

WELS NEWS

October, 2017

New Directors Begin Their Work

One of the main purposes of *the synod* as described in its constitution is “to extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran church by assisting and counseling in every appropriate way the pastors, teachers, and congregations” of the synod. One way in which this is done is through the various commissions that are a part of Congregational Services.

Two of those commissions have recently been blessed with new directors who will serve at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry. Rev. Jon Hein, who has served as the director for the Commission for Congregational Counseling (CCC) but has been located at the congregation he had been serving, is completing his move to the Waukesha, Wis., area where he will continue his work as director of the CCC. In that role, he will serve not only as the director of CCC, but also as the coordinator for all the commissions of Congregational Services as they work together to help congregations carry out their local ministries.

Two other commissions (Adult Discipleship and Youth and Family Ministry) will also welcome a new leader who will serve as the director of both commissions. Rev. Donn Dobberstein recently accepted the call to serve as the Director of Discipleship and will be relocating to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry in the coming weeks.

These two calls demonstrate the importance of the role that the synod plays—not in carrying out the actual ministries, which are done at the local level, but in helping congregations to evaluate their ministry needs and in providing the resources that will help them do that. The CCC will be instrumental in helping congregations assess ministry needs, challenges, and opportunities. The Commissions on Adult Discipleship and Youth and Family Ministry will focus on helping congregations address ministry needs to adults, families, and children.

As our synod strives to help congregations to serve people of all ages with the saving gospel, we pray that God would bless the work of these new leaders and their commissions.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

Relief Efforts Underway In Texas

Pam Noldan, a member at Risen Savior, Austin, Tex., was excited that there was something she could do to help. "When I saw the request for volunteers, I thought we can actually do this. Yes, we can help!"

Pam and her husband Lars are two of the more than 35 WELS members from the greater Austin and Dallas/Fort Worth area who traveled to Edna and Victoria, Tex., Aug. 31-Sept. 3, to offer support and relief to those communities which were affected by Hurricane Harvey.

"God has visited us with a burden in our region, and we want to fulfill the love of Christ by carrying each other's burdens," says Rev. Donald Patterson, South Central district president.

These volunteers partnered with members of Redeemer, a dual-site ministry with worship in both Edna and Victoria, to address the critical needs of the congregation's members, their friends and family, and also the community. Wind damage, downed trees, and loss of electricity for a long period of time are just some of the issues these communities are dealing with.

"We're there to help the local congregation. But they don't just want to serve their own; they want to impact the community—to shine Christ's light," says Rev. Daron Lindemann, pastor at Holy Word, Pflugerville, Tex., and district relief coordinator.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is assisting with this local effort, including sending several Christian Aid and Relief trailers filled with generators, chain saws, and other relief supplies and equipment to use for the clean-up. Local Texas congregation members donated water, cleaning supplies, and food to help those in need in those communities.

The relief team responded to over 50 emergency requests in Edna and Victoria. While many came from Redeemer members, the word spread quickly that their church was actively responding with a relief team. Friends, neighbors, and members of the community called in requests as well.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief also has already sent \$25,000 to help address immediate needs of the congregations and members affected by the hurricane and the flooding.

Lindemann says, "Thank God for our eager and willing volunteers, for safety throughout the weekend at relief sites, and for our witness to Christ's love. The effort in Edna and Victoria is winding down, and our need to respond to Houston is us upon us. This is the next area of relief work."

This is just the start of the relief efforts following Hurricane Harvey; as flood waters recede allowing access into the Houston area, efforts will be focused on Houston-area congregations that are dealing with the effects of catastrophic flooding in the area. Some locations got more than 50 inches of rain from Harvey.

A representative from WELS Christian Aid and Relief will be meeting with churches and leaders in the affected areas this week. "After the

meetings, then we'll determine who needs help and what help that would be," says Rev. Robert Hein, chairman of WELS Christian Aid and Relief. "Texas helps Texas. They're not waiting for us to come and rescue them; they are already reaching out to help their brothers and sisters in need. We always prefer to do a local relief effort and give these people the resources and the tools they need."

As Christian Aid and Relief considers how to best mobilize volunteers as they meet with local leaders, Hein says those who are interested in volunteering can sign up online at wels.net/relief or contact Rev. Richard Warnecke, a WELS Christian Aid and Relief committee member, at 262-424-8792; pastorwarnecke@christpewaukee.org.

To promote good coordination of efforts, please direct questions about hurricane relief to Warnecke or to Hein, 262-334-7881; revrhein@gmail.com, rather than to local Texas congregations

Hein says WELS Christian Aid and Relief is not shipping supplies or donated items to Texas at this time. "If you wish to support this relief effort, the best way is to direct financial gifts to WELS Christian Aid and Relief and designate the Hurricane Fund," he says. WELS Christian Aid and Relief will then provide funding for supplies and relief efforts in coordination with the local pastors in the affected areas.

Donate to Hurricane Harvey relief online at wels.net/give or by sending checks earmarked for WELS Christian Aid and Relief Hurricane Harvey to WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr., Waukesha, WI 53188.

Next Interactive Faith Features Martin Luther

The next Interactive Faith online Bible study will begin Wed., Oct. 4, and run every Wednesday through Nov. 8. The study will stream live twice each Wednesday at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. (central). The online Bible studies are a great opportunity to get together as a group or to participate individually in a synod-wide Bible study.

The upcoming study is titled "Luther's Lasting Impact," and will be led by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor Joel Otto.

Otto says, "The fact that the world is marking the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of the 95 Theses says something about the lasting impact of the Reformation. This is especially true for us who call ourselves Lutherans. What we understand—and the world often misses—is that Luther's Reformation was theological. Luther recognized that the problems in the church stemmed from faulty teaching."

This Bible study will examine some of Luther's key theological emphases and note how they impacted the life of the church in areas like his translation of the Bible into the language of the people, education and his catechisms, worship, and everyday Christian living.

"Luther's theological emphases, rooted in Scripture, continue to impact the life of the church today and the way we, as Lutheran Christians, live our faith in the face of 21st century challenges," says Otto.

To join the study, visit wels.net/interactivefaith.

MLC Highlighted During WELS Night At Miller Park

More than 2,600 WELS members and their guests—including several hundred from Minnesota—converged on Milwaukee for the fourth annual WELS Night at Miller Park. “Since the Brewers were playing the Minnesota Twins, it seemed only fitting to showcase Martin Luther College (MLC), the WELS college of ministerial education located in New Ulm, Minn., during the pregame festivities,” says Mr. Lee Hitter, WELS director of communications.

MLC Vice President Steve Thiesfeldt, wearing an MLC Knights baseball uniform, threw a looping curve-ball for his ceremonial first pitch. “The opportunity to interact with family, friends, and WELS members before, during, and after the game was something I’ll never forget,” says Thiesfeldt. “Even conversations with strangers provided a chance to share who we are as a church body. I hope this excellent fellowship and outreach opportunity continues for years to come.”

After Thiesfeldt’s pitch was thrown for a strike, four students from MLC were invited to sing the national anthem. The quartet members of Four Times the Charm—which included Nicolas Gartner, Carl Boeder, Luke Dorn, and Jacob Ungemach—harmonized their beautiful rendition of the anthem before a crowd of 34,000 fans. “I never could have imagined representing such a wonderful school and synod by using my God-given talents in this way. Even days afterward, we’ve been showered with compliments, blessings, and well wishes. Words could never describe how blessed we’ve been through this experience,” says Gartner. The positive reaction to their performance on social media overwhelmed the group. “This was a dream come true for our group. It was just a wonderful night to catch up with other WELS members, enjoy the ballpark experience, and cheer for your favorite team,” says Dorn.

Another highlight of the evening was the more than 1,000 members wearing WELS Night at Miller Park t-shirts. “To see so many members proudly wearing their WELS shirts in the stands was a terrific opportunity to let the people of Milwaukee know and ask about WELS,” says Hitter. “We plan to offer the same royal blue shirt again for next year’s game.”

The Brewers junior announcer for the evening was 10-year-old Noah Bauer, a fifth grade student from Our Redeemer Lutheran in Madison. After his stellar performance on the microphone, he may have a promising future in broadcasting. “I was a little bit nervous about being in front of that many people, but once it got started I was fine. It was definitely one of the coolest things I’ve ever had the chance to do,” says Bauer.

The Brewers ended up being the perfect hosts to our Minnesota neighbors, losing to the Twins 7-2.