

Proceedings

October 2017

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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Notes

Many references to the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM) are included within the convention resolutions. Unless otherwise noted, these are referencing the 2017 BORAM, which can be found at wels.net/2017synodconvention.

Convention overview

The synod convention has come and gone, but what happened there will continue to provide direction and encouragement for our synod's work for the next two years.

With the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation taking center stage in worship and in presentations, the Reformation themes of "grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, and Christ alone" were never far from the minds of the delegates. The convention was an opportunity for our synod to thank God for what he did through Martin Luther and to recommit ourselves to the truths that Luther taught.

All would agree that one of the high points was the formal declaration of fellowship between our synod and three Lutheran church bodies from around the world. Delegates heard and saw presentations by representatives of the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia, the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission, and the East Asia Lutheran Synod.

Another highlight was marking the retirement of the synod's debt by shredding a copy of the debt statement. Two years ago, the synod in convention voted to launch a campaign to retire the debt early. Through God's grace, WELS members offered their gifts to support this goal, and the debt was paid off a year and a half ahead of schedule, allowing more gospel ministry to be funded.

Synod convention delegates approved a ministry financial plan that maintains ministries at current levels. For more details, see p. 70.

For more information on the 2017 convention, including photos and video reports, visit wels.net/2017synodconvention.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder

Voting delegates

Arizona-California District

Pastors

Terry Deters
Stephen Hein
Steven Lockman
Donald Pieper
Paul Schroeder
Daniel Solofra
Glenn Wenzel
Thomas Zimdars

Teachers and staff ministers

Michael Mundstock
Karl Bauer
Jonathan Favorite
Terrance Greening
Alan Mindock

Laymen

Erik Alair
Kevin Baughman
Robert Boe
Richard Davis
Bob Dix
Jeff Hansen
Ted Heyn
Neil Kratz

David Miller
Alan Mork
Robin Offerdahl
Ronald Phillips
Stephen Poole
Melvin Victor
David Warnke
Jeffery Weinstein

Dakota-Montana District

Pastors

Wayne Fischer
Jonathan Schultz
Lloyd Schlomer
Ryan Wolfe

Teachers and staff ministers

Philip Miller
Mark Renner

Laymen

Allan Ashton
Jim Borchardt
Clayton Geist
Tom Helland
Don Jakober
Matthew Macioroski

Todd Moritz
Duane Smallfield
Lyle Walth
Allen Barthel
Jim Weimer

Michigan District

Pastors

Michael Biedenbender
Nathan Fager
John Gierach
James Hoff
David Horton
Joel Pankow
Steve Schmeling
David Voss
Mark Voss
Jeffrey Weber
Timothy Winkel

Teachers and staff ministers

Brian Kasten
David Knittel
David Lecker
Greg Milbrath
Alan Schaffer
Larry Sellnow

Laymen

Joseph Baumann
Brent Bedore
Tom D'haene
Mike Brenner
John Chiotti
Bradley Clark
Steve Crawford
Ronald Dart
Keith Dirkson
Kevin Doering
David Drzewiecki
Thomas Grant

Earl Hagstrom
Thomas Johnson
Ron Jorgenson
Royce Kriewall
Lawrence Larsen
Thomas Leitz
Thomas Marks
Douglas Ogonowski
Howard Osborn
Lucas Porinsky
Dave Scharrer
Curt Thormeier

Minnesota District

Pastors

Craig Engel
Matthew Grunewald
Jonathan Hackbarth
Michael Hatzung
Michael Killinger
Jonathan Leach
Jeffrey Limpert
Donald Main
Scott Muske
Philip Spaude
Matthew Sprunger
Peter Sulzle
James Witt
Jon Wolff

Teachers and staff ministers

Gary Bain
James Bakken
Mark Dobberstein
James Dretske
Richard Gibson
J. Lance Hartzell
Jeffrey Koepsell
Daniel Rick
Paul Tess
Gregory Thiesfeldt
Jeffery Wiechman

Laymen

James Baur
Mike Becker
Matthew Boehlke
Kenneth Ebert
Allen Enter
John Fuchsel
Don Gunderson
Jim Hovind
Andrew Jacobsen
Charles Landeck
Gene Luedtke
Russ Meyer

Paul Miller
Dean Mitzner
Rodney Olson
Steve Olson
Dale Peterson
Scott Pless
Dave Sauer
Adam Schmidt
Alex Smith
Tim Welker
Dennis Wutzke

Nebraska District

Pastors

Christopher Esmay
Michael Quandt
Dennis Strong
Timothy Westendorf
Michael Wolff

Teachers and staff ministers

Frederick Lohmiller
David Ring

Laymen

Casey Cummings Sr.
David DeHart
David Heberer
Thomas Krafft
Jonathan Mayer
Aaron Newman
Mark Quinnett

Dale Raugutt
Randy Sachtjen
Elroy Schmidt
Shong Leng Thao
DeLoy Titkemeier
Dennis Zanto

North Atlantic District

Pastors

Thomas Glende
Peter Korthals
Jeffrey Samelson

Teachers and staff ministers

Brent Bitter

Laymen

Gerald Bertelsen
Paul Giovinazzo
Jason Miller
Harry Newton

Charles Thompson
Konstantin Tochkov
Paul Voigt

Northern Wisconsin District

Pastors

Matthew Arnold
Ben Berger
James Borgwardt
Paul Cole
Matthew Guse
Victor Headrick
Joel Heckendorf
Christopher Johnson
Paul Meier
Gregory Pope
Roger Riedel
Joel Sauer
Marcus Schulz
Gregory Stahlecker
Jon Tesch

Teachers and staff ministers

Joel Barthel
Bradley Bendix
Timothy Bentz
Paul Hoffman
Steven Lehman
Joel Putz
Brian Root
Darin Stewart

Laymen

Earl Bauman
Virgil Bender
Michael Brooks
Glenn Brunner
David Dexter
Trevor Kehoe
Dale Krause
Jeff Kuhlow
Kevin Miller
Mike Muelver

Carl Newhouse
Bob Petermann
Fred Pieper
Brian Posselt
Frank Ruebel
Tovio Salo
Keith Wakeman
Stanley Wittler
Jim Young

Pacific Northwest District

Pastors

Edward Frey
James Getka
Joseph Johnson
Joel Nitz

Teachers and staff ministers

Jason Kelley
Thomas Zarnstorff

Laymen

John Bleasdale
Bruce Frazier
Rich Holt

Gordon Peters
Bill Ruthford
Craig Wiebusch

South Atlantic District

Pastors

John Gensmer
Christopher Kruschel
Brian Pechman
Jonathan Scharf
Jonathan Schroeder

Teachers and staff ministers

Ryan Kirchoff
Jason Schultz
Benjamin Troge

Laymen

Donald Baldwin
David Berg
Mark Krueger
Dean Loucks
Matthew Petto

Tim Suttle
Dale Tietz
Rolf Weeks
Danny Wehmeyer

South Central District

Pastors

Charles Huebner
David Kapler
James Krause
John Strackbein

Teachers and staff ministers

Donald Henry Fuhrmann

Laymen

Robert Browning
Roger Hinz
Roger Immel

Greg Lurvey
Roger Rusert
Raymond Zachow

Southeastern Wisconsin District

Pastors

James Behringer
Dennis Bratz
Paul Brug
Robert Frick
Jon Hartmann
John Kelly
Mark Kock
Timothy Kujath
Matthew Kuske
Peter Martin
Steven Neumann
Charles Raasch
Aaron Robinson
Eric Roecker
Nathan Seiltz
Paul Steinberg
Aaron Weber
Benjamin Wessel
Michael Woldt

Teachers and staff ministers

Randel Fink
Richard Mannisto
Brett Valerio
Jon Ziesemer
Paul Berger
Jarrod Erbe
Brian Gottschalk
James Hahm
Kevin Hahm
Joshua Johnson
Donald Kolander
Keith Kopczynski
Nathan Krug
Kerry Kuehn
Daniel Larabee
Jamie Luehring
Martin Moldenhauer
Daniel Nolte
Jonathan Pasbrig
Craig Radue
David Rust
Matthew Rydecki
Steven Travis
Justin Walz
Benjamin Washburn
Troy Yerks

Laymen

David Baird
Dennis Banaszak
John Bartelson
Roy Biermann
Mark Groth
Jody Hafeman
John Hall
Micah Hernandez
Jared Jamrozy
Tim Kosteretz
Brian Kreuziger
Michael Lines
John Maiwald
Mike Milici
Michael Nichols
Richard Oldenburg
James Petermann
Patrick Ruehrdanz
Doug Schaal
David Threlkeld
Mark Venz
Phil Wagie
Gary Zenda

Western Wisconsin District

Pastors

Philip Henselin
Phillip Heyer
Charles Iles
Paul Jenkins
Todd Krueger
Paul Kuckhahn
Jeffrey Mahnke
Joel Naumann
Steven Neyhart
Conrad Prell
Anthony Schultz
Clark Schultz
Anthony Straseske
Nathan Strutz
Douglas Tomhave
James Weiland

Teachers and staff ministers

Craig Breitzkreutz
Robert Buss
Kirk DeNoyer
Daniel Kuehl
William Otto
David Schulz
Frank Van Brocklin
Craig Winkler
Michael Wisniewski
Timothy Wrobel
Frederick Zimmermann

Laymen

Michael Dieck
George Ehlers
John Goeglein
Steven Gress
Curt Gruenewald
Marvin Gurgel
John Gut
Andrew Hillmann
Dale Husman
Eugene Kegler
Vern Kingery
Steven Kozar
Jeffrey Krakow

Harvey Larsen
Joel Marheine
Randy Meis
Delmar Mineard
David Moseley
Gerald Natzke
Brian Nichols
Scott Rich
Dean Schneider
Joel Scott
Maurice Stecklein
Bob Wenger
Cletus Wolfe

World missionaries

James Enderle
John Hartmann
Paul Nitz
Luke Wolfgramm

Advisory delegates

Officers

Rev. Mark Schroeder, president
Rev. James Huebner, first vice president
Rev. Joel Voss, second vice president
Rev. Robert Pasbrig, recording secretary

District presidents

Rev. Jon Buchholz, Arizona-California
Rev. Douglas Free, Dakota-Montana
Rev. John Seifert, Michigan
Rev. Charles Degner, Minnesota
Rev. Philip Hirsch, Nebraska
Rev. Donald Tollefson, North Atlantic

Rev. Joel Zank, Northern Wisconsin
Rev. John Steinbrenner, Pacific Northwest
Rev. Charles Westra, South Atlantic
Rev. Donald Patterson, South Central
Rev. David Kolander, Southeastern Wisconsin
Rev. Michael Jensen, Western Wisconsin

Synodical Council

Mr. Steven Hansen, Arizona-California
Mr. Kenneth Gosch, Dakota-Montana
Dr. Timothy Kriewall, Michigan
Mr. Paul Holzhueter, Minnesota
Mr. Gary Graf, North Atlantic
Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, Northern Wisconsin
Mr. Warren Ehlke, Pacific Northwest

Mr. John Fowler, South Atlantic
Mr. Bradley Johnston, South Central
Mr. Timothy Snyder, Southeastern Wisconsin
Mr. Art Tessmann, Western Wisconsin
Teacher James Moeller, teacher-at-large
Rev. Joel Jenswold, pastor-at-large
Rev. Jonathan Schroeder*, pastor-at-large

Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator, Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Paul Wendland, president, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
Rev. Mark Zarling, president, Martin Luther College
Rev. Matthew Crass, president, Luther Preparatory School
Rev. Joel Petermann, president, Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Home and World Missions

Rev. Keith Free, administrator, Board for Home Missions
Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator, Board for World Missions
Mr. Sean Young, director, Missions Operations

Congregation and Ministry Support Group

Rev. James Behringer*, director, Commission on Special Ministries

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, coordinator, Congregation and Ministry Support Group/director, Commission on Worship

Rev. Jonathan Hein, director, Commission on Congregational Counseling

Rev. Michael Hintz, director, Commission on Evangelism

Teacher James Rademan, director, Commission on Lutheran Schools

Other

Mr. Lee Hitter, director, Communication Services

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director, Ministry of Christian Giving

Mr. Dennis Maurer, director, Human Resources

Prof. Thomas Nass, Translation Liaison Committee

Rev. Paul Naumann, chairman, Committee on Constitutional Matters

Mr. Joshua Peterman, director, Benefit Plans

Mr. Todd Poppe, chief financial officer

Mr. Martin Spriggs, chief technology officer

* Also served as a voting delegate

Floor committees

Committee #1: President's Report

Pastor Jonathan Scharf, chairman
Pastor Matthew Arnold, secretary
Pastor Christopher Esmay
Pastor Stephen Hein
Pastor James Hoff
Pastor Paul Jenkins
Pastor Eric Roecker
Teacher James Bakken
Teacher Timothy Wrobel

Layman Eric Alair
Layman David Dexter
Layman George Ehlers
Layman Donald Jakober
Layman Thomas Marks
Layman Richard Oldenburg
Layman Scott Pless
Layman Elroy Schmidt
Layman Maurice Stecklein

Committee #2: Conference of Presidents

Pastor Nathan Seiltz, chairman
Pastor Jeffrey Mahnke, secretary
Pastor Peter Korthals
Pastor Joel Nitz
Pastor Anthony Schultz
Pastor Philip Spaude
Teacher Kevin Hahm
Teacher Ryan Kirchoff
Teacher David Lecker

Teacher Jason Schultz
Layman John Goeglein
Layman Dale Krause
Layman Gene Luedtke
Layman David Moseley
Layman Douglas Ogonowski
Layman Duane Smallfield
Layman Shong Leng Thao

Committee #3: Special committees

Pastor Joel Heckendorf, chairman
Teacher Daniel Kuehl, secretary
Pastor Michael Biedenbender
Pastor Thomas Glende
Pastor Jonathan Leach
Pastor Brian Pechman
Pastor Paul Steinberg
Pastor Luke Wolfgramm
Staff Minister Randel Fink
Teacher Joel Barthel
Teacher Mark Dobberstein

Teacher Justin Walz
Layman Kevin Baughman
Layman Steven Gress
Layman Jeff Kuhlow
Layman Joel Marheine
Layman Howard Osborn
Layman Patrick Ruehrdanz
Layman Roger Rusert
Layman Adam Schmidt
Layman DeLoy Titkemeier
Layman Lyle Walth

Committee #4: Commission on Inter-Church Relations

Pastor Jonathan Schroeder, chairman
Teacher Bradley Bendix, secretary
Pastor Paul Brug
Pastor Edward Frey Jr.
Pastor Scott Muske
Pastor Clark Schultz
Pastor James Weiland
Pastor Michael Wolff
Teacher James Dretske

Staff Minister Richard Mannisto
Layman Allen Barthel
Layman Robert Boe
Layman Thomas Leitz
Layman Kevin Miller
Layman Paul Miller
Layman David Threlkeld
Layman Danny Wehmeyer
Layman Cletus Wolfe

Committee #5: Ministry of Christian Giving and Communication Services

Pastor Michael Quandt, chairman
Teacher Richard Gibson, secretary
Pastor Terry Deters
Pastor Christopher Johnson
Pastor Donald Main
Pastor Paul Schroeder
Staff Minister Brett Valerio
Teacher Timothy Bentz
Teacher Craig Winkler

Layman Brent Bedore
Layman Richard Davis
Layman Curt Gruenewald
Layman Richard Holt
Layman Mike Muelver
Layman Dale Peterson
Layman Lucas Porinsky
Layman Mark Venz
Layman Dennis Zanto

Committee #6: Synodical Council

Pastor Paul Meier, chairman
Pastor Joel Naumann, secretary
Pastor James Behringer
Pastor Paul Kuckhahn
Pastor Roger Riedel
Pastor Timothy Westendorf
Teacher J. Lance Hartzell
Teacher Rick Lohmiller
Teacher Daniel Nolte

Teacher William Otto
Layman David Baird
Layman Roy Biermann
Layman Michael Dieck
Layman Ted Heyn
Layman Carl Newhouse
Layman Rodney Olson
Layman Paul Voigt
Layman Jim Weimer

Committee #7: Financial results and plan (budget)

Pastor David Voss, chairman
Teacher Jon Ziesemer, secretary
Pastor James Getka
Pastor Mark Kock
Pastor Jeffrey Samelson
Pastor Dennis Strong
Pastor Douglas Tomhave
Teacher Jeffrey Koepsell
Teacher Donald Kolander
Teacher Frank Van Brocklin

Layman David Drzewiecki
Layman Jeff Hansen
Layman Trevor Kehoe
Layman Harvey Larsen
Layman Steve Olson
Layman Dave Scharrer
Layman Joel Scott
Layman Konstantin Tochkov
Layman Raymond Zachow

Committee #8: Compensation Review Committee

Pastor Michael Woldt, chairman
Pastor Nathan Strutz, secretary
Pastor John Gierach
Pastor Matthew Guse
Pastor Benjamin Wessel
Pastor Tim Winkel
Teacher James Hahm
Teacher David Ring
Layman Don Baldwin
Layman Joseph Baumann

Layman Matthew Boehlke
Layman Casey Cummings Sr.
Layman Bruce Frazier
Layman Neil Kratz
Layman Mike Milici
Layman Jason Miller
Layman Fred Pieper
Layman David Sauer
Layman Dean Schneider

Committee #9: Home Missions

Pastor Joel Sauer, chairman
Teacher Kirk DeNoyer, secretary
Pastor Dennis Bratz
Pastor Jeffrey Limpert
Pastor Anthony Straseske
Pastor John Tesch
Pastor Aaron Weber
Teacher Gary Bain
Teacher Craig Breitreutz
Teacher Jarrod Erbe

Layman James Baur
Layman Gerald Bertelsen
Layman Mike Brenner
Layman Marvin Gurgel
Layman Dean Mitzner
Layman Alan Mork
Layman Gordon Peters
Layman Brian Posselt
Layman Scott Rich
Layman Dale Tietz

Committee #10: World Missions and Joint Mission Council

Pastor Joel Pankow, chairman
Teacher Paul Berger, secretary
Pastor Joseph Johnson
Pastor Conrad Prell
Pastor Aaron Robinson
Pastor Ryan Wolfe
Teacher Robert Buss
Teacher Brian Root
Teacher Alan Schaffer
Layman Mike Becker

Layman John Chiotti
Layman David De Hart
Layman Paul Giovinazzo
Layman John Gut
Layman Randy Meis
Layman Stephen Poole
Layman Frank Ruebl
Layman Bill Ruthford
Layman Dennis Wutzke

Committee #11: Ministerial Education

Pastor Phil Henselin, chairman
Teacher Larry Sellnow, secretary
Pastor Charles Iles
Pastor Michael Killinger
Pastor Paul Nitz
Pastor Charles Raasch
Teacher Brian Gottschalk
Teacher David Schulz
Teacher Thomas Zarnstorff

Teacher Frederick Zimmermann
Layman John Bleasdale
Layman Bradley Clark
Layman Kenneth Ebert
Layman Mark Groth
Layman David Heberer
Layman Dale Husman
Layman Ronald Phillips
Layman Tovio Salo

Committee #12: Congregation and Ministry Support Group A **(Congregational Counseling, Worship, Evangelism)**

Teacher Paul Tess, chairman	Layman David Berg
Pastor Christopher Kruschel, secretary	Layman Steve Crawford
Pastor Wayne Fischer	Layman Roger Immel
Pastor Todd Krueger	Layman Melvin Victor
Pastor Steven Neumann	Layman Russ Meyer
Pastor Matthew Sprunger	Layman Harry Newton
Teacher Jason Kelley	Layman James Petermann
Teacher Philip Miller	Layman Craig Wiebusch
Layman John Bartelson	

Committee #13: Congregation and Ministry Support Group B **(Special Ministries, Adult Discipleship, Youth and Family Ministry)**

Teacher Greg Thiesfeldt, chairman	Layman John Fuchsel
Pastor Michael Hatzung, secretary	Layman Andrew Hillmann
Pastor James Enderle	Layman Thomas Krafft
Pastor John Gensmer	Layman Doug Schaal
Pastor Peter Martin	Layman Tim Suttle
Pastor Lloyd Schlomer	Layman Charles Thompson
Staff Minister Brent Bitter	Layman David Warnke
Teacher Keith Kopczynski	Layman John Wiederhold
Layman Ronald Dart	

Committee #14: Congregation and Ministry Support Group C **(Lutheran Schools)**

Teacher Jamie Luehring, chairman	Layman Keith Dirkson
Pastor Matthew Kuske, secretary	Layman Allen Enter
Pastor Paul Cole	Layman Eugene Kegler
Pastor Victor Headrick	Layman Mark Krueger
Pastor David Kapler	Layman Jonathan Mayer
Pastor Glenn Wenzel	Layman Delmar Mineard
Pastor John Wolff	Layman Jeffrey Weinstein
Teacher Karl Bauer	Layman Gary Zenda
Teacher Troy Yerks	

Committee #15: Support Services **(Technology, Financial Services, Human Resources, Facility Services)**

Pastor Don Pieper, chairman	Layman Don Gunderson
Staff Minister Michael Mundstock, secretary	Layman Steven Kozar
Pastor Craig Engel	Layman Dean Loucks
Pastor John Hartmann	Layman Aaron Newman
Pastor David Horton	Layman Michael Nichols
Teacher Daniel Larabee	Layman Tim Welker
Layman Bob Dix	Layman Bob Wenger
Layman Kevin Doering	

Committee #16: WELS Historical Institute and Archives

Teacher Ben Troge, chairman
Teacher Mark Renner, secretary
Pastor Ken Ewerdt
Pastor Nathan Fager
Pastor John Kelly
Pastor Timothy Kujath
Pastor Tom Zimdars
Teacher Brett Fuhrmann

Layman Allan Ashton
Layman Earl Bauman
Layman Robert Browning
Layman Thomas Grant
Layman Micah Hernandez
Layman Vern Kingery
Layman Dale Raugutt
Layman Phil Wagie

Committee #17: Subsidiaries and Benefit Plans

Layman Randy Sachtjen, chairman
Pastor Jonathan Hackbarth, secretary
Pastor Jon Hartmann
Pastor Gregory Pope
Pastor Dan Solofra
Staff Minister Jonathan Favorite
Teacher Jay Schwall
Layman Tom D'Haene

Layman James Borchardt
Layman Jim Hovind
Layman John Maiwald
Layman Gerald Natzke
Layman Brian Nichols
Layman Mark Quinnett
Layman Rolf Weeks

Committee #18: Northwestern Publishing House and Publication Coordinating Commission

Pastor James Borgwardt, chairman
Pastor Steve Schmeling, secretary
Pastor Robert Frick
Pastor Jonathan Schultz
Teacher Kerry Kuehn
Teacher Alan Mindock
Teacher Jonathan Pasbrig
Teacher Steven Travis

Layman Virgil Bender
Layman Clayton Geist
Layman Roger Hinz
Layman Andrew Jacobsen
Layman Jared Jamrozy
Layman Thomas Johnson
Layman Tim Kosteretz
Layman Eldon Pagel

Committee #19: WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Layman Michael Brooks, chairman
Pastor Steven Lockman, secretary
Pastor Matthew Grunewald
Pastor Gregory Stahlecker
Pastor John Strackbein
Teacher Terrance Greening
Teacher Paul Hoffman
Teacher Craig Radue
Teacher Darin Stewart

Layman Glenn Brunner
Layman John Hall
Layman Thomas Helland
Layman Ron Jorgenson
Layman Charles Landeck
Layman David Miller
Layman Robin Offerdahl
Layman Jim Young

Committee #20: Constitutional Matters

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher David Knittel, secretary
Pastor Phillip Heyer
Pastor Charles Huebner
Pastor Jeffrey Weber
Teacher Steven Lehman
Teacher Benjamin Washburn
Layman Earl Hagstrom
Layman Jeffrey Krakow

Layman Royce Kriewall
Layman Lawrence Larsen
Layman Michael Lines
Layman Michael Loeffel
Layman Todd Moritz
Layman Bob Petermann
Layman Matthew Petto
Layman Stanley Wittler

Committee #21: Elections

Teacher Jeff Wiechmann, chairman
Pastor Peter Sulzle, secretary
Pastor Steven Neyhart
Pastor James Witt III
Teacher Joshua Johnson
Teacher Nathan Krug
Teacher Greg Milbrath
Teacher Joel Putz
Teacher Daniel Rick

Teacher David Rust
Teacher Michael Wisniewski
Layman Jody Hafeman
Layman Brian Kreuziger
Layman Greg Lurvey
Layman Matthew Macioroski
Layman Curt Thormeier
Layman Keith Wakeman

Committee #22: Resolutions

Teacher Martin Moldenhauer, chairman
Teacher Matthew Rydecki, secretary
Pastor Ben Berger

Pastor James Krause
Teacher Brian Kasten
Layman Alex Smith

Committee #23: Steering

Rev. Donald Tollefson, chairman, North Atlantic District President
Rev. Jon Buchholz, secretary, Arizona-California District President
Rev. Joel Zank, Northern Wisconsin District President

President's Report

Aug. 1, 2017

Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

President Mark Schroeder

My father-in-law, now in his eighties, is a man who always says exactly what he is thinking. And, because he is more than a little hard of hearing, he often speaks his thoughts and opinions in a voice that can be on the loud side. That can create some awkward situations for his daughters when they are with him in public places. At a restaurant, he has been known to say, with the waitress standing nearby, "You know, if that waitress thinks that her nose ring makes her more attractive, she is sadly mistaken!" In church, after singing an unfamiliar hymn, he will say loudly enough to be heard from four pews away, "The pastor should forget about choosing that hymn again."

My father-in-law says what he thinks. And it really doesn't matter to him how direct and blunt he might sound. It wasn't long ago that he said to my wife and her sisters, "You know, if you girls expect an inheritance someday, don't. I'm going to spend it all before I go."

I don't know whether he was serious or not, but what he said is true, isn't it? An heir can't receive an inheritance if there is no inheritance to receive. And an inheritance can't be passed on to the next generation if it is spent or lost or squandered.

The year 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. We look back at the blessings that God gave to his church through the faithful work of Martin Luther, his contemporary fellow-reformers, and generations of faithful witnesses after him. As we do that, we can't help but thank God for the many blessings that God has passed down through the generations to us. It's a rich and priceless inheritance—not of money or property but of the truth of his Word and the life-giving power of the gospel. It's a heritage that has been treasured, protected, and preserved, and which has now been entrusted to us. It's a heritage for us to defend and hold on to, so that we can share it with others now and with generations to come. In view of this precious inheritance that we have received through the Reformation, it seems very fitting that the theme of our 2017 convention is "Our Great Heritage."

We celebrate and thank God for that momentous event for a number of reasons. First, the Reformation was used by God to ensure that there would be an inheritance to pass down. After centuries in which the light of the gospel and the truth of God's Word were obscured and hidden, God saw to it that his truth did not die and his Word did not go silent. Through Luther, God restored that treasure to his church and provided a heritage to pass down to future generations.

Then, in the centuries that followed, God enabled the blessings of the Reformation to be passed down from one generation to the next, bringing hope and life to people around the world. Treasured by faithful Lutherans who came before us, the inheritance would survive new attacks from new and different directions and would remain intact even when there would be temptations to squander and lose it, until that heritage, by God's grace, has come to us.

So now we are heirs of the Reformation and its blessings today. Because of that great heritage, we have Christ, and he has us. And our God-given task and privilege is to hold on to that heritage tightly with boldness and courage, to share it joyfully with the world, and to pass it on to the next generation faithfully.

"Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone." Our Reformation heritage is often summarized in that three-part phrase. Of course, the other "alone" on which all three are based and on which the Church is built is "Christ Alone." But along with those central treasures, faithful Lutherans today recognize other valuable truths and principles preserved for us by the

Lutheran Reformation. This report will focus on some of the treasures that we possess by God's grace and that serve as the foundation, guide, and motivation for the work we do together as a synod and for the decisions we will make at this convention.

Unwavering commitment to the Word

Martin Luther: "I must place the Word of God above everything. I must hazard life and limb, the world's favor, my property, honor, and all my welfare that I may keep it and cling to Christ as to my most precious possession in heaven and on earth."

We know and believe that it is the Word of God alone that enables us to know the grace of God and to know what God has done for us in Christ. We know that it is the Word of God alone that reveals God's unchanging truth to us. It is that Word alone that serves as the only source of our synod's doctrine and the Word alone that guides us in our practice. But we not only have the Word in the Scriptures; we are committed to the conviction that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God himself and that all our teachings and beliefs are to be drawn from that Word.

Sadly, such a commitment to the truth of Scripture has all but disappeared in large segments of the Christian church today. Already by the middle of the last century, the truth of the Scriptures was called into question by "theologians" who rejected inerrancy and reduced the Bible to little more than a culturally influenced collection of human wisdom. In the decades since, many Christians have heard the question posed by Satan in the garden, "Did God really say?" and have concluded, "No, he didn't." The belief that there even exists such a thing as absolute truth has been jettisoned. Individuals and even entire Christian churches have become comfortable with the idea that religious truth is whatever I decide it to be. Sadly, for many who wear the name Christian, a commitment to the Scriptures is a heritage that has been lost and even willingly abandoned.

It isn't just that the Bible has been set aside. In recent decades the basic truths of the Scriptures, including moral truths unquestioned for thousands of years, have been under increasing assault from a godless and hostile culture. The value of human life, the sanctity of marriage, the God-given norms for human sexuality, the importance of work and self-sufficiency, the beauty of showing mercy and love to those in need—have all been the targets of forces that have been very successful in calling what is up down, what is wrong right, and what is ugly beautiful.

The truth of God's Word is under attack, and so are those who hold to the truths of God's Word. The faithful Christian individual and the faithful Christian church today find themselves being wrongfully accused of hatred, bigotry, being closed minded and out of step with the times. Sometimes even the government takes up the cause and allies itself with the forces that are attempting to silence the faithful proclamation of God's truth.

Our synod has been blessed with a commitment to preach and teach the truth of God's Word regardless of the consequences. With Luther, by God's grace, we stand firmly before anyone who opposes God's truth. We do that not trusting in our own power or ability, but standing firmly on the Scriptures. We proclaim God's truth not to change laws or to cure the ills of society, but to change hearts through the power of the gospel.

The attacks on God's church will not decrease. Just the opposite; they will only increase and intensify. In these last days, we thank God that he has preserved among us a commitment to stand on his Word. We pray that in our classrooms, our pulpits, our synodical areas of ministry, our homes, and our communities, God will continue to give us the boldness and courage to cling to his Word and to boldly proclaim what he has said—regardless of the cost, regardless of the consequences.

Trust in the power and efficacy of the Word

"I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip and my Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word did it all."

During this convention you will hear an important report from Pastor Jon Hein, the director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling. For the past several years, Pastor Hein has been conducting a detailed study of the membership trends in our synod. It is no secret that our membership has been declining over the past decade. We do well to acknowledge current trends honestly and to ask some very important questions about how to address them.

There will always be a temptation to think that the problem of declining membership can be addressed by something that we do. Or, to look at it another way, there will be the temptation to conclude that the church will grow in numbers if only we adopt effective strategies and programs and methods to bring about such growth. Many in the evangelical churches have determined that the "unchurched" are unchurched because the church's message is not relevant to them

and to their lives. They have decided that the message needs to change. Instead of proclaiming clear law and gospel, instead of focusing on what Christ has done for us, they attempt to attract people to the church by offering a message that emphasizes what Christ can do in us, promising lives that are happier, marriages that are stronger, and Christian service that is more energized. Luther's conviction that "the Word did it all" is replaced by "Our approach and tailoring the message does it all."

Pastor Hein's report clearly reminds us that the challenges of declining membership and reaching the lost are real challenges that we should not ignore. But he is also careful to point out that these are challenges that cannot be addressed by changing the message, nor should they be addressed simply in the interest of improving statistics. Rather, we should examine whether we are being faithful in our stewardship of that message. With Luther, we need to reassert our conviction that the power of changing hearts and bringing people to saving faith rests not in us or in our efforts, but in the power of the gospel itself, through the working of the Holy Spirit. And then we need to pray to God that he will enable us, in all we do as congregations and as individuals, to be faithful in our stewardship of the means of grace.

During this convention you will have the opportunity not only to review the results of Pastor Hein's study but to consider and commit to practical steps we can take to be faithful in our roles as shepherds and witnesses.

The centrality of the gospel

"The chief article and foundation of the gospel is that before you take Christ as an example, you accept and recognize him as a gift, as a present that God has given you and that is your own. This means that when you see or hear of Christ doing or suffering something, you do not doubt that Christ himself, with his deeds and suffering, belongs to you. On this you may depend as surely as if you had done it yourself; indeed, as if you were Christ himself."

It should be the focus and center of every sermon preached in our congregations. It should be evident in every class taught in our school classrooms and central to our early childhood ministries. It should be what motivates and guides Christian parents and what strengthens Christian marriages. It should be what leads and enables us to live our lives as God's children and what comforts us as our time on this earth approaches its end.

The "it," of course, is the gospel, the good news of what God has done for every sinner in Christ. When the gospel remains central, sermons bring people closer to Jesus, children learn to know and serve their Savior, marriages are strengthened, and Christians are equipped for lives that serve God and others. When the gospel loses that central place, faith withers and is replaced by self-righteousness and ultimately despair.

During this convention, we will review many things that we have been doing together as a synod and look ahead to wide-ranging plans that have been prayerfully made. As we do that, we will want to emphasize that in all things, our precious heritage of keeping the gospel central to all we do should guide us in all decisions and should be the foundation on which all plans are made.

The importance of ministerial education

"Pray that God may give us—as Christ himself commands us to pray—faithful laborers and preachers who are in earnest and who hold on to the Word."

When he began his visitation of congregations in Saxony, Luther was shocked to learn not only that the laypeople were ignorant of some of the basic truths of the Scriptures but that the same thing was true of the pastors. From that time on, Luther emphasized the importance of having pastors who are well trained in biblical languages, fully knowledgeable of the doctrines and Scripture, and committed to their task of serving as spiritual shepherds to their people.

WELS has been blessed with a ministerial education system that is well equipped to provide the thorough training to church workers that Luther championed. This system has blessed us with a dependable supply of pastors, teachers, and staff ministers who know the Word and who have been trained to preach and teach that Word.

As our schools have carried out their mission, they have looked for ways to improve the training of our called workers and to meet new needs in the church as those needs develop. In recent years, our schools have provided numerous undergraduate opportunities to serve in mission settings. They have responded to the need for pastors and teachers to serve in cross-cultural and urban settings. They have developed ways to provide additional mentoring and guidance to new graduates as they begin serving.

At this convention you will have an opportunity to hear about what our schools are doing and will do to provide the kind of workers that will serve God's people faithfully.

The blessing of corporate worship

“No more splendid work exists than receiving and hearing the Word of God.”

The worship in the congregations of our synod has been and by God’s grace will continue to be Christ-centered in its focus and dedicated to a faithful and clear proclamation of law and gospel. Worship among us also offers believers the opportunity to respond to God’s gracious blessings in Word and Sacrament with confession of sins, confession of faith, prayers, and hymns of praise.

In Christian freedom, there can and will be some variety in worship forms and styles, but there is also wisdom and benefit in a common (not necessarily identical) worship experience and emphasis that is widely shared among congregations that walk together in a common faith and mission. For that reason, our synod has undertaken the large task of creating a new hymnal. The new hymnal, scheduled for completion early in the next decade, will preserve the best from our current hymnal and incorporate newer hymns and liturgies that are Christ-centered and scripturally sound. At this convention you will receive a progress report from the WELS Hymnal Committee.

The need for Christian education

“Indeed, for what purpose do we older folks exist, other than to care for, instruct, and bring up the young? . . . This is why God has entrusted them to us who are older and know from experience what is best for them. And God will hold us strictly accountable for them.”

From its very beginning, our Wisconsin Synod has recognized the importance of Christian education. The primary responsibility for teaching children about their Savior rests with Christian parents. But we have also recognized that the church can assist and supplement the instruction in the home through Christian schools on all levels. We dedicate much time and resources to training teachers and operating Lutheran elementary schools, high schools, and colleges. In recent years, many of our congregations have recognized the opportunities for Christian instruction and for outreach to the unchurched in early childhood ministry programs.

The importance of Christian education is one Reformation heritage that we have treasured. Northwestern Publishing House has completed a revision of Luther’s Catechism that is now available for use in congregations and schools. At this convention we will have opportunities to recommit ourselves to a joint effort to provide Christ-centered and Bible-based instruction of our children and to explore ways in which our system of Christian education can be utilized to reach the unchurched through their children.

A renewed emphasis on Christian vocation

“How could the devil have more effectively led us astray than by the narrow conception that service to God takes place only in a church and by the works done therein? The whole world could abound to the service of God not only in churches but in the home, kitchen, workshop, and field.”

Permit a brief personal story. I come from a family of eight children. I am the youngest. By the time I was a senior in high school, all seven of my siblings were either serving in the pastoral or teaching ministry, or at the seminary. It was time for me to decide what I would do with my life, and you can imagine the pressure I was under to make it eight for eight. The pressure didn’t come from my parents; it came from me. And I struggled with the decision. My mother recognized I was struggling. One day she said to me, “You know, the Lord needs good laypeople just as much as he needs good pastors and teachers. No matter what you decide to do, you can be sure that the Lord will use you to serve him.” In those few words, my mother showed that she understood one of the great, almost radical, teachings re-discovered by the Lutheran Reformation: Christian vocation. In other words, God’s people serve him and serve him well no matter what the calling or vocation into which he places them.

Our synod recognizes the importance of Christian vocation. While we certainly refer to the public ministry as a high calling from God, we in no way denigrate the other callings that God gives to people. No matter what the calling—as a spouse, a parent, a child, a student, a factory worker or farmer, a professional or entrepreneur—God places people exactly where he wants them to be, and in that calling God gives opportunities to serve him, to witness for him, and to show love for others.

Showing mercy and Christian love

“Therefore, a man should be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except the need and advantage of his neighbor.”

One recurring emphasis—often overlooked—in Luther’s teaching was the importance of showing Christian love and concern for one’s neighbor. In fact, Luther often made the point that showing Christian love and concern for others was the single most important way for a Christian to express his thanks and praise to God.

At this convention, you will see the many ways in which we have opportunities to respond to God’s blessings with the love and mercy we show to others. The WELS Commission on Special Ministries will describe the ongoing efforts to serve those with special needs, to minister to those in prison, and to bring the gospel to people in our society who are often ignored and forgotten. WELS Christian Aid and Relief will share stories with you about how your gifts of love have made possible humanitarian aid projects in our mission fields, carried out relief efforts in time of disaster, and provided help for families facing serious medical problems.

Showing love and mercy to others was an emphasis of Luther and his Reformation. It’s a heritage that remains ours today.

The privilege of missions

“Dear Father, we pray, give us first your Word, that the gospel be preached faithfully throughout the world.”

It’s a phrase that occurs many times in the Book of Acts. In fact, it occurs so often that it could perhaps be the theme of the entire book. “So the Word of God spread” (Acts 6:7).

Beginning in Jerusalem after Pentecost, the religious leaders of the Jews did everything they could—including threats and arrests—to keep the apostles and other Christians from preaching and teaching about the crucified and risen Savior. But early Christians didn’t stop. “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 5:42). As the church grew, the apostles appointed seven men to assist them in providing for the physical and spiritual needs of Christians. “So the word of God spread.”

King Herod arrested believers and carried out executions. He had Peter arrested and thrown into prison. But an angel opened the doors of the prison and Peter went free. “And the word of God continued to increase and spread” (Acts 12:24).

Later, on his second mission journey, Paul proclaimed the gospel in Ephesus. Paul first preached to the Jewish people in the synagogue, but when they rejected his message, he shifted his efforts to a Greek audience. The Holy Spirit blessed his preaching. “In this way, the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (Acts 19:20).

The same Word of God that grew despite opposition and persecution in the time of the apostles is continuing to grow today. Even though we live in a country that seems to be turning away from Christianity, and even though the influence of Christian faith and values seems to be diminishing in our own culture, the very opposite is true in many places around the world. The word of the Lord is growing. The saving gospel is on the march. God’s church is being built by the same powerful preaching of the good news of Jesus.

We have continued to open new missions here in the United States. And while our synod may not be increasing in numbers here in America, our fellowship around the world continues to grow. It’s happening in some completely unexpected places and in ways that we could not have foreseen. Thousands of people are hearing the gospel and being brought to faith in places like Nepal and Pakistan, where modern-day Herods continue to threaten and oppose Christians. Christian groups in places like Vietnam and Laos and Thailand, like modern-day Macedonians, are asking us to come and help them with theological training. Literally millions of people are hearing the gospel online in Latin America through the efforts of our synod’s Multi-Language Publications. And hardly a month goes by when our synod is not contacted by a Lutheran group somewhere in the world seeking to establish a relationship with our synod.

At this convention, we will see tangible evidence that the word of the Lord continues to grow. A high point will be the joy of declaring fellowship with three confessional Lutheran church bodies. The Lutheran Church of Ethiopia broke away from a large liberal Lutheran church body because it wanted to be faithful to the Lutheran Confessions. The South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) has confessed that it shares our commitment to the Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions. Finally, the East Asia Lutheran Synod is a brand new Lutheran church body established on the mainland north of Hong Kong by six pastors trained at our Asia Lutheran Seminary.

Because we share the same commitment to the truth of God’s Word, WELS will have the opportunity to declare fellowship with these Lutheran church bodies. It will be a joyful day for them and for us. And, with God’s power and blessing, the word of the Lord will continue to grow and spread.

A life of repentance

“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

It goes without saying that our synod is not perfect, because it’s a family of weak and imperfect sinners. When Martin Luther said, “We are all beggars,” we would join him in that statement in describing ourselves. So we are reminded, as Luther noted, that God desires that our entire life be a life of repenting of the evil that we have done and the good that we have left undone—both in our lives as individuals and in our lives as members of God’s visible church.

The flaws in us and in our synod will continue until Christ returns to transform the Church Militant into the Church Triumphant. In the meantime, we pray for his strength, guidance, and correction. We beg for his mercy for our failures. But we also have the joy and comfort of knowing that God has taken miserable sinners like us, declared us to be perfect in his eyes for the sake of Christ, and placed us in this world to be used as his workers and witnesses in the service of his gospel. And he has promised to give us all we need to carry out the mission he has entrusted to us with boldness, confidence, and joy.

That gracious act of God—accomplished on Calvary’s cross and proclaimed in the Scriptures—places our synod in an incredibly wonderful position. We have the truth of his Word. We have heard and believed the unconditional gospel of full forgiveness in Christ. He has placed us in this world and gives us the opportunity to give the world exactly what it so desperately needs—the gospel of Christ crucified and risen, proclaimed in the Scriptures, summarized in the Lutheran Confessions, preserved to us through the generations.

Other convention business

Inter-church relations

Representatives from WELS, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), and the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) have been meeting over the past few years in formal doctrinal discussions to determine whether the three synods are still separated by doctrinal differences.

The first task of the committee was to draft a statement that addressed the question of when two church bodies in fellowship with each other must separate if false doctrine appears. (Please see the “Joint Statement Regarding the Termination of Fellowship” on p. 29 of the *Book of Reports and Memorials*.) The statement has been adopted by the ELS, is still under discussion in the CLC, and is being submitted for approval by this convention. A full report of the committee’s work is included in the report of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations on p. 28 of BORAM.

Plans have been made for WELS and the ELS to continue informal discussions with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), with another meeting scheduled in late November. Over the past five years, these meetings have proven to be very helpful in clarifying where our synods agree and where disagreements remain. Topics discussed have included Scripture, fellowship, the role of man and woman, and hermeneutics (the principles that guide the interpretation of Scripture). We have been especially gratified that the leadership of the LCMS is firmly committed to the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures and to see their efforts in promoting and preserving confessional Lutheranism around the world. These discussions remain informal, since all participants recognize that a restoration of fellowship between our synods is not likely in the near future. It remains our prayer, however, that at some point in the future fellowship can be restored on the basis of full agreement in doctrine and practice.

Retirement of the synod capital debt

At this convention, we will pause to give formal recognition to the retirement of the synod’s capital debt earlier this year. The synod’s various capital debts were combined into a single debt of \$22.4 million in 2008. After an initial special offering, plans were made to retire the debt in 2019 through regular payments of \$1.6 million from the synod’s operating budget. In 2016, the Conference of Presidents authorized a second special offering with the goal of retiring the debt ahead of schedule. By God’s grace, the debt was retired late last year nearly two years ahead of schedule. At this convention, we will thank God for his blessing on this effort for enabling the synod to be debt free for the first time in decades.

It should be noted that even as the debt was being repaid, the Lord made possible a number of other capital projects that have all been fully paid for. Projects completed since 2009 include the Chapel of the Christ at Martin Luther College (MLC), the acquisition of a new synod headquarters, the Early Childhood Learning Center at MLC, the relocation of the synodical archives from the seminary to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, and renovation projects on the other three ministerial education campuses.

Ministry financial plan

The ministry financial plan (budget) to be considered by this convention is unanimously recommended by the Synodical Council with the unanimous support of the Conference of Presidents. It was developed by all areas of ministry with commendable cooperation in keeping with the support forecast and with a strong commitment to reducing costs wherever possible.

Because areas of ministry were, for the most part, able to sustain existing ministry without increased funding, the ministry financial plan does make possible some modest expansion to ministries and programs. Included among these expansions, most of which have been encouraged by previous conventions, is funding for the synod archivist, new home missions starts, expansion of the Pastoral Studies Institute (to coordinate and deliver theological training around the world), and a director of discipleship.

Special items

In addition to reports and recommendations from all areas of ministry, special items to be considered by this convention are the:

- report of the Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force;
- report of the Reformation 500 Committee;
- proposed “Our Great Heritage” long-range plan;
- report of the WELS Hymnal Project Committee;
- report and recommendations of the Compensation Review Committee;
- report and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Ministry of Christian Giving Review Committee;
- bylaw changes recommended by the Synodical Council and Conference of Presidents; and
- report of the Early Childhood Ministries Task Force.

Conclusion

It is often said that we are living in a post-Christian world. There are those who say that, for the church to survive in a post-Christian world, it needs to take a defensive position, to hunker down in the face of opposition, and to build walls of protection against advancing enemy forces. Others suggest that, in a rapidly changing post-Christian world, the church needs to make some fundamental changes and adapt to a new reality, perhaps by morphing its message into something more appealing, more relevant, and less offensive.

We dare not take either approach. Our synod has been blessed with the perfect remedy for a sick and dying world. We have the message that God has entrusted to us—the message of Christ crucified and risen.

Far from hiding in a protective bunker, we can have boldness and courage because we have a powerful message to proclaim. We have the Sword of the Spirit—the Word of God—that will not return to him empty. And we have his promise that the gates of hell itself cannot and will not overcome his church.

Because we know that, we will not run from our Lutheran heritage; we will embrace it. Because of the truth that has been revealed to us, we will not hide from nor apologize for our identity as confessional Lutherans. We will cherish it, declare it, explain it, and defend it.

Second, we dare not tamper with the message. Itching ears will demand that we say what they want to hear. A consumer-minded, self-centered audience will want a message that offers shallow relevance and feel-good results. A hostile culture will demand that we avoid calling sin what it is, confronting it, and calling for repentance. But a changed and modified Word of God ceases to be the Word of God. Such a message will fall flat, the hearers will be left searching, and the visible church will fail in the main mission that God has given it.

King Solomon said that there is nothing new under the sun. The same sinful human nature that has plagued mankind since the fall is alive and well in people today. The same *opinio legis*—the idea that I must somehow save myself by what I do—exists in all people today just as it did in the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. The same hard hearts beating in the hearts of the stubborn children of Israel beat in chests of people today. Unbelief and wickedness may take on different shapes and forms at different times, but nothing has really changed.

But it is also true that the only remedy for sin has also not changed. “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” has always been and remains the only remedy for sin, the only avenue to the presence of God, and the only way for sinners to be saved.

As we mark 500 years of the Lutheran Reformation, we pray that God will move us to rededicate ourselves to the biblical truths that God so graciously restored to his church and which he has passed down to us as the heirs of that Reformation. In every sermon preached, in every Bible class taught, in every opportunity to share what we believe, may he enable us to know and confess that we are saved by God's grace alone, that we receive that blessing through faith alone, and that we are sure of that truth because of Scripture alone. Holding on to that heritage, we will by God's grace be permitted to share in the glorious privilege of serving as his witnesses, and we will have the joy of passing that heritage down to the next generations of God's people.

Soli Deo Gloria! To God alone be the glory!

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Mark Schroeder
WELS President

Reports and resolutions

Committee #1: President's Report

Subject: Appointments and installations 2015-17

Reference: Report from the President's Office

Report No. 01

Installations

Mr. Thomas Plitzuweit, Associate Director, Commission on Lutheran Schools

Appointments

To Synodical Council

Rev. Earle Treptow

Rev. Joel Zank

To Commission on Inter-Church Relations

Rev. Thomas Fricke

Rev. Keith Wessel

Prof. Bradley Wordell

To Committee on Constitutional Matters chairman

Rev. Eric Steinbrenner

To VEBA Commission

Mr. Jon Wirkkula

To Retirement Program Commission

Mr. James Brenn

To Forward in Christ reviewer

Prof. Bill Tackmier

To Forward in Christ devotion writer

Rev. Daniel Habben

Rev. Peter Prange

Rev. Joel Seifert

To Forward in Christ editorial writer

Rev. Andrew Schroer

To Publication Coordinating Commission

Rev. John Braun
Rev. Bryan Gerlach
Rev. Curtis Jahn
Rev. Thomas Kock
Rev. Bruce McKenney
Mr. Thomas Plizuweit
Rev. Nathan Seiltz
Rev. Jonathan Werre
Mr. Lee Hitter, advisory
Mr. Todd Poppe, advisory

To Publication Review Committee

Rev. Paul Eckert
Rev. Larry Ellenbergerger
Rev. Harlyn Kuschel
Rev. Richard Lauersdorf
Rev. Thomas Pfothenhauer
Rev. Joel Prange
Prof. James Schneider
Rev. Carl Voss

To Board for Home Missions

Rev. Wayne Uhlhorn, chairman

To Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman

To Commission on Adult Discipleship

Rev. Jonathan Bergemann
Rev. John Vieths
Rev. Ross Stelljes, advisory
Rev. Daniel Schroeder, advisory

To Commission on Special Ministries

Rev. Stephen Schmidt
Rev. Robbin Robbert

To Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Committee

Mr. Thomas Heuer

To Commission on Youth and Family Ministry

Rev. Andrew Schwartz
Mr. Benjamin Washburn
Rev. Paul Schupmann

To Ministry of Christian Giving Review Committee

Rev. Jonathan Kolander
Rev. Joel Voss
Rev. Michael Otterstatter

To Care Committee for Called Workers

Mr. Kurt Holzhueter

To Support Committee

Rev. Jerry Ewings
Rev. Michael Jensen
Rev. Mark Johnston
Rev. Dennis C. Klatt
Rev. Joel Leyrer

Rev. Glenn L. Schwanke
Rev. Donald Sutton

To Christian Aid and Relief
Rev. Robert Hein

To Commission on Evangelism
Rev. Jay Bickelhaupt
Rev. Joseph Fricke
Rev. Michael Geiger
Rev. Douglas Tomhave

To Commission on Worship
Mr. Kevin Bode
Mr. G. Harvey Dunn
Rev. Jason Hacker

To Commission on Lutheran Schools
Rev. Jonathan Brohn
Mr. Ronald Conradt
Rev. Matthew Brown
Mr. Shawn Herkstroeter
Mr. Mark Otte
Mr. James Sexton

To Commission on Adult Discipleship
Rev. Aaron Boehm
Prof. Thomas Kock
Rev. David Wenzel

To Commission on Youth and Family Ministry
Rev. Snowden Sims

To Commission on Congregational Counseling
Rev. Douglas Tomhave

To Human Resources Advisory Committee
Mr. Steven Schroeder

Pastor Jonathan Scharf, chairman
Pastor Matthew Arnold, secretary

Subject: President's Report

Reference: *President's Report*
Report No. 02

We join with President Schroeder in thanking God for the treasures passed down to us through the Lutheran Reformation, especially the gift of God's Word. Through that Word we celebrate the 10 treasures listed in the report. We pray with the hymnwriter, "Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word!"

We take President Schroeder's encouragement to heart—to address declining membership in our congregations with a renewed commitment to the faithful proclamation of law and gospel and not with a mere reliance on programs or strategies. "Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word!"

We thank God for the offerings of his people which enabled the retirement of the synod's debt. Instead of debt service, future offerings can be directed to a careful expansion of gospel ministry. "Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word!"

Pastor Jonathan Scharf, chairman
Pastor Matthew Arnold, secretary

Subject: Membership—called workers

Reference: Report from the President's Office

Resolution No. 01

WHEREAS the following pastors, professors, graduate tutors, male teachers, and male staff ministers are recommended by their respective district presidents for voting membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, that the following be graciously welcomed into the voting membership of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod:

ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA DISTRICT

Rev. Luther R. Zuberbier, Deer Valley Lutheran Church, Phoenix, Ariz., from WLS
Teacher Eric J. Hahn, California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif., from MLC
Teacher Kyle R. Melso, California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif., from MLC
Teacher Joshua M. Severeid, California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif., from MLC

DAKOTA-MONTANA DISTRICT

Rev. John M. Schwartz, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Pierre, S.D., from WLS
Teacher Matthew J. Behm, Trinity Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, S.D., from MLC
Teacher Santiago D. Botero, Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D., from MLC

MICHIGAN DISTRICT

Rev. Craig N. Birsching, St. John Lutheran Church, Westland, Mich., from WLS
Rev. Ross S. Chartrand, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., from WLS
Rev. Justin L. Shrum, St. John Lutheran Church, Riga, Mich., from WLS
Teacher Nathan L. Guhl, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., from MLC
Teacher Ryan A. Lemke, Michigan Lutheran High School, St. Joseph, Mich., from MLC
Teacher Aaron E. Luedke, St. John Lutheran School, Pigeon, Mich., from MLC
Teacher Aaron W. Schwartz, Peace Lutheran School, Livonia, Mich., from MLC
Teacher Joseph D. Shiery, St. John Lutheran School, Bay City, Mich., from MLC
Teacher Wesley S. Towne, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., from MLC

MINNESOTA DISTRICT

Rev. Justin W. Heise, St. Peter Lutheran Church, St. Peter, Minn., from WLS
Rev. Jacob A. Schram, Salem Lutheran Church, Stillwater, Minn., from WLS
Rev. Paul L. Spaude, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., from WLS
Teacher Todd W. Brassow, St. John Lutheran School, Redwood Falls, Minn., from MLC
Teacher Grey J. Davis, St. Croix Lutheran High School, West Saint Paul, Minn., from MLC
Teacher Jason M. Dutcher, St. John Lutheran School, Lake City, Minn., from MLC
Teacher Paul T. Habermann, Holy Trinity Lutheran School, New Hope Minn., from MLC
Teacher Garrett J. Schoch, St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn., from MLC
Staff Minister Kristoffer K. Kuschel, St. Paul Lutheran Church, New Ulm, Minn., from MLC

NEBRASKA DISTRICT

Rev. Jacob A. Jenswold, Rock of Ages Lutheran Church, Kansas City, Mo., from WLS
Rev. Nathan G. Schulte, Latin American Mission, Latin America, from WLS
Rev. Austin M. Ziche, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Hadar, Neb., from WLS
Teacher Benjamin M. Olsen, Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb., from MLC
Teacher Jacob E. Ziel, Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb., from MLC

NORTH ATLANTIC DISTRICT

Rev. Douglas R. Van Sice, New Mission, Hendersonville, N.C., from WLS
Rev. Mark J. Voss, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Long Valley, N.J., from WLS

NORTHERN WISCONSIN DISTRICT

Rev. Philip M. Janisch, Trinity Lutheran Church, Brillion, Wis., from WLS
Rev. Christopher W. Johns, St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Pound, Wis., from WLS
Rev. Matthew E. Stuebs, Calvary Lutheran Church, Abrams, Wis., from WLS

Teacher Daniel T. Roemhildt, St. Peter's Lutheran School, Sturgeon Bay, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Erick K. Schalo, St. Peter Lutheran School, Weyauwega, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Nathan L. Scharf, Immanuel Lutheran School, Greenville, Wis., from MLC

PACIFIC NORTHWEST DISTRICT

Rev. Geoffrey D. Rue, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Wash., from WLS
Teacher Jacob P. Biebert, St. Matthew Lutheran School, Spokane, Wash., from MLC
Teacher Phillip G. Bunkowske, Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Wash., from MLC
Teacher Martin Santos, Holy Trinity Lutheran School, Des Moines, Wash., from MLC

SOUTH ATLANTIC DISTRICT

Rev. Eric C. Melso, New Mission, Chattanooga, Tenn., from WLS
Rev. Andrew J. Schrimpf, Cross of Glory Lutheran Church, Baton Rouge, La., from WLS
Teacher Aaron J. Markgraf, St. Paul Lutheran School, Beverly Hills, Fla., from MLC
Teacher Justin T. Marshall, Divine Savior Academy—Doral, Doral, Fla., from MLC
Teacher Joel R. Sonntag, Good Shepherd Lutheran Academy, Deltona, Fla., from MLC

SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT

Rev. Benjamin M. Schone, Abiding Word Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas, from WLS
Rev. Joshua J. Shandor, King of Kings Lutheran Church, Little Rock, Ark., from WLS
Teacher Matthew P. Lange, Abiding Word Lutheran School, Houston, Texas, from WLS

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN DISTRICT

Rev. Christian D. Marquardt, St. James Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wis., from WLS
Rev. Jardan Patrick, Joint Mission Council, Waukesha, Wis., from WLS
Rev. Nixon G. Vivar, Christ Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wis., from WLS
Teacher James F. Christensen, St. Marcus Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis., from MLC
Teacher ChiSeon Kim, Jerusalem Lutheran School, Morton Grove, Ill., from MLC
Teacher John M. Kujath, Our Savior Lutheran School, Zion, Ill., from MLC
Teacher Joshua W. Lindner, Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Jeremy M. Maas, St. Marcus Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Michael G. Martens, Trinity Lutheran School, Caledonia, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Jeffrey B. Rick, Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill., from MLC
Teacher David J. Roeckle, Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Downers Grove, Ill., from MLC
Teacher Christopher A. Stollfus, Word of Life Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Seth D. Zoellner, Trinity Lutheran School, Waukesha, Wis., from MLC

WESTERN WISCONSIN DISTRICT

Rev. Samuel R. Crass, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., from WLS
Rev. Joshua J. Jensen, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., from WLS
Rev. Larry C. Neitzel, St. John Lutheran Church, Kendall, Wis./St. Matthew, Ontario, Wis., from WLS
Rev. Peter R. Schlicht, Eastside Lutheran Church, Madison, Wis., from WLS
Teacher Jarred D. Beduze, Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Benjamin S. Ewings, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Lucas G. Krogmann, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Carl D. Manske, Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Joshua J. Most, St. Mark's Lutheran School, Watertown, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Ethan R. Rixe, Christ-St. John's Lutheran School, West Salem, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Luke M. Rosenbaum, Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis., from MLC
Teacher Luke J. Rothe, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., from MLC.

Pastor Jonathan Scharf, chairman
Pastor Matthew Arnold, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Membership—congregations

Reference: Report from the President's Office

Resolution No. 02

WHEREAS 1) the following congregation is recommended by the district president for voting membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; and

WHEREAS 2) the constitution of the congregation has been examined and approved by the district constitution and legislation committees; therefore be it

Resolved, that this congregation be graciously welcomed into the voting membership of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod:

SOUTH ATLANTIC DISTRICT

Grace Lutheran Church of Grenada, Inc., Grand Anse, Grenada.

Pastor Jonathan Scharf, chairman

Pastor Matthew Arnold, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #2: Conference of Presidents

Subject: Convention attendance report

Report No. 01

The 64th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod was attended by 365 voting delegates, comprised of 106 pastors, 4 world missionaries, 70 teachers, 6 staff ministers, and 179 lay delegates. An additional 53 advisory delegates and 10 special guests attended. Twelve delegates were excused for the full convention, and 11 delegates were absent and unexcused.

Pastor Nathan Seiltz, chairman

Pastor Jeffrey Mahnke, secretary

Subject: Conference of Presidents (Committee discussions summary)

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 5-12; Memorial 2017-01, p. 227

Report No. 02

Our committee commends the Conference of Presidents for their faithful labors for our Savior and synod.

After reading and discussing the report of the Conference of Presidents, our committee has the following encouragements:

- We applaud all efforts in the making of the synod's ministry plan, and we strongly encourage congregations to increase their Congregation Mission Offerings. Among other things, this would reduce student debt at the ministerial education schools and help with recruitment of future called workers.
- We encourage the Conference of Presidents to consider appointing an ad hoc committee to research and make recommendations on the recruitment of second-career candidates for public ministry.

- We appreciate the summary of the special committee that studied the issue of participation in the military chaplaincy program. We encourage the Conference of Presidents to create and make available for the synod a Bible study or doctrinal paper on the teachings of the two kingdoms, divine call, and fellowship as they relate to the military chaplaincy program.

After discussing Memorial 2017-01, "Convention delegate fee," we recommend that congregations, treasuring the privilege to send delegates to represent them at synod conventions, continue to pay the convention delegate fee and that there be no change to the current system that is in place. We decided to not bring that memorial to the floor for a vote.

Pastor Nathan Seiltz, chairman
 Pastor Jeffrey Mahnke, secretary

Subject: Expressions of gratitude

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the accomplishment of the convention’s work requires the effort of many people; and
- WHEREAS 2) the work of the synod depends on the consecrated labor of many people within its membership; therefore be it

- Resolved, that the synod in convention express its gratitude to:
1. The faculty and staff of Luther Preparatory School for hosting this convention, especially Roger Kobleske.
 2. The support staff and officers of the synod for arranging and conducting the business of this convention.
 3. Those who delivered the sermons, devotions, and essays; conducted the services; served as organists and instrumentalists; sang in the choirs; and in other ways led us in worship.
 4. Mr. Timothy Snyder, who served as the convention videographer, and Mr. Bill Pekrul as the convention photographer.
 5. The Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society for the presentation of the flags.
 6. The delegates and floor committees of the convention for their concentrated efforts; all who served on boards, commissions, and committees of the synod.
 7. The school staff, kitchen staff, audio/visual services, technology services, pages, and volunteers who contributed their time and talent to make the convention flow smoothly to a successful completion.
 8. Luther Preparatory School, Northwestern Publishing House, Boettcher/Trinklein Productions, Mr. Kevin Kopplin, Sky High Marketing, the Wartburg Project, WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds, Inc., Church Extension Fund, Lutheran Military Support Group, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Central Office Systems, Troxell Communications, and others who provided materials for the convention.
 9. All other WELS agencies who provided time, materials, and representatives to inform delegates of synod work.

Pastor Nathan Seiltz, chairman
 Pastor Jeffrey Mahnke, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Location of the synod convention

Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS Martin Luther College has extended an invitation to host the 2019 synod convention in New Ulm, Minn.; therefore be it

Resolved, that we accept the invitation of Martin Luther College with thanks.

Pastor Nathan Seiltz, chairman
Pastor Jeffrey Mahnke, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Convention offerings

Resolution No. 04

WHEREAS a thank offering was gathered at the opening service; therefore be it

Resolved, that the 2017 WELS convention designate the offering be equally divided among the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia, East Asia Lutheran Synod, and South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission.

Pastor Nathan Seiltz, chairman
Pastor Jeffrey Mahnke, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Expressions of gratitude

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 11

Resolution No. 05

WHEREAS 1) Rev. John Guse served faithfully as district president of the South Atlantic District; and

WHEREAS 2) Rev. Herbert Prahel served faithfully as district president of the Western Wisconsin District; and

WHEREAS 3) Rev. David Rutschow served faithfully as district president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District;
and

WHEREAS 4) Rev. Earle Treptow served faithfully as district president of the Nebraska District before accepting
a call to the seminary; and

WHEREAS 5) Pastor-emeritus Carl Voss served faithfully by coordinating the process of finding semi-retired
pastors to serve in vacancies or in part-time service, but now his services are no longer needed;
therefore be it

Resolved, that our synod in convention thank the Lord for Rev. Guse, Rev. Prahel, Rev. Rutschow, Rev. Treptow,
and Pastor-emeritus Voss for their years of faithful service.

Pastor Nathan Seiltz, chairman
Pastor Jeffrey Mahnke, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #3: Special committees

Subject: Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 16-22

Report No. 01

We appreciate the plethora of opportunities for continuing education that are presently available and encourage continued work on new programs. We also encourage called workers and congregations to value the importance of continuing education and take advantage of the opportunities that are available.

Pastor Joel Heckendorf, chairman

Teacher Dan Kuehl, secretary

Subject: Reformation 500

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 23,24

Report No. 02

We thank the individuals and organizations that have contributed multiple resources for the Reformation 500 celebration. We encourage individuals and congregations to utilize these resources.

Pastor Joel Heckendorf, chairman

Teacher Dan Kuehl, secretary

Subject: Translation Liaison Committee

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 13-16

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) God's Word is our great heritage and we want to continue to clearly proclaim that Word; and
- WHEREAS 2) the Translation Liaison Committee (TLC), by direction of the synod, has had influence on major translations; and
- WHEREAS 3) we currently have opportunity to work with at least two of the major translations; and
- WHEREAS 4) the contributions of WELS linguists could benefit the church at large; and
- WHEREAS 5) no official statement concerning the duration of the TLC exists; therefore be it

Resolved. that the TLC continue as a standing committee to evaluate major Bible translations, to communicate with their editors and publishers, to offer suggestions to improve such translations, and to share its findings with the synod at large.

Pastor Joel Heckendorf, chairman

Teacher Dan Kuehl, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #4: Commission on Inter-Church Relations

Subject: The work of the CICR

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 25-31

Report No. 01

The Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) is to “serve under the Conference of Presidents by representing the synod in doctrinal discussions with other church bodies who are, or are not, in fellowship with the synod” and to “keep itself informed on the doctrinal trends in other church bodies.”

The fruits of the CICR’s labors are on display at this convention. We rejoice at the declaration of fellowship with three confessional Lutheran church bodies and sponsorship of their membership in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. We encourage the CICR to continue their efforts to recognize or establish unity of doctrine and practice with faithful church bodies around the world. Their current efforts range from U.S. territories to Europe, from Africa to the Far East. While faithfulness to Scripture at times results in termination of fellowship with erring church bodies, we see the fundamental work of the CICR as one that seeks to recognize and celebrate the fellowship that comes from God-pleasing doctrinal agreement. The CICR’s work with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) and the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) and the resulting “Joint Statement” demonstrate the evangelical and faithful nature of their efforts.

We commend the informal meetings held with the leadership of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and encourage such meetings to continue.

Our synod thanks the members of the CICR who have completed two terms of service: Prof. Ken Cherney and Pastor Peter Prange. Their work has been a blessing to us and to our brothers and sisters in faith around the world.

Pastor Jonathan E. Schroeder, chairman

Teacher Bradley R. Bendix, secretary

Subject: To declare formal fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 25-31

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia (LCE) has been formed and exists as an independent confessional church; and
- WHEREAS 2) unity in faith between the LCE and WELS has been evidenced by a common commitment to the Holy Scriptures, to the Lutheran Confessions, and to the doctrinal position of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC); and
- WHEREAS 3) the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) unanimously recommends a formal declaration of fellowship and sponsorship of the LCE in the CELC; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that we thank God for allowing the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia to be formed as a confessional Lutheran church with whom we enjoy unity in faith and doctrine; and be it further
- Resolved, b) that WELS officially declare fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia; and be it further
- Resolved, c) that WELS sponsor the LCE as an associate member of the CELC; and be it finally
- Resolved, d) that we ask God to give joy and blessing to both of our church bodies through this fellowship.

Pastor Jonathan E. Schroeder, chairman
Teacher Bradley R. Bendix, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: To declare formal fellowship with the East Asia Lutheran Synod

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 25-31

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the East Asia Lutheran Synod (EALS) has been formed and exists as an independent confessional church; and
- WHEREAS 2) unity in faith between the EALS and WELS has been evidenced by a common commitment to the Holy Scriptures, to the Lutheran Confessions, and to the doctrinal position of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC); and
- WHEREAS 3) the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) unanimously recommends a formal declaration of fellowship and sponsorship of the EALS in the CELC; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we thank God for allowing the East Asia Lutheran Synod to be formed as a confessional Lutheran church with whom we enjoy unity in faith and doctrine; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that WELS officially declare fellowship with the East Asia Lutheran Synod; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that WELS sponsor the EALS as an associate member of the CELC; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that we ask God to give joy and blessing to both of our church bodies through this fellowship.

Pastor Jonathan E. Schroeder, chairman
Teacher Bradley R. Bendix, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: To declare formal fellowship with the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 25-31

Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) has been formed and exists as an independent confessional church; and
- WHEREAS 2) unity in faith between SALEM and WELS has been evidenced by a common commitment to the Holy Scriptures, to the Lutheran Confessions, and to the doctrinal position of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC); and
- WHEREAS 3) the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) unanimously recommends a formal declaration of fellowship and sponsorship of SALEM in the CELC; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we thank God for allowing the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission to be formed as a confessional Lutheran church with whom we enjoy unity in faith and doctrine; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that WELS officially declare fellowship with the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that WELS sponsor SALEM as an associate member of the CELC; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that we ask God to give joy and blessing to both of our church bodies through this fellowship.

Pastor Jonathan E. Schroeder, chairman
Teacher Bradley R. Bendix, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Joint Statement Regarding Termination of Fellowship

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 29-31

Resolution No. 04

- WHEREAS 1) since the establishment of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) in 1960, there has been much discussion about the history behind the formation of the CLC and the precise nature of the differences that have separated the CLC from the ELS and WELS; and
- WHEREAS 2) God desires that we agree on the doctrinal principles of God's Word and commit ourselves to implementing those principles in our church life; and
- WHEREAS 3) agreement on the doctrine of fellowship would be a necessary first step toward the restoration of God-pleasing fellowship relations; and
- WHEREAS 4) the Joint Statement Regarding the Termination of Fellowship accurately defines the biblical principles; and
- WHEREAS 5) the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) unanimously recommends adoption of the Joint Statement; and
- WHEREAS 6) this "Joint Statement," if and when it is adopted by the three synods, will supersede all previous statements or interpretations of previous statements that are in conflict with it; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that WELS adopt the Joint Statement Regarding Termination of Fellowship as an accurate articulation of the biblical principles; and be it finally
- Resolved, b) that we encourage the CICR to continue their efforts towards restoration of God-pleasing fellowship relations with the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

Pastor Jonathan E. Schroeder, chairman

Teacher Bradley R. Bendix, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #5: Ministry of Christian Giving and Communication Services

Subject: Communication Services

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 39-41

Report No. 01

We commend Communication Services for assisting the Conference of Presidents in communicating WELS' mission to the world. Communication Services has been able to help each area of ministry to communicate identified priorities to the laypeople and called workers of our synod through print, digital, and social media. We also commend Communication Services for improving branding throughout various media platforms. We especially thank Communication Services for its close cooperation with the Ministry of Christian Giving in communicating the need for support of the synod.

Pastor Michael Quandt, chairman

Teacher Richard Gibson, secretary

Subject: Ministry of Christian Giving

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 32-38

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) serves on behalf of the Conference of Presidents (COP) to encourage every WELS member to “excel in the grace of giving” through Christ; and
- WHEREAS 2) increasing Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO), the primary funding source of our synod’s ministries, will enable us to expand our ministries throughout the world; and
- WHEREAS 3) the Ministry of Christian Giving Review Committee has concluded that “through the years and by the grace of God the MCG has been able to have a positive impact on WELS ministry;” and
- WHEREAS 4) the Ministry of Christian Giving Review Committee has recommended that the MCG will expand its individual funding contacts with the gospel-motivated stewards of our fellowship by adding one full-time Christian giving counselor to its team; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we praise Jesus for abundantly blessing us through his gifted, generous stewards, and for the faithful service of the MCG staff and counselors, asking the Lord’s continued blessing on their work; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that we urge all congregations to make use of the resources provided by the MCG as they cheerfully plan their annual CMO; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that we recommend the MCG continue to work faithfully and optimistically with the COP as it manages CMO and other funding opportunities; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that we accept the report of the Ministry of Christian Giving Review Committee and that we endorse the addition of one full-time Christian giving counselor starting in the second year of the current biennium.

Pastor Michael Quandt, chairman
Teacher Richard Gibson, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #6: Synodical Council

Subject: Synodical Council

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 77-89

Report No. 01

Our committee notes with gratitude the faithful work of those who serve on the Synodical Council (SC) and highlights the following items:

The retirement of the capital debt: Praise and thanks be to God for blessing our efforts and enabling us to retire the debt nearly a year and a half ahead of schedule. Indeed, this has happened only by God’s grace and by the power of his gospel working in the hearts of his people.

Synod finance and the need to fund the ministry financial plan: We share the SC’s concern that the Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) have been relatively flat over the past ten years. We pray that the efforts of the district presidents and circuit pastors would lead congregations to continue joyful, gospel-motivated giving by increasing their CMO.

2015 WELS Convention Compliance: We rejoice with the SC that the responsible groups have completed or are in the process of implementing all the resolutions of the 2015 convention.

Thanks for faithful service: Thank you to Pastor Phil Hirsch, Pastor Howard Mohlke, and Pastor David Rutschow for their faithful service on the SC.

Pastor Paul Meier, chairman
Pastor Joel Naumann, secretary

Subject: Accounting Oversight Committee

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 88,89
Report No. 02

We rejoice with the Accounting Oversight Committee that all audits were completed within five months of year-end and all entities received an unmodified opinion, the best you can get, on the financial statements' compliance with generally accepted accounting principles.

We also thank Mr. Tom Walters and Mr. Carl Rudolph for their faithful years of service on the Accounting Oversight Committee.

Pastor Paul Meier, chairman
Pastor Joel Naumann, secretary

Subject: Long-range plan 2018–25

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 82-85
Resolution No. 01

WHEREAS 1) a long-range plan is good stewardship of synodical resources; and

WHEREAS 2) the 2011–17 long-range plan of "In Christ Alone" has reached completion; and

WHEREAS 3) the Synodical Council has formulated a new long-range plan entitled "Our Great Heritage" for 2018–25; therefore be it

Resolved, that we adopt "Our Great Heritage," proposed in BORAM (pp. 82-85), as the WELS long-range plan for 2018–25.

Pastor Paul Meier, chairman
Pastor Joel Naumann, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Unfunded Priority List

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 79
Resolution No. 02

WHEREAS 1) the Synodical Council (SC) sets a ministry financial plan to distribute the expected funds and gifts in a responsible manner; and

WHEREAS 2) the Lord is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20); and

WHEREAS 3) the Lord may bless us with resources beyond what is expected in the current ministry financial plan; and

WHEREAS 4) as good stewards, the SC has proposed an unfunded priority list (BORAM, p. 79) of additional ministry objectives; and

WHEREAS 5) we desire to be good stewards of God's blessings; therefore be it

Resolved. a) that we adopt the Unfunded Priority List recommended by the Synodical Council (SC) as printed in BORAM; and be it finally

Resolved. b) that \$90,000 of MLC financial assistance (half of priority #5) be moved to priority #2.

Pastor Paul Meier, chairman

Pastor Joel Naumann, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #7: Financial results and plan (budget)

Subject: Support for ministry financial plan

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 123-142

Report No. 01

We recognize that even though “membership has been declining approximately one percent per year since 2008,” (BORAM, p. 129), God has moved his people to maintain Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) over the same period. These facts indicate an increase in per communicant giving. We thank God for enabling his people to share their gifts for the work of the kingdom.

We also note that recent gifts to the Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) since the publication of BORAM have improved the projected ending balance. The FSF is projected to remain above the Synodical Council’s target of \$10 million through the end of Fiscal Year 2019.

Opportunities for ministry abound. The costs of living and serving in our fallen world continue to increase; God’s kingdom work must also increase. We encourage all WELS members to assess prayerfully God’s blessings to them and to support the ministry financial plan through the CMO and other gifts.

Pastor David Voss, chairman

Teacher Jon Ziesemer, secretary

Subject: Ministry financial plan

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 123-142

Resolution No. 01

WHEREAS 1) God has blessed our synod through thank offerings which the Savior’s grateful, blood-bought souls have given; and

WHEREAS 2) the Synodical Council (SC) has studied the needs in each area of ministry and also the trends in the Congregation Mission Offering (CMO); and

WHEREAS 3) the SC has proposed a ministry financial plan for the next biennium that takes into account the synod’s financial needs and expected support for the Lord’s work; therefore be it

Resolved. a) that we adopt the SC’s ministry financial plan for the 2017–19 biennium (see pp. 70-79, *Proceedings*); and be it finally

Resolved. b) that we ask the Lord of the Church to enable and inspire his people, both as congregations and individuals, to support generously the ministry financial plan as we unite to do the work of the gospel entrusted to us as *Our Great Heritage*.

Pastor David Voss, chairman
Teacher Jon Ziesemer, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #8: Compensation Review Committee

Subject: Report of Floor Committee 8

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 100-122

Report No. 01

The floor committee thanks the Compensation Review Committee (CRC) for their service to our Savior. Special thanks is given for the Bible study portion of the report. We strongly encourage all calling bodies to review this Bible study on a regular basis. We also encourage that a link to the Bible study be included with the compensation calculator.

The principles underlying the compensation of called servants of the gospel are established by the inspired and unchanging Word of God. The specific application of these principles may vary according to time and circumstance. We pray that these synodical compensation guidelines and resources will challenge leaders in our local WELS churches and schools to have serious discussions regarding compensation for additional duties, funding of professional expenses and continuing education, assigning value to district and synodical service outside the local congregation, and the role of a compensation package in the calling process.

While this compensation plan applies only to synodical called workers, we encourage all calling bodies within our synod to make use of the CRC compensation guidelines and resources as they prayerfully, carefully, and thoughtfully determine the appropriate compensation for each of their called workers. While the topic of student loan debt was not specifically the purview of this committee, the committee encourages congregations calling new graduates to fully utilize all aspects of the guidelines, as well as to discuss student debt with each individual graduate.

We believe annual encouragement and instruction in determining called worker compensation will be a blessing for our church body. We note with appreciation that the CRC plans future Bible studies and instructional videos related to called worker compensation issues. We believe these resources will be valuable for district presidents, circuit pastors, and congregational leaders.

We concur with the CRC report when it states, "there is an ongoing role for the CRC." The committee recognizes the following issues: 1) how to credit years of experience in other vocations for second-career pastors and teachers, 2) housing allowance for called workers without bachelor's degrees, 3) business expenses (per diem or reimbursement?), and 4) vacation time.

One final note. No guidelines or resources, no matter how well-crafted, will ever eliminate selfishness, greed, or discontent in the hearts of those serving in the public ministry or in the lives of those being served by faithful ministers of the gospel. That is the work of the Spirit. No guidelines or resources, no matter how well-crafted, will ever provide the financial means for struggling congregations to compensate their called workers according to synodical guidelines. That, too, is the work of the Spirit as God's people grow in the grace of giving. We confessional Lutherans know and confess that the Spirit works through the gospel in Word and Sacrament. We pray that the Spirit will preserve our synod from called workers who are "lovers of money" or "hired hands who care nothing for the sheep." We pray that the same Spirit will move God's people to honor those who serve them with the gospel by providing adequate compensation.

Pastor Michael Woldt, chairman
Pastor Nathan W. Strutz, secretary

Subject: Compensation review

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 100-122

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Compensation Review Committee (CRC) of the Synodical Council has presented a recommendation for revised synodical compensation guidelines as directed by the 2015 synod in convention; and
- WHEREAS 2) these revised guidelines are a repackaging of what is currently in place, with some modifications, namely, 1) the inclusion of early childhood ministry directors and teachers in the list of ministry positions, 2) the addition of two columns to the left of Column A in the current matrix, 3) an increased range of columns for most ministry positions, and 4) setting the range for the principal position the same as that of pastors and missionaries; and
- WHEREAS 3) these revised guidelines clarify and add specificity in applying the current guidelines; and
- WHEREAS 4) these revised guidelines should have minimal financial impact on the work of the synod; and
- WHEREAS 5) the Synodical Council has recommended the approach to compensation outlined in these guidelines; and
- WHEREAS 6) the guidelines and resources developed by the CRC will give assistance to calling bodies who strive to provide adequate compensation for the servants of Christ who labor for their benefit and in their name; therefore be it

Resolved. that this convention approve the elements of compensation and the approach to compensation reflected in the revised guidelines presented by the Compensation Review Committee (see pp. 80-98, *Proceedings*).

Pastor Michael Woldt, chairman
Pastor Nathan W. Strutz, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #9: Home Missions

Subject: Board for Home Missions

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 147-151

Report No. 01

The Board for Home Missions seeks to continue to “stick to the knitting,” that is, to focus on proclaiming Christ and his Word alone so that many may be brought to faith and salvation.

The committee wishes to highlight the Board for Home Missions’ (BHM) report.

We give thanks for those who have proclaimed God’s Word faithfully and who have completed their service on the Board for Home Missions: Pastor Nathan Strutz, Dr. Keith Eldred, Mr. John Beeskow, Pastor Stephen Helwig, and Mr. Steven Kalscheuer. We also thank Pastor Charles Westra who served as BHM chairman for nine years until elected as South Atlantic District president. A special thanks to Pastor Tom Trapp for his 41 years serving in campus ministry. We would also like to welcome Pastor Jon Bilitz as the new campus pastor in Madison, Wis. We especially thank all of the congregations for their partnering through their mission offerings which support Home Missions. In addition, we thank the Joint Mission Council for their active work in cross-cultural ministry and the Church Extension Fund for establishing the Home Missions Endowment.

We wish to encourage congregations to use the following WELS resources:

- Mission counselors—Working through district mission boards, congregations are encouraged to make use of a mission counselor to assist in developing a strategy for starting a new mission.
- Builders for Christ—This group, which is part of Kingdom Workers, has put together a three-man staff to advise congregations who are contemplating a building project. These are men who have “been there, done that” and so can bring expertise to congregations.
- Campus Ministry—As students head off to colleges, congregations and parents are strongly encouraged to provide WELS Campus Ministry with contact information at wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/campus-ministry.

We are synod—we walk together. We pray that we continue supporting and looking for opportunities to share God’s Word with our neighbors across the street and across state lines. We give thanks that the Lord uses Home Missions to be part of the rescue mission team. That is our great heritage.

Pastor Joel Sauer, chairman
Teacher Kirk DeNoyer, secretary

Committee #10: World Missions and Joint Mission Council

Subject: Board for World Missions and Joint Mission Council reports

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 154-161

Report No. 01

As we celebrate 500 years of God’s grace since the Reformation, we are excited about the work our Board for World Missions and Joint Mission Council are doing.

We celebrate that WELS is helping to serve 80,000 people in 23 mission fields and another 60,000 across the globe via online correspondence. The national churches with whom we share fellowship have called 400 national workers to serve in more than 700 places. There are 160 additional national leaders in pastoral training through World Missions programs. We also note the seven administrative committees who facilitate mission work in a variety of nations and places. These are reasons to rejoice!

We urge missionaries to utilize digital media in order to keep our WELS members informed about the opportunities to help with our outreach, offerings, and prayers.

The Pastoral Studies Institute has expanded and is doing great work at training workers in the ministry across cultures. Extensive mission work was done in order to establish fellowship with three new sister churches. The Joint Mission Council has also helped to coordinate work between Home and World Missions. Multi-Language Publications has been used to help spread the gospel in a variety of tongues. God’s Word is being spread in its truth and purity, in keeping with the Reformation. Thanks be to God!

Pastor Joel Pankow, chairman
Teacher Paul M. Berger, secretary

Committee #11: Ministerial Education

Subject: Pursuing multiple avenues to train called workers

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 164

Report No. 01

We commend the Board for Ministerial Education for addressing the need to spread the Word to diverse cultures by pursuing multiple avenues to recruit and train our called workers.

Pastor Philip Henselin, chairman

Teacher Larry Sellnow, secretary

Subject: WLS PSI program

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 169,170

Report No. 02

We commend Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for the Pastoral Studies Institute program, which is training hundreds of pastoral leaders of other ethnic groups to work within each ethnic group.

Pastor Philip Henselin, chairman

Teacher Larry Sellnow, secretary

Subject: MLC student educational debt

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 178,179,227,228 (Memorial 2017-03)

Report No. 03

We are encouraged by the efforts of our ministerial education schools to reduce student educational debt while balancing the need to reserve funds for upcoming property improvements.

Pastor Philip Henselin, chairman

Teacher Larry Sellnow, secretary

Subject: Contingency financial plans

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 188

Report No. 04

We note that if government funding should be removed (vouchers, Pell grants, etc.), ministerial education schools have worked or are presently working on contingency plans to handle financial situations.

Pastor Philip Henselin, chairman

Teacher Larry Sellnow, secretary

Subject: WLS accreditation

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 173

Report No. 05

We commend the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board for keeping in mind the specific mission of the school and for maintaining the high quality of its educational program as it studies the benefits of accreditation.

Pastor Philip Henselin, chairman
Teacher Larry Sellnow, secretary

Subject: WLS mission

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 170
Report No. 06

We commend the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board for addressing the mission of the school and the impact of the Pastoral Studies Institute and the Grow in Grace continuing education programs.

Pastor Philip Henselin, chairman
Teacher Larry Sellnow, secretary

Committee #12: Congregation and Ministry Support Group A— Congregational Counseling, Worship, Evangelism

Subject: Commission on Congregational Counseling, Commission on Worship, Commission on Evangelism

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 46-56
Report No. 01

Commission on Congregational Counseling

1. We are thankful that we now have a full-time director for the Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC). We ask that our Lord richly bless the faithful labor of Pastor Jonathan Hein and his team.
2. We applaud the work of the CCC taking note of their demographic study and statistical analysis.
3. We are thankful that through the CCC our gracious Lord has called us out of our spiritual complacency, re-focusing our attention on our Lutheran heritage—the sharing of the gospel of Christ.
4. We concur with their conclusion that a “healthy congregation” or “healthy synod” is simply one that is regularly asking itself, “What else can we do to help all people know Jesus?”

Commission on Worship

1. As they retire, we acknowledge with thanksgiving the faithful labors of Teacher Carl Nolte and Dr. Kermit Moldenhauer for their many years of service to the Commission on Worship and to WELS.
2. We look forward to the completion of the new hymnal project with its projected release in 2021.
3. We recognize and commend the work of the Commission on Worship for this year’s National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts, as it offered congregations throughout WELS an opportunity for continuing education while displaying examples of excellence in worship.

Commission on Evangelism

We give thanks to our Lord for the 15 years of faithful leadership of Pastor Mike Hintz, director of the Commission

on Evangelism, and the dedicated work of Mrs. Audrey Bluhm, who has served for 27 years as the Commission's secretary. Both will be retiring at the close of 2017.

Teacher Paul Tess, chairman

Pastor Christopher Kruschel, secretary

Committee #13: Congregation and Ministry Support Group B— Special Ministries, Adult Discipleship, Youth and Family Ministry

Subject: Special Ministries, Adult Discipleship, Youth and Family Ministry

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 57-66

Report No. 01

Special Ministries

- 1) While the WELS Commission on Special Ministries employs only three full-time called workers, we recognize that much of the work of its eight committees is carried out by an army of thousands of unpaid volunteers in local congregations and in the privacy of their own homes. We praise God for this wonderful blessing!
- 2) We support the restoration of budgeted synodical support for civilian chaplaincy and the prison ministry as soon as it is financially feasible. We further note that \$50,000 for Military Services and \$50,000 for Prison Ministry are listed as #7 and #9, respectively, on the WELS Unfunded Priority List.

Commission on Adult Discipleship

- 1) We note with joy that the Conference of Presidents has approved the calling of a WELS Director of Discipleship who will oversee the work of both the Commission on Adult Discipleship and the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry.
- 2) We support the efforts of our synod to provide guidelines and encouragement to WELS congregations as they support continuing education. In response to Unpublished Memorials 2017-07 and 2017-08, we support professional growth and ongoing training for both called workers and lay leaders as a means of strengthening our churches; however, it is not the practice of the synod to mandate continuing education policies and practices to congregations.

Commission on Youth and Family Ministry

- 1) Memorial 2017-05 proposes that WELS call a full-time Sunday school coordinator. We believe that this need will be addressed sufficiently by calling a WELS director of discipleship. Through his oversight of the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry, the director of discipleship will provide the leadership needed to enhance WELS Sunday school programs.
- 2) We concur with the concerns regarding the need for publicity to encourage excellence in teaching as well as a heightened awareness of the need for high quality WELS Sunday school programs (reference: Memorial 2017-05). Through the leadership of WELS Youth and Family Ministry, we encourage the organization of Sunday school institutes wherever they are feasible in the districts and circuits of WELS.
- 3) We encourage leaders of our churches to provide congregational support to enhance the quality of Sunday school programs, including training of teachers, adequate financial support, and increased publicity.

In conclusion, the committee recognizes the importance of using Special Ministries to reach out in love to those with special needs and circumstances. We further recognize that the key to lifetime adult discipleship is ongoing spiritual growth. Finally, we believe and support enhanced and vibrant Sunday school programs that train our youth for a lifetime of discipleship.

Teacher Greg Thiesfeldt, chairman
Pastor Michael Hatzung, secretary

Committee #14: Congregation and Ministry Support Group C— Lutheran Schools

Subject: Commission on Lutheran Schools

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 66
Report No. 01

We are thankful for the multi-faceted work of the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) as they support the 392 early childhood ministries, 301 Lutheran elementary schools, and 25 area Lutheran high schools touching 41,000 hearts with the gospel through Christian education.

We commend the 119 schools that have been accredited through WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA) and encourage all of our WELS schools to seek accreditation.

We are thankful for the training of 50 consultants throughout the country to support and assist congregations.

We applaud the collaboration between the Commission on Evangelism and Commission on Lutheran Schools who jointly offer a new one-day school of outreach seminar for interested ministry teams.

We recognize the challenge of preparing willing and able school leaders for service in our WELS schools and encourage the continued growth of the following programs:

- Principal Apprentice and Director Apprentice Mentoring
- Principal Training Program
- Leadership Candidate Training
- Lutheran Principal Initiative

We rejoice in the continued progress of the Early Childhood Ministries Task Force in their work to train and support our many early childhood ministries in our synod. We encourage this group to continue in their work and are thankful for their efforts in making the following available throughout the synod:

- Tools to support congregations in understanding mission, vision, and objectives of WELS Early Childhood Ministries
- Initiatives to train and support early childhood directors
- Building Blocks: A Handbook for Beginning and Operating a Christian Early Childhood Ministry
- Characteristics of High Quality, Mission-Focused Early Childhood Ministries Document
- Ten Essential Questions When Considering an Early Childhood Ministry Checklist
- Outreach Strategies for Early Childhood Ministry and Positioning Schools for Outreach.

Teacher Jamie Luehring, chairman
Pastor Matthew Kuske, secretary

Subject: Request to change voluntary supplemental contributions to Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) to Annual School Support Fee based on school enrollment

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 228

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) on average 75 percent of area Lutheran high schools (ALHS), 60 percent of Lutheran elementary schools (LES), and 10 percent of stand-alone early childhood ministries (ECM) voluntarily make an annual contribution benefiting all schools; and
- WHEREAS 2) leadership training, development, and support are critical for the success of our synod school system; and
- WHEREAS 3) providing training, resources, and support is a mission of the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS), and the administrators are providing training to current and future school and early childhood leaders, training district coordinators, counselors, and consultants to support schools; and
- WHEREAS 4) WELS schools need to fill on average 25 principal vacancies per year; and
- WHEREAS 5) due to budget constraints since 2007, the Voluntary Supplemental Contribution has been a tremendous blessing to the CLS, currently supplying about \$160,000 annually, nearly one-third of the annual funding for normal CLS operating purposes; and
- WHEREAS 6) additional funds gained through participation by all schools could support needed activity in the districts through the district coordinator and also help fund the unfunded fourth director approved in 2013 by the synod in convention to help address leadership training and added support for schools; and
- WHEREAS 7) fees would average less than \$1/month per student; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that all schools in our synod contribute \$7.50 per full-time equivalent (fte) student annually for LES and ECM students, and \$4.00 annually per student for LHS students; and be it finally
- Resolved. b) that any future increases to this contribution must be approved by the synod in convention.

Teacher Jamie Luehring, chairman

Pastor Matthew Kuske, secretary

DEFEATED

Subject: Support for 21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 68,69

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the Conference of Presidents (COP) has recognized the need to eliminate the Martin Luther College (MLC) graduate assignments to the principal apprentice role; and
- WHEREAS 2) the COP limited principal apprentice assignments to two in May 2017, down from an average of seven in previous years; and
- WHEREAS 3) the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) and MLC have developed a process to recruit and fully prepare experienced teachers to serve as principals, which is called the 21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative; and
- WHEREAS 4) the 21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative may produce up to 15 fully trained principal candidates annually beginning in 2020; and
- WHEREAS 5) the current annual principal vacancy rate is 25 per year; and
- WHEREAS 6) recent research reveals that common levels of administrative release time, training, and compensation hinder the abilities of principals to lead their schools, contribute to principal attrition, and hinder recruitment of new principals; and

- WHEREAS 7) full principal training involves Leadership Candidate Training through the Commission on Lutheran Schools and study for a Master's degree in Educational Administration through Martin Luther College; and
- WHEREAS 8) principal training involves a significant amount of time and money on the part of candidates; and
- WHEREAS 9) the cost for training should represent a shared investment by candidates and the synod; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) to thank the Conference of Presidents for their diligent and earnest efforts to reduce and eliminate the number of MLC graduates assigned to the role of principal apprentice; and be it further
- Resolved. b) to endorse the 21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative, and request the Commission on Lutheran Schools and Martin Luther College to promote and regularly review the initiative; and be it further
- Resolved. c) to encourage calling bodies to enact the synod-adopted guidelines for principal administrative release time and compensation; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) to ask the Synodical Council and the Board for Ministerial Education to prioritize the funding needed to encourage and support WELS teachers to join a 21st-Century Lutheran Principal cohort.

Teacher Jamie Luehring, chairman
 Pastor Matthew Kuske, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Encouragement for Voluntary Supplemental Contribution

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 228

Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) provides a variety of important resources and assistance to WELS Lutheran preschools, elementary schools, and high schools; and
- WHEREAS 2) the CLS continues to implement and expand available resources and assistance, including principal and administration training and greater assistance to early childhood education ministries; and
- WHEREAS 3) the CLS seeks to continue to provide resources during a time of declining grant options at affordable prices for all schools; and
- WHEREAS 4) all schools in our school system benefit from the work of the CLS; therefore be it
- Resolved. that the delegates of the synod convention strongly encourage all of their schools to participate in the Voluntary Supplemental Contribution.

Teacher Jamie Luehring, chairman
 Pastor Matthew Kuske, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #15: Support Services

Subject: Overview

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 92-100
Report No. 01

Technology: We applaud Support Services' effort to keep personal information secure for called workers, employees, and customers of WELS. We appreciate their diligence in protecting this information and staying on task to keep it secure.

Financial: We appreciate the effort to be good stewards of what God has given to us as a synod. We appreciate the willingness to do more with less and to find effective ways to do this task.

Human Resources: We appreciate the forward thinking to provide resources needed for congregations. We appreciate their willingness to have qualified individuals from WELS congregations evaluate their work.

Facility Services: The new archive initiative is well planned and preserves the history of WELS in fine fashion.

Capital Projects Committee: We are concerned that WELS has consistently fallen below school capital spending maintenance standards. We support the committee request to evaluate the need, evaluate the recommendations, and identify funding (pp. 99,100).

Concern has been expressed about difficulties with tax reporting for clergy in congregations. We anticipate increased clarity of the tax manual and accompanying code changes.

Pastor Don Pieper, chairman
Staff Minister Mike Mundstock, secretary

Committee #16: WELS Historical Institute and Archives

Subject: WELS Archives

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 89,90
Report No. 01

The committee wants to draw delegates' attention to the use of the new Center for Mission and Ministry for WELS Archives.

The committee acknowledges the faithful service of new archivist Mrs. Susan Willems, as well as many volunteers.

The committee invites congregations to use the synod archivist for the preservation or donation of their own records.

The committee echoes the thoughts of reporter and archivist Mrs. Susan Willems, "We humbly ask the Lord to continue to bless our efforts as we seek to honor him through the preservation of our synod's history" (p. 90).

Teacher Ben Troge, chairman
Teacher Mark Renner, secretary

Committee #17: Subsidiaries and Benefit Plans

Subject: Approval of report

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 200-207

Report No. 01

We praise the Lord for the kingdom blessings he is bringing about through WELS subsidiaries. Of note is the distribution of \$31 million in Church Extension Fund (CEF) matching grants since 1993. We are encouraged to see that \$1.6 million in grants is awaiting present mission projects, and an anticipated \$2.6 million are in the pipeline for new mission projects.

We recognize and appreciate the report that roughly 80 percent of WELS ministries are enrolled in WELS VEBA for their called workers, which has been maintained at a steady level over the past several years. This is significant because a shrinking pool of program participants often leads to higher costs.

The committee recognizes the unique challenges of the WELS Pension Plan, as more called workers are at or nearing retirement age. Some discussion was shared about the synod's requirement that calling bodies are required to make pension payments for called workers at 50 percent full-time equivalency or higher, but recognizes the importance of a steady inflow of dollars to support the current and future pension disbursements.

The committee encourages the WELS Benefit Plans office to continue to manage these resources that support our WELS called workers now and in their retirement.

Mr. Randy Sachtjen, chairman

Pastor Jonathan Hackbarth, secretary

Committee #18: Northwestern Publishing House and Publication Coordinating Commission

Subject: Thank you

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 210

Report No. 01

We join with Northwestern Publishing House to give thanks for the service of Pastor John Braun, who has served faithfully as vice president of publishing services at Northwestern Publishing House for 23 years.

Pastor James Borgwardt, chairman

Pastor Steve Schmeling, secretary

Subject: Publication Coordinating Commission

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 211

Report No. 02

The Publication Coordinating Commission (PCC) coordinates the publication plans of our synod's various boards and commissions. The PCC recently allocated subsidy for the production of five theological books for pastors but lacks sufficient funds for many other projects.

The PCC helps fund necessary Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) publications for our pastors that would not otherwise be produced. There will be an ongoing need for these types of pastoral resources. Since NPH does not recover the total costs for these projects, we note the urgency of the PCC to receive funding from the Unfunded Priority List (p. 79, BORAM).

Pastor James Borgwardt, chairman
Pastor Steve Schmeling, secretary

Subject: Promotion of Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) by pastors

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 207-210

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) with the advent of Internet, apps, and Christian mass media, the options for Christian content and instruction have exponentially expanded beyond any other time in history; and
- WHEREAS 2) these options today serve WELS members, pastors, teachers, and musicians looking for Christian books, Bibles, devotionals, music resources, and gifts; and
- WHEREAS 3) Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) plays a critical role in producing materials that are biblically sound and centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ; and
- WHEREAS 4) NPH ensures that the books and materials it publishes and makes available from other publishers are theologically accurate and doctrinally trustworthy; and
- WHEREAS 5) a pastor's advocacy for NPH is critical to inform WELS members about the books and other materials they produce; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that pastors recognize the role NPH plays in service to the wider WELS membership; and be it further
- Resolved, b) that pastors actively encourage their members, teachers, and musicians to make use of NPH resources using promotional ideas and materials that NPH provides, such as webpage links, book fairs, e-mail, newsletter articles, flyers, etc.

Pastor James Borgwardt, chairman
Pastor Steve Schmeling, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #19: Christian Aid and Relief

Subject: Christian Aid and Relief

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 90-92

Report No. 01

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation we stand in awe of how God used Dr. Martin Luther to once again shine a bright light onto the central truth of Scripture, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians

2:8,9). This truth is more precious to us than all the gold and all the silver and all the gems in all the world! As recipients of God’s amazing grace and as heirs of the Lutheran Reformation we now strive to faithfully and openly put into practice the words of Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” The God who sees all things and knows all things has already “prepared” opportunities for us to show our love and thankfulness to him by producing these “good works” in our lives. When we keep our eyes open for opportunities our God gives to us, we will see that there is no shortage of opportunities to do “good works.”

Christian Aid and Relief, the synod’s “ministry of compassion,” places before our eyes numerous opportunities to bring physical relief to people suffering from natural disasters and severe medical and financial emergencies in the form of cash grants, food, clothing, and medical supplies. Christian Aid and Relief also partners with WELS missionaries to support humanitarian aid projects, providing opportunities to proclaim the gospel. Through Christian Aid and Relief each of us can personalize our efforts by distributing our funds through our churches and missionaries. Through Christian Aid and Relief each of us has the opportunity to partner with churches and missions to provide local relief efforts.

Dr. Michael Brooks, chairman
Pastor Steven Lockman, secretary

Subject: Christian Aid and Relief

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 90-92

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Scriptures encourage, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10); and
- WHEREAS 2) WELS Christian Aid and Relief exists to “do good” by providing disaster relief and humanitarian aid to people around the world in areas served by WELS ministries; and
- WHEREAS 3) Christian Aid and Relief has continued to show admirable creativity in partnering with other WELS agencies; and
- WHEREAS 4) ongoing needs from past earthquakes in Nepal and floods in Malawi, as well as storm damage in Vietnam and Texas remind us that there will always be abundant opportunities for humanitarian work in Christ’s name; and
- WHEREAS 5) the work of Christian Aid and Relief around the world, within our own country, and often in individual homes may be unknown to some WELS members; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that we thank the Lord for the work he is doing through the ongoing work of Christian Aid and Relief; and be it further
- Resolved, b) that we encourage Christian Aid and Relief to continue their creative efforts to inform WELS members about the wonderful work being done (e.g. through continued use of social media and sending information concerning *Lifeline* videos to all pastors and information about promotional kits to all schools); and be it further
- Resolved, c) that we encourage Christian Aid and Relief to continue to find creative ways for WELS members to express their love through giving (e.g. social media links to donate, and perhaps finding ways to be included in their employer’s annual charitable contribution drive); and be it further
- Resolved, d) that we encourage every WELS congregation to make use of the communication materials produced by Christian Aid and Relief (e.g. *Lifeline* videos, website, promotional materials for WELS schools, etc.); and be it finally
- Resolved, e) that WELS in convention encourage WELS congregations and individuals to consider increasing their support of Christian Aid and Relief in tangible ways thus allowing more of our members to express their Christian love through the mission and ministry of WELS—above and beyond the deeds of kindness that they do in their own communities.

Dr. Michael Brooks, chairman
Pastor Steven Lockman, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Christian Aid and Relief

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 90-92

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) The Lord has graciously moved the hearts of WELS members to show how much they care for this ministry with their prayers and gifts of love; and
- WHEREAS 2) through the careful assessment work, oversight of volunteers, and coordination of Mr. Mark Vance, the outgoing director of operations for WELS Christian Aid and Relief, the Lord provided a blessing to the synod and the people in need we serve; and
- WHEREAS 3) the Lord has graciously led Mrs. Beth Zambo to serve this committee as administrative assistant; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we thank the Lord for all of his wonderful blessings on this ministry; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that we ask the Lord to continue to shower this ministry with his rich blessings through the care, support, and prayers of his people; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that we ask the Lord to bless the work of Mrs. Beth Zambo; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that we thank Mr. Mark Vance for his faithful service.

Dr. Michael Brooks, chairman
Pastor Steven Lockman, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #20: Constitutional Matters

Subject: Group A revisions

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 213-219

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the 15 bylaw revisions in Group A (BORAM, pp. 213-219) “are intended to provide clarification in wording” (BORAM, p. 213); and
- WHEREAS 2) “all of the revisions reflect current practice and do not represent substantive changes in current structure or practice” (BORAM, p. 213); and
- WHEREAS 3) even in the cases of a change in terms of service, these changes bring improved consistency to elected and appointed positions, calling for election or appointment to four-year terms, with the candidate able to succeed himself twice, for a period of 12 years (BORAM, p. 213); therefore be it
- Resolved. that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of the bylaws as listed in Group A.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-1, Section 3.40, Nominating Committee

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 220

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the members of the Board of Directors of Northwestern Publishing House are elected at synod convention, unlike other subsidiary organizations; and
- WHEREAS 2) this will “make the bylaw governing Northwestern Publishing House consistent with the other subsidiary organizations” (BORAM, p. 220); and
- WHEREAS 3) a benefit of the bylaw change for Section 3.40 would be to ensure that men with proper background and qualification can continue to be chosen for the benefit of the mission and ministry of Northwestern Publishing House (BORAM, p. 220); and
- WHEREAS 4) “the addition in (e) reflects the current practice of having the synod in convention elect the chairmen of the commissions of Congregational Services (Congregation and Ministry Support Group)” (BORAM, p. 220); therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 3.40 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-2, Section 4.00, Conference of Presidents Duties and Responsibilities

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 220

Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) “the current bylaw describes the executive committee of the Conference of Presidents as members of the Conference of Presidents appointed to serve in that capacity” (BORAM, p. 220); and
- WHEREAS 2) current practice of the Conference of Presidents “has made such an executive committee unnecessary” (BORAM, p. 220); and
- WHEREAS 3) the executive committee “has not functioned in at least ten years” (BORAM, p. 220); and
- WHEREAS 4) “this change states that if there would be an occasion for an executive decision to be made by the Conference of Presidents, the president and two vice presidents shall serve as the executive committee” (BORAM, p. 220); therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 4.00 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-3, Section 4.15, Congregational Services

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 220

Resolution No. 04

- WHEREAS 1) “the change of the name of the entity reflects a change recommended by the Congregation and Ministry Support Group” (BORAM, p. 220); and
- WHEREAS 2) the change of bylaw Section 4.15 will use language consistent with other bylaws when referring to terms of service; therefore be it
- Resolved. that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 4.15 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Proposed Bylaw revisions retiring the Ministry of Christian Giving Commission and the Communication Services Commission

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 34,221

Resolution No. 05

- WHEREAS 1) the Conference of Presidents (COP) has proposed a revision of the Bylaws, Section 4.20, on Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) retiring the Ministry of Christian Giving Commission (BORAM, Item #B-4, p. 221); and
- WHEREAS 2) the rationale of the COP states that “the Ministry of Christian Giving works closely with the president and the Conference of Presidents, making a separate commission unnecessary” (BORAM, p. 221); and
- WHEREAS 3) the MCG report also states that “the commission has not been needed in recent years since the COP directly oversees the MCG director” (BORAM, p. 34); and
- WHEREAS 4) the rationale of the COP further states that “the amendments [of Section 4.20] reflect current practice” (BORAM, p. 221); and
- WHEREAS 5) the COP has proposed a revision of the Bylaws, Section 4.30, on Office of Communication Services retiring the Communication Services Commission (BORAM, Item #B-5, p. 221); and
- WHEREAS 6) the rationale of the COP states that “the office of Communication Services works closely with the president, the Conference of Presidents, and the areas of ministry, making a separate commission unnecessary” (BORAM, p. 221); and
- WHEREAS 7) the rationale of the COP further states that “the amendments [of Section 4.30] reflect current practice” (BORAM, p. 221); therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention concur with the proposed revisions of Section 4.20 and Section 4.30 of the Bylaws that would result in the retiring of the MCG Commission and the Communication Services Commission; and be it finally
- Resolved. b) that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 4.20 and Section 4.30 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-6, Section 5.70, Archives

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 221,222

Resolution No. 06

- WHEREAS 1) “the synod archives has always been overseen by the Synodical Council” (BORAM, p. 221); and
- WHEREAS 2) “with the relocation of the archives to the Center for Mission and Ministry, the archivist will be accountable to the president or his designee” (BORAM, p. 221); therefore be it
- Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 5.70 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-7, Section 6.88, Publication Coordinating Commission

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 222

Resolution No. 07

- WHEREAS 1) we as a synod want to be good stewards of the gifts and resources that God graciously puts at our disposal; and
- WHEREAS 2) it would be good stewardship to have all major expenditures from the Publication Coordinating Commission fund approved in advance by the Executive Committee of the Synodical Council; and
- WHEREAS 3) it is a blessing to have appropriate synod agencies develop Christian literature and media resources to assist our congregations and schools; and
- WHEREAS 4) the Conference of Presidents previously did not appoint all the members of the Publication Coordinating Commission; and
- WHEREAS 5) it would be beneficial to have the Publication Coordinating Commission’s membership expanded to a broader base as it serves the synod’s publication needs; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that the Conference of Presidents, in consultation with the appropriate board, shall appoint the chairman and other members of the Publication Coordinating Commission; and be it finally
- Resolved, b) that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the remaining revisions of Section 6.88 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-8, Section 6.92, WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 222,223

Resolution No. 08

- WHEREAS 1) WELS Christian Aid and Relief is presently called an agency (BORAM, p. 222) and has carried out relief work as a part of its ministry; and
- WHEREAS 2) designating WELS Christian Aid and Relief as a commission is consistent with the designation of other entities; and
- WHEREAS 3) such a change “does not require a change in the way that WELS Christian Aid and Relief operates” (BORAM, p. 223); and
- WHEREAS 4) changing terms of the members from six years to four years makes it “consistent with other terms” (BORAM, p. 223) of service in the Bylaws; and
- WHEREAS 5) it would be beneficial to have WELS Christian Aid and Relief “report regularly to the Synodical Council” (BORAM, p. 223); therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 6.92 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-9, Section 7.00, Northwestern Publishing House

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 223

Resolution No. 09

- WHEREAS 1) “Northwestern Publishing House is accountable to the Synodical Council” (BORAM, p. 223); and
- WHEREAS 2) having the board of directors of Northwestern Publishing House appointed by the Synodical Council rather than elected by the synod convention would be “parallel to how the directors are chosen for all other subsidiaries” (BORAM, p. 223); and
- WHEREAS 3) appointing men in this manner would assure that we continue to have men serving on the board who “have the qualifications that will benefit Northwestern Publishing House and its ministry” (BORAM, p. 223); and
- WHEREAS 4) the synod president’s designee represents the synod president; therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 7.00 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

DEFEATED

Subject: Item #B-10, Section 7.10, WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 223,224

Resolution No. 10

- WHEREAS 1) it is current practice that the Church Extension Fund makes loans to World Missions; and
- WHEREAS 2) the synod president is an ex-officio member of the board of directors of WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., with voting privileges; and
- WHEREAS 3) the synod president’s designee represents the synod president; and
- WHEREAS 4) the Synodical Council acts on behalf of the synod to oversee WELS Church Extension Fund; and
- WHEREAS 5) the current wording may prevent the Synodical Council from making changes in the corporation’s articles of incorporation or bylaws without a recommendation from the board of directors or the Board for Home Missions; therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 7.10 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-11, Section 7.20, WELS Foundation, Inc.

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 224

Resolution No. 11

- WHEREAS 1) the synod president is an ex-officio member of the board of directors of WELS Foundation, Inc., with voting privileges; and
- WHEREAS 2) the synod president's designee represents the synod president; and
- WHEREAS 3) the Synodical Council acts on behalf of the synod to oversee WELS Foundation, Inc.; and
- WHEREAS 4) the current wording may prevent the Synodical Council from making changes in the corporation's articles of incorporation or bylaws without a recommendation from the board of directors or the Conference of Presidents; therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 7.20 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-12, Section 7.30, WELS Investment Funds, Inc.

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 224

Resolution No. 12

- WHEREAS 1) the word "periodically" in the present bylaw does not specify a specific period of time regarding reviewing "investment objectives and guidelines" (BORAM, p. 224) by the board of directors of WELS Investment Funds, Inc. and the Synodical Council; and
- WHEREAS 2) the synod president is an ex-officio member of the board of directors of WELS Investment Funds, Inc., with voting privileges; and
- WHEREAS 3) the synod president's designee is to represent the synod president; and
- WHEREAS 4) the Synodical Council acts on behalf of the synod to oversee WELS Investment Funds Inc.; and
- WHEREAS 5) the current wording may prevent the Synodical Council from making changes in the corporation's articles of incorporation or bylaws without a recommendation from the board of directors; therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 7.30 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-13, Section 7.40, WELS Retirement Program Commission

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 224,225

Resolution No. 13

- WHEREAS 1) the word "periodically" in the present bylaw does not specify a specific period of time regarding reviewing "investment objectives and guidelines" (BORAM, p. 225) by the WELS Retirement Program Commission and the Synodical Council; and
- WHEREAS 2) the synod president is an ex-officio member of the WELS Retirement Program Commission with voting privileges; and
- WHEREAS 3) the synod president's designee is to represent the synod president; therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 7.40 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-14, Section 7.50, WELS VEBA Commission

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 225

Resolution No. 14

- WHEREAS 1) the word “periodically” in the present bylaw does not specify a specific period of time regarding reviewing plans, “investment objectives, and guidelines by” (BORAM, p. 225) the WELS VEBA Commission and the Synodical Council; and
- WHEREAS 2) the synod president is an ex-officio member of the WELS VEBA Commission with voting privileges; and
- WHEREAS 3) the synod president’s designee is to represent the synod president; therefore be it
- Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 7.50 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-15, Section 7.70, WELS Historical Institute

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 225

Resolution No. 15

- WHEREAS 1) the president is an ex-officio member of the board of directors of WELS Historical Institute with voting privileges; and
- WHEREAS 2) the president’s designee is to represent the president; therefore be it
- Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 7.70 of the Bylaws.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Subject: Item #B-9, Section 7.00, Northwestern Publishing House

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 223

Resolution No. 16

- WHEREAS 1) there are administrative benefits to standardizing certain sections of the bylaws; and
- WHEREAS 2) the synod president’s designee represents the synod president; therefore be it
- Resolved, that the delegates of the 2017 synod convention approve the proposed revisions of Section 7.00 of the Bylaws except that directors will continue to be elected by the synod, not appointed by the Synodical Council in consultation with the Conference of Presidents.

Pastor Mark Voss, chairman
Teacher Dave Knittel, secretary

ADOPTED

Committee #21: Elections

Subject: Elections

Report No. 01

The following individuals were elected to the respective positions:

First Vice President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Rev. James Huebner

Recording Secretary of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Rev. Robert Pasbrig

Synodical Council Pastor-At-Large

Rev. Joel Jenswold

Rev. Jonathan Schroeder

Synodical Council Teacher-At-Large

Mr. James Moeller

Board for World Missions, Chairman

Rev. Paul Janke

Board for World Missions, Layman

Mr. Arlin Bornschlegl

Board for Home Missions, Chairman

Rev. Wayne Uhlhorn

Board for Ministerial Education, Chairman

Rev. Duane Rodewald

Board for Ministerial Education, Teacher or Staff Minister

Mr. Gerald Zeamer

Board for Ministerial Education, Layman

Mr. Paul Hahm

Mr. Dean Waldschmidt

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board, Chairman

Rev. Jonathan Scharf

Board of Appeals, Pastor

Rev. Joel Leyrer

Board of Appeals, Teacher or Staff Minister

Mr. James Moeller

Board of Appeals, Layman

Mr. Kenneth Gosch

Commission on Evangelism, Chairman

Rev. Donn Dobberstein

Commission on Lutheran Schools, Chairman

Mr. James Sievert

Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors, Parish Pastor

Rev. Joel Schroeder

Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors, Teacher or Staff Minister

Mr. Matthew Groth

Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors, Layman

Mr. Joel Raasch

Mr. Edward Wolf

Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman

Pastor Peter Sulzle, secretary

Revisions to the WELS Bylaws

The 2017 synod in convention passed the following revisions to the WELS Bylaws (see the report of the Constitutional Matters Floor Committee, pp. 51-57 of this book). Additions are underlined. Deletions are indicated by a strikethrough. For a complete, updated copy of the WELS Constitution and Bylaws, visit wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports or contact the President's Office at 414-256-3202 for a printed copy.

Group A

Item #A-1

DEFINITIONS

Section 1.00

(h) "Parasynodical organizations" are those WELS-affiliated organizations listed under "Church-Related and Charitable Organizations" in the most current synod Yearbook.

Item #A-2

OFFICERS

Section 2.00

President

(a) The president shall officially represent the synod and promote the best interests of the synod. He shall exercise supervision over the official conduct of all officials of the synod, supervise the execution of synodical convention resolutions, and oversee the total synodical operation, particularly to insure that it is true to its mission and objectives and that it is being conducted within the framework of the synod's stated standards for doctrine and practice. He shall function in every way as the synod's pastor and chief executive officer of the synod. He shall be responsible for reporting to synod and district conventions.

(b) The president shall be a pastor elected by the synod in convention for a four-year term with no limitation on the number of terms. The office shall be full time. The Synodical Council shall establish the salary of the president and provide adequate housing for him. In the event the president is not re-elected, the Synodical Council shall make financial arrangements for his support for such time as it deems necessary.

(c) The president shall serve as the chairman of the Synodical Council and the Conference of Presidents and as an ex-officio member of all other boards, commissions, and committees of the synod for which he ~~is not directly responsible.~~ does not serve as chairman. He may ~~appoint advisory members to represent him.~~ designate others to represent him on boards, commissions, and committees for which he does not serve as chairman.

Section 2.10

First Vice President

(b) The first vice president shall be a parish pastor elected by the synod in convention for a four-year term with no limitation on the number of terms. The office shall be part time.

Section 2.20

Second Vice President

(b) The second vice president shall be a parish pastor elected by the synod in convention for a four-year term with no limitation on the number of terms. The second vice president shall carry out such assignments the president or first vice president may assign or are prescribed under these bylaws.

Item #A-3

~~Section 2.65~~ 5.35

Accounting Oversight Committee

(c) The committee shall be composed of at least four members but not more than seven members. The members shall be appointed by the Synodical Council. One member of the Synodical Council shall serve as an advisory member. The Synodical Council shall appoint one of the members to serve as chairman. The members, other than the Synodical Council's member, shall serve a term of ~~six~~ four years and may succeed themselves ~~once~~ twice. As far as practical, the terms should be staggered. The members shall be independent in fact and appearance from the management of the synod and its affiliates, shall be financially literate, and at least one member shall be an audit committee financial expert as defined by Securities and Exchange Commission regulations.

Item #A-4

Section 2.80

Election of the President, Vice Presidents, and Recording Secretary

(a) The election of the president and second vice president or first vice president and recording secretary shall take place at each regular synod convention and shall precede all other elections. Any of these offices vacated by election shall be filled by election at that convention for the remainder of the unexpired term.

(b) The nomination of candidates for the offices of president and second vice president or first vice president and recording secretary shall be conducted by the synod in convention in alternate conventions on written nominating ballots. For the office of president anyone listed on the most current synodical roster of "pastors - active" shall be eligible. For the office of vice president only parish pastors on the same roster shall be eligible. For the office of recording secretary, all male called workers listed as active in the most current synodical roster shall be eligible.

(c) The five nominees who shall have received the largest number of votes on the nominating ballot for president shall be the candidates for that office. The nominating ballot shall not be declared an election. The synod in convention shall then proceed to the election. If no candidate receives the majority of the votes cast on the first ballot, the name of the candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be stricken, and a new ballot shall be taken. The balloting shall continue in this manner until one candidate shall have received the majority of the votes cast.

Item #A-5

Section 2.90

Restriction on Offices and Appointments Held

(g) Boards, commissions, or committees shall not confer honorary or advisory membership on their former board members, or former staff members, or former missionaries ~~honorary membership~~.

(h) No person except the president whose salary is derived in whole or in part directly from the synod shall be eligible for membership on the Synodical Council.

(i) A missionary under the supervision of the Board for World Missions may not be a member or permanent advisory member of an administrative committee of the Board for World Missions.

Item #A-6

SYNODICAL COUNCIL

Section 5.00

Synodical Council Duties and Responsibilities

(c) The advisory members of the council shall include the first vice president, second vice president, chief financial officer, an administrator each for home missions, world missions, and ministerial education, the coordinator of ~~the Congregation and Ministry Support Group~~ Congregational Services, the director of the Ministry of Christian Giving, the director of communications, the chief technology officer, and the treasurer. Additional advisory members may be appointed by the chairman as necessary.

(f) The Synodical Council shall have the responsibility for preparing, reviewing, and approving the ~~program budgets~~ ministry financial plan recommended to the synod in convention in keeping with fiscal integrity. Although the Synodical Council is responsible for overall fiscal integrity under the direction of the president, the internal management of the institutions, boards, commissions, and other undertakings of the synod shall be generally vested in the respective boards and commissions. The Synodical Council shall weigh and balance the areas of ministry with respect to the synod's resources and mission. The Synodical Council shall be responsible for overall ministry program and budget development, evaluation, and coordination, and support allocation. The Synodical Council shall present to each regular synod convention a comprehensive, balanced ministry program and financial plan reflecting a long-range planning process by which the synod may best achieve its objectives in keeping with its resources. To that end

it shall: evaluate the program and ~~budget resources available~~ for each area of ministry on the basis of its contribution to the synod's continuing purpose and objectives; evaluate the contribution each program is making toward the achievement of the synod's objectives; develop and maintain a strategic plan with established priorities; recommend programs and the ~~budget ministry financial plan~~ to the synod convention; be accountable for balancing the ~~budget ministry financial plan~~; and coordinate the program, adopted by the synod convention, making adjustments in work programs, and ~~budgets support allocations, and resource utilization~~ as they become necessary.

(g) Should the resources at the disposal of the Synodical Council be insufficient to meet all financial obligations of the synod ~~promptly~~, the Synodical Council is authorized and directed to borrow, at its discretion, the necessary amounts up to such limits as the synod in convention may prescribe. The Synodical Council shall, however, include these activities in its report to the next regular convention of the synod.

(j) The Synodical Council shall be responsible for the administration and investment of all synod funds. ~~The Synodical Council shall approve the establishment of any restricted funds.~~ The Synodical Council shall be responsible for the investment and administration of the assets entrusted to it by the synod. It shall make such conveyances of the properties of the synod in accordance with the policies of the synod and within such limitations as the synod in convention may from time to time prescribe and within such further limitations as may be set forth elsewhere in these bylaws.

(k) The Synodical Council shall require an annual audit by a certified public accounting firm of the records and accounts of the synod, its schools, Support Services subsidiaries, WELS Retirement Program Commission, WELS VEBA Commission, and all other units identified by the Synodical Council. ~~that disburse synodical funds.~~ Such audit shall be performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing ~~principles.~~ standards.

(l) The Synodical Council shall submit, through the president, to every regular convention of the synod a written report of its activities, the condition of the finances and properties of the synod, and the investment of ~~trust~~ synodical funds. A similar report shall be presented through the president to the regular district conventions.

Item #A-7

Section 5.10 Synod Operations

(a) The operations of the synod shall be grouped into five areas of ministry: Home Missions, World Missions, Ministerial Education, Congregation and District Ministry, and Ministry Support, as described elsewhere in these bylaws.

~~(b) Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education are described elsewhere in the bylaws.~~

~~(c) Congregation and District Ministry includes the Conference of Presidents and the various ministries accountable to, or under the oversight of, the Conference of Presidents as specified in the bylaws.~~

~~(d) Ministry Support includes the praesidium, the Synodical Council and areas accountable to it, and Support Services as specified in the bylaws.~~

~~(e) The president and the chief financial officer shall be responsible for Ministry Support.~~

Item #A-8

Section 5.20 Boards, Commissions, and Committees

(d) Meetings of boards, commissions, and committees may be held at any place as designated in the meeting notice or as the members may establish ~~by resolution or by written consent.~~

(f) An action required or permitted by the constitution or bylaws to be taken by boards, commissions, and committees may be taken without a meeting if a consent in writing setting forth the action so taken, shall be signed or sent electronically by all of the members entitled to vote on such action.

Item #A-9

Section 5.30 Establishing the Budget Ministry Financial Plan

(a) ~~After appropriate consultation,~~ The Synodical Council shall establish a support forecast which shall serve as a

basis for determining operating support available for ministry. The forecast for Congregation Mission Offerings shall be established in consultation with the Conference of Presidents, an estimate of anticipated revenues which shall constitute the target for the Synodical Council expenditures budget.

(b) In the year in which the convention meets, every area of ministry, ministerial education school and Ministry Support subsidiary, operational unit of the synod, through its respective area of ministry, administrator or board shall present to the president Synodical Council its budget complete ministry financial plan for the next two fiscal years. The plan shall include the use of both operating and special funds, as well as anticipated changes in reserves. The president shall then present a comprehensive ministry financial plan to the Synodical Council, according to methods, forms, and schedules prescribed by the council.

(c) The Synodical Council shall review the program and budget requests ministry financial plan proposed by the president, seeing to it that the expenditures do not exceed anticipated support and resources, that the plan reflects the overall purposes and goals of the synod, and that the use of reserves is fiscally responsible. presented and approve a recommended total work program of the synod that does not exceed anticipated revenues and is fiscally responsible.

(d) Requested items not included in the recommended budget ministry financial plan shall be placed on an unfunded list in priority order.

(e) The synod in convention shall review the recommended work program of the council ministry financial plan proposed by the Synodical Council, and, after making any desired changes, approve a total work program complete ministry financial plan including the areas of ministry, ministerial education schools, and Support Services subsidiaries that is fiscally responsible, for the synod that does not exceed anticipated revenues.

(f) At any time during the biennium, if the budget ministry financial plan approved by the convention would result in expenditures greater than anticipated revenues, resources, or if the plan were to become fiscally imprudent, the Synodical Council shall adjust the budget plan in order that budgeted expenditures do not exceed anticipated resources revenues for that fiscal year, or result in the fiscally imprudent use of those resources.

(g) Budgeted expenditures eliminated Synod support allocations reduced by the process of adjustment, either by the synod convention or by the Synodical Council, by the process of adjustment shall be placed on the unfunded priority list. The priorities on this list shall be determined by the council on an ongoing basis upon recommendation of the respective area of ministry. Budgeted expenditures specifically approved by the convention but eliminated because of lack of funds shall be given a high priority.

(h) If reductions are necessary in the budget adjustment process, the areas of ministry in consultation with their operational units shall determine in which area of its budgets the reduction shall be applied. At any time during the biennium, an area of ministry, synodical school, or Support Services subsidiary may request the Synodical Council to consider a request to modify the approved plan. The request shall be submitted and considered

(i) There shall be no intradepartmental or interdepartmental budget transfers except in accordance with procedures established by the Synodical Council.

Item #A-10

Section 5.40 Gifts and Bequests

(a) The Synodical Council shall be responsible for all gifts and bequests benefiting the synod's missions and ministries or area of ministry. If the use of a gift or request is restricted by the donor, the Synodical Council shall ensure that the gift or bequest is used for the restricted purpose insofar as possible. If the restriction placed on a gift is deemed by the Council impossible to implement, or if the restriction is not in the best interest of the synod, the Council shall decline the gift, or one of its operational units.

(b) Gifts and bequests not given for a clearly defined purpose shall be designated by the Synodical Council. These gifts and bequests may be placed into a fund for investment. Gifts to the synod that are not restricted by the donor will be placed into the Financial Stabilization Fund.

(c) Gifts and bequests given for clearly defined purposes shall be placed into the appropriate funds and used for the designated purposes insofar as possible. The ministerial education school governing boards and the boards of

directors of the Ministry Support subsidiaries shall be responsible for all gifts and bequests benefitting the entity. If the use of the gift is restricted by the donor, the governing board or board of directors shall ensure that the gift or bequest is used only for the restricted purpose insofar as possible.

(d) Gifts and bequests to synodical schools shall be handled under the following provisions:

- 1. Gifts and bequests given for an endowment purpose shall be transferred, upon receipt, to the Synodical Council to be held for investment.
- 2. Gifts and bequests for a designated purpose shall be forwarded to the Synodical Council for investment until needed. Gifts and bequests will be returned to the school upon approval of the Synodical Council if the usage is in accordance with the terms of the gift or bequest. However, if the gift or bequest is below the policy criteria set for the school by the Synodical Council, it may be retained by the school and expended for the designated purpose.
- 3. Gifts and bequests not given for a clearly defined purpose shall be designated by the governing board and forwarded upon receipt to the Synodical Council which shall keep an accurate record of the provisions and amounts of such gifts and bequests. These funds shall be held for investment and may be withdrawn after approval of the designation and the proposed use by the Synodical Council. However, if the funds are below the policy criteria set for the school by the Synodical Council, they may be retained by the school and expended for that purpose.

Item #A-11

Section 5.60 Administrators

(a) ~~The area of ministry~~ administrators for Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education shall be accountable and reportable to their boards and to the president ~~or his designee~~.

(b) Administrators shall be advisory, non-voting members of the boards ~~and/or commissions~~ under which they serve.

(c) Administrators shall execute the decisions of the boards and/or commissions under which they serve.

(d) Administrators of the synod shall be called in the following manner. Notice of a vacancy shall be published on the official internet site of WELS and/or to congregations by mail or e-mail, and all pastors, male teachers, congregations, and voting members of congregations shall be invited to nominate candidates within 20 days from the date of publication. The list of candidates shall be published on the official internet site of WELS and/or to congregations by mail or e-mail, and the calling board shall call from the published list no earlier than 30 days from the date of publication.

Item #A-12

Section 6.40 Authority of the Governing Boards

The internal affairs of the ministerial schools and their administration shall be subject solely to the authority of the governing boards unless the item is governed by synod convention resolutions and/or Synodical Council policy and procedures. Each ministerial school, ~~however~~, is a part of the ministerial education system, which is governed and administered by the Board for Ministerial Education.

Item #A-13

Section 6.44 Duties of Presidents of Ministerial Schools

(a) The president of a ministerial school shall be the chief executive officer of the school. He shall provide operational supervision to supervise its departments and ~~property~~. ensure that the synod's and the school's assets are maintained and safeguarded.

(b) Department heads shall administer their departments. The president, however, shall have access to all records, meetings, and correspondence pertaining to each department. In case of disagreement the decision of the president shall be final, pending an appeal to the school's governing board.

(d) The president shall be the official representative of the ministerial school. He shall report regularly to the governing board and execute its decisions. The president shall be an advisory member of the governing board.

(f) In collaboration with the faculty, the president shall determine the courses of study and shall assign them to the

members of the faculty. In case of disagreement among the members of the faculty, the decision shall rest with the president. No changes in the basic curriculum shall be made without the approval of the governing board.

Item #A-14

**Section 6.48
Calling Procedure**

(c) All pastors, male professors, male teachers, congregations, and voting members of congregations shall be entitled to nominate a candidate or candidates within 20 days from the date of publication of the vacancy. The calling board may issue a request for additional candidates at any time.

Item #A-15

SUPPORT SERVICES

Support Services includes the entities contained in Section 7.00–7.99 of the bylaws, as well as, but is not limited to accounting, archives/history, budgeting, benefit plans, finance, human resources, legal, lending, planning, real estate, revenue forecasting, and technology. ~~These areas are responsible and accountable~~ president oversees this area directly or indirectly through advisory members he appoints to support the corporations, committees, and commissions accountable to the Synodical Council: through the president or his designee.

Group B

Item #B-1

**Section 3.40
Nominating Committee**

(e) In January of the convention year, the Nominating Committee shall nominate by ballot three candidates for each position on the following boards as terms expire: the Board for World Missions; ~~the board of directors of Northwestern Publishing House;~~ the Board for Ministerial Education; the chairmen of the following boards: Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education; the Board of Appeals; and the chairmen of the Governing Boards of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School and Michigan Lutheran Seminary; all of whom shall be parish pastors. It shall nominate candidates to serve as chairmen of the commissions of Congregational Services, all of whom shall be pastors with the exception of the chairman of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, who shall be a teacher. It shall nominate the pastor and teacher at large members of the Synodical Council as their terms expire.

Item #B-2

**CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS
Section 4.00**

Conference of Presidents Duties and Responsibilities

(h) ~~The Conference of Presidents shall appoint an executive committee from its members that~~ The President, the First Vice President, and the Second Vice President shall serve as an executive committee of the Conference of Presidents and shall have the authority to act on behalf of the Conference of Presidents between meetings.

Item #B-3

**Section 4.15
~~Congregation and Ministry Support Group~~
Congregational Services**

(e) Each commission shall consist of no fewer than five members, with a chairman elected by the synod in convention for a term of four years. Each chairman may succeed himself twice. Commission members shall be appointed by the Conference of Presidents for a term of four years. A commission member may ~~be appointed to no more than three consecutive terms: succeed himself twice.~~ Insofar as practicable, appointments shall reflect the synod's geographic diversity. Appointments shall provide appropriate representation of pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and laymen, as well as, when appropriate, advisory members from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College.

Item #B-4

**Section 4.20
Ministry of Christian Giving**

(a) There shall be ~~a commission~~ an office entitled "Ministry of Christian Giving" that shall serve under the Conference of Presidents to assist them by developing programs and mechanics for marshaling the financial resources of the synod.

(b) ~~The commission~~ Ministry of Christian Giving shall assist the Conference of Presidents in carrying out their responsibility for funding the synod's budget.

(c) The Director of the Ministry of Christian Giving and the Christian Giving Counselors shall be called by the Conference of Presidents.

~~(c) The commission shall be composed of a member of the Conference of Presidents, one pastor, one teacher, and four laymen.~~

~~(d) The Conference of Presidents shall recommend members to the president. The president shall appoint commission members. The president shall appoint one of the members to serve as chairman. The members other than the Conference of Presidents' member shall serve for a term of six years. Commission members may succeed themselves once. Insofar as is practicable the membership shall represent diverse geographic areas.~~

~~(e) (d) The commission~~ Director of the Ministry of Christian Giving shall report to the Conference of Presidents through the president or his designee.

Item #B-5

Section 4.30

Office of Communication Services

(a) There shall be an Office of Communication Services ~~Commission~~ that shall serve under the Conference of Presidents to assist them in communicating the synod's mission to the members of the synod. The Office of Communication Services will be administered by a Director of Communications who shall report to the Conference of Presidents through the synod president or his designee.

Item #B-6

Section 5.70

Synod Archives

(a) The Synodical Council shall establish and maintain an ~~synodical~~ archives, which shall be the repository of documents of historical value.

(b) The president, officers, administrators, agencies, synodical schools, boards, commissions, and committees of the synod shall transfer documents of historical value such as protocols, records, correspondence, and other pertinent materials to the archives.

(c) ~~Parachurch~~ Congregations, schools, and parasynodical organizations and institutions maintained by the members of WELS, because they are a significant portion of the life and work of WELS, shall be encouraged to submit materials of a more general informational and historical nature for preservation.

(d) The ~~synodical~~ archives shall include a separate file for each of the districts of the synod. The district presidents shall, at their discretion, transfer documents of historical value from their respective districts to be deposited in their district file.

(e) The ~~synodical~~ archives shall serve as the repository for the records of those congregations of the synod that have been disbanded.

(f) The ~~synodical~~ archives shall serve as the repository for biographical materials on all of the synod's called workers.

(g) The ~~synodical~~ archives shall serve as the clearinghouse for the artifacts of historical value. Such artifacts may be retained by the archives for preservation and display, or, at its direction, be forwarded to the WELS Historical Institute.

~~(h) The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board shall call~~ The synod president, after consultation with the Synodical Council, shall or engage an archivist, who shall serve under the direction of the ~~library director of the Seminary.~~ president or his designee.

~~(i) The library director of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary shall oversee the operation and staffing of the synodical archives. He shall report to the Seminary Governing Board through the President of the Seminary.~~

(j) The activities connected with the synodical archives shall be reported to the Synodical Council ~~by~~ through the president or his designee.

Item #B-7

PUBLISHING

Section 6.88

Publication Coordinating Commission

- (a) There shall be a Publication Coordinating Commission that shall coordinate and prioritize the publishing (pre-press, production, marketing, distribution, analysis, and inventory control) and media production of the synod's boards, commissions, and Northwestern Publishing House.
- (b) The commission shall evaluate the needs for Christian literature and media tools in congregations, schools, and homes, and recommend to appropriate synod agencies the development of such resources.
- (c) The Publication Coordinating Commission fund supports the commission's work. The commission shall administer the fund. All major expenditures from the Publication fund shall be approved in advance by the Executive Committee of the Synodical Council.
- (d) The commission shall be chaired by ~~the vice presidents of publishing services of Northwestern Publishing House; a member appointed by the synod president. The synod president, in consultation with the appropriate board, Northwestern Publishing House shall appoint the following another members to the commission: one from Northwestern Publishing House, one member from each area of ministry, and three at-large members. The~~ Conference of Presidents shall appoint three members to the commission. ~~The Board for Home Missions, the Board for Ministerial Education and the Board for World Missions shall each appoint one member. Appointments shall be for a term of two~~ four years, with no limit on the number of terms served.
- (e) The director of communications shall be an advisory member of the commission. Additional advisory members may be appointed by the chairman as necessary. The commission shall report to the Synodical Council through the president or his designee.

Item #B-8

Section 6.92

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

- (a) There shall be ~~an agency~~ a commission that will serve under the Synodical Council to assist them in administering ~~and acting as agent for~~ any program of disaster relief, special assistance to those in need, or humanitarian aid projects undertaken by the synod.
- (b) The name of this ~~agency~~ commission shall be "WELS Christian Aid and Relief."
- (c) The ~~agency~~ commission shall ~~be overseen by a committee~~ consisting of five members appointed by the president for a term of ~~six~~ four years. The terms shall be staggered. At least one of the members shall be appointed ~~from a slate of candidates provided by~~ in consultation with the Board for World Missions. ~~Committee~~ commission members may succeed themselves ~~once~~ twice. Insofar as practicable, the members shall represent diverse geographic areas.
- (d) One of the ~~committee~~ commission members shall be appointed by the president to serve as chairman.
- (e) The ~~committee~~ commission, with the approval of the president, shall make provisions for appropriate administrative and support staff.
- (f) The ~~committee~~ commission, with the approval of the president, shall advise the constituency of the synod as to needs that, in the judgment of the committee, should be the object of relief appeals within the synod.
- (g) The ~~committee~~ commission shall report to the president or his designee and shall provide to the Synodical Council a semiannual report of all expenditures for disaster relief, special assistance to those in need, and humanitarian aid.

Item #B-9

Section 7.00

Northwestern Publishing House

- (a) There shall be a subsidiary corporation named Northwestern Publishing House that shall serve the ~~synod's gospel ministry (also other Christians and unchurched)~~ Synodical Council by publishing and providing biblically sound materials that communicate, foster, and support the Christian faith and life of WELS members and non-members.
- (b) Northwestern Publishing House will be governed by a board of directors elected by the synod from a slate of

~~candidates proposed by the synod Nominating Committee. The board of directors will consist of two parish pastors, one professor from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, one professor from Martin Luther College, one elementary or secondary teacher, and four laymen with retail, marketing, finance, legal, technology, and/or other appropriate professional backgrounds. Directors will serve for a term of four years and may succeed themselves twice. Insofar as practical, the directors' terms shall be staggered. The members may succeed themselves once.~~ The president's designee, if one is appointed per 7.00(g), shall be an advisory ex-officio member of the board of directors.

Item #B-10

Section 7.10

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.

(a) There shall be a subsidiary corporation named WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc. organized for religious, charitable, and educational purposes, consistent with the principles of the synod. The corporation shall serve the Synodical Council through the sale of investments and receipt of gifts to provide loans and grants to mission congregations for parsonages, land, and other necessary facilities and grants to Home Missions. Loans made to mission congregations require the recommendation of the Board for Home Missions. Subject to any conditions contained in its bylaws, the corporation may also make loans to non-mission congregations-and to World Missions.

(b) The membership, term of office, and manner of election of the board of directors of this corporation shall be prescribed by the articles of incorporation or bylaws of the corporation. The president's designee, if one is appointed per 7.10(e), shall be an advisory ex-officio member of the board of directors

(c) Any changes in the corporation's articles of incorporation or bylaws shall be subject to the approval of the Synodical Council ~~after receiving recommendations from the board of directors or the Board for Home Missions.~~

Item #B-11

Section 7.20

WELS Foundation, Inc.

(a) There shall be a subsidiary corporation named WELS Foundation, Inc. The corporation shall serve the Synodical Council by organizing exclusively to provide, direct, channel, and manage funds for religious, charitable, and educational purposes consistent with the principles of the synod. ~~Expenditure of funds for such purposes shall be subject to the policies approved by the Synodical Council.~~

(b) The membership, term of office, and manner of election of the board of directors shall be prescribed by the articles of incorporation or bylaws of the corporation. The president's designee, if one is appointed per 7.20(e), shall be an advisory ex-officio member of the board of directors.

(c) Any changes in the corporation's articles of incorporation or bylaws shall be subject to the approval of the Synodical Council ~~after receiving recommendations from the board of directors or the Conference of Presidents.~~

Item #B-12

Section 7.30

WELS Investment Funds, Inc.

(b) The membership, term of office, and manner of election of the board of directors shall be prescribed by the articles of incorporation or bylaws of the corporation. The president's designee, if one is appointed per 7.30(g), shall be an advisory ex-officio member of the board of directors.

(c) Any changes in the corporation's articles of incorporation or bylaws shall be subject to the approval of the Synodical Council ~~after receiving recommendations from the board of directors.~~

(e) The board of directors shall draw up its own investment objectives and guidelines subject to the approval of the Synodical Council. The investment objectives and guidelines shall be reviewed periodically at least annually by the board of directors and the Synodical Council.

Item #B-13

Section 7.40

WELS Retirement Program Commission

(b) The Commission shall consist of one pastor, one teacher and four laymen appointed by the Synodical Council. Appointments shall be for a term of three years. The terms of two members shall expire each year. Members may

succeed themselves three times. The president's designee, if one is appointed per 7.40(d), shall be an advisory ex-officio member of the board of directors.

(c) The Commission shall develop its own investment objectives and guidelines subject to the approval of the Synodical Council. The investment objectives and guidelines shall be reviewed periodically at least annually by the Commission and the Synodical Council. The Commission shall develop the pension plan's benefit basis subject to the approval of the Synodical Council. The pension plan's benefit basis shall be reviewed periodically at least annually by the Commission and the Synodical Council. The Commission shall also adopt such other policies it may deem necessary and advisable for the operation of the Plans.

Item #B-14

Section 7.50

WELS VEBA Commission

(b) The Commission shall consist of one pastor, one teacher, and four laymen appointed by the Synodical Council. Appointments shall be for a term of three years. The terms of two members shall expire each year. Members may succeed themselves three times. The president's designee, if one is appointed per 7.50(d), shall be an advisory ex-officio member of the board of directors.

(c) The Commission shall study and implement new procedures or make improvements in the plans, in accordance with proper procedure and sound fiscal management. The plans shall be reviewed periodically at least annually by the Commission and the Synodical Council. The Commission shall develop its own investment objectives and guidelines subject to the approval of the Synodical Council. The investment objectives and guidelines shall be reviewed periodically at least annually by the Commission and the Synodical Council. The Commission shall also adopt such other policies it may deem necessary and advisable for the operation of the plan.

Item #B-15

Section 7.70

WELS Historical Institute

(b) The makeup, term of office and manner of election of the board of directors of this corporation shall be prescribed by the articles of incorporation or bylaws of the corporation. The president's designee, if one is appointed per 7.70(d), shall be an advisory ex-officio member of the board of directors.

Financials

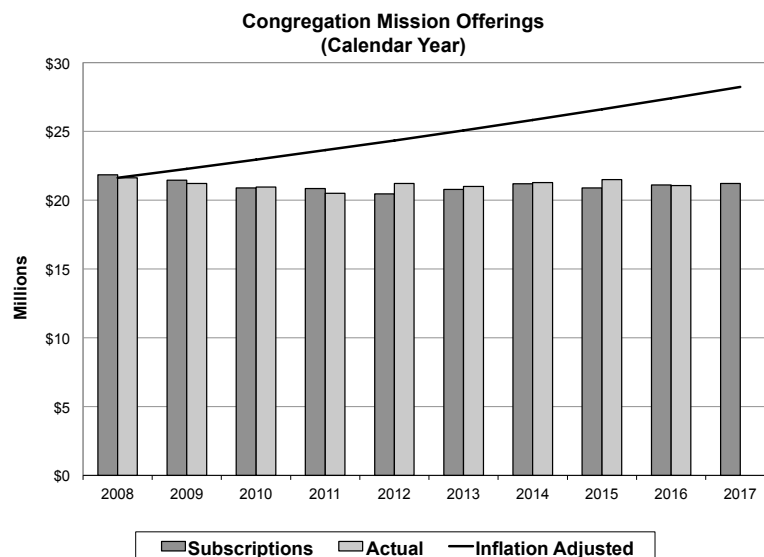
The financial information listed on the following pages summarizes the ministry financial plan (budget) approved for the 2017–19 biennium by the 2017 convention delegates, outlined on p. 37 in Resolution No. 1 from Committee #7: Financial results and plan (budget).

Proposed ministry financial plan for 2017–19 biennium

The ministry financial plan for the first time includes three of the synod’s ministry support services subsidiaries—WELS Church Extension Fund, WELS Foundation, and WELS Investment Funds. Detailed reports on the mission, purpose, and activities of each subsidiary can be found in the Book of Reports and Memorials. These subsidiaries are primarily funded by charging fees for the services they provide and do not received synod support. The subsidiaries’ financial activities are being included in the ministry financial plan to provided a clear picture of the financial scope and condition of the synod.

Planning for the 2017–19 biennium was initiated in spring 2016, about 14 months before the start of the biennium. With CMO levels uncertain, the Synodical Council recommended that synod support funding remain flat at FY17 levels for each year of the upcoming biennium. The Synodical Council asked the synod president to work with the areas of ministry to draft an initial ministry financial plan within these levels for review at its fall 2016 meeting. With this general direction by the Synodical Council, the areas of ministry, schools, and support services subsidiaries, working with their boards and commissions, proceeded to develop their ministry plans with the goal of maintaining existing ministry or carefully expanding where levels of available resources, reserves, or special gifts and grants allowed.

For most areas, developing a flat budget for the second consecutive biennium, while maintaining existing ministry, proved challenging in the face of modest wage increases and other cost increases for benefits, insurances, and utilities. With CMO support forecasted to increase at just a fraction of cost increases, additional funding would be needed, or ministry would need to be reduced. When the Synodical Council met in fall 2016, it was determined that ministry needs justified a greater use of reserves, and small increases in synod support were approved. Increases of \$246,100 (1 percent in FY18) and \$587,100 (2 percent in FY19) were approved to maintain existing ministries, accommodate support for the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, allow for the addition of a director of discipleship, and allow for the addition of a Christian Giving counselor in the second year of the biennium.



Historical levels of CMO have been relatively flat to slightly declining since 2008. 2017 CMO subscriptions are \$21.2 million or 1.9 percent below CMO receipts from 2008, and nearly \$7 million behind a 3 percent inflation-adjusted level. The ministry financial plan includes CMO increases of 0.5 percent annually, based on average increases experienced over the last several years.

Communicant members in 2016 number approximately 292,000, nearly 6 percent below the 309,000 communicant members in 2008. Membership has been declining approximately 1 percent per year since 2008, and likewise the base of financial support for the work of the synod is also shrinking.

In February 2017, the synod president submitted a ministry financial plan to the Synodical Council for consideration. The proposed plan for FY18 includes synod support of nearly \$29 million, other expenses in areas of ministry and at the schools of \$44.5 million, and \$7.8 million of expense at the subsidiaries for a total ministry financial plan of \$81.3 million. The FY19 proposed plan includes synod support of \$29.2 million, other expenses in areas of ministry and at the schools of \$44.8 million, and \$7.9 million of expense at the subsidiaries for a total ministry financial plan of \$81.9 million.

The financial plan relies on the drawdown of the Financial Stabilization Fund, approximately \$3.2 million over the biennium, and on areas of ministry and schools to use nearly \$4.0 million of reserves annually, in addition to other funding sources or one-time funds to sustain ongoing ministry.

Please refer to the area of ministry reports in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* for the ministry financial plans for each area. Following is a summary of the support forecast and the financial plan for each year of the biennium along with comparative information for the current biennium.

Support forecast

The support forecast for the biennium is based on the following trends and assumptions.

1. **CMO**—congregations will meet their calendar year 2017 subscriptions, which are 0.8 percent higher than 2016 receipts. CMO is planned to increase 0.5 percent for calendar years 2018 and 2019.
2. **FSF**—holds all unrestricted non-CMO support for the year or years after receipt and includes the following:
 - a. Foundation and other grants: Mainly Schwan Foundation and WELS Foundation grants
 - Schwan Foundation grants were determined based on a \$1.88 million grant provided for 2017 and are assumed to remain flat for 2018 and 2019.
 - WELS Foundation grants are based on the unrestricted net asset policy as adopted by the WELS Foundation Board with distributions of \$150,000 per year expected in 2018 and 2019.
 - Other grants tracked through the WELS Foundation include distributions from a gifted interest in an LLC, which is scheduled to terminate near the end of FY17. The final distribution is expected to be approximately \$6.8 million when the donated stores' leases terminate, with \$3 million to be directed to World Missions special funds and \$3.8 million designated to support general operations. What was, at one time, expected to be a lump sum distribution into the FSF for general operations, is now expected to be received in annual distributions over a ten-year period. The forecasts for FY18 and FY19 include support of \$380,000 annually. Guidance for the handling of these funds are still subject to change based on the donor's wishes.
 - b. Gifts from individuals: Includes Missions and Ministry, Mission Partners, Walking Together, and other gifts from individuals and congregations.
 - Missions and Ministry is a new program that is meant to be utilized by congregations as part of their annual mission festivals which accent the synod's ministry work at home and around the world. In addition, donors who previously gave towards Walking Together or debt elimination are encouraged to direct their gifts to this new program. Annual gifts of \$250,000 are forecasted for this program.
 - Gifts estimated at \$50,000 annually are anticipated for the Mission Partners program.
 - Other gifts are based on current trends showing relatively flat levels over the last few years and assumptions that donors will continue to prefer to direct their gifts to specific ministries. These gifts are forecasted to be \$900,000 annually.
 - c. Unrestricted bequests: Represents estate gifts to the ministry and/or mission of WELS and is based on the conservative end of actual gifts received during the prior five-year period recognizing that donors are better informed of the opportunity to restrict their estate gifts to a specific ministry. Unrestricted bequests are estimated at \$1,550,000 annually for the upcoming biennium.
 - d. Investment income: Represents returns on non-endowed funds, the continued investment in annuity contracts, and the anticipated decrease in investable reserves. Current annuity investments will terminate with the death of

the annuitant. The plan recognizes that, when this situation occurs, these funds will be reinvested in other available options that will be at lower interest rates than what is provided through the annuity contract.

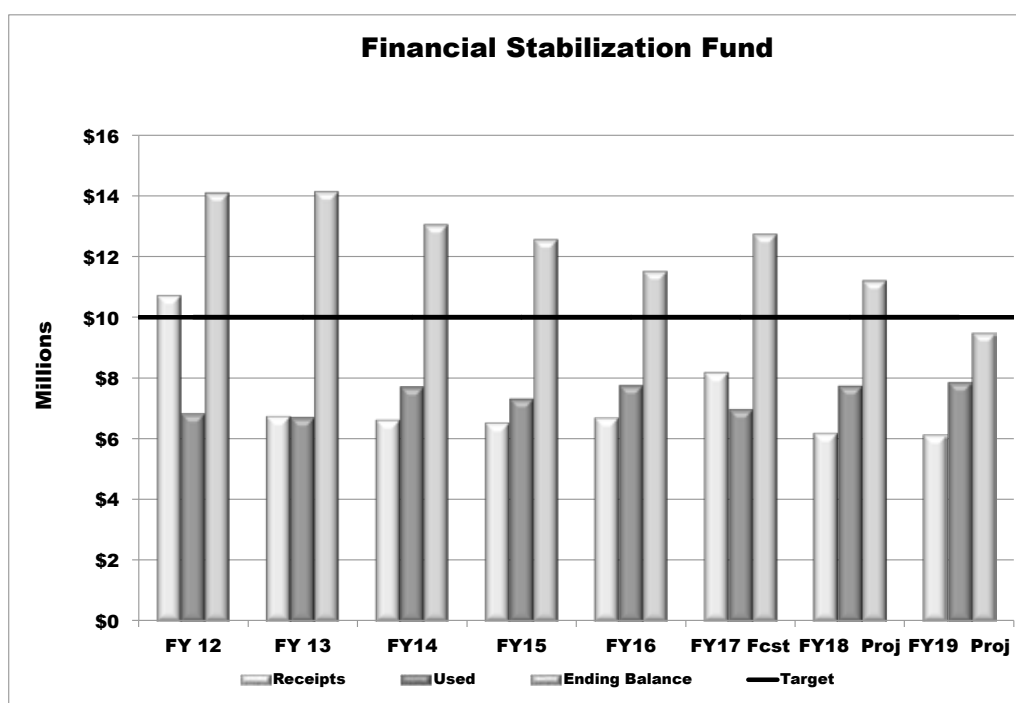
e. Endowment & other: Includes distributions from general endowment funds, as well as income for services provided, rental payments as defined by the building fund policy and the proceeds from our corporate credit card rebate program. Slight increases during the biennium were assumed.

3. FSF ending balance

a. Additions to the FSF are planned at \$6.2 million for FY18. With a 1 percent increase in the planned synod support level and a 0.5 percent planned increase in CMO, transfers out of the FSF are planned at \$7.7 million, resulting in a decrease in the FSF of \$1.5 million to an ending balance of \$11.2 million.

b. Additions to the FSF are planned at \$6.1 million for FY19. With an additional 1 percent increase in synod support, transfers out of the FSF are planned at \$7.8 million, decreasing the FSF by \$1.7 million to an ending balance of \$9.5 million.

c. A critical assumption for the FSF balance in the upcoming biennium includes the estimated 0.5 percent increase in CMO in each year of the upcoming biennium. If congregations can exceed this increase, less will need to be transferred from the FSF to cover the synod's operating expenses. However, if CMO receipts fall short of this increase, additional transfers out of the FSF may be needed, which will draw the balance lower, or spending reductions may be necessary.



Unfunded Priority List

This list reflects the changes recommended at the convention in August.

1.	Synodical Council	\$100,000	Publication Coordinating Commission theological works
2.	Ministerial Education	\$90,000	MLC financial assistance
3.	Missions	\$200,000	Home Missions start and World Missions enhancement
4.	COP	\$100,000	Christian Giving counselor (one year earlier than planned)
5.	World Missions	\$50,000	Ethiopia/Sudan worker training support
6.	Ministerial Education	\$90,000	MLC financial assistance
7.	Ministerial Education	\$150,000	Capital projects
8.	COP	\$50,000	Special Ministries Military Services Committee
9.	Home Missions	\$125,000	New Home Missions start
10.	COP	\$50,000	Special Ministries Prison Ministry Committee
11.	COP	\$100,000	Commission on Lutheran Schools associate director
12.	Synodical Council	\$100,000	Catechism and Bible history curriculum
13.	Home Missions	\$125,000	New Home Missions start

SUMMARY	Plan Summary															
	2015-16 Actual			2016-17 Plan			2017-18 Plan			2018-19 Plan						
	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE
Home Missions	5,692,862	2,678,730	8,371,592	10,40	5,705,900	3,270,700	8,976,600	10,40	5,556,000	4,598,495	10,154,495	11,50	5,556,000	4,361,860	9,917,860	11,50
World Missions	5,810,999	2,925,803	8,740,802	52,60	5,893,000	3,987,290	9,880,290	51,35	6,593,000	3,723,276	10,276,276	51,25	6,593,000	3,729,571	10,322,571	51,25
Ministerial Education	8,252,667	30,037,230	38,289,897	328,95	8,132,550	30,897,239	39,029,789	333,05	8,133,000	32,427,114	40,560,114	335,45	8,133,000	33,717,639	41,850,639	336,05
Congregation & District Ministry	4,812,499	1,714,636	6,527,135	38,35	5,082,300	1,795,530	6,877,830	38,40	5,444,100	2,463,250	7,907,350	39,30	5,578,600	1,746,850	7,325,450	40,30
Ministry Support	2,945,724	1,604,259	4,549,983	26,95	3,245,350	1,383,300	4,628,650	29,20	3,296,000	1,351,936	4,647,936	27,20	3,412,500	1,271,900	4,684,400	27,20
Debt Retirement	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-	675,000	-	675,000	-	28,982,100	-	28,982,100	462,40	29,233,100	-	29,233,100	466,30
TOTAL	29,114,751	38,964,658	68,079,409	457,25	28,734,100	41,334,059	70,068,159	462,40	28,982,100	44,554,071	73,546,171	464,70	29,233,100	44,827,920	74,060,920	466,30

Synod Support	% of total	% change
2015-16	19.6%	
2016-17	19.8%	0.2%
2017-18	20.5%	1.4%
2018-19	22.6%	11.2%
Home Missions	20.0%	
World Missions	28.3%	-1.9%
Ministerial Education	17.7%	5.6%
Congregation & District Ministry	11.3%	10.2%
Ministry Support	2.3%	-57.8%
Debt Retirement	-	-1.3%
TOTAL	19.0%	0.9%

Total Funding	% of total	% change
2015-16	12.3%	
2016-17	12.8%	7.2%
2017-18	14.1%	13.0%
2018-19	13.4%	-2.3%
Home Missions	12.8%	
World Missions	56.2%	0.0%
Ministerial Education	9.8%	3.2%
Congregation & District Ministry	6.7%	-7.4%
Ministry Support	2.4%	0.8%
Debt Retirement	-	0.0%
TOTAL	11.7%	0.0%

Synod Support	% of total	% change
2015-16	19.6%	
2016-17	20.5%	1.4%
2017-18	28.1%	0.0%
2018-19	27.8%	0.0%
Home Missions	19.1%	2.5%
World Missions	11.7%	3.5%
Ministerial Education	0.0%	0.0%
Congregation & District Ministry	0.0%	0.0%
Ministry Support	0.0%	0.9%
Debt Retirement	-	0.0%
TOTAL	13.0%	0.9%

Total Funding	% of total	% change
2015-16	12.3%	
2016-17	13.0%	5.7%
2017-18	14.0%	7.7%
2018-19	13.9%	-0.1%
Home Missions	13.9%	
World Missions	56.5%	3.2%
Ministerial Education	9.9%	-7.4%
Congregation & District Ministry	6.3%	0.8%
Ministry Support	0.0%	0.0%
Debt Retirement	-	0.0%
TOTAL	13.4%	0.7%

Synod Support	% of total	% change
2015-16	19.6%	
2016-17	20.5%	1.4%
2017-18	28.1%	0.0%
2018-19	27.8%	0.0%
Home Missions	19.1%	2.5%
World Missions	11.7%	3.5%
Ministerial Education	0.0%	0.0%
Congregation & District Ministry	0.0%	0.0%
Ministry Support	0.0%	0.0%
Debt Retirement	-	0.0%
TOTAL	13.0%	0.9%

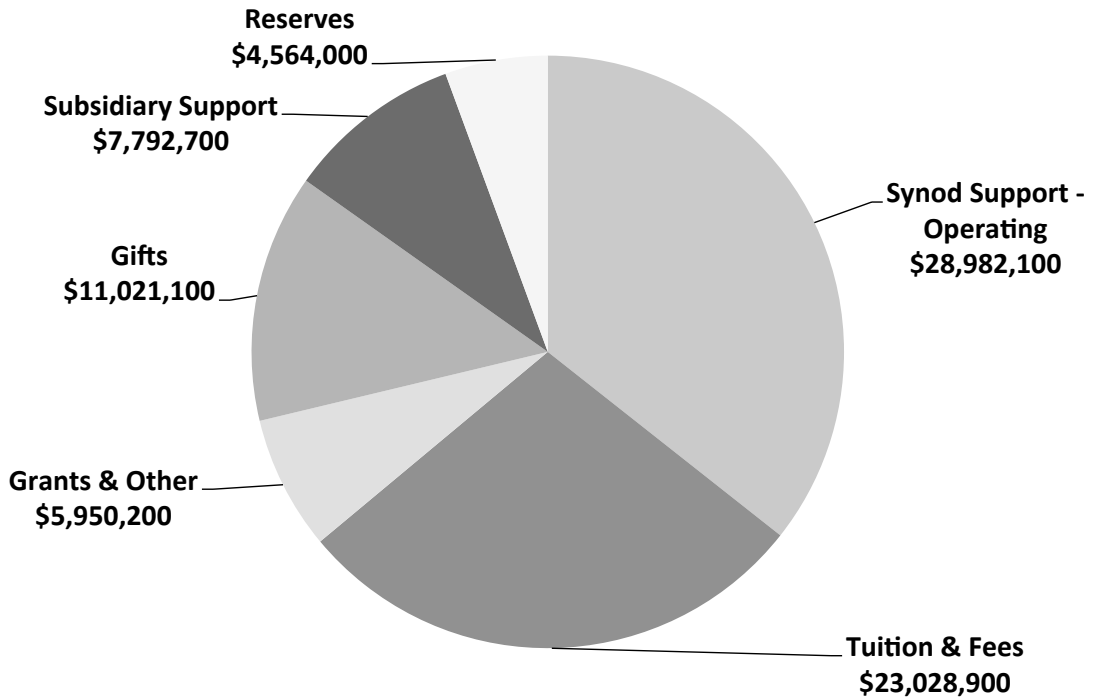
Total Funding	% of total	% change
2015-16	12.3%	
2016-17	13.0%	5.7%
2017-18	14.0%	7.7%
2018-19	13.9%	-0.1%
Home Missions	13.9%	
World Missions	56.5%	3.2%
Ministerial Education	9.9%	-7.4%
Congregation & District Ministry	6.3%	0.8%
Ministry Support	0.0%	0.0%
Debt Retirement	-	0.0%
TOTAL	13.4%	0.7%

Synod Support	% of total	% change
2015-16	19.6%	
2016-17	20.5%	1.4%
2017-18	28.1%	0.0%
2018-19	27.8%	0.0%
Home Missions	19.1%	2.5%
World Missions	11.7%	3.5%
Ministerial Education	0.0%	0.0%
Congregation & District Ministry	0.0%	0.0%
Ministry Support	0.0%	0.0%
Debt Retirement	-	0.0%
TOTAL	13.0%	0.9%

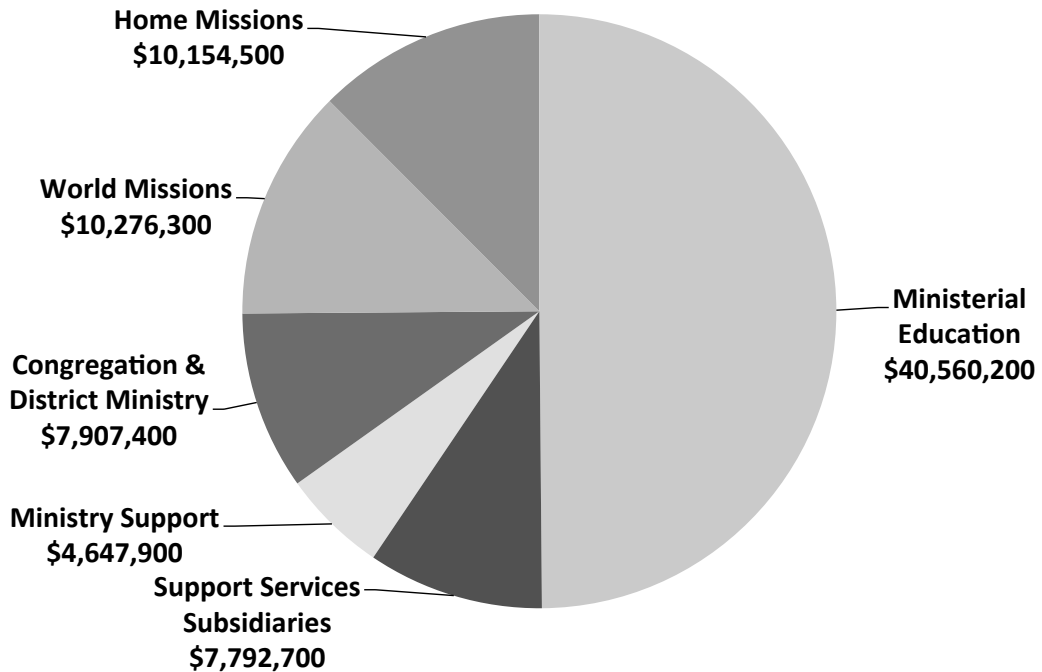
	Plan Summary																
	2015-16 Actual		2016-17 Plan		2017-18 Plan		2018-19 Plan										
	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE					
Home Missions																	
Board and Administration	606,685	240,855	847,540	4.40	614,984	326,600	941,584	4.40	619,125	69,590	688,715	4.50	622,125	73,050	695,175	4.50	
Multi-cultural Ministry	1,746,392	449,779	2,196,171	1.00	1,811,400	557,950	2,369,350	1.00	1,792,200	1,226,950	2,999,150	1.00	1,793,900	1,095,650	2,894,550	1.00	
Campus Ministry	395,903	59,896	455,799	1.00	433,500	19,000	452,500	1.00	415,650	29,470	445,120	1.00	414,565	25,470	440,035	1.00	
Outreach Ministry	2,941,549	1,768,086	4,709,635	3.00	2,846,016	2,135,350	4,984,366	3.00	2,789,025	2,432,475	5,221,500	3.00	2,789,410	2,320,190	5,109,600	3.00	
New Initiatives	-	-	-	0.00	-	-	-	0.00	-	200,000	200,000	0.00	-	200,000	200,000	0.00	
Joint Mission Council Ministry	2,393	160,174	162,567	1.00	-	231,800	231,800	1.00	-	540,000	540,000	2.00	-	547,500	547,500	2.00	
JMC - New Initiatives	-	-	-	0.00	-	-	-	0.00	-	100,000	100,000	0.00	-	100,000	100,000	0.00	
TOTAL	5,692,862	2,678,730	8,371,592	10.40	5,705,900	3,270,700	8,976,600	10.40	5,556,000	4,598,495	10,154,495	11.50	5,556,000	4,361,860	9,917,860	11.50	
World Missions																	
Board and Administration	439,536	87,010	526,545	4.60	447,400	227,628	675,028	4.60	269,780	446,535	716,315	4.50	170,279	585,805	756,084	4.50	
Africa	744,485	963,916	1,708,401	11.50	695,885	1,478,920	2,174,805	11.00	692,772	1,375,964	2,068,736	12.00	654,877	1,382,089	2,036,966	12.00	
Europe	492,570	362,073	854,643	2.25	539,615	280,295	819,910	2.50	562,269	215,650	777,919	1.25	541,950	80,870	622,820	1.25	
Latin America	538,785	136,603	675,388	5.25	541,512	184,995	726,507	5.25	664,532	117,895	782,427	6.00	664,532	138,460	802,992	6.00	
Native America	270,941	124,397	395,338	3.00	301,319	223,000	524,319	3.00	382,187	90,500	472,687	3.00	386,835	90,500	477,335	3.00	
East Asia	754,248	976,804	1,731,052	10.50	854,891	899,951	1,754,842	9.50	1,426,613	255,347	1,681,960	9.50	1,485,924	263,301	1,749,225	9.50	
South Asia	528,443	202,352	730,795	4.50	591,274	299,970	891,244	4.50	572,000	283,885	855,885	4.00	572,000	297,046	869,046	4.00	
Asia-Pacific Rim	621,155	102,000	723,155	4.00	741,258	103,500	844,758	4.00	600,945	226,500	826,845	4.00	639,876	200,000	839,876	4.00	
New Initiatives	-	-	-	0.00	-	-	-	0.00	-	200,000	200,000	0.00	-	200,000	200,000	0.00	
Multi-Language Publications	1,101,855	52,473	1,154,328	7.00	1,016,126	73,500	1,089,626	7.00	1,251,512	141,000	1,392,512	7.00	1,251,632	93,000	1,344,632	7.00	
Other	318,981	(77,825)	241,156	0.00	163,720	216,131	379,851	0.00	190,990	370,000	560,990	0.00	191,095	370,000	561,095	0.00	
TOTAL	5,810,999	2,929,803	8,740,802	52.60	5,893,000	3,987,290	9,880,290	51.95	5,553,000	3,723,276	10,276,276	51.25	5,553,000	3,729,571	10,282,571	51.25	
Ministerial Education																	
Board and Administration	172,291	887,232	1,059,523	1.00	146,800	845,000	991,800	1.00	84,095	918,155	1,002,250	1.00	84,695	915,955	997,650	1.00	
Retiree Health Care	150,776	-	150,776	0.00	64,100	-	64,100	0.00	48,900	-	48,900	0.00	51,900	-	51,900	0.00	
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary	1,042,780	4,361,089	5,403,869	39.30	1,042,780	4,659,365	5,702,145	39.30	1,070,737	4,921,078	5,991,815	39.65	1,070,737	4,968,983	6,039,720	39.65	
Marin Luther College	3,011,660	16,596,523	19,608,183	179.15	3,011,660	17,477,664	20,489,324	186.00	3,300,238	18,207,261	21,507,499	185.80	3,300,238	19,088,481	22,388,719	186.40	
Luther Preparatory School	2,531,830	5,677,856	8,209,686	64.00	2,523,880	5,223,712	7,747,592	62.75	2,520,130	5,410,870	7,931,000	64.00	2,520,130	5,654,870	8,175,000	64.00	
Michigan Lutheran Seminary	1,343,330	2,604,530	3,947,860	45.50	1,343,330	2,691,498	4,034,828	44.00	1,108,900	2,969,750	4,078,650	45.00	1,108,900	3,089,350	4,198,250	45.00	
TOTAL	8,352,667	30,037,230	38,289,897	328.95	8,133,550	30,897,239	39,028,788	333.05	8,133,000	32,427,114	40,560,114	335.45	8,133,000	33,717,639	41,850,639	336.05	

	Plan Summary															
	2015-16 Actual				2016-17 Plan				2017-18 Plan				2018-19 Plan			
	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE
Congregation & District Ministry																
Congregation & Ministry Support Group	1,058,682	1,422,189	2,480,871	16.05	1,058,600	1,655,930	2,714,530	16.10	1,223,600	2,169,550	3,393,150	17.00	1,228,600	1,553,150	2,781,750	17.00
Conference of Presidents	73,518	28,345	101,863		132,000	13,900	145,900		124,800	10,800	135,600		125,300	10,800	136,100	
Christian Giving	1,740,448	37,955	1,778,403	16.80	1,894,800	4,800	1,899,600	16.80	1,994,800	4,800	1,999,600	16.80	2,094,800	4,800	2,099,600	17.80
Communication Services	499,497	65,068	564,565	5.50	526,900	78,000	604,900	5.50	544,900	80,000	624,900	5.50	560,900	80,000	640,900	5.50
District Ministries	1,077,842	-	1,077,842	0.00	1,089,700	-	1,089,700	0.00	1,135,200	-	1,135,200	0.00	1,188,200	-	1,188,200	0.00
Convention	102,476	90,144	192,620	0.00	-	-	-	0.00	100,000	100,000	200,000	0.00	-	-	-	0.00
CLCR	27,308	65,955	93,243	0.00	38,300	39,900	78,200	0.00	38,800	98,100	136,900	0.00	38,800	98,100	136,900	0.00
Special Support	29,989	5,000	34,989	0.00	92,000	3,000	95,000	0.00	92,000	92,000	184,000	0.00	92,000	92,000	184,000	0.00
Support	202,740	-	202,740	0.00	250,000	-	250,000	0.00	250,000	-	250,000	0.00	250,000	-	250,000	0.00
TOTAL	4,812,499	1,714,636	6,527,135	38.35	5,082,300	1,795,530	6,877,830	38.40	5,444,100	2,463,250	7,907,350	39.30	5,578,600	1,746,850	7,325,450	40.30
Ministry support																
Facilities	173,158	660,048	833,206	0.00	223,500	365,000	588,500	0.00	223,500	350,000	573,500	0.00	223,500	350,000	573,500	0.00
Synodical Council	82,757	8,142	90,899	0.00	84,200	-	84,200	0.00	86,600	-	86,600	0.00	89,200	-	89,200	0.00
Synod Presidium	302,261	-	302,261	2.00	322,800	-	322,800	2.00	323,600	-	323,600	2.00	327,400	-	327,400	2.00
Special Task Forces	180	-	180	0.00	8,700	-	8,700	0.00	6,200	-	6,200	0.00	6,200	-	6,200	0.00
Archives	-	9,964	9,964	1.00	-	100,000	100,000	1.00	20,000	80,036	100,036	1.00	100,000	-	100,000	1.00
Technology	1,313,721	89,284	1,403,005	12.75	1,343,025	34,600	1,377,625	13.00	1,372,975	36,900	1,409,875	13.00	1,403,075	36,900	1,439,975	13.00
Financial Services	882,019	106	882,125	8.20	1,010,325	-	1,010,325	10.20	1,010,325	-	1,010,325	8.20	1,010,325	-	1,010,325	8.20
Human Resources	211,588	(676)	210,912	2.00	252,800	-	252,800	2.00	252,800	-	252,800	2.00	252,800	-	252,800	2.00
CAR	-	837,391	837,391	1.00	-	883,700	883,700	1.00	-	-	885,000	1.00	-	-	885,000	1.00
TOTAL	2,945,724	1,604,259	4,549,983	26.95	3,245,350	1,383,300	4,628,650	29.20	3,295,000	1,351,936	4,647,936	27.20	3,412,500	1,271,900	4,684,400	27.20
Diak. Retirement	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-	675,000	-	675,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	4,545,724	1,604,259	6,149,983	26.95	3,920,350	1,383,300	5,303,650	29.20	3,295,000	1,351,936	4,647,936	27.20	3,412,500	1,271,900	4,684,400	27.20

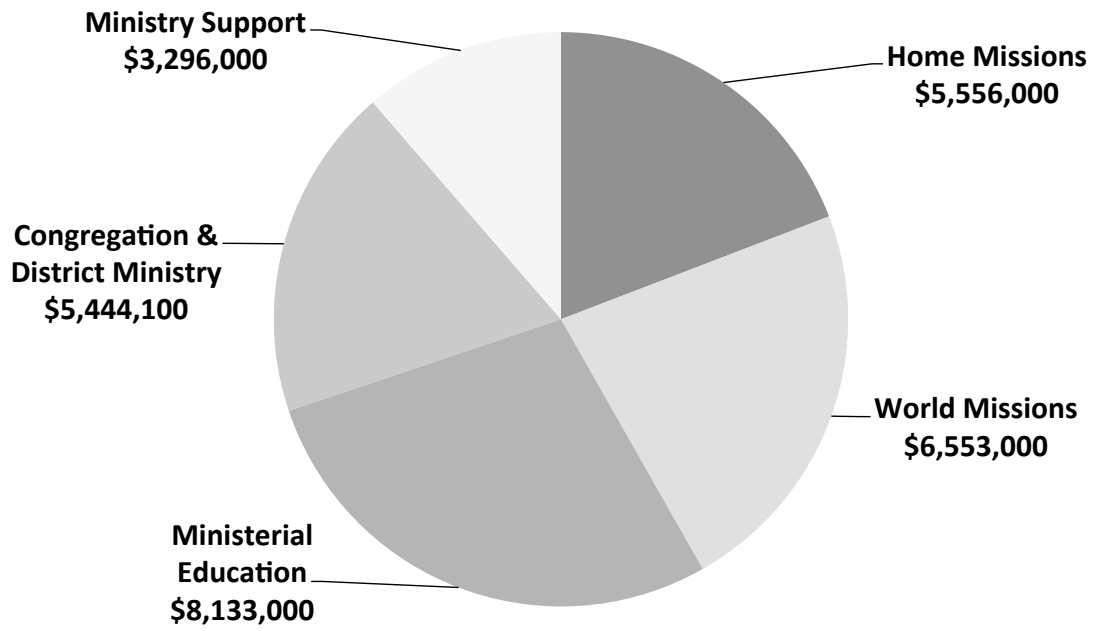
**FY 2017-18 Total Ministry Plan Support
\$81,339,000**



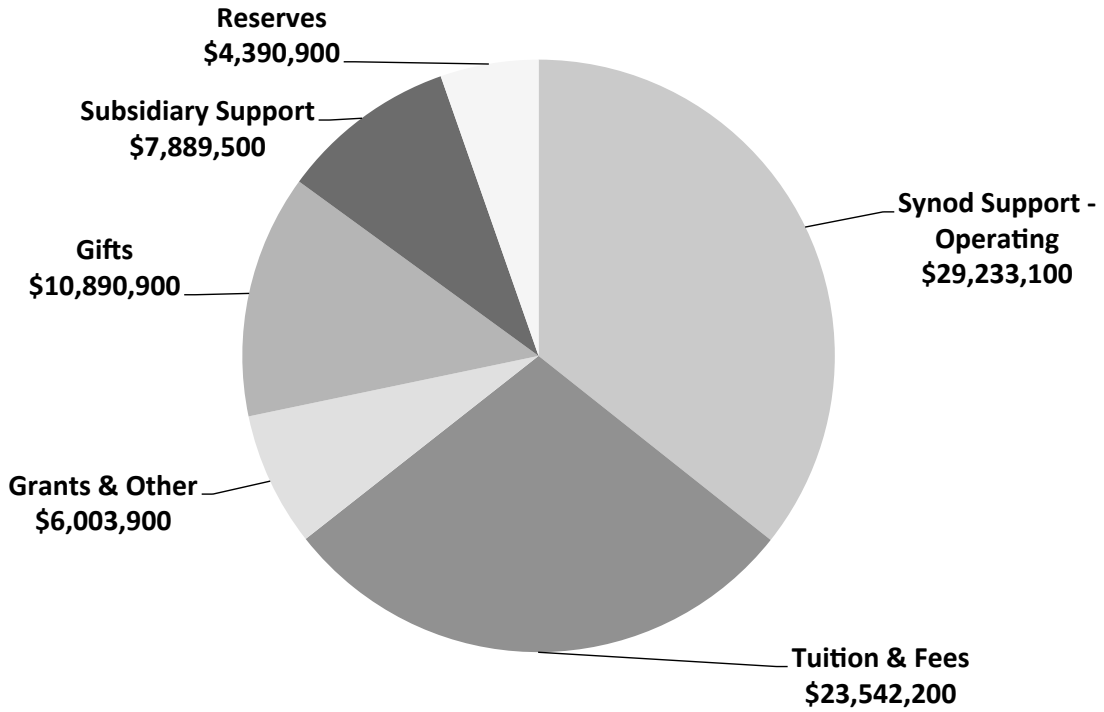
**FY 2017-18 Total Ministry Plan Expenses
\$81,339,000**



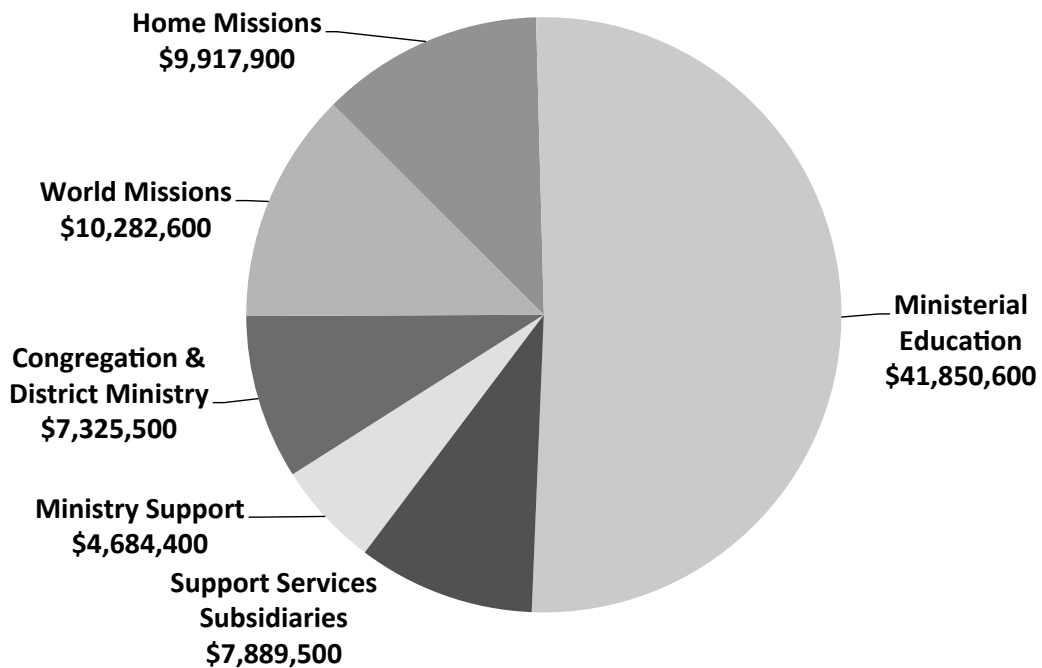
FY 2017-18 Synod Operating Support Allocation
\$28,982,100



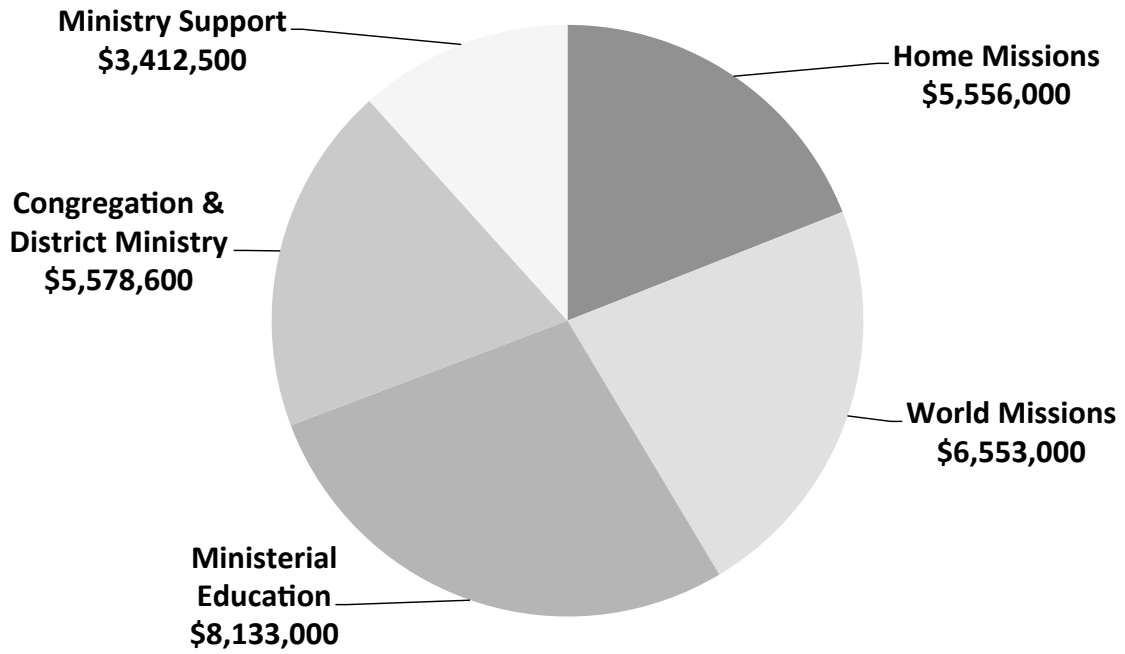
**FY 2018-19 Total Ministry Plan Support
\$81,950,500**



**FY 2018-19 Total Ministry Plan Expenses
\$81,950,500**



FY 2018-19 Synod Operating Support Allocation \$29,233,100



Appendix: Approved Compensation Guidelines

Preface

At its inception in August 1997, the Synodical Council (of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod) set the focus for a new called worker compensation plan. It did so by establishing a Human Resources Committee (HRC) made up of SC members that was charged with the responsibility of developing such a plan.

For about one year, the HRC struggled with the task. The conclusion was reached that an entirely new plan was needed to address the major concerns that were made apparent through extensive survey and discussions held with synodical areas of ministry, calling bodies, knowledgeable laity, and called workers from throughout the synod. The results were contained in the Compensation Guidelines that have been in effect since December 2002.

Subsequent to the adoption and implementation of the Compensation Guidelines, the Synodical Council, through its subcommittee, the Compensation Review Committee, has monitored and updated the Compensation Guidelines to reflect changing compensation and benefits issues. However, no substantial changes were made to the guidelines since their adoption in 2002.

In 2013, the synod in convention resolved to establish a new ad hoc committee to look at all areas of synod structure and programs and to bring its suggestions and recommendations to the 2015 synod convention. The newly-established Ad Hoc Commission 2 identified the Compensation Guidelines as a potential contributing factor in several issues that our called workers and congregations presently face. Specifically, increases in salary are largely tenure based and do not reflect sufficiently duties and responsibilities, lack of calls to more senior tenured workers, difficulties filling principal vacancies, and the absence of early childhood education directors in the guidelines. The Synodical Council's Compensation Review Committee (CRC) assumed responsibility for identifying possible changes to the guidelines and to report those changes to the district conventions in 2016 and final recommendations to the 2017 synod convention.

The CRC considered the issues identified by the Ad Hoc Commission 2 and drafted recommendations for consideration by district conventions as well as the Synodical Council and Conference of Presidents. In summary, the following substantial changes have been made to the guidelines.

- Two salary columns were added to the left of the columns in the current salary matrix for non-college-degreed early childhood ministry workers
- The salary ranges applicable to the various ministry positions were expanded to four columns, with the fourth column being the column to the right. This increase in range of columns was not added for the ministerial education school presidents or the synod president.
- Providing specific guidance regarding recognizing ministry responsibilities and additional education in determining a called worker's salary.
- Setting the range of salary for principals in the same range as that of pastors.
- Clarifying and re-emphasizing that all workers should receive a housing allowance or housing equity.

In addition, the committee created a called worker compensation calculator for congregations and other calling bodies to facilitate the consistent application of the guidelines. The committee plans to provide ongoing training materials for use by district presidents and circuit pastors for their work with calling bodies.

The CRC thanks all those who provided prayers and input on the committee's recommendations and tools.

“Double Honor” – An Examination of the Scriptural Principles for Compensating Called Workers

The Issue – The Lord of the Church has graciously instituted on this earth the ministry of the gospel. By means of this ministry, the Lord wills that all nations hear the Good News of the saving work of Jesus Christ, believe it, and finally be saved. This ministry of the Word is carried out by God’s people. All have a share in this work. But some will be called by God through His Church to do this work full time as representatives of Christ and the body of believers who has called them to use Christ’s Keys publicly. The question then arises: *What compensation should full-time called workers receive?* For guidance in answering this question, we will look to God’s timeless Word.

LUKE 10:7

⁷Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

The context—Jesus is preparing to send ahead of Him 36 two-man teams (or 35 teams) to the towns and places Jesus intended to visit. They can expect opposition (Luke 10:3). They are not to go home and pack a big suitcase to take along (Luke 10:4). They are not to become distracted on the way (Luke 10:4). If they find a welcome in any home, they are to remain in that home, working from there in that place (Luke 10:5). In this home they are to accept the food and drink provided to them (they have not brought along purse or bag, i.e. money or provisions, Luke 10:4). Jesus states the reason they are to accept this support: *[T]he worker deserves his wages.* Here Jesus clearly states the principle of material support for those who preach/teach the Word.

Why the prohibition from moving around from house to house?

Answer: These workers in the Lord’s Kingdom were not to “hunt around” for the most comfortable accommodations, nor seek the most lucrative support they could find. They were to be satisfied with their basic needs being supplied.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:4-14

⁴Don’t we have the right to food and drink? ⁵Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? ⁸Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn’t the Law say the same thing? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? ¹²If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. ¹³Don’t you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

The context—Paul has just written to the Corinthians about being willing to yield their right to do something out of love and for the good of another (Chapter 8). In Chapter 9, Paul puts forward an example of this in what he had done when he had first come to Corinth. He had not made use of his “right” (vv. 4, 12) of receiving material support from the Corinthians.

Notice Paul calls receiving support a “right” of those laboring in the Word. What is a “right”?

Answer: A “right” is that which is due to a person by virtue of a given status. A person has a just, moral claim to that which is their right. We might even say rights are “existential.” To exist as a certain thing means certain rights accrue to that individual. Paul’s point is that being (existing as) an apostle meant having the right of material support.

Nature and human experience teach the principle that laborers enjoy the fruit of their labors. What examples does Paul cite in this section?

Answer: Soldiers receive compensation for their duty (One thinks how soldiers were quartered in the homes of those they served to defend). Vintners enjoy some of the grapes they harvest. Shepherds enjoy some of the milk from the sheep/goats they tend. Farmers and farmhands enjoy the produce they have worked to plant and harvest.

Not only do nature and experience teach this principle, God does, too, in the Old Testament. In what unlikely verse from the Old Testament does Paul see God teaching the principle of the right of a gospel preacher/teacher to be compensated for their labors?

*Answer: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.”
(Deuteronomy 25:4)*

What other example from the Old Testament does Paul also cite?

Answer: Paul cites the example of the priests at the Temple who received their food from the gifts and sacrifices the people brought.

The principle (Paul even calls it the command of the Lord Jesus, v. 14)

(ANSWER) THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL SHOULD RECEIVE

THEIR LIVING FROM THE GOSPEL

For further discussion: In verse 5 Paul made the point that the gospel preacher has the right to take his wife with him. How does this affect our understanding of the “right of support” (v. 12) for those who preach the gospel?

Answer: Understanding that the full-time preacher/teacher has the right to be a “family man/woman,” calling bodies would want their support to be sufficient so the worker can provide for family.

Paul freely yielded his right of support in Corinth. Is it right to expect a called worker to labor in “tent-making” to make a living wage?

Answer: At certain times and in certain places, “tent-making” ministries may exist. (“Tent-making” ministries are understood as those where a person is called and compensated for part-time gospel ministry, with the understanding they will seek gainful employment elsewhere to earn a “living wage.”) It would be important in these circumstances for both the calling body and the individual called to know the parameters and expectations of the Call. “Tent-making” calls will exist where and when circumstances and careful stewardship determine this is the wisest way to carry on gospel ministry. Congregations that would “expect” their called worker to get a second job because they simply don’t want to pay “so much,” or who want to do ministry “on the cheap,” should reexamine their motives and the principles this Bible study seeks to review.

GALATIANS 6:6

⁶Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Who has the primary responsibility to compensate the instructor of the Word?

Answer: Those who directly receive the benefit from that instructor. This is not to suggest that subsidy in the cause of opening missions is wrong, but as a general practice it is only fitting that the recipients of the gospel ministry compensate the gospel minister from whom they receive the gospel.

1 TIMOTHY 5:17,18

¹⁷The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”

How do we know that the “honor” of which Paul speaks in these verses is not merely an attitude in the abstract but compensation in the concrete?

Answer: To buttress his statement that elders who serve well are worthy of double honor, Paul quotes (again) the passage from Deuteronomy where oxen are allowed to eat as a result of their treading, and he quotes Jesus’ comments about workers and their deserved wages.

What significance is it that compensation is called not only a wage (v. 18), but also an “honor” (v. 17)?

Answer: In the world, compensation may be simply a calculation of the “market-rate” or even a tool to motivate and retain workers. Not so in the Church. Compensation for those who are called to serve in the gospel ministry is also a way God’s people show them honor.

How should the word “double” be understood in this verse? (the literal formula or calculus by which to set the salary of called workers, a general guideline, other?)

Answer: Interpretations vary. Some believe elders deserve the attitude of honor (this would be one honor) and also the honor of wages (the second, and thus, “double” honor). There is a Scriptural use of the idea of doubling that simply connotes “much more.” (e.g. the double blessing for Jerusalem in the place of her sin, Isaiah 40:1-2; the double destruction spoken of through Jeremiah, Jeremiah 17:18; the double portion of judgment for the harlot, Revelation 18) Perhaps the best way to bring out the idea in this verse is: Whatever you have come to think of as normal honor, the well-serving elder is worthy of much more! And this abundance of honor will be evidenced in the elder’s compensation.

Notice again that the basis for Paul’s point regarding compensation is Old Testament Scripture (*Do not muzzle the ox . . .*) and the command of the Lord Jesus (*The worker deserves his wages*).

For further discussion:

Nowhere does Scripture mandate an exact amount or formula for determining compensation for called workers. That in itself is instructive. How so?

Answer: The setting of compensation is an area in which Christians move about in the freedom of the gospel, guided by the counsel of God’s Word. The determination of compensation is not a legalistic chore for a calling body or a mindless picking of a number, but a thoughtful, prayerful, gospel-motivated exercise of love.

The compensation provided a full-time called worker has been called “freedom.” In what sense is compensation “freedom?”

Answer: The full-time worker should be free to concentrate on the work for which they have been called and not have to unduly concern themselves with matters of food and clothes. Of course, this is first and foremost a matter of trusting the Father in heaven who knows our needs and well provides us. However, a congregation’s compensation should not lead a worker into temptation, either.

Based on what Scripture says, what questions might a calling body ask itself when determining the compensation of its called worker(s)?

Answer: Answers will, of course, vary. Some questions that flow out of this study might be:

- *Does this compensation demonstrate double honor?*
- *Does this compensation adequately provide for this man/woman/family?*

Summary—In the Church, the gospel is everything. It is God’s pardon of the sinner for Jesus’ sake. It is the creative word of God that calls the Church into existence and will preserve her in the world until Christ comes. While Christ will always and rightly be our dearest Treasure, Christ’s people will also honor those who bring them such Good News. Part of that honor will be demonstrated in the compensation we provide those bringers of the Gospel. *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those of those who bring good news. (Isaiah 52:7)*

Compensation Planning Philosophy

Guideline Objectives

The Compensation Review Committee aimed at producing compensation guidelines that will:

Goal #1

Reflect the Scriptural principle that those who serve in the public ministry are worthy of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17).

Goal #2

Recommend appropriate compensation so that servants of the gospel may devote themselves to the work of the ministry, without needing to find outside employment to support themselves and their families (1 Corinthians 9:1-14).

Goal #3

Encourage equity in compensation so that two people doing similar work receive similar compensation.

Goal #4

Recognize the value of experience but place a greater emphasis on responsibilities assigned to the individual called worker.

Goal #5

Make it easier for calling bodies to put together a compensation package for their called workers.

Goal #6

Promote a relatively cost-neutral impact to the work we do together as a synod as the revised guidelines are implemented.

Expected Outcomes

It is anticipated that the guidelines will:

1. Reinforce the scriptural truth that calling bodies have a God-given responsibility to provide adequate compensation for the servants of Christ who labor in their name.
2. Provide calling bodies the opportunity to give prayerful and careful consideration each year to the compensation they will provide for those who serve in public ministry.
3. Encourage calling bodies and called workers to plan for professional development as an ongoing responsibility.
4. Offer flexibility to calling bodies in determining compensation for their called workers.

5. Promote a more consistent approach to compensation within and between calling bodies.
6. Simplify the process of determining the components of appropriate compensation.

Desired Benefits

It is also anticipated that the guidelines will:

1. Provide for a deep, thoughtful, Scripture-guided exercise for the calling body and its called workers.
2. Help calling bodies recognize with thanksgiving the blessings the Lord has given them in the called workers he has provided.
3. Lead called workers to appreciate the privileged responsibilities entrusted to them.
4. Help recognize the wide diversity of responsibilities within WELS.
5. Provide for an annual review of compensation levels for called workers.

Compensation Plan Components

The information contained within this section is intended to provide calling bodies with a framework for determining the overall compensation package for called workers. Additional guidance is provided through the use of the Called Worker Compensation Calculator which incorporates these components in an easy to use web-based tool which can be found at wels.net/cwcompcalc.

Base Salary

Base salary is the starting point for developing a total compensation package for all called workers. The entry-level figure of the synod salary matrix (see below) was initially derived from national averages of survey data taken from the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Since 2002, two surveys, the Consumer Expenditure Survey and national per capita income, are reviewed annually in order to adjust the entry-level salary as appropriate. However, significant financial challenges since the mid-2000's have limited changes to the salary matrix to modest increases, including two years where the matrix was frozen (2009-10 and 2010-11).

Salary Ranges

The salary matrices outlined below provide calling bodies with a flexibility to establish compensation levels between and within different synodical salary range assignments based upon a number of factors. The number of columns assigned for each ministry position allow a calling body to recognize differing responsibilities between positions. It is important to understand that a range assignment within the matrix is a continuum with multiple salary points. A specific salary is determined for an individual holding the position based upon call responsibilities, education level attained, and years of experience. At least annually, calling bodies should conduct a review to evaluate an individual worker's responsibilities and educational advancement and determine where in the suggested salary range the worker ought to be placed. Changing call responsibilities and educational levels may lead to a salary adjustment.

Years of Experience

The salary matrix recognizes the value of ministry experience. Two years of frozen salaries required the addition of two years to the salary matrix, moving it from 30 to 32 years.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

General Information

One of the principles of these Guidelines is to provide that all called workers are compensated equally for the work of the call they accept. Because the cost of living varies from region to region in the United States, it is necessary that the compensation amounts in the Base Salary Matrix be adjusted up or down depending upon the geographic location of the call. The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is the component of the compensation package that allows calling bodies to adjust wages to reflect this fact. The COLA multiplier can be positive (cost of living multiplier greater than 100%) or negative (cost of living multiplier less than 100%)

It is important to remember that this adjustment is to reflect living costs apart from housing. This means the calculation will be the same regardless of whether the called worker owns, rents, or has housing provided. This also means that any cost of living index (COLI) must exclude housing as a component of

the index. See the “Housing” component of the package for further details on how housing affects compensation.

The COLA Calculation

The actual application of this adjustment is very simple. It only requires multiplying the actual salary determined for the worker from the matrix (not the entry level salary) by the appropriate modifier (salary x modifier = COLA). This figure should be reviewed on an annual basis. The modifier must be set by the calling body. Guidelines for determining this value are detailed in the sections below.

Example: With a salary of \$45,000 and a modifier of 109.0%, a COLA of \$4,050 would result (\$45,000 X .09 = \$4,050).

Selecting a Cost of Living Data Source

The online Called Worker Compensation Calculator at wels.net/cwcompcalc contains a pull-down menu with suggested COLA adjustments based on many specific geographic locations that may be relevant for calling bodies. If the calling body’s location is listed in the pull-down menu, it may use the applicable COLA adjustment when computing compensation. COLA adjustment may vary widely depending on the specific location of the calling body, however. If the location of the calling body is not listed in the pull-down menu, the calling body must calculate the applicable COLA by reviewing the available COLA information sources and determining for themselves which resource or combination of resources best serves their specific situation. There are many resources available that provide cost of living information. However, there is not one single source that will work as needed for all WELS calling bodies.

There are two primary reasons for not being able to designate a specific resource as the final guide for selecting the base salary modifier. First, some resources do not cover an adequate number of locations. Second, some resources do not provide enough information on how their number was derived. This second point is important because of the need to exclude the housing component (see **General Information**).

Although each of the resources listed below does include housing in their composite number, some of them provide enough information so that this housing element can be mathematically removed. Since housing is often the largest contributing factor to these indices, it is imperative to be able to eliminate that portion in order to have an accurate base salary modifier for our purposes.

The Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) is one group that has developed a suitable Cost of Living Index (COLI). The WELS Human Resources Office has determined that the methodology they use to calculate COLI is very sound and should be used as the starting point for determining the appropriate base salary modifier. The primary shortcoming of their COLI is the limited number of locations covered each quarter. The composite COLI does include housing. However, C2ER provides enough information to remove housing from COLI. Instructions for making this calculation can be found in the following section on **Removing the Housing Component from the Composite Value**.

The COLI data can be found at www.coli.org. C2ER data for selected areas may be found at cloud.wels.net/hr. Specific data may be requested by e-mail to hro@wels.net.

A web site that uses COLI and other information to generate cost of living comparisons is found at www.bestplaces.net.

Two other sites that provide cost of living data are money.cnn.com/calculator/pf/cost-of-living, and www.bankrate.com/CostOfLiving. However, these resources do not provide enough information to allow removal of housing from the data.

Removing the Housing Component From a Composite Value

The COLA adjustment is only applied to the non-housing compensation components. If a calling body uses the Called Worker Compensation Calculator pull-down menu to determine the COLA adjustment, this is done automatically. If a calling body does not find a COLA number for its area in the pull-down menu in the CWCC, or believes the number to be inaccurate, it must remove the housing component when manually determining the COLA adjustment to obtain an appropriate value for use with this compensation plan. The removal of the housing component from cost of living eliminates a duplication with the separately provided housing/housing allowance element of this plan.

The composite cost of living figure is usually listed as a percentage relative to the average cost of living. The average cost of living is written as 100%. A cost of living of 109% would indicate an area where costs are 9% higher than the average.

Since the composite value is a weighted average of several cost of living components, the information required to remove the housing component is as follows:

- The percent weighting of each component
- The specific value of each component

Consider the following example (taken from the www.bestplaces.net website):

<u>Cost of Living Component (Component Weight)</u>	<u>Relative Percentage</u>
Housing (31%)	117%
Food/Groceries (16%)	102%
Transportation (10%)	102%
Utilities (8%)	95%
Health (5%)	120%
Miscellaneous (30%)	102%
Overall (i.e. the composite-weighted value)	107%

Here we have the information we need, the weighting factors (31% of the composite value comes from housing) and the value for each component (housing = 117% of average).

Note that the weighting factors total 100% ($31 + 16 + 10 + 8 + 5 + 30 = 100$).

The following steps will remove housing from the composite:

1. Calculate the total weighting of all the components that will remain in composite after removing housing.

That number is $100 - 31 = 69\%$
or $16 + 10 + 8 + 5 + 30 = 69\%$
or $0.16 + 0.10 + 0.08 + 0.05 + 0.30 = 0.69$ (in decimal for Steps 2 & 3).

2. Multiply each remaining component by its weighting factor and add the results.

$.16 \times 102\% = 16.32\%$
 $.10 \times 102\% = 10.2\%$
 $.08 \times 95\% = 7.6\%$
 $.05 \times 120\% = 6.0\%$

$$.30 \times 102\% = 30.6\%$$

$$\frac{\quad}{70.72\%}$$

3. Divide the cost of living figure without housing from Step 2 (70.72%) by the combined weighting factor calculated in Step 1 (0.69).

$$70.72\% \text{ divided by } .69 = 102.49\%$$

This example is the relative cost of living with housing removed (compared to 107% of average if housing is included).

Determining the Salary Multiplier from Relative Cost of Living Figures

The salary multiplier (see section **The COLA Calculation** above) is easily determined from the composite cost of living value with housing removed, as calculated in the section above.

Remember that the cost of living figures shown above are relative to an average value of 100%. To determine the multiplier, simply subtract the average percentage from the new composite percentage.

$102.49\% - 100\% = 2.49\%$, or 0.0249 for use as the multiplier to determine COLA (see Section **The COLA Calculation**). Thus in this example, the COLA would be

$$\$26,300 \times .0249 = \$654.87 \text{ (rounded to } \$655)$$

Note: If the cost of living were less than average, (i.e. less than 100%) a negative multiplier (hence a negative COLA) would result, reflecting the lower cost of living for that area.

Education

This element is considered as salary range assignments are established. For example, the minimal educational expectation (just one component of the Level C range) for an elementary classroom teacher is the Bachelor's Degree. Continuing education toward the Master's Degree would seem to be a worthwhile goal, and as that goal is worked on, the calling body might consider moving that teacher's compensation level along the salary ranges listed from C to F. Salary numbers need not be exactly C, D, E or F, but could rather be placed anywhere between the C to F ranges as continuing education proceeds. Similar progression could be applied to principals or secondary teachers as they continue their education toward the Master's Degree, something which would seem especially valuable given their respective callings and levels of responsibility. If an advanced degree is attained, calling bodies are strongly encouraged to increase compensation as illustrated in the Called Worker Compensation Calculator at wels.net/cwcompcalc.

Missionaries, counselors, administrators, and all other called workers could be so encouraged. The point is this . . . continuing education should be recognized for all called positions within the suggested range of salary offered by the Called Worker Compensation Calculator or columns C-F in the salary matrix. As additional educational levels are attained and utilized in an individual's call, consideration should be given to moving this salary component to higher levels within the respective ranges. Learning is lifelong, and clearly does not stop, even formally, upon graduation.

Levels of Responsibility

General Information

The current compensation package lists twenty-nine different ministry classifications on page 18 of these guidelines. Each ministry classification has a built-in set of responsibilities. Some classifications have higher levels of responsibility than others. For example, the classification principal has more responsibility than that of early childhood ministry teacher. However, within the same ministry classification there are often extra duties and responsibilities that may be assigned. This component allows the calling body to recognize these added responsibilities with additional pay. The Called Worker Compensation Calculator offers common additional responsibilities that might be considered in determining salary.

The responsibility component recognizes additional duties that are assigned to individuals within the same job classification. It is not the process of measuring how well these or any job responsibilities are being carried out. At this point, there is no provision within the compensation package to perform this type of evaluation. Some additional assignments may be temporary in nature, lasting only for a year or so. Others may continue from year to year. In either case, the calling body should review each called worker's responsibilities on at least an annual basis. Additional compensation should be considered for those workers who have assumed these additional responsibilities.

General Responsibility Factors

Increased job responsibility can occur in a variety of forms. Any notable change in the complexity of the job or the time required to complete assigned tasks may warrant consideration for additional compensation. Some general factors to consider:

1. Additional time requirements
2. Increased knowledge, skill, or expertise for new assignments
3. Additional decision making
4. Additional communication requirements (motivation, facilitation, negotiation)
5. Increased requirement for critical thinking and problem solving

Responsibility Examples

Following is a list of tasks that could be considered as "additional responsibilities" within a specific job classification, in this example for a Teacher. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

- Activities/Athletic Director
- Music Coordinator/Director
- Department Chair
- Technology Coordinator/Director
- Vice-Principal/Assistant Principal
- Director/Coordinator of Curriculum Instruction
- Congregational duties
- District/Synod duties

Calculating the Responsibility Amount

The recommended compensation for additional responsibilities would be an additional \$1000 to \$1200 for each additional responsibility. The Called Worker Compensation Calculator provides illustration of moving the called worker across their designated salary matrix columns based on their additional responsibilities. Calling bodies are strongly encouraged to use the Called Worker Compensation Calculator to assist with determining additional salary commensurate with additional called worker responsibilities at wels.net/cwcompcalc.

Social Security Reimbursement (SECA Tax)

Congregations/calling bodies are encouraged to remunerate up to one half of the self-employed social security tax for Ministers of the Gospel. This cash reimbursement is taxable income under current tax code. The reimbursement amount is calculated on salary, cost of living, and housing value (provided or allowance).

Housing Allowance

General Information

Because many called workers have housing provided in the form of a teacherage or parsonage, it is necessary to make the housing allowance a separate component of the compensation package. If we remember this fact, we can better understand how this component is to be applied. The breakout is not required to receive the associated income tax benefits for those who meet the criteria for the IRS designation of "Ministers of the Gospel". The tax benefit is achieved by making the appropriate request that lists actual housing expenses. (See the tax planning section for more details). If there were no parsonages or teacherages, this component would not be needed. The base salary could be increased and the cost of living adjustment (COLA) could reflect the regional differences in housing costs.

Each called worker is entitled to a housing allowance. This is part of their total compensation and should not be determined on the basis of need. Two individuals performing the same job should receive the same pay for that job. No consideration, for example, should be given to the size of an individual's family. Nor does it matter if a called worker is head of household. The compensation guidelines attempt to establish a fair wage for a specific job. That fair wage includes the housing allowance regardless of what the actual housing needs are for that individual. The Salary Matrix itself does not provide a fair total wage; its values were specifically set below what would be considered a fair total wage, with the understanding a housing allowance would be included (or housing provided) to bring the called workers total wage to a fair and appropriate level. For example; if a congregation has a teacher who happens to be married to a pastor, both should receive a housing allowance as part of their overall compensation.

Calculating the Housing Allowance

The cost of housing can vary significantly from region to region within the United States. This variance must be considered when establishing the appropriate amount for this component. Remember that the cost of living adjustment (COLA) does not include the variance in housing costs.

The calling body should determine the average cost of renting a three-bedroom home in the area where

the called worker lives or works. This amount should be included as part of compensation for each worker who is not specifically provided housing as part of his or her total wage amount. The Called Worker Compensation Calculator includes a link to the HUD calculator for comparison purposes. Local real estate companies can also be of assistance in determining this number. After establishing a fair housing allowance for the called worker upon acceptance of a new call, annual adjustments should be equal to the inflation rate adjustment applied to the Synod Salary Matrix annually.

Phase-in Plan

The guidelines approved by the synod convention in 2003 called for a housing allowance for all called workers, regardless of their need or family situation. Some calling bodies may not have understood how the guidelines applied, particularly to called worker spouses, and haven't provided the appropriate housing allowance. Because full implementation of this recommendation could place a significant financial burden on a calling body, the calling body may need to adopt a phase-in plan like the one suggested below:

- Year 1 - Amount equal to the housing equity allowance (currently \$581)
- Year 2 - 40% of the housing component for that area
- Year 3 - 60% of the housing component for that area
- Year 4 - 80% of the housing component for that area
- Year 5 - 100% of the housing component for that area

Housing Equity

General Information

Called workers who have housing provided at no cost (parsonage or teacherage) do not have the benefit of accumulating the same housing equity as do their counterparts who receive a housing allowance. This can present a serious problem as these individuals approach retirement. This component of the compensation plan is intended to relieve this problem. Individuals who spend most of their ministry in provided housing will be able to accumulate the funding necessary to provide their own housing upon retirement.

Calculating the Housing Equity Allowance

The recommended amount for this allowance is 2% of the base salary. As of July 1, 2017, the base salary is \$29,072. This would make the Equity Allowance:

$$\$29,072 \times .02 = \$581$$

The base salary is set by the WELS Human Resources Office and could be adjusted annually. Ideally, the equity amount could be invested in a tax-free account under the name of the called worker. For more information, see the Tax Planning section of this document.

Compensation Related Issues

Benefit Plans

Pension

Each called worker who works at least half-time during the year is provided coverage in the WELS Pension Plan. Calling bodies are required to pay for the mandatory participation in the plan through payments established by the Retirement Program Commission. The plan provides a portion of post-retirement income for the worker based on years of service. The WELS Pension Plan is not designed as an income replacement plan, so other sources of retirement income will be needed at the end of a career. These sources include personal savings, contributions to 403(b) plans like the WELS Shepherd Plan, individual retirement accounts, and Social Security benefits.

Details about the WELS Pension and Shepherd Plans are available at www.welsbpo.net or by calling the WELS Benefit Plans Office at 414.256.3860.

Other Benefits

All calling bodies should ensure that their called workers have adequate health insurance and other benefits as part of their compensation package. Regarding health insurance specifically, calling bodies should either provide every full-time called worker with adequate health insurance coverage or confirm that each called worker has adequate health insurance coverage through some other means (e.g., through a spouse's plan, etc.). While not mandatory, calling bodies are encouraged to participate in the WELS Voluntary Employee Benefits Association (VEBA) Group Health Care Plan. The VEBA plan does not underwrite coverage based on age, participant's health condition, or health care utilization.

What is VEBA? It is a legal entity by which a benefit organization is granted tax-exempt trust status by the IRS. The beneficiary association can provide for the payment of life, health, accident, or other benefits to their members or their dependents.

In addition to health care coverage, the VEBA Plan provides the following coverage either as part of the plan or as a voluntary benefit:

- % Long-term Disability Insurance
- % Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance
- % Group Term Life Insurance (voluntary)
- % Dental Insurance (voluntary)
- % Medicare Supplement (voluntary)

Details about the plan are available at www.welsbpo.net or by calling the WELS Benefit Plans Office at 414.256.3860.

Flexible Spending Plans (Internal Revenue Code Section 125)

Qualified flexible benefit plans allow workers to pay for certain health care expenses with pre-tax dollars. This means that contributions are made before almost any income and payroll taxes are calculated and deducted. At the federal level this translates into no FICA (Social Security taxes), Medicare, Federal Unemployment (a tax not applicable to most WELS entities), or income tax. The FICA and Medicare savings apply both to the employee and the employer. In almost all states these plans also allow for no state income taxes to be calculated or deducted on the Section 125 amounts.

Flexible spending plans come in different forms. Some examples are:

- Premium Conversion Plan (premium only plan or POP)
- Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs)
- Full Flex Plans (cafeteria plans)

Since these plans may have complex legal and cost implications, calling bodies are strongly encouraged to seek professional advice when considering their establishment. Exploration is underway to provide some form of flexible spending plan through WELS VEBA in which sponsoring WELS organizations may participate.

Business Expenses

Certain business expenses are incurred by workers in carrying out ministry work; calling bodies are urged to recognize such costs and provide for non-taxable reimbursement of such expenses to the fullest extent allowed by law. Such expenses may include the following:

- Car Allowance or mileage reimbursement for use of a personal vehicle
- Conference Expenses
- Book Expense
- Office supplies
- Computer
- Mobile devices such as phones and tablets

Tax Planning

All workers are encouraged to minimize tax liability through careful planning and making use of advantages available to them in the tax laws. The WELS Financial Services area publishes a tax guide for use by calling bodies and individuals that outlines federal tax laws and applies them to practical situations. A copy of this tax guide can be requested through **hro@wels.net**.

Workers and calling bodies are urged to look for professional advice within their local areas when undertaking tax planning.

COMPENSATION PLAN

Base Salary Matrix

Effective 7/1/2017

Range Spread			14,536	15,263	15,990	16,717	17,444	18,170	18,897	19,624
Range Spread	8,528	9,061	10,660	11,193	11,726	12,259	12,792	13,325	13,858	14,391
Service Incr.	388	412	485	509	533	557	581	606	630	654
Ranges	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Experience										
0	23,258	24,712	29,072	30,526	31,980	33,433	34,887	36,341	37,794	39,248
1	23,646	25,124	29,557	31,035	32,513	33,991	35,468	36,946	38,424	39,902
2	24,033	25,536	30,042	31,544	33,046	34,548	36,050	37,552	39,054	40,556
3	24,421	25,948	30,526	32,052	33,579	35,105	36,631	38,158	39,684	41,210
4	24,809	26,359	31,011	32,561	34,112	35,662	37,213	38,763	40,314	41,864
5	25,196	26,771	31,495	33,070	34,645	36,219	37,794	39,369	40,944	42,518
6	25,584	27,183	31,980	33,579	35,178	36,777	38,376	39,975	41,574	43,173
7	25,971	27,595	32,464	34,087	35,711	37,334	38,957	40,580	42,204	43,827
8	26,359	28,007	32,949	34,596	36,244	37,891	39,539	41,186	42,833	44,481
9	26,747	28,419	33,433	35,105	36,777	38,448	40,120	41,792	43,463	45,135
10	27,134	28,831	33,918	35,614	37,310	39,006	40,701	42,397	44,093	45,789
11	27,522	29,243	34,402	36,123	37,843	39,563	41,283	43,003	44,723	46,443
12	27,910	29,654	34,887	36,631	38,376	40,120	41,864	43,609	45,353	47,097
13	28,297	30,066	35,372	37,140	38,909	40,677	42,446	44,214	45,983	47,752
14	28,685	30,478	35,856	37,649	39,442	41,234	43,027	44,820	46,613	48,406
15	29,073	30,890	36,341	38,158	39,975	41,792	43,609	45,426	47,243	49,060
16	29,460	31,302	36,825	38,666	40,508	42,349	44,190	46,031	47,873	49,714
17	29,848	31,714	37,310	39,175	41,041	42,906	44,772	46,637	48,503	50,368
18	30,235	32,126	37,794	39,684	41,574	43,463	45,353	47,243	49,132	51,022
19	30,623	32,538	38,279	40,193	42,107	44,021	45,935	47,848	49,762	51,676
20	31,011	32,949	38,763	40,701	42,640	44,578	46,516	48,454	50,392	52,330
21	31,398	33,361	39,248	41,210	43,173	45,135	47,097	49,060	51,022	52,985
22	31,786	33,773	39,732	41,719	43,706	45,692	47,679	49,666	51,652	53,639
23	32,174	34,185	40,217	42,228	44,239	46,249	48,260	50,271	52,282	54,293
24	32,561	34,597	40,701	42,737	44,772	46,807	48,842	50,877	52,912	54,947
25	32,949	35,009	41,186	43,245	45,305	47,364	49,423	51,483	53,542	55,601
26	33,337	35,421	41,671	43,754	45,838	47,921	50,005	52,088	54,172	56,255
27	33,724	35,833	42,155	44,263	46,371	48,478	50,586	52,694	54,802	56,909
28	34,112	36,244	42,640	44,772	46,904	49,036	51,168	53,300	55,432	57,564
29	34,499	36,656	43,124	45,280	47,437	49,593	51,749	53,905	56,061	58,218
30	34,887	37,068	43,609	45,789	47,970	50,150	52,331	54,511	56,691	58,872
31	35,275	37,480	44,093	46,298	48,503	50,707	52,912	55,117	57,321	59,526
32	35,662	37,892	44,578	46,807	49,036	51,265	53,493	55,722	57,951	60,180

WELS SYNODICAL SALARY RANGE ASSIGNMENTS

Revised July 1, 2017

<i>Position</i>	<i>New Column Assignment</i>
Early Childhood Ministry Teacher w/o degree	A - B
Early Childhood Ministry Teacher (BS or BA base)	C - F
Teacher (BS or BA base)	C - F
Secondary Teacher	D - G
Early Childhood Ministry Director	D - G
Prep Professor	D - G
Staff Minister	D - G
Principal	E - H
Christian Giving Counselor	E - H
Prep Vice President	E - H
Prep Dean	E - H
College Professor	E - H
Pastor	E - H
Home Missionary	E - H
World Missionary	E - H
CMM Associate Administrator	E - H
CMM Associate Director	E - H
CMM National Coordinator	E - H
Mission Counselor	E - H
CMM Administrator	F - I
CMM Director	F - I
Prep President	F - I
College Vice President	F - I
College Dean	F - I
Seminary Professor	F - I
Seminary Vice President	F - I
College President	G - I
Seminary President	G - I
Synod President	J

Notes:

- 1) There is a 50% spread between 0-30 years of experience.
- 2) Columns C-J increase by 5% over the previous column (for example, Rate Range E is 10% greater than Rate Range C).
- 3) Each called worker's actual salary is determined by finding the applicable experience row and determining the appropriate rate range (For example, a teacher with 10 years' experience should receive a salary between \$37,042 and \$42,102. Salaries greater than \$37,042 would recognize additional education credentials and responsibility levels).
- 4) The entire salary matrix will be reviewed annually and adjusted as needed to reflect changes occurring in the economy.
- 5) The basis for the housing equity allowance is the base salary
- 6) The cost of living adjustments are based on the worker's salary
- 7) SECA tax reimbursement, housing allowances, and housing equity are provided in addition to the salary amount.
- 8) The online Called Worker Compensation Calculator helps a calling body consider the impact of additional responsibilities and education in determining where in the suggested salary range the worker ought to be placed.

WELS Compensation Plan Worksheet

Visit wels.net/cwcompcalc for the Called Worker Compensation Calculator with options to print/save a worksheet.

Minutes

Mon., July 31, 2017

In preparation for the 64th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, a training meeting was held for committee chairmen and secretaries at 3 p.m.

At 4 p.m., 2nd Vice President Joel Voss conducted a delegate orientation session with the assistance of Communications Director Lee Hitter. Topics included the *Book of Reports and Memorials*; worship information; meal information; introduction of the Steering Committee members; election information; introduction of the personnel on the Conference of Presidents and Synodical Council; shuttle bus information; the Help desk; the doctrinal essay; the four major topics at this convention; convention memorials and their assignments to floor committees; speaking at the microphones; daily agendas; convention floor seating; evening presentations; the display tables; the Northwestern Publishing House display; delegate responsibilities after the convention; convention streaming and publicity; delegate interviews; the 8-page convention wrap-up “Together;” wels.net; an open house at the Center for Mission and Ministry; and finally, thank yous to sponsoring organizations. The speakers offered to answer questions—there were none. The presentation was closed at 4:29 p.m.

At 6:30 p.m., the opening service with communion was held at St. Mark, Watertown, Wis. The presiding minister was Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president; the preacher was Rev. Jonathan Schroeder, pastor of Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga. The organist was Mr. Mark Davidson from Trinity, Waukesha, Wis. Daniel Moldenhauer directed the choir, and 12 instrumentalists also helped beautify the communion worship service.

Following the worship service, floor committees met on the campus to organize and plan. Fellowship followed.

Tues., Aug. 1, 2017

At 8 a.m., President Mark Schroeder wished a good morning to all. Several announcements were made. President Schroeder then introduced Mrs. Karen Fischer, former president of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society. Fischer narrated the presentation of the flags of all countries in which WELS carries out mission work or a country that has a church body in fellowship with WELS. The ladies were thanked for their presentation with a round of applause.

President Mark Schroeder called the 64th Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to order at 8:30 a.m. The opening devotion, hymn, and prayer were led by Pastor Douglas Tomhave, pastor at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis. The devotion was based on Ephesians 2:4-10, and the hymn “By Grace I’m Saved” was sung. He was thanked for his devotion.

President Schroeder welcomed Luther Preparatory School president, Matthew Crass, to the stage. Crass provided a short history of ministerial education in WELS and offered assistance to the delegates from the various representatives of the school. He was thanked for his presentation.

President Schroeder offered a prayer for God’s guidance during the elections taking place at this convention. Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, conducted the nominating ballot for the office of first vice president of WELS. After the ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

President Schroeder announced that the opening worship service offering totaled \$2,735. Contributions can still be placed in a chest located on the convention floor. The recipient will be determined later in this convention.

At 9 a.m., President Schroeder introduced special guests and observers:

Rev. Michael Herbst, Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany

Rev. Dr. Kebede Yigezu, Lutheran Church of Ethiopia

Rev. Paul Zhao and Rev. Jonathan Li, East Asia Lutheran Synod
Rev. Titus Tse, South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission
Rev. Glenn Obenberger, Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Rev. Dr. Jon Vieker, Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod
Rev. Michael Eichstadt, Church of the Lutheran Confession

Each was welcomed with a round of applause.

At 9:05 a.m., President Schroeder presented the written “President’s Report” [see p. 15, *Proceedings*]. The text of the report was projected on a large screen at the front of the assembly. A copy of the report is available on the WELS convention website, wels.net/2017synodconvention, filed in the “Key convention documents” folder. President Schroeder was given a round of applause.

Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, reported. Nominated for first vice president of WELS were Pastors James Huebner, David Kolander, and Jonathan Scharf. Biographies of the nominees were projected on the screen. After the ballots were cast, Wiechman declared the ballot closed.

At 9:50 a.m., a 25-minute break was declared.

The morning session resumed at 10:17 a.m., and the floor was given to Mr. Todd Poppe, chief financial officer of WELS, who provided information about the synod’s financial results and plan. He summarized the information printed in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM) starting on p. 127 using a PowerPoint presentation. A round of applause followed his presentation. A shredder was then used to symbolize the retirement of the WELS debt of \$22,400,000. A round of applause followed the shredding ceremony.

Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, reported. A fourth name was added to the ballot for the office of first vice president of WELS, making the first ballot void. Added was the name of Pastor Jonathan Schroeder. His biography was shared with the assembly on the large screen. The ballot was cast for the position of first vice president. After all ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

Prof. Earle Treptow, chairman of the Compensation Review Committee, a standing committee of WELS, summarized the committee’s report printed in BORAM starting on p. 100. A PowerPoint was used in the presentation. He presented a “test drive” of the new web-based calculator to assist calling bodies in determining compensation. Questions were entertained and answered. Treptow was given a round of applause for this presentation.

Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, reported the need of a run-off for the position of first vice president. Candidates were Pastors James Huebner and David Kolander. After all the ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

Pastor Paul Prange, representing the Board for Ministerial Education, was given the floor. He began a summary of the Board for Ministerial Education’s BORAM’s report, beginning on p. 163, using a PowerPoint presentation with photographs. The presidents of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary were introduced. Also introduced was Pastor Duane Rodewald, chairman of the Board for Ministerial Education. Those introduced and Prange were given a round of applause. Questions were asked during the nominating ballot described below.

Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, announced the election of Pastor James Huebner to another four-year term as first vice president of WELS. He continued with the nominating ballot for the position of WELS recording secretary. After the ballots were collected, he declared the nominating ballot closed.

There was a floor request that copies of the presentations be made available to the delegates.

Pastor Duane Tomhave offered the meal prayer, and the morning session adjourned. Photographs of the delegates from each district were taken through the course of the convention.

During the lunch hour, Pastor Michael Schultz, Hymnal Project director, presented a printed and PowerPoint presentation about the Hymnal Project. Half of the delegates were asked to stay and hear the presentation; the other half of the group were asked to attend the presentation on Wednesday during the lunch break.

The Tuesday afternoon session was called to order at 1:16 p.m. by President Schroeder.

Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, reported. Names on the ballot for the position of recording secretary included Pastors John Bortulin, William Carter, Daniel Habben, Robert Pasbrig, and Jonathan Schroeder. Also on the ballot was teacher Benjamin Priebe. Biographical information was provided. After ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

Prof. John Brenner was welcomed. He presented the convention essay, "God's Word is our great heritage." A copy of the essay is available on the WELS convention website, wels.net/2017synodconvention, filed in the "Key convention documents" folder.

Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, reported. A run-off ballot for the position of recording secretary included the names of Pastors Robert Pasbrig and Jonathan Schroeder. After the ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

Benner continued and concluded the reading of the essay. He was given a round of applause. Questions were asked and answered. It was moved and supported to thank the essayist. The motion carried.

Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, reported. Pastor Robert Pasbrig was re-elected as recording secretary. The first ballot for various synod boards and commissions was presented. For each position, opportunity was given for nominees from the floor. There were no nominations from the floor for any of the positions and nominations for each position were declared closed. After the ballots were cast, the election was declared closed.

After several announcements, the afternoon session adjourned at 3:12 p.m. Floor committees met for the remainder of the afternoon.

Beginning at 7 p.m., Pastor Nathan Seiltz, administrator, Multi-Language Publications; and Missionaries Paul Nitz, Malawi, Africa; Luke Wolfgramm, Russia; John Hartmann, Zambia, Africa; and James Enderle, East Asia presented information about their mission work.

Wed., Aug. 2, 2017

At 8 a.m., President Mark Schroeder wished the delegates, "Good morning," and introduced Rev. James Hoff, who led the opening devotion based on Romans 3:21-28. The hymn "I Know My Faith Is Founded" was sung. Hoff was thanked for his devotion.

Teacher Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, reported. Four run-off elections were needed. Board for World Missions layman, Glenn Bechler and Arlin Bornschlegl; Board for Ministerial Education teacher or staff minister, David Wilson and Gerald Zeamer; Board for Ministerial Education layman, Paul Hahm and Richard Krahn; Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board chairman, Rev. Jonathan Scharf and Rev. Eric Steinbrenner. After the ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

At 8:20 a.m., Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of the Board for World Missions, and Rev. Paul Janke, chairman of the Board for World Missions, were introduced. Illustrated PowerPoint presentations were offered. Two videos from the "Moments with Missionaries" series were shown. They depicted southeast Asia seminary students and work in Manila, the Philippines. The men were given a round of applause.

At 8:50 a.m., Rev. Keith Free, administrator of the Board for Home Missions, and Rev. Wayne Uhlhorn, chairman of the Board for Home Missions, were introduced. Their presentation included projected maps and slides. A round of applause thanked the men for their presentations.

At 9:22 a.m., Rev. Jonathan Hein, representing the Congregation and Ministry Support Group (CMSG), was introduced. He explained the recently completed study entitled, "A Demographic Study of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod." A video describing this study was shown. Numerous questions were asked and answered. Members of the CMSG were introduced, and each spoke about their field of expertise: Rev. Bryan Gerlach, director, Commission on Worship; Rev. Michael Hintz, director, Commission on Evangelism; Pastor Michael Hintz, Commission on Evangelism; Rev. Gary Pufahl, chairman, Commission on Adult Discipleship; Teacher James Rademan, director, Commission on Lutheran Schools; Rev. James Behringer, director, Special Ministries, who introduced Dr. Erhard Opsahl, president of the Lutheran Military Support Group who presented a small flag display to President Schroeder. Opsahl was thanked with a round of applause.

A break was declared at 10:41 a.m. The morning session resumed at 10:56 a.m. First Vice President James Huebner took the chair.

Teacher James Rademan, director, Commission on Lutheran Schools; Teacher Thomas Plitzuweit, associate director, Commission on Lutheran Schools; and Teacher Cindy Holman, national coordinator of Early Childhood Ministries, were given the floor. Each were thanked for their presentations with rounds of applause.

Behringer presented additional comments, urging congregations to submit the names of those serving in the military. He also noted materials available for the deaf, the blind, and others with special needs. Hein also shared closing thoughts. Special thanks were extended to Hintz, who will be retiring.

At 11:13 a.m., continuing education for called workers was addressed. Teacher James Rademan and Dr. John Meyer addressed the growing need to educate principals for the 21st century. A PowerPoint presentation illustrated the large turn-over of principals in our schools. Reference was made to diagrams included in the convention binder that describe the 21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative. The men were thanked with applause.

At 11:42 a.m., Mr. Bill Ziche, president of Northwestern Publishing House, presented a report using PowerPoint. He emphasized the goal of providing doctrinally sound printed materials and electronic materials on the NPH website to the members of WELS. He referred the delegates to the report from NPH contained in BORAM. He was thanked with applause.

After announcements, the morning session adjourned for lunch at 12:08 p.m. Rev. James Hoff offered the meal prayer. Included in the prayer was the family of Rev. Michael Killinger, whose father was called home to heaven this morning. During the lunch hour, Rev. Michael Schultz presented the update on the worship planning materials for those who did not hear the presentation yesterday.

The afternoon session was called to order by President Schroeder at 1:15 p.m. Rev. Glenn Obenberger, vice president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), was introduced. He brought fraternal greetings from the ELS. He emphasized the evangelical Lutheran spirit which is shared by the church bodies in fellowship with WELS. A medallion was presented to President Schroeder. Schroeder responded with a gift from WELS to Obenberger. He emphasized that prayers will continue to be offered for the ELS by WELS. There was a round of applause.

President Schroeder introduced Rev. Michael Herbst, vice president of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany. Herbst summarized the current situation of the various Lutheran churches in Germany, many of which no longer accept the clear Word of God. Illustrations were projected on the screen at the front of the assembly. He shared some of the history of his church body and photos of each congregation, its location and pastors. He also spoke of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC). President Schroeder presented a gift to Herbst. He expressed his thanks. There was a round of applause.

At 1:50 p.m., Prof. John Brenner, chairman of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations, was introduced. He introduced Rev. Dr. Kebede Yigezu of the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia. Yigezu brought greetings from his church, quoting John 8:31 and shared information about his church body using a PowerPoint presentation. He described the church body's seminary, working to preserve biblical truth. Recent history, including the visits of WELS representatives, was also detailed.

Rev. Jonathan E. Schroeder, chairman of Floor Committee #4: Commission on Inter-Church Relations, moved Resolution 04-01. The motion was supported. The motion carried by the assembly rising and applauding. President Schroeder presented Yigezu with a gift. Yigezu expressed his thanks.

Prof. Brenner introduced two pastors representing the East Asia Lutheran Synod. The pastors introduced the assembly to their church body using a PowerPoint presentation. There were questions and answers provided. Rev. Jon Schroeder moved Resolution 04-02. The motion was supported. The motion carried by the assembly rising and applauding. President Schroeder presented each man with a gift. The pastors expressed their thanks and honor in being part of this event.

Prof. Brenner introduced the leader of the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM), Pastor Titus Tse. A PowerPoint presentation was used by Tse to introduce SALEM to the assembly. Rev. Jon Schroeder moved acceptance of Resolution 04-03. The motion was supported and approved by the assembly rising and joining in a round of applause. President Schroeder present Tse with a gift from WELS. Pastor Tse thanked the group and promised "to keep the faith."

The assembly rose and joined in singing "God's Word Is Our Great Heritage."

At 3:09 p.m. a break was declared. The afternoon session resumed at 3:33 p.m.

Rev. Jon Schroeder presented Resolution 04-04. Acceptance was moved and supported. The motion carried.

Schroeder read Report 04-01. It was moved and supported to dismiss Floor Committee #4 with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. John Braun and Prof. Thomas Nass were introduced and shared a PowerPoint presentation, "Reformation 500." Short vignettes were shown. Thanks were expressed for those who assisted with the Reformation 500 planning. Prof. Nass spoke of a project by the CELC, "Ninety-Five Theses for the 21st Century." A paper copy was provided for each delegate. A short video of the reading of some of the theses was shown.

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director, Ministry of Christian Giving, addressed the assembly. A video depicting a home visit by a Christian Giving counselor was shown. Lueneburg was thanked for his presentation.

Rev. Robert Hein was introduced. He showed a video depicting the work of WELS Christian Aid and Relief. The report in BORAM is found on pages 90-92. As humanitarian aid is provided, there is also often opportunity to share the gospel, sometimes in places where the sharing of God's Word is not welcomed. Mr. Mark Vance is retiring after years of service with Christian Aid and Relief. Hein was thanked for his report with a round of applause.

Rev. Mark Voss presented a PowerPoint regarding the synod's review of the Christian Standard Bible. The printed report is in BORAM, pages 15 and 16. The Translation Liaison Committee offered many suggestions to the Bible's publisher as the translation was being revised, about half of which were accepted. The review process of WELS' Christian Standard Bible Review Committee was described. One hundred twelve reviewers have been involved, and about half have submitted their reviews. The Outreach paperback copy of this Bible has statements that are of concern to us. Other versions of the Christian Standard Bible do not. Voss was thanked for his report with applause.

Rev. Jeff Wiechman, chairman of Floor Committee #21: Elections, presented the committee's report. Report 21-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

Second Vice President Joel Voss took the chair. Rev. Jon Scharf, chairman of Floor Committee #1: President's Report, presented the committee's work. Resolution 01-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 01-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Reports 01-01 and 01-02 were read. Floor Committee #1 was thanked for its work.

Teacher Jamie Luehring, chairman of Floor Committee #14: Congregation and Ministry Support Group #3 (Lutheran Schools), presented the committee's report. Resolution 14-01 was moved and supported. There was discussion. A division of the house showed that the motion was defeated. Resolution 14-02 was moved and supported. There was discussion, especially regarding the suggested timeline of two years. It was moved and supported to remove the time references in Whereas #7. The proposed amendment carried. The amended motion carried. Report 14-01 was read. The committee will again meet to receive a resolution offered from the floor.

After announcements, the afternoon session adjourned at 5:27 p.m. with prayer led by Rev. James Hoff.

In the evening, the movie "A Return to Grace: Luther's Life and Legacy" was shown. Following the movie, Rev. John Braun, chairman of the Reformation 500 Committee, and Mr. Steve Boettcher, producer of the movie, answered questions from the audience.

Thurs., Aug. 3, 2017

President Mark Schroeder greeted the delegates at 8:00 a.m. and introduced Rev. Jeffrey Samelson who led the morning devotion based on 2 Timothy 3:12-4:5, "One with authority." The hymn, "O God, Our Lord, Your Holy Word" was sung. Organist was Rev. Bryan Gerlach. Samelson was thanked for his devotion.

President Schroeder extended thanks to all of Luther Preparatory School and in particular Rev. Roger Kobleske, who is retiring after many years of service. Also thanked was Rev. Paul Naumann who is ending his 12 years as chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Matters and also serving as parliamentarian at synod conventions. There was a round of applause.

It was moved and supported that the body dispense with the reading of the reports. The motion was defeated.

Rev. Michael Woldt, chairman of Floor Committee #8: Compensation Review, presented the committee's work.

Resolution 08-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report 08-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Teacher Jamie Luehring, chairman of Floor Committee #14: Congregation and Ministry Support Group #3—Lutheran Schools, returned to the podium. Resolution 14-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Nathan Seiltz, chairman of Floor Committee #2: Conference of Presidents, presented the committee's work. Resolution 02-01 was withdrawn. Resolution 02-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 02-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 02-04 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 02-05 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Reports 02-01 and 02-02 were read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Joel Heckendorf, chairman of Floor Committee #3: Special Committees, presented the committee's work. Resolution 03-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Reports 03-01 and 03-02 were read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Michael Quandt, chairman of Floor Committee #5: Ministry of Christian Giving and Communication Services, presented the committee's work. Resolution 05-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report 05-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Mark Voss, chairman of Floor Committee #20: Constitutional Matters, presented the committee's work. Resolution 20-01 was moved and supported. There was discussion. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-04 was moved and supported. There was discussion. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-05 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-06 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-07 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-08 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-09 was moved and supported. There was discussion. The motion was defeated. Resolution 20-10 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-11 was moved and supported. There was discussion. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-12 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-13 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-14 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. Resolution 20-15 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Teacher Ben Troge, chairman of Floor Committee #16: Archives and WELS Historical Institute, presented the committee's work. Report 16-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Paul Meier, chairman of Floor Committee #6: Synodical Council, presented the committee's work. Resolution 06-01 was moved and supported. There was discussion. It was moved and supported to amend the motion to split the \$180,000 that was in #5 in the "Unfunded Priority List" (BORAM, p. 79) inserting \$90,000 of the MLC Financial Assistance before #2 of that list and retaining \$90,000 in what will now be #6, MLC Financial Assistance. The amendment carried. The amended motion carried. Reports 06-01 and 06-02 were read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

A break in the morning session was declared at 9:48 a.m. The morning session resumed at 10:13 a.m.

Rev. David Voss, chairman of Floor Committee #7: Finance and Ministry Financial Plan, presented the committee's work. Resolution 07-01 was moved and supported. There was discussion. The motion carried. Report 07-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Joel Sauer, chairman of Floor Committee #9: Home Missions, presented the committee's work. Report 09-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

District President Donald Patterson was recognized and promoted the supplies offered at Northwestern Publishing House.

Mr. Randy Sachtjen, chairman of Floor Committee #17: Subsidiaries, presented the committee's work. Report 17-01 was read. There were questions with answers provided. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Joel Pankow, chairman of Floor Committee #10: World Missions and Joint Mission Council, presented the committee's report. Report 10-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Philip Henselin, chairman of Floor Committee #11: Ministerial Education, presented the committee's report. Reports 11-01, 11-02, 11-03, 11-04, 11-05, and 11-06 were read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Prof. Paul Tess, chairman of Floor Committee #12: Congregation and Ministry Support Group #1—Worship, Evangelism, Congregational Counseling, presented the committee's work. Report 12-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Teacher Gregory Thiesfeldt, chairman of Floor Committee #13: Congregation and Ministry Support Group #2—Special Ministries, Adult Discipleship, Youth and Family Ministry, presented the committee's work. Report 13-01 was read. There was discussion promoting parent instruction of children. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Donald Pieper, chairman of Floor Committee #15: Support Services, presented the committee's work. Report 15-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. James Borgwardt, chairman of Floor Committee #18: Northwestern Publishing House and Publication Coordinating Commission, presented the committee's work. Resolution 18-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Reports 18-01 and 18-02 were read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Dr. Michael Brooks, chairman of Floor Committee #19: WELS Christian Aid and Relief, presented the committee's work. Resolution 19-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 19-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried.

Report 19-01 was read. It was moved and supported to thank the committee. The motion carried.

Rev. Mark Voss, chairman of Floor Committee #20: Constitutional Matters, returned to the podium. Resolution 20-16 was moved and supported. It was moved and supported to call the question. The motion to call the question carried. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority vote. The committee was thanked again.

President Mark Schroeder presented his closing remarks, describing what the synod is. It is 370,000 people united in a common faith and united in a common goal—to share the Savior with the world. We are beginning the second 500 years of the Reformation. It is our prayer that God will enable our synod to continue the three Reformation principles. The delegates were thanked for their time, efforts, zeal, and dedication. "What happens in Watertown CANNOT stay in Watertown." Share what has happened here wherever possible.

It was moved and supported to adjourn at 11:35 a.m. The motion carried. There was a final round of applause.

The convention's closing vespers service was held in the Luther Preparatory School chapel. The presiding minister was Rev. Timothy Dolan, LPS dean of students, and the preacher was Rev. John Steinbrenner, president of the Pacific Northwest District. Installed in the service were first vice president Rev. James Huebner and recording secretary Rev. Robert Pasbrig. The closing service organist was Prof. Randy Bode.

Following the service, the delegates were given copies of "Together: Synod Convention edition."

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Robert W. Pasbrig,
WELS recording secretary

2017 memorial disposition

Memorial	Title	Submitted by	Committee assigned to	Disposition	Rationale
2017-01	Convention delegate fee	Pastor Randall Siegel, Wauwatosa, Wis.	#2 Conference of Presidents	Considered and addressed in a committee report	See report 02-02
2017-02	Joint statement regarding the termination of fellowship	Michigan District	#4 Commission on Inter-Church Relations	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 04-04
2017-03	Reduction of student debt	Arizona-California District	#11 Ministerial Education	Considered and addressed in a committee report	See report 11-13
2017-04	Request to change Voluntary Supplemental Contributions to CLS to Annual School Support Fee based on school enrollment	WELS district school coordinators	#14 Congregation and Ministry Support Group 3	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 14-03
2017-05	2018 the "year of the Sunday school" in WELS	Carl W. Toepel, Howards Grove, Wis.	#13 Congregation and Ministry Support Group 2	Considered and addressed in a committee report	See report 13-01
2017-06	Synod headquarters processing of all called worker payrolls	Pastor Anthony Allard, Sioux City, Iowa	#15 Support Services	Considered and addressed in a committee report	See report 15-01
2017-07	Continuing education requirement for positions that exercise authority over a congregation	Pastor Anthony Allard, Sioux City, Iowa	#13 Congregation and Ministry Support Group 2	Considered and addressed in a committee report	See report 13-01
2017-08	Continuing education program provider system	Pastor Anthony Allard, Sioux City, Iowa	#13 Congregation and Ministry Support Group 2	Considered and addressed in a committee report	See report 13-01

Convention presentations

For a complete list of convention presentations, see the minutes, which begin on p. 99.

Opening service sermon: "Here we stand"

July 31, 2017

St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

Text: Romans 3:19-28

Rev. Jonathan Schroeder

It provided the perfect place to build the monument. In medieval times, defensive stone walls and a water-filled moat surrounded the city of Worms, Germany. Eventually made obsolete by modern warfare, the city fathers removed the walls and filled in the moat, but they decided to preserve the moat area as a park. So as you walk through old town Worms today, you find this lovely green ring of leafy parks that follows the path of the old city walls. Right in the center of that moat shaped park, stands the world's largest monument to the Lutheran Reformation.

Inspired by the hymn *A Mighty Fortress*, the monument has crenellations along its castle-like walls, the four towered corners are mounted by statues of the great men of the Reformation. Fredrick the Wise holds his sword, scholars and early reformers surround a central pedestal, rising out of the fortress which holds Dr. Martin Luther, in a defiant stance, his proud eyes looking to the south. Inscribed at his feet are the famous words he spoke there in 1521: "Here I stand."

The Reformation sprang to life in Wittenberg at the doors of the castle church in 1517. But Worms is where the Reformation had come to die. Summoned to an imperial diet, Luther had two options: recant his books and teachings, or the empire would declare him an outlaw and the Church, a heretic.

Luther stood before men holding dizzying levels of power: before a church that claimed absolute authority over the spiritual lives of every Christian in the west, and before an emperor whose holdings stretched from the eastern edges of Europe across the Atlantic to the Spanish new world. But in the face of such ecclesiastical and imperial power, Luther stood in the truth of Scripture, and so he could not and did not recant. The Reformation lived on.

Luther's words that day are rightly remembered, but often forgotten is the chilling response of Emperor Charles V. The most powerful man in the world responded: "I have decided to mobilize everything against Luther: my kingdoms and dominions, my friends, my body, my blood and my soul."¹ The Church of the Reformation would live on, but they would have to fight for it.

What could be so important that the reformers risked life and limb to stand in opposition to the emperor and the pope? Understanding where the church has stood is key for us, the heirs of the Reformation, key to determining where we will stand. They stood on a truth worth dying for.

¹Oberman, H. (1989). *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

The Reformers called our reading from Romans chapter three a presentation of the first and chief article of the faith.² This is where the church of the Reformation has stood for 500 years—proclaiming the continuing relevance of Paul’s answer to the question: How can I be right with God?

That question drove a young Luther to a fruitless search in monastic life. That same question drove a learned Luther into the scriptures that held the answer he sought: the breathtaking realization that a person is justified, declared righteous, by faith apart from observing the law.

The gospel makes the radical claim that our status before God has nothing to do with how we live or what kind of people we are. It rejects mankind’s biggest assumption about God: that he loves good people. And it also rejects the big assumption we churchly people make about God. We know that the world is wrong—God loves all people.

Deep down, however, we face different temptation; we harbor a more subtle assumption in our hearts. We think that God tends to favor people who can get their life together, compared to all those people around us, whose brokenness is on public display. We think that God favors people, well, like you. Church musicians, pastors, teachers, honor choir teens.

We hear what Paul says, that there’s no difference—all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory. But in our hearts, we know that some fall farther short than others, and we rewrite the universal condemnation to say, “There’s not much difference”—but there’s some, we think.

When we harbor that assumption in our heart, we reject the word “freely” that God uses to describe our justification here. Undeservedly—that’s the part that’s hard to swallow for churchly folks like us, gathered in august assembly. You are here, and God love you, you have your life pretty much together, don’t you?

Except . . . except no one knows the brokenness that you hide within. We just do a better job of keeping our brokenness quiet. But you know the jagged edges of your inner life, don’t you? You know the dark and shattered pieces that you keep locked away. You may not let others see them. But you know them.

God knows them too. Every one of them. The sins that make you burn with embarrassment. The sins that make you hang your head in shame. God knows them. And what can we say? What excuse can broken people like us offer?

Every mouth may be silenced. The whole world, even us . . . especially us . . . held accountable to God.

Paul here draws the unavoidable conclusion that when it comes to the righteousness of my life, there is no difference between my brokenness and the acts of the wicked. All of us have fallen short of God’s approval. All of us have fallen short of his glory.

How can I be right with God? I can’t. No amount of monkish activity, no amount of new year’s resolutions, no amount of decisions, commitments to Jesus, no amount of life coaching is going to fix my brokenness.

But . . . But . . . But now, Paul says in a glorious pivot from despair to hope³, A new age has dawned, because a righteousness from God, apart from what I do, has been made known. The beating heart of Scripture is the fact that God declares the sinner to be righteous, undeservedly, by God’s grace.

God’s brilliant gospel promises reach down and pull us up from our brokenness and say, “undeservedly, I declare you righteous. So put your guilt, your doubt, your fear away. Stop burning with embarrassment and hanging your head in shame. You can stand before me, you can be right with me, because I declare it in the face of your unworthiness.”

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

To describe the fullness of God’s radical grace, Paul uses the language of the law-court, of the slave market, and of the temple. He says, we are justified, redeemed, atoned. (Bruce, *Romans*, 107).

In the divine court of heaven, we have been acquitted—we are not liable to be punished for our sins. A verdict like that makes no sense. Did God go soft on sin? Is he like the strict father who had many rules for his young children, but when he becomes a grandfather, all of sudden you can take juice in the living room and climb on the table?

²SA II

³ Lockwood. *1 Corinthians*, 568.

That wouldn't be just. Justice says that God must punish sin. And he did. He just didn't punish us. You are justified, because you have been redeemed. Paul's word takes us to the slave market and reminds us that a slave's freedom can be bought, he can be redeemed. But while there were many slaves redeemed from the slave-markets of Paul's day, here he refers to the one redemption above all others, the Christ Jesus redemption, a ransom so great that it required God's blood and demanded divine death. He purchased me, not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. Justification comes freely, but never make the mistake of thinking it cheap.

Finally, Paul takes us to the temple, behind the curtain, into the Holy of Holies, the place that only high priest could come, only once per year, and only with blood. Paul calls Jesus the place where atonement is made. In the temple that was the mercy seat, the atonement cover where sacrificial blood made atonement for Israel. God presented Jesus as the sacrifice that turns aside the wrath of God over sin. Himself the victim and himself the priest, Jesus offers and is the once-for-all-sacrifice that restored what was lost since Eden, communion between God and man.

God presented Jesus to the world as proof of his justice by punishing sin, and proof of his love in justifying sinners. Atonement means God's law and gospel both stand, because God's justice and God's love both meet in the person of Jesus Christ.

And so, we maintain that a person is justified by faith, apart from observing the Law. That is the first, chief article of the faith, and that is a truth worth dying for.

Five hundred years later, here we've stood, holding a righteousness from God and preserving the message of radical grace for the world. The question for us today, as the Church of the Reformation soldiers on toward her 600th year, is, where will we stand?

In the Smithsonian Natural History museum in Washington, D.C., sitting on a shelf in a display case you can see the very first digital camera. Bulky, awkward, a cassette tape bolted to the side. But as Isaacson notes⁴, it disrupted an entire industry.

The Eastman Kodak Company had created personal photography for the masses in the 20th century and by the 1960s Kodak was making a billion dollars per year. They owned 70 percent of the market in photographic products.

That first digital camera on display in the Smithsonian, it was invented in 1975. Twenty-five years before digital cameras became popular, an employee of Eastman Kodak created the forerunner of every selfie, Snapchat, or Instagram. Kodak had a 25-year jump on the industry when it came to digital photography. The trouble was, they didn't do anything with it.

They let the digital camera gather dust in the R&D department, because they misunderstood their core business. Kodak thought that they were in the film business. They got caught up in the process, in the material, rather than in their core mission of capturing memories and recording moments. Today over 1 trillion digital images are captured each year. Kodak had everything they needed to succeed in the new age of digital photography. They simply didn't value it and didn't implement it. Looking back, it's easy to see that they made their stand in the wrong place. In 2012, Kodak, inventor of the digital camera, went bankrupt.

Could it happen, that we, the church of the Reformation, could lose sight of our core mission and take our stand in the wrong place? Could we begin to think that we are in the growth business, or the relevance business, or the millennial business, or the change our community business? Could we be tempted to leave the familiar old truth of radical grace in the dusty corner of our R&D department? Could we begin to think success in our church isn't found in radical grace but in the strategies and paradigms, in programs or funding models? Could we get so caught up in the process or material of church that we forget our core mission, our reason to exist as Christ's Church: to be proclaimers of a righteousness that is from God and is by faith? Years from now, will someone look back in our history and say, "They had it; they just didn't value it. They didn't implement it."

Brothers and sisters, we have what we need for the next 100 years—we don't need to discover anything new. But we cannot leave it sitting in a dusty corner of the R&D department. To value it, to implement it means recognizing that we have been invited by Jesus to share in his mission of calling the elect to faith through the gospel. It is a call to action for our generation. Celebrating the reformation isn't just about where we've stood, it's about where we will stand.

⁴ Isaacson, W. (2017). *Developing Disruption*. Retrieved April 15, 2017, from Dell Technologies Trailblazers: <http://www.delltechnologies.com/en-us/perspectives/trailblazers>.

Our battle today isn't against imperial armies, but against every effort to sideline our reformation heritage, the truth of the gospel rediscovered in little Saxony and announced with hammer strokes that reverberated throughout the world and shook the church to its foundations.

The battle today is for our church's future. Will we still stand where the Reformers stood? Will we proclaim unchanging truth to a people adrift on a sea of relativity? Will we engage a culture that trumpets inclusivity with the exclusive message of salvation in Christ alone? Will we have the audacity to storm the gates of hell with the gospel truth that sinners are saved by his grace through faith alone? Church of the Reformation, where will we stand?

Let's not be a church that's known for what we're against. Let's be a church that leans into its core mission. What would it be like if your congregation became known in your community as "that's the church that proclaims the radical grace of God." The church that serves grace neat. Other churches preach grace, but it isn't alone. They preach faith, but require a decision. They preach Scripture, but think it says too little about modern times or far too much. They preach Christ, as a way, not as the One and Only. Let us be the church of God's great Alones.

If you ever get to Worms to see that Reformation monument, take a moment to notice where the Luther statue is looking. Those proud eyes and defiant stance face south. If you walk along the statue's line of sight, a couple of hundred feet, you'll see what he's looking at.

The bishop's palace where the Diet met inside the old city walls is long gone. All that remains is a little gravel path in the shadow of the cathedral, and next to the path a very simple set of pavers set into the grass. No signs, no statues, but in the center of those pavers lies a mossy edged stone with this inscription, "Here, before emperor and kingdom, stood Martin Luther, 1521⁵." This was the spot.

Those simple little paving stones meant more to me than the world's biggest Reformation memorial. That huge monument with its fortress walls and giant pedestal allows you to stand and admire the greatness of what God did through them. But the humble stone pavers at your feet, they invite you to stand with them and pray for what God will do through you.

Here we stand. We can do no other. God help us. Amen.

⁵ *Hier stand vor Kaiser und Reich Martin Luther, 1521*

Essay: "God's Word is our great heritage"

Aug. 1, 2017

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It is no secret that 2017 marks an important anniversary for Lutherans. Five hundred years ago on October 31, an obscure German monk by the name of Martin Luther nailed to a church door in Wittenberg ninety-five theses that he wished to debate. Although the Ninety-Five Theses lack the clarity of thought that we see in Luther's writings only a few short years later, it is customary for us to consider the posting of his theses to be the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation, a movement which changed the world. The Reformation brought back to light the scriptural truth that we are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in our Savior Jesus Christ. It also brought back to light the truth that God's Word is the only source of faith and spiritual life. The Holy Scriptures alone determine Christian doctrine and Christian truth.

Many important events have happened in Lutheran history in years marking the anniversary of the Reformation. Some of these have been good and some have not. In 1917 the Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska synods merged to form the Wisconsin Synod as we know it today. This merger was based on complete agreement in doctrine

and practice. In 1917 ninety-two percent of all Norwegian Lutherans in America were also involved in a merger but one based on doctrinal compromise. This merged body became known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church and eventually became part of the American Lutheran Church in 1960 and a participant in the formation of the ELCA in 1988. Thirteen faithful pastors and congregations refused to go along with the merger and in 1918 formed what we know today as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). In 1917 the synods comprising the General Synod, General Council, and the United Synod, South made plans to merge. They formed the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA) in 1918. The ULCA became the largest and most liberal Lutheran synod in America. In 1962 The ULCA merged with the Augustana Synod and a couple of smaller synods to form the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). The LCA was the largest of the groups that formed the ELCA in 1988.

In 1817 Frederick William III (1770–1840), the ruler of Prussia (1797–1840), issued a decree which ultimately resulted in a forced merger of the German Reformed Church and the Lutheran Church in his realm. This forced merger became known as the Prussian Union. The union eventually spread to other parts of Germany and helped spark the development of independent, free Lutheran churches in Germany who refused to compromise Lutheran doctrine. Some of these confessional Lutherans emigrated to America and Australia. In 1817 a confessional Lutheran pastor in Schleswig-Holstein, Claus Harms (1778–1855), issued a new edition of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses and wrote ninety-five theses of his own protesting rationalism in the churches of Germany and the doctrinal compromise of the proposed Prussian Union. His theses were influential in reviving confessional Lutheranism in Germany and America.

In 1817 a Danish Lutheran pastor, Nikolai Grundtvig (1783–1882), penned a verse which he intended to be a fifth stanza for Luther's great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress." In English translation and set to a melody by Fritz Reuter (1863–1924) this hymn, "God's Word Is Our Great Heritage," has become a favorite in our synod. Unfortunately, Grundtvig did not remain a conservative, confessional Lutheran in his doctrine of Scripture. In 1824, he articulated what he called his "unparalleled or matchless discovery"—the Bible is not the "living" Word of God. The "living" word is that which has been repeated in the church through the centuries. According to Grundtvig, the "living" word of God is the Apostles Creed and the words of institution for Baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹

What will the Reformation anniversary of 2017 bring? Today there are very few Lutheran churches that teach that the Bible is the totally inspired and inerrant Word of God. Few still hold to the sola scriptura principle of the Reformation. Will we see a resurgence of confessional Lutheranism or a further decline?

The theme for our convention this year is a reminder of what we have inherited from the Reformation and from our Wisconsin Synod fathers. It is a statement of thanksgiving, determination, and confidence for the future. This essay will explore our Lutheran heritage, particularly as it is expressed in the sola scriptura principle. We pray that by God's grace that heritage shall be ours forever.

The Bible is the totally inspired and inerrant Word of God

The truth that the Bible is the Word of God is one of the best attested doctrines in the Holy Scriptures. The Old Testament prophetic books repeatedly affirm "the word of the Lord came to . . ." or "This is what the LORD says" or some similar expression.² The New Testament declares concerning the Old, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). St. Peter writes, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 2:21). St. Paul praises the Thessalonians for recognizing the origin of his message, "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the words of man, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The apostle asserts, "This what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:13). St. Peter equates Paul's letters with Scripture. "Just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:15,16).

¹ See *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. by Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965) vol. 2, 964-965. See also A. M. Allehin, *N.F.S Grundtvig: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Aarhus University Press, 1997. Printed in England by Alden Press, Oxford) 105-115.

² e.g. Isaiah 8:1,11; 22:14,15; 40:1,5; 43:1; 50:1; 52:4; 66:1; Jeremiah 1:2,4; 2:1; 3:6,11; 7:1; 9:7; 10:1; 13:1; 14:11, 14; 15:1; 16:1; 18:1,5; 19:1; 21:1; 22:1,11; 23:2,7,15; 25:1; 26:1; 27:1; 20:1; 31:1; 32:1,26; 33:1,10,12,14,17,19,23; 34:1,8; 35:1; 36:1; 40:1; 43:1; 44:1; 46:1,13; 47:1; 48:1,25; 49:1,12; 50:1,10,33; 51:1,39,48; Ezekiel 1:1; 2:1; 3:1,10; Hosea 1:1; 3:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:6,8,10; 2:1; 3:1; 5:4; 7:1; 8:1; Obadiah 1; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1; Haggai 1:1; 2:1; Zechariah 1:1; 8:1; Malachi 1:1. This list is by no means exhaustive.

God moved human writers with their various life situations, vocabularies, and writing styles to convey to us the very words that he wanted to have recorded for us. Though written by sinful human beings, the Bible is God's Word. Therefore, it is inerrant—it contains no errors. In his great high priestly prayer our Savior says, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Pointing to a rather obscure sentence in the Old Testament, Jesus declares, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

The Bible is also infallible—what it says must come to pass. As the Scriptures declare, "God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19).

Luther does not spend much time trying to demonstrate that the Bible is God's Word. For him it was not an issue. When he opened the Bible, he was opening God's Word. When he read the Holy Scriptures, he was reading what God had caused men to write. The Reformer asserts, "We censure the doctrines of men not because men have spoken them, but because they are lies and blasphemies against the Scriptures. And the Scriptures, although they too are written by men, are neither of men nor from men but from God. Now since the Scriptures and the doctrines of men are contrary one to another, the one must lie and the other be true."³ In commenting on 2 Samuel 23:2 he says,

In the first place, he mentions the Holy Spirit. To Him he ascribes all that is foretold by the prophets. And to this and to similar verses St. Peter refers in 2 Peter 1:21, where he says, "No prophecy ever came by the impulse of men, but moved by the Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke." Therefore we sing in the article of the Creed concerning the Holy Spirit: "Who spake [spoke] by the prophets." Thus we attribute to the Holy Spirit all of Holy Scripture and the external Word and sacraments, which touch and move our external ears and senses.⁴

The Lutheran Confessions also assume and teach the inspiration of Scripture. Philip Melancthon (1497–1560) writes in the Apology,

It is truly amazing that the opponents remain unmoved by so many passages of Scripture that clearly attribute justification to faith and moreover deny it to works. Surely they do not think that the same thing is repeated over and over for no reason, do they? Surely they do not think that these words fell from the Holy Spirit inadvertently, do they?⁵

The Bible is sufficient. It contains everything we need for faith and life. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The main purpose of the Bible is to testify to Jesus and show us God's plan of salvation. Jesus told the unbelieving Jews, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you believe that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39,40). St. John toward the end of his gospel declares, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). In the story of the rich man and Lazarus Abraham explains the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures.

He [the rich man in hell] answered, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not come to this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them." "No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced, even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:27-31).

The Scriptures contain all we need to know for our salvation. No new revelation, no great miracle, no human strategy can lead people to heaven. Understanding the sufficiency of Scripture is part of our Lutheran heritage. For Luther, the Scriptures are all we need for faith and the Christian life. No other source is necessary or possible. He declares, "The Word of God—and no one else, not even an angel—should establish articles of faith."⁶ Commenting on Galatians 1:9 Luther writes,

³ Luther's Works, American Edition, American Edition (55 vols.; ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann; Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-86), vol. 35:153. Hereafter this series will be designated LW.

⁴ LW, 15:275.

⁵ Apology, IV: 107-108. Kolb-Wengert translation.

⁶ Smalcald Articles, II, 2, par. 15.

Here Paul subordinates himself, an angel from heaven, teachers on earth, and any other masters at all to sacred Scripture. This queen must rule, and everyone must obey, and be subject to her. The pope, Luther, Augustine, Paul, an angel from heaven—these should not be masters, judges, or arbiters but only witnesses, disciples, and confessors of Scripture. Nor should anything be taught or heard in the church except the Word of God. Otherwise let the teachers and the hearers be accursed along with their doctrine.⁷

At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther expressed the conviction that guided the whole course of the Lutheran Reformation.

Since then your serene majesty and your lordships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, neither horned nor toothed. Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves). I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.⁸

Closely related to the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures is the fact that they are efficacious. They have the power to accomplish what God wants. The LORD assures Jeremiah, “ ‘Is not my word like fire,’ declares the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?’ ” (Jeremiah 23:29). The writer to the Hebrews tells us, “The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Paul declares, “I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). The LORD comforts Isaiah, “As the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is the word that goes forth from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10,11).

Luther believed in the efficacy of Scripture. In fact, he not only believed in the efficacy of Scripture, he also asserted that God does not give his Spirit or impart his grace to anyone apart from or before contact with the external Word.⁹ The external Word is the Word that strikes the senses. One cannot separate the Holy Spirit from the written or spoken Word of God. Where God’s Word is read or proclaimed, there the Holy Spirit will be doing his work of creating and sustaining faith. Luther was so certain that God’s Word would never return without accomplishing God’s plan and purpose that he wrote,

Now wherever you hear or see this Word preached, believed, professed, and lived, do not doubt that . . . “a Christian holy people” must be there even though their number is very small. For God’s Word “shall not return empty.” . . . And even if there were no other sign than this, it would suffice to prove that a Christian, holy people must exist there, for God’s Word cannot be without God’s people, and conversely, God’s people cannot be without God’s Word.¹⁰

Luther took no credit for the accomplishments of the Reformation. He gave all credit to God’s holy Word.

We should preach the Word, but the results must be left solely to God’s good pleasure. Take myself as an example. I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept [cf. Mark 4:26-29] or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses on it.¹¹

We also confess the *clarity* of the Holy Scriptures. The psalmist proclaims, “Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105). If the Bible were a dark and obscure book, it could not be described as a lamp or a light to guide our way. Although there are some things in the Bible that are difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16) and teachings that are foolishness to human reason (1 Corinthians 1:23-27), the basic message of the Bible is so clear that

⁷ LW, 26:57-58.

⁸ LW, 32:112.

⁹ SA, III, 8, par. 3-13.

¹⁰ LW, 41:150.

¹¹ LW, 51:76-77.

a child can understand. It does not take multiple academic degrees to comprehend, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Paul reminded Timothy, “How from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). Nevertheless, it is only by the power of God that we can believe that message. “For the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

A heritage to treasure

“God’s Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever”—with these words, the hymn writer is expressing a prayer, a wish for the future. The hymn gives voice to a determination to preserve the heritage we have received. Our forefathers from the Reformation to the present have left us a wonderful, precious inheritance. But if we take that heritage for granted, if we fail to treasure it, we will lose it. History demonstrates that over and over again.

The people of Israel were faithful to God during the lifetime of Joshua and the elders who served with him, but then we read, “After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, there arose a generation who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10). How could that happen? Did the leaders of Israel fail to train a generation to succeed them or did the next generation take their heritage for granted? The people of Israel over the centuries repeatedly despised their heritage. Because of that God warned through the prophet Amos, “ ‘The days are coming,’ declares the Sovereign LORD, ‘when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD’ ” (Amos 8:12). Luther made this historical observation:

For you should know that God’s word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been. It has been with the Jews, but when it’s gone it’s gone, and now they have nothing. Paul brought it to the Greeks; but again when it’s gone it’s gone, and now they have the Turk. Rome and the Latins also had it; but when it’s gone it’s gone, and now they have the pope. And you Germans need not think that you will have it forever; for ingratitude and contempt will not make it stay. Therefore, seize it and hold it fast, whoever can; for lazy hands are bound to have a lean year.¹²

Today Luther’s beloved Saxony is spiritually bankrupt. Our sister synod, the small Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK), is a lonely voice faithfully proclaiming the gospel against overwhelming odds.

How does it happen that a people or a church body that has God’s Word subsequently loses it? Does one generation devalue the importance of Christian education? Does a younger generation take for granted all the blessings God has given them through their forefathers and turn their back on God’s Word? Do they begin to think that the teachings of the Bible are old-fashioned and out of date? What happened in Germany and the rest of the Western world? People tired of contending for God’s truth. Pietism turned people’s attention inward to human experience and away from the objective truths of God’s Word. The Enlightenment raised human intellect and reason above God’s wisdom. Liberalism declared that, for Christianity to survive, the church must conform its teachings to the prevailing philosophical, scientific, and historical thought of the day. Existentialism and its ill-begotten son, postmodernism, led people to deny any concept of absolute or objective truth and to believe that truth is subjective—the individual determines what is true for him. They claim that what is true for one person is not necessarily true for another. Consequently, doctrine has become a dirty word in our contemporary society.

Toward the end of his life St. Paul warned, “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3,4). When people in the visible church deny absolute truth and treat the Holy Scriptures as only a human book where one may or may not encounter God, cults rush in to fill the spiritual void. Through neglect of God’s Word people become incapable of countering the false teachings of the cults or meeting the spiritual challenge of Islam. They lose the confidence and certainty that only Scripture can bring.

The Lutheran Reformation was a doctrinal reformation. Others before Luther set out to reform morals and church structure. Luther believed that the reformation the church needed was primarily doctrinal rather than moral or ecclesiastical.¹³ He was willing to risk his very life because the doctrine was not his but God’s. He knew that God builds his

¹² LW 45:352.

¹³ Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation*. The Penguin History of the Christian Church, vol. 3 (London: Penguin Books, 1972) pp. 13-14. Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*. (New York: Image Books, 1992) pp. 56-57.

church through sound doctrine not through false doctrine. Doctrine shows the way to heaven and consequently cannot be treated as unimportant or uncertain. In his lectures on Galatians (1535) he explains,

With the utmost rigor we demand that all the articles of Christian doctrine, both large and small—although we do not regard any of them as small—be kept pure and certain. This is supremely necessary. For this doctrine is our only light, which illumines and directs us and shows us the way to heaven; if it is overthrown in one point, it must be overthrown completely. And when that happens, our love will not be of any use to us. . . . Therefore there is no comparison at all between doctrine and life. “One dot” of doctrine is worth more than “heaven and earth” (Matt. 5:18); therefore we do not permit the slightest offense against it.¹⁴

Why is doctrine so important? It is the lifeblood of the church. “God’s Word is our great heritage . . . in life it guides our way.” God’s Word is our guide to heaven. Apart from his revelation, no one can know the way of salvation. The Bible tells us, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for them who love him—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:9,10). Only the Bible can tell us, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Our sins cried out to be punished, but God punished his own Son in our place, just as he foretold, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5,6). Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was the payment for all sins of all people of all time. “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). That sacrifice was good once for all (Hebrews 9:26, 10:10). Salvation is ours by God’s grace through faith. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

For Luther, the teaching of justification by faith alone serves to guarantee that justification is by grace alone, because justification by faith alone excludes human works and merit.

Furthermore, “All have sinned,” and “they are now justified without merit by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . . by his blood” (Rom. 3:23-25). Now because this must be believed and may not be obtained or grasped otherwise with any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us.¹⁵

Faith alone saves, but faith is never alone. After Paul demonstrates that we are saved by grace alone through faith, he declares, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). The Bible tells us, “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:17). Luther realized that although in justification faith does nothing but receive what God has promised, in sanctification it is very active.

Faith is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us born anew of God [John 1:12,13]. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers. . . . O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. . . . Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times. This knowledge of and confidence in God’s grace makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and all creatures. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God who has shown him this grace. Thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire.¹⁶

God’s Word guides us in our life of sanctification. It shows us what pleases God. The world rebels against God’s law. Our society tells us to do whatever makes us happy. The psalmist expresses a far different attitude. “How can a young man keep his ways pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:9-11).

¹⁴ LW, 27:41.

¹⁵ SA, II, 1, par. 3-4.

¹⁶ LW, 35:370-371.

God's Word also guides our way in all the vicissitudes of life. Since we remain sinners living in a sin-filled world, we can expect that problems will come into our lives. Christians are not immune to health problems, financial problems, family problems, or even persecution for their faith. Yet in his Word our Savior promises us, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). We can be comforted by the Bible's assurance, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). We have the certainty that "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how shall he not also along with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:31,32).

In death God's Word is our stay. Unless our Savior returns first, all of us will die. Many in our world live as if they will never die and face judgment. Many deny the eternal nature of the punishments in hell. Many believe that the various religions are simply different paths to the same god and trust that so long as they do their best and try their hardest, they will make it to heaven. Others believe that though they will die, they will be reincarnated. They think that they will always have another chance. The Bible, however, tell us, "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Our life is our time of grace. There is no second chance after death.

Christians, however, need not fear death. We can face death with the certainty that our Savior has conquered death for us. He assures us, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25). He promises, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19). The assurance that Jesus gave the penitent malefactor on the cross is intended for us as well when we die—"today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). On Judgment Day Jesus will bring with him those who have died before us. The dead in Christ will rise first; then those who are still alive will be caught up to be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). In heaven we will be free forever from sin and sin's consequences. In the life to come "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 20:4).

We can be certain because God's Word declares it. That is our Reformation heritage. Those who have gone before us have passed down to us the certainty that the Bible is the totally inspired and inerrant Word of God. The Bible does not and cannot lie. Its message is clear. It contains everything we need for our faith and spiritual life.

Many who go by the name of Lutheran have lost that Reformation heritage. That can happen to us, too. We retain our heritage by God's grace alone. That is why we pray, "Lord grant while worlds endure, we keep its teachings pure, throughout all generations." It is a sad fact of history that the man who penned those words succumbed to false teaching only a few years later.

Satan attacks the divine authority of Scripture because without it we have no certainty of salvation. Every modern error denies one or more of the qualities or characteristics of Scripture (verbal inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, clarity, sufficiency, efficacy). Those who have lost their Reformation heritage often have done so because they have raised human reason or human emotions or human experience above God's Word. Since the fall into sin, human reason has been corrupted. Reason can serve in spiritual matters only in a ministerial role, always submitting to God's Word. It must never be used in a magisterial way, raising its own thoughts and opinions above what God says. Paul reminds us, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5). The Bible is the Word of the almighty, eternal, all-knowing, all-wise God. That calls for appropriate humility on our part. "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God. For, 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever.' And this is the word that was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:23-25).

Luther was skeptical of human reason because of the corruption of original sin. He recognized that Scripture is not irrational but super-rational—God's wisdom often goes beyond our ability to comprehend. He contrasted faith and reason.

For faith speaks as follows: "I believe thee, God, when Thou dost speak." What does God say? Things that are impossible, untrue, foolish, weak, absurd, abominable, heretical, diabolical—if you consult reason. For what is more ridiculous, foolish, and impossible than when God says to Abraham that he is to get a son from the body of Sarah, which is barren and already dead?¹⁷

¹⁷ LW, 26:227.

Adolf Hoenecke (1835–1908), the great theologian of the Wisconsin Synod, reflects Luther’s attitude and echoes his words. In speaking of the apparent paradox between God’s will to save all and Scripture’s teaching of a particular election, he said,

One may ask: Can you make sense of that for yourself?—What then?—God wants to save all, but again: He has elected only a few who alone are saved?—No I can’t make sense of that for myself. However, has God revealed his truth to us so that we should make sense of it for ourselves? No, exactly the opposite, we believe it as he has revealed it to us.¹⁸

Neither can we raise human emotions or inner experience above the Holy Scriptures. Feelings fluctuate. They change from moment to moment. They cannot bring me any certainty. Only the Word of God can give confidence because that Word centers in Christ and his accomplishments. Luther puts it this way,

If you are not ready to believe that the Word is worth more than all you see or feel, then reason has blinded faith. So the resurrection of the dead is something that must be believed. I do not feel the resurrection of Christ, but the Word confirms it. I feel sin but the Word says that it is forgiven to those who believe. I see Christians die like other men, but the Word tells me that they shall rise again. So we must not be guided by our feelings but by the Word.¹⁹

Luther was brilliant, but he did not let his brilliance move him to exalt his reason above the Scriptures. His two catechisms are masterful summaries of the basic teachings of God’s Word, but in humility he always remained a student of the catechism. He returned to it every day. He wrote,

I, too, am a doctor and a preacher. . . . Yet I continue to do as a child does that is being taught the Catechism. Mornings, and when I otherwise have time, I read and recite word for word the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I like, but must remain a child and student of the Catechism.²⁰

God’s Word is our great heritage. How do we as individuals show that we treasure it? We can imitate the Bereans. The Bible tells us, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:10,11). We will study our Bibles. We will gather for worship and Bible class. We will regularly review the truths we learned in confirmation class. We will make sure that the cares, concerns, and worries of this life do not distract us from the one thing that is needed (Luke 10:42), listening to the Word of God. Northwestern Publishing House offers many excellent aids to assist us in our studies.

As a synod, we will continue to place a priority on the thorough instruction of our pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. Those who are in the public ministry have to be able to “correctly handle the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). False teachings and teachers will arise. That calls for patient instruction and attempts to win the errorist over to the truth. While we will want to take everyone’s words and actions in the kindest possible way, we know that those who cling to error after patient instruction in God’s Word must be removed from our fellowship. The Bible warns us that false teaching “will spread like gangrene” (2 Timothy 2:17). The church body that fails to exercise moral and doctrinal discipline in accordance with God’s Word will eventually lose the gospel. If it does not make any difference what we do or what we believe, who needs the Savior or his Word?

Historically, false doctrine has often entered the visible church through seminaries and institutions of higher learning. Those whom we call to teach our future pastors and teachers have an awesome responsibility. As Paul encouraged Timothy, “The things that you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). We will always want to call to these offices those who fit this description: “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word” (Isaiah 66:2). We want them to be biblical theologians, not speculative theologians or those who think that they are wiser than God’s Word. We want men who will heed Paul’s directives: “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of

¹⁸ *Verhandlungen der Verssammlung der Deutschen Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin und anderen Staaten, 1882*. 33-34. English translation by Schroeder, “The Contribution of Adolf Hoenecke to the Election Controversy of the Synodical Conference and an Appendix of Translated Articles.” *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, vol 17 #2 (October 1999) 22.

¹⁹ Luther, Sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:1ff, March 31, 1529; quoted in Harold Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989), pp. 116-117.

²⁰ Large Catechism, Preface of 1530, par. 7-8.

season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2,3).

God’s Word is our great heritage. If we treasure it, by God’s grace it will be ours forever.

A heritage to share

God’s Word, however, is not meant to be a possession that we keep to ourselves. It is an inexhaustible treasure that is meant to be shared. That is why we sing, “To spread its light from age to age shall be our chief endeavor.”

That sharing begins with those who are closest to us. God commands parents to bring up their children “in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). In the Old Testament he decreed, “These commandments that I give you this day are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road” (Deuteronomy 6:6,7). Because the people of Israel were not always faithful in carrying out this responsibility, the psalmist expresses a renewed determination to do what God commands.

O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from of old—things we have heard and known, things our fathers have taught us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands (Psalm 78:1-7)

We train our children by our example. They see our attitude toward our Savior, his forgiveness, his Word, and worship. When they are young we can read and discuss Bible stories with them before they go to bed or sing some of the great hymns of the church. As they grow, we can review the catechism with them and refresh for ourselves those precious truths that are written in language so simple a child can understand. We can make sure that our actions match our words.

Our congregations assist parents through Sunday schools, preschools, vacation Bible schools, Lutheran elementary schools, area Lutheran high schools, confirmation classes, and youth Bible classes. Christian education is not cheap, but it is well worth the expense. If we do not train the next generation, who will?

Every Christian has the privilege of telling others about their Savior. St. Peter, writing to the elect (believers) living throughout the region we know today as Turkey, declares, “But you are a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). To praise someone is to tell others the praiseworthy things he has done. To praise God means to tell others that he sent his Son to be the sacrificial Lamb who lived and died to take away the sins of the world. To praise God is to tell the repentant sinner that although he deserves to be punished forever, God has forgiven his sins in Christ Jesus. That gospel message brings people into the kingdom of God. That message is the key which opens heaven. Every Christian is a priest before God (universal priesthood of believers). Every Christian has the authority and the responsibility to seek the lost and the erring and to speak Christ’s words of admonition and forgiveness.

Our Savior encourages us, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). As we live our life of faith, there will be opportunities to speak of God’s forgiveness in Christ. St. Peter tells us, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15,16). At the very least, when confronted with a question that we have difficulty answering, we can follow Philip’s example and invite the person to “come and see” (John 1:46).

No one will be saved apart from faith in Jesus. Our Savior himself tells us, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (John 3:16-18).

The proclamation of the gospel is vitally important. For just as no one will be saved apart from faith in Jesus, no one can come to faith apart from the proclamation of the gospel. The Bible makes that very clear.

As the Scripture says, “Everyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.” . . . Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:11-15, 17)

At the heart of the Reformation was Luther’s desire for the certainty of salvation. He wanted peace of conscience and peace with God more than anything else. Listen to his description of his discovery of the gospel, or perhaps more accurately, his discovery of the distinction between the law and the gospel. His eyes were opened as he came to understand that God’s righteousness not only means that he demands perfect obedience of us, it also means that he credits perfect righteousness to us for the sake of Jesus.

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly mourning greatly, I was angry with God and said, “As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without God adding pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!” Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, “In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’ ” There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, “He who is righteous by faith shall live.” Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.²¹

Luther could not keep quiet. He wanted everyone to have what he had. He was willing to put his life on the line for the sake of the gospel. He faced the fury of pope and emperor, the greatest powers in Europe at the time, to proclaim the only message that can save people eternally. He attacked every false teacher and false teaching that stood in the way of the clear proclamation of the gospel. Commenting on 1 Peter 1:16, Luther explains the Christian’s responsibility:

For here nothing else is necessary than faith, that I give God his due and honor and regard Him as my God, who is just, truthful, and merciful. Such faith liberates us from sin and all evil. Now when I have given God this honor, then whatever life I live I live for my neighbor, to serve and help him. The greatest work that comes from faith is this, that I confess Christ with my mouth, and if it has to be, bear testimony with my blood and risk my life. Yet God does not need the work; but I should do it to prove and confess my faith, in order that others, too, may be brought to faith.²²

When a person understands all that God has done for him, he cannot keep quiet because he wants other to share in that joy. In an extended sermon on John 14 Luther writes:

For once a Christian begins to know Christ as his Lord and Savior, through whom he is redeemed from death and brought into his dominion and inheritance, God completely permeates his heart. Now he is eager to help everyone acquire the same benefits. For his greatest delight is in this treasure, the knowledge of Christ. Therefore he steps forth boldly, teaches and admonishes others, praises and confesses his treasure before everybody, prays and yearns that they, too, may obtain such mercy.²³

²¹ LW, 34:336-337.

²² LW, 30:32-33.

²³ LW, 24:87-88.

Commenting on Genesis 45:9 Luther encourages us tell others the good news that they, too, may be saved:

“Therefore tell it to my father, to his whole household, and to his neighbors.” Just as Christ commands His disciples, saying, “Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel” (Mark 16:15), so Joseph sends his brothers, saying, “Hurry. Do not tarry, but spread abroad what you have heard.” For when we have learned to know God in the Son apprehending the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, who clothes our hearts with joy and with the freedom from care because of which we despise sin and death, what is left? “Go, and do not keep silence, in order that the rest of the multitude may be saved, too, not you alone.”²⁴

The great Reformer understood the need to send preachers to the heathen. You cannot expect the heathen to come to you. You must go to them. His exposition of Psalm 117 makes that clear.

Now if all the heathen are to praise God, this assumes that He has become their God. If He is to be their God, then they must know Him, believe in Him, and give up all idolatry. . . . And if they are to believe, they must first hear His word and thereby receive the Holy Spirit, who through faith purifies and enlightens their hearts. One cannot come to faith and lay hold on the Holy Spirit without hearing the word first, as St. Paul has said (Rom. 10:14): “How are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard?” and (Gal 3:2): “You have received the Spirit through the proclamation of faith.” If they are to hear His Word, then preachers must be sent to proclaim God’s Word to them, for not all the heathen can come to Jerusalem or make a living among the small company of the Jews. Therefore the psalmist does not say: “Come to Jerusalem, all heathen!” He lets them stay where they are and calls upon them, wherever they may be, to praise God.²⁵

Isaiah in speaking of the future glory of the church, says, “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. You will spread out to the right and to the left” (Isaiah 54:2,3). Luther explains,

So he says here, “Your place is so small, and you are so few, that you should be contained in a small house. But I say to you, ‘Your people and your tent will be expanded into all the world.’ ” . . . Today we would speak of the construction of a house. Summary: It is as if he were saying: “My church, make your building so broad that your habitation will be advanced into all the world. Do not be led astray by appearances, by the great number of enemies and by the small number of your people.”²⁶

Luther and his followers had a mission mindset. Those who think otherwise do not really understand the Reformation, its history and attendant circumstances. Luther used the opportunities available to him. He preached and taught where he could. Regions that were closed to him by Roman Catholic rulers were penetrated by his publications. Printers flooded Europe with his writings and through them many were brought to saving faith in Jesus. Those who studied under Luther at the University of Wittenberg carried the gospel far and wide.

We have that same mission mindset. We look for the opportunities God places before us. We have already spoken of the obligations God gives us to instruct our children. We also have a responsibility toward our other relatives, our friends, and the people we work with.

We gather in congregations to reach out with the gospel to our communities. When I was a young mission pastor, telephone canvassing was a quick and easy way to contact people. Today so many react negatively to telephone solicitation that telephone canvassing is probably neither wise nor profitable. Besides, with the advent of cell phones and the decline of landlines, it is not so easy to target a given area, neighborhood, or community. Today God presents us with other ways of reaching the lost. Social media and other Internet resources have opened some remarkable possibilities for outreach.

God has presented amazing opportunities before our synod to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Forty years ago, no one would have believed that we would be able to support mission efforts in former Iron Curtain countries or nations where Islam or a resurgent and hostile Hinduism are the dominant religions. The Internet now carries the gospel into areas closed to missionaries. English speakers in our own country and around the world can

²⁴ LW, 8:45-46.

²⁵ LW, 14:9.

²⁶ LW, 17:235.

access sermons, Bible studies, and sound essays through various websites. Our Multi-Language Publications provides good, Lutheran resources in hard copy or electronic format in an ever-increasing number of languages. At one time, world mission work almost exclusively meant sending expatriate missionaries to establish mission outposts in other lands and on other continents. Today groups of Christians in Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world have approached us to train their pastors and church workers. They recognize how God has blessed us with the purity of the gospel and doctrinal integrity and they want what we have. Immigrant groups in America present real mission opportunities. Many of those we reach demonstrate an admirable drive to take the gospel back to their homeland. Through the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference we are able to encourage and assist isolated Lutheran groups around the world and they, in turn, provide encouragement to us.

The fields are white for the harvest. The only question is whether we will continue to have the will and zeal to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities God presents to us.

Many important events have happened in Lutheran history in years marking the anniversary of the Reformation. Some of these have been good and some have not. What will future generations say about the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation? Will they say that those who celebrated were Lutheran in name only, or will they be thankful that 2017 marked a return to the doctrine and spirit of the Reformation? Will 2017 mark a resurgence of confessional Lutheranism or a continued decline? Will we be as diligent in the study and proclamation of God's truth as Luther was?

We really can do no less. "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:14,15). Our forefathers have left us a tremendous heritage. If we treasure that heritage we will do everything in our power to preserve it for succeeding generations and will make every effort to share it with others.

Closing service sermon: "Christ alone—a fitting summary!"

Aug. 3, 2017

Luther Preparatory School Chapel, Watertown, Wis.

Text: John 14:6

Rev. John Steinbrenner

Dear Fellow Forgiven Sinners,

The Professor for College Composition was trying to teach students to write more with less. This was his training assignment: go read a long writing (or watch a long movie), return with a very short summary. Students would:

- take President Kennedy's famous 1961 Inauguration Address and pare it down to a phrase; or
- take Charles Dickens "A Christmas Carol" and summarize it with a single sentence.

We could give it a try right now. After 3 days in a convention chair pouring over a 230-page book about our synod's work, how would you summarize? What seems to stand out? Did you enjoy yesterday afternoon's "Celebration of Fellowship" with the other church bodies with whom we are now in joint confession? Or would your fitting summary simply be: "The Luther Movie!?" (What a clear confession of our beliefs! We've come a long way since *The Road to Emmaus*.) Or maybe you're the accountant type and you liked the shredder that diced up our debt papers on Tuesday. So, maybe your summary of convention would be: "Debt-free at last!" What phrase do you think accurately sums up our synod's work and current status?

Jesus once offered a “fitting summary” of the work of his blood-bought church. It was during Holy Week. As Jesus was doing everything to accomplish our salvation, he was patiently teaching his disciples everything necessary to lay hold of it. Jesus said, “believe in me, I’m going to prepare a place for you, I’m coming back to get you.” Then Thomas asked an honest follow-up question about the “where and how of it all.” So, Jesus offered this “fitting summary”: “⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14).

So clear and simple! Jesus is THE WAY—Christ is the road, the sole path to heaven (and he emphasized this truth with his negative, clarifying statement: “No one comes to the Father except through me.” Jesus is THE TRUTH—Christ is the Word as he told us earlier in John’s Gospel. Everything he said and all his written Word is true and can be trusted. Jesus is THE LIFE—Christ is the source of our physical and spiritual life. Whoever believes in the living Savior has eternal life! So, there you have it! Our Savior said it! At its core—our lives, our salvation—are all about Christ . . . and CHRIST ALONE!

But as we were reminded many times this past week—not everyone believed what Jesus said that late Thursday night before he died for us. There is this “constant companion” (our sinful nature) that lives in the hearts of mankind and insists that “the way, the truth and the life” are largely about us! So much so that, at Luther’s time: THE WAY to heaven was taught that . . . we need to assist our way to heaven by our “good deeds.” THE TRUTH? The church’s leadership and their traditions will essentially establish God’s will for our lives. In fact, it was taught, that church leadership and tradition was on par with God’s Word—even trumping God’s Word! In short, this LIFE and ETERNAL LIFE depended largely on us. Or so it was taught. Such sinful self-righteousness. Such damnable theology. These beliefs and those who taught them actually called Jesus a liar and proposed a way to the Father that actually bypassed Christ alone!

But then, as is articulated so well in Lutheran Reformation history and was summarized so well in our devotions this week . . .

- 500 years ago, God graciously led Luther back to the truth. Simply put, Luther stood where Jesus stood. Luther believed and taught that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.
- 500 years later we are still praising God for this vital “Reformation of the Church” and still looking to Jesus and his Word and Sacraments as God’s gifts to create and sustain our faith. May we ever hold onto them as our “Great Heritage.” Are there better truths we can pass on to our children and the next generation? Is there something better that our school boards and education committees could focus on than these truths? Are there any other life-saving truths such that our evangelism committees could share that would be of greater benefit to our communities!?
- For 5 centuries we’ve condensed Reformation’s lessons into boxes marked “the 3 solas.” (we looked at them all week on the banners behind President Schroeder) And if someone asked us for a simpler summary of the Reformation?... could we “say more with less?” The square root of the 3 solas is the 4th and final banner: “Solus Christus!” Our lives, our synod and our synod’s work are all about Christ . . . and CHRIST ALONE!

But . . . as we leave this convention today, we must drag our “constant companion” with us . . . this sinful nature of ours that still insists that “the way, the truth, the life” are more about us than about Jesus! Having been somewhat immunized by lessons from the Reformation, our sinful nature’s lies that challenges Jesus’ “I AM” statement are a bit more subtle today but just as sinful:

- Jesus’ Word is necessary to do our ministries we concede, but ministry will go nowhere without our leadership and organizational and fine people skills!
- Jesus’ Word provides direction for our ministries we’ll admit, but it doesn’t need to be the primary place we look – there are a lot of good ideas out there in other growing churches or business models in the world—look there first!
- Our church won’t make it if our pastor leaves!
- Our school will fail if our principal takes his call!
- Such selfish deceit, distrust, and even laziness . . . since Jesus has done everything, the sinful nature concludes, I don’t have to do anything!

Lord Jesus . . . HAVE MERCY ON US . . . we’re sorry for our sins. We’ve come again to the cross of Christ to drown this “constant companion” through daily sorrow and repentance. This necessary exercise is another lesson we’ve learned from the Lutheran Reformation!

Lord Jesus . . . THANK YOU . . .

- for not condemning us on the spot; for not treating us as our sins deserve or repaying us according to our iniquities (Psalm 103);
- for paying our sin-debt IN-FULL with your perfect sacrifice on Calvary; for blotting out our transgressions for your own sake and remembering our sin no more (Isaiah 43);

Friends, be at peace, rejoice, for we leave this Convention today as God's forgiven family . . . Baptized sons and daughters . . . robed in the righteousness of Christ . . . and CHRIST ALONE!

Over the past four days of our convention, we were brought right back to the cross of Jesus and the blessings he gives to us. And all our planning, budgeting and work of training and sending was MOTIVATED BY CHRIST for the PURPOSE OF SHARING CHRIST with the world. Like Paul told the Philippians, how thankful we are for our partnership in the gospel (1:3-5).

- What a blessing to be united with three more church bodies in our confession of the life-saving truth that Jesus is "the way, the truth and the life."
- As a synod (and sometimes it sounds cliché) we are so blessed to be able to do things that would be virtually impossible to do as individual congregations . . . walking together to train workers, walking together to opening missions and supporting ministries. How could we do this with quality and uniformity without one another . . . and without God blessing it all? Thanks be to God for his grace and his blessing of our partnership in the gospel. May we never stop praising God for this blessing. May we express our thanks by keeping our CMO strong and keeping our synod and its work in our regular prayers.

Thomas asked a question about not knowing the way to the Father . . . and Jesus offered a fitting summary: the way, truth, and life are found in "Christ Alone." This wasn't just a fitting summary for Thomas' question, but this is also a fitting summary of the Reformation. And it isn't just a fitting summary of the Reformation, but a fitting summary for our salvation. And as a synod who cherishes these truths as "Our Great Heritage"—Jesus is our thankful motivation. "Christ Alone," then, is a fitting summary for our work at this convention!

May our protecting God bless you all with safe travels as you go back to work in your corners of God's kingdom. May our gracious God bless you all as you worship, serve, share, and honor "Christ Alone!" Amen!

