

WELS NEWS

September 2018

The Vicar Year Begins

Those who are training to be doctors spend many years preparing for that work. Intensive study takes place in the classroom as future physicians learn about human anatomy, diagnosing diseases, and the proper use of available medications. But they can't become doctors with book knowledge alone. Before they become fully qualified physicians, they spend time as interns, gaining hands-on practical knowledge of the work they will do as doctors.

The same thing is true for those who will serve our congregations as pastors. They will spend a total of eight years preparing for the work they will do as shepherds and spiritual leaders. But the seventh year of training is not spent in the classroom. The seventh year of training for future pastors is spent in a congregation serving as a vicar. The vicar year is similar to a doctor's year of internship, in which future pastors are given hands-on training and experience in the various aspects of the pastoral ministry.

It's August, and that means the members of this year's vicar class will be arriving in congregations to begin this important year of their training. Over the next 11 months they will gain experience in preaching, teaching Bible class and confirmation class, planning and conducting worship, working with the congregation's lay leadership, and making hospital and shut-in calls. Perhaps most of all, they will spend this year gaining an understanding of the spiritual needs of people and how they will depend on the Word of God to serve those needs.

If your congregation is blessed to have a vicar this year, recognize that you will play an important role in his training as a future pastor. Welcome him (and his wife if he is married); encourage him; and, most of all, pray for him. By doing that, you will help him return to the seminary for his final year of training with a strong desire and a commitment to serve God's people as a pastor. If your congregation does not have a vicar, take a moment to thank God for those young men who are training now and who may someday serve as your pastor.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

WELS Night Is A Thriller

More than 2,400 WELS members witnessed a dramatic walk-off home run as the Brewers defeated the Rockies in the bottom of the ninth inning. The epic three-run blast topped off a wonderful evening of fun and fellowship for the fifth annual WELS Night at Miller Park on Aug. 3. Several seating sections were filled with members wearing the royal blue WELS Night at Miller Park t-shirts.

"It was great to see more than one thousand of our members proudly wearing their WELS shirts in front of tens of thousands of Brewers fans from across the greater Milwaukee region and the state," says Mr. Lee Hitter, WELS director of communications. WELS President Mark Schroeder welcomed busloads of WELS members from congregations throughout the Midwest prior to the game. It was a picture-perfect evening.

The pregame included WELS Second Vice President Joel Voss throwing out the ceremonial first pitch. "The satisfaction of seeing and being with my fellow brothers and sisters in the faith began as soon as I stepped out of the car. After walking just a few yards, there was a lady wearing the WELS Night shirt. She saw me first and greeted me warmly even though we had never met. It was a joy to see more than two thousand WELS people simply enjoying the sport of baseball. It brought WELS people together in a way that is not common," says Rev. Joel Voss, Resurrection, Centerville, Ohio.

The fourth inning featured Brewers junior announcer Ella Schroeder, a fourth-grade student from St. John's Lutheran School, Wauwatosa, Wis. She did a fantastic job introducing the Brewers' batters as they came to the plate.

"I thank WELS for the opportunity to represent it not only on the mound but also as its second vice president. It's one of the many joys of the ministry the Lord has given me, and I thank him daily for those blessings," says Voss.

WELS Foundation Makes Distributions

WELS Foundation announced it has distributed \$2.7 million from more than 300 endowments through its endowment program. WELS Ministerial Education Schools received \$1.84 million, and WELS Missions received \$480,000. The remainder was distributed to congregations, schools, or other ministry organizations that benefit from donor-designated endowments.

Rev. Paul Prange, Board of Ministerial Education administrator, says, "The annual endowment distributions are clearly very valuable for our work of ministerial education. They are used almost entirely for need-based student financial assistance and for larger maintenance projects on our campuses. The Lord continues to provide for our needs through his generous people."

One of the ways WELS World Missions uses the funding from endowment distributions is to send members of the Global Hmong Committee and the Pastoral Studies Institute to train leaders of the Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC) in Vietnam. HFC church leaders explain, "We have the opportunity to learn law and gospel through WELS training. This has strengthened the faith of the leaders and members and has moved the church in a new direction. It has stabilized the HFC from the law tradition of the former way the church did work. We used to think that the law would save us. Now we know we are saved by grace."

WELS Foundation manages endowment funds established by individuals, congregations, or other WELS organizations for the benefit of Christ's work through WELS congregations and areas of ministry. An endowment is a donor restricted gift that is invested in perpetuity in a diversified portfolio of stocks and bonds. Annual distributions from the endowment investment returns provide a source of ongoing financial support for WELS ministries, a way for members to provide a lasting legacy of their Christian faith that supports ministry. Once an endowment is established, additional gifts can be added over time to increase the fund and future distributions.

To learn more about WELS Foundation, visit wels.net/foundation. To learn more about adding to an existing endowment or setting up an endowment for a ministry close to your heart, contact your local Christian giving counselor at wels.net/giving-counselors.

A New Way To Begin Your Mission Journey

A new program called WELS Mission Journeys is coordinating short-term trips for WELS congregations and their members to help home mission churches, world mission fields, and existing congregations with outreach events.

Mr. Shannon Bohme, coordinator of the Mission Journeys program, says that there is a huge gap between congregations and WELS members who were looking for short-term mission experiences and available options for taking trips like these. With the creation of this new program, WELS Missions will offer opportunities for laypeople to get involved in outreach as well as to experience work in the mission field firsthand. "You will get the joys and the sorrows," says Bohme, who has had 17 years of international mission experience. "You may invite someone to come to church and they don't come; that's real-life mission work. But you may also get the chance to tell someone about their Savior for the first time."

But the trip will be just the start of each person's mission journey. "We're looking at a way we can grow together in the Great

Commission," says Bohme. "We want everyone to take that excitement from the mission experience, bring it home, and start looking at their neighbors in a different way—to start inviting them to learn about the most important thing in the world, their Savior."

For the program, members age 13 and up from a congregation or school will sign up for the trip as a group. Training, which includes team building and culture awareness, then will be provided. Events on the trips could range from canvassing to helping run vacation Bible schools or soccer camps. "It all depends on what the field needs," says Bohme. Congregations will fund the trips on their own, with WELS Missions providing the training and coordination needed to make the trips happen. After the trip, the team and its supporting organization will be encouraged to conduct an outreach event in its own community.

Three congregations have already participated in the pilot program: St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis., and Goodview Trinity, Goodview, Minn., both sent teams to Ecuador, and St. Martin's, Watertown, S.D., sent members to East Asia.

Bohme says more international trips are already in the works for the upcoming year, including five more trips to East Asia. Several trips are also being planned to the Apache Reservation to help with its upcoming 125th anniversary of WELS mission work. Other domestic trips are being considered, though Bohme says that the program still is looking for more volunteers and more congregations that need outreach help.

Mission Journeys is also forging partnerships with congregations, schools, and other WELS ministries that set up their own mission outreach trips, offering training and organization expertise to help ensure that the trips are "effective" and are complementing the missions' goals. Currently Mission Journeys is working with groups traveling to Paraguay and Mozambique.

Want to get involved in WELS Mission Journeys? Sign up to host a team or to be part of a team. Learn more at wels.net/missionjourneys.