

WELS NEWS

September, 2015

Rev. Mark Schroeder Reelected As Synod President

Rev. Mark Schroeder “thankfully, joyfully” accepted the call to serve as WELS synod president on Tuesday, July 28. Delegates reelected him to his third four-year term on the first ballot.

“I am truly humbled that God in his wisdom would see fit to give this clay jar the opportunity to serve you again as synod president,” says Schroeder, “and I am truly humbled that you have placed that trust in me once again.”

Schroeder notes that it has been a joy and a privilege for him to serve in this capacity for the past eight years. “Not a day goes by that I don’t marvel at and his continued grace to us as individuals, to us as a church body,” he says. “I ask for God’s continued blessings on his church, on our dear Wisconsin Synod, completely trusting in his promises to do what he always does—to bless his Word.”

Delegates also reelected Rev. Joel Voss, pastor at Resurrection, Centerville, Ohio, to his third term as second vice president.

Numerous other elections for synodical boards and commissions will take place throughout the convention. The full list of election results is available online.

“One In Christ” Debt Elimination

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving Director Rev. Kurt Lueneburg introduced the new “One in Christ” synodwide debt elimination campaign at the 2015 WELS Synod Convention, held July 27-30, 2015, in Saginaw, Mich.

Lueneburg says, “This is a synodwide emphasis. We’re encouraging congregations to set a goal, schools as well if they’re willing to participate, and individuals who make over-and-above gifts, so we’re all in this together.”

The remaining \$4.7 million in synod debt resulted years ago from ministerial education school amalgamations and capital projects as well as internal borrowing.

“The main reason it’s important is that by retiring the debt now, we are able to deploy resources to training our gospel workers, supporting work in home and world missions, as well as the work we do strengthening congregations,” says Lueneburg.

Each congregation should watch for a shipment of materials to arrive late this summer for holding a special emphasis on November 22 or another Sunday in November. Materials will include promotional posters, a worship service, Bible study, and an informational brochure with tear-away offering envelope for each member.

“‘One in Christ’ is the theme, and we want to do this so we can move forward in ministry. Look at all the ministries we’re currently able to do . . . what could we do under God if we had these funds available?” says Lueneburg.

“That is the focus of the campaign,” he says, “to get the message of Jesus out to more and more people.”

Learn more about the “One in Christ” campaign.

Reformation 500 Plans Underway

Delegates heard today from the Reformation 500 Committee, which was appointed by WELS President Mark Schroeder to plan a celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation started by Martin Luther on Oct. 31, 1517. The anniversary will be celebrated in 2017.

Rev. John Braun, chairman of the Reformation 500 Committee, says the goals for the committee in its planning are to educate WELS and others on the important truths of the Reformation as well as to help congregations reach out in their communities by providing resources for them to point to Christ using the emphasis of Luther and the Reformation.

The committee has partnered with Northwestern Publishing House to prepare new books and materials in time for the celebration. These include a commemorative book of essays on the value of the Reformation today; a Lenten kit with sermons based on a Reformation theme; a Christmas kit; bulletin inserts; a new Reformation history; an interactive, digital presentation for school classrooms called Luther Then—Lutherans Now; and a new version of the exposition to Martin Luther’s Catechism.

Boettcher+Trinklein Television, Inc., the producers of *Come Follow Me* and *Road to Emmaus*, also are producing a two-hour documentary on Martin Luther and the impact of the Reformation on modern-day America, which will broadcast nationally on PBS in October 2017. Additional resources related to the film will be available.

Several events are being planned throughout the districts, including a gathering for all WELS pastors, teachers, and laypeople in Milwaukee on Oct. 31, 2017.

New Directors At WELS CMM

The WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis., welcomes two new directors. Both Rev. Nathan Seiltz, director of Multi-Language Publications (MLP), and Mr. Tom Plitzuweit, associate director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, began serving in their new calls July 1.

Plitzuweit’s primary responsibility will be to continue the WELSSA accreditation process for WELS elementary and high schools. Prior to serving as CLS associate director, Plitzuweit served as principal and upper grades teacher at St. Paul,

Plymouth, Neb. In addition to his duties at St. Paul, Plitzuweit was the superintendent of all WELS schools in Nebraska, acting as a liaison between the WELS schools and the Nebraska state government, and WELS district schools coordinator for the Nebraska district. Plitzuweit says he’s driven to help WELS schools improve. “I really think we have the best school system in America. I’d like to see us take our leaders—our teachers, principals, congregations—and put even more focus on our schools, making them better and showcasing them,” he says. “We’ve had some exceptional leaders in this area who started it for us. Now we need to keep pushing forward with school and ministry developments—those are going to be key things.”

Seiltz will be charged with continuing to spread the gospel in as many languages as possible. A 1994 graduate of Wisconsin

Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Seiltz previously served as principal at Evergreen Lutheran

High School in Tacoma, Wash. His past service also includes time as a world missionary in the Dominican Republic. In July 2014, he became chairman of the Europe Administrative Committee of the Board for World Missions.

“One thing that drew me to MLP was the goal to reach 25 million people with the gospel in the next few years. To see how MLP works, coordinates, and collaborates with many of the World Mission fields, it’s a way to reach a large amount of people,” says Seiltz. “I’m excited to be part of MLP, and it’s exciting to look at the possibility of using technology to reach out to the world. I’m going to work hard with Missions to do exactly that—fulfill our Savior’s calling to reach out to everybody with the gospel.”

Grants from Thrivent Financial are helping make many of these Reformation projects possible.