

WELS NEWS

December, 2017

Conference Of Presidents Holds Its Fall Meeting

The Conference of Presidents (COP) met Oct. 10-13 at the Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis., for its regular fall meeting.

Included in the discussions and decisions:

- The COP noted with thanks to God that Congregation Mission Offerings are up 1.6% over last year (\$231,000). As congregations begin planning for next year, a video communication from each district president will encourage and guide congregations in that process.
- Last year the COP determined that pastors teaching at Lutheran high schools and prep schools fall under the same calling guidelines that restrict the calling of teachers (Nov. 1 through the first week of June, with two calls possible during that time). The COP clarified this policy by determining that pastors serving in primarily administrative roles (presidents/principals, deans, etc.) at the schools can be called at any time.
- The COP extended divine calls to Rev. Jerry Ewings to serve as a Christian giving counselor and to Rev. Mark Gabb to serve as the director of the Commission on Evangelism.
- The COP appointed Rev. Doug Tomhave to serve as the chairman of the Commission on Evangelism.
- Earlier this year the COP established a standing committee to work with WELS parasynodical organizations. This committee is in the process of determining its specific role and establishing the procedures it will follow. The purpose of the committee is to foster good communication and cooperation between the synod and WELS parasynodical organizations. The committee reported that it had begun its work and will continue to develop its goals and policies.
- The COP concurred with the request of Northwestern Publishing House to conduct a review of the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV) as soon as the complete translation is available. This review will be similar to reviews of the New International Version, the English Standard Version, and the Christian Standard Bible, which have already been done.
- The COP continues to monitor closely the pastoral vacancy rate and how the calling process can best serve the needs of congregations and workers in a time of a shortage of pastors.
- The COP discussed the workload of district presidents who serve in the large districts. The COP asked the synod president to investigate various options to provide needed assistance.
- The COP discussed how the certification process for teachers can be improved and, if possible, streamlined. The COP asked Martin Luther College to review certification requirements for all teachers and to bring its proposals to the January meeting of the COP.

- The COP will ask the Synodical Council to establish an ad hoc committee to study future options for the WELS Pension Plan. No change in the plan is anticipated in the near future, but the COP agreed that such a study would be beneficial for future decisions.
- The COP is encouraging all congregations to designate one Sunday in November as a Mission and Ministry Sunday to encourage greater awareness of, and support for, the work we do together as a synod. In the future, congregations will be encouraged to plan a Mission and Ministry Sunday for October.
- The COP asked for the appointment of a special committee to discuss possible alternative models for congregational constitutions and bylaws.
- The COP approved a request from Martin Luther College (MLC) for permission to conduct an appeal for MLC's Congregational Partner Grant Program (CPGP). The CPGP gives congregations the opportunity to provide direct financial support for students at MLC preparing for the public ministry of WELS.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

Reformation Worship Focuses On God's Grace

A year ago, in anticipation of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, initial plans were made for a large celebration in Milwaukee that would include conferences for all WELS called workers and a large festival worship service for called workers and WELS members in the 15,000-seat Bradley Center. After determining the huge cost of such an event, the decision was made not to hold the event as hoped but to encourage districts and regions to plan for local celebrations that would be less costly and enable more people to participate.

That decision was blessed by God. During the last two weekends, more than 20 districts and regions held special Reformation 500 worship services. The events were very well attended and provided many more people the opportunity to join in this celebration than would have been possible with one centralized event. In each case, worshipers had the opportunity to thank and praise God for the blessings of the Lutheran Reformation. Worshipers were reminded that "grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone" is not just a slogan or motto, but the heart and center of what connects us to "Christ alone."

To view photos or contribute your own, check out the WELS Facebook page at [fb.com/welslutherans](https://www.facebook.com/welslutherans). Watch for more photos and information about Reformation 500 celebrations in the January 2018 edition of *Forward in Christ* magazine.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

MLP Continues To Work In South Asia

The bag weighed almost as much he did.

But that didn't stop a pastor from South Asia from hoisting the almost 100-pound bag of Multi-Language Publication booklets onto his back and walking for hours back to his hometown. What's even more amazing is that in the past his church had been destroyed and he had been beaten and imprisoned for worshiping his Savior and sharing his faith with others.

"It's really a privilege and a great honor to help [people like this]," says Rev. Nathan Seiltz, director of WELS Multi-Language Publications (MLP). "Printed publications are a wonderful tool for them to reach out and do some discipleship among the people there."

Seiltz conducted his first field visit of the area in September. While there, he was able to help conduct a leadership workshop in which 75 men and women learned more about the prison epistles Philippians and Colossians, discussed the Lutheran Reformation, and went home with self-study booklets explaining Lutheran doctrine to distribute in their communities.

This field in South Asia wouldn't exist if not for these MLP publications. "Multi-Language Publications is the parent of these fields. It was a seed-sowing ministry and they planted so many seeds the church grew," says WELS' field coordinator for South Asia. "It's a tremendous tool for our church in outreach and in discipleship training." The church body in this area currently has 42 congregations and 14 seminary students.

Seiltz and the field coordinator also visited several local congregations and met with our national contact to discuss future plans. One idea is to develop a radio station that would include programming to teach people about Jesus. MLP also will continue to provide printed materials like these self-study booklets and *The Promise*, a 16-page brochure that presents the basic biblical message from the fall into sin to life in heaven. "These are the tools that people are using to share their faith with other people," says Seiltz. "That was really encouraging to hear."

Seiltz visited South Asia after catastrophic flooding hit the region in August and September. While he didn't visit any of the areas affected by the flooding, he says the leadership workshop was moved and delayed a day because the flooding delayed many of the workshop attendees who had to travel. WELS Christian Aid and Relief has granted almost \$20,500 to provide flood relief in South Asia. Funds will be used to purchase and deliver supplies like mattresses, blankets, and mosquito netting to people in the affected areas. Our contact says providing this help gives the opportunity to show Christ's love in action to the different communities.

Learn more about Multi-Language Publications, which has printed more than 2.9 million items in 47 languages, at wels.net/mlp. Learn more about WELS Missions at wels.net/missions.

OWLS Are "Filled With The Gospel"

The Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) met in Pewaukee, Wis., Oct. 10-12, under the theme "Filled with the gospel." About 175 members from around the United States attended.

The convention was hosted by the Dodge-Washington OWLS. This was the first convention directed by new convention chairman Mr. Werner Lemke.

For a decade, the OWLS have used their offerings to support the WELS European Civilian chaplaincy, which serves military personnel and WELS civilians in Europe. This year, the OWLS presented Military Services with a check for \$50,000 for work in Europe. The convention offering and proceeds from a silent auction were directed for next year's gift to the work of the chaplain in Europe as well.

For four years, the OWLS have provided scholarships to Martin Luther College students. This year, Lailah Thabatah, Heidi Moldenhauer, Tristan Pankow, and Hannah Rundgren received scholarships.

With the convention in Pewaukee this year, attendees were given the opportunity to tour the WELS visitors' center at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM), along with a tour of the CMM to learn more about WELS ministry. They were also treated to several presentations about Lutheran traditions and WELS ministry.

Rev. Jim Behringer, director of the WELS Commission on Special Ministries, says, "All the presenters were excellent. Rev. Aaron Christie's presentation on Luther's principles that led to the Lutheran fine arts tradition today was full of interesting examples. The OWLS were moved to hear a presentation by former European Civilian Chaplain Josh Martin and his wife, who received OWLS support during their nine years overseas. Seminary Professor Brad Wordell amazed the audience with the opportunities the Lord is giving us to train pastors around the world through the Pastoral Studies Institute, and Rev. Tony Schultz had the OWLS chuckling with recognition as he talked about opportunities to talk about Jesus."

This year, the convention elected a new OWLS president, Pastor Em. Norman Schell from Omaha, Neb. Schell has been involved with the convention for years helping with the technology needs.

Next year's convention will be at the Osthoff Resort in Elkhart, Wis., under the theme "Finish Your Race." All WELS members are invited, even those who aren't part of an OWLS chapter.

Learn more about the OWLS and all the ministries under the WELS Commission on Special Ministries at wels.net/special-ministries.