

MINUTES
65TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION OF THE
WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE, NEW ULM, MINNESOTA
JULY 29—AUG. 1, 2019

Wednesday, July 31, 2019

At 8:00 a.m., President Schroeder called the morning session to order. He introduced Pastor Benjamin Kratz who serves Our Savior Lutheran Church, Birmingham, Ala. Kratz led the opening devotion based on Revelation 3:1-6. The hymn, "O Christ, Who Called the Twelve" was sung.

He was thanked for his devotion.

Prof. Gregory Diersen was welcomed back to the podium for a second run-off election for two positions, Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) Board of Directors parish pastor, and Board of Appeals layman. After votes were cast, the ballots were collected, and the election was declared closed.

Prof. James Danell, chairman of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations, came to the podium. He introduced Rev. Mark Onunda and his wife, Mrs. Grace Onunda, from the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ–Kenya, and Rev. Peter Chen and Mr. Michael Lin from the Christian Lutheran Evangelical Church of Taiwan.

Rev. Onunda and his wife addressed the group. The history of Lutheranism in Kenya and plans for mission work, especially among refugees from South Sudan, was described. Wishes for the Lord's blessing on our fellowship were stated. A standing round of applause followed. A PowerPoint presented photographs of leaders and congregations in Kenya.

Rev. Peter Chen and Mr. Michael Lin addressed the convention. They introduced the Christian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Taiwan to the convention using PowerPoint. The representatives expressed great joy in the fellowship with WELS and requested prayers. A standing round of applause was given.

Pastor Michael Schroeder, chairman of Floor Committee #3, Inter-Church Relations, read the committee's printed report.

Resolution 03-01, To declare formal fellowship with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ–Kenya, was moved and supported. The motion carried with standing unanimous approval.

Resolution 03-02, To declare formal fellowship with the Christian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Taiwan, was moved and supported. The motion carried with standing unanimous approval.

The floor committee was thanked for its work. President Schroeder presented gifts to the representatives. The group then joined in singing "Christ is Made the Sure Foundation." The representatives were again thanked.

The Elections Committee presented one additional run-off election for NPH Board of Directors parish pastor. After the ballots were collected, the election was closed.

Mr. William Ziche, NPH president, and Rev. Curt Jahn, vice president of publishing services at NPH, were introduced. The men referenced the NPH report in the 2019 *Book of Reports & Memorials*, pages 145-149. NPH history was shared using PowerPoint. Also addressed was the importance of publishing to our synod and the new printed materials now available from NPH. There was a round of applause.

At 9:52 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. PowerPoint was used as the men presented a Home Missions report. A 2019 \$1 million grant for Home Missions from the Church Extension Fund (CEF) and over \$38 million in grants over the years were highlighted. Financial investments in CEF were encouraged. Multicultural missions were noted. Mission trips with Mission Journeys were promoted. Internet updates can be obtained through the WELS website. The men were thanked for their presentation with a round of applause.

District President Rev. Donald Patterson again promoted visits to the NPH display.

At 10:27 a.m., a recess was declared. First Vice President Rev. James Huebner took the chair.

At 10:49 a.m., Rev. Jonathan Hein, representing WELS Congregational Services, was welcomed to the dais with the five Congregational Services directors: Rev. Bryan Gerlach, WELS Commission on Worship; Rev. Donn Dobberstein, WELS Commission on Discipleship; Rev. Eric Roecker, WELS Commission on Evangelism, Mr. James Rademan, WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools; and Rev. James Behringer, WELS Commission on Special Ministries. Each reported on the work of their division using PowerPoint. Attendance at the January 2020 National Conference on Lutheran Leadership was encouraged. Evangelism initiatives were described. An example of new elder training videos was shared. The *10 for 10* stewardship emphasis was proclaimed. (It's free!) The 2020 WELS international youth rally, under the theme "2020 Vision" was highlighted, as was the *Kids Connection*, now celebrating its 25th year. An idea from Rev. Gerlach: Begin budgeting for the new hymnal now and strongly consider using "Service Builder" — it is amazing! WELS school statistics were shared. School counseling, support, growth, coaching, and evaluation tools are ongoing. Principal and future principal training is being provided. School accreditation as quality assurance was explained. Compassion (Love in Action) is a key word in Special Ministries. How can we be more caring?

Many materials are available. Many volunteers are working with prison ministry, themselves growing in the Savior's love. There was a round of applause, and the presenters were thanked.

After announcements, the morning session adjourned for lunch with prayer at 12:02 p.m. Second Vice President Joel Voss took the chair and called the afternoon session to order at 1:18 p.m. Rev. Joel Press was introduced. He reported for the WELS Historical Institute. He referenced pages 133-136 in BORAM and briefly shared Lutheran history and special anniversaries. Membership in the WELS Historical Institute was urged. There was a round of applause. He was thanked for his report.

Rev. Robert Hein came to the dais and reported for Christian Aid and Relief using a video. Disaster relief, assistance with medical and financial need, and humanitarian assistance are carried out by WELS Christian Aid and Relief. Assistance in local and faraway locations was delineated. Applause followed his presentation, and he was thanked for his presentation.

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of the Ministry of Christian Giving, reported. Blessings and opportunities in synodwide church attendance, membership, and giving were noted. Of special note were the synodwide special offerings, including "Equipping Christian Witnesses." The results of the work of the WELS Christian giving counselors were reported. Several charitable giving techniques were shared. Available resources were listed. Applause followed, and Lueneburg was thanked for his presentation.

Rev. Jason Hacker, board member of the Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG), was introduced. All veterans present in the assembly were asked to stand and were thanked for their military service with a round of applause. His report stressed the guilt experienced by many veterans and the fact that Lutherans have the answer for guilt not found in many other places. Help is available for those suffering with PTSD. A Christian Service Handbook will soon be available. The "Ammo Can" can be placed out for gifts twice a year with a display illustrating what LMSG is doing. A round of applause followed, and Hacker was thanked.

At 2:15 p.m., Rev. Michael Schultz, director of the WELS Hymnal Project, reported on the progress with the new hymnal. Past progress and the upcoming introduction to the new hymnal was covered. A round of applause followed, and he was thanked for his report.

Prof. Gregory Diersen, chairman of Committee #18, Elections, read the committee's report. It was moved and supported to accept the report and thank the committee. The motion carried.

Pastor Duane Rodewald, chairman of Floor Committee #1, President's Report, read the committee's report and resolutions.

Resolution 01-01, Membership-Called Workers, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

Resolution 01-02, Membership-Congregations, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

It was moved and supported to accept the report and thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

Pastor Jay Bickelhaupt, chairman of Floor Committee #2, Conference of Presidents, read Report No. 02, Memorial 2019-01. Report No. 03, Memorial 2019-02, was read. Report No. 04, Memorial 2019-03, was read.

Resolution No. 04, Encouraging Education About the Staff Ministry Program, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

Resolution No. 05, Convention Offerings, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

It was moved and supported to accept the report and thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

Teacher Chris Holman, representing Floor Committee #4, Ministry of Christian Giving & Communications, read Report No. 01.

It was moved and supported to accept the report and to thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

Pastor David Bivens, chairman of Floor Committee #5, Synodical Council, read Report No. 01.

Resolution No. 01, Unfunded Priority List, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

Resolution No. 02, Compensation Review Committee, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

It was moved and supported to accept the report and to thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

After announcements, the afternoon break was declared at 3:00 p.m. Schwan ice cream was provided to all delegates by Christian Family Solutions and The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn.

The afternoon session resumed at 3:40 p.m. Pastor Steven Gabb, chairman of Floor Committee #6, Finance and Ministry Financial Plan, read Report No. 01.

Resolution No. 01, Ministry Financial Plan, 2019-21, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

It was moved and supported to accept the report and to thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

Rev. Peter Prange, chairman of Floor Committee #7, Home Missions, read Report No. 01.
It was moved and supported to accept the report and to thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

Pastor William Brassow, chairman of Floor Committee #8, World Missions and Joint Mission Council, read Report No. 01.

Resolution No. 01, World Missions and Joint Mission Council resolution, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

It was moved and supported to accept the report and to thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

Pastor Timothy Otto, chairman of Floor Committee #10, Congregation Services A (Congregational Counseling, Evangelism, Discipleship), read Memorials 17, 18, and 19 and Report No. 01.

It was moved and supported to accept the report and to thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

Pastor Peter Kiecker, chairman of Floor Committee #11, Congregation Services B (Worship, Special Ministries), read Report No. 01.

Resolution No. 01, Contemporary Lord's Prayer, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

It was moved and supported to accept the report and to thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

Teacher Jim Henrickson, chairman of Floor Committee #12, Commission on Lutheran Schools, read Report No. 01. Memorial 2019-20 was also read.

Resolution No. 01, Request for increased financial support for the 21st Century Lutheran Principal Initiative, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

Resolution No. 02, Request for increased financial support for the Commission on Lutheran Schools, was moved and supported. The motion carried.

It was moved and supported to accept the report and to thank the committee for its work. The motion carried.

In all cases, there were rounds of applause following each of the committee reports.

At 4:45 p.m., after announcements, the afternoon session adjourned with prayer led by Pastor Benjamin Kratz. Following the evening meal, the launch of the "Equipping Christian Witnesses" campaign was conducted in the Chapel of the Christ led by President Rev. Mark Zarling and Rev. Kurt Lueneburg. Campus tours followed. Fellowship and refreshments were offered beginning at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Robert Pasbrig
Recording secretary