

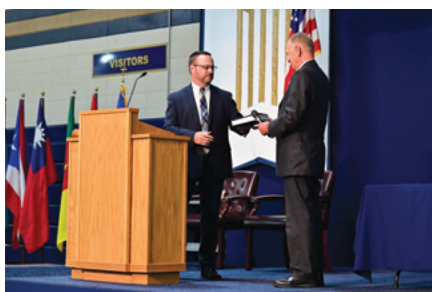


# YOUR GIFTS, GOD'S BLESSINGS

*An annual report to our members | 2022*



# MESSAGE *from the* PRESIDENT



**ABOVE:** Three hundred thirty voting delegates attended WELS' 66th biennial convention, July 26–28, 2021, at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., under the theme “Here we stand.” This synod convention included in-person and virtual delegates.

**FRONT COVER:** Northwestern Publishing House began shipping copies of the new *Christian Worship* in September 2021. St. John, Burlington, Wis., held a hymnal introduction seminar in November. Cover photo credit: Michael Kuether.

**God's people gather.** That was one of the themes that defined 2021 for our synod. The pandemic caused great disruption and separation in 2020. Many, if not most, congregations needed to make major adjustments to their worship and ministries. Synod boards and committees continued to meet to carry out their work, but those meetings were held virtually. Travel was restricted and ministry projects were postponed.

But 2021 was a year in which God's people once again gathered together for in-person corporate worship and for carrying out the mission that God has graciously given us. With great joy, the people of our synod gathered in their churches and schools to worship side by side, to attend classes, and to thank God for the precious gospel that he has made known to us.

As life began to return to normal, God continued to place gospel opportunities into our lives. His Word was preached, and his sacraments administered. Home missions were planted, and world mission work was expanded. Workers well trained for God's harvest field were called and sent out to their

fields of service. Congregations devoted themselves to focusing on stewardship, discipleship, and evangelism. Once again, as it did in the time of the apostles, the Word of the Lord grew—and so God continued building his Church among us.

One of the most pleasant and unexpected blessings was the fact that even in a year of “getting back to normal,” God opened the hearts of his people to provide more financial support than ever before for the work that we do together as a synod. Blessings like that should never surprise us, since God always provides more than we ask or imagine to enable us to carry out the mission he has given us.

This report reviews some of the many ways that God has blessed his work among us. As you read about them, join with the psalm writer in singing, “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name be the glory, for your love and faithfulness!”



*Mark Schroeder*

**REV. MARK SCHROEDER**  
WELS president



Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary class of 2021

# CALLED *to* PREPARE

On May 21, 2021, 28 men graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis., and began their pastoral ministries.

WLS prepares men for pastoral ministry by providing them with spiritual, theological, and professional training. Students attend classes for two years, serve as full-time vicars during their third year, and then attend classes and write a thesis in their fourth year. Throughout their time at the seminary, students receive opportunities to serve in a variety of ministries and to experience other cultures to help prepare them for their future calls.

The seminary also provides pastors with opportunities for continued growth in all their callings through the Grow in Grace

Institute. Grow in Grace offers continuing education courses, a mentoring initiative for new graduates, a clearinghouse of resources for pastors, and an annual retreat for pastors who are celebrating milestones in their ministries.

The Pastoral Studies Institute, a partnership between WLS and WELS Missions, guides and assists non-traditional students through their pre-seminary and seminary training so they can become pastors. This includes second-career students as well as cross-cultural students.

For more information, visit [wisluthsem.org](http://wisluthsem.org).



# WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

To carry out its purpose, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has established the following objectives:

- to lead theological students and pastors in a reverent study of the inspired and inerrant Word of God so that they are able to understand and apply its Christ-centered message of law and gospel;
- to encourage theological students and pastors to grow in their personal faith through daily contact with the means of grace;
- to teach all the areas of the theological curriculum in a thorough and scholarly fashion, in full harmony with the Holy Scriptures and in conscious agreement with the Lutheran Confessions;
- to train theological students and pastors in the skills required for ministry in an ever-changing world;
- to instill in theological students and pastors the kinds of attitudes that will assist them as they carry out their ministry in the contemporary world, e.g., confessional in stance, evangelical in approach, mission-minded in spirit, culturally sensitive, appropriately flexible, and zealous both to nurture and to equip the saints.

*Pictured (right): Prof. Robert Wendland teaches church history and homiletics.*



The 2021–22 seminary chorus is directed by Prof. Aaron Christie.





## INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Each seminary student spends an internship year as a “vicar,” learning and serving under experienced pastors and mission-minded congregations. At the seminary’s vicar assignment service on May 19, 2021, Zach Satorius (left) was called to serve in Medellín, Colombia, under Rev. Henry Herrera (right) of the Colombian Lutheran Church. It has been 12 years since a Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary vicar was placed in Latin America. Satorius arrived in Medellín in August 2021 and will return to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for his final year of study in August 2022.

MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA



PROF. JONATHAN BARE AND JOHN RUDRAPATY

## PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

The **Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI)** guides and assists spiritual leaders around the world through preseminary and seminary training. Team members spend much of their time visiting and teaching PSI students. Occasionally, a PSI student visits the seminary campus. Pictured are John Rudrapaty (right), originally from India, who enrolled in level 1 of the PSI BDiv program this year, and the director of the Pastoral Studies Institute, Prof. Jonathan Bare. Rudrapaty now lives in San Antonio, Texas, where he is a member of Our Savior. During his two-week visit to the seminary in the fall of 2021, he studied a course with Bare, sat in on a variety of MDiv classes, got to know fellow students and professors, and visited several area ministries.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Since the school began in 1863, more than **3,500 men** have graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Photos of the students from each graduating class as well as the faculty members from that school year line the hallways and hang in classrooms.

# MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., is committed to training a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of WELS and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions and *The Book of Concord*. In fall 2021, 714 students were enrolled as undergraduates.

To meet the current ministry needs of WELS, Martin Luther College:

- prepares men for pastoral training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary;
- prepares men and women for service as teachers and staff ministers in the synod’s churches, schools, and other institutions;
- prepares men and women for other church ministries, both full- and part-time, responding to the needs of WELS;
- prepares international students for ministry in partnership with WELS mission fields; and
- provides programs of continuing education that meet the ministerial needs of WELS.

For more information, visit [mlc-wels.edu](http://mlc-wels.edu).

## DID YOU KNOW?

Martin Luther College offers three graduate degrees for teachers and staff ministers—Master of Arts in Theological Studies for teachers and staff ministers, Master of Science in Education, and Master of Science in Educational Administration.



## EQUIPPING CHRISTIAN WITNESSES

Exciting progress was made in Martin Luther College’s “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign. In April 2021, the college held the groundbreaking for the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse, which is a 36,000-square-foot indoor turf facility that will include large practice areas, batting cages, golf simulators, and locker rooms. The three pillars of the campaign are shown below. For more information, visit [mlc-wels.edu/mlc-campaign](http://mlc-wels.edu/mlc-campaign).

**STUDENT**



**RECRUITMENT**

**900-1,000 STUDENTS**

Eager to Train for Gospel Ministry

**STUDENT**



**FINANCIAL AID**

Congregational Partner Grant Matching Fund

**\$3-5 M**

**STUDENT**



**FACILITIES**

Residence Hall **\$12 M**

Athletic Center **FUNDED!**





INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK

In November 2021, Martin Luther College’s Cultural Engagement Center sponsored activities for **International Education Week** to help students learn more about the international students on campus and the opportunities that are available for them to serve in other countries. During the 2021–22 school year, 12 international students are attending Martin Luther College from 7 countries. Pictured are some of those students during an international and third culture student panel offered to the student body.

Megan Kassuelke, MLC’s director of cultural engagement, notes, “What our students learn at MLC impacts the entire synod. We need culturally competent people in our classrooms and churches who show Jesus’ love by making sure that everyone in their care feels seen, heard, and valued.”



COMMENCEMENT 2021

On May 15, 2021, **158 students graduated** from Martin Luther College, including 94 from the teacher track, 33 from the preseminary program, and 1 from the staff ministry track. Teachers and staff ministers were also assigned to their first calls that day.

STUDENT TEACHING

Luke Schultz began his day as a student teacher by listening to memory treasures in his fourth- through eighth-grade classroom at Immanuel, Hutchinson, Minn. Each Martin Luther College student completes a **student teaching assignment** in a Lutheran school and a public school.



# PREPARATORY SCHOOLS

Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., prepare high school students for future service as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. For the 2021–22 school year, Luther Preparatory School has 425 students and Michigan Lutheran Seminary has 182 students.

Both schools offer “Taste of Ministry” opportunities for students, which include shadowing called workers to learn more about their work. Students also are given firsthand gospel ministry experiences on campus and during mission trips.

For more information, visit [lps.wels.net](http://lps.wels.net) or [mlsem.org](http://mlsem.org).

## LUTHER PREPARATORY SCHOOL



**Abram Steinbrenner and Benjamin Felgenhauer** shadowed Rev. Jordan Ertl, pastor at St. John's, Baraboo, Wis., for Luther Preparatory School's Taste of Ministry.

**Ethan Buege and Isaiah Schlomer** volunteered for this Project Timothy mission trip to Divine Savior, West Palm Beach, Fla., through Luther Preparatory School.



## MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY



Six Michigan Lutheran Seminary students participated in this Project Titus trip to help with a science-themed vacation Bible school at Messiah, Johns Creek, Ga.

**Megan Beardslee**, a senior at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, visited St. Paul's, Saginaw, Mich., for Taste of Ministry.







Members of WELS' One Africa Team with a delegation from the Lutheran Church of Cameroon

# CALLED *to* PROCLAIM

Representatives of WELS' One Africa Team met with a delegation of pastors and laymen from the Lutheran Church of Cameroon in Douala, Cameroon, on October 23, 2021. The group discussed the partnership in the ministry that these groups share, the future of the Lutheran Church of Cameroon seminary, ministry training opportunities, and other ministry topics. At the conclusion of the meetings, Rev. Matthias Abumbi, Lutheran Church of Cameroon president, presented gifts of peace to the WELS missionaries. The gifts were cultural items from the Bakossi Tribe—a bag (*Ebam*), a cap (*Mbute*), and a cup (*Mbwinde*). When Abumbi placed the caps on their heads, the bags on their shoulders, and the cups in their hands,

he announced and explained that these gifts speak the powerful message—there is peace between us as brothers. The gifts expressed what the six-day meeting revealed—the tremendous and valuable gift of peace. Pictured with representatives from the Lutheran Church of Cameroon are (from left) Missionary John Holtz, Missionary Dan Kroll, Mr. Stefan Felgenhauer, and Missionary Howard Mohlke.

The Lutheran Church of Cameroon includes 31 congregations that are served by 8 national pastors, 3 evangelists, and 4 certified assistants. To learn more, visit [wels.net/cameroon](https://wels.net/cameroon).

# WORLD MISSIONS

WELS World Missions conducts and encourages gospel outreach in **44 foreign countries** and is exploring outreach opportunities in **20 additional countries**. World Missions brings the light of God's Word through evangelism efforts, church planting, training national workers for ministry, and providing religious materials in foreign languages through Multi-Language Productions. Forty-one world missionaries partner with more than 400 national pastors to conduct outreach and train more than 380 students for service in Christ's kingdom.

World Missions supports mission work:

- on the **Apache reservations in Arizona**, where the gospel is being shared in eight churches, one preaching station, and two Lutheran elementary schools;
- in **Africa**, where missionaries and national church partners from six existing countries are exploring mission work in ten additional African countries;
- in **Asia**, where the newly formed Asia One Team is coordinating resources and partnering with sister synods to reach out with the gospel to Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, and Muslim individuals in nine different countries;
- in **East Asia**, where missionaries are coaching and mentoring 45 mission group leaders in spite of tightening security, and Asia Lutheran Seminary is reaching hundreds of new students through new online classes;
- in **Latin America**, where the *Academia Cristo* online training tool is walking more than 360 people through self-led classes, and missionaries have identified more than 25 men in 11 different countries as potential church planters;
- in **Europe**, where national churches are partnering with WELS missionaries and the Pastoral Studies Institute to train the next generation of church leaders; and
- through **Multi-Language Productions**, which has produced confessional Christian content in more than 56 languages and on a variety of platforms.



MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Arturo and Maricruz Navarrete learned about God's grace through *Academia Cristo* and were confirmed as Lutherans in September 2021. The couple sold their living room furniture and purchased chairs, tables, and a coffee maker so they can host a new church group in their home in Mexico City, Mexico.



NONG KHAI, THAILAND

Missionary Tom Chaleunsouk baptized six people in March 2021 in Nong Khai, Thailand. Since 2020, Chiang Mai, Thailand, has served as a home base for the **Asia One Team**, which coordinates WELS mission efforts in South Asia and the Asia-Pacific Rim.



DID YOU KNOW?

The WELS world mission field on the **Apache reservations in Arizona** serves more than 3,600 baptized members through 5 missionaries, 2 national pastors, and 1 national evangelist.



MALAWI

**CAMM CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY**

WELS' Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM) celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2021. CAMM provides **health care through clinics** in Malawi and Zambia, serving more than 70,000 patients per year. Pictured is a young patient with an ear infection.



MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA

**NEW SYNOD IN LATIN AMERICA**

In October 2021, representatives from WELS and WELS' sister churches throughout Latin America met in Medellín, Colombia, to form a new synod—*Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*. Founding members come from churches in Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Venezuela. As part of a synod, these churches now carry out mission work together, train pastors together, and support each other with prayers and fellowship. Pictured is Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions, installing the officers of the new synod.

Synod membership is expected to swell in the future as new groups gathered through *Academia Cristo* training efforts complete a two-year confessional process called *Ruta Cristo* (Christ path). *Academia Cristo* launched in 2015. It is a multi-faceted effort of the WELS Latin America mission team to make disciples by sharing the message of God's grace through its website, mobile app, and social media; to identify and train potential leaders; and to encourage those leaders to make disciples who plant churches. Since *Academia Cristo's* launch, 47 students from 12 countries have become confessional Lutherans—41 in 2021 alone. Most of them have gathered and now lead groups of believers.

To learn more, visit [wels.net/latinamerica](https://wels.net/latinamerica).

# HOME MISSIONS

The Board for Home Missions approved financial support for home mission churches in five new locations in 2021, including:

- **Waco, Texas:** The Heart of Texas mission core group has been meeting regularly since March 2020. This mission is being supported by Trinity in nearby Temple, Texas.
- **Durham, N.C.:** Gethsemane, the WELS congregation in Raleigh, N.C., is launching a second site in nearby Durham. The gospel is especially needed in this area, as studies show that 75 percent of people in the area do not know their Savior.
- **Parrish, Fla.:** This new mission plant is being started and supported by Risen Savior in Lakewood Ranch, a previous home mission church that recently became self-supporting. Ascension in Sarasota is also supporting this new mission site, which is reaching out with the gospel to a community that is 85 percent unchurched.
- **Dickinson, N.D.:** A committed core group has been meeting regularly for livestreamed worship and monthly gatherings since 2012, served by pastors from Redeemer, Mandan, N.D., and Our Saviour's, Bismarck, N.D. Those two congregations as well as Salem, Circle, Mont., will be

supporting this new mission start named Amazing Grace.

- **Collinsville, Ill.:** Christ Our Savior, Collinsville, Ill., has served as a preaching station of Martin Luther, St. Louis, Mo., since 2002. Home Missions is now providing funding to Christ Our Savior to call its own pastor. The group pictured (right) took an evangelism and outreach training course from Praise and Proclaim Ministries in October 2021 and is looking forward to reaching out to its community with its new pastor.

In 2021, Home Missions approved financial support for four existing ministries, including King of Kings, Willoughby, Ohio; Christ the Rock, Hutto, Texas; Ascension, Crossville, Tenn.; and Summerlin, Las Vegas, Nev. Home Missions also approved unsubsidized mission status for Redeemer, Fallbrook, Calif.; St. John's on the Hillside, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Good Shepherd, Beloit, Wis. Home Missions provides assistance to unsubsidized mission congregations through its district missions boards, mission counselors, synodical support staff, and special project funds, but does not provide direct financial support.



Christ Our Savior, Collinsville, Ill.



## FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER

Rev. Paul Bourman presents a children's devotion at Hope, Tigard, Ore. Hope is one of the 132 congregations that Home Missions supported in 2021.





## INTOWN LUTHERAN, ATLANTA, GA.

On October 17, 2021, Rev. Lucas Bitter, pastor at Intown Lutheran, Atlanta, Ga., baptized Lauren Glenney. Bitter began reaching out to those in the heart of the city in 2017. This home mission has created deep roots in its community through local service projects and fellowship events. Members let their lights shine as they interact with their neighbors.



## CAMPUS MINISTRY

Campus ministry students in Milwaukee, Wis., volunteered at the WELS Bargain Center, which supports its ministry, in September 2021. Home Missions provided funding to 25 campus ministries in 2021. A full-time campus ministry mission counselor, Rev. Dan Lindner, is now serving all WELS campus ministries.



## MISSION CONNECTIONS

Salvador, a Spanish-speaker who lives in Denver, Colo., began studying virtually with *Academia Cristo* and then sought a local congregation that would teach the same things as *Academia Cristo*. He found Christ Lutheran Church/*Iglesia Luterano Cristo*, WELS' home mission in Denver, which offers Spanish worship services. Salvador's children were recently baptized (pictured with Rev. Paul Biedenbender), the family attends church regularly, and Salvador is training to become a leader in the congregation.

### DID YOU KNOW?



In July 2021, the synod in convention approved a WELS Home Missions **initiative to plant 100 new home mission churches and enhance 75 existing ministries** from 2023–2033.

# JOINT MISSIONS



FIVE MISSIONARIES COMMISSIONED

WELS Missions commissioned five new missionaries during the closing service of Taste of Missions in July 2021. Pictured from left: Rev. Mark Zondag, world missionary on the Asia One Team; Rev. Lucas Callies, home missionary at Good Shepherd, North Liberty, Iowa; Rev. Isaac Hayes, home missionary at St. John's on the Hillside, Milwaukee, Wis.; Rev. Timothy Walsh, home missionary at Grace of God, Dix Hills, N.Y.; and Rev. Andrew Westra, home missionary at a new mission start in Waco, Texas.

In 2021, Taste of Missions provided an online missions experience for WELS members around the world. The 2022 event is scheduled to take place both online and in person at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., on June 11. For more information, visit [tasteofmissions.com](http://tasteofmissions.com).



MISSION JOURNEYS

In November 2021, a **WELS Mission Journeys** team from St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis., traveled to Hope in the Heights, a WELS home mission congregation in Houston, Texas. The team assisted Hope with its outreach efforts.



Rev. Ger Lor confirmed 11 new members at **Grace Hmong Lutheran, Kansas City, Kan.**, in January 2021.





WELS Christian Aid and Relief provided smokeless stoves in South Asia

# CALLED *to* SERVE

WELS Christian Aid and Relief approved \$470,882 for humanitarian aid projects in WELS mission fields throughout the United States and worldwide for fiscal year 2021–22.

Rev. Daniel Sims, director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief, says, “When our missionaries can assist people in this way, it also helps to build trust and leads to many opportunities to then share the life-changing news of the gospel.”

The humanitarian aid granted through WELS Christian Aid and Relief takes many forms, including providing smokeless stoves to safely heat homes in South Asia (pictured above), medical clinics, assistance for legal immigrants, vocational training, and backpacks and school supplies for underprivileged kids.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief also offers disaster relief, which takes the form of monetary aid and volunteer efforts. In December 2021, a crew of

volunteers replaced roofs from two homes in New Orleans, La., that were damaged by Hurricane Ida.

“I can’t thank God enough for the support and prayers for Crown of Life that poured in after the storm,” says Rev. Jonathan Kehl, pastor at Crown of Life. “The immediate support was so encouraging, as well as the long-term commitments to aiding our congregation and area in recovery. We were excited to see the crew of Christian Aid and Relief volunteers, who generously gave their time and vacations to show up in New Orleans.”

In 2021, WELS Christian Aid and Relief also offered a grant program to help congregations offer pandemic relief to their communities.

For more information, visit [wels.net/relief](https://wels.net/relief).

# CONGREGATIONAL SERVICES

WELS Congregational Services exists to serve congregations and schools and their leaders by providing resources, training, and personal assistance so that they may carry out gospel ministry in the most faithful way on the local level. Congregational Services consists of six commissions—Congregational Counseling, Discipleship, Evangelism, Lutheran Schools, Worship, and Special Ministries. These commissions give focused attention to specific areas of congregational life.

Congregational Services shares its resources at [welscongregationservices.net](https://welscongregationservices.net), which was created to serve as a clearinghouse for its materials. It includes training videos, leaders' guides, Bible studies, ready-made graphics, and more covering a wide variety of topics.

## ANALYZING WELS STATISTICS

For about seven decades, at the end of each year, WELS has asked congregations to supply church statistics. Generally, over 95 percent of congregations do just that. A compliance rate that high yields very reliable and significant data. That data has been published each year in the WELS Statistical Report—over a hundred pages of numbers: membership, worship attendance, ministrations, and more.

In 2021, WELS Congregational Services published a statistical summary report that analyzes the data from 2020 and previous years. It translates those hundreds of pages of numbers into information that can be used by congregations and the synod as we plan how to best steward the resources God provides as we seek to do all we can with the gospel.

Find the WELS 2020 statistical summary at [welscongregationservices.net/stat-summary-2020](https://welscongregationservices.net/stat-summary-2020).



## THE FOUNDATION

“We rightly look at the opportunity to gather around Word and sacrament as the highlight of the week,” says Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services. “Ultimately, the gathering of the saints is the foundation of a congregation’s ministry. It is where the sheep are fed. It is where the universal priesthood gets the encouragement to be light and salt to a dark and dying world.”

With that idea in mind, WELS Congregational Services created *The Foundation*, an effort to build upon the importance of public worship both on Sunday morning and throughout the week. Congregational Services now provides worship, evangelism, discipleship, and school resources for every week of the year. All the resources are catalogued at [welscongregationservices.net](https://welscongregationservices.net) and are available for free.

Pictured is the Advent theme carried out in all *The Foundation* resources for Advent 2021.





EVANGELISM

## EVERYONE OUTREACH

WELS Commission on Evangelism is now offering Everyone Outreach workshops to congregations that want to build a culture of outreach so that every ministry and every member is thinking about and participating in outreach. The workshop and extended program include group activities, thought-provoking discussions, and a process to keep outreach in focus and track engagement. WELS Commission on Evangelism trained 21 facilitators to help lead these workshops in 2021. Pictured is Rev. Jonathan Scharf facilitating a workshop at Abiding Word, Houston, Texas.

## EQUIP WOMEN TO TEACH THE WORD

*Equip Women to Teach the Word* provides online training to Christian women, enabling them to teach the Word of God in home and congregational settings. Resources include five online lessons with accompanying videos to build a biblical foundation and provide step-by-step instruction that replaces fear with confidence to serve.

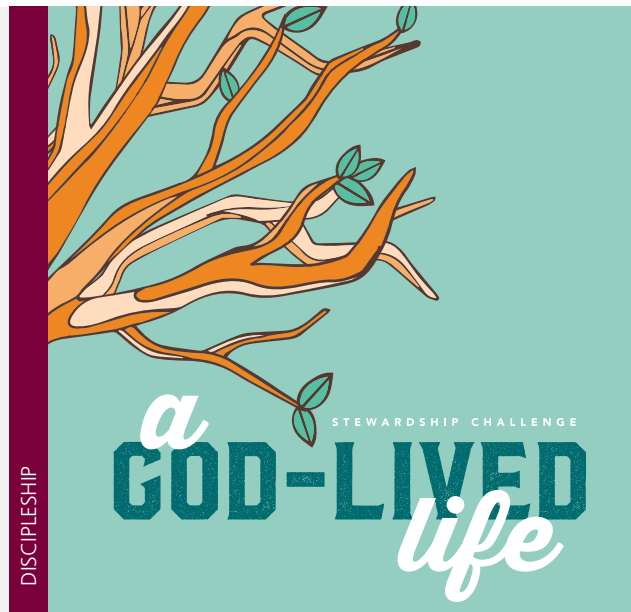
*“Equip Women to Teach the Word is for the woman who wants to be well prepared, improve her teaching, and stand firm on the Word of God despite the influences of the world around her,”* says Mrs. Dawn Schulz, a member of WELS Women’s Ministry, which was commissioned to develop the resource. It stresses the important partnership between pastor and laypeople as they work together to carry out their church’s ministry. Find it at [welscongregationalservices.net/equip-women-to-teach](https://welscongregationalservices.net/equip-women-to-teach).



## A GOD-LIVED LIFE

WELS Commission on Discipleship released a new stewardship challenge titled “A God-Lived Life.” As Rev. Donn Dobberstein, director of the commission, explains, “ ‘A God-Lived Life’ is about more than stewardship. It’s a whole-life challenge to God’s people to live the life to which he has called them. The hope is that being challenged in specific ways will urge Christians to put into practice a closer walk with God and a life of love toward others. That’s a God-lived life.”

This four-part stewardship program focuses on the aspects of a God-lived life—a life of being a disciple, a life lived for others, a life of hospitality, and a life lived shrewdly. It is available at [welscongregationalservices.net](https://welscongregationalservices.net).





EVANGELISM BIBLE STUDY

## ONE BY ONE

“In my former life [as a detective], there were times if someone did not step up to lead, people could get hurt or die. The same is true for you—and for all of us—as Christians. Someone you have not met yet is counting on you to step up and lead—to lead them to Christ so they will live. Your church doesn’t have to grow by a thousand. It can grow one by one.” So begins Rev. David Rosenau’s article in the February 2021 issue of *Forward in Christ*.

Rosenau (pictured left) created a Bible study with the title “One by one” for WELS Commission on Evangelism. To see the Bible study, visit [welscongregationalservices.net](http://welscongregationalservices.net). To read the full *Forward in Christ* article, visit [forwardinchrist.net](http://forwardinchrist.net).

### DID YOU KNOW?



#### WELS NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LUTHERAN LEADERSHIP

WELS Congregational Services is hosting a second WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership from January 16–18, 2023, in Chicago, Ill. For more information, visit [lutheranleadership.com](http://lutheranleadership.com).

## FINDING SPIRITUAL SUPPORT WHILE IN THE MILITARY

Paul Wolfgramm (pictured), a 35-year-old Marine Corps Reserve veteran with deployment experience, understands the importance of the work of WELS Military Services—even though he admits he didn’t know about the resources offered by WELS during his own service. “It’s a time when your faith can be unraveled or it’s a time when your faith can really be strengthened and you can grow in your relationship with your Savior,” he says. “To be able to reach people who are in such a critical junction in their lives with God’s Word and sacraments is really special.”

As a laymember of WELS Military Services Committee, Wolfgramm now works to make sure other WELS members in the military know where they can find that spiritual support. The best place to start is at [wels.net/refer](http://wels.net/refer). “You can sign up yourself or you can refer someone else who is actively serving,” explains Wolfgramm.

In addition to receiving military-specific spiritual resources, service men and women who fill out the referral form will be put in contact with the nearest military contact pastor and potentially other WELS members in their area. WELS currently has 120 military contact pastors serving congregations near military installations and military service men and women on base.

Learn more at [wels.net/military](http://wels.net/military).

MILITARY SERVICES








Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah

LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

### WELS SCHOOLS BY THE NUMBERS

**2,922**  
 **WELS  
TEACHERS**

**MORE THAN**  
**44,900**  
**WELS STUDENTS**  
 (infant through high school seniors)

 **423**  
**SCHOOLS**

**68%**  
**OF WELS SCHOOLS**  
 had enrollment growth during  
 the 2021–22 school year

For more school statistics, visit [cls.welsrc.net/2021-stats](https://cls.welsrc.net/2021-stats).

### WORSHIP

## NATIONAL HYMNAL WEEK INTRODUCES HYMNAL

WELS Commission on Worship introduced its first WELS National Hymnal Week in September 2021 to provide an opportunity for WELS members to think about the blessings of worship as well as get a sneak peek at what the new *Christian Worship* hymnal has to offer.

The week involved a worship service that was based on the new lectionary readings of the day and included hymns and music from the new hymnal, a hymn sing, video presentations on new hymnal resources as well as on broader worship topics, and a pre-recorded concert. These resources are available at [welscongregationservices.net/hymnal-introduction-resources](https://welscongregationservices.net/hymnal-introduction-resources).

To learn more about *Christian Worship: Hymnal*, visit [christianworship.com](https://christianworship.com).



### PRISON MINISTRY

WELS Prison Ministry administers an extensive ministry-by-mail program. During the pandemic, demand for the Bible study books provided by WELS Prison Ministry soared. A small staff utilizes the services of hundreds of volunteers to manage the ministry-by-mail program, which has reached **more than 70,000 inmates**. Eighty-three percent of the Bible study course books that are distributed through WELS Prison Ministry produce a response from an inmate. Volunteers prepare regular mailings, correct Bible correspondence tests, and serve as pen pals to inmates.

# SUPPORT SERVICES

## WELS MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN GIVING

WELS Christian giving counselors serve God’s people with the good news of Jesus and help them offer gifts for Christ’s work in their congregations, local ministries, and WELS areas of ministry. There is no charge for their confidential service. Christian giving counselor contacts are made through in-person and phone/Zoom meetings. By God’s grace and to his glory, over the past 14 years our Christian giving counselors have helped WELS members offer \$93 million in immediate gifts and \$419 million in deferred expectancies. We thank Jesus for his gift of generosity! Pictured is Rev. Michael Hatzung, a WELS Christian giving counselor since 2005.



To learn more or request help with a gift to your church, synod, or WELS-affiliated ministry, visit [wels.net/christian-giving](https://wels.net/christian-giving) or call **800-827-5482**.

## WELS TECHNOLOGY

The **WELS Technology** team seeks to help the spread of the gospel with technology tools the Lord continues to make available in the 21st century. WELS Technology supports the synod’s gospel work by providing a capable and secure technical infrastructure, building and supporting applications used by synod workers and volunteers, facilitating digital communications, assisting congregations and called workers to better make use of technology, and coordinating technology initiatives that cannot be done at smaller organizational levels.



WELS COMMUNICATION SERVICES

**WELS Communication Services** coordinates the various WELS communication platforms so they have a recognizable look and feel and layers communications across those platforms. Some of those platforms include [wels.net](https://wels.net), WELS’ official website; “Together,” a bi-weekly e-newsletter and a bi-weekly video update; *Forward in Christ*, WELS’ official monthly magazine; *WELS Connection*, a monthly video highlighting how Congregation Mission Offerings are used; and WELS’ social media sites. As new programs are developed or new communications created, WELS Communication Services helps establish the design, offers input on the content, and helps areas of ministry develop a communication strategy for the new ministry tool.





Hymnal introduction seminar,  
St. John, Burlington, Wis.

# CALLED *to* SUPPORT

## NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) provides Christ-centered, biblically sound resources to the people of WELS and beyond. NPH publishes *Forward in Christ* and *Meditations: Daily Devotional*, elementary and Sunday school curricula, Bible studies, worship materials, music, and faith-strengthening books for laypeople. In 2021, NPH released more than 39 Christian resources in print and digital formats, including:

- *Christian Worship: God Gives His Gospel Gifts*, the final volume in the People's Bible Teachings series;
- *364 Days of Devotion: A Devotional Book*, a follow up to the popular *364 Days of Thanksgiving*;
- *The Story of God's Love*, an abridged Evangelical Heritage Version Bible;
- An Evangelical Heritage Version Study Bible;
- *A Theology of the Cross* audiobook narrated by sainted Prof. Daniel Deutschlander;

- *Here We Stand* Bible study for the anniversary of Luther's stand at the Diet of Worms;
- *10 Lies About God* Bible study, which confronts common misconceptions about who God is; and
- 11 music offerings for organ, piano, choirs, and vocal solos, 7 of which draw from new hymns in the 2021 *Christian Worship: Hymnal*.

In addition, NPH released the majority of the new *Christian Worship* hymnal suite volumes. NPH will release *Christian Worship: Service Builder* in late 2021 or early 2022 followed by additional *Christian Worship* resources. Complimentary copies of the hymnal and psalter were sent to all WELS churches in September 2021.

Visit [nph.net](http://nph.net) or call 800-662-6022 to learn more about the ministry of NPH.

### WELS BENEFIT PLANS

The WELS Benefit Plans Office (BPO) serves WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) workers and organizations through administration of the WELS Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association (VEBA) Health Plan, the WELS Pension Plan, and the WELS Shepherd Plan.

The WELS VEBA Health Plan provides benefits for church and school workers in accordance with God's Word while remaining compliant with the federal health care reform law. The plan provides comprehensive, nationwide coverage. More than 80 percent of WELS workers and calling bodies participate in WELS VEBA.

Delegates of the 2021 synod convention voted to change WELS' Pension Plan to a defined contribution plan for future worker retirement benefits. The Pension Plan was frozen on December 31, 2021, which means that no new benefits can be earned under the Pension Plan. Beginning January 1, 2022, eligible workers are being provided with contributions to be used for retirement benefits through a defined contribution plan that is administered through the WELS Shepherd Plan, which is the name of WELS' retirement savings plan for synod workers.

"There are three main advantages to the change," notes Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of WELS Benefit Plans. "First, workers will receive meaningful contributions for retirement benefits. Then, workers will have more flexibility to provide for their retirement income needs and to share savings with their survivors. Finally, sponsoring organization costs will remain more stable over time."

Coverage and benefits provided through WELS Benefit Plans are uniform throughout all 50 states. This supports the WELS ministry and call process because worker call decisions are not influenced by health insurance and retirement benefit decisions.

Visit [welsbpo.net](http://welsbpo.net) for more information.

### WELS CHURCH EXTENSION FUND

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc. (WELS CEF), provides financing through loans and grants to mission congregations so they can acquire land and ministry facilities to be used for gospel outreach in coordination with WELS Home Missions. WELS CEF also provides loans to self-supporting WELS congregations and schools for land and facility projects. The money to carry out WELS CEF's mission comes from investments and gifts from WELS members, congregations, and affiliated organizations.

In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, \$15.4 million of new loans and \$1.98 million of new grants were approved to mission and mission-minded self-supporting congregations. In addition, WELS CEF provided grants of \$1.06 million and \$.6 million to the Board for Home Missions from its annual endowment distribution and its newly created annual unrestricted net asset grant program. WELS CEF ended fiscal year 2021 with assets of \$229.1 million and net assets of \$117.5 million. Three thousand fifty-one WELS members invested more than \$106.9 million. The loan portfolio held \$184 million in 205 loans to congregations and affiliates.

For more information, visit [wels.net/cef](http://wels.net/cef).



GRACE, SAHUARITA, ARIZ.

Young members of Grace, Sahuarita, Ariz., watch in excitement as their new church undergoes the construction process. **WELS Church Extension Fund** provided more than \$500,000 in home missions grants to Grace, along with a low-interest loan for the remainder of the cost of the land and construction of its new church.

### WELS FOUNDATION

WELS Foundation currently administers more than 1,200 donor-directed planned gifts that support gospel ministry throughout WELS. What an impact on God's kingdom!

That impact was felt through the distributions to ministry that WELS Foundation was privileged to make in fiscal year 2021. Those distributions included \$6.7 million to WELS national ministries, \$5.2 million to WELS congregations, and \$1.8 million to WELS-affiliated ministries.

This past July, WELS Foundation distributed \$1 million to ministry through several synod endowments. In addition, WELS Foundation manages



endowments set up by individuals, congregations, and other WELS ministries. In total, WELS Foundation distributed \$3.5 million to gospel work from more than 350 endowments this past year.

To learn about leaving a legacy gift to share the gospel with the next generation, visit [wels.net/foundation](https://wels.net/foundation).

**WELS INVESTMENT FUNDS**

God poured out his blessings on WELS Investment Funds in fiscal year 2021. One of those blessings was the annual investment returns of last year: 25.19 percent for the WELS Balanced Fund and 32.27 percent for the WELS Endowment Fund. These returns had a tremendous impact on the ministries that invest through WELS Investment Funds.

By pooling investment resources through WELS Investment Funds, congregations can take advantage of lower cost, institutionally priced investment alternatives that would not otherwise be available. As more congregations and WELS-affiliated ministries invest in WELS Investment Funds, the cost-reduction benefits increase. As of September 30, 2021, WELS Investment Funds managed \$300 million in assets.

For the second year in a row, the WELS Endowment Fund’s net investment return placed in the 90th percentile in a comprehensive annual study of private and community foundations.

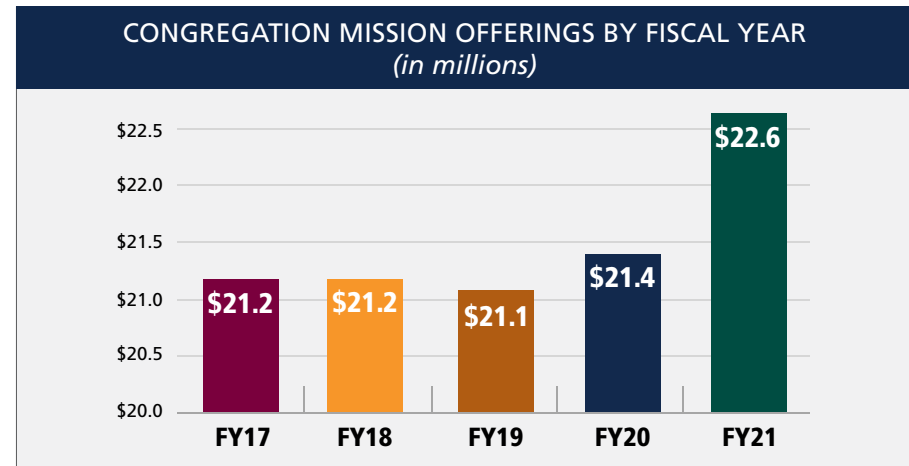
To learn why more than 230 WELS ministries have chosen to invest with WELS Investment Funds, visit [wels.net/welsfunds](https://wels.net/welsfunds).

**FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Financial Services provides accounting and financial services that support and serve WELS ministries.

“WELS is financially strong as God has continued to bless us with the financial gifts needed to maintain existing ministry levels and to develop a well-balanced ministry financial plan for the next biennium,” notes Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS’ chief financial officer.

Synod convention delegates passed the Synodical Council’s proposed ministry financial plan in July 2021. The development of the ministry financial plan is a collaborative process involving the areas of ministry, ministerial education schools, synod leadership, and the Synodical Council.



Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) are critical to WELS’ financial position as these offerings fund nearly three-quarters of WELS’ operating budget. WELS finished fiscal year 2021 (year ended June 30, 2021) with CMO of \$22.6 million, which was \$1.2 million higher than the previous year and the first time CMO exceeded \$22.0 million. In November 2021, the synod learned that its Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan was forgiven. Northwestern Publishing House and the four ministerial education schools had previously received forgiveness of their PPP loans.

Another critical component to WELS’ ability to maintain ministries are strong reserves, including the Financial Stabilization Fund. This fund holds all undesignated non-CMO funding sources (gifts, grants bequests, investment income, and other support) for a minimum of one year before being transferred to the operating fund. The financial position of the Financial Stabilization Fund allowed the Synodical Council to approve the transfer of certain reserves from the Financial Stabilization Fund into a new Ministry Opportunity Fund, which will provide a consistent source of funding for unfunded ministry opportunities. The Ministry Opportunity Fund will initially provide a total of \$3.0 million in distributions over the next four years to WELS Home Missions in support of its 100 new missions in 10 years initiative.



# WELS *in brief*

As a Christian church body, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's calling is to nurture the faith of our members and to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

WELS is the third largest Lutheran church body in the United States with 1,264 churches, 344,244 baptized members, and 275,259 communicant members.

WELS has 12 districts to allow for more area-specific ministry, personal contacts, and member involvement.

WELS Congregational Services provides resources, training, and personal assistance to congregations, schools, and their leaders so that they

may carry out gospel ministry in the most faithful way on the local level.

WELS congregations—either individually or as federations—operate one of the largest parochial school systems in the United States. This system includes 282 Lutheran elementary schools, 368 early childhood ministries, and 27 area Lutheran high schools. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis., a liberal arts college for Christian men and women, is a WELS-affiliated ministry.

WELS maintains four schools for the education of our pastors, teachers, and staff ministers—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis.; Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minn.; Luther Preparatory School

in Watertown, Wis.; and Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Mich.

WELS supports work in mission fields in the United States and in countries around the world.

WELS is a member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, an organization of 34 confessional church bodies throughout the world.

Five separately incorporated entities work closely with WELS to provide resources necessary to carry out WELS' ministry.

Known as the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, the synod's headquarters in Waukesha, Wis.,

also houses the WELS Archives and the WELS Visitor Center.

From collections that document the administration of WELS to individual congregational records, the WELS Archives helps preserve and share the history of our synod. Visit [wels.net/archives](https://wels.net/archives) for more information.

Tours to the WELS Visitor Center resumed in 2021 and may be scheduled by e-mailing [cmmtours@wels.net](mailto:cmmtours@wels.net) or by calling **414-256-3200**.

For more information about the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, including a directory of local congregations, visit [wels.net](https://wels.net).