

# Proceedings

October 2015

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD  
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
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**Notes**

To learn more about the convention and to view photos and video reports, visit [wels.net/2015synodconvention](http://wels.net/2015synodconvention).

Many references to the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM) are included within the convention resolutions. Unless otherwise noted, these are referencing the 2015 BORAM, which can be found at [wels.net/about-wels/official-reports](http://wels.net/about-wels/official-reports).

# Convention overview

**M**ore than 400 voting and advisory delegates met at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Mich., from July 27–30, 2015, for the 63rd Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

I am thankful to the delegates who took a week out of their busy schedules to be about the Lord's business. In addition to experiencing the uplifting worship services and devotions and hearing an excellent essay—all focused on the theme "One in Christ"—the delegates spent their time together reviewing the work of the synod during the past two years and making decisions on a number of issues.

## **The ministry financial plan (budget)**

Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) continue to be the backbone of the ministry financial plan. The 2015–17 plan features no increase in synodical support, with slight increases to the overall spending made possible by the use of special funds held by the areas of ministry.

The 2015–17 plan includes support for a significant number of new home missions, continuing mission efforts around the world, and the staffing and resources needed for our ministerial education schools to prepare the next generation of called workers.

Continuing payments have helped reduce the synod's capital debt to just under \$4.7 million (as of the time of synod convention) from \$22.4 million in 2007. This convention began a special offering, titled "One in Christ," to eliminate the debt two years early. Upon retirement of the debt, the \$1.6 million that has been contributed annually from the operating plan towards debt retirement could be made available for ministry. If the debt is not retired at the end of FY16, additional unplanned resources will be needed to fund the remaining portion of the debt. See p. 60 for the list of unfunded ministries that could benefit from this funding.

## **Ad Hoc Commission 2**

The 2013 synod in convention approved a resolution to establish a new ad hoc commission to look at all areas of the synod structure and programs, especially in the areas not addressed by the previous commission, and to report on its results to the 2015 convention. In fall 2013 I appointed the members of the Ad Hoc Commission 2 (AHC2). The AHC2, chaired by Second Vice President Joel Voss, put together a report listing many of the blessings it discovered about the synod's work and also thirteen topics it researched and put together recommendations concerning. Floor Committee #21 considered the work of the AHC2 and addressed many of the AHC2's concerns with the resolutions it brought to the convention floor (see pp. 44-49). We thank the members of the AHC2 for the many hours of work that they put into carrying out their assignment.

## **Movie preview**

Rev. Mike Hintz, director of the Commission on Evangelism, gave convention delegates a sneak peek of WELS' new movie, *My Son, My Savior*. Hintz showed a trailer of this outreach movie, which shows Jesus' life through the eyes of his mother, Mary. The movie is a follow-up to the successful *Road to Emmaus* and *Come Follow Me* films.

Delegates learned that the DVD for *My Son, My Savior*, as well as supporting and promotional materials, will be available in October. WELS congregations are encouraged to use *My Son, My Savior* during Advent 2015.

WELS Commissions on Evangelism and Adult Discipleship; Northwestern Publishing House; WELS Multi-Language Publications; and Boettcher+Trinklein Television, Inc., are collaborating on this series of outreach movies, which are made possible through individual donations and grants.

## **Mission presentations**

Many delegates commented on how they were moved deeply by the presentations of WELS world missionaries and Bishop Vyacheslav Horpynchuk of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. These mission presentations are a highlight of each convention as they showcase the work that God is accomplishing through our support as a church body.

## **Convention 2017**

The next synod convention will take place in July 2017 at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis.

## **In conclusion**

I am thankful for the opportunity to continue serving as your synod president. It has truly been a privilege, and I ask for your continuing prayers as I begin a third term.

For complete information on the 2015 convention, visit [wels.net/2015synodconvention](http://wels.net/2015synodconvention).

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder

# Voting delegates

## Arizona-California District

### Pastors

Bradley Bode  
Charles D. Found  
Charles Gumm  
Adam Horneber  
Richard Kogler  
Peter Kruschel  
Thomas Rothe  
Paul W. Schulz  
Matthew Vogt  
David Warskow

### Teachers and staff ministers

Michael Ash  
Peter Buege  
Steven Rosenbaum  
Jeremiah Strassburg  
Larry Zarnstorff

### Laymen

Don Ascoli  
James Brenner  
Roger Carter  
Neil Detloff  
Dennis Enser  
Matt Glaeser  
John Houchins  
John Penhalegon  
Floyd Pinkney

Joel Rhoads  
James Robinson  
Gary Savelli  
John Sempert  
Alexander Titus  
Danny Weimer  
Peter Yee

## Dakota-Montana District

### Pastors

Paul Janke  
Robert Koester  
Eugene Roecker  
William Russow

### Teachers and staff ministers

Eric Brown

### Laymen

Brian Dickey  
Sergio Dominguez  
David Edison  
Wayne Heuer  
Eugene King  
Thomas Klaudt

Gerald Pepke  
Joseph Purcell  
Ervin Schadler  
Marvin Schlomer

## Michigan District

### Pastors

Steven Bauer  
Spencer Biga  
Robert Duehlmeyer  
Cary Grant  
David Kipfmiller  
David Koehler  
William Mayhew  
Scott Miller  
David Putz  
James Seelow  
Daniel Simons  
Jeffrey Sonntag  
Thomas Westra

### Teachers and staff ministers

Jeremy Dennings  
Michael Falk  
Steven Grosinske  
Matthew Groth  
Kevin Needham  
Nathan Sievert

### Laymen

Daniel Butler  
Craig Ehinger  
Richard Fischer Jr.  
William Gutowski  
Shawn Harrington  
William Hayes  
Brandon Hughes  
George Kempf  
Michael Lahmann  
Joseph Maples  
Gary Morgan  
Gordon Nessler

Ronald Nichol  
David Pawley  
Gary Raffel  
Randall Rathje  
Wayne Schember  
Craig Schuette  
Richard Spike  
David Sudhoff  
Gary Treichel  
Thomas Wood

## Minnesota District

### Pastors

Keith Bilitz  
Timothy Bode  
Mark Cordes  
James Danell  
Charles Degner  
David Huebner  
Mark Kaesmeyer  
Paul Koelpin  
Jonathan Kruschel  
Paul Marggraf  
Pheng Moua  
James Pope  
Jason Schulz  
Tim Smith  
Dennis Valleau

### Teachers and staff ministers

Kelly Emde  
James Grunwald  
Thomas Hunter  
Eric Kaesermann  
Robert Klindworth  
Mark Kutz  
Stephen Merten  
John E. Meyer  
Daniel Plath  
Aaron Schleusener  
Daniel Whitney

### Laymen

Bruce Beussman  
Russell Bratsch  
Karl Breitzkreutz  
Harold Brown  
Anthony Chapas  
Edward Cohrs  
Jon Enstad  
Lee Erickson  
Dale Hadler  
Elwood Heldt  
Paul Holzhueter

Dean Lind  
Shaun Morris  
Bernhard Pieper  
Gerald Ramthun  
Timothy Russow Sr.  
Raymond Schmidt  
Luke Wegner  
Fred Wegner  
Rodney Werner  
Loren Wondrasch

## Nebraska District

### Pastors

Joshua Hillmann  
Troy Jacobs  
Philip Kieselhorst  
Jonathan Micheel  
David Wietzke

### Teachers and staff ministers

Dale Rundgren  
Philip Stern

### Laymen

Owen Clayton  
Bernard Cooper  
Richard Einert  
Alan Gotta  
Daniel Mayhew  
Dan Meihak  
Andy Monday

Clayton Petersen  
Dana Rabenberg  
Scott Richert  
Douglas Ruhter  
Jon Thibaudeau  
Walter Wendt

## North Atlantic District

### Pastors

Heath Butler  
Michael Gehl  
Jeremiah Gumm  
N. Wayne Halldorson

### Teachers and staff ministers

Kevin Walker

### Laymen

Michael Baird  
Jeremy Doherty  
Brian Hughey

Al Jacobs  
Bill Schaumburg

## Northern Wisconsin District

### Pastors

Darin Aden  
John Boggs  
Paul Cerny  
William Finn  
Christopher Goelzer  
Beck Goldbeck  
Ross Henzi  
Richard Krahn II  
Luke Myslik  
Philip Paustian  
Paul Schuler  
Marcus Schulz  
Jon Zabell  
Jonathan Zietlow

### Teachers and staff ministers

Kevin Ehlke  
Timothy Hemling  
Nathaniel Kallies  
Justin Liepert  
Adam Mateske  
Joshua Schmidt

### Laymen

Glenn Bechler  
Norman Blattler  
Steven DeMerritt  
Robert Eberhardt  
Roger Francois  
James Freer  
Alan Geisthardt  
Robert Goggins  
Ronald Harrison  
Brian Hoppe  
Dale Kelm  
Dennis Malenke  
John Meiselwitz

William Prue  
Kenneth Rosenthal  
Bud Rusch  
Kenneth Sletten  
Michael Smith  
William Steinbrenner  
Gary Vanderheyden  
Jordan Wenzel  
Tom Wilde



## Pacific Northwest District

### Pastors

Thomas Gumm  
Gary Kraklow  
Daniel Kramer  
Frederick Voss

### Teachers and staff ministers

Allen Ash  
David Malnes

### Laymen

Kenneth Barton  
James Bennington  
Earl Lackey  
Brian Saatkamp

Thomas Starling  
David Stuhlmiller  
Harold Wellnitz

## South Atlantic District

### Pastors

Kent Holz  
Martin Luchterhand  
Stephen Mueller  
Charles Vannieuwenhoven  
Paul Werner  
Jason Zahn

### Teachers and staff ministers

Randy Cochran  
Jonathan Romsdahl

### Laymen

Jeff Bare  
Dennis Duessler  
Gary Frey  
Jerry Merritt  
Daniel Meyer  
Kenneth Morris

Don Rowe  
Ron Schebel  
Ronald Schmitz  
John Schneider  
Michael Schotthey  
Robert Strenad

## South Central District

### Pastors

Nathanael Bourman  
Kevin Mau  
Andrew Retberg

### Teachers and staff ministers

Andrew Van Weele

### Laymen

David Bertram  
Robert Collier  
Andrew Krentz  
John McLaughlin  
Brent Nemmers

Lee Niethammer  
Jack Riggs  
Matthew Weseloh  
Ronald Zahrt

## Southeastern Wisconsin District

### Pastors

Aaron Christie  
Robert Dick  
George Ferch  
Keith Free  
Robert Gurgel  
Michael Helwig  
Kevin Hundley  
Frank Italiano  
David Kehl  
James Kleist  
Charles Papenfuss  
Robert Pasbrig  
John Paustian  
David Rockhoff  
Matthew Schwartz  
Aaron Steinbrenner  
Michael Turriff  
Peter Unnasch  
Mark Wagner

### Teachers and staff ministers

Joe Archer  
Brett Baade  
Thomas Banaszak  
James Brandt  
David Brightsman  
Robert Buschkopf  
Daniel Ebeling  
Kyle Gut  
Frederick Horn  
Paul Huebner  
Michael Marquardt  
Brian Mensching  
Mark Moldenhauer  
Carl Nolte  
Shawn Riesop  
Courtney Schmidt  
Darwin Schramm  
Daniel Schulz  
James Sievert  
Paul Strutz  
Scott Wagner  
Marv Wittig  
Keith Wordell  
Donovan Zastrow

### Laymen

William Apmann  
Donald Becker  
Mark Bergemann  
Mark Brandau  
Greg Busse  
Ronald Butt  
Damion Glisper  
Kenneth Kaepernick  
Kurt Kopplin  
Scott Lee  
David Mays  
Michael O'Brien  
Ronald Przybyla  
Anthony Rekeweg  
Brian Schluntz  
Thomas Siegel  
David Siegler  
Mark Stair  
Brad Techlin  
Alan Vitense  
Fredrick Westrich  
Daryl Wuenne

## Western Wisconsin District

### Pastors

Jonathan Bilitz  
Robert Edwards  
Patrick Feldhus  
Jon Guenther  
Dale Hella  
Daniel Iwinski  
David Karow  
Bradley Pearson  
Jonathan Rossman  
Raymond Schumacher  
Daniel Sims  
Paul Stratman  
Paul Welke  
Robert Wilke

### Teachers and staff ministers

Stephen Berg  
Jonathan Biedenbender  
Andrew Dais  
William Hinz  
Carl Hochmuth  
Robert Pagel  
Benjamin Rank  
Matthew Schiebel  
Frederick Utteck

### Laymen

Christopher Abel  
Gerald Baumann  
Henry Berry  
William Bittner  
Frederick Camacho  
Albert Demaske  
Ronald Fregien  
LaVern Georgson  
Thomas Heuer  
Timothy Kiefer  
Thomas Kuzenski

Fred Lintelmann  
Douglas Luttrell  
Robert Putz  
Kevin Riley  
Ronald Schneider  
Norman Trier  
Delbert Werner  
Raymond Zunker

## World missionaries

Mark Panning  
Terry Schultz  
Robert Siirila

# 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. Earle Treptow, Nebraska  
Rev. Donald Tollefson, North Atlantic

Rev. Joel Zank, Northern Wisconsin  
Rev. John Steinbrenner, Pacific Northwest  
Rev. John Guse, South Atlantic  
Rev. Donald Patterson, South Central  
Rev. David Rutschow, Southeastern Wisconsin  
Rev. Herbert Prahl, Western Wisconsin

## Synodical Council

Mr. Steven Hansen, Arizona-California  
Mr. Kenneth Gosch, Dakota-Montana  
Mr. Mark Bannan, 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. Philip Hirsch, chairman, 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. Charles Westra, chairman, Board for Home Missions  
Rev. Keith Free\*, administrator, Board for Home Missions  
Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator, Board for World Missions  
Mr. Sean Young, director, Missions Operations

## Other

Rev. James Behringer, director, Commission on Special Ministries  
Prof. John Brenner, chairman, Commission on Inter-Church Relations  
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  
Mr. Lee Hitter, director, Communication Services  
Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director, Ministry of Christian Giving  
Mr. Dennis Maurer, director, Human Resources  
Rev. Paul Naumann, chairman, Committee on Constitutional Matters  
Mr. Joshua Peterman, director, Benefit Plans  
Mr. Todd Poppe, chief financial officer  
Teacher James Rademan, director, Commission on Lutheran Schools  
Mr. Martin Spriggs, chief technology officer

\* Also served as a voting delegate

# Floor committees

## Committee #1: President's Report

Pastor Jon Zabell, chairman  
Teacher Eric Brown, secretary  
Pastor James Danell  
Pastor George Ferch  
Pastor Joshua Hillmann  
Pastor Richard Kogler  
Teacher David Malnes  
Teacher Robert Pagel

Layman Jon Enstad  
Layman Damion Glisper  
Layman Allen Jacobs  
Layman Floyd Pinkney  
Layman Randall Rathje  
Layman Kenneth Rosenthal  
Layman Don Rowe  
Layman Michael Smith

## Committee #2: Conference of Presidents

Pastor Bradley Bode, chairman  
Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary  
Pastor Keith Bilitz  
Pastor Jon Guenther  
Pastor Jonathan Zietlow  
Teacher Eric Kaesermann  
Teacher Kevin Needham  
Layman James Bennington

Layman Sergio Dominguez  
Layman William Schaumberg  
Layman Craig Schuette  
Layman Ken Sletten  
Layman Alexander Titus  
Layman Rodney Werner  
Layman Tom Wilde

## Committee #3: Commission on Inter-Church Relations

Pastor Paul Janke, chairman  
Pastor Paul Schuler, secretary  
Pastor Frank Italiano Jr.  
Pastor David Putz  
Pastor Frederick Voss  
Teacher Michael Ash  
Teacher Daniel Schulz  
Layman Craig Ehinger

Layman Robert Goggins  
Layman Thomas Heuer  
Layman Brian Hoppe  
Layman Andy Monday  
Layman James Robinson  
Layman Raymond Schmidt  
Layman Thomas Starling  
Layman Danny Weimer

## **Committee #4: Ministry of Christian Giving**

Pastor Robert Koester, chairman  
Pastor Jon Micheel, secretary  
Pastor Ross Henzi  
Pastor Thomas Rothe  
Pastor Michael Turriff  
Teacher Andrew Bare  
Teacher Peter Buege  
Teacher Andrew Dais

Layman David Bertram  
Layman Norman Blattler  
Layman Russell Bratsch  
Layman Dennis Enser  
Layman Fred Lintelmann  
Layman Clayton Peterson  
Layman Gary Raffel  
Layman Alan Vitense

## **Committee #5: Communication Services**

Pastor Philip Kieselhorst, chairman  
Teacher Carl Nolte, secretary  
Pastor Darin Aden  
Pastor David Rockhoff  
Pastor Paul W. Schulz  
Teacher Thomas Banaszak  
Layman Kenneth Barton

Layman Gerald Baumann  
Layman William Bittner  
Layman Paul Holzhueter  
Layman Dennis Malenke  
Layman Gerald Pepke  
Layman John Schneider  
Layman David Sudhoff

## **Committee #6: Synodical Council**

Pastor James Seelow, chairman  
Teacher James Grunwald, secretary  
Pastor Kent Holz  
Pastor David Huebner  
Pastor David Wietzke  
Teacher Brian Mensching  
Teacher Larry Zarnstorff  
Layman Michael Baird

Layman Henry Berry  
Layman Steven DeMerritt  
Layman Jerry Merritt  
Layman David Pawley  
Layman Joseph Purcell  
Layman Jack Riggs  
Layman Walter Wendt

## **Committee #7: Support Services**

Teacher Frederick Uttech, chairman  
Pastor Martin Luchterhand, secretary  
Pastor Charles Found  
Pastor Beck Goldbeck  
Pastor Dale Hella  
Pastor Peter Unnasch  
Teacher Daniel Ebeling  
Teacher Marv Wittig  
Layman Don Ascoli

Layman Richard Fischer  
Layman Wayne Heuer  
Layman Brian Hughey  
Layman Daniel Meyer  
Layman Tim Russow Sr.  
Layman Brian Saatkamp  
Layman Brian Schluntz  
Layman Ronald Zahrt

## **Committee #8: WELS Historical Institute and WELS Archives**

Pastor Adam Horneber, chairman  
Teacher Steven Rosenbaum, secretary  
Pastor Richard Krahn  
Pastor Stephen Mueller  
Pastor Terry Schultz  
Staff Minister Kelly Emde  
Teacher William Hinz

Layman Anthony Chapas  
Layman Eugene King  
Layman Joseph Maples  
Layman Lee Niethammer  
Layman Ron Przybyla  
Layman Douglas Ruhter

## **Committee #9: Christian Aid and Relief**

Pastor Aaron Christie, chairman  
Pastor Robert Gurgel, secretary  
Pastor William Finn  
Pastor Paul Marggraf  
Pastor Luke Myslik  
Pastor Robert Pasbrig  
Teacher Allen Ash  
Teacher Justin Liepert

Layman Harold Brown  
Layman Dennis Duessler  
Layman William Hayes  
Layman Daniel Mayhew  
Layman Gary Savelli  
Layman Marvin Schlomer  
Layman William Steinbrenner  
Layman David Stuhlmiller

## **Committee #10: Finance and budget**

Pastor Heath Butler, chairman  
Teacher John Meyer, secretary  
Pastor Robert Duehlmeyer  
Pastor Daniel Sims  
Pastor Aaron Steinbrenner  
Pastor Thomas Westra  
Teacher Darwin Schram

Teacher Keith Wordell  
Layman Jeremy Doherty  
Layman Matthew Glaeser  
Layman Dan Meihak  
Layman John Meiselwitz  
Layman Anthony Rekeweg  
Layman Fred Wegner

## **Committee #11: World Missions, Joint Mission Council**

Pastor John Boggs, chairman  
Pastor Raymond Schumacher, secretary  
Pastor Paul Cerny  
Pastor Mark Kaesmeyer  
Pastor Scott Miller  
Teacher Brett Baade  
Teacher Adam Mateske  
Teacher Mark Moldenhauer  
Teacher Jeremiah Strassburg

Layman James Brenner  
Layman Robert Eberhardt  
Layman Alan Gotta  
Layman Ronald Harrison  
Layman Elwood Heldt  
Layman Earl Lackey  
Layman Michael Lahmann  
Layman Ronald Nichol

## **Committee #12: Home Missions**

Pastor Timothy Bode, chairman  
Teacher Scott Wagner, secretary  
Pastor William Mayhew  
Pastor Matthew Schwartz  
Pastor James Pope  
Teacher Matthew Groth  
Teacher Frederick Horn

Layman Neil Detloff Jr.  
Layman Roger Francois  
Layman David Mays  
Layman Gary Morgan  
Layman William Prue  
Layman Gerald Ramthun  
Layman Harold Wellnitz

## **Committee #13: Ministerial Education**

Pastor Jason Zahn, chairman  
Teacher Dale Rundgren, secretary  
Pastor Philip Paustian  
Pastor Mark Wagner  
Pastor Paul Werner  
Teacher Jonathan Romsdahl  
Teacher Andrew Van Weele

Layman Roger Carter  
Layman Thomas Kuzenski  
Layman Scott Richert  
Layman Robert Strenad  
Layman Loren Wondrasch  
Layman Daryl Wuenne

## **Committee #14: Congregation and Ministry Support Group A (Worship, Evangelism, Congregational Counseling)**

Pastor Jeremiah Gumm, chairman  
Teacher Jeremy Dennings, secretary  
Pastor Gary Kraklow  
Pastor Charles Papenfuss  
Pastor Tim Smith  
Pastor Matthew Vogt  
Teacher David Brightsman  
Teacher Steve Merten

Layman Jeff Bare  
Layman Glenn Bechler  
Layman Ronald Butt  
Layman Thomas Klauadt  
Layman Jon Thibaudeau  
Layman Luke Wegner  
Layman Peter Yee

## **Committee #15: Congregation and Ministry Support Group B (Special Ministries, Adult Discipleship, Youth and Family Ministry)**

Pastor Michael Helwig, chairman  
Teacher Joshua Schmidt, secretary  
Pastor Kevin Hundley  
Pastor Daniel Kramer  
Pastor David Warskow  
Pastor Jonathan Bilitz  
Teacher Michael Falk  
Teacher Benjamin Rank

Layman Alan Geisthardt  
Layman William Gutowski  
Layman Scott Lee  
Layman Kenneth Morris  
Layman Gordon Nessler  
Layman Ervin Schadler  
Layman Ron Schebel

## **Committee #16: Congregation and Ministry Support Group C (Lutheran Schools)**

Teacher Carl Hochmuth, chairman  
Pastor Robert Edwards, secretary  
Pastor Thomas Gumm  
Pastor John Paustian  
Pastor Eugene Roecker  
Teacher Nathaniel Kallies  
Teacher Shawn Riesop

Layman Lee Erickson  
Layman Ronald Fregian  
Layman George Kempf  
Laymann Timothy Kiefer  
Layman Andrew Krentz  
Layman John Penhalegon



## **Committee #17: Northwestern Publishing House and Publication Coordinating Commission**

Teacher James Brandt, chairman  
Pastor Paul Welke, secretary  
Teacher Timothy Hemling  
Pastor Charles Gumm  
Pastor David Koehler  
Pastor William Russow  
Pastor Robert Wilke  
Teacher Stephen Berg

Layman Frederick Camacho  
Layman Richard Einert  
Layman Shawn Harrington  
Layman Brent Nemmers  
Layman Bernhard Pieper  
Layman Bud Rusch  
Layman Michael Schottey

## **Committee #18: Church Extension Fund**

Layman Joel Rhoads, chairman  
Teacher Thomas Hunter, secretary  
Pastor Charles Degner  
Pastor Pheng Moua  
Pastor Mark Panning  
Pastor Wayne Halldorson  
Pastor Paul Stratman

Teacher Courtney Schmidt  
Layman Bruce Beussman  
Layman Owen Clayton  
Layman Dale Kelm  
Layman Michael O'Brian  
Layman Ronald Schmitz  
Layman Thomas Wood

## **Committee #19: WELS Foundation and WELS Investment Funds**

Teacher James Sievert, chairman  
Teacher Philip Stern, secretary  
Pastor David Kehl  
Pastor Peter Kruschel  
Pastor Marcus Schulz  
Teacher Matthew Schiebel  
Layman William Apmann

Layman Mark Brandau  
Layman Karl Breitzkreutz  
Layman Gary Frey  
Layman Dale Hadler  
Layman Dana Rabenberg  
Layman Mark Stair  
Layman Gary Treichel

## **Committee #20: WELS Benefit Plans (VEBA and Pension)**

Layman James Freer, chairman  
Pastor Nathanael Bourman, secretary  
Pastor James Kleist  
Pastor Jonathan Rossman  
Pastor Jason Schulz  
Pastor Jeffrey Sonntag  
Teacher Michael Marquardt  
Teacher Daniel Whitney

Layman Brandon Hughes  
Layman Kurt Kopplin  
Layman Dean Lind  
Layman Shaun Morris  
Layman Kevin Riley  
Layman Thomas Siegel  
Layman Brad Techlin  
Layman Gary Vanderheyden

## **Committee #21: Ad Hoc Commission 2**

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary  
Pastor Patrick Feldhus  
Pastor Cary Grant  
Pastor Christopher Goelzer  
Pastor Daniel Iwinski  
Pastor Paul Koelpin  
Teacher Kyle Gut

Layman Mark Bergemann  
Layman Daniel Butler  
Layman LaVern Georgson  
Layman John Houchins  
Layman Ronald Schneider  
Layman Delbert Werner  
Layman Frederick Westrich

## **Committee #22: Miscellaneous memorials**

Pastor Robert Dick, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Walker, secretary  
Pastor Mark Cordes  
Pastor David Karow  
Pastor Andrew Retberg  
Pastor Robert Siirila  
Teacher Jonathan Biedenbender

Teacher Donovan Zastrow  
Layman Edward Cohrs  
Layman John McLaughlin Jr.  
Layman David Siegler  
Layman Richard Spike  
Layman Norman Trier  
Layman Jordan Wenzel

## **Committee #23: Constitutional Matters**

Pastor Daniel Simons, chairman  
Pastor Steven Bauer, secretary  
Pastor Troy Jacobs  
Pastor Keith Free  
Teacher Joe Archer  
Teacher Robert Buschkopf  
Teacher Paul Huebner

Teacher Mark Kutz  
Layman Christopher Abel  
Layman Donald Becker  
Layman Robert Collier  
Layman Wayne Schember  
Layman Raymond Zunker

## **Committee #24: Elections**

Teacher Robert Klindworth, chairman  
Teacher Daniel Plath, secretary  
Pastor Spencer Biga  
Pastor Jonathan Kruschel  
Pastor Kevin Mau  
Pastor Bradley Pearson

Teacher Paul Strutz  
Layman Greg Busse  
Layman Brian Dickey  
Layman Robert Putz  
Layman John Sempert  
Layman Matt Weseloh

## **Committee #25: Membership and attendance**

Pastor David Kipfmiller, chairman  
Teacher Aaron Schleusener  
Pastor Dennis Valleau

Layman Dave Edison  
Layman Douglas Luttrell

## **Committee #26: Resolutions**

Teacher Nathan Sievert, chairman  
Pastor Michael Gehl

Teacher Steven Grosinske  
Layman Kenneth Kaepernick

## **Committee #27: Steering**

Rev. John Guse, chairman, South Atlantic District President  
Rev. Donald Tollefson, secretary, North Atlantic District President  
Rev. Joel Zank, Northern Wisconsin District President

# President's Report

July 28, 2015

Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

President Mark Schroeder

**D**aniel found himself in a predicament. The king had ordered all of his subjects to pray to no one other than the king for 30 days. Disobedience to that law would result in a quick trip to the lions' den. But for Daniel, in spite of the clear risk, this was really no predicament at all. That very day Daniel went to his room and prayed before open windows. In spite of the very real threat to his life, Daniel did not fail to confess and demonstrate his faith in the true God.

The apostles had stood at the foot of the cross where their Master was executed by his enemies. Now, only weeks later, they found themselves confronted by those same enemies, who had ordered them to stop preaching and teaching about Jesus. They knew the risk. Their answer? "We cannot help speaking about the things that we have seen and heard."

Because of his faithful preaching of the gospel, the apostle Paul was hauled before the Roman governor, Felix. He knew that his fate was in the hands of that powerful man. But when given an opportunity to defend himself, Paul simply spoke about his faith in Jesus Christ. He did the same with the next governor and finally before the emperor himself. The threat of punishment, even execution, did not cause him to shrink. The man who said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," proved it by his continued bold testimony.

The holy Roman emperor had declared Martin Luther to be an outlaw, able to be arrested and killed at any time because of his teachings drawn from Scripture alone. Later the emperor summoned the followers of Luther to explain their teachings and how they were different from the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. At great personal risk, Luther had written a summary of those teachings, which would later form the basis of the confession that was presented to the emperor at Augsburg. Luther wasn't the only one who boldly confessed Christ in the face of danger and death. At Augsburg that day, the Augsburg Confession was presented to the emperor and signed by dozens of laymen, who by their signature risked the loss of wealth, political positions, and their very lives.

Throughout history, when the forces of Satan have conspired and risen up to attack God's church and the gospel itself, God has enabled faithful believers to stand firm. And as those faithful witnesses stood their ground and boldly confessed, God's truth was proclaimed. His Word, again and again as he had promised, did not return to him empty.

Today, Christians living in our country face no threat of death for what we believe and teach. We are not confronted by a government that, to this point, has attempted to silence us from proclaiming the truth of God's Word. No WELS pastor has yet been arrested for what he has preached from the pulpit.

But make no mistake, the forces of Satan in this world have continued their effort to silence the gospel and to attack God's church. In our case, those attacks have been coming from the increasingly hostile culture in which we live. Marriage has been legally redefined by the Supreme Court. Perversions of the worst kind are not only defended and promoted but glorified. Absolute truth has been replaced by personal preference and opinion. The love of many has grown cold. The very concept of sin is foreign to large segments of our society. Huge segments of the Christian church now proclaim a gospel that is no gospel at all. And those who strive to hold on to God's truth and confess it are branded as old-fashioned, closed-minded, bigoted, and hateful.

When surrounded by such a culture, there will always be the temptation not so much to deny Christ outright but

to allow our attitudes and beliefs to be slowly shaped and molded to conform to the thinking around us. As public opinion changes on a wide spectrum of beliefs and values, there is always the danger that we, almost without realizing it, relinquish our firm hold on God's truth, that our focus on what God has said becomes fuzzy and blurred, and that we over time grow tired of resisting.

How do we counter those dangers and temptations? We listen to the Word. We repent of our sin. We return to the cross. We treasure the sweet news of full forgiveness in Jesus. We rejoice before the empty tomb of a victorious Savior who has made his victory ours. We respond in joyful obedience. We take courage in God's unbreakable promises. We live in love. And, like those faithful witnesses that have gone before us, we speak the things that we have seen and heard—to our children, to our friends and neighbors, to people around the world.

Armed with his promises, God's people do not cower in a cave or under a rock. The church does not retreat. The gospel, with all its saving power, does what it always does—accomplishing God's saving purpose until Jesus, as he promised, comes again. And we, God's people, with confidence and optimism and joy, speak what we have seen and heard.

Thus the mission of the church is twofold: to hold faithfully to the Word of God without compromise and then to proclaim the saving message of that Word to the world.

The last two years have been years of blessing for our synod as we have worked to carry out that twofold mission. During this convention, you will hear reports from all areas in which we are working together, as people who have been made one in Christ, to do the work that God has privileged us to do. I will try not to duplicate those reports, but there are a few things that need to be highlighted.

### **Missions**

God has enabled us to increase the number of new mission congregations that have been planted in the United States and Canada. He has blessed our efforts to reach people of in a wide variety of cultures and ethnic groups. One of the new projects begun by the Joint Mission Council is to explore ways in which immigrants to our country can take the gospel back to their country of origin. That work is already being blessed with new opportunities for gospel proclamation at home and abroad.

God also continues to cause the gospel seed, planted through our mission efforts, to grow in more than 20 countries around the world, sometimes in ways that we could not have planned or even imagined ten years ago. Whether it's using electronic means to reach thousands of people in Latin America; students, along with WELS missionaries on the ground, sharing Jesus in East Asia; connecting with small confessional Lutheran churches in Africa; or providing Christ-centered instruction to thousands of people in the mountains of Nepal in their own language, the Lord continues to open doors for the spread of the gospel. We need to recommit ourselves to providing the resources and manpower to seize those opportunities when God places them before us.

### **Ministerial education**

During the past biennium, we were privileged to celebrate the 150th anniversaries of both Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Luther Preparatory School. God has certainly blessed the decision made long ago to commit our synod to the thorough training of called workers. Along with Martin Luther College and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, our ministerial education system has continued to provide a sufficient supply of well-trained and doctrinally solid pastors, teachers, and staff ministers.

In recent years, the number of graduates of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College have quite closely matched the need for new called workers. Smaller class sizes at the seminary, coupled with the increased number of both retirements and new mission congregations, indicate that the need for recruitment of pastoral candidates will continue to be important in the coming years. In addition, the rapid expansion of early childhood programs and the potential growth in school enrollment due to expanded school choice in some states also indicate that the need for teacher candidates will continue.

The financial condition of our schools has improved markedly, with the two terminal schools in very strong positions, while the positions of our two prep schools have stabilized (although we do need to continue to work to improve the financial situations at both).

### **Congregation and Ministry Support Group**

All of the entities of the CMSG continue to provide congregations with assistance in carrying out their local ministries. The work of the various commissions has shifted from producing materials to "training the trainers." Schools of

outreach and worship have been conducted in dozens of locations, and plans are in place for a school of youth ministry. Special Ministries provides leadership and assistance to congregations in a wide variety of ways. The Commission on Congregational Counseling continues to develop a synodwide opportunity for congregations to address questions about how best to plan and carry out their ministries. And the Commission on Lutheran Schools is working to help schools to improve the quality of instruction and to address challenges posed by shifting enrollments and educational trends. This remains an extremely important priority, since our system of elementary and high schools has been, and remains, a God-given blessing.

### **Progress toward debt retirement**

The synod's various debts were combined into a single \$22.4 million capital debt in 2009. Since then, all but \$4.7 has been paid. By resolution of the 2013 convention, a special offering to retire the debt two years early will begin with this convention. All congregations and members are encouraged to participate in this effort. Once the debt is retired, the annual amortization payment of \$1.6 million will be available to support the mission of the synod.

### **Ad Hoc Commission 2**

The Ad Hoc Commission, established by the 2013 synod convention, will offer its report and recommendations for your consideration and action. Since some of the recommendations call for some significant changes, the floor committee dealing with the report will host an open hearing Tuesday evening.

### **Inter-church relations**

For the past three years, WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) representatives have been holding informal meetings with their counterparts in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. These meetings have been valuable in clarifying where the synods agree and differ in various areas of doctrine and practice. They have also opened lines of communication that have been beneficial in a number of practical ways. A fourth meeting is planned for December of this year.

During the past year, WELS and the ELS have begun formal doctrinal discussions with the Church of the Lutheran Confession. The issue of church fellowship and its application brought about a split in the late 1950s. Efforts were made a decade ago to heal the split on the basis of Scripture, but those efforts, while productive, were ultimately unsuccessful. After informal discussions among a group of pastors in the Mankato, Minn., area, the three synods agreed that formal doctrinal discussions should resume to determine whether fellowship can be restored on the basis of God's Word. Two meetings have been held; a third is scheduled for August. All involved ask for your prayers that God would bless these meetings.

### **Finances and Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO)**

Congregation Mission Offerings remain the foundation of the financial support of our mission and ministry. CMO has been virtually flat for the past seven years, but the Synodical Council has done an admirable job in reducing costs, finding efficiencies in staffing, and utilizing funding from other sources. Two examples of such funding are the grants from the Church Extension Fund to Home Missions and from the WELS Foundation to the general operating budget of the synod.

It is true that increasing costs of ministry, especially the cost of health care and the pension plan, have created challenges to congregations to increase their CMO. But two things should be remembered. First, those same costs are incurred by the synod as it supports its workers. Second, congregations should be encouraged to remember that the cost of ministry should not deter us from generous and growing support of the mission and ministry we do together as a synod. We are grateful for the support that the vast majority of our congregations provide and pray that God will continue to move his people to even more generous giving for missions through CMO.

Taking into consideration the anticipated funding from CMO and all other sources, the Synodical Council (SC) is proposing a Ministry Financial Plan (budget) that features no increases in operating support from the current year. If the Lord blesses us with additional financial support, the SC is presenting to this convention a prioritized list of unfunded ministries that could be implemented.

### **Upcoming anniversaries**

Significant anniversaries lie ahead. 2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. Plans for a synodwide observance are being coordinated by a special committee. Another event that should not be forgotten in 2017 is the 1917 amalgamation of the Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska Synods into the Wisconsin Synod we know today.

## Archivist

Beginning in 1995, several WELS conventions have passed resolutions calling for a full-time synod archivist. These conventions all recognized the importance of preserving the documented history of our synod—not for history’s sake but to maintain a faithful record of God’s grace shown to and through our synod during its history. I am happy to report that Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has provided funding for this position for two years using special funds on hand, and it is included in the Ministry Financial Plan for 2015–2017.

## Holding on to our heritage

I’ve expressed the following thoughts many times before, but I believe they bear repeating. As the congregations of our synod face the challenges of an increasingly hostile culture, it is vital that we hold on to the heritage that has been passed down to us. This does not imply that we will remain focused on the past or consumed by nostalgia for a bygone era. Nor is it simply a matter of preserving the history of our synod. Rather, it means that for us to carry out our mission faithfully in the future, we need to rededicate ourselves to holding on to what is valuable and never letting it go. We need to celebrate and cherish our heritage as confessional Lutherans and all that it entails. Rather than diluting that heritage and reshaping our identity into something more generic and less distinct from other types of Christianity, or worse, abandoning it, we need to sharpen and clarify for ourselves and for others what makes our synod distinct and different. How will we do this?

- *Sola Gratia* (by grace alone), *Sola Fide* (by faith alone), *Sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone), and *Sola Christo* (by Christ alone) will not be an empty slogan but will remain the focus and foundation of all we believe, teach, confess, and practice.
- We will train men not just as theologians, but as pastors—caring shepherds who will use their knowledge of God’s Word to lead and guide God’s people more deeply into the Scriptures, with all of their teaching and preaching centered on the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. We will train teachers not just to be professional educators, but as servants who recognize that their main role is to feed Jesus’ lambs with his precious Word.
- Our preaching and teaching will continue to be Christ-centered and grace-proclaiming rather than an attempt to entertain, to pander to emotions, or primarily to provide guidance on how to live a happy and fulfilled life. We will recognize that God’s Word faithfully preached and proclaimed will always be relevant because law and gospel will speak to the deepest spiritual needs that we sinners have. We will proclaim the whole counsel of God, not shying away from teaching those things that may be difficult for our sinful human nature to accept.
- We will commit ourselves to thorough instruction of the young. As our young people head out into the hostile worlds of secular education and employment, we will do all we can in our families and schools to provide them with a foundation that cannot and will not be shaken.
- We will emphasize the centrality of the means of grace in our lives as we worship regularly and share in the Lord’s Supper often. We will bring our children and others joyfully to the font where the Spirit not only creates faith on the day of baptism but also provides a constant reminder of God’s promises every day afterward.
- We will treasure and teach our heritage of Lutheran worship. We dare not abandon a treasure that has been a blessing for centuries and adopt a style of worship that is indistinguishable from the generic, shallow, and emotionally-based worship of Christian churches around us. We will teach the deep significance of the historic liturgy and strive to plan and carry out our worship with thought, with a commitment to excellence, and with the gospel freedom to adopt new hymns and forms that maintain the centrality of the gospel.
- We will hold on to the teachings and doctrines of Scripture no matter how the culture may change and no matter how strongly our beliefs may be challenged. We will never grow complacent in our knowledge of the Scriptures, but we will look continually to grow in our knowledge and depth of understanding.
- We will be zealous in taking the treasure of our gospel heritage and sharing it with as many people as possible. We will recognize that the mission God has given us is not an obligation but a privilege.
- We will look together with eager anticipation to the return of our Savior, because we know that his final victory will be our victory.

All of this we can do if, and only if, we place ourselves, our families, our congregations, and our synod into the gracious care of a God who has promised that his Word will always accomplish what he pleases and will achieve the purpose for which he sent it.

## Sincere thanks

For the past eight years, you have given me the privilege of serving as your synod president, and I thank you—and our gracious God—for this opportunity. It is a privilege that this sinner has certainly not deserved, and I thank him

for his grace. Your prayers and words of encouragement are more appreciated than you will ever know.

In this call I've had the privilege of working with dozens of faithful and talented people who serve in their positions with dedication and joy. Whether it's leadership groups such as the Synodical Council or the Conference of Presidents, boards, committees, administrators, directors, and all the other people at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, I can assure you that these are people who work tirelessly on your behalf, recognizing that they serve not just you but their Savior.

May God continue to bless the small corner of his church that we call the Wisconsin Synod. May he keep us faithful, may he give us joy in our labor, and may he always keep our eyes focused on the cross where he died for us and on the heavens from which he will come again to take us home.

*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: President's Report**

Reference: *President's Report*

Report No. 01

We appreciate President Schroeder's report to the delegates recognizing that anything we do as a synod we do by grace alone, by faith alone, by scripture alone, in Christ alone.

We are grateful for President Schroeder's encouragement to stand firm in a culture that is increasingly hostile to the absolute truth of scripture and to those who teach it.

We are encouraged by the blessings reported in the area of synod finances, and we pray with President Schroeder that God will continue to move his people to even more generous giving for mission and ministry, especially through Congregation Mission Offerings.

We support the direction laid out by President Schroeder in his nine points (on pages three and four in the original document) and thank him for his faithful and diligent service.

To God be the glory!

Pastor Jon Zabell, chairman

Teacher Eric Brown, secretary

**Subject: New congregations**

Reference: Office of the president

Resolution No. 01

WHEREAS 1) Grace Lutheran Church, Norman, Okla., is recommended by the South Central District president for membership into the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; and

WHEREAS 2) its constitution has been examined and approved by the South Central 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.

Pastor Jon Zabell, chairman

Teacher Eric Brown, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #2: Conference of Presidents

## **Subject: Expressions of gratitude**

Resolution No. 01

- 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 Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) for hosting this convention, especially Prof. Marcus Bode.
2. The support staff and officers of the synod for arranging and conducting the business of this convention, especially Ms. Kathy Kolander, Mrs. Carla Martin, and Mrs. Julie Wietzke.
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 Ms. Kaitlyn Cole 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. Northwestern Publishing House; WELS Foundation; WELS Church Extension Fund; MLS; MLS Foundation; Central Office Systems; 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 Brad Bode, chairman

Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Expressions of gratitude**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 10

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) Rev. Douglas Engelbrecht served faithfully as district president of the Northern Wisconsin District; and
- WHEREAS 2) Rev. Theodore Lambert served faithfully as district president of the Pacific Northwest District; and
- WHEREAS 3) Rev. Peter Naumann served faithfully as district president of the Dakota-Montana District; therefore be it

Resolved, that our synod in convention thank the Lord for Rev. Engelbrecht, Rev. Lambert, and Rev. Naumann for their years of faithful service.

Pastor Brad Bode, chairman

Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

**Subject: Convention offerings**

Resolution No. 03

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

Resolved, that the 2015 WELS convention designate the offering to the Pakistan and Ukrainian Lutheran Churches.

Pastor Brad Bode, chairman  
Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Location of the synod convention**

Resolution No. 04

WHEREAS Luther Preparatory School has extended an invitation to host the 2017 synod convention in Watertown, Wis.; therefore be it

Resolved, that we accept the invitation of Luther Preparatory School with thanks.

Pastor Brad Bode, chairman  
Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: WELS TLC (Translation Liaison Committee)**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 21-23

Resolution No. 05

WHEREAS 1) the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) was one of the three most highly regarded Bible translations recommended by the WELS Translation Evaluation Committee in its report to the 2013 convention; and

WHEREAS 2) some WELS pastors who participated in the review of the HCSB in 2012 were “quite enthusiastic about the HCSB,” whereas others “considered the HCSB to be in need of further revision and polishing” (2013 BORAM, p. 74); and

WHEREAS 3) the HCSB is in the process of completing a revision that will be released sometime in the next years, with the exact date undisclosed; and

WHEREAS 4) the HCSB invited the WELS Translation Liaison Committee (TLC) to submit recommendations to be considered in this revision, and the TLC submitted 56 pages of “global recommendations” and 1,031 recommendations on individual passages; and

WHEREAS 5) the HCSB Oversight Committee, which includes two Lutherans, considered all of the TLC recommendations and has given indication that some of the TLC recommendations will perceptibly influence the final product; therefore be it

Resolved, a) that when the revision of the HCSB appears, the Conference of Presidents direct a synodwide review to take place, coordinated either by the TLC or a new committee appointed for that purpose; and be it finally

Resolved, b) that the results be shared with the 2017 WELS convention if possible or with the 2019 convention, if necessary.

Pastor Brad Bode, chairman  
Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: New teacher induction**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 14

Resolution No. 06

- WHEREAS 1) the Sixty-first Biennial Convention of WELS adopted the resolution “that the assignment of Martin Luther College (MLC) teacher candidates be accompanied by a system of new teacher induction” (2011 *Proceedings*, p. 60); and
- WHEREAS 2) a formal system of new teacher induction extends synodwide under the direction of the New Teacher Induction Coordinator at MLC together with the Conference of Presidents and the Commission on Lutheran Schools; and
- WHEREAS 3) the benefits of new teacher induction apply to every beginning teacher in WELS schools; and
- WHEREAS 4) not every beginning WELS teacher enters ministry as the result of assignment from Martin Luther College; and
- WHEREAS 5) in practice every beginning WELS teacher, regardless of ministry entry point, is enrolled in the synod’s two-year New Teacher Induction program; and
- WHEREAS 6) the wording of the resolution of the Sixty-first Biennial Convention of WELS does not reflect the intent of that convention, nor actual practice within our schools; therefore be it

Resolved, that all beginning teachers in WELS schools be supported by a system of new teacher induction as directed by the Conference of Presidents, the Commission on Lutheran Schools, and the New Teacher Induction Coordinator.

Pastor Brad Bode, chairman  
Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 20

Resolution No. 07

- WHEREAS 1) the 2013 synod convention directed the synod president to appoint a special task force to develop a continuing education process for pastors and staff ministers “so that progress toward professional growth for pastors and staff ministers can be formally encouraged and reported”; and
- WHEREAS 2) the Continuing Education of Called Workers (CECW) Task Force realizes that its materials are not ready for release for the July 2015 deadline as anticipated; and
- WHEREAS 3) the CECW Task Force desires to put forth a quality product from which all pastors and staff ministers can benefit; therefore be it

Resolved, that the synod in convention encourages the Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force to move ahead with its work as quickly as possible, making use of the guidance and direction of the Conference of Presidents, so that these materials can be made available as soon as possible and be widely used.

Pastor Brad Bode, chairman  
Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Mentoring initiative for new pastors**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 202,203

Resolution No. 08

WHEREAS the Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee (CECW) recommends the mentoring initiative for new pastors, Memorial 2015-03, pp. 202,203; therefore be it

Resolved. that we recommend approval of the CECW initiative as stated in Memorial 2015-03.

Pastor Brad Bode, chairman  
Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Encouragement of calling bodies to fund professional growth**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 203,204

Resolution No. 09

WHEREAS the Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee (CECW) is encouraging calling bodies to provide the resources of time and money to their called workers to pursue ministry-long spiritual and professional growth, Memorial 2015-04, pp. 203,204; therefore be it

Resolved. that we support and commend the CECW for their efforts and recommend approval of Memorial 2015-04.

Pastor Brad Bode, chairman  
Teacher Randy Cochran, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

## Committee #3: Commission on Inter-Church Relations

#### **Subject: Words of appreciation**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 23-27

Report No. 01

We note that Prof. Thomas Nass's 23 years of service on the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) will officially come to an end with the 2015 WELS convention and that Prof. Paul Wendland has been relieved of his advisory status to the CICR, due to the press of his duties as seminary president. We heartily thank both of them for their dedicated service to the commission and the synod.

Pastor Paul Janke, chairman  
Pastor Paul Schuler, secretary

#### **Subject: The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 23

Resolution No. 01

WHEREAS 1) the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference has recently grown to 29 member synods, including 22 full members and seven smaller, associate members; and

WHEREAS 2) the Lord continues to bring our synod into contact with various gatherings of Christians around

the world who are seeking information about confessional Lutheran doctrine and/or church fellowship; and

WHEREAS 3) the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) represents our synod in doctrinal discussions with other church bodies that are, or are not, in fellowship with our synod; therefore be it

Resolved, a) that we encourage the continued efforts of the CICR to engage in doctrinal discussions with individuals and churches around the world who are seeking to take confessional Lutheran stances; and be it finally

Resolved, b) that we encourage the members of our synod to pray earnestly that God would bless these doctrinal discussions and use them to bring about unity in the gospel.

Pastor Paul Janke, chairman  
Pastor Paul Schuler, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 26

Resolution No. 02

WHEREAS 1) WELS representatives continue to monitor developments in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS 2) WELS representatives have met informally with the representatives of the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, a) that we encourage WELS representatives to continue their doctrinal discussions with the LCMS; and be it finally

Resolved, b) that we encourage the members of our synod to pray for leaders of WELS, the ELS, and the LCMS as these discussions continue and that the Lord would bless these efforts.

Pastor Paul Janke, chairman  
Pastor Paul Schuler, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Church of the Lutheran Confession**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 26

Resolution No. 03

WHEREAS 1) WELS representatives have met formally with the representatives of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC); therefore be it

Resolved, a) that we encourage WELS representatives to continue its doctrinal discussions with the CLC; and be it finally

Resolved, b) that we encourage the members of our synod to pray for leaders of WELS, the ELS, and the CLC as these formal discussions continue and that the Lord would bless these efforts to restore doctrinal fellowship.

Pastor Paul Janke, chairman  
Pastor Paul Schuler, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

# Committee #4

## Ministry of Christian Giving

### **Subject: Ministry of Christian Giving**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 27-29

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) performs vital work by utilizing gospel-centered, personal, and practical tools in order to assist and encourage Christians to grow in the grace of giving; and
- WHEREAS 2) growth in Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) is needed to maintain current synodical ministry efforts and to address unfunded priorities; and
- WHEREAS 3) retiring the current synodical debt of \$4.7 million by July of 2016 (utilizing the “One in Christ” offering) will free up \$1.6 million each year for funding mission and ministry; and
- WHEREAS 4) the Conference of Presidents (COP) will conduct a review of the structure and day-to-day functioning of the MCG with the goal of optimizing its efforts; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we thank the Lord for the faithful labor of the MCG office and counselors, asking the Spirit’s continued blessing on their work; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that we encourage all congregations to utilize the tools provided by the MCG as they plan their CMO; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that we encourage all congregations to participate in the “One in Christ” debt retirement offering by giving an over-and-above offering to this effort; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that we urge the MCG to work wholeheartedly with the COP in the upcoming review of the MCG’s work, striving with an openness to all ideas and suggestions to optimize its valuable work.

Pastor Robert Koester, chairman  
Pastor Jonathan Micheel, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #5:

## Communication Services

### **Subject: The work of Communication Services**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 29-32

Report No. 01

As WELS strives to be more widely identified as a confessional Lutheran church body, we commend the Communication Services of the synod for carrying out this goal using a variety of up-to-date and innovative means, for example: an updated website, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube), and video productions for various areas

of ministry. We thank the staff for the host of services they provide with the resources available to them.

Pastor Philip Kieselhorst, chairman

Teacher Carl Nolte, secretary

## Committee #6: Synodical Council

### **Subject: Synodical Council report**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 65-79, 90-92

Report No. 01

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

The SC has set forth a plan for “aggressive, but careful expansion” of the synod’s work. That work is outlined in the long-range plan (BORAM, pp. 72-76) and reflects a faithful presentation of the plan’s name, “In Christ Alone.” This work includes careful, ongoing monitoring of our financial position during the current biennium and continued efforts to fund the ministry needs and priorities of the various areas of ministry.

We recognize the substantial amount of work that has gone into the WELS long-range plan and encourage all areas of ministry to work to achieve those goals, confident that they will represent our best efforts to “with one heart and mouth . . . glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6).

We are thankful that the blessing of the Lord on the Financial Stabilization Fund has given us reason to be more confident in how the funding of our work as a synod is carried out.

The plan to retire the synod’s debt of \$4.7 million by the end of 2016 presents a timely opportunity to redirect the gifts of God’s people toward carrying out both the immediate needs of the synod as well as implementing the long-range plans presented by the Synodical Council. We pray for the Lord’s blessings on the special offering that is planned toward that end.

We are grateful that the Lord has given us many opportunities to expand our ministry as reflected by the listing of unfunded priorities. We recognize the wisdom of good planning for the future, but in view of past financial difficulties we would note that implementing some of the programs on the list would require funding beyond a “one time” outlay of funds and trust that a careful evaluation and consideration of this will take place before those programs on this list are put into place.

We note with appreciation the diligence of various responsible groups in carrying out the resolutions of the 2013 WELS convention (BORAM, p. 77).

The Accounting Oversight Committee (BORAM, pp. 78,79), under the oversight of the SC, assists in ensuring that appropriate accounting practices are in place at the synod, its schools, and subsidiaries in an attempt to reduce costs and/or improve services. We are thankful for their continued service.

We give thanks to the Lord for the service of those whose work on the Synodical Council has ended: Mr. Phil Hempel, Mr. Mark Massmann, Mr. David Metzger, Mr. Todd Scott, Pastor Peter Naumann, and Pastor Daniel Koelpin.

Finally, we pray that the Lord would continue to bless our synod through the faithful work of the Synodical Council.

Pastor James Seelow, chairman

Teacher James Grunwald, secretary



# Committee #7: Support Services

## **Subject: Technology**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 81-84  
Report No. 01

We commend WELS Technology for its ministry-focused efforts to meet the needs of our synod in an ever-changing digital world. We highlight its work of having upgraded the synod's operating systems built on Microsoft Office 365 and SharePoint technologies. Attention is directed to ongoing programs including WELSource, Multi-Language Publications, the synod's mobile app, and ShopWELS. Looking ahead we encourage WELS Technology to continue to pursue its stated primary areas of focus: 1) migration of all forms to digital in connection with WELSource, 2) improve security, 3) additional assistance provided to cross-cultural mission work, and 4) further migration and upgrade of web properties.

Last, but not least, we gratefully acknowledge the efforts of WELS Technology to accomplish the significantly challenging projects completed in the previous two years.

Teacher Frederick Uttech, chairman  
Pastor Martin Luchterhand, secretary

## **Subject: Financial Services**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 84,85  
Report No. 02

We commend Financial Services for its continued hard work despite fluctuating manpower. We also commend staff members for their dedication to efficiency within their departments which has also realized cost savings. Using sound financial stewardship with the gifts the Lord has provided, we are thankful to see that they completed all audits within four months of fiscal year's end. We encourage them to continue to seek out and implement changes that reduce cost, increase effectiveness, and strengthen internal controls.

Teacher Frederick Uttech, chairman  
Pastor Martin Luchterhand, secretary

## **Subject: Human Resources**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 86,87  
Report No. 03

We commend Human Resources (HR) for overseeing the personnel functions for synod workers and serving as a resource to WELS congregations and other affiliated groups. We acknowledge the significant effort to standardize and enhance the personnel review process, as well as the conversion to a new payroll processing provider.

In view of the changing culture and potential legal issues, we especially encourage the HR department to continue its important work. We urge HR to seek out new avenues to share HR information to support congregational personnel management.

Teacher Frederick Uttech, chairman  
Pastor Martin Luchterhand, secretary

**Subject: Capital Projects Committee**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 88,89

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) directed by the 2013 WELS Biennial Convention, the formation of the Capital Projects Committee (CPC) by the synod president has made substantial headway in faithfully completing the task of organizing the capital projects; and
- WHEREAS 2) the CPC wishes to acknowledge the cooperative spirit of the synodical schools; and
- WHEREAS 3) the CPC is still in the initial phase of the planning process; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that all synod entities are strongly encouraged to participate in the CPC planning process to assist in identifying all future capital project needs; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that all synod schools complete their facilities master plan by the END OF THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2016; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that the CPC continue to develop a funding process for all future capital projects to include synod facilities, technology needs, and vehicle purchases; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that the CPC continue as a permanent standing committee working to oversee and coordinate all synod capital projects.

Teacher Frederick Uttech, chairman  
Pastor Martin Luchterhand, secretary

**ADOPTED**

## Committee #8: WELS Historical Institute and WELS Archives

**Subject: WELS Archives**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 79,140

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the ongoing preservation and organization of fragile synodical records continue to be a pressing need; and
- WHEREAS 2) previous synodical conventions have adopted resolutions that the synod hire a full-time archivist, but necessary funding was unavailable; and
- WHEREAS 3) Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has announced a partnership with WELS administration to move the synod's archives to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry; and
- WHEREAS 4) WELS Historical Institute strongly supports the need for an archivist; and
- WHEREAS 5) Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will fund for two years a qualified archivist who can oversee the move; and
- WHEREAS 6) following this move, the ongoing administration of the WELS archives might be accomplished through trained volunteers; therefore be it

- Resolved. a) that we thank our almighty God for providing the initial funding for an archivist through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary proceed with its plan to fund for two years a qualified archivist who can oversee the relocation of materials from its campus to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that the Synodical Council retain, subject to funding, a permanent archivist after the cessation of the funding from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Pastor Adam Horneber, chairman  
Teacher Steven Rosenbaum, secretary

**ADOPTED**

## Committee #9: Christian Aid and Relief

**Subject: Christian Aid and Relief**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 80,81,90,91  
Report No. 01

Matthew's gospel tells us that Jesus was the One who filled to the full "what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases' " (Matthew 8:17). Until the end of time, through his body, the Head continues to show his compassionate love for people in their desperate needs. One such demonstration of his healing work is that which is being done through WELS Christian Aid and Relief. When contacted by persons serving in the front lines of world missions, home missions, or local congregations and apprised of a local disaster, a profound need of an individual, or of humanitarian need in a community, Christian Aid and Relief is there to channel the gifts of loving people to meet the needs of which they have been made aware.

Christian Aid and Relief is poised to act quickly to apply help to the hurt. The relief is provided with careful stewardship. Eighty seven percent of the gifts are applied directly to the need with the remaining portion covering the administrative cost. This is well under the twenty percent administrative cost that is considered standard among reputable charitable organizations.

Christian Aid and Relief expands the possibilities for each of us to show the love of Christ beyond our home and neighborhood and our local congregation to reach people across the country and around the world with the love of Christ that shares their suffering and alleviates their need.

Pastor Aaron Christie, chairman  
Pastor Robert Gurgel, secretary

**Subject: Christian Aid and Relief**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 80,81,90,91  
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 shown admirable creativity in partnering with other WELS agencies to further the gospel's cause; and
- WHEREAS 4) recent earthquakes in Nepal and floods in Malawi remind us that significant opportunities for humanitarian work in Christ's name will continue until his return; and
- WHEREAS 5) Christian Aid and Relief is funded completely outside of the WELS budget through special gifts from God's people as they express their faith in love; and
- WHEREAS 6) the work of Christian Aid and Relief around the world, within our own country, and often in individual homes is relatively unknown to the constituency of WELS; 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 commend Christian Aid and Relief for their compassion-filled creativity in building bridges to the gospel; and be it further
- Resolved, c) 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, d) that WELS in convention encourage each WELS congregation to consider increasing its 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 they do in their own communities.

Pastor Aaron Christie, chairman  
 Pastor Robert Gurgel, secretary

**ADOPTED**

## Committee #10: Finance and budget

**Subject: Ministry financial plan**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 93-112

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Synodical Council's (SC) proposed ministry financial plan for the 2015–17 biennium not only maintains existing ministry but also provides for careful growth; and
- WHEREAS 2) the SC's proposed ministry financial plan includes a projected need for Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) to increase by one percent in each of the calendar years of 2016 and 2017; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that we adopt the SC's ministry financial plan for the 2015–17 biennium; and be it finally
- Resolved, b) that we pray that the Lord bless his people with generous hearts and bless the gospel ministry envisioned by the ministry financial plan.

Pastor Heath Butler, chairman  
 Teacher John Meyer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) increase**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 93-112

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the ministry financial plan for the 2015–17 biennium sets our synod on a course of careful expansion as we partner in our worldwide mission; and
- WHEREAS 2) the 2015–17 ministry financial plan seeks to sustain current ministry and increase support for synodical workers and further missions, even though the 8-year CMO trend has not met the pace of inflation; and
- WHEREAS 3) the WELS Long-Range Plan calls for congregations to increase the percentage of their support for the work of the synod through Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) from seven percent of the congregation’s budget to ten percent or more with 100 percent of congregations participating (92 percent in 2010); and
- WHEREAS 4) the ministry plan’s goals are based on a one percent increase in Congregation Mission Offerings in each of the calendar years 2016 and 2017; and
- WHEREAS 5) being one in Christ, we marvel that the Lord gives us the privilege of using our earthly treasure to joyfully pursue his eternal mission together; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we thank the Lord for the work that the Conference of Presidents does in encouraging congregations to support our synod’s ministry plan; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that we encourage the congregations of our synod to prayerfully consider the ministry opportunities that lie before us, offering thanks to the Lord for the privilege to serve; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that we encourage the congregations of our synod to prayerfully consider increasing their support of our synodical mission in order to achieve the goals of the ministry plan.

Pastor Heath Butler, chairman

Teacher John Meyer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Debt retirement**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 92-112

Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) a critical element of the 2015–17 ministry financial plan is the retirement of debt in fiscal year 2015–16; and
- WHEREAS 2) the Conference of Presidents will implement the One in Christ debt retirement offering; and
- WHEREAS 3) debt retirement is good stewardship of God-given financial resources; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the synod thank the Lord for the challenges he places before it; and be it finally
- Resolved. b) that all congregations and members be encouraged to support the One in Christ debt retirement offering generously.

Pastor Heath Butler, chairman

Teacher John Meyer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #11: World Missions, Joint Mission Council

## **Subject: Board for World Missions and Joint Mission Council reports**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 113-121

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) World Missions is serving more than 80,000 souls in the 23 mission fields where WELS is training and partnering to do mission work; and
- WHEREAS 2) approximately 40 million foreign-born people currently reside in the United States and are the focus of our Joint Mission Council and Global Ministry Committee; and
- WHEREAS 3) our gracious God remains faithful in his promise that the fields of souls in this world are ripe for harvest; and
- WHEREAS 4) these fields of souls, ripe for harvest, reside in a dangerous world, plagued by sin and constantly under attack by Satan; and
- WHEREAS 5) the Lord of the Church has provided faithful servants who continue to carry out the work of gospel proclamation at home and abroad; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we as individuals and as a synod thank our gracious God for the many opportunities to share the gospel with those around us and throughout the world; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that we pray for continued blessings, protection, and courage for those called to serve in places we ourselves cannot go, as well as those who live in these lands, often under dangerous conditions; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that we as convention delegates and members of WELS learn more about world and joint mission opportunities by visiting [www.wels.net/missions](http://www.wels.net/missions) often to increase our understanding of the marvelous work our God is doing as well as the need for prayers and support of that work; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that we fervently thank those whose work in these mission fields has concluded or who have moved on to other areas of ministry.

Pastor John H. Boggs, chairman

Pastor Raymond W. Schumacher, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #12: Home Missions

## **Subject: Board for Home Missions**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 123-127

As members of Floor Committee 12, we wish to highlight the Board for Home Missions' (BHM) Report:

The work of the Board for Home Missions is **urgent**.

Fields are still ripe for the harvest and workers are needed. Within North America, the needs are great. Many people are moving back to cities, a factor that provides unique challenges and opportunities. The work in North America is being done among many cultures, including, but not limited to, Hmong, Hispanic, Sudanese, Asian, and Muslim cultures. Twenty-eight percent of the BHM budget for 2014 supported cross-cultural ministry. Because the work among multi-cultural ministries tends to overlap with the work of the Board for World Missions, a joint mission council has been established (see report from Joint Mission Council, BORAM, pp. 119-121). College students need the forgiveness that Jesus offers, and thus Campus Ministry is also vitally important.

The work of the Board for Home Missions is **amazing**.

By God's grace, 600 missions have been authorized by the Board for Home Missions since 1960, and 23 of those have been authorized since 2010. Five new missions were started in 2014, and seven started in 2015. Approximately \$700,000 coming from the the Church Extension Fund (CEF) over each of the next two years will fund more new missions. We give thanks to God for these additional blessings bestowed upon new missions through the CEF. Realizing that starting new missions is expensive, our committee sees the benefits of the Board for Home Missions' plan of encouraging missions to be self-supporting within eight years.

The work of the Board for Home Missions is **flexible**.

The Board for Home Missions recognizes there is no "cookie-cutter" approach to doing mission work in North America (see the Ad Hoc Commission 2 report in BORAM, pp. 191-193). Although the Holy Spirit alone converts unbelieving hearts, the approach to starting new missions varies with location and community makeup. The Board for Home Missions encourages God's people to seek opportunities to cultivate fields in their own areas, sharing the gospel in a variety of ways.

The work of the Board for Home Missions **involves many people**.

The work of planting a new mission church involves the efforts of volunteer district mission board members, mission counselors, consultants, administrators, individual congregations, and congregation members. The work could not continue at the same level without the support of mission partners like the Church Extension Fund, Kingdom Workers, Builders for Christ, Lutheran Women's Missionary Society, Christian Aid and Relief, and our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary with its Vicars in Missions program and Summer Student Assistant program. These partnerships illustrate how we are one in Christ.

We praise and thank God especially for the work of two individual Christians who worked under the umbrella of the Board for Home Missions: Pastor Kenneth Brokmeier, whose term expired after serving as chairman of the Campus Ministry Committee for the past eight years, and Pastor Harry Hagedorn who served for 25 years as the administrator of the Board for Home Missions. Pastor Hagedorn was called to his eternal glory in April 2015.

Pastor Tim Bode, chairman  
Teacher Scott Wagner, secretary

## Committee #13: Ministerial Education

**Subject: Blessings of Ministerial Education**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 131-165

We give thanks to our most gracious Lord of the Church for:

- the governing boards' comprehensive picture of ministerial education expenses including total cost of upkeep of buildings and grounds and factoring those items into the financial budgeting process;
- the brotherly spirit in which Ministry of Christian Giving, Board for Ministerial Education, Board for Home Missions, and Board for World Missions are conducting ministry planning, budgeting, and implementation;
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) appointing a faculty committee to explore the wisdom of seeking accreditation for seminary programs of study;
- recognizing that to study for the ministry, particularly by young teenagers, is a special decision especially in light of our current cultural climate, therefore we need to keep them in our prayers;
- the efforts of Martin Luther College (MLC) and WLS to nurture pastoral candidates immediately when they set foot on MLC's campus—particularly since attrition is greatest in the first year of their college studies for pastoral ministry;
- our current called workers who encourage young men and women to consider entering the preaching and teaching ministry.

Pastor Jason Zahn, chairman

Teacher Dale Rundgren, secretary

**Subject: Student debt**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 148

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) we thank God for the unique blessings of our three-tiered ministerial education system; and
- WHEREAS 2) educational debt averages over \$20,000 for nearly three quarters of the MLC graduating class; and
- WHEREAS 3) the increases made to tuition assistance have not been able to keep pace with the increase in cost of education; and
- WHEREAS 4) the harvest is plentiful and the need for workers is great; and
- WHEREAS 5) the fear of excessive student debt may cause some to choose a vocation other than ministry; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that we commend our Ministerial Education schools for their efforts to maximize available resources for preparing future public ministers; and be it further
- Resolved, b) that we commend all of our Ministerial Education schools for continuing to develop and provide personal financial education to their students; and be it further
- Resolved, c) that we commend our Ministerial Education schools for their commitment to control student debt load; and be it further
- Resolved, d) that we encourage our Ministerial Education schools to continue to communicate and work in concert with the synod in addressing this issue of student debt; and be it finally
- Resolved, e) that we encourage our Board for Ministerial Education to make reduction of student educational debt a key priority.

Pastor Jason Zahn, chairman

Teacher Dale Rundgren, secretary

**ADOPTED**



# Committee #14: Congregation and Ministry Support Group A— Worship, Evangelism, Congregational Counseling

## **Subject: Commission on Worship**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 36-42

Report No. 01

We commend the Commission on Worship for its ongoing efforts to expand the impact of the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts by making plans for regional and national conferences.

We give thanks for the work of the WELS Hymnal Project under the direction of Pastor Michael Schultz. We especially commend them for their transparent communication to the synod regarding the progress of the project. We pray that the Lord of the Church continue to bless their work.

Pastor Jeremiah Gumm, chairman  
Teacher Jeremy Dennings, secretary

## **Subject: Commission on Evangelism**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 42-45

Report No. 02

We thank the Lord that many WELS congregations have taken advantage of more than 200 Schools of Outreach since 1993.

We commend the Commission on Evangelism for its ongoing collaboration with Multi-Language Publications to provide resources in a wide variety of languages and dialects.

We eagerly anticipate the release of the new movie, *My Son, My Savior*, this fall and the outreach tools associated with it.

Pastor Jeremiah Gumm, chairman  
Teacher Jeremy Dennings, secretary

## **Subject: Making the call of the director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling permanent**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 45-47

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Lord has richly blessed the work of the Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC) in the past biennium; and
- WHEREAS 2) the CCC is currently serving 41 congregations in the Self-Assessment and Adjustment (SAA) program with 81 congregations in the pipeline awaiting trained counselors; and
- WHEREAS 3) 30 counselors have been trained and 30 more are in the process of being trained; and
- WHEREAS 4) the work of the CCC has proven to be financially sound and sustainable; and
- WHEREAS 5) the call for the director of the CCC is currently a limited length call; therefore be it
- Resolved, that the Conference of Presidents take the necessary steps to make the call of the director of the CCC permanent.

Pastor Jeremiah Gumm, chairman  
Teacher Jeremy Dennings, secretary

**ADOPTED**

## Committee #15: 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. 48-54

Report No. 01

Special Ministries

1. We applaud the many branches of Special Ministries and encourage them to keep up the good work.
2. We commend the tireless efforts of the volunteers involved in those various branches of Special Ministries.

Adult Discipleship

1. We are thankful for the “Interactive Faith” online Bible studies and encourage continual course offerings.
2. In a culture where marriage is under attack, we commend the excellence and value of expanding marriage enrichment retreats throughout all twelve districts.

Youth and Family Ministry

1. We encourage the continued planning and offering of the International Youth Rallies.
2. We acknowledge with thanksgiving Pastor Tony Schultz for 20 years of dedicated devotion to strengthening the faith of an entire generation.
3. We strongly support the piloting and future development of the School of Youth and Family Ministry.

In summary, the committee recognizes that our synod is faced with the challenges of keeping our youth and families connected to the Means of Grace. We encourage parish leaders to partner with parents in making every effort to keep our families one in Christ through the Word.

Pastor Michael Helwig, chairman  
Teacher Joshua Schmidt, secretary

# Committee #16: Congregation and Ministry Support Group C— Lutheran Schools

## **Subject: Culture of school improvement**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 56

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) we seek to have quality Lutheran education in our synod schools; and
- WHEREAS 2) the efforts for creating a culture and environment of continual improvement begin with ministry self-assessment; and
- WHEREAS 3) the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) has developed the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation (WELSSA) process; and
- WHEREAS 4) the synod in convention in 2013 resolved that the CLS encourage school leaders to use the appropriate tools to create a culture of continual improvement; and
- WHEREAS 5) 33 new schools have completed the WELSSA process during the last biennium; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we thank God for the work done by the CLS in meeting the directives of the 2013 synod resolution; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that we commend the CLS on their efforts to help all schools create a culture of improvement; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that those schools having no plan of self-study or improvement be encouraged to use the tools available through the CLS to start on the path for self-study for the purpose of school improvement.

Teacher Carl R. Hochmuth, chairman

Pastor Robert Edwards, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Lutheran school leadership**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 57

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the 2013 WELS Convention passed a resolution on Lutheran school leadership; and
- WHEREAS 2) the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) implemented the School Leadership Candidate Training program to identify, encourage, and begin the training of potential school leaders; and
- WHEREAS 3) a cohort of 15 candidates began training June 2015, with another cohort to start in June 2017; and
- WHEREAS 4) the CLS administrators have begun consulting with congregations during the calling process for Lutheran Elementary School (LES) principals and Early Childhood Education (ECE) directors as is done for pastoral calls; and
- WHEREAS 5) the CLS has begun implementation of an onsite Principal Training Program that pairs a Martin

Luther College graduate with a principal at a WELS school for three years; following which, the graduate returns to the Assignment Committee to be assigned as a principal; therefore be it

Resolved, a) that we thank God for the faithful work done by the CLS in the area of developing Lutheran school leadership; and be it further

Resolved, b) that we encourage the CLS to continue to foster and develop school leaders; and be it finally

Resolved, c) that we support the Principal Training Program and the Leadership Candidate Training program.

Teacher Carl R. Hochmuth, chairman

Pastor Robert Edwards, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Voluntary Supplemental Contribution Program**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 56

Resolution No. 03

WHEREAS 1) the Voluntary Supplemental Contribution Program (VSCP), initiated in 2007, today provides more than 20 percent of the Commission on Lutheran Schools' (CLS) operating costs; and

WHEREAS 2) the number of WELS schools participating in the VSCP reached 40 percent in the last biennium; and

WHEREAS 3) these funds provide resources for various items including leadership development programs; teacher continuing education initiatives; congregational, school, and individual support and consulting; as well as district school coordinator and early childhood district coordinator efforts in each district; and

WHEREAS 4) increased participation would provide more vital resources for the CLS to carry out all these tasks; therefore be it

Resolved, a) that we thank the Lord for those schools participating in the VSCP and providing resources for the CLS to carry out its work; and be it finally

Resolved, b) that schools not currently participating in the VSCP be encouraged to participate.

Teacher Carl R. Hochmuth, chairman

Pastor Robert Edwards, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

## Committee #17: Northwestern Publishing House and Publication Coordinating Commission

#### **Subject: Publication Coordinating Commission**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 171,172

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Publication Coordinating Commission (PCC) has the task of coordinating and prioritizing the publishing and media production of the synod's boards and commissions and Northwestern Publishing House (NPH); and
- WHEREAS 2) in the past the PCC has solicited publishing proposals that would not recover the cost of production and yet are deemed by the boards, commissions, and NPH to be important; and
- WHEREAS 3) a major portion of the Publication Fund was transferred to the Financial Stabilization Fund; and
- WHEREAS 4) funding levels have not allowed the Synodical Council (SC) to restore the PCC publication fund as resolved by the 2011 and 2013 synod conventions; and
- WHEREAS 5) at the present time the publication fund has just over \$115,000 available, and this balance is insufficient to fund any major project but will likely be used to prepare materials for the Reformation 500 Project; and
- WHEREAS 6) funding is still needed for several new professional books to be written by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professors for pastoral training and professional growth; and
- WHEREAS 7) the goal of the *One in Christ: Moving Forward in Ministry* campaign is to retire the synod debt in 2016; and
- WHEREAS 8) the SC has identified funding restoration of \$100,000 to the PCC publication fund as a Tier 2 priority; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the PCC continue to coordinate and prioritize the publishing and media production of the synod's boards and commissions and NPH; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that we encourage the members of WELS to support the PCC publishing projects with their prayers and financial gifts; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that upon retirement of the synod's debt or sooner, the \$100,000 be restored to the PCC publishing fund.

Teacher James Brandt, chairman  
 Pastor Paul Welke, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Congregation use of Northwestern Publishing House materials**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 167-171

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) for more than 120 years Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) has prepared materials that are consistent with the synod's mission and aligned with Lutheran doctrine and practice; and
- WHEREAS 2) increased NPH investment in marketing and expanded distribution in the past 18 months have resulted in encouraging gains that have slowed a downward sales trend; and
- WHEREAS 3) NPH is currently engaged in a number of exciting collaborative projects with WELS commissions, committees, and parasynodical agencies; and
- WHEREAS 4) NPH has completed a revision of Christ Light, including a Sunday school version of the curriculum; and
- WHEREAS 5) based on extensive research, NPH is reformatting Bible studies to provide greater relevance and to better address the ways adults learn today; and
- WHEREAS 6) the pastor's advocacy for NPH is critical to NPH's ability to reach his church members with the books and other materials NPH develops for them; therefore be it

Resolved, a) that congregations be encouraged to review the new Christ Light Sunday school curriculum for use in their Sunday School programs; and be it finally

Resolved, b) that congregations and pastors of the synod be encouraged to promote and use NPH publications and other products.

Teacher James Brandt, chairman

Pastor Paul Welke, secretary

**ADOPTED**

## Committee #18: WELS Church Extension Fund

**Subject: Approval of report**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 174,175

Report No. 01

We praise the Lord for the work of the Church Extension Fund (CEF) and for the investments of more than \$78 million from more than 3,727 investors. These gifts have provided substantial funds to congregations through loans, grants, and special grants.

Local congregations will work through their district mission board to learn more and to make application for loans or grants. We are thankful that the CEF has expanded their marketing efforts. We encourage the Board for Home Missions to work more closely with the CEF to explore mission expansion opportunities.

We encourage delegates to help build awareness of the work of the CEF in their local congregations by viewing the newly produced CEF video online at [wels.net/giving/wels-church-extension-fund](http://wels.net/giving/wels-church-extension-fund) or by viewing the CD that has been distributed to every congregation in the synod.

Mr. Joel Rhoads, chairman

Teacher Thomas Hunter, secretary

## Committee #19: WELS Foundation and WELS Investment Funds

**Subject: WELS Foundation/Investment Funds**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 175-180

Report No. 01

WELS Foundation, Inc., and WELS Investment Funds, Inc., may be two of WELS' best kept secrets. We would like to shed some light on them. WELS Foundation, Inc., and WELS Investment Funds, Inc., exist to help God's people

support, strengthen, and enhance the gospel ministry—locally, nationally, and around the world—of WELS and WELS affiliated organizations.

- Legal complexities, changes in tax law, and accounting and administrative challenges can make it difficult for individuals or congregations to make informed choices for the administration and investment of resources that God’s people desire to give in response to God’s grace.
- WELS Foundation, Inc., and WELS Investment Funds, Inc., are governed by professionals experienced in all aspects of financial services who volunteer their time and service to the Church. We thank these two boards for their dedicated service and encourage them to continue their work for the Lord.
- WELS Foundation, Inc., provides services such as endowment services for WELS ministries and legacy charitable remainder trusts for individuals while honoring the original intent of the donors. This includes maintaining the records of the original intent of the endowment funds.

To carry out its mission, WELS Foundation:

- Provides knowledgeable planned giving support to WELS members through WELS Christian giving counselors and other WELS advancement representatives.
- Provides various giving opportunities including charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, donor advised funds, and endowment administration.
- Provides printed and online educational material regarding various giving opportunities for WELS and WELS-affiliated organizations.

WELS Foundation, Inc.:

- As of June 30, 2013, managed \$78.6 million in assets.
- As of Dec. 31, 2014, managed \$87.4 million in assets.
- That is an increase of \$8.8 million (11 percent).

To carry out its mission, WELS Investment Funds, Inc.:

- Strengthens and enhances the congregations of WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and their affiliated organizations by providing professionally managed investment portfolios.
- Serves as the administrator of two investment portfolios: WELS Equity Fund and WELS Income Fund.

Teacher James Sievert, chairman

Teacher Phil Stern, secretary

## Committee #20: WELS Benefit Plans (VEBA and Pension)

### **Subject: Benefit Plans**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 180-184

Report No. 01

Floor committee #20 wishes to thank the VEBA Commission and the Pension Commission for their faithful service and adherence to God’s Word in the complex and changing legal landscape, which includes the Affordable Care Act and the recent Supreme Court decision regarding the definition of marriage. We also commend their efforts to manage plan assets and benefit expenses while striking a balance between maintaining acceptable costs for organizations and meaningful benefits to participants.

Mr. James Freer, chairman

Pastor Nathanael Bourman, secretary

**Subject: WELS VEBA**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 180-184

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) WELS VEBA offers consistent care, coverage, and cost regardless of the age and location of the member; and
- WHEREAS 2) WELS VEBA provides quality benefits at a competitive cost, and at times has even decreased premiums; and
- WHEREAS 3) increased enrollment allows WELS VEBA to more effectively support our synod's ministry nationwide by diversifying risk over a broader population and operating more cost effectively; and
- WHEREAS 4) WELS VEBA provides a health coverage option that complies with the law and stays faithful to God's Word; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that congregations and individuals prayerfully consider the benefits of enrollment in WELS VEBA; and be it finally
- Resolved, b) that we encourage the VEBA commission to continue educating WELS members and congregations regarding VEBA's benefits and the advantages of WELS VEBA as the synod's health plan.

Mr. James Freer, chairman

Pastor Nathanael Bourman, secretary

**ADOPTED**

## Committee #21: Ad Hoc Commission 2

**Subject: Ad Hoc Commission 2 (AHC2)**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 185-195

Report No. 01

We have reviewed the following topics and support the findings of the AHC2.

- Topic 3—Term limits for district presidents
- Topic 8—Board for Home Missions—urban outreach
- Topic 10—Board for World Missions administrative structure
- Topic 13—The work of the Church Extension Fund and WELS Foundation

No further action regarding these topics is required.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman

Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

**Subject: Topic one: WELS compensation issues**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 186,187

Resolution No. 01



- WHEREAS 1) Ad Hoc Commission 2 studied the issue of the WELS Compensation Guidelines; and
- WHEREAS 2) they found weaknesses in the present guidelines and have recommended a thorough review; and
- WHEREAS 3) the Compensation Review Committee of the Synodical Council has expressed its agreement with the recommended review; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the Compensation Review Committee of the Synodical Council develop a draft proposal of the revised guidelines to be shared with the 2016 district conventions; and be it finally
- Resolved. b) that a final recommendation of the revised synod compensation guidelines be presented to the 2017 synod in convention.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Topic two: WELS convention delegate preparation**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 187,188

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the twelve districts of synod presently have no uniform way of preparing delegates for their important roles at WELS convention; and
- WHEREAS 2) there is great value in thorough delegate preparation for a synod convention; and
- WHEREAS 3) the Ad Hoc Commission 2 (AHC2) recommendation of having delegates serve in two consecutive conventions may have the unintended consequence of limiting the opportunities of called workers to serve as delegates at the synod convention; and
- WHEREAS 4) finding and organizing all delegates to serve at two consecutive conventions may tax logistical feasibility; and
- WHEREAS 5) technology may be utilized to enhance delegate preparation; and
- WHEREAS 6) the proposed recommendation does not address the issue of delegate preparation, especially for first-time delegates; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) the synod in convention reject the AHC2 recommendation that delegates serve at two consecutive conventions; and be it further
- Resolved. b) the synod in convention direct the Conference of Presidents to investigate the use of technology (e.g. webinars and training DVDs) in addition to other methods to assist the districts in their preparation of delegates for the synod convention; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that the delegates be surveyed after the 2017 synod convention to help determine the effectiveness of the preparation process; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that each individual district continue to strive for excellence in delegate preparation.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Topic four: Nomination for election to the praesidium of a district**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 188,189

Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) the Ad Hoc Commission 2 (AHC2) is recommending to the synod in convention that the 12 districts of our synod use their district nominating committee for the offices of the praesidium in the same way that they do for any other office that is elected in convention; and
- WHEREAS 2) the AHC2 also recommends that the nominees who are not elected to one office be considered as candidates for the next lower office; and
- WHEREAS 3) this recommendation does not allow for delegates to nominate candidates from the floor of the convention; and
- WHEREAS 4) this recommendation provides the nominating committees minimal guidelines for choosing candidates to be nominated; and
- WHEREAS 5) this recommendation could make it difficult to certify that the individual making the nomination is eligible to make the nomination; and
- WHEREAS 6) this recommendation places the responsibility for selecting a list of candidates in the hands of a small percentage of the district; and
- WHEREAS 7) the present practice of nominating from the floor has served our synod well for many years; and
- WHEREAS 8) it has been the practice of some district presidents to alert potential candidates and their congregations of possible nominations so that they may consider before the convention the effect their election may have on current ministry; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the synod in convention reject the AHC2 recommendation that the twelve districts of our synod use their district nominating committees for the offices of the praesidium in the same way that they do for any other office that is elected in convention; and be it finally
- Resolved. b) that we encourage district conventions to make procedural adjustments to allow for delegates to become better acquainted with the list of candidates for their presidium.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Topic five: Nomination for election of WELS president and the synod praesidium**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 189,190

Resolution No. 04

- WHEREAS 1) the Ad Hoc Commission 2 (AHC2) is recommending that the synod in convention use the Synod Nominating Committee for the offices of the praesidium in the same way that we do for any other office that is elected by the synod in convention; and
- WHEREAS 2) the AHC2 also recommends that the nominees who are not elected to one office would be considered as candidates for the next lower office; and
- WHEREAS 3) this recommendation does not allow for delegates to nominate candidates from the floor of the convention; and
- WHEREAS 4) this recommendation provides the Synod Nominating Committee minimal guidelines for choosing candidates to be nominated; and
- WHEREAS 5) this recommendation could make it difficult to certify that the individual making the nomination is eligible to make the nomination; and
- WHEREAS 6) this recommendation places the responsibility for selecting a list of candidates in the hands of a small percentage of the synod; and
- WHEREAS 7) the present practice of nominating from the floor has served our synod well for many years, even

though there is only a short period of time for the newly elected officer to deliberate his election to office; therefore be it

Resolved. a) that the synod in convention reject the AHC2 recommendation that the synod in convention use the Synod Nominating Committee for the offices of the praesidium in the same way that we do for any other office that is elected by the synod in convention; and be it finally

Resolved. b) that procedural adjustments be made to future elections to allow for delegates to become more familiar with the nominated candidates.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Topic six: Funding merit scholarships and need-based grants at Martin Luther College**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 190

Resolution No. 05

WHEREAS 1) Martin Luther College (MLC) has a process for determining need-based grants to students; and

WHEREAS 2) MLC has limited funds available for scholarships; and

WHEREAS 3) MLC is already offering both need-based and merit scholarships; and

WHEREAS 4) MLC desires to increase money available for financial assistance for need and merit-based scholarships; therefore be it

Resolved. that the synod in convention support the Ad Hoc Commission 2 recommendation that MLC pursue the idea of adding other merit-based scholarships that are in keeping with the mission, vision, and resources of MLC.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Topic seven: Early childhood leadership training**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 191

Resolution No. 06

WHEREAS 1) the Ad Hoc Commission 2 (AHC2) studied the growing need in our church body for strong, well prepared, and highly capable leaders for early childhood ministry (ECM), specifically the issue of how we prepare early childhood directors for their work; and

WHEREAS 2) the AHC2 study revealed a need for WELS congregations to have a well-defined ECM mission and purpose that is a part of the overall mission of the church and that the congregation, its leaders, and the ECM staff understand that purpose and support it; therefore be it

Resolved. a) that the synod in convention support the AHC2 recommendation to encourage congregations of WELS that have an early childhood ministry to review their ECM mission and purpose and to provide adequate support to carry them out, especially regarding the director position; and be it finally

Resolved. b) that the synod in convention support the AHC2 recommendation to encourage congregations of WELS that wish to add an early childhood ministry program to have a clearly defined ECM mission and purpose that flows from and supports the mission of the church and that members, church leaders, and ECM staff understand them and support them.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Topic 9: Board for World Missions' procedures for opening new mission fields and withdrawing manpower from existing mission fields**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 192,193

Resolution No. 07

WHEREAS the Ad Hoc Commission 2 (AHC2) studied concerns expressed about the methods used by the Board for World Missions (BWM) in determining when to begin working in a new mission field and when to withdraw support and/or expatriate manpower from existing mission fields; therefore be it

Resolved. a) that the synod in convention encourages the BWM to work with each administrative committee to develop written, strategic plans for future mission expansion. The plans might include a strategy for expansion within an existing country or expansion into another country. The plans should include maximum utilization of technology and alternate strategies, where workable; and be it further

Resolved. b) that the synod in convention encourages the BWM to work with each administrative committee to develop written, strategic plans for future withdrawal of money and manpower support from existing mission fields. The plans should include stated goals and benchmarks that should be reached prior to a strategic reduction. (For example, a plan might state, "When we have ten national congregations and six fully-trained national pastors, we will plan to withdraw one expatriate missionary."); and be it further

Resolved. c) that the synod in convention encourages the BWM to think long term when doing mission work in foreign countries. When planting and developing a national church, it seems prudent to think in terms of multiple generations to develop a national church to the point where complete withdrawal of manpower and outside subsidy is possible; and be it further

Resolved. d) that the synod in convention encourages the synod to resist precipitous and unplanned reductions in money and manpower that undercut strategic planning (except where necessitated by political or other circumstances that may impact the safety of the called workers and their families); and be it finally

Resolved. e) that the synod in convention encourages the synod to renew and reaffirm its commitment to gospel outreach around the world, using any legitimate means possible to reach souls for Christ.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Topic eleven: Protection/recovery of synodical support provided to congregations that elect to close or to leave the synod**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 194

Resolution No. 08

WHEREAS the Ad Hoc Commission 2 (AHC2) believes it is a matter of prudent stewardship for options to be explored regarding how and to what degree changes can be made to current practices and procedures so as to enhance the ability of and the likelihood that the synod can recover some portion of the support that it provides to congregations, which after receiving such support, then elect either to leave the synod or to close; therefore be it

Resolved. that the synod in convention supports the recommendation that both the Board for Home Missions

and the Church Extension Fund should examine their respective practices and procedures, and specifically the terms and conditions under which each organization provides subsidies, grants, loans, and/or other support to congregations to see if changes can be made to such so as to enhance the ability of the synod to recover some portion of the subsidies, grants, loans, and/or other support provided in the event that a congregation that has been the beneficiary of the subsidies, grants, loans, and/or other support elects to leave the synod or closes.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Topic twelve: Online repository**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 194,195

Resolution No. 09

WHEREAS 1) it will be beneficial to have a repository created where items from pastors, teachers, and staff ministers could be posted and shared; and

WHEREAS 2) the Ad Hoc Commission 2 was informed by the director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC) that the CCC had previously discussed this idea and that it finds value in this endeavor; therefore be it

Resolved. that the synod in convention recommends that the CCC be encouraged to partner with the other commissions of the Congregation and Ministry Support Group in creating and maintaining an online repository as the commissions deem best in cooperation with the WELS Technology Office.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Appreciation for work of Ad Hoc Commission 2**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 185-195

Resolution No. 10

WHEREAS 1) the 2013 synod in convention approved that our synod establish a new ad hoc commission to look at all areas of the synod structure and programs especially in the areas not addressed by the previous commission; and

WHEREAS 2) President Mark Schroeder appointed the following to the Ad Hoc Commission 2: Teacher Daniel Brands, Rev. Jon Buchholz, Mr. Harvey Dunn, Mr. Warren Ehlke, Teacher Michael Hein, Rev. Duane Rodewald, Rev. Thomas Unke, and Rev. Joel Voss; and

WHEREAS 3) these men served faithfully, volunteering their time over the past biennium; therefore be it

Resolved. that the synod in convention thank these men for their faithful service and give glory to God for their work for the kingdom.

Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman  
Teacher Kevin Ehlke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

# Committee #22: Miscellaneous memorials

## **Subject: WELS name change**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 202 and Unprinted Memorial (2015-06)

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the identity of our church body is recognized around the world as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; and
- WHEREAS 2) we need to let our light shine and explain our identity as confessors of Christ and as confessional Lutherans; and
- WHEREAS 3) there will be complicated legalities for our synod, our missions, and individual congregations (e.g. leases, property, missionary visas, tax exemptions, and donor reporting, etc.) if we change our legal name; and
- WHEREAS 4) there will be an uncertain, but significant expense in changing our name; and
- WHEREAS 5) we want to use our resources, time, and treasures to spread the gospel; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we keep our name Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; and be it finally,
- Resolved. b) that we boldly share our heritage of proclaiming full and free forgiveness in Christ as we have through previous generations.

Pastor Robert Dick, chairman  
Mr. Kevin Walker, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Scouting**

Reference: Unprinted memorial

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the various organizations and activities of scouting continue to draw the interest of WELS children and their parents because of their perceived benefits; and
- WHEREAS 2) many changes have taken place within both the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts in recent decades, as evidenced by new policies regarding homosexuality, their oaths and objectives, and public statements and materials seeming to downplay the religious elements of scouting; and
- WHEREAS 3) many earlier materials on scouting produced by the WELS do not take into account the differences between the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts, nor the perceived differences in participation from one level, e.g. Cub Scouts or Brownies, to the next, e.g. Scouts, nor the possibility of differences in practice and significance from one location ("troop," "den," etc.) to another; and
- WHEREAS 4) the lack of up-to-date and currently accurate materials has left congregations and individuals seeking guidance regarding scouting struggling to determine if previous evaluations and judgments are still accurate and make it difficult for parents and children to match our historical criticisms of scouting to the organizations, troops, dens, etc. that are actually presented as options for their children; and

- WHEREAS 5) the wider Church, especially confessional Lutherans, but also other Christians looking into the issues regarding scouting would benefit from a detailed, Scripture-based, and evangelical study with published documentation; and
- WHEREAS 6) the Lutheran Pioneers and Lutheran Girl Pioneers have for many years faithfully provided a scripturally sound and beneficial alternative to scouting, but many WELS congregations find themselves too small and/or too isolated for sponsoring Pioneer programs to be feasible; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the Conference of Presidents appoint a committee to do research into the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and their affiliated activities and organizations, e.g. Venturing, to determine the current spiritual implications of membership and involvement with those groups; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that said committee and/or the Conference of Presidents report their findings on the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to the 2016 district conventions of WELS and present our position at the 2017 synod convention; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that said committee and/or the Conference of Presidents have resources and documents produced that can be used by congregations and individuals needing an explanation of our position regarding Boy Scout or Girl Scout membership and involvement; and be it further
- Resolved. d) that our brethren in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod be consulted in the course of the committee's work, and advised of any recommendations resulting from the work; and be it finally
- Resolved. e) that any new recommendations regarding scouting still support and encourage membership in Lutheran Pioneers and Lutheran Girl Pioneers.

Pastor Robert Dick, chairman  
Mr. Kevin Walker, secretary

#### **DEFEATED**

#### **Subject: CYFM restoration of funding for director of the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 201,202

Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) it is always our desire that the youth we train in our congregations remain disciples of Christ throughout their earthly lives, on to eternal life; and
- WHEREAS 2) the loss of our youth during the high school years and beyond continues to be a troubling trend within WELS; and
- WHEREAS 3) Scripture and research both reveal that parents and families are the key factor in keeping youth connected to Christ; and
- WHEREAS 4) the 2003 WELS convention resolved to study the extent of and reasons for teen and young adult losses in our church body; and
- WHEREAS 5) the report from that study included eleven recommendations. The first point recommended that WELS work more with parents to carry out their leadership role in the spiritual lives of their children; and
- WHEREAS 6) according to statistics on the WELS website, a majority of our children do not attend our WELS schools, and
- WHEREAS 7) there is no significant difference in membership retention between LES students and non-LES students (38 and 32 percent respectively); and
- WHEREAS 8) the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry (CYFM), the area of ministry responsible for working with parents and serving and encouraging our families, remains unfunded and vacant due to budgetary constraints; and

WHEREAS 9) President Schroeder stated in his convention report that “we will commit ourselves to thorough instruction of the young” and “we will do all we can in our families and schools to provide them with a foundation that cannot and will not be shaken”; and

WHEREAS 10) the continuing absence of a director for the CYFM provides serious challenges to those in our synod committed to the retention and growth of our families; therefore be it

Resolved, that we strongly encourage that the Youth and Family director position be listed on the Synodical Council prioritized list of unfunded programs (BORAM, p. 69).

Pastor Robert Dick, chairman  
Mr. Kevin Walker, secretary

**ADOPTED**

## Committee #23: Constitutional Matters

**Subject: Revision to the bylaws**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 68,69  
Resolution No. 01

WHEREAS 1) the position of Chief Technology Officer is an important one for our synod as we serve the gospel of Jesus Christ in this digital age; and

WHEREAS 2) it is consistent with our Bylaws to have the position description of the Chief Technology Officer included in our Bylaws as we do other position descriptions; therefore be it

Resolved, that WELS in convention adopt the changes in the Bylaws of the WELS, sections 5.00 and 5.80, as printed on pp. 68,69 of BORAM.

Pastor Dan Simons, chairman  
Pastor Steve Bauer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Teachers and staff ministers**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 10  
Resolution No. 02

WHEREAS 1) WELS has male and female staff ministers serving as called workers; and

WHEREAS 2) “staff minister” will continue to be a category of called workers in the future; and

WHEREAS 3) the proposed revisions to WELS Bylaws, Section 1.00 will bring wording regarding staff ministers into parallel with that regarding pastors and teachers; therefore be it

Resolved, that WELS in convention adopt the revisions to section 1.00 of the Bylaws as printed on p. 10 of BORAM.

Pastor Dan Simons, chairman  
Pastor Steve Bauer, secretary

**ADOPTED**



**Subject: WELS Retirement Program Commission**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 182,183

Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) the current Bylaws of WELS make no mention of the Shepherd Plan 403(b)(9); and
- WHEREAS 2) this is a retirement investment plan for called workers and is currently being used by some called workers; and
- WHEREAS 3) the proposed revisions to Section 7.40 of the Bylaws will include the Shepherd Plan under the oversight of a WELS Retirement Program Commission; therefore be it
- Resolved. that WELS in convention adopt the proposed revisions of the Bylaws found in Sections 7.40 and 7.50 as printed on pp. 182,183 of BORAM.

Pastor Dan Simons, chairman

Pastor Steve Bauer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Revisions to the bylaws**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 10

Resolution No. 04

- WHEREAS 1) moves of called workers between districts have been recorded by letters of transfer between district presidents (including retired called workers); and
- WHEREAS 2) the Conference of Presidents has gone on record saying, "Current methods of reporting moves from one district to another make the issuing of such letters unnecessary" (BORAM, p. 10); therefore be it
- Resolved. that WELS in convention approve the proposed change to the Constitution for the Districts article VII, Section 1—Rights and Duties of Officers.

Pastor Dan Simons, chairman

Pastor Steve Bauer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Thanksgiving**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 182,183

Resolution No. 05

- WHEREAS 1) Judge Victor Manian has faithfully served WELS on the Committee on Constitutional Matters for many years; and
- WHEREAS 2) his service has been a great blessing that God has granted to our synod; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that WELS in convention thank our triune God for the Honorable Judge Victor Manian's years of service; and be it finally
- Resolved. b) that WELS in convention thank the Honorable Judge Victor Manian for his generous and faithful service to his Savior.

Pastor Dan Simons, chairman

Pastor Steve Bauer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #24: Elections

## **Subject: Elections**

Report No. 01

The following individuals were elected to the respective positions:

PRESIDENT OF THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Rev. Mark G. Schroeder

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT OF THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Rev. Joel R. Voss

BOARD FOR HOME MISSIONS, CHAIRMAN (Parish Pastor)

Rev. Charles A. Westra

BOARD FOR MINISTERIAL EDUCATION, PARISH PASTOR

Rev. John P. Bortulin

BOARD FOR MINISTERIAL EDUCATION, TEACHER

Mr. Kurt E. Rosenbaum

BOARD FOR MINISTERIAL EDUCATION, LAYMAN

Mr. Kyle K. Koltz

BOARD FOR WORLD MISSIONS, CHAIRMAN (Pastor)

Rev. Howard O. Mohlke

BOARD OF APPEALS, PASTOR

Rev. John A. Vieths

BOARD OF APPEALS, TEACHER

Mr. Stephen L. Schultz

BOARD OF APPEALS, LAYMAN

Mr. Gregory G. Galler

COMMISSION ON ADULT DISCIPLESHIP, CHAIRMAN

Rev. Gary A. Pufahl

COMMISSION ON CONGREGATIONAL COUNSELING, CHAIRMAN

Rev. David G. Scharf

COMMISSION ON SPECIAL MINISTRIES, CHAIRMAN

Rev. Joel P. Gaertner

COMMISSION ON WORSHIP, CHAIRMAN

Rev. Jon F. Zabell

COMMISSION ON YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY, CHAIRMAN

Rev. John H. Boggs

MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE GOVERNING BOARD, CHAIRMAN

Rev. Michael A. Woldt

NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, WLS PROFESSOR  
Rev. John P. Hartwig

NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, LAYMAN  
Mr. Christopher J. Snyder

Teacher Robert F. Klindworth, chairman  
Teacher Daniel L. Plath, secretary

## Committee #25: Membership and attendance

**Subject: Convention attendance report**  
Report No. 01

There were 389 voting delegates who attended the 63rd WELS Biennial Convention, comprised of 108 pastors, three world missionaries, 64 teachers, five staff ministers, and 209 lay delegates. There were 49 advisory delegates and three special guests in attendance. Five delegates were excused for the full convention. Three delegates were absent and unexcused.

Pastor David Kipfmiller, chairman  
Teacher Aaron Schleusener, secretary

# Revisions to the WELS Bylaws and Constitution for the Districts

The 2015 synod in convention passed the following revisions to the WELS Bylaws and the Constitution for the Districts by at least a two-thirds majority vote for each revision. The resolution that dealt with each revision is noted below, along with the page where that resolution can be found in this book.

Additions are underlined. Deletions are indicated by a strikethrough.

## Resolution No. 23-01, p. 52

### 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, 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.

#### Section 5.80

#### Chief Technology Officer

(a) There shall be a chief technology officer who, under the direction of the president, shall have overall responsibility for the technology activities of the synod. These activities include the responsibility for the technical infrastructure and activities of the synod, the security of all synodical information, the development and maintenance of financial systems to support the work of all synod entities, the integrity of synod databases, and provisions for reliable digital communications.

(b) The chief technology officer shall be hired by the president after consultation with the Synodical Council. He shall be an employee of the synod and accountable to the president.

(c) The chief technology officer shall be responsible for areas of ministry support assigned to him by the president. He shall be an advisory member of any board, commission, and committee of the synod as assigned by the president or otherwise specified in these bylaws.

## Resolution No. 23-02, p. 52

### WELS Bylaws, Section 1.00—Definitions

(d) “Staff Minister” means any male who is synodically certified and listed on the most current synodical roster of “Staff Ministers—active” or “Staff Ministers—retired” who is holding a permanent call. Male staff ministers are included in the male teachers category in all articles and bylaws.

Male staff ministers who still have a program of education to complete and female staff ministers listed in the most current synodical roster titled “Female Staff Ministers—active” and “Female Staff Ministers—retired” are also included in Sections 8.20 and 8.60.

## Resolution No. 23-03, p. 53

### Section 7.40

#### WELS Pension Retirement Program Commission

(a) There shall be a WELS ~~Pension Retirement Program~~ Commission that shall serve the Synodical Council by administering the synod’s retirement program, including the synod’s pension plan and the synod’s 403(b)(9) retirement income account plan (the “Plans”), in keeping with the ~~p~~Plan

document(s) approved by the Synodical Council.

(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 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 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 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 pPlans.

(d) For oversight purposes the Commission shall report to the Synodical Council through the synod president or his designee. The synod president may select a designee to provide operational oversight to the synod employees assigned to the Commission.

### **Section 7.50**

#### **WELS VEBA Commission**

(a) There shall be a WELS Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association (VEBA) Commission that shall serve the Synodical Council by operating and administering the group medical plan(s) approved by the Synodical Council for the benefit of the synod's workers and such other workers within the synod who may qualify under the plan(s).

(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 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 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 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.

(d) For oversight purposes the Commission shall report to the Synodical Council through the synod president or his designee. The synod president may select a designee to provide operational oversight to the synod employees assigned to the Commission.

### **Resolution No. 23-04, p. 53**

#### **Constitution for the Districts, Article VII, Section 1—Rights and Duties of Officers**

The president shall be responsible for the supervision of doctrine and practice within the district. The president shall represent the district, shall supervise the execution of its resolutions and shall sign documents issuing from the district. The president shall provide for the ordination of such candidates for ministry who shall have graduated from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Seminary or such who shall have otherwise qualified and who shall have received and accepted a call from within the confines of the district. He shall also authorize the installation of other pastors and of male teachers called by congregations within the district. He shall issue letters of transfer to such pastors and male teachers as shall enter another church body in fellowship with the synod ~~or another district of the synod.~~



# Financials

The financial information listed on the following pages summarizes the ministry financial plan (budget) approved for the 2015–17 biennium by the 2015 convention delegates, outlined in Resolution No. 01 from Committee #10, Finance and budget (see p. 32).

## Ministry financial plan highlights

Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) continue to be the primary source of synod support. Due to uncertain levels of CMO, synod support funding will remain flat at FY15 levels for each year of the upcoming biennium. The areas of ministry and schools developed their ministry plans with the goal of maintaining existing ministry or carefully expanding where levels of available reserves or special grants allowed. For most areas, developing a flat budget while maintaining existing ministry proved challenging even with modest wage increases as costs such as insurances and some fees are expected to increase over the next biennium. The Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) will continue to hold all non-CMO sources of support until the year after receipt.

The approved plan for the 2015–17 biennium is balanced and relies on the drawdown of the FSF and on areas of ministry and the schools to use reserves and additional funding sources to sustain ongoing ministry. The synod remains financially sound, and we pray for the Lord's continued blessings as we encourage congregations to consider increasing their CMO and to support the efforts underway to retire the synod debt.

## Assumptions

The approved ministry financial plan was put together with the following assumptions:

- Congregation Mission Offerings will increase 1 percent in calendar years 2016 and 2017.
- Net asset policies adopted by WELS Church Extension Fund and WELS Foundation will contribute \$700,000 annually to Home Missions special funds and \$150,000 annually to the Financial Stabilization Fund, respectively.
- A \$2.9 million dollar distribution from a gifted interest in an LLC is expected in FY17. The total distribution from the LLC is expected to be approximately \$6 million with initial direction that nearly \$3 million will be endowed to support World Missions and the remainder to support general WELS ministry. Guidance for the handling of these funds is subject to change based on the donor's wishes.
- Schwan Foundation grants are expected to increase 5 percent in 2016 and 2017. Other sources of support are expected to remain relatively flat.
- Synod support to each area of ministry and to the schools will remain flat to FY15 levels.
- Expenses will increase for wages (+1.75 percent), health care (+11 percent), and pension (+10 percent).
- The synod debt of \$4.7 million in municipal bonds will be retired by the end of FY16 as a result of the One in Christ debt retirement offering initiated in the fall of 2015. The debt retirement could result in reduced transfers from the Financial Stabilization Fund of \$1.6 million per year.
- The Financial Stabilization Fund will be drawn down by \$2.9 million in FY16 and increased by \$2 million in FY17. The FY17 increase is a result of the distribution expected from the LLC and the anticipated retirement of the synod's debt at the end of FY16.
- Nearly \$6.4 million of reserves will be used over the biennium by the various areas of ministry and the schools.

Within the biennium, synod support is allocated, on average, approximately 40 percent to Home and World Missions, 28 percent to Ministerial Education, 18 percent to Congregation & District Ministry, 12 percent to Ministry Support, and 2 percent to Debt Retirement.

Total plan expenses for FY 2015–17 are, on average, approximately 55 percent for Ministerial Education, 27 percent for Home and World Missions, 10 percent for Congregation and District Ministry, 7 percent for Ministry Support, and 1 percent for debt retirement.

## APPENDIX

### Prioritized list of unfunded programs for the 2015–17 biennium

Resolution No. 03 from Committee #22, Miscellaneous Memorials, outlined the addition of a Director of Youth and Family Ministry to the unfunded program prioritization list. The list will be reviewed and may be reprioritized at the November 2015 meeting of the Synodical Council.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Item</b>
1	\$50,000	World Missions	Ethiopia/Sudan worker training support
2	\$180,000	Ministerial Education	Prep School subsidy
3	\$100,000	Ministry of Christian Giving	Giving counselor
4	\$50,000	Special Ministries	WELS Military Services Committee
5	\$125,000	Home Missions	New Home Mission start
6	\$50,000	Special Ministries	WELS Prison Ministry Committee
7	\$100,000	Synodical Council	Publication Coordinating Commission
8	\$100,000	Lutheran Schools	Associate director
9	\$100,000	Youth and Family Ministry	Director

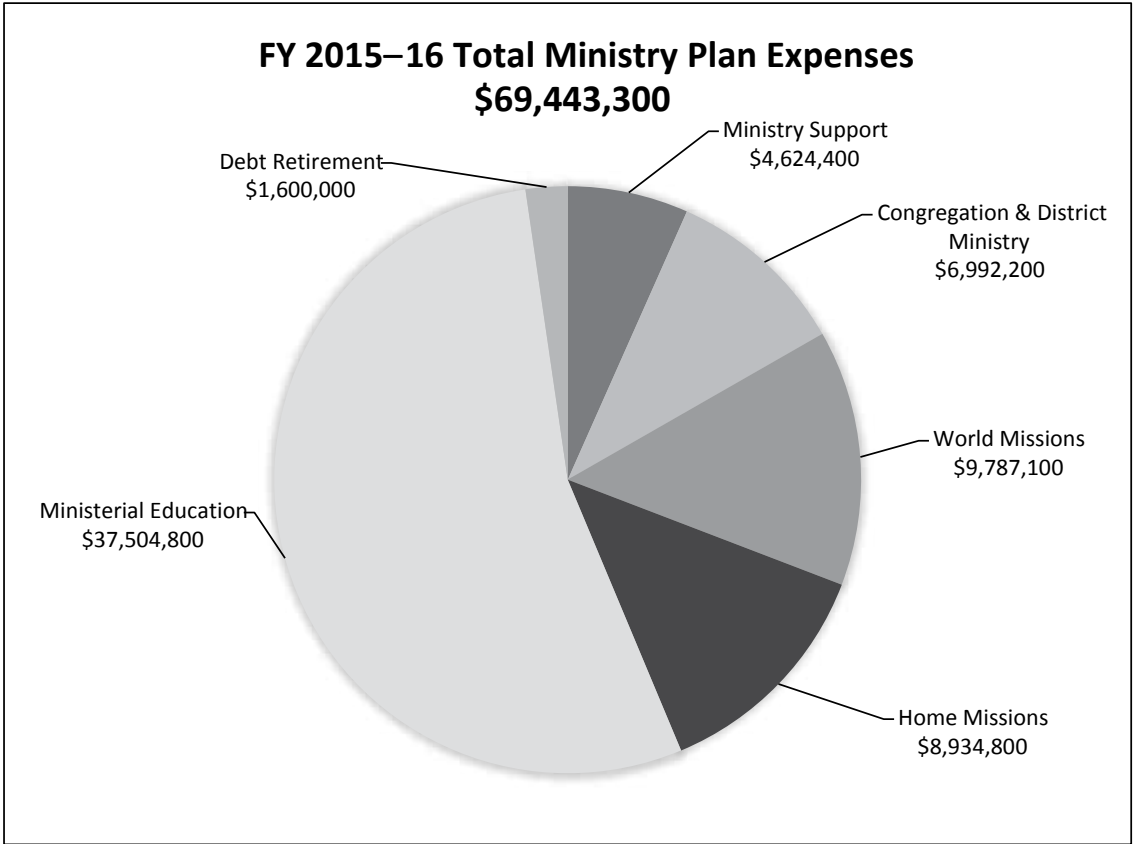
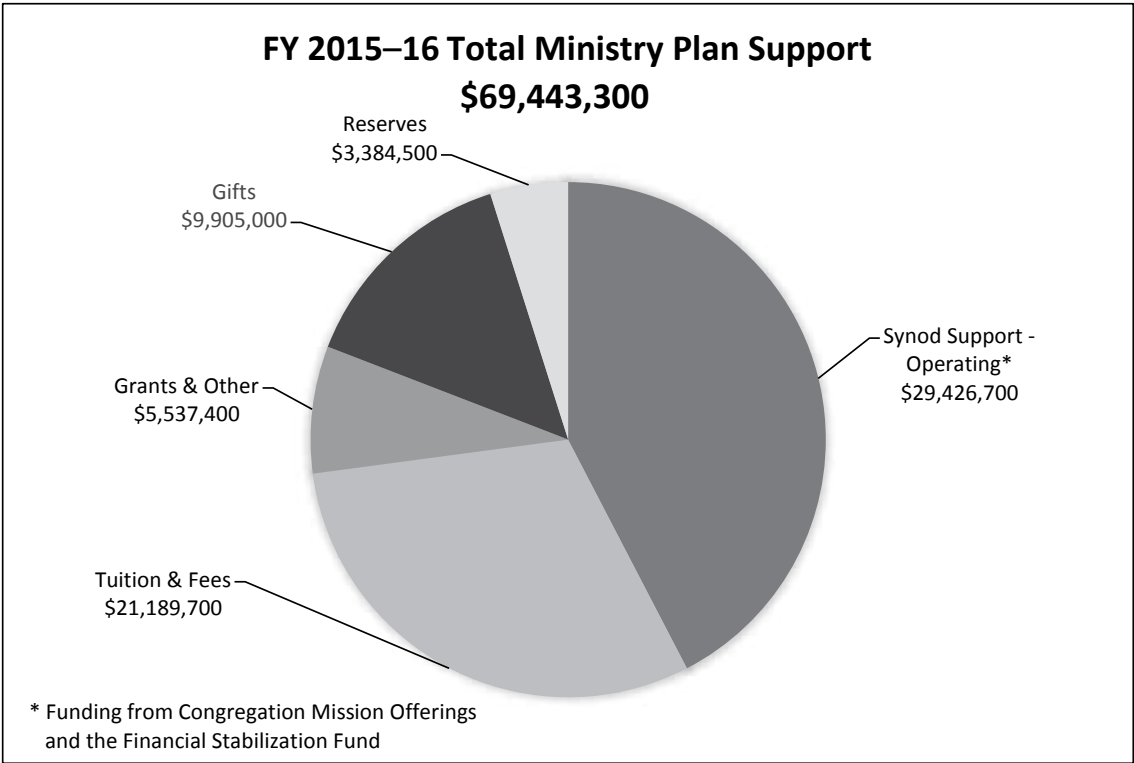


**Plan Summary**

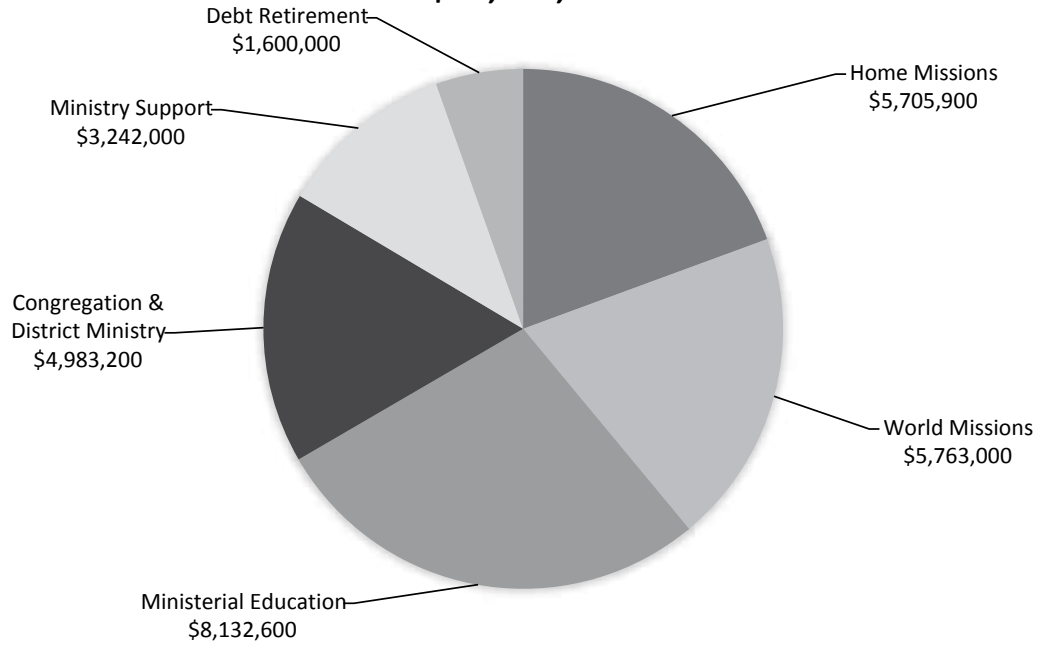
	2013-14 Actual			2014-15 Adj Plan			2015-16 Plan			2016-17 Plan						
	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE
<b>SUMMARY</b>																
Home Missions	5,743,537	1,968,998	7,712,535	11.65	5,705,900	2,032,300	7,738,200	10.90	5,705,900	3,228,901	8,934,801	10.40	5,705,900	2,920,700	8,626,600	10.40
World Missions	5,427,701	3,949,208	9,376,909	52.60	5,738,000	3,868,000	9,606,000	53.35	5,763,000	4,024,110	9,787,110	52.35	5,788,000	4,092,290	9,880,290	51.35
Ministerial Education	8,130,672	30,045,952	38,176,624	321.50	8,094,546	29,526,295	37,620,841	330.75	8,132,550	29,372,165	37,504,715	331.75	8,132,550	30,262,642	38,395,192	331.75
Congregation & District Ministry	4,669,986	1,560,069	6,230,055	36.60	4,938,300	1,912,800	6,851,100	37.90	4,983,200	2,008,980	6,992,180	37.95	5,012,200	1,315,530	6,327,730	37.95
Ministry Support	3,065,411	874,957	3,940,368	29.30	3,334,054	1,457,750	4,791,804	28.80	1,600,000	1,382,400	2,982,400	29.20	3,252,150	1,383,300	4,635,450	28.95
Debt Retirement	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-	27,890,800	-	27,890,800	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,637,307</b>	<b>38,399,184</b>	<b>67,036,491</b>	<b>451.65</b>	<b>29,410,800</b>	<b>38,797,145</b>	<b>68,207,945</b>	<b>461.70</b>	<b>29,426,700</b>	<b>40,016,556</b>	<b>69,443,256</b>	<b>461.65</b>	<b>27,890,800</b>	<b>39,974,462</b>	<b>67,865,262</b>	<b>460.40</b>
<b>Synod Support</b>																
Home Missions	5,743,537			20.1%	5,705,900			19.4%	5,705,900			19.4%	5,705,900			20.5%
World Missions	5,427,701			19.0%	5,738,000			19.5%	5,763,000			19.6%	5,788,000			20.8%
Ministerial Education	8,130,672			28.4%	8,094,546			27.5%	8,132,550			27.6%	8,132,550			29.2%
Congregation & District Ministry	4,669,986			16.3%	4,938,300			16.8%	4,983,200			16.9%	5,012,200			18.0%
Ministry Support	3,065,411			10.7%	3,334,054			11.3%	3,242,050			11.0%	3,252,150			11.7%
Debt Retirement	1,600,000			5.6%	1,600,000			5.4%	1,600,000			5.4%	-			0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,637,307</b>				<b>29,410,800</b>				<b>29,426,700</b>				<b>27,890,800</b>			<b>-5.2%</b>
<b>Total Funding</b>																
Home Missions	7,712,535			11.5%	7,738,200			11.3%	7,738,200			11.5%	8,626,600			12.7%
World Missions	9,376,909			14.0%	9,606,000			14.1%	9,787,110			14.1%	9,880,290			14.6%
Ministerial Education	38,176,624			56.9%	37,620,841			55.2%	37,504,715			54.0%	38,395,192			56.6%
Congregation & District Ministry	6,230,055			9.3%	6,851,100			10.0%	6,992,180			10.1%	6,327,730			9.3%
Ministry Support	3,940,368			5.9%	4,791,804			7.0%	4,624,450			6.7%	4,635,450			6.8%
Debt Retirement	1,600,000			2.4%	1,600,000			2.3%	1,600,000			2.3%	-			0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67,036,491</b>				<b>68,207,945</b>				<b>69,443,256</b>				<b>67,865,262</b>			<b>-2.3%</b>

	Plan Summary															
	2013-14 Actual				2014-15 Adj Plan				2015-16 Plan				2016-17 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
<b>Home Missions</b>																
Board and Administration	570,504	485,932	1,056,436	5.15	569,600	317,500	887,100	4.40	603,100	375,300	978,400	4.40	616,200	314,600	930,800	4.40
Multi-Cultural Ministry	1,859,005	384,480	2,243,485	1.00	1,764,100	260,900	2,025,000	1.00	1,849,900	469,600	2,319,500	1.00	1,703,912	328,900	2,032,812	1.00
Campus Ministry	383,433	21,990	405,423	1.00	407,600	25,000	432,600	1.00	438,400	14,000	452,400	1.00	443,800	19,000	462,800	1.00
Outreach Ministry	2,925,215	756,334	3,681,549	3.00	2,961,300	1,324,100	4,285,400	3.00	2,811,500	2,244,200	5,055,700	3.00	2,938,988	2,130,600	5,069,588	3.00
Joint Mission Council Ministry	1,380	320,262	321,642	1.50	3,300	104,800	108,100	1.50	3,000	125,801	128,801	1.00	3,000	127,600	130,600	1.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,743,537	1,968,998	7,712,535	11.65	5,705,900	2,032,300	7,738,200	10.90	5,705,900	3,228,901	8,934,801	10.40	5,705,900	2,920,700	8,626,600	10.40
<b>World Missions</b>																
Board and Administration	356,674	118,379	475,053	4.35	412,054	140,100	552,154	4.60	421,450	134,600	556,050	4.60	434,150	224,558	658,708	4.60
Africa	1,391,554	688,144	2,079,698	12.50	1,204,000	946,200	2,150,200	12.50	695,885	1,497,900	2,193,785	11.50	695,885	1,531,950	2,227,835	11.00
Europe	478,424	180,720	659,144	3.00	539,400	186,000	725,400	3.00	538,804	462,895	1,001,699	2.50	539,615	455,395	995,010	2.50
Latin America	578,679	421,970	1,000,649	6.75	455,400	393,200	848,600	6.25	541,512	182,895	724,407	5.25	541,512	184,395	725,907	5.25
Native America	215,660	136,719	352,379	2.00	242,100	213,500	455,600	2.00	301,129	209,500	510,629	3.00	301,319	123,000	424,319	3.00
East Asia	1,045,457	662,484	1,707,941	9.50	804,600	1,128,300	1,932,900	10.50	708,930	1,074,960	1,783,890	9.50	749,891	1,069,951	1,819,842	9.50
South Asia	371,920	380,145	752,065	3.50	350,700	423,900	774,600	3.50	542,402	270,160	812,562	5.00	591,274	213,610	804,884	4.50
Asia-Pacific Rim	570,165	184,532	754,697	4.00	629,700	173,000	802,700	4.00	732,363	98,200	830,563	4.00	741,258	103,500	844,758	4.00
Multi-Language Publications	158,206	852,927	1,011,133	7.00	888,600	167,000	1,055,600	7.00	1,016,126	73,000	1,089,126	7.00	1,016,126	73,500	1,089,626	7.00
Other	300,962	323,188	624,150	0.00	211,446	96,800	308,246	0.00	264,359	20,000	284,359	0.00	176,970	112,431	289,401	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,427,701	3,945,208	9,372,909	52.60	5,738,000	3,888,000	9,626,000	53.35	5,783,000	4,024,110	9,787,110	52.35	5,785,000	4,092,290	9,880,290	51.35
<b>Ministerial Education</b>																
Board and Administration	173,844	1,268,359	1,442,203	0.50	127,220	813,800	941,020	0.50	141,950	820,000	961,950	1.00	146,800	845,000	991,800	1.00
Retiree Health Care	27,968	-	27,968	0.00	196,000	-	196,000	0.00	61,000	-	61,000	0.00	64,100	-	64,100	0.00
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary	1,188,060	3,993,866	5,181,926	37.00	1,123,600	5,014,015	6,137,615	39.00	1,042,780	4,406,075	5,448,855	39.00	1,042,780	4,559,345	5,602,125	39.00
Martin Luther College	3,193,500	17,404,167	20,597,667	175.50	3,079,300	15,533,320	18,612,620	183.00	3,011,660	16,491,830	19,503,490	185.00	3,011,660	17,206,980	20,218,640	185.00
Luther Preparatory School	2,340,800	4,925,200	7,266,000	65.00	2,353,800	5,016,100	7,371,900	64.25	2,531,830	5,087,370	7,619,200	62.75	2,523,880	4,957,920	7,481,800	62.75
Michigan Lutheran Seminary	1,206,500	2,454,380	3,660,880	43.50	1,212,626	3,149,060	4,361,686	44.00	1,343,330	2,596,890	3,910,220	44.00	1,343,330	2,693,397	4,036,727	44.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	8,130,672	30,045,952	38,176,624	321.50	8,094,546	29,526,295	37,620,841	330.75	8,132,550	29,372,165	37,504,715	331.75	8,132,550	30,262,642	38,395,192	331.75

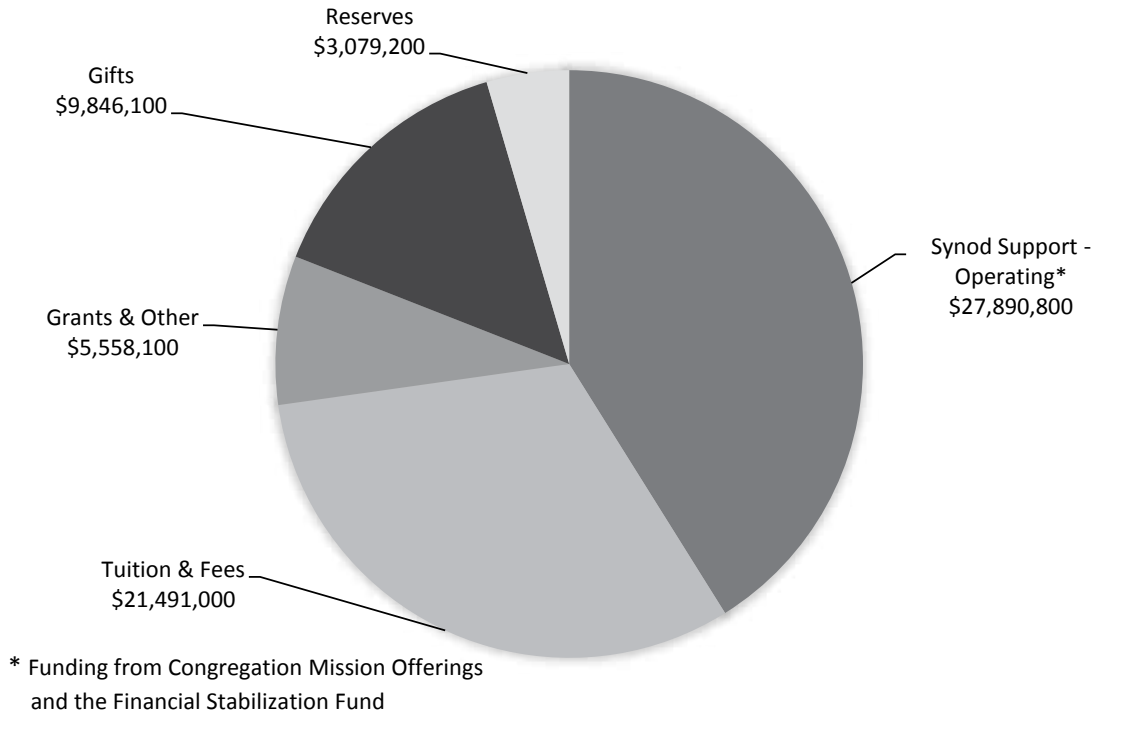
	Plan Summary																
	2013-14 Actual			2014-15 Adj Plan			2015-16 Plan			2016-17 Plan							
	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	
<b>Congregation &amp; District Ministry</b>																	
Congregation & Ministry Support Group	1,003,750	1,039,330	2,043,080	15.30	1,058,600	1,624,000	2,682,600	15.60	1,058,600	1,779,580	2,838,180	15.65	1,058,600	1,175,930	2,234,530	15.65	
Conference of Presidents	103,423	42,653	146,076		128,700	25,000	153,700		98,100	23,700	121,800		98,200	13,900	112,100		
Christian Giving	1,583,349	216,694	1,800,043	16.80	1,814,800	51,300	1,866,100	16.80	1,804,800	4,800	1,809,600	16.80	1,894,800	4,800	1,899,600	16.80	
Communication Services	476,877	63,826	540,703	4.50	526,900	185,500	712,400	5.50	526,900	78,000	604,900	5.50	526,900	78,000	604,900	5.50	
District Ministries	1,026,713	-	1,026,713	0.00	1,013,200	-	1,013,200	0.00	1,017,100	-	1,017,100	0.00	1,046,400	-	1,046,400	0.00	
Convention	109,337	87,957	197,294	0.00	-	-	-	0.00	97,500	90,000	187,500	0.00	-	-	-	0.00	
Commission on Inter Church Relations	46,238	83,709	129,947	0.00	50,100	17,000	67,100	0.00	24,200	29,900	54,100	0.00	24,300	39,900	64,200	0.00	
Special Support	83,935	25,900	109,835	0.00	96,000	10,000	106,000	0.00	96,000	3,000	99,000	0.00	103,000	3,000	106,000	0.00	
Support	236,364	-	236,364	0.00	250,000	-	250,000	0.00	260,000	-	260,000	0.00	260,000	-	260,000	0.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,669,986</b>	<b>1,560,069</b>	<b>6,230,055</b>	<b>36.60</b>	<b>4,938,300</b>	<b>1,912,800</b>	<b>6,851,100</b>	<b>37.90</b>	<b>4,983,200</b>	<b>2,008,980</b>	<b>6,992,180</b>	<b>37.95</b>	<b>5,012,200</b>	<b>1,315,530</b>	<b>6,327,730</b>	<b>37.95</b>	
<b>Ministry Support</b>																	
Facilities	198,438	227,938	426,376	0.00	223,500	412,850	636,350	0.00	223,500	365,000	588,500	0.00	223,500	365,000	588,500	0.00	
Synodical Council	76,843	(12,965)	63,878	0.00	119,300	67,000	186,300	0.00	85,900	-	85,900	0.00	88,800	-	88,800	0.00	
Synod Praesidium	270,761	2,700	273,461	2.00	334,600	50,000	384,600	2.00	315,400	100,000	415,400	3.00	322,600	100,000	422,600	3.00	
Special Task Forces	9,156	-	9,156	0.00	12,500	-	12,500	0.00	11,100	-	11,100	0.00	11,100	-	11,100	0.00	
Technology	1,336,942	20,727	1,357,669	12.75	1,381,029	55,200	1,436,229	13.00	1,343,025	34,600	1,377,625	13.00	1,343,025	34,600	1,377,625	12.75	
Financial Services	933,328	78	933,406	11.55	1,010,325	-	1,010,325	10.80	1,010,325	-	1,010,325	10.20	1,010,325	-	1,010,325	10.20	
Human Resources	239,943	559	240,502	2.00	252,800	-	252,800	2.00	252,800	-	252,800	2.00	252,800	-	252,800	2.00	
Christian Aid and Relief	-	635,920	635,920	1.00	-	872,700	872,700	1.00	-	882,800	882,800	1.00	-	883,700	883,700	1.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,065,411</b>	<b>874,957</b>	<b>3,940,368</b>	<b>29.30</b>	<b>3,334,054</b>	<b>1,457,750</b>	<b>4,791,804</b>	<b>28.80</b>	<b>3,242,050</b>	<b>1,382,400</b>	<b>4,624,450</b>	<b>29.20</b>	<b>3,252,150</b>	<b>1,383,300</b>	<b>4,635,450</b>	<b>28.95</b>	
<b>Debt Retirement</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>0.00</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,665,411</b>	<b>874,957</b>	<b>5,540,368</b>	<b>29.30</b>	<b>4,934,054</b>	<b>1,457,750</b>	<b>6,391,804</b>	<b>28.80</b>	<b>4,842,050</b>	<b>1,382,400</b>	<b>6,224,450</b>	<b>29.20</b>	<b>3,252,150</b>	<b>1,383,300</b>	<b>4,635,450</b>	<b>28.95</b>	



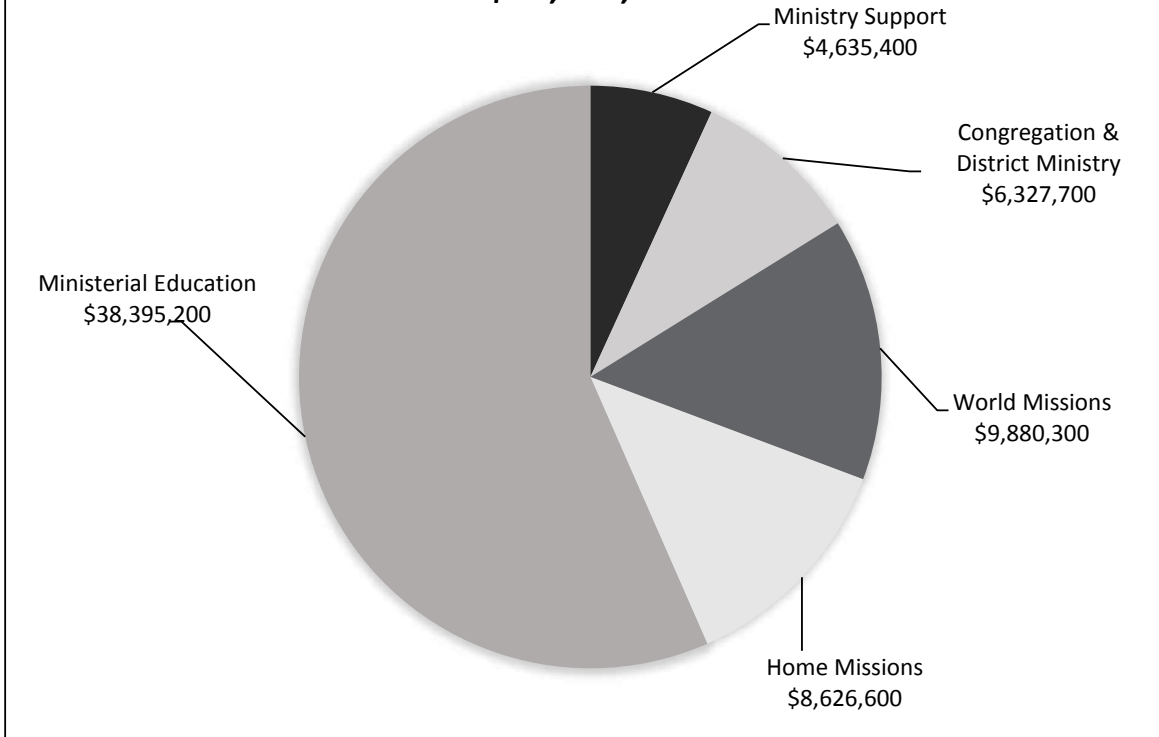
**FY 2015–16 Synod Operating Support Allocation  
\$29,426,700**



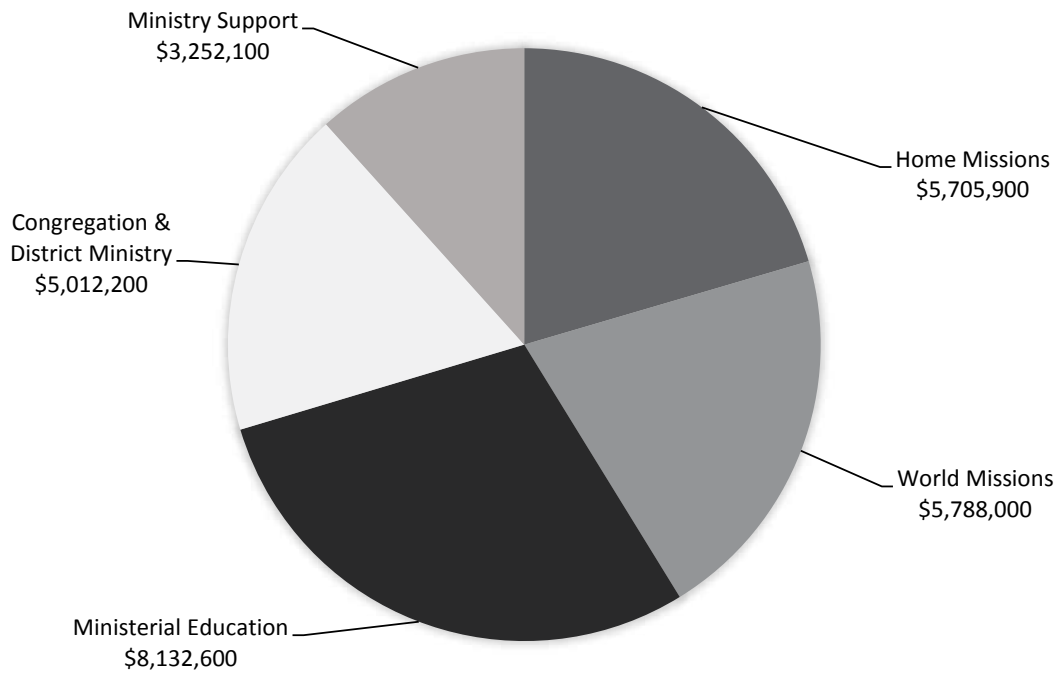
**FY 2016–17 Total Ministry Plan Support  
\$67,865,200**



**FY 2016–17 Total Ministry Plan Expenses  
\$67,865,200**



**FY 2016–17 Synod Operating Support Allocation  
\$27,890,800**



**Synod schedule**

0.50% Inflation Rate Adjustment

**WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES**

**Salary Matrix**

**2015-16**

<b>Range Spread</b>	14,356	15,074	15,822	16,540	17,287	18,005	18,753	19,471
<b>Range Spread</b>	14,356	15,074	15,792	16,510	17,227	17,945	18,663	19,381
<i>Service Incr.</i>	479	502	527	551	576	600	625	649
<b>Ranges</b>	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<i>Experience</i>								
0	28,712	30,148	31,584	33,019	34,455	35,891	37,326	38,762
1	29,191	30,651	32,111	33,571	35,031	36,491	37,951	39,411
2	29,670	31,153	32,639	34,122	35,607	37,091	38,576	40,060
3	30,148	31,656	33,166	34,673	36,184	37,691	39,202	40,709
4	30,627	32,158	33,693	35,225	36,760	38,291	39,827	41,358
5	31,105	32,660	34,221	35,776	37,336	38,891	40,452	42,007
6	31,584	33,163	34,748	36,327	37,912	39,492	41,077	42,656
7	32,062	33,665	35,275	36,879	38,489	40,092	41,702	43,305
8	32,541	34,168	35,803	37,430	39,065	40,692	42,327	43,954
9	33,019	34,670	36,330	37,981	39,641	41,292	42,952	44,603
10	33,498	35,173	36,858	38,533	40,217	41,892	43,577	45,252
11	33,976	35,675	37,385	39,084	40,794	42,493	44,202	45,901
12	34,455	36,178	37,912	39,635	41,370	43,093	44,827	46,550
13	34,934	36,680	38,440	40,187	41,946	43,693	45,453	47,199
14	35,412	37,183	38,967	40,738	42,522	44,293	46,078	47,848
15	35,891	37,685	39,495	41,289	43,099	44,893	46,703	48,497
16	36,369	38,188	40,022	41,841	43,675	45,493	47,328	49,146
17	36,848	38,690	40,549	42,392	44,251	46,094	47,953	49,795
18	37,326	39,193	41,077	42,943	44,827	46,694	48,578	50,444
19	37,805	39,695	41,604	43,494	45,404	47,294	49,203	51,093
20	38,283	40,197	42,132	44,046	45,980	47,894	49,828	51,742
21	38,762	40,700	42,659	44,597	46,556	48,494	50,453	52,391
22	39,240	41,202	43,186	45,148	47,132	49,094	51,078	53,041
23	39,719	41,705	43,714	45,700	47,709	49,695	51,704	53,690
24	40,197	42,207	44,241	46,251	48,285	50,295	52,329	54,339
25	40,676	42,710	44,769	46,802	48,861	50,895	52,954	54,988
26	41,155	43,212	45,296	47,354	49,437	51,495	53,579	55,637
27	41,633	43,715	45,823	47,905	50,014	52,095	54,204	56,286
28	42,112	44,217	46,351	48,456	50,590	52,696	54,829	56,935
29	42,590	44,720	46,878	49,008	51,166	53,296	55,454	57,584
30	43,069	45,222	47,406	49,559	51,742	53,896	56,079	58,233
31	43,547	45,725	47,933	50,110	52,319	54,496	56,704	58,882
32	44,026	46,227	48,460	50,662	52,895	55,096	57,330	59,531

See p. 70 for synodical salary range assignments and above base compensation for called workers.



**Synod schedule**

0.50% Inflation Rate Adjustment

**WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES**

**Salary Matrix**

**2016-17**

<b>Range Spread</b>	14,428	15,149	15,901	16,622	17,374	18,095	18,846	19,568
<b>Range Spread</b>	14,428	15,149	15,871	16,592	17,314	18,035	18,756	19,478
<i>Service Incr.</i>	481	505	530	554	579	603	628	652
<b>Ranges</b>	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<i>Experience</i>								
0	28,856	30,299	31,742	33,184	34,627	36,070	37,513	38,956
1	29,337	30,804	32,272	33,739	35,206	36,673	38,141	39,608
2	29,818	31,309	32,802	34,293	35,785	37,276	38,769	40,260
3	30,299	31,814	33,332	34,847	36,365	37,880	39,397	40,912
4	30,780	32,319	33,862	35,401	36,944	38,483	40,026	41,565
5	31,261	32,824	34,392	35,955	37,523	39,086	40,654	42,217
6	31,742	33,329	34,922	36,509	38,102	39,689	41,282	42,869
7	32,223	33,834	35,452	37,063	38,681	40,292	41,910	43,521
8	32,704	34,339	35,982	37,617	39,260	40,895	42,539	44,174
9	33,184	34,844	36,512	38,171	39,839	41,499	43,167	44,826
10	33,665	35,349	37,042	38,725	40,418	42,102	43,795	45,478
11	34,146	35,854	37,572	39,279	40,998	42,705	44,423	46,131
12	34,627	36,359	38,102	39,833	41,577	43,308	45,051	46,783
13	35,108	36,864	38,632	40,387	42,156	43,911	45,680	47,435
14	35,589	37,369	39,162	40,941	42,735	44,514	46,308	48,087
15	36,070	37,874	39,692	41,496	43,314	45,118	46,936	48,740
16	36,551	38,379	40,222	42,050	43,893	45,721	47,564	49,392
17	37,032	38,884	40,752	42,604	44,472	46,324	48,192	50,044
18	37,513	39,388	41,282	43,158	45,051	46,927	48,821	50,696
19	37,994	39,893	41,812	43,712	45,631	47,530	49,449	51,349
20	38,475	40,398	42,342	44,266	46,210	48,133	50,077	52,001
21	38,956	40,903	42,872	44,820	46,789	48,737	50,705	52,653
22	39,437	41,408	43,402	45,374	47,368	49,340	51,334	53,305
23	39,918	41,913	43,932	45,928	47,947	49,943	51,962	53,958
24	40,398	42,418	44,462	46,482	48,526	50,546	52,590	54,610
25	40,879	42,923	44,992	47,036	49,105	51,149	53,218	55,262
26	41,360	43,428	45,522	47,590	49,684	51,752	53,846	55,914
27	41,841	43,933	46,052	48,144	50,264	52,356	54,475	56,567
28	42,322	44,438	46,582	48,699	50,843	52,959	55,103	57,219
29	42,803	44,943	47,112	49,253	51,422	53,562	55,731	57,871
30	43,284	45,448	47,642	49,807	52,001	54,165	56,359	58,523
31	43,765	45,953	48,172	50,361	52,580	54,768	56,987	59,176
32	44,246	46,458	48,703	50,915	53,159	55,371	57,616	59,828

See p. 70 for synodical salary range assignments and above base compensation for called workers.

## Synodical salary range assignments

Teacher	A-C
Principal	B-D
Prep professor	B-D
Staff minister	B-D
Prep vice president	C-E
Prep dean	C-E
College professor	C-E
Home missionary	C-E
World missionary	C-E
Associate administrator	C-E
Mission counselor	C-E
Prep president	D-F
College vice president	D-F
College dean	D-F
Seminary professor	D-F
Seminary vice president	D-F
Administrator	D-F
College president	E-G
Seminary president	E-G

*Note: A periodic review (minimally once per year) should be undertaken to evaluate an individual's compensation level. Changing call responsibilities and educational levels may lead to a salary range reassignment.*

## Above base compensation components for called workers

1. Cost of living adjustment (using ACCRA or similar COLA index).
2. Cash housing allowance if not provided housing (using HUD Fair Market Rental Values established upon hire date + adjusted annually based on the percent change for the salary matrix. For 2015–16 and 2016–17 this adjustment would be .5%).
3. Social Security allowance (7.65% of salary, cost of living, and housing value/cash housing/fair market rental of parsonage-teacherage).
4. Housing equity of 2% of entry-level base for workers in provided housing (parsonage/teacherage).
5. VEBA health insurance.
6. WELS Pension.
7. Reimbursement for business-related expenses such as travel and conferences.

*Note: An Excel compensation spreadsheet is available for download on the Human Resources page under "compensation" at [cloud.wels.net](http://cloud.wels.net)*

## Compensation for synod president and congregational support for vice presidents

The synod president is compensated with a salary based on column "H." In addition to the base salary and the other components of compensation listed with the compensation guidelines, in 2015–16 the president will receive above base compensation the amount of \$41,225, which reflects a .5% increase from 2014–15. In 2016–17, this component of the president's compensation will be increased by .5% to \$41,431.

The proposed budget for the next biennium includes funding for the first and second vice presidents' congregations in the amount of \$20,000 and \$10,000, respectively. The congregations of the vice presidents are free to request and utilize these funds as they see fit to cover expenses and lost ministry time as a result of the synodical duties of their pastors.

*Note: Salary matrices and compensation worksheets are available for download on the Human Resources page under "compensation" at [cloud.wels.net](http://cloud.wels.net)*

# Minutes

## **Mon., July 27, 2015**

The convention opened with a 6:30 p.m. communion worship service held at St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Saginaw, Mich. The preacher was Rev. Paul Koelpin, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. The text for the sermon was 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. Koelpin used the theme, "Won in Christ." Rev. Mark Schroeder, president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, served as the presiding minister. Rev. Jacob Behnken served as the organist, and Prof. Leonard Proeber served as the choir director. The service included a choir and several instrumentalists.

## **Tues., July 28, 2015**

President Mark Schroeder called the convention to order and welcomed the delegates in the name of the triune God at 8:00 a.m. He introduced Mrs. Karen Fischer, president of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society, who took the podium and narrated the presentation of the flags from every country in which WELS conducts mission work. The ladies were thanked for their presentation.

Rev. Thomas Westra, pastor at Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio, led the morning devotion based on Romans 6:1-11, "One in Christ." Prof. Leonard Proeber served as the organist.

President Schroeder introduced Rev. Joel Petermann, president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich. Petermann welcomed the delegates and provided information about the campus. He was thanked for his presentation.

Dr. Robert Klindworth, chairman of Floor Committee #24, Elections, was introduced. The nominating ballot for the office of president of the synod was conducted. After ballots were collected, Klindworth declared the election closed.

Rev. Joel Voss, second vice-president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, was introduced. Voss presented information about the convention including the privileges and the responsibilities of the delegates. He was thanked for his presentation.

President Schroeder read a letter of greeting from Rev. Martin Wilde, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany (ELFK). He also introduced special guests in attendance, including Rev. John Moldstad, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod; Dr. Al Culver, director of church relations and assistant to the president of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod; Rev. Michael Wilke, representing the Church of the Lutheran Confession; and Rev. Vyachslav Horpynchuk, bishop of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. Also introduced was possibly the oldest man to ever serve as a delegate at a synod convention, Mr. William Hayes of Livonia, Mich., 90 years of age.

Mr. Lee Hitter, director of WELS communications, demonstrated the updated synod website and the live streaming available from the convention. He described the video news updates that are being prepared three times each day. Videos of the 28 displays at the convention are also being made. Written articles will highlight each day's presentations and decisions. Articles will be posted on wels.net and sent out in a daily issue of "Together," WELS' e-newsletter.

Mr. Todd Poppe, WELS chief financial officer, was introduced. He presented the synod's budget for the next two years utilizing a handout, "Ministry Financial Plan, 2015–2017." Questions were entertained. He was thanked for his presentation.

President Schroeder declared a 20-minute break at 9:40 a.m.

At 10 a.m., Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president and pastor at Grace, Milwaukee, Wis., took the chair and introduced Rev. John Brenner, chairman of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations. Brenner presented a brief history of the commission and presented the five objectives that guide the work of the commission. He was thanked for his presentation. Questions were entertained.

President Schroeder resumed the chair. Dr. Klindworth reported for the Elections Committee. Eight candidates were on the ballot for the office of president: Pastors Douglas L. Free, James R. Huebner, Paul M. Janke, David P. Kolander, Mark G. Schroeder, Earle D. Treptow, Charles A. Westra, and Mark G. Zarling. After all ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

President Schroeder presented his report (see p. 16). A printed copy of the report was distributed after the report was presented.

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of the Ministry of Christian Giving, was introduced. He presented a digital and printed report for the Ministry of Christian Giving. His report also included a video, the November 2015 *WELS Connection*, "One in Christ." He was thanked for his report.

Dr. Klindworth reported for the Elections Committee. President Mark Schroeder has been re-elected. The nominating ballot for the office of second vice president was conducted after the position's responsibilities were read. After the ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

At 11:20 a.m., following a number of announcements, all joined in praying the meal prayers. The morning session was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

President Schroeder called the afternoon session to order at 1:30 p.m. Dr. Klindworth shared the results of the nominating ballot for the position of second vice president. Nominated were Pastors Paul M. Janke, David P. Kolander, Earle D. Treptow, Charles A. Westra, and Joel R. Voss. After the ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

President Schroeder announced the acceptance of the call to serve as WELS president for a third four-year term. He included thanks to his wife, Andrea.

Rev. James Huebner presented the essay, "One in Christ." Printed copies of the essay were distributed.

Dr. Klindworth reported the re-election of Rev. Joel Voss as the second vice president of WELS. He continued by speaking of the elections scheduled for tomorrow and the possibility of adding names to those nominated by the Nominating Committee.

There were several announcements. Pastor Westra led the group in prayer. The afternoon session adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

An open session discussing the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Commission 2 was held at 7:00 p.m.

### **Wed., July 29, 2015**

The morning session was called to order by President Mark Schroeder at 8 a.m. The opening devotion was led by Rev. Daniel Sims, pastor at Zion, Columbus, Wis., who based his message on Galatians 3:26, 27. The Michigan Lutheran Seminary Concert Choir beautified the devotion with the hymn, "Yes, Jesus Loves Me." The organist was Mrs. Rebecca Berg, instructor at Michigan Lutheran Seminary.

Second Vice President Joel Voss announced his acceptance of the call to serve another term as the second vice president.

Dr. Robert Klindworth, chairman of the Elections Committee, opened nominations from the floor for each of the 16 board and commission positions up for election. There were no nominations from the floor and the opportunity to offer nominations was closed. The election for each of the positions was conducted. After the ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions, reported for World Missions utilizing a digital presentation. Two videos from the *WELS Missions, Moments with Missionaries* series were shown, including *China: Now is the Time* and *India: Bible Woman*.

Rev. Charles Westra, chairman of the Board for Home Missions, and Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Home Missions, reported for Home Missions. Digital presentations were utilized as well as video depicting the work in St. George, Utah. Rev. Pheng Moua was introduced. Moua is a Pastoral Studies Institute graduate who is serving as a synod

convention delegate. A video was shown depicting the work of the Church Extension Fund as it supplies funding to home mission congregations.

Rev. John Moldstad, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), addressed the convention. He mentioned what a privilege it is for him to address the WELS convention as the two synods continue in fellowship. He mentioned the doctrinal study undertaken at the recent ELS convention. He shared additional ELS news regarding recent resolutions. He mentioned the growing number of pastoral vacancies. Also noted were ministry to the military, Christ in media, and an encouragement to continue in faith and love boldly. "Battle on," Moldstad encouraged, because we trust the Supreme Commander who has already won the victory. He was thanked for his message.

Announcements were made, including the showing of a video greeting from Wisconsin Lutheran College. At 10:15 a.m. a 20-minute break was declared.

After the break, Mr. Bill Ziche, president of Northwestern Publishing House, addressed the assembly utilizing a digital presentation to share news about the ministry of the publishing house.

Rev. John Braun, chairman of the Reformation 500 Committee, presented a digital presentation about the committee's preparations for the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

The following individuals presented presentations for the Congregation and Ministry Support Group: Rev. Bryan Gerlach, director of the Commission on Worship, who also reported for the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry; Rev. Michael Schultz, director of the hymnal project; Rev. Michael Hintz, director of the Commission on Evangelism, who also reported for the Commission on Adult Discipleship; Rev. Jonathan Hein, director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling; and Rev. James Behringer, director of the Commission on Special Ministries.

After announcements, the morning session adjourned for lunch with the meal prayers at 12:06 p.m.

President Schroeder called the afternoon session to order at 1:32 p.m. The final reports for the Congregation and Ministry Support Group were presented. Teacher James Rademan, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, shared updates from his area, and Rev. Michael Hintz presented a trailer of the new movie, *My Son, My Savior*.

Dr. Robert Klindworth reported for the Elections Committee. He read the list of those elected. Four run-off ballots were required: Board of Appeals, Teacher; Board of Appeals, Layman; Commission on Adult Discipleship, Chairman; and Commission on Youth and Family Ministry, Chairman. After all ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator for Ministerial Education, reported for the Board for Ministerial Education. Videos from each of the schools were shown.

Rev. Robert Hein, chairman of WELS Christian Aid and Relief, presented a video, *Thailand*, and a digital presentation describing the work of Christian Aid and Relief.

Rev. Jon Zabell, chairman, 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. Report No. 1 was read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Paul Janke, chairman, Floor Committee #3, Commission on Inter-Church Relations, presented the committee's work. Resolution 03-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 03-02 was amended, then moved and supported. The amended motion carried. Resolution 03-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report 03-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. James Seelow, chairman, Floor Committee #6, Synodical Council, presented report 06-01. The committee was thanked.

Teacher Frederick Uttech, chairman, Floor Committee #7, Support Services, presented the committee's work. Resolution 07-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report 07-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Adam Horneber, chairman, Floor Committee #8, WELS Historical Institute and WELS Archives, presented the committee's work. Resolution 08-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. The committee was thanked.

A recess was called at 3:03 p.m.

Rev. Heath Butler, chairman, Floor Committee #10, Finance and Budget, presented the committee's work. Resolution

10-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 10-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 10-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried. The committee was thanked.

Rev. John Boggs, chairman, Floor Committee #11, World Missions and Joint Mission Council, presented the committee's work. Resolution 11-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Jason Zahn, chairman, Floor Committee #13, Ministerial Education, presented the committee's work. Resolution 13-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report 13-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Aaron Christie, chairman, Floor Committee #9, Christian Aid and Relief, presented the committee's work. Resolution 09-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report 09-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Teacher James Brandt, chairman, Floor Committee #17, Northwestern Publishing House and Publication Coordinating Commission, presented the committee's work. Resolution 17-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 17-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. The committee was thanked.

Mr. Joel Rhoads, chairman, Floor Committee #18, Church Extension Fund, presented Report 18-01. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Timothy Bode, chairman, Floor Committee #12, Home Missions, presented Report 12-01. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman, Floor Committee #21, Ad Hoc Commission 2, presented the committee's work. Resolution 21-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 21-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 21-03 was moved and supported. It was moved and supported to amend the motion by striking Resolved B. The proposed amendment carried. The amended motion carried. Resolution 21-04 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 21-05 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 21-06 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 21-07 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 21-08 was moved and supported. The committee was thanked.

At 5:07 p.m., Rev. Daniel Sims led a closing prayer, and the afternoon session was adjourned.

In the evening, delegates were invited to attend mission presentations in the assembly hall.

#### **Thurs., July 30, 2015**

President Mark Schroeder called the morning session to order at 8:00 a.m. Rev. Kent Holz, pastor at Beautiful Savior, Clarksville, Tenn., led the opening devotion based on Philippians 1:18b-27. A special prayer was offered for LCMS President Matthew Harrison, whose home was destroyed by fire. The organist was Mr. Phil Eich.

Rev. Robert Koester, chairman of Floor Committee #4, Ministry of Christian Giving, presented the committee's work. Resolution 04-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. The committee was thanked.

Teacher Frederick Uttech, chairman of Floor Committee #7, Support Services, returned to the podium to complete the committee's report. Reports 07-02 and 07-03 were read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman of Floor Committee #21, Ad Hoc Commission 2, returned to the podium to complete the committee's report. Resolution 21-08 was moved and supported. It was moved and supported to call the question. The motion to call the question carried. The motion carried. Resolution 21-09 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 21-10 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report 21-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Philip Kieselhorst, chairman of Floor Committee #5, Communication Services, presented the committee's report. Report 05-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Jeremiah Gumm, chairman, Floor Committee #14, Congregation and Ministry Support Group A, presented the committee's work. Resolution 14-01 was moved and supported. The wording of the "Resolved" was amended by the committee. The revised motion carried. Reports 14-01 and 14-02 were read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Michael Helwig, chairman of Floor Committee #15, Congregation and Ministry Support Group B, presented the committee's report. Report 15-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Teacher Carl Hochmuth, chairman of Floor Committee #16, Congregation and Ministry Support Group C, presented

the committee's work. Resolution 16-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 16-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 16-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried. The committee was thanked.

Teacher James Sievert, chairman of Floor Committee #19, WELS Foundation and WELS Investment Funds, presented the committee's report. Report 19-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Mr. James Freer, chairman of Floor Committee #20, Benefit Plans (VEBA and Pension), presented the committee's work. Resolution 21-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report 20-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Dr. Robert Klindworth, chairman of Floor Committee #24, Elections, presented the committee's final report. Report 24-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. David Kipfmiller, chairman of Floor Committee #25, Membership and Attendance, presented the committee's report. Report 25-01 was read. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Bradley Bode, chairman of Floor Committee #2, Conference of Presidents, presented the committee's work. Resolution 02-01 was moved and supported. One name was added, Julie Wietzke. The revised motion carried. Resolution 02-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 02-03 was moved and supported. (The amount was \$5,165.) The motion carried. Resolution 02-04 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 02-05 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 02-06 was moved and supported. (The motion includes first year tutors) The motion carried. Resolution 02-07 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 02-08 was moved and supported. It was moved and supported to recommit to committee. The motion to recommit was defeated.

A ten-minute break was declared at 10:04 a.m. After the break, discussion of Resolution 02-08 continued. It was moved and supported to call the question. The motion to call the question carried. Wording was revised by the committee. The reworded motion carried by a hand count. Resolution 02-09 was moved and supported. Wording was revised by the committee. The reworded motion carried. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Robert Dick, chairman of Floor Committee #22, Miscellaneous Memorials, presented the committee's work. Resolution 22-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution 22-02 was moved and supported. The motion was defeated. Resolution 22-03 was moved and supported. The committee removed Whereas 7. It was moved and supported to drop the words "as #2." The revised and amended motion carried. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Daniel Simons, chairman, Floor Committee #23, Committee on Constitutional Matters, presented the committee's work. Resolution 23-01 was moved and supported. Wording was added by the committee. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority. Resolution 23-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority. Resolution 23-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority. Resolution 24-0 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority by hand count of 234 in favor and 43 opposed. Resolution 23-05 was moved and supported. The motion carried. The committee was thanked.

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of the Ministry of Christian Giving, announced the official beginning of the debt elimination drive. All were encouraged to bring a gift out of love for the Savior and then to return home and encourage congregation participation in the offering.

President Mark Schroeder offered closing thoughts. Often we do not want to know how things end, but God has told us how things will end. The church will suffer, but do not give up hope; Jesus will win and we are with him, gathered around the Lamb. Do not be afraid!

Also, what has happened here needs to be shared. We have seen the power of the gospel. We have been reminded that we are Lutherans who stand boldly on the Word of God and know salvation by faith alone. Share the blessings God is showering on our synod. Tell this story.

Thank you for the time you have given. WELS is not perfect, but God uses unworthy sinners to be his workers and witnesses. We face challenges but this magnifies God's power—we know how the story ends. We know he will never leave us; let us not ever leave him.

The group arose and joined in the singing of the Doxology.

After announcements, it was moved and supported to adjourn. The motion carried. President Schroeder declared the convention closed with the sounding of the gavel.

The closing worship service was held at 11:45 a.m. The preacher was Rev. John Seifert, president of the Michigan District. Rev. Joel Petermann, president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary, served as the presiding minister. The sermon text was based on 1 Peter 4:7-11, with the theme: "Work to be one in service and glorify God through Jesus Christ." The organist was Ryan Fricke of Trinity, Bay City, Mich. The trumpeter was Seth Willitz.

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



# 2015 memorial disposition

Memorial	Title	Submitted by	Committee assigned to	Disposition	Rationale
2015-01	Restoration of funding for the director of the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry	Northwestern and Rhinelander Circuits of the NW District	#22 – Miscellaneous Memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 22-03
2015-02	Request for WELS to change name to World Evangelical Lutheran Synod	Galen W. Sommer, Minneapolis, Minn.	#22 – Miscellaneous Memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 22-01
2015-03	Mentoring initiative for new pastors	Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee	#2 – Conference of Presidents	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 02-08
2015-04	Encouragement for calling bodies to provide the resources of time/money to their called workers to pursue ministry-long spiritual and professional growth	Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee	#2 – Conference of Presidents	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 02-09
2015-05	Scouting	Christ, Clarksville, Md.	#22 – Miscellaneous Memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 22-02
2015-06	Name of the synod	Rev. Robert Gurgel, Milwaukee, Wis.	#22 – Miscellaneous Memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 22-01

# Convention presentations

For a complete list of convention presentations, see the minutes, which begin on p. 71.

## Opening service sermon

July 27, 2015

St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.

Prof. Paul Koelpin

*I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*

*“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”*

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)*

I should tell you that most historians are pessimists. It’s not that they want to be; they would like to see themselves as contributing to the improvement of the world. They want people to learn lessons from the past, but people just don’t seem to learn much. Conflict still happens. Things still fall apart. For most historians, any notion that there ever was or ever will be a truly “golden age” is just a romantic fiction. Even a study of the history of the church reveals often a regrettable lack of purity and purpose.

Does this mean that I’m a pessimist? Sometimes. More often than I’d like to be. I’m personally aware of my own failures and weakness. And when I study the ways of the world, it’s hard to be positive. Change is happening rapidly. I can hear the line from the hymn “Abide With Me” in my head: “Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away; Change and decay in all around I see.” We live in a culture that is in grave moral decline, and, what is more, those who find truth in the pages of Holy Scripture are castigated as wrong and haters and out-of-touch.

We are gathered here to consider who we are and what we do together—joined in the fellowship of faith. We will be asked to look forward and to anticipate the future. That’s not an easy proposition in view of what we know about the past and our immediate present. So where does that leave us? Should we be paralyzed by the past? We might be if that were all we knew to be true. But, thanks be to God, we have a unique perspective. We have both the record of the past and the knowledge of the ultimate future. And that changes everything.

Listen to the instruction of St. Paul from 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

Paul is brimming with confidence and optimism as he concludes this letter to the church at Corinth despite living in a culture that was in moral decline and personally dealing with issues of division and dissension. “Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

So there we are . . . on the one hand, history’s pessimism (which is nothing other than an honest assessment of human nature). On the other, the optimism of eternity (which is nothing other than confidence in Christ). This is the tension in which each of us lives every day—on the one hand, we are sinful creatures who live in a sin-cursed world; on the other, we are new creations in Christ who have a grasp on eternity even now.

As we stand between history and eternity, we intend to contemplate and celebrate our unity in Christ. The theme of this convention is “One in Christ.” As a church body—as a synod—we rejoice that we have a common identity in the word and work of Jesus Christ. My fellow brothers and sisters, the only reason we can be united as “One in Christ” is because the victory over sin and death and Satan has been “Won in Christ.” We are “One in Christ” because we have been “Won in Christ.”

Nothing unites like a champion. Sports fans understand well what I mean. The excitement is enticing as championship fever spreads. Everyone identifies with a champion. In a manner of speaking, Jesus is our champion. He has become our identity. I don’t want this to seem trite by using this analogy. His was a battle far more difficult and a victory far more significant than any other conflict on this earth. His was a fight to the finish, a battle to the death.

Jesus’ life was a confrontation with evil from beginning to end—day after day. And he did not give up when he met challenges and opposition. He condemned everything that opposed the will of God—from the personal temptations of Satan to the detestable lives of adulterers to the self-righteousness of the Pharisees. He preached repentance and taught about the true nature of God’s kingdom. He encouraged the ministry of his disciples, even though he knew that they were “sheep among wolves.”

In the greatest irony of history, the more Jesus loved and forgave, the more he was hated. And the greatest act of love was the scene of his execution. All of this followed God’s eternal plan. Saving us meant dying for us. Not because he deserved it, but because he had to. In the full flower of his life, Jesus surrendered his life in death. There, on Calvary, a sinless human life was offered to fulfill all righteousness. Once and for all, perfection had been attained.

What looked like defeat was actually victory. Jesus conquered on the cross. The empty tomb was the declaration of victory over sin and death. “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” Eyewitnesses saw Jesus, heard him speak, touched him, and ate with him. “He lives!” they declared. We too will live, even though, because of our sin, we will die. Yes, for us on this side of eternity, death still stings. But the sting doesn’t last forever. Those who hope in Christ can claim his victory. To believe in Jesus means to identify with the work and words of our champion. So Easter transforms our outlook on life. The proclamation of victory is sort of like watching the replay of a championship. You feel the thrill all over again—even though you know the outcome. The resurrection inspires Christians to live each day with joy and confidence. Each day has a purpose as a day of grace to serve the cause of the gospel.

Will we be accused of being too triumphalist with all this victory talk and resurrection energy? What brings us “down to earth” is the truth that we continue to live and serve in the “Church Militant.” Every day on earth is a battle—with ourselves, with our culture, with evil and its temptations. The winds and waves of society and change still threaten to blow us away. We are often swayed by public opinion and the fickleness of human emotion. We must not misunderstand: Christ’s victory does not ensure that our church body will look victorious. Our work is not a numbers game; it is a test of endurance and truth. Our unity is not a product of our own design. This is not a celebration of what we’ve established or become. We are “One in Christ” because we have been “Won in Christ” for the purpose of proclaiming his truth and love. So “stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” And God has promised that his Word will “not return empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

Stand firm, yes, but life does not stand still. Time marches on. Paul often talked about life as though it were a race. So did the writer of the book of Hebrews (perhaps Paul?) who wrote, “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out

for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” In our context as those united in common faith, perhaps we might see this as a relay race—running together and relying on each other as we speed toward the finish line of life. We may not run at the same speed or with the same style, but at least it should be clear that we are on the same team.

As we run we will encounter hurdles that seem to be getting higher and obstacles that get wider and longer. [Perhaps we are running a steeplechase—pun intended.] I fear that our natural reaction to the challenges of this world may be to “cry foul”—to demand that the race be “run according to the rules.” Fellow racers, the hurdles will not be removed from the track. The world has no sensitivity for the rules. And if we put our hope in rules, we may lose all of our energy or even find that we have disqualified ourselves.

We run with the energy and focus and power that Christ supplies. Do the hurdles seem insurmountable? We do not run with our own strength. The church (this synod, this gathering) is not our human creation. God has given us life and structure and purpose and strength. We run, truly, with supernatural power. Our mission is a supernatural mission.

I think also about the lesson of the prophet Daniel. He served and lived during the challenge of exile. This was a time of real trial for believers. And even the most faithful were likely ready to question the goodness and mercy of God. Why did he allow Jerusalem and the temple to be destroyed? What good could come from living among unbelievers in a crassly pagan culture? Then God gave Daniel visions of the future that Daniel could hardly stomach. God peeled back the curtains, as it were, and allowed him to see a “great war”—the spiritual warfare similar to that about which Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

And what does Daniel say: “I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless.” He was overcome with anguish, and he could hardly breathe. God said to Daniel: “Do not be afraid. Peace! Be strong now; be strong.” Daniel saw reality—and it was shocking. God did not sugar-coat anything. “There will be times of distress.” But he supplied Daniel with the strength and confidence of eternal life. Daniel ends with this passage: “Go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

We will continue to experience “days of distress.” And if God would allow us to see the spiritual dimensions of the warfare that is happening, we would become physically weak and emotionally disturbed. But . . . “stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” At the end of the day, to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord is to be exhausted by meaningful work. I can think of nothing more worthwhile, which deserves our full focus and commitment, than the work of the gospel. That is the work of this synod; that is the work of this convention.

Does it make a difference to know already how things will end? Absolutely. In him, we win. And we are “One in Christ” because we have been “Won in Christ.” Amen.

## Essay: “One in Christ”

July 28, 2015

Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Rev. James Huebner

## Introduction

**As a prisoner for the Lord ... I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received ... Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all** (Ephesians 4:1,3-6). The apostle Paul was in Rome under house arrest, “a prisoner for the Lord.” While there, word came to him that the members of the church in Ephesus, a congregation he had founded and spent three years building, were at each other’s throats. So, he wrote a letter urging oneness and unity.

How could oneness ever happen in Ephesus? You see, the congregation was made up primarily of two culture groups. Some Christians in that congregation had come from an Israelite background, some had come from a Greek or non-Israelite background, and they didn’t get along. The Greek Christians brought ham and bacon to the Easter brunch, and the Jewish Christians became nauseous. The Jewish Christians were asking, “How can Greeks be in God’s family? That doesn’t seem right. They aren’t blood descendants of Abraham!” The Greek Christians were wondering, “Are we good enough to be members of God’s family?”<sup>1</sup>

*One in Christ* is the theme for this convention. How can oneness ever happen in our synod? We come from different homes, different congregations, different districts. We have different views on what areas of ministry should get priority in synodical funding, different opinions about which translation of the Bible to use, different opinions on how to carry out worship that serves God’s people and also attracts prospective members, young people, and church-shoppers. In light of those differences some might think the theme, *One in Christ*, is wishful thinking at best or a white-washing of reality at worst. Based on what Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians and us, I believe it is a statement of fact. This God-breathed letter provides the background and basis for this essay, as we track through the apostle’s epistle to see that *One in Christ* means we are one with God, one in faith, one in purpose, and one in service.

If this six-chapter letter can be divided in half with chapters one to three featuring what God did for us, the center, the focal point, of the first half would be the opening verses

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<sup>1</sup> It would be like members of Grace Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1910, reacting to the news that for the first time in the history of the congregation there would be worship services in English, once a month, on a Sunday night. “Is that OK? I thought God only spoke German!”

of chapter two (Ephesians 2:1-10)<sup>2</sup>, a summary of the main truths of Scripture: faults, forgiveness, faith, and fruits. You have to have all four, and you have to have them in the right order. If you put faith and fruits in front of forgiveness, you're a Roman Catholic. If you put faith in front of forgiveness, you're a Baptist. If you have all four and have them in the right order, you are a Lutheran. Faults and forgiveness are highlighted in part one of this essay, faith in part two, and fruits in parts three and four.

[1:1-2 greeting]	
1 <sup>ST</sup> HALF OF EPHESIANS – “CENTERED”	
2:1-10	
faults, forgiveness, faith, fruits	
1:20-22.....2:11-22	
Christ is the head	Christ is the cornerstone
1:15-19.....3:1-19	
we believe by his incomparably great power	we believe by the administration of God's grace
1:3-14.....3:14-21	
hymn	hymn

What most people in our world don't know but need to know is that we were born with a death notice hanging over us. Spiritually we were stillborn. That's the shocker the apostle dropped on the Ephesians. **We were dead in transgressions** (2:5)<sup>3</sup>. It is normal and natural for people to believe that every newborn is innocent, that if your heart and lungs are functioning, you have a spark of good in you. But if you want to know the truth about what it takes to be one with God, then you have to come to grips with the fact that there is no such thing as an innocent baby. No human has potential to be as good as God demands. No human is born with a spark of good or "spirituality."<sup>4</sup> What we were born with, our sinful nature, is rightly classified as our biggest fault and the root of all our faults.

What we desperately need in order to be one with God is a miracle of forgiveness from God. Jesus made that happen. This is the best news anyone could ever hear. God works in ways unexpected and undeserved primarily in raising people from spiritual death to spiritual life. Israelites, what did you do to be cured and healed of venomous snake

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:1-10: As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this essay, Scripture references with only chapter and verse will be references from the letter to the Ephesians.

<sup>4</sup> From God's perspective, "All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no who does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3).

bites? “Nothing! God did it with his promise of healing.” Nicodemus, what did you do to be born of your mom and dad? “Nothing!” My friends, what did you or I do to be one with God? Nothing! The phrases are piled up, excluding all human activity. **It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast (2:8-9).**

If you wanted to write a letter encouraging people toward unity, how would you start? Pointing out their errors and weaknesses? Offering a step-by-step “how to”? Cajoling them? The apostle begins in a most unexpected way, with a hymn of praise! In fact, he bubbles over with so much excitement that verses three to ten of chapter one are one, long, run-on sentence. **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3).** That opening verse of Paul’s hymn of praise is a part of our communion liturgy. In Christ everything we could ever hope for or imagine when it comes to our relationship with God is already ours.

That news fills our heart with so much joy that we spring out of bed each day with a smile on our face, lift our eyes heavenward, and call out, “Thank you, Lord, for this wonderful day!” Right? Or would it be more accurate to say that more often than not, instead of having eyes lifted heavenward, our noses are earth-bound, buried in the drudgery and doldrums of dredging for daily bread? And then what? We complain. Has complaining become a national pastime? We complain about the weather. It’s either too hot or too cold, too humid or too dry. If not the weather, then it’s our health: the allergies, the arthritis, the feet, the back. If not health, then it’s the government: too much Big Brother, not enough compassion, too much red tape, not enough protection. If not the government, then it’s the former councilman who demonstrates during church meetings that he believes negativity is a spiritual gift, the ushers who don’t show up, the noisy kids in the back pews, the lack of any kids in the back pews, the women of the Ladies Aid who won’t let a new member change the potato salad recipe, the public school system, the economy, the unfair demands at work, or our unbelievably hectic schedules.

How can we break the pattern of grumbling and complaining? That happens when we are absolutely clear on how we became one with God. Paul points ahead to the center of this half of his letter in his opening hymn of praise. We are God’s children because of **his glorious grace (1:6)**. Even before God created the sun and positioned it in the heavens, before he set the moon and stars and planets in their places in space, God looked down through the corridors of time and singled us out to be his own. **He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In**

**love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will (1:4-5).**

What prompted God to single us out to be his children?<sup>5</sup> It is his love “in Christ.” That phrase “in Christ” (or “in him” or “through Jesus Christ”) occurs one hundred fifty times in this little letter and ten times in the opening fourteen verses. God did not choose us in the way that children choose players when they pick up sides for a ball game. The captains try to pick the best players first. But when God chose us, it was not because of some potential in us but only because of Jesus. **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us (1:7-8).**<sup>6</sup>

Do you want joy and hope in a world that can drag you down? Then lift your eyes to the cross of Jesus and see the price paid for your oneness with God. In a world of confusion where things do not always add up, Christ Jesus makes sense of it all. Life is no mystery when God has revealed to us the mystery of his mercy. God **made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ ... to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ (1:9-10).** No matter how old or young you are, no matter how tall or short you are, no matter what the amounts and distribution of melanin pigment in your epidermis, no matter where you live, we are one with God because of what Jesus did. No disagreements or dividers here. That’s what it means to be one in Christ.

## II.

If I’ve heard it once, I’ve heard it a hundred times, “If God hands out forgiveness for free, what’s to prevent people from going out and sinning like crazy?” The concern is about behavior. “How are we going to get people to live godly lives? How are we going to get people to behave?” The apostle addresses that issue, too. But he doesn’t begin by talking about what people are to do. He begins in 1:3-2:9 with what God has done. Then in 2:9-22 he addresses the impact that has on our insides so that we are no longer dead corpses nor scratching and clawing to get away from him like a trapped raccoon. We

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<sup>5</sup> Paul expands on the answer to that question: God did not single us out to be his own because we are so wonderful or because we have such great qualities. No! He singled us out to be recipients of his mercy “according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory” (1:11-12).

<sup>6</sup> For the apostle Paul, “redemption” was not an abstract theological term dug out of an old, dusty doctrine book. Redemption is the only way out for people in prison because it involves two things: a payment is made, and then captives are set free. Paul was under house arrest and had no idea whether someone would be able to make a ransom payment so that he could go free. But he did know that whether under house arrest or in jail, whether walking the streets of Rome or Corinth or Ephesus, Jesus had already made the ransom payment for all sins of all sinners. Jesus anteed up his own blood, and with that payment we sinners were set free from the prison of sin and the chains of guilt and declared to be one with God.



are God's dear children, grateful for his love, wanting to do what he wants because all of what God did for us in Christ becomes ours personally through faith. Remember the sequence: faults, forgiveness, *faith*. Faith is trust that what God says about us is true. Faith is passive. It is the empty bowl which God created in us by his powerful words of promise and love. It catches all the good things God pours into our hearts. It is not the reason he loves us. It is the result of his love for us.

But faith is also active. It is alive and producing the fruits of faith like an apple tree producing apples. **We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (2:10).**<sup>7</sup> We will explore that in parts three and four of this essay.

Back to the subject of faith. One way to track the history of your congregation is to note the building projects. But you don't want to overlook another building project that has been going on in your church, the building of the Holy Christian Church. And when we talk about the Holy Christian Church, we can't help speaking about its chief architect, designer, and engineer, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the foundation for our faith and the cornerstone of our faith. He unites us in faith.

You don't have to be an expert builder to know that a firm foundation is essential for any building. But what about your congregation? What about our synod? If our church body were built on human qualities and capabilities, it would have collapsed long ago. We humans blow it. We goof up. We make mistakes. We sin. Some days we do what God wants, and some days we don't. More often than not, that shifting goes back and forth through the sixteen or seventeen waking hours of each day and sometimes within minutes. You're paying attention to the essayist one second, and the next your mind is roaming down Court Street for a cone at Fuzzy's. You're fired up for Jesus after a worship service like last evening, but late at night you're on Internet sites that make the angels nauseous. It's a good thing that God doesn't build his church on sinners like you or me. Paul stated the facts that flip the scenario from "Oh-oh!" and "Oh, no!" to "Oh, yes!" **You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (2:20).**

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<sup>7</sup> A famous professor, whose good-news-proclaiming efforts we are planning to celebrate in a special way in two years, wrote: Faith is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God. It makes us ... altogether different people, in heart and spirit and mind and all powers ... O, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them ... Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake life itself on it a thousand times. This knowledge of and confidence in God's grace makes people glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all creatures ... 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 this grace (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, IV, 10-12).

Martin Luther couldn't sleep at night. In fact, he nearly killed himself trying to beat sin out of his body because he knew, "God is holy, I'm not, and I have to be as holy as God is if he's going to open heaven's gates for me." His superiors were afraid he'd go nuts. So, to keep him busy they had him study to be a parish priest and also got him a job as a university professor. Of all things, they asked him to teach the Bible. For the first time in his life, he dug into Holy Scripture. What he found there astounded him. What he found there he proclaimed from his pulpit and in his classroom. What he found there is what a young man in our Bible Information Class found. He said, "Pastor, the thought of Judgment Day scares me. I've tried to be as good as possible at home, at work, and with friends, but sometimes I can't sleep at night because I'm going to be at the pearly gates one day, and St. Peter might not let me in." Ever have a thought like that pass through your brain? I told him what I'm going to tell you. You are not going to make it through those gates, and neither will I, if that's the criteria. If we think we have to get in by being good, we'll never make it because we can't be good enough. That's why God sent Jesus to be perfect in our place. And here's the incredible news of the Bible. God credits what Jesus did to your account and mine. He treats us as though we never sinned even though we do all the time, because we are covered by the rightness of Jesus. The young man looked at me and said, "Now I can sleep tonight. I've got the golden ticket." That good news of Jesus' rightness draped over us is the foundation for our faith.

Buildings often have a cornerstone to mark the date of construction. In ancient times the cornerstone not only held up and supported the building, it also aligned the walls so that they'd fit together just so. Can you imagine what would have happened if the construction engineer for this building watched workmen unload beams and found that two of them didn't fit?

The Christians in the congregation of Ephesus weren't fitting together. They had a hard time finding common ground and working together. So Paul wrote: **[Christ Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near** (2:17). My grandma used to say, "*Es gibt allerlei Menschen in Gottes Menagerie*," ("There are all kinds of people in God's zoo"). She was actually saying what the apostle Paul taught: **You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of God's household** (2:19). When the diverse people of Ephesus were filled with the good news of Jesus' mercy, it didn't matter whether they had grown up thinking that pork sandwiches were yummy or yucky. It didn't matter whether their relatives lived in the shadows of Jerusalem's walls or on the left coast of Asia Minor. Jesus had established peace between God and sinners, and consequently there could be harmony and oneness among sinners of all shapes, ages, and colors.

They were all members of God's spiritual house, one in faith. **In [Christ] the whole building is joined together ... For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit (2:21,18).**

Have there been disagreements among WELS Christians in the past one hundred sixty-five years? Of course. For example: "Should we build a seminary in Watertown, Wisconsin, or Milwaukee, Wisconsin?" "Should we join the General Council with the Ohio and Iowa Synods or not?" "Should we leave the General Council or not?" "What authority should boards of control have over faculty and vice versa in the set up of the school's curriculum or in matters of student discipline?" "Should we venture into a world mission field now or later?" "Should we break fellowship ties with a sister church body or not?" "Should we close prep schools or not?" "Should we amalgamate two colleges into one or not?" How in all the world can a synod with people who have differing opinions hang together and work together? The answer is that we are all parts of one spiritual building. Some of you are the bricks, some the mortar, some the light bulbs, some the doors. If this essayist goes more than sixty minutes, you might consider him to be one of the air vents. But we are all joined together to form one functioning building. The apostle looks at you and me today and says: **In [Christ] you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (2:22).** No matter how old or young you are, no matter how tall or short you are, no matter what the amounts and distribution of melanin pigment in your epidermis, no matter where you live, we are one in faith, trusting in Jesus Christ. No disagreements or dividers here. That's what it means to be one in Christ.

### III.

If someone walked up to you on the street and asked, "What's your purpose in life?" you might be hard pressed to come up with an answer on the spot. But in chapter three of this letter, the apostle Paul zeroes on three purposes for our life on earth.

The apostle experienced the warm and welcoming power of God's undeserved mercy, his grace. The Lord God had forgiven Paul fully and freely for all of his bad past and for all of his future failures **through the working of his power (3:7b).** That happened in only one way. **The administration of God's grace ... has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets (3:2,5).**

God has done that for sinners like us. He does not count our past or future sins against us. Because Jesus is our Substitute we are free from the burden of the consequences of our sin. **In [Christ Jesus] and through faith in him we may approach God with**

**freedom and confidence** (3:12). That only happens as we use the Holy Spirit's power tool, the words and promises of Holy Scripture.<sup>8</sup>

The Statistical Report for 2014 indicates that fifteen per cent of WELS communicants participated in Bible class. Could we be doing better? Of course. That's why there has been more attention at the seminary (compared to forty years ago) to training seminarians in the skills and art of Bible class planning, preparing, and presenting. That's why the Commission on Adult Discipleship and continued education for called workers feature growth for called workers in personal Bible study and leading small and large group Bible study. While it's obvious that pastors and congregational leaders will always be striving to encourage more and more members to participate in some form of Bible study, and while it's true that in some congregations there will be more of an emphasis on small group Bible study or individual and family devotions, on this we agree: one purpose for our life on earth is to grow in faith, and that happens only when the Spirit is using his "Means of grace" on our hearts. If someone walked up to you on the street and asked, "What's your purpose in life?" one part of your response would be, "God wants me to grow closer to him, and that happens when I dig into and ponder Holy Word." That purpose in life is true for all of us.

And that would have been enough for Paul. It would have been enough to have the scales fall off his sin-blinded eyes so that he could see and hold in his heart and hands the amazing love of Jesus. But God had even more surprises in store for him. What had been given to him was also now to be a gift from him to give to others so that they, too, could experience the "Ooos" and "Ahhhs!" of God's love. **Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you ... Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ** (3:2-3,8).

If you were lost in the woods but finally saw a path with a few fresh footprints, you'd be thinking, "Whew! At least there's someone nearby who can help me." But then, if you followed those tracks and came across all kinds of footprints that came and went in every direction, you'd jump out of your skin with excitement because now you were near civilization and all kinds of people. You were safe! God's love to us works like that. There's so much to chew on, to celebrate, to revel in, that when we ponder one aspect of his love, it connects us to another and another, and we can hardly contain ourselves. That's what Paul meant by the **unsearchable riches of Christ** (3:8). He had

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<sup>8</sup> Notice the references to Bible reading and Bible study: In *reading this*, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ (3:4). I pray that out of his glorious riches he may *strengthen you with power through his Spirit* in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, *being rooted and established* in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (3:16-19).

been given God's love in Christ and was bursting with a desire to give it to others. Good thing God put him to work in ministry. Paul might have exploded if he didn't have an outlet so that he could give it to others.

But Paul wasn't the only unworthy sinner given the privilege of proclaiming Christ. **God's intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known** (3:10). This is not a command for you lay members to leave your career, sell your worldly goods, and set out on a trek through the barrios of Barcelona or the alleys of Atlanta or the jungles near Djakarta. This is a statement of reality that what we do individually as witnesses for Christ is multiplied exponentially when we pool our resources and work together with fellow Christians. One little night light can help a little child find the bathroom in the middle of the night, but a whole string of lights and, better yet, a beacon of light from the bathroom really lights the way. Christians working together serve as a beacon to cut through the fog of spiritual uncertainty and guide many more, who are headed toward shipwrecking their lives on the reef of unbelief, to the safe haven and harbor of God's own heart.

The report by the Board for World Missions at this convention will, as always, open our eyes to the global opportunities for proclaiming Jesus to the millions who don't know and believe in him. We can have healthy and heartfelt discussions and maybe even disagreements on the proportion of synodical budget to support those efforts. But as excited as we get from encouragements to think globally about outreach possibilities, none of that will be possible for our synod if members of WELS and congregations of WELS are not personally and corporately mission-minded.

The Statistical Report for 2014 indicates that 531 of our 1269 WELS congregations had zero adult confirmands and another 173 had 1. That's 55.5% of our congregations. Can we get better at our personal witnessing and congregation evangelism efforts? Of course. That's why there has been more attention at the seminary (compared to forty years ago) to training seminarians in the skills and practice of evangelism. That's why the WELS Commission on Evangelism has been offering Schools of Outreach for over twenty-three years. While it's obvious that some congregations are located in small towns or rural areas with a population density far less than a city, I believe that in every congregation of WELS someone has to know someone (a spouse, a relative, a neighbor, a friend) who needs to hear about Jesus. So, we flee to the cross for forgiveness for our lack of good-news-proclaiming zeal and receive from Christ Jesus both model and motivation: **The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many** (Mark 10:45). If someone walked up to you on the street and asked, "What's your purpose in life?" one part of your response would be, "God wants

me to share his love with you so you can be with him now and forever.” That purpose in life is true for all of us.

Paul concludes chapter three of this letter with another hymn. **Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever (3:20-21).** We know that there is no biblical prescription as to when Christians are to gather for worship and what they are to do when they gather. However, over time and many centuries Christians have developed patterns and language in which God comes to us in Word and sacrament, and we go to him with praise, prayers, and gifts. What I find instructive about those patterns is that even the “us to God” parts reflect the praise hymns and prayers of Scripture in that they are not merely acclamations of God’s greatness, majesty, and power, but also proclamations of what God did for us. Consider that even those psalms which are considered “Praise Psalms” (e.g. Psalms 145-150)<sup>9</sup> include language that proclaims why we praise God. This subject of what we do, say, and sing when we gather for worship has been the basis for much writing and many essays, but one thing is clear, worship is not optional.

Some time ago, I met with a person who indicated that he would like to join our church. In the conversation I mentioned that we look forward to seeing him every week. He replied, “Oh, I have to tell you. I’m not a church-going guy.” I said, “Well, maybe this isn’t the church for you.” Fortunately, that wasn’t the end of our conversation. I had the privilege of telling him about soul-food, that worship includes language like, “You were sent to heal the contrite of heart;”<sup>10</sup> “You washed us from our sins in your own blood;”<sup>11</sup> “O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world.”<sup>12</sup> What better soul-food could there be? The happy result was that he became a church-going guy.

You and I get to snack on soul-food each day when we begin our day with a favorite Bible passage or paragraph, but we get a full smorgasbord when we gather each week. The day and time of day are not what makes worship God-pleasing worship. The style of music and instruments enhance the message but are not what makes worship God-pleasing worship because worship is not primarily what we do but a review and retelling of what God has done for us. If someone walked up to you on the street and asked, “What’s your purpose in life?” one part of your response would be, “God wants me to worship and honor him every moment of every day and especially when I gather with fellow Christians.” That purpose in life is true for all of us.

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<sup>9</sup> Note that the grand praise psalm, Psalm 150.

<sup>10</sup> A phrase from the *Kyrie in Mass for the New World*. GIA Publications, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> A phrase from *O Lord, Our Lord in The Service of Word and Sacrament. Christian Worship:A Lutheran Hymnal*, 1993.

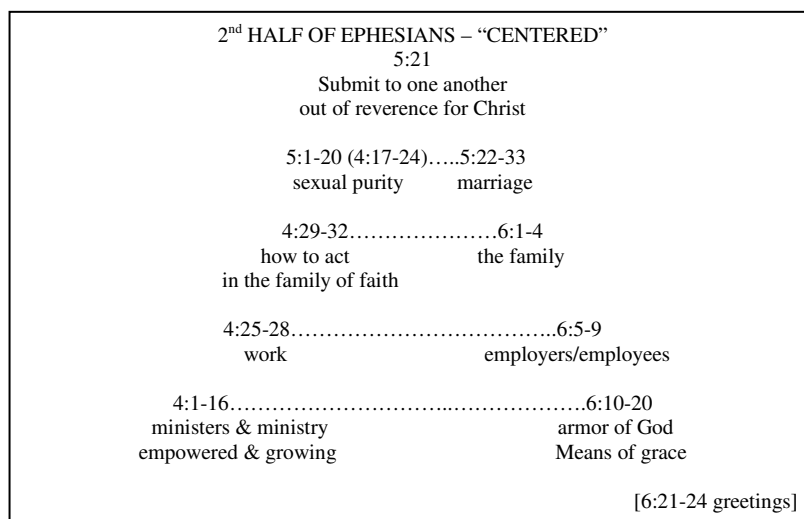
<sup>12</sup> A phrase from the *Agnus Dei in The Service of Word and Sacrament. Christian Worship:A Lutheran Hymnal*, 1993.

No matter how old or young you are, no matter how tall or short you are, no matter what the amounts and distribution of melanin pigment in your epidermis, no matter where you live, we are one in purpose as we grow in faith, proclaim the good news of Jesus' love, and privately and publicly worship him. No disagreements or dividers here. That's what it means to be one in Christ.

IV.

“Oh, brother! He’s gone on for forty-five minutes and only covered the first three chapters of Ephesians. There are three more to go!” It’s true that the material of the next three chapters could be expanded into seminars and Bible studies on what it means to be one in Christ that would span the next two days of this convention and more. For the sake of time, we hit the highlights.

If this six-chapter letter can be divided in half with chapters four to six featuring how we live in the light of what God has done for us, the center, the focal point, of the second half would be Ephesians 5:21: **Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.**



The apostle was unafraid to broach touchy subjects and to press the hot buttons of his day which are still searing in our world, in our American culture, and in our synod. Are there subjects addressed that challenge our oneness? Yes and no. Yes, they bring to light differences of opinions or differences in the way we approach issues, problems, and concerns. But, no, they are also opportunities for us to demonstrate our common commitment: **To the law and the testimony!** (Isaiah 8:20), meaning, “Let’s get back to the Holy Scriptures and listen to what God has to say.” In other words, every

generation needs to recapture the truths and principles of Holy Scripture for itself in order to be one in service to God and to each other. Thus, **submit to one another out of reverence for Christ** (5:21) is the “what” of being one in service to God and each other, and on either side of that center is the “how”: **speaking the truth in love** (4:15), **using the sword of the Spirit** (6:17).

The apostle raised the issue of the doctrine of the ministry of the Word in 4:11-16<sup>13</sup>, including examples of representative ministry (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers) and one of the purposes for representative ministry, to enhance the personal ministry of individual Christians. How can we preserve oneness in Christ regarding this doctrine? We do that by speaking the truth in love, using the sword of the Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

In 4:17-24 and again in 5:1-14, Paul addresses a very real threat to the spiritual unity in the Ephesian congregation, namely, Satan’s tool of sexual impurity. If you are unaware of the assault on biblical morals and values created by the effort of the LGBT crowd to shift in the minds of Americans homosexuality from a moral issue to a political issue, you better pinch yourself to see if you’re still breathing. Has the availability of pornography through the Internet become a plague on our society and also affected our church members and called workers? Yes. But people who fall prey to homosexual or heterosexual sin are not the enemy. They are victims of the enemy who need to hear what God has to say about their sin and their Savior in an honest, compassionate, and winsome way. We do that by speaking the truth in love, using the sword of the Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

How do we become known as a generous synod and avoid greed and selfishness so that CMO and IMO<sup>16</sup> grow, matching what Paul calls for in 4:28<sup>17</sup>, doing something useful with our hands that we may share with others? Whining or guilt trips? No! We do that by speaking the truth in love, using the sword of the Spirit.

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<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 4:11-16: Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

<sup>14</sup> An excellent resource to take us into the Scriptures for a restudy of this doctrine is *The Ministry of the Word* by Dr. John Brug, NPH, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Helpful tools to study and refocus on what God has to say about sexual purity include *A Study of Marriage, Divorce, Malicious Desertion, and Remarriage in the Light of God’s Word [Originally prepared under the auspices of the Conference of Presidents in December 1989*

*and reviewed and updated by the Conference of Presidents in May 2015]* and <http://www.conquerorsthroughchrist.net>.

<sup>16</sup> CMO = Congregational Mission Offerings. IMO = Individual Mission Offerings.

<sup>17</sup> Ephesians 4:28: Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.



How can we grow in our communication techniques with each other when in discussions about doctrinal and non-doctrinal issues? **Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths ... Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (4:29,32).**<sup>18</sup> In that way we also set the tone for how we build relationships and reach out to the lost without beating them over the head with a Bible. We do that by speaking the truth in love, using the sword of the Spirit.

How do we overcome the fear of ministry review so that conversations between congregational leaders and called workers on subjects like faithful use of gifts and time management<sup>19</sup> are not gripe sessions but demonstrations of loving care and support? We do that by speaking the truth in love, using the sword of the Spirit.

How do we go about discussions on the biblical principles of God-pleasing gender interaction and application of those principles, which the apostle lays out in 5:22-33? We do that by speaking the truth in love, using the sword of the Spirit.

When the apostle addresses the issue of parent-child relationships in 6:1-4<sup>20</sup>, and we observe the break-up of the family in our society, we value all the more the precious privilege of enhancing through Lutheran schools what children learn about Jesus in God-fearing homes. But how can we also make every effort to shift the purpose for a congregation's early childhood center, preschool, and Lutheran elementary school from primarily "taking care of our own" to "reaching out to the lost"? We do that by speaking the truth in love, using the sword of the Spirit.

How can we learn to care more about others than ourselves so that not only employers and employees interact in a God-pleasing way (6:5-9)<sup>21</sup>, but we also ask everyone we know, "How are you doing today" and mean it? We do that by speaking the truth in love, using the sword of the Spirit.

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<sup>18</sup> The entire section of 4:29-32: Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

<sup>19</sup> Ephesians 5:15-16: Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

<sup>20</sup> Ephesians 6:1-4: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" – which is the first commandment with a promise – "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 6:5-9: Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

In these areas of the application of doctrine we may long for perfect unity and oneness, but that will not happen on this side of heaven. Yet, we can demonstrate oneness in service to God and each other in our approach, in our attitude, and in the way we interact with each other, submitting **to one another out of reverence for Christ** (5:21), which means putting ourselves in a position to catch the blessings God wants to pour out to us and being **completely humble and gentle ... patient, bearing with one another in love** (4:2). We do that by speaking the truth in love, using the sword of the Spirit.

The apostle concludes this fabulous letter with an illustration of what that means. Can you see him, sitting at his writing desk, quill in hand, writing this letter? As he shifts his weight in the chair, the chain on his ankle rattles, and out of the corner of his eye he sees the Roman soldier assigned to guard him that day, all fitted out and geared up for duty. Then it dawned on him. "Ah! The Christians in Ephesus are soldiers for the Savior." His pen goes back to the paper, "You not only need to know what you're dealing with, Satan and all his forces. You also need to know how to defend yourself and, if necessary, go on the attack. **Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand** (6:13). There's the enemy. Here's the armory!"

**Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist** (6:14a). You can see that Roman soldier, can't you? His belt holding his tunic in place and housing his weapons. A faulty belt won't hold in place what it's supposed to hold. So it is with the belt of truth. Mix in some error, and you'll be in danger of having God's truth slip off your hips and roll away. Strap on the belt of God's truth – not part of it; all of it – and you'll have all the tools in place within easy reach.

Stand firm **with the breastplate of righteousness** (6:14b). You can see that Roman soldier, can't you? Shining metal plate formed over his chest and midsection. When we have stepped outside the bounds of what God wants, Satan rightly does what his name implies. He accuses us before God. But Jesus' rightness protects our spiritual heart and lungs. We are declared right by God even though Satan loves to accuse us. Put on Jesus' rightness as a breastplate.

Stand firm **with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace** (6:15). You can see that Roman soldier, can't you? He's balanced, one foot slightly behind the other, standing his ground. When an enemy swings his sword, he can duck it like a dodge-ball. But he's not wearing snow shoes. He's also ready to move forward and carry out his duty. The good news of peace with God through Jesus keeps us

balanced and able to dodge temptations, but also keeps us light on our feet, ready to take the first step in kindness for the needy, in comfort for the hurting, in forgiveness for the guilty. Lace up those boots of peace.

**Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one** (6:16). You can see that Roman soldier, can't you? The gleaming shield isn't just to display the emblem of his legion. He can maneuver it for protection. Your trust in Jesus does the same. It's not stuck and static in your heart. It has floated out of your heart to be a force-field when the flaming arrows of temptation come sizzling in. Knock them down. Fend them off. Take up that shield of faith.

**Take the helmet of salvation** (6:17a). You can see that Roman soldier, can't you? Head injury, and he's a goner. Gotta keep your wits about you. What better way to do that than to have the Head of the Church give us his saving love, urging us to wrap our thoughts in that love so that we can make wise decisions when challenged by a fork in the road? Jesus predicted that even families can be divided, and wouldn't his words apply to our synodical "family"? When differences of opinion come up, will we follow our emotions, follow our personal preferences, or follow what God says? Take the helmet of salvation.

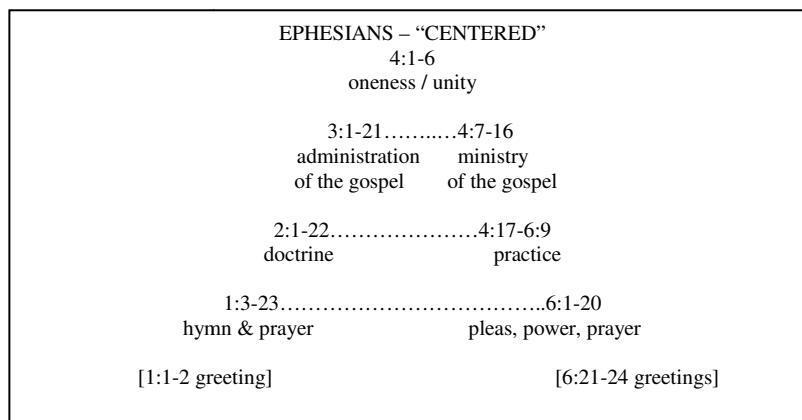
**[Take] the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God** (6:17b). You can see that Roman soldier, can't you? He's got all the defensive armor. He needs an offensive weapon from the armory. The sword is his. The Word of God is yours. And it works. Use it. You can slice and dice the devil and send him running. Wield the Word of God.

You might be thinking, "Thank God. Here's the armory. I can deal with the devil and all the forces he brings to create disunity." But God is not done. He has one more weapon in the armory for you to use so that we can be one in Christ. **Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me** (18-19a). Pray for your family. Pray for your pastors, teachers, and staff members. Pray for your district and synodical leaders. Pray for your synod. Pray for the lost, which means praying that God will unite us as individuals, as congregations, and as a synod in this glorious task to save lost souls.

No matter how old or young you are, no matter how tall or short you are, no matter what the amounts and distribution of melanin pigment in your epidermis, no matter where you live, we are one in service to God and each other. No disagreements or dividers here. That's what it means to be one in Christ.

## Conclusion

The Hebrew language often features “centering.” While we often expect the main point, the focal point, the culmination of the story, to be at the end, Hebrew writers put that in the center.<sup>22</sup> The apostle Paul was a Hebrew through and through.<sup>23</sup> Could it be that the apostle employs this Hebraistic style of “centering” in his letter to the Ephesians? If so, the apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, offers to the Ephesian Christians and to us a beautiful and powerful message to help them and help us understand what it means to be one in Christ and to pursue oneness in Christ, and his theme stands in the center of the letter, which is all about oneness and unity: **As a prisoner for the Lord ... I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received ... Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all** (Ephsians 4:1,3-6).



*One in Christ* is the theme for this convention. How can oneness ever happen in our synod? We come from different homes, different congregations, different districts. We have different views and different opinions on a variety of subjects. But in spite of those differences, when we ponder what Paul wrote to the Ephesians and to us, we have reason to praise God that *One in Christ* is neither wishful thinking nor a white-washing of reality. We are *One in Christ: one with God, one in faith, one in purpose, and one in service.*

†Soli Deo gloria†

<sup>22</sup> Centering is also a common feature in the Old Testament Scriptures. For example, the high point, main point, or “center” of:

- the Pentateuch is the great Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)
- the Song of Songs is the marriage (Song of Songs 4:16-5:1a)
- the Isaiah 40-66 is Isaiah 53
- many Psalms (e.g. Ps 23, 25, 23, 92, and the Songs of Ascent 120-134).

<sup>23</sup> Paul said: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I ... was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors” (Acts 22:3).

# Closing service sermon

July 30, 2015

Michigan Lutheran Seminary Chapel, Saginaw, Mich.

Rev. John Seifert

**G**race and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins according to the will of our God and Father that he might rescue us from this present evil age. Amen.

1 Peter 4:7-11: *The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

Dear Fellow Forgiven Sinners,

One in Christ. You just couldn't get away from it during the course of this convention. One in Christ was the backdrop behind President Schroeder. It's plastered on the front of your BORAM; projected on the screens up front; and pasted in the PowerPoint presentations. One in Christ was the theme for our opening service and the convention essay. Daily devotions reminded us that we are One with God; One in Faith; One in Purpose. Now, this closing service is supposed to show how we are One in Christ as we go home to serve our Savior—as you do your work as the part of the body of Christ that you are.

Are you kidding me? Did you hear what some of these guys said when they got to the mic? Were you dumbfounded when you overheard some of the comments made during conversations at mealtime, over breaks, and at the evening fellowship? On the floor or in committee, someone who is one in Christ with you said exactly the opposite of what you said. And did you hear the “No” votes when you voted “Yes”? Then there was a call for a division of the house! And now you're supposed to go home, report on the work and the decisions of this convention (some of which you were NOT personally in favor of). How in the world can you leave here believing that with all of these people you are one in Christ?

You can leave believing that all of these people are One in Christ with you—because God said so and actually, you did too. God made you one in Christ when he used water and in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit washed away your sins and created or strengthened faith in Jesus in your heart. You professed that you are one in Christ when you were confirmed—whether that was at Grace in downtown Milwaukee, Beautiful Savior in Cincinnati, or Good Shepherd in Midland, Mich. Monday night those who are one in Christ with you joined with you to proclaim the Lord's death in your reception and celebration of the Lord's Supper and as you joined your voices in prayer and a confession of faith.

But if you've learned anything during your time at this convention, you've learned that being one in Christ is something that also takes work.

Work to be one in service and glorify God through Jesus Christ . . .

I . . . by paying attention to the times

II . . . by loving each other deeply

III . . . by using your gifts to serve others

## I.

Decades ago I read about a Christian man who would walk to his bedroom window before going to bed each night, look out and up to the heavens, and in a simple prayer, ask: “Tonight, Lord?” Then he closed the curtains and went to bed. Each morning he’d walk to the same window, open the curtains, look up towards the heavens, and pray another simple prayer: “Today, Lord?” It’s easy to forget, isn’t it? We so easily get consumed with the incessant routine of jumping (some mornings, crawling) out of bed to meet the challenges of another busy day and 16 or 18 hours later crashing our exhausted, sleep-deprived bodies onto the mattress each night that we forget. We forget to ask—sometimes even forget to think: “Tonight, Lord?” “Today, Lord?”

Instead of an alarm from your phone, will tonight’s sleep suddenly end with the trumpet blast that announces Jesus’ return? When nothing else seems able to divert your attention from the problems and struggles of the day, will the stars falling from the sky, the roaring sea, and the dead bodies coming out of their graves raise your eyes to the skies to see Jesus coming on the clouds with all his angels?

Wars (Ukraine comes to mind), earthquakes, famine, persecution of Christians (Ukraine comes to mind again), false prophets, exponentially-increasing wickedness, love growing cold—*pay attention to the times*, brothers. The service and worship you have offered Jesus at this convention—and the service you will be offering back home as you explain and support what has been done—MAY be the last service you give Jesus before he calls you home to heaven.

*The end of all things is near. Pay attention to the times . . . so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.*

## II.

If we live our lives, if we offer God our service, if we interact with each other as though we recognize that THIS may be the last service we are even able to offer to Jesus because the *end of all things is near*—God will be praised through Jesus Christ. But it’s hard. It’s hard when you remember what others said at the mic; what you overheard at mealtime and breaks; what you endured when others set aside, overruled, and rejected decisions you wanted made at this convention. So remember God’s words: *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

If you did not get out of this synod convention what you wanted to get—what you were convinced was the right, the best, the only course of action for our synod to follow—get over it! This service is NOT about you. You are not the important person here. Of course you can have your opinion; you can express your desires and thoughts; you can even express your discouragement or disappointment. But ultimately this is not about you!

It’s about the people you love. If as you leave here you’re going to work—and it is hard work—to be one in service and to glorify God through Jesus Christ, then you’re going to forget a lot. You’re going to forget every word that hurt your feelings. You’re going to forget the bitterness you felt with every decision that did not go your way. You’re going to forget the sins you saw and heard because *love covers over a multitude of sins*. You’re going to forget those sins of those who are one in Christ with you because you are one in Christ. And they are going to forget your sins, too—after all, you are as guilty as they are. After all, it’s not because we’re members of the One-in-Christ club that we forget each other’s sins. It’s because of God’s love in Christ. God’s love in Christ covers your sins as completely as the blood of the covenant sacrifices covered the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. No more could God look down from heaven and see the sins of his people and the laws they had broken—the blood of bulls and lambs obscured God’s view and covered those sins. No more can God look down from heaven and see your sins—the blood of his Son covers your sins, too, all of them.

Come to think about it, perhaps I overstated things before—this is about you. It’s about you because your sins brought the Son of God to earth through the womb of the Virgin Mary. It’s about you because your sins were laid on Jesus, that spotless Lamb of God. It’s about you because Jesus’ innocent suffering and death as your substitute has paid for your sins. It’s about you because Jesus’ resurrection guarantees you life after death, a perfect, eternal life at your Savior’s side in heaven. It’s about you because you can say what the MLS choir sang: “Yes, Jesus loves me.”

And because you do recognize, you do believe that Jesus loves you, you will; you do love each other—deeply. And that *love covers over a multitude of sins . . . so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.*

### III.

But now it's almost time to leave. Now the real work begins. Leave believing not only that you are one in Christ with these people but also with the rest of the people in WELS. Carry with you the confidence as one part of the body of Christ, you do have work to do, and you have God-given gifts for that work. No matter what part of the body of Christ you are: a hand, a foot, an arm, a thumb, or a little toe (a president, a second vice president, a chairman; a commission member; a pastor, teacher, lay delegate) function as God has designed and called and equipped you to function. Go to your brothers and sisters in Christ with the news and the enthusiasm and the decisions of these last days. Help them to remember how and why they are one in Christ with you, with each other, with all in our synod. Covered with the blood of Christ and dressed in his righteous robe: *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms . . . speaking the very words of God . . . serving with the strength God provides.*

Work to be one in service and glorify God through Jesus Christ . . . by paying attention to the times . . . by loving each other deeply, and . . . by using your gifts to serve others. That IS work. But through that work—as we all use our gifts to serve others, God will *be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

Amen.