

WELS NEWS

May 2015

Planning For The 2015 Synod Convention

"One in Christ." That is the theme for the 63rd biennial convention of our synod, when 400 delegates and 50 advisory members will meet at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Mich., July 27-30.

It's a fitting theme because it reminds us of who we are - sinners reunited with God and with each other. Together, we are united with God and with each other as members of his family. We confess a common faith, grounded in God's Word. And we share a common mission to proclaim the saving gospel to a dying world.

It's also a fitting theme because it identifies the one who creates and sustains this unity. Our oneness with God and with each other has been brought about only in Christ, only through his perfect life, his innocent death, and his powerful resurrection.

The convention is a time for us to review the blessings that God has worked in us and through us. It's a time to see the opportunities God is placing in front of us. It's a time when, as a synod, our representatives will make important and prayerful decisions regarding the work we do together.

At this convention, we will elect a synod president and second vice president. We will elect others to serve on various boards and commissions. We will adopt a ministry financial plan (budget) for 2015-2017, outlining how we plan to use the gifts that God provides to carry out the synod's mission and ministry. The convention essay, drawn from the convention theme and focused on Paul's letter to the Ephesians, will be delivered by First Vice President James Huebner. Prof. Paul Koelpin of Martin Luther College will deliver the opening sermon. There will be special presentations by missionaries and others who serve on our behalf.

The Ad Hoc Commission 2 has been working for two years to develop recommendations to improve various areas of the synod's work. The commission will deliver its report to this convention for discussion and action.

The 2015 convention will also serve as the kick-off of the special synodwide offering (approved by the 2013 convention) to retire the synod's consolidated capital debt. That debt was identified in 2007 and amounted to \$22.4 million. In the years since, through an initial special offering and through regular payments, the debt will be less than \$5 million by the time the convention meets. The special offering will be carried out under the same theme as the convention, "One in Christ." Once it is retired, the funds used for debt repayment can be redirected to support gospel ministry.

The *Book of Reports and Memorials*, which contains all information regarding convention business, will be available online by May 1. The published hard copy book will be sent to called workers, congregations, and delegates during the week of May 11.

Serving in Christ

President Mark Schroeder

NPH To Print Lutheran Bible Translation

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) will be printing and distributing a new translation of the Bible produced by the Wartburg Project, an independent Lutheran Bible translation effort by WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) pastors and professors.

Since late in 2013, more than 90 WELS and ELS pastors, professors, and others have been working through the Wartburg Project on the translation. The goal is to publish a New Testament and Psalms special edition in 2017, with a future date for the complete Bible yet to be determined.

NPH was chosen from among other publishers to publish this new translation. "Printing this translation aligns with NPH's mission to 'deliver biblically sound, Christ-centered resources within WELS and beyond,'" says Mr. Bill Ziche, NPH president. But he stresses that this will not be the only translation used by NPH in its materials. "NPH will continue to pursue an 'eclectic approach,' as directed by synod resolution, utilizing the best translation for the context of any given work. The Wartburg Project translation will be one translation option among others."

Not funded, owned, or directed by WELS, the Wartburg Project formed after the 2013 synod convention. While convention delegates defeated a resolution calling for the synod praesidium to appoint a committee to explore producing a Lutheran translation of the Bible, discussion on the floor was encouraging for those who wanted to work on a translation on their own. "There were a number of groups doing that," says Prof. John Brug, general editor and Old Testament editor for the Wartburg Project. "We thought, why not try to bring everyone together under one umbrella in a purely positive project."

Brug says the Wartburg Project's goal is to aim for the "middle road" in its translation. He says that means they will preserve traditional biblical idioms like "the glory of the Lord" and "manger" but also look for better ways to say things that may be confusing in other translations.

While the translation is based on the original Hebrew and Greek texts, translators also will be building on the heritage of the English translations that already are available. "From the beginning, I've enjoyed saying that we are standing on the shoulders of giants," says Rev. Brian Keller, New Testament editor. "We are not trying to reinvent the wheel. Copyright laws are certainly being honored. But there is this long tradition of English Bible translation that provides a base to work with."

About 20 pastors and professors are the main core of translators and technical reviewers. More than 70 other pastors and professors as well as additional teachers and laypeople are helping with readability. All are volunteers, working on the project in their spare time.

"One of the blessings of the Wartburg Project is the great opportunity which it is providing to many of our pastors for continuing education in the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible," says Brug. "The knowledge they are gaining will provide rich dividends to the church as it works its way into their preaching, teaching, and writing."

Members of the Wartburg Project are excited that the translation is progressing so quickly. “We appreciate all the support, encouragement, and prayers,” says Keller. “We thank God for his blessing and ask for his help. If this translation turns out to be a blessing for many, may God alone have all glory and praise!” Learn more about the Wartburg Project at www.wartburgproject.org. Download a complimentary Passion History developed by the Wartburg Project and learn more about NPH's publishing plans at www.nph.net/wartburgproject.

Korean Pastor Requests Colloquy

A Korean pastor from the North Atlantic District has requested a colloquy so he can become a pastor in WELS. Rev. Kwang Hoon (Peter) Wee is a member at Our Savior's, New Brunswick, N.J., and currently serves as its minister of evangelism, helping with outreach to the Korean and Chinese communities in the area.

A colloquy is an in-depth interview with a pastor who has left another church body due to its false teaching or practice and now wants to serve as a WELS pastor. “His personal and family background, his theological training, his understanding and confession of scriptural doctrine and practice—all are part of a thorough review to understand the colloquy candidate and his reasons for requesting a colloquy into WELS,” says Rev. Donald Tollefson, North Atlantic district president. “The goal is to provide assurance so that when a candidate completes the colloquy process, all those involved can say, ‘We believe, teach, and confess the same scriptural truths.’”

Wee had served at a nondenominational campus ministry at Rutgers. When he and his members needed a place to worship, he approached Our Savior's and its pastor, Rev. Mark Johnston. Johnston and Wee began talking about doctrine. From those discussions, Wee discovered what he had been missing. He decided he wanted to become a WELS pastor and began studying confessional Lutheranism with area pastors through a program put together by the Pastoral Studies Institute. Now he has requested a colloquy to become a WELS pastor.

A colloquy is a rigorous process involving a committee consisting of one of the WELS vice presidents, a member of the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran **Seminary**, and the president of the district where the applicant lives. “There is great responsibility in being involved in the colloquy process to ensure, as much as humanly possible, that goals and desires for requesting and going through a colloquy are plain and understood by all involved,” says Tollefson. “There is, however, also great privilege in being involved in this process so that, with God's guidance, it will lead to a common bond and unity with another called servant to proclaim the Word of the Lord and lead souls to Christ.”

Formal notice to the WELS constituency of a colloquy request is required by the synod's constitution.

New Spanish-Language Website

In an effort to get the gospel into the homes of more families in Latin America, a new Spanish-language website, Academia Cristo (Christ Academy), has been developed to provide further outreach and training opportunities.

"We have an opportunity to communicate the gospel in Latin America like

we've never had before," says Missionary Michael Hartman, field coordinator for Latin America, referring to the statistic that there will be 70 million smartphone users in Mexico by the end of 2015. "People are getting on the Internet, and they're getting on with their mobile phones."

Whereas Spanish-language printed materials developed by Multi-Language Publications (MLP) had been used in the past, the goal is to replace this written material with videos and audio Bible studies that can be distributed more **widely** through the Internet. Hartman says this will be appealing to Latinos, who don't have a reading culture but are regularly on their smartphones.

While there will be simple courses available for non-Christians, the point of the site isn't strictly outreach. "Gospel outreach happens when you sit down and you talk with your friends or family about Jesus," says Hartman. "What we really want to do is enable Christians to be able to do just that."

For that purpose, Academia Cristo will also include a level of courses for local leaders that will show them how to share their faith. A future goal is to add seminary courses for those training for the ministry.

Hartman, the Latin American national churches, and other members of the mission team are working closely with MLP to create the courses. Currently six courses are completed, including two five-lesson Bible studies based on the *Come Follow Me* movie as well as other courses on what Christians believe and who Jesus is.

World Missions sees this site as a way to help serve scattered members throughout Latin America, providing ways for them to grow in the faith as well as share their faith with others.

With more and more Hispanics moving into the United States and connecting with WELS churches there, the site also offers a way for those far away from their homeland to share the gospel message they discovered.

This is not to take away the human element. A missionary or a national pastor is connected to each course, available to answer questions and concerns. Two members of the Latin American mission team also work directly with national church bodies and their members to explore new opportunities for outreach and training. One lives in Mexico; the other works with Hispanic members throughout the United States.

Check out the new site at www.academiacristo.com.

Brewers Tickets On Sale

Tickets are on sale now for the 2015 WELS Night at Miller Park. Join WELS members from Southeastern Wisconsin and beyond on Aug. 14, 2015. 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. Purchase tickets at brewers.com/wels