special education licensure. Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., also offers an ABS undergraduate major as well as a post-baccalaureate program for ABS licensure.

For more information about the task force, contact James Rademan, director of WELS Lutheran Schools, at jim.rademan@wels.net.

Huebner Added To Line-Up For WELS Night

WELS First Vice President Rev. James Huebner will throw out the ceremonial first pitch for the Milwaukee Brewers’ game against the San Francisco Giants on Fri., July 12, 2019. Game time is 7:10 p.m. “What a thrill to throw out the first pitch, and all the more because those of us who are big Brewers fans are so excited for this season,” says Huebner, pastor at Grace, Milwaukee.

The popular WELS Night T-shirts are available to order for \$6, and for the first time, in both youth and adult sizes. Imagine thousands of WELS members wearing the brightly colored T-shirt, creating a sea of blue at the sixth annual WELS Night at Miller Park.

The Brewers are again offering WELS members up to 50 percent off the price of tickets. Seating will be along the third base line this year and in a block for WELS members. The pricing is Field Outfield Box sections 128–131 for \$21/ticket, Loge Outfield Box sections 229–232 for \$17/ticket, or Terrace Reserved sections 436–437 for \$9/ticket. The ticket service fee will be waived for groups of 20-plus if you contact Greg Souza at 414-902-4492 or greg.souza@brewers.com. Tickets can be purchased at brewers.com/wels. T-shirts can be ordered at welsnight2019.orderpromos.com.

A Personal Approach To Sharing Faith

In November 2018, Northwestern Publishing House released the book *Quick to Listen: Understanding Viewpoints that Challenge Your Faith*. This new title prepares readers to share their faith with Christian compassion as they encounter evolutionists, atheists, Bible skeptics, and members of the LGBTQ community in their daily lives.

Through the book's written accounts and exclusive interviews, individuals from these four groups share their stories to explain why they hold their particular beliefs. The readers and pastor-authors then consult Scripture as they reflect on these challenging experiences and perspectives. Together, they look to God for the guidance and understanding they need to share the message of salvation with these groups.

Rev. Christopher Doerr, Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis., is one of the authors of *Quick to Listen*. He is joined by Rev. Samuel Degner, professor of evangelism and New Testament at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.; Rev. Nick Schmoller, professor of theology and foreign language at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn.; and Rev. Luke Thompson, pastor at St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

When writing this book, Doerr often thought back to his time as a student at a secular college. There he learned that opening up about his faith with those who identify as members of the groups featured in this book was much more than a one-sided conversation.

"'Friendship evangelism' is knowing how to listen and ask questions, not just responding with what's in your heart," Doerr says. "We need to be in touch with people's doubts and concerns regarding Christianity."

With this in mind, Doerr and the other authors aim to make *Quick to Listen* a tool to help readers show Christlike care for the people who challenge Christianity. The readers' efforts to share the good news of Christ can then be seen as what they truly are: expressions of that care and not simply counter arguments.

Rev. Mark Paustian, professor of English and Hebrew at MLC, wrote the foreword to *Quick to Listen*. He uses the text to teach

apologetics classes—courses that focus on defending Christianity against differing beliefs.

"I'm deeply concerned for the faith of my students, and I need to be confident that the study we're taking up together is truly edifying to their souls," Paustian says. "I'm convinced *Quick to Listen* has been. I can say our discussions are exciting, even profound. I think there are countless Christians out there who hunger for such an experience."

Paustian appreciates that *Quick to Listen* approaches apologetics through studies of real people. He believes this practical and human element is critical to sharing the gospel effectively.

"These accounts and interviews impress upon readers the need to understand people, not just worldly issues and arguments," he explains. "The key is first to invest enough time trying to understand what's really going on with the particular person God has put in front of us in a given moment. *Quick to Listen* makes that simple idea come alive."

You can learn more about [*Quick to Listen*](#), read a [sample](#), and purchase the book online at nph.net.

Listen To WELS Daily Devotion On Alexa

The audio version of [WELS Daily Devotion](#) can now be added to Amazon Alexa's "Flash Briefing" function. If you have an Echo, Echo Dot, Echo Show, etc. you can set up a "flash briefing" that plays through a list of available items, or "skills" of your choosing. You can hear news from NPR, the local weather forecast, a daily joke, and almost anything else you can imagine. Once you have it set up you can just ask Alexa to "play my flash briefing" or "what's in the news?" There are [other commands](#) you can use as well. CNET put together a [nice article](#) on how to enable this feature.

You can now add WELS Daily Devotion to that lineup. Each day WELS provides a three- to five-minute devotion based on a Bible passage. These devotions are written by WELS pastors across the country and globe. They are then "read" by a few individuals within the [WELS Congregational Services](#) team. What a great way to put technology to work for you as you sit over your morning coffee or get ready for work. In your Amazon Alexa app on your smartphone (or <https://alexa.amazon.com> on your computer) go to settings, then Flash Briefing, then "add content." You can then search for "WELS Daily Devotion."

If you do have an Echo (perhaps there was one in your stocking) and decide to use this "skill," be sure to leave a review in the app. This will increase the likelihood of it being found by others, who can then also hear the Good News! Look for more skills in the near future including our "Verse of the Day" and "Through The Bible" readings.