

Book of Reports and Memorials

May 2021

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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Foreword

Convention theme

The theme of the 2021 WELS convention is “Here We Stand,” reminiscent of Martin Luther’s willingness to risk his life with his bold stand on the Word of God 500 years ago at the Diet of Worms. Our convention will focus on this theme to remind us that for the Christian church today to carry out its mission faithfully, the same bold stand on the Word of God is necessary. Convention worship, essays, and decisions will focus on that theme. Major items for consideration include the proposed ministry financial plan (budget) for 2021–23, a recommended change in the WELS Pension Plan, and increasing opportunities God is giving our synod to proclaim the gospel to a growing number of people around the world.

The Book of Reports and Memorials

This *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM) is intended to summarize, both for convention delegates and for the synod’s entire constituency, the business that will come before the convention. It contains reports from all synodical entities describing the synod’s activities during the past year and providing information about current efforts and future plans. It also contains memorials, which are formal requests to the convention to address specific issues. All delegates are encouraged to read through this book in advance of the convention. It is available to delegates in both printed and electronic form.

Altered format

Due to the potential restrictions on travel and gathering, the Conference of Presidents changed this convention’s format. The location was changed from Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., due to less stringent restrictions in Wisconsin. Delegates were assigned to floor committees as always. But at this convention, only the chairman, the secretary, and two laymen from each floor committee will attend the convention in person as voting delegates. The number of in-person advisory delegates will be limited. Floor committees will conduct their business and adopt their reports and resolutions via virtual meetings, which will be scheduled by floor committee chairmen and held in advance of the convention. Advisory delegates are available to attend when appropriate and necessary. Elections will be held electronically in advance. Because much work will be done in advance, the convention itself is shortened to two days of sessions instead of three.

Floor committees

The convention’s business will be addressed by floor committees. All delegates are assigned to a floor committee. Each committee is assigned specific matters to address or a task to perform prior to and during the convention. All floor committees, regardless of their assignment, will be asked to review and discuss the recommended change to the synod’s Pension Plan and the ministry financial plan. The floor committees, along with their chairmen, are listed on pp. 1 and 2.

Delegates

In-person voting delegates are expected to attend convention sessions. Those delegates who are not in-person delegates are encouraged to participate in convention proceedings through video conferencing. Advisory delegates may attend floor committee meetings upon invitation of the floor committee or by mutual agreement. Floor committee chairmen may at any time request that the committee conduct its work without the presence of advisors.

Memorials

A memorial is a formal request for the synod to take specific action. Memorials will be assigned to the floor committee already dealing with the subject matter or area addressed by the memorial. Sometimes memorials are submitted after the deadline for inclusion in BORAM. These are referred to as “unprinted memorials” because they are not printed in BORAM. Instead, they are printed and distributed to delegates during the summer and are assigned to appropriate floor committees for the same kind of consideration given to memorials printed in BORAM.

Schedule

A delegate orientation session will be held on Monday, July 26, at 4:30 p.m. The opening worship service is on Monday at 6:30 p.m. in the Luther Preparatory School chapel. The convention business begins on Tuesday at 8 a.m. Some evening events are scheduled. One plenary session of the convention is scheduled for Tuesday evening. The convention concludes with a closing worship service on Wednesday afternoon.

May God bless our gathering here, to his glory and for the good of his kingdom!

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Organizational chart

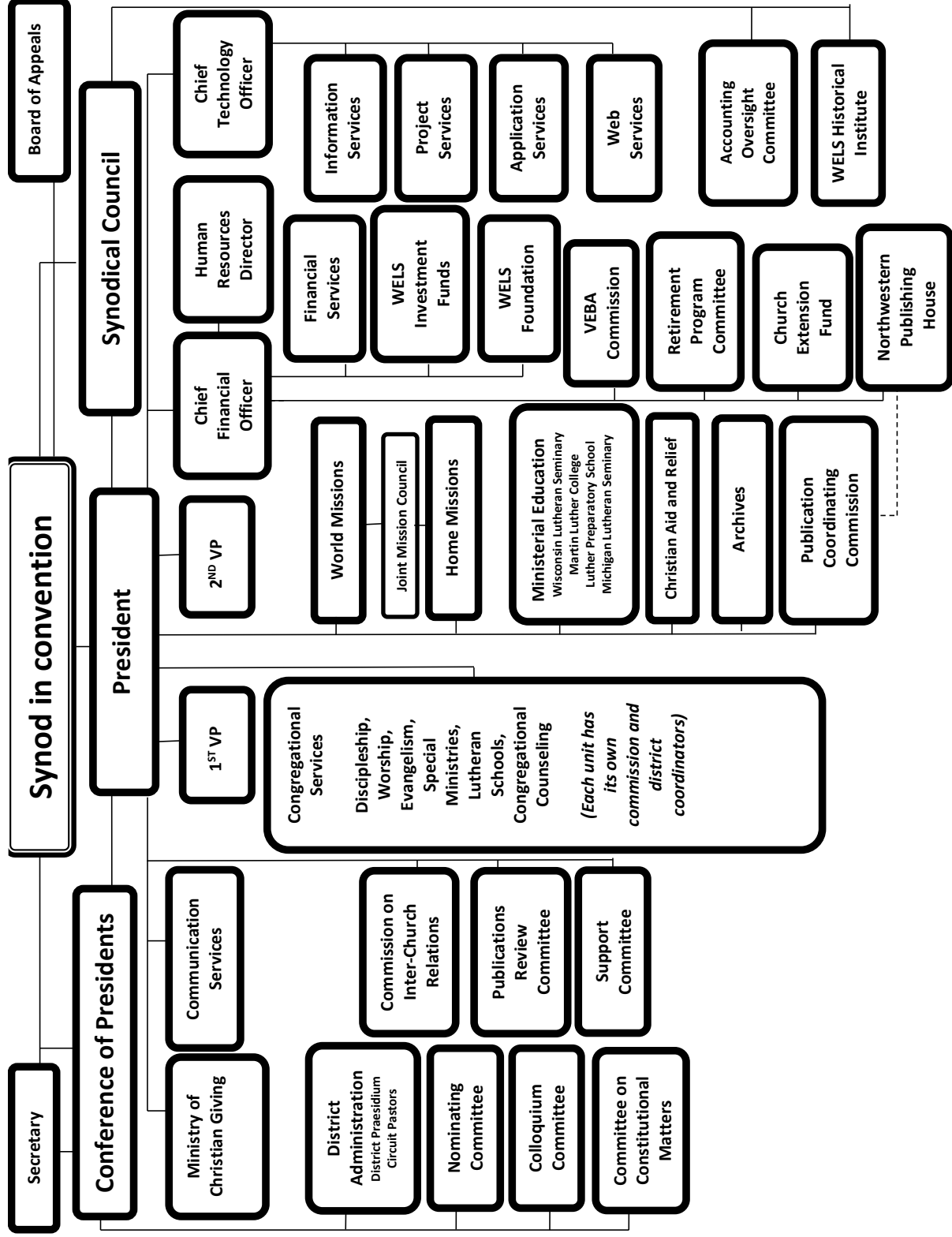


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For more information, visit wels.net/2021synodconvention.

Convention floor committees

Committee	Assignment	Chairman
#1	President's Report	Pastor Michael Seifert
#2	Conference of Presidents WELS Support Committee Nominating Committee Membership and attendance Translation Liaison Committee Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee	Pastor Nathan Sutton
#3	Commission on Inter-Church Relations	Pastor Kurt Schaser
#4	Ministry of Christian Giving	Pastor Adam Seelow
#5	Communication Services	Pastor Justin Cloute
#6	Synodical Council Accounting Oversight Committee Capital Projects Committee Compensation Review Committee Convention Compliance WELS Long-Range Plan 2017-25 Pension recommendation Archives	Pastor Steven Hillmer
#7	Ministry financial plan (budget)	Pastor Daniel Balge
#8	Home Missions	Pastor Aaron Mueller
#9	World Missions, Joint Mission Council	Pastor Philip Huebner
#10	Ministerial Education	Pastor Steven Pagels
#11	Congregational Services A (Congregational Counseling, Discipleship, Evangelism)	Pastor Brian Hackmann
#12	Congregational Services B (Worship, Special Ministries)	Teacher James Grasby
#13	Congregational Services C (Lutheran Schools)	Teacher Scott Schmudlach
#14	Support Services Technology Financial Services Human Resources Facility Services	Teacher Benjamin Schramm
#15	Subsidiaries and Benefit Plans WELS Foundation WELS Church Extension Fund	Pastor John Koelpin

WELS Investment Funds
WELS Retirement Program Commission
WELS VEBA Commission
WELS Historical Institute

#16	Northwestern Publishing House and Publication Coordinating Commission	Pastor Stephen Daley
#17	WELS Christian Aid and Relief	Pastor Carlos Leyrer
#18	Constitutional Matters	Pastor Glenn Schwanke
#19	Pension proposal	Pastor Adam Mueller
#20	Steering	Pastor Jon Buchholz

Congregation and District Ministry

The Congregation and District Ministry portion of WELS' ministry financial plan (budget) includes the Conference of Presidents (COP) and all entities overseen by the COP. These include:

Conference of Presidents

- Regular and special meetings of the Conference of Presidents and the Assignment Committee
- Travel and other expenses related to the district presidents' work
- Pastoral assistants provided to the congregations served by the district presidents
- Partial cost of the vicar program

Support Committee

Grants and assistance provided to needy retired called workers and their spouses

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

- Regular and special meetings of the commission
- Travel expenses related to inter-church relations
- Annual support for the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC)
- Financial support for sister church bodies as appropriate

Ministry of Christian Giving

- Administration and staff salaries and office expenses
- Salaries and travel expenses for current and deferred Christian giving counselors
- Expenses of counselor training and consultation
- Cost of promotions and appeals

Communication Services

- Content production and management of WELS' web presence, including wels.net and social media outlets
- Graphic design, editorial, and video production services to create WELS communication pieces and to assist all areas of ministry, subsidiaries, and one affiliate with their communications
- Coordination of public responses and communications of the synod
- Partial funding for editorial staff of *Forward in Christ*

Synod Nominating Committee

Selection of nominees for convention elections

Congregational Services

- Commission on Worship
- Commission on Evangelism
- Commission on Special Ministries
- Commission on Lutheran Schools
- Commission on Discipleship
- Commission on Congregational Counseling

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

Coordination of efforts to help called workers grow in faith, knowledge, and skill

Translation Liaison Committee

Evaluation of major Bible translations and communication with their editors and publishers, including suggestions for improvements to translations

Synod convention

District ministries and functions

- Costs related to the functions of the districts, district praesidia, and circuit pastors
- District conventions and other meetings
- District committees

Conference of Presidents

Floor Committee #2

The Conference of Presidents (COP) is composed of the 12 district presidents, elected by their respective districts, as well as the synod president and the two synod vice presidents, all of whom are elected by the synod in convention. The synod president serves as the chairman of the Conference of Presidents. The synod secretary, also elected by the synod in convention, serves as a non-voting advisory member of the Conference of Presidents.

The Conference of Presidents meets three times annually for face-to-face meetings and via teleconference between regular meetings when necessary. The Conference of Presidents also meets at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in May each year in its role as the Assignment Committee of the synod.

The Conference of Presidents is divided into three standing committees: Doctrine, Called Workers, and Congregations.

The Conference of Presidents is entrusted with the following broad responsibilities:

- Overseeing all matters of doctrine and practice to ensure that the synod, its congregations, its called workers, and other affiliated entities remain faithful to the Scriptures and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- Working to maintain and strengthen the synod's unity in doctrine and practice and in its purpose and mission.
- Assisting congregations in the calling process by providing candidates for divine calls and appropriate advice.
- Providing counsel to congregations either directly or through the circuit pastors of the district in matters dealing with ministry, governance, and relationships between congregations and called workers.
- Overseeing the various ways in which congregations and individual members provide financial support for the work of the synod, including ongoing instruction in Christian stewardship, encouragement of Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO), and planning for special offerings that may be held periodically.
- Overseeing and serving as the calling body for the work of the Ministry of Christian Giving, as well as for all units of WELS Congregational Services. It also oversees the other areas included in Congregation and District Ministry, including Communication Services, the Commission on Inter-Church Relations, and the Support Committee.
- Communicating and promoting the synod's mission and ministry in the districts.
- Providing counsel to the synod president as he carries out his responsibilities.
- Overseeing the planning of the synod convention.

The Conference of Presidents spends significant time at each meeting reviewing issues relating to calls and vacancies, addressing issues that affect congregations and called workers, and discussing specific matters of doctrine and practice. The group functions primarily as a "conference" to provide a forum for district presidents to confer with each other and to provide and receive guidance and input from one another.

The Conference of Presidents works in close cooperation and consultation with the Synodical Council. Three district presidents, along with the synod president and two synod vice presidents, serve as members of the Synodical Council.

Modified convention

The Conference of Presidents is responsible for planning and conducting the synod convention. In preparing for the 2021 convention, the COP was aware of the potential disruptions that could be caused by the ongoing pandemic. Since, for planning purposes, final decisions regarding the convention format and location needed to be made by the end of January, the COP discussed various options at its January meeting. One option was to plan to hold a normal convention at Michigan Lutheran Seminary as originally planned. At that time, looking ahead to July, there was no way of knowing whether there would still be limits on gathering size, travel restrictions, quarantines, or hesitancy on the part of

delegates to travel and be in a large crowd. The COP concluded that the ability to hold a convention as normal may not be possible. The COP considered canceling the convention entirely and entrusting the business of the synod to the Synodical Council. The COP did not want to choose that option. A third option, to hold a smaller convention in a location where there would be less likelihood of restrictions on gathering size, was chosen. At this convention, only the chairmen, secretaries, and two laymen from each committee are attending as voting delegates. The number of advisory delegates has been significantly reduced. Only displays of synodical entities will be permitted. We are grateful that so many have expressed support for this decision of the COP.

Overseeing matters of doctrine and practice

Each district president, along with his district officers, is entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing doctrine and practice in his district, including carrying out discipline of called workers and congregations when Christian love and faithfulness to God's Word require it. To assure as much consistency as possible from district to district, the Conference of Presidents devotes considerable time in its meetings to discussing practical situations, providing a forum for mutual advice and encouragement.

From time to time, the Conference of Presidents as a group addresses doctrinal issues or matters of practice that affect the entire synod in an effort to strengthen the doctrinal unity we enjoy. This may involve clarifying and communicating doctrinal positions, addressing specific issues after in-depth study, and producing (or overseeing the production of) documents that summarize scriptural doctrines and evangelical practice. The results of these efforts are intended to be pastoral and evangelical in nature, not in any way formulating new canon law in a legalistic way.

The Conference of Presidents is fully committed to the biblical principle of Christian freedom in matters of adiaphora (things neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture); at the same time it continues to encourage called workers and lay leaders to exercise their Christian freedom with wisdom, brotherly love, and extensive consultation with others in our fellowship who may be affected. The Conference of Presidents continues to encourage open and brotherly discussion of such things as worship style, outreach efforts, and congregational organization. The Conference of Presidents believes that such discussion, when done in a spirit of Christian love and based on an ongoing study of the Scriptures, is essential to maintaining our synodical unity, a correct understanding of Christian freedom, and our clear identity as a confessional Lutheran church body.

The Conference of Presidents has recognized its responsibility in this area of its work and has maintained a high standard in producing and approving doctrinal studies and practical policies. But while the Conference of Presidents is responsible for supervising, maintaining, and strengthening unity of doctrine and practice, a practical reality for members of the Conference of Presidents and its Doctrine Committee is that, due to the press of other duties and responsibilities, the length of time needed to produce sound scriptural study documents or doctrinal statements can be unduly extended. To provide assistance in addressing doctrinal and practical issues in a timely manner and in keeping with the gifts the Lord provides to his Church, the Conference of Presidents has recognized that at times it can better carry out such work through the use of ad hoc committees appointed to address a specific subject, rather than the appointment of a standing doctrinal commission or by assigning the work exclusively to the Doctrine Committee of the Conference of Presidents. Work produced by such committees is then submitted to the Conference of Presidents for approval and for public distribution.

One such recent effort has been to craft a re-statement of our synod's doctrinal statement on the role of men and women, as described later in this report (p. 7). The COP also recently decided to begin work on a pastoral brief regarding Christian freedom and pastoral practice.

Assignment of ministerial candidates

In its role as the Assignment Committee of the synod, the Conference of Presidents continually monitors the number of candidates graduating from Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The vast majority of assignments are made in May, with a smaller number assigned after the mid-year graduation at Martin Luther College. In May 2020, for the first time, the Assignment Committee carried out its work via videoconference. The Assignment Committee plans to meet in person in 2021.

The Assignment Committee also assigns third-year seminary students to their place of vicarship. These assignments are made by the Conference of Presidents after extensive consultation with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and WELS Board for Home Missions. Since the vicar year is actually a part of the seminary's program of education, the seminary provides input into the vicar assignment process to ensure that the candidates are placed in locations where they can receive thorough training in the practical aspects of the pastoral ministry. Candidates who are identified as having

gifts for evangelism/outreach are often assigned to supervising pastors with proven gifts for the same so that the vicar's evangelism/outreach gifts may be further developed. The Vicars in Mission Settings Program has worked well to provide outreach-ready graduates for assignment.

The Assignment Committee adopted a procedure by which limited-time assignments can be made permanent prior to the May assignment day. In addition, the Assignment Committee has made progress toward the goal of not assigning MLC graduates as school principals. A program to train currently serving teachers as principals in a three-year process is currently in place.

Funding for the synod's mission and ministry

While the Synodical Council is responsible for formulating and recommending the synod's ministry program and the financial plan that supports it, the Conference of Presidents is responsible for funding the ministry program adopted by the synod in convention.

The Conference of Presidents operates under the principle that the foundational support for the mission and ministry of the synod is the Congregation Mission Offering (CMO). Other sources of financial support, such as gifts from individuals, bequests, grants from foundations, etc., are great blessings and play an important role in providing the resources necessary to carry out the synod's work. Gifts from these sources can vary widely from year to year; CMO, on the other hand, has been a more consistent and predictable source of financial support.

The Conference of Presidents works to encourage congregations to increase their CMO commitments and to meet or exceed those commitments by the end of the year. Prior to 2020, CMO had been relatively flat for 10 years. We are grateful that congregations exceeded expectations in 2020, and that upward trend has continued in calendar year 2021. Despite the previous lack of growth in CMO, unexpected gifts, the use of undesignated special funds, and efforts by areas of ministry and departments to economize have made it possible to not only avoid serious reductions in ministry but, in fact, to expand in certain areas. The Conference of Presidents has discussed ways to foster Spirit-worked generosity and to encourage increased CMO to enable the synod to maintain and even to expand its mission and ministry.

The vast majority of congregations provide generous financial support for the synod's work through CMO and other gifts. There are some congregations, for various reasons, that provide little or no CMO support for the work we do together as a synod. The district presidents and circuit pastors will continue to encourage these congregations to participate in the joy of supporting our synod's work to the extent that they are able.

Need for called worker recruitment

Vacancies in both pastor and teacher positions have been increasing in recent years, and the current supply of candidates has not been able to keep pace with the need. At the April 2021 meeting of the COP, it was reported that there were 136 pastoral vacancies and approximately 140 teacher vacancies. We are thankful that larger classes are now at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and should provide some relief to the pastoral vacancy problem in the next few years, and concerted efforts are being made at Martin Luther College to increase recruitment efforts. The Conference of Presidents continues to encourage increased efforts by pastors, teachers, congregations, parents, and grandparents to recruit young people for full-time ministry.

The shortage of called workers has complicated the task of providing call lists to congregations. The COP will continue to discuss ways to alleviate some of these pressures until more candidates become available in the coming years.

Ministry certification

The COP has granted provisional ministry certification to uncertified teachers, staff ministers, and congregational assistants currently serving in a called position as long as they have enrolled in the appropriate certification course. This decision will enable these workers to receive the benefits of the IRS parsonage allowance deduction.

Because of the large number of teachers and staff ministers that will be seeking synod certification due to the parsonage allowance change, the COP approved a change to the teacher certification program so that on-campus attendance for some courses is no longer required. Those courses will be offered via virtual instruction or through regional satellite courses.

Congregational Services

Congregational Services is directly accountable to the Conference of Presidents and provides the COP with regular reports. Congregational Services includes six commissions: Lutheran Schools, Worship, Evangelism, Discipleship,

Special Ministries, and Congregational Counseling. Directors of these commissions are called by the COP, and members of the commissions (except for the chairmen) are appointed by the COP. The chairman of each commission is elected by the synod in convention. Each of these commissions will report to this convention. Pastor Jonathan Hein serves as the coordinator for Congregational Services.

The COP approved the position of congregational counselor to assist Hein and his team in providing assessment, planning assistance, and resources to congregations. The COP began calling for this position late in 2020; as of the writing of this report, the position is not yet filled.

Special committees

Two years ago, the COP noted that our WELS doctrinal statements on the subject of male/female roles could, in places, be misunderstood or misapplied. There is no fundamental dispute on the doctrine itself, but there are areas of application that need to be explained more clearly. To avoid confusion and to enhance the clarity of our statements, the COP appointed a committee to review our doctrinal statements and other published materials dealing with the roles of men and women and to provide recommendations for improvement. A draft document was prepared and shared with pastoral conferences for review and input. That document continues to be a “work in progress.” The final document is intended to meet the standards of a confessional statement, be a clear summary of scriptural truths, and mark the Creator’s good design as the dominant theme of the statement. Additional explanatory material will be provided in a supplemental companion document. There is no specific timetable for this work to be completed; the COP desires to “get it right” rather than “get it soon.”

Matters relating to human sexuality and gender issues have become even more controversial in our society in recent years. Our congregations, schools, and members will likely face increasing pressures in these areas. The COP believes that our synod will be well served to have a clear description of our biblical position on human sexuality and gender issues in the face of these pressures and even attacks. A committee was appointed to draft a statement that will articulate biblical truths on these topics and our synod’s commitment to uphold them. The result of their work is two documents: “Statement on Human Sexuality, Personhood, Identity, and the Historic Christian Faith” and a longer document dealing specifically with the transgender movement, “A Pastoral Statement on the Transgender Movement.” The first document is available from your district president; the second was published in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* and is available in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary essay file.

COP Doctrine Committee

To foster our unity in doctrine and practice in WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the COP Doctrine Committee holds regular meetings with the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The COP Doctrine Committee is also in frequent communication with the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to ensure ongoing good communication between the group charged with overseeing doctrine and practice and the school that trains future pastors. In addition, President Earle Treptow of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has consented to serve as an advisory member of the COP Doctrine Committee.

WELS pension review

The COP was consulted by the special committee appointed by the Synodical Council to review the WELS Pension Plan. The COP offered its input in several areas. After receiving the committee’s final recommendation, the COP endorsed the proposal prior to its adoption by the Synodical Council. The final proposal is found on p. 168.

COP liaison with WELS-affiliated ministries and organizations

There are dozens of organizations and ministries carried out by WELS members, referred to as “affiliated ministries.” Because WELS-affiliated ministries carry out their work among our WELS members and congregations, the COP believes that it should foster close communication and cooperation between these ministries and the COP. A three-man standing special committee of the COP makes regular contact with the leaders of these ministries to accomplish this goal on an ongoing basis.

Assistance for the presidents of the largest districts

The largest districts of the synod have hundreds of congregations and called workers. This has meant that there is an increasing workload on the presidents of those districts. To better serve congregations and called workers, the presidents of the Western Wisconsin, Southeastern Wisconsin, and Northern Wisconsin Districts were asked to offer suggestions as to how they might be assisted in their work. Some assistance has been provided to each of the three districts. The effectiveness of this assistance will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

Need for additional options for congregational bylaws

The current model constitution and bylaws for the synod offers only one type of structure for congregations. In recent years, a number of congregations have desired to move to different models that provide various ways to organize while still maintaining biblical principles. The COP will be discussing whether it would be wise and orderly for the synod to offer several different options for congregational structures.

Revisions to the bylaws

The COP is recommending a number of bylaw changes. Included among those are recommendations to change the terminology dealing with called worker certification, shortening the time for nominating synod administrators, changing the process for calling prep school professors, and changing the length of terms of several synod and district offices to make them consistent with all other positions. These recommended amendments can be found on p. 175 and will be addressed by Floor Committee #18 (Constitutional Matters).

The Equality Act

A bill that has been passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and that may be taken up by the U.S. Senate would potentially have serious impact on the religious freedom enjoyed by churches. WELS members have been encouraged to be familiar with the bill and to exercise their rights as citizens to express their views to their elected representatives. If the bill passes and is signed by the president, it's certain that many religious groups and groups supporting religious freedom would challenge the constitutionality of the law. The COP will continue to monitor the situation and will be ready to offer input from our synod in whatever way may be most appropriate.

A look ahead

The Conference of Presidents will continue in its role of providing supervision of doctrine and practice, as well as in assisting congregations in the calling process.

In addition, the Conference of Presidents will:

- Assist in the introduction of the synod's new hymnal.
- Work with Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to recruit and train future called workers at an affordable cost.
- Continue to work on the re-statement of the synod's doctrinal position on the role of man and woman.
- Address questions relating to congregational polity and organizational structure.
- Continue to explore ways to improve coordination and communication between the synod and WELS-affiliated ministries and organizations.
- Encourage congregations to grow their Christian stewardship and in their financial support of WELS and its mission.
- Look for ways to assist the synod in maintaining its identity as a confessional Lutheran synod and to communicate our synod's beliefs to the outside world in a clear and loving manner.
- Work with the Commission on Congregational Counseling and other entities of Congregational Services to help congregations grow stronger and healthier through the means of grace.
- Continue to review the calling process and identify ways in which it can be improved.

The Conference of Presidents invites all members of the synod to join in thanks to a gracious God, who has blessed our synod with his pure Word, who has permitted us both to hear and proclaim the saving gospel, and who has united us as one in Christ—in faith, in mission, and in Christian love.

Rev. Mark Schroeder, reporter

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president and chairman

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president

Rev. Joel Voss, WELS second vice president

Rev. Jon Buchholz, Arizona-California District president

Rev. Douglas Free, Dakota-Montana District president

Rev. Philip Hirsch, Nebraska District president

Rev. Michael Jensen, Western Wisconsin District president

Rev. Dennis Klatt, Minnesota District president

Rev. David Kolander, Southeastern Wisconsin District president

Rev. Donald Patterson, South Central District president

Rev. Snowden Sims, Michigan District president

Rev. John Steinbrenner, Pacific Northwest District president
Rev. Donald Tollefson, North Atlantic District president
Rev. Charles Westra, South Atlantic District president
Rev. Joel Zank, Northern Wisconsin District president

Advisory:

Rev. Robert Pasbrig, WELS secretary

Nominating Committee Floor Committee #2

These candidates have been chosen by the synod Nominating Committee to be presented to the delegates of the 66th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The delegates will elect one man for each position listed unless otherwise indicated. Incumbents are noted by an asterisk (*). To view position descriptions and nominee biographies, visit wels.net/2021synodconvention and scroll to "Resolutions and elections." This list does not include nominations that may be made from the floor.

Synodical Council

Pastor-at-large (need two)

Jonathan Bauer, Mount Horeb, Wis.

Matthew Brown, Houston, Texas

Joel Heckendorf, Reno, Nev.

Joel Jenswold, Deforest, Wis.*

Shane Krause, Onalaska, Wis.

Adam Mueller, Tucson, Ariz.

Teacher-at-large (need one)

James Henrickson, Dallas, Texas

Nathan Kieselhorst, Watertown, Wis.

Thomas Plitzuweit, Oconomowoc, Wis.*

Board for World Missions

Chairman (pastor)

David Bivens, Mequon, Wis.

Paul Janke, Watertown, S.D.*

Timothy Westendorf, Highlands Ranch, Colo.

Board for Home Missions

Chairman (parish pastor)

Mark Gabb, Hernando, Fla.*

Timothy Gauger, Rockford, Mich.

Kevin Wattles, Falls Church, Va.

Board for Ministerial Education

Parish pastor

John Bortulin, Mukwonago, Wis.*

Nathan Buege, Katy, Texas

Nathanael Scharf, New Ulm, Minn.

Teacher or staff minister

James Henrickson, Dallas, Texas

Ryan Loberger, Doral, Fla.

Jacob Unke, Missouri City, Texas

Layman

Peter Martens, Lubbock, Texas

Joel Scott, Beaver Dam, Wis.

Adam Zastrow, Mayville, Wis.

Martin Luther College Governing Board

Chairman (parish pastor)

Joel Petermann, Harbor City, Calif.

Michael Seifert, Midlothian, Va.

Eric Steinbrenner, Livonia, Mich.

Commission on Evangelism

Chairman (pastor, teacher, staff minister, or layman)

Joseph Fricke, Johnson Creek, Wis.

Timothy Spiegelberg, Firestone, Colo.

Douglas Tomhave, Lake Mills, Wis.*

Commission on Lutheran Schools

Chairman (pastor, teacher, staff minister, or layman)

Rendell Koepell, San Jose, Calif.

Paul Leifer, Northville, Mich.

Ryan Wiechmann, Rothschild, Wis.*

Board of Appeals

Pastor

Timothy Ehlers, Vernon, Conn.

David Rosenau, Yalaha, Fla.

Paul Zell, Hendersonville, N.C.

Teacher or staff minister

David Kasischke, San Antonio, Texas

Erik Landwehr, Miami Springs, Fla.

Steven Rosenbaum, Wildomar, Calif.

Layman

Gregory Galler, Lake Elmo, Minn.*

David Nommensen, Palmyra, Wis.

Victor Vieth, Lewiston, Minn.

Rev. Robert Pasbrig, reporter

Rev. Robert Pasbrig, WELS secretary and chairman

Rev. Dennis Belter, Northern Wisconsin District

Rev. Michael Kober, South Atlantic District

Rev. Henry Koch, Minnesota District

Rev. Bruce McKenney, Western Wisconsin District

Rev. Jonathan Nitz, Southeastern Wisconsin District

Rev. David Reichel, Dakota-Montana District

Rev. Joshua Stahmann, Arizona-California District

Rev. Luke Tembreull, Pacific Northwest District

Rev. Steven Wagenknecht, South Central District

Rev. Mark Westra, North Atlantic District

Rev. Thomas Westra, Michigan District

Rev. David Wietzke, Nebraska District

WELS Support Committee

Floor Committee #2

Our calling

The elders who lead well should be considered worthy of double honor, especially the ones who work hard in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17). In our Wisconsin Synod, one way we seek to show such honor to our elders is through the WELS Support Committee. This committee has the privileged task of providing financial assistance to retired called workers and/or surviving spouses who don't have adequate financial resources for everyday living expenses. The following factors guide our committee as we seek to carry out our calling.

- The fund is not an entitlement program.
- The fund is not an extension of the synod's pension plan.
- The financial assistance received is a charitable gift from the synod to those in need.
- The fund is not established to provide temporary assistance for those who resigned from the ministry.
- The fund does not grant financial assistance to those who need assisted living and nursing home care.
- The fund is not intended to be the main source of income. Assets and other means of income are expected to be used first, with Support Committee assistance supplementing those resources.

Our current situation

The committee is composed of five district first vice presidents of WELS. The first vice president in every district is the contact person for the Support Committee. Each year the district vice presidents reach out to local pastors, circuit pastors, and district officers to request their help in making sure the Support Committee is made aware of retired called workers and/or their surviving spouses who may need financial help. Once a possible recipient is identified, a simple application form is used to help determine the level of need. The Support Committee then reviews all the applications received and must approve them before assistance begins. The annual amount budgeted for this work is \$250,000. In 2020, there were 18 individuals or couples throughout the synod receiving support. This resulted in a monthly expenditure of \$17,925 and an annual expenditure of \$215,100. It also often happens that during the course of the year new requests are made to the Support Committee. What a blessing that our Lord allowed our synod to take care of all those who sought assistance in 2020.

A look ahead

The Support Committee continues to provide assistance to retired called workers and/or their surviving spouses as long as synod finances make it possible. At the beginning of 2021, 17 individuals and/or couples were receiving support, calling for a monthly expenditure of \$18,475 and an annual budget for approved requests of \$221,700.

Subscriptions to *Forward in Christ*, *Meditations*, and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* are also provided to those recipients who request them. The Support Committee thanks Northwestern Publishing House for covering the costs of these subscriptions.

Rev. Glenn Schwanke, reporter

Rev. Glenn Schwanke, chairman

Rev. Brett Brauer

Rev. Timothy Ehlers

Rev. Michael Enderle

Rev. Michael Helwig

Translation Liaison Committee

Floor Committee #2

Our calling

The Translation Liaison Committee (TLC) consists of four parish pastors and three professors who were appointed by the Conference of Presidents in 2013. The purpose of the TLC is “to evaluate major Bible translations; to communicate with their editors and publishers; to offer, when appropriate, suggestions to improve such translations; and to share its findings with the synod at large” (2013 *WELS Proceedings*, p. 68).

Our current situation

New American Standard Bible

The TLC learned in December that a revision of the New American Standard Bible (NASB) was published in 2020. Upon request, the members of the TLC have been given copies of the new edition, and we plan to do some reviewing.

The information shared online gives a good orientation about what to expect in the revision (see lockman.org/nasb-bible-info). The update seeks to “increase accuracy, clarity, and readability,” while incorporating the latest in biblical scholarship. The latest revision was in 1995, so it is no surprise that a new edition should appear.

Of special note is the fact that the revision has updated the gender language in order to make it more “gender accurate.” For example, NASB 2020 frequently replaces “man/men” with “person/people,” when the context includes both genders. In place of “brothers,” the NASB 2020 often has “brothers and sisters.” Italics have always been used in the NASB to indicate words that, according to the translators, are not in the original text, but “are implied or understood in the text.”

Not changed in the NASB 2020 is the overall translation philosophy. The NASB prides itself on consistently using “the formal equivalence translation philosophy,” translating “word-for-word from the original languages as much as possible.”

The NASB first appeared in 1971, prepared by evangelical scholars for the interdenominational Lockman Foundation. In the 1970s, the NASB was seriously considered by WELS, before WELS made the decision in 1979 to use the NIV in its publications. The main drawback of the NASB at the time was the unidiomatic nature of some of its language, so the 2020 revision that gives attention to the readability of the NASB may be a welcome improvement.

As this report is being prepared, the NASB 2020 is available online at BibleGateway.com, and it is under preorder for Logos. Print copies are being published both by the Lockman Foundation and Zondervan. It is interesting that the NASB 95 will continue to be published for any who prefer to remain with that edition.

New International Version

In May 2020, the TLC submitted 15 more translation suggestions for the New International Version (NIV), bringing the total number of suggestions submitted in the past five years to 91. As a committee, we feel that we have considered the main passages that have received criticism in WELS over the years. We are now suggesting small improvements in matters that have come to our attention in various ways. As noted in previous reports of the TLC, all of our suggestions are posted on the WELS website under “Translation” (see bibletranslation.welsrc.net).

As in other years, our 2020 suggestions were graciously received by Dr. Douglas Moo, the chairman of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), which oversees the NIV text. According to Dr. Moo, the CBT’s work was slowed down in 2020 due to COVID, but the CBT hopes to do extra work in 2021. There still are no immediate plans for a published revision, but the CBT is collecting improvements for an eventual revision of the NIV at some point.

Christian Standard Bible

As reported in the *2020 Report to the Twelve Districts*, the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) published a modest revision of their Bible text in 2020, improving some weaknesses that were observed after the first publication of the CSB in 2017. Included were a few improvements suggested by the TLC in May 2019. Now the CSB overseers are minded to leave the text alone for a good number of years, recognizing the value of a stable text.

Information about the 2020 CSB revision can be found at [csbible.com/2020updates](https://www.csbible.com/2020updates), including a complete listing of all of the text revisions, which is fascinating to peruse. Available on the WELS website is the nine-page report of the WELS committee that reviewed the CSB in 2018. Their conclusion was that “we can recommend the Christian Standard Bible for reading, preaching, and teaching in our church.”

A look ahead

Besides taking a look at the NASB 2020, the TLC plans to continue writing up translation recommendations for the NIV. Anyone who has suggestions for us in this work is invited to share them with any member of the committee. Modern Americans are blessed to have a number of high-quality translations to choose from. It is a privilege for the TLC to represent WELS with the major Bible translations prepared outside of our fellowship.

Prof. Thomas Nass, reporter

Prof. Thomas Nass, chairman

Rev. Brett Brauer

Prof. Kenneth Cherney, Jr.

Prof. Joel Fredrich

Rev. Geoffrey Kieta

Rev. Glenn Schwanke

Rev. Paul Zell

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee Floor Committee #2

Our calling

The Continuing Education for Called Workers (CECW) Committee coordinates our synod’s efforts to assist called workers to grow in faith, knowledge, and skill in order to carry out the unique vocations (callings) God has given to each. Helping them grow includes not only assisting them toward professional growth in their public ministry callings but also encouraging them toward growth in their most important calling (the calling to faith in Jesus), as well as all their other callings God may have given to each (spouse, parent, member of a congregation and synod, etc.).

The CECW also works to help synodical leaders and calling bodies clearly understand why it is wise for calling bodies—and our whole synod—to invest in the growth of all their called workers. Growth for our called workers is certainly not about self-centered goals (advancing their career, gaining recognition, increasing compensation). Growth for our called workers is about growing in the gospel for themselves and growing into being a clearer presenter of God’s mercy wherever God has called them to represent him (home, church/school, in the community). As our synodical theme reminds us, we are helping them let Christ’s love be ever more clearly seen. To that end the CECW also seeks to urge lay leaders to understand the importance of investing in assisting current called workers toward growth.

The CECW includes representatives from our terminal schools (Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) as well as representatives from WELS Congregational Services. By the synod’s constitution, our chairman is the first vice president of the synod, and we report to the Conference of Presidents. Our report is divided into the CECW’s work for pastors and for teachers and staff ministers.

Pastors

Our current situation

We thank God for the good work that is being done by so many entities in our church body in regard to encouraging pastors to grow. A considerable part of the work of encouraging the ongoing growth of pastors has been entrusted to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). The seminary carries out most of this work through Grow in Grace, the

seminary's institute for pastoral growth. Grow in Grace seeks to partner with pastors for growth in all their callings under four main goals. Here is the current situation in pastoral growth under each goal.

Events and courses

Grow in Grace seeks to deliver Christ-centered, accessible, and ministry impacting events and courses in the four theological disciplines.

For those who want to pursue continuing education in a formal manner, the Master of Sacred Theology program offers courses to pastors in nine areas of focused study designed to meet a pastor's unique gifts and the unique needs of his calling body. Currently 28 pastors are actively involved in that degree program.

To make courses more available, WLS has shifted the pattern of how in-person formal course offerings are offered. In even-numbered years, Summer Quarter is held on campus. In odd-numbered years, we offer districtwide satellite courses in as many districts as are willing to invite us in—currently nine districts. We don't offer a satellite for the Southeastern Wisconsin District since they have on-campus Summer Quarter available to them in their district every even year. While such satellite opportunities offer courses in a more condensed agenda, the fact that they are offered within the district and at an already scheduled district gathering means that they provide a much easier path toward attendance for pastors. In 2019 more than 600 pastors participated in at least one course at eight districtwide satellites, more than five times the highest recorded attendance of any on-campus Summer Quarter. In addition, each year online courses continue to be offered as well as on-campus courses during Winterim in January.

On-campus Summer Quarter in 2020 had to become virtual. Nevertheless, attendance was excellent. One hundred four learners took a total of 150 classes. This is the highest "on-campus" attendance in years. All classes were offered online, some synchronously, some asynchronously, and some a hybrid of the two. Will offering fewer in-person classes and more online classes be a model for the future? Our post-Summer Quarter survey of pastors who attended didn't clearly favor one or the other, so we plan to offer Summer Quarter on campus in 2022 as scheduled.

Satellite Summer Quarter 2021 is a work in progress as of this writing. Some districts have decided to cancel their conference completely, some have determined to move to an all-online format, some are planning to meet in person as scheduled, and some are unsure yet as to which approach to take.

Retreats and mentoring

Grow in Grace seeks to provide collaborative opportunities for pastors to learn from one another and to gather with peers celebrating similar ministry milestones.

Pastor Partners mentoring, formally adopted by the synod in 2015, provides new seminary graduates with three years of focused encouragement from a trained pastoral mentor. While mentoring remains optional for each seminary graduate, in the past two years (2019, 2020) 96 percent of WLS graduates requested a mentor. Of the more than 145 pastors who have now been mentored, we have seen the resignation of only one pastor who was active in mentoring. God is blessing us with retaining a higher percentage of new pastors than we have seen since the 1980s. There may be many reasons for this; humanly speaking the mentoring program seems to be a key component. Pastor Partners is overseen by Prof. em. Forrest Bivens, working with a team of seven pastors.

Each spring, Celebration of Ministry Retreats invite pastors and wives to a time of worship, Bible study, and fellowship for the express purpose of encouraging pastors and their wives. Four retreats are offered at key ministry milestones—a year-3 retreat, a year-10 retreat, a year-25 retreat, and a year-35 retreat. In both 2020 and 2021, the retreats have had to be postponed. Current plans are to invite 12 classes to the retreats in 2022.

Strengthening ministry

Grow in Grace seeks to deliver gospel-rich resources that assist pastors to partner with others in honestly evaluating all their callings and to plan for growth with confidence.

Under the leadership of Grow in Grace's former director Richard Gurgel, the institute produced three essay/workbook resources to help pastors plan for growth. *Guard What Has Been Entrusted to Your Care* encourages pastors to guard the gifts of time, faith, health, and brothers/sisters. *Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage* helps pastors strengthen their devotional life. *Fan God's Gifts into Flame* helps pastors approach planning for growth from a biblical perspective. We continue to offer these resources on our website and will consider ways to repackage them to make them even more valuable for even more pastors.

Preacher's Podcasts is a partnership between Grow in Grace and WELS Congregational Services in which a sermon text for Sunday is discussed by one or two pastors and a WLS professor, giving insights into how the text fits into the thoughts of that day, important Greek/Hebrew thoughts, possible preaching values, etc. Taping is being done a year in advance; watch for release in Epiphany 2022.

Growth resources

Grow in Grace seeks to deliver informal resources useful for individual or group study that assist pastors to grow in all their callings.

The Shepherd's Study is an online collection of reviews on books in every area of theology. Pastor Brett Ehlke and Prof. Souksamay Phetsanghane recently finished a two-year term as editors. Pastors Luther Zuberbier and Aaron Jensen have assumed editorship. About 30 parish pastors provide the reviews. The editors provide the pastors with a list of books from which to choose. They choose two books to read and review. On every other Tuesday, a review gets posted to our website as well as on Facebook. About 800 pastors open our e-mail, and of those, about 50 percent of them "click through" to read more deeply.

The Four Branches Review is an e-newsletter shared with all pastors each month that offers a brief article of interest in each of the four areas of theological study. It is also posted on our website. A team of four writers for each quarter prepares the articles, one in each of the four areas of theological study. Pastor Jeremy Belter serves as editor. About 20 pastors partner in this effort. Again, about 800 pastors open this e-mail, and about 50 percent "click through" to read the entire articles.

Other updates

Prof. Richard Gurgel took the call to become the president of Martin Luther College, leaving WLS in summer 2020. Prof. Thomas Kock became the new director of Grow in Grace in July 2020.

In July 2020, a generous donor offered a matching grant of up to \$25,000 for the Grow in Grace Endowment Fund. By God's grace, God's people offered more than \$28,000, and the donor matched all of it. We thank God for the generosity of his people.

In January 2021, another generous donor offered a \$10,000 matching grant for Grow in Grace's general fund. As of this writing, Grow in Grace is taking steps to publicize this grant.

A look ahead

Since Pastor Partners mentoring and the Celebration of Ministry retreats have proved a blessing to hundreds of pastors (and thousands of souls they serve), we will continue to look for ways to strengthen that support system so that it can continue to be a blessing for many more pastors (and their wives) in the years ahead.

We continue to work with the districts in a desire to achieve our long-range goal of offering courses each odd-numbered year in all 11 districts beyond the Southeastern Wisconsin District. In 2021 we are scheduled to have satellites in 9 districts, up from 8 districts in 2019.

We also will be seeking to strengthen our on-campus Summer Quarter each even-numbered year. One idea is to give special invitations to those men who have graduated five or six years previous. In addition to returning to campus for classes, special worship and fellowship events could be planned to seek to duplicate some of what has made our San Antonio retreats so popular by capturing a bit of a class-reunion atmosphere for those younger pastors.

We hope to accelerate our exploration of opportunities to deliver growth resources in forms such as podcasts and brief videos. This could greatly expand our ability to reach even more pastors with what is produced for their growth and encouragement.

Grow in Grace will also continue to nurture a new partnership with the Commission on Congregational Counseling to provide readily accessible materials that pastors could use in partnership with lay leaders and ministry peers to evaluate how they are serving their Savior in all their various callings. Such tools would provide a welcome match to what the Commission on Congregational Counseling has produced to assist lay leaders in congregations to evaluate their congregation's ministry.

The relationship between staff ministers and pastors

The analogy of physician assistants (PAs) and physicians may help in understanding the difference in roles between

a staff minister and a pastor. A PA is not a doctor, and PA training is not as broad and deep as the training doctors receive in medical school and their residencies. However, PAs are provided with the academic knowledge and clinical skills to provide health care services under the direction and supervision of a physician.

The relationship between staff ministers and pastors is quite similar. In some ways, it follows the pattern of Levites working with the priests in the Old Testament and of deacons working with the elders-overseers, the pastors, in the New Testament. Staff ministers are not pastors; they do not receive the same extent of training that our pastors do. However, many of the continuing education resources that are available for pastors, as noted above in this report, can be profitably used by staff ministers for their spiritual and professional growth.

There are regular informal opportunities for continuing education available for staff ministers on the circuit, conference, and district levels. One continuing education event specifically for staff ministers is the three-day Staff Ministers Conference held each year at the end of April. A graduate-level opportunity now in place at Martin Luther College is a Master of Arts in Theology degree program that is open to staff ministers and teachers alike. There are 12 individuals currently in the program, a relatively small but growing number. To put that in context, that number is higher than was ever enrolled at one time in the former Master of Arts in Religion program once offered by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary that has now, in essence, been replaced by the Master of Arts in Theology.

Teachers and staff ministers

Our current situation

By every measure, churches and schools are having a tough year. Teachers and staff ministers need to take care of themselves so they can serve others. Sometimes that means physical rest, but it also means taking care of one's spirit and mind. There are many ways your synod is providing spiritual and mental renewal for called workers.

Resources for educators from Christian Family Solutions

The prolonged nature of the pandemic has tested even the strongest among us. The counseling staff at Christian Family Solutions wants educators to know that they stand ready to help those who are struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns as a result of these seemingly unrelenting challenges.

Christian Family Solutions has partnered with the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools to deliver presentations and other resources that support those serving in ministry. Those resources are regularly updated on the WELS website and can be found at cls.welsrc.net/connect.

Continuing education resources from Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC) strives to offer relevant, high-quality, affordable courses to help meet your needs. During this challenging year, we have received many requests for courses to help you care for your students' well-being. Thanks to the hard work of our extraordinary instructors, we are happy to offer a long list of courses, including several new courses, to help you do just that.

Courses are available in:

- Early Childhood
- Educational Technology
- Graduate Studies
- Ministry Certification
- Pastors' Courses
- Special Education
- Satellites
- Synchronous Online Courses

2021 Open Learning Conference: Serving in times of crisis

When MLC rose to the challenge and launched its first virtual conference last year, more than 1,000 called workers registered! Join us this year for our second conference. Sit back and soak up the knowledge—or sit up and engage with MLC professors and your colleagues all over the country.

This year's conference featured a pre-conference sectional in February. "Trauma-Informed Christian Schools" focused on student and teacher mental/emotional health. It will be archived for several months at mlc-wels.edu/openlearning/2021-conference-recordings-and-resources.

The June 15–16 conference features six sectionals:

- Hitting the Reset on Classroom Management—Prof. Ben Clemons
- Serving Families in Crisis—Dr. Joshua Mears
- Quality Physical Education Technology Resources—Prof. Dan Gawrisch
- Team Building and Leadership in a Crisis—Dr. Jeff Wiechman
- Social-Emotional Needs of Students in Crisis—Dr. Jennifer Londgren
- Communication and Wellness with Technology—Prof. Rachel Feld

Two new graduate degree programs at MLC

The MS Education–Special Education with MN Learning Disabilities Licensure program is designed for teachers who want to serve learners with special needs in WELS schools. The program provides Minnesota licensure in Learning Disabilities both as a stand-alone license for existing WELS teachers and an add-on for MLC undergraduates completing their Academic Behavioral Specialist license.

Graduate students in this program follow a prescribed set of special education courses, complete a 12-week internship, and take two state-required licensure tests. MLC has also coordinated the program with its undergraduate special education major, enabling undergrad students to earn their master’s degree and specialty license at a faster pace and a lower cost.

MLC is also now offering a master’s degree in educational technology.

A look ahead

The Commission on Lutheran Schools is looking for future school leaders. The Principal Credential Cohort equips veteran teachers to serve as principals before they receive a principal call. Members of the Principal Credential Cohort receive encouragement and support from mentors and other cohort members and attend at least three leadership training events, including a national leadership conference. They also enroll in MLC’s MS in Educational Administration program and/or demonstrate competence in the WELS Principal Standards. Those enrolled in MLC’s master’s program receive a 50 percent scholarship for their coursework. New cohorts begin each summer.

You can nominate a teacher for the Principal Credential Cohort. The teacher should have at least three years of teaching experience and the gifts to serve as a future school leader. Visit cls.welsrc.net/school_leadership or contact lutheranschools@wels.net.

In Ecclesiastes 4:12, Solomon writes, “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” These words of Solomon suggest that there is indeed strength in numbers. Serving in ministry can be extremely demanding, and the events of this past year have made it even more challenging for many. Do you know a person or two who could use some encouragement? Are you in need of a support system yourself? Consider the idea of forming a triad with two other colleagues to provide mutual support and encouragement to one another.

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president and chairman

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education and secretary

Prof. Thomas Kock, director of continuing education, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services

Prof. John Meyer, director of continuing education and graduate studies, Martin Luther College

Prof. Lawrence Olson, director of staff ministry, Martin Luther College

Teacher Jim Rademan, director of WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

Floor Committee #3

Our calling

The WELS Bylaws charge the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) to “serve under the Conference of Presidents by representing the synod in doctrinal discussions with other church bodies who are, or are not, in fellowship with the synod” and to “keep itself informed on the doctrinal trends in other church bodies.” This function is in keeping with the object and purpose of the synod: to “extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church” (WELS Constitution, Article IV).

To carry out its calling, the Commission on Inter-Church Relations meets twice each year for regular meetings, at which time it receives updates from sister synods throughout the world. Some members of the CICR represent WELS at the conventions of sister synods as well. Finally, commission members stay abreast of happenings in other Lutheran church bodies around the world through periodical reading.

Our current situation

The CICR continues to work closely with the Board for World Missions (BWM) in assisting established and emerging church bodies from around the globe who are looking for fellowship with WELS and for assistance in educating pastors in their countries in confessional Lutheranism. About three years ago it became apparent that the CICR and the BWM needed to work in tandem at developing and establishing relationships with church bodies that were inquiring about fellowship. Many of the inquiring groups were either breaking off of established church bodies or were seeking fellowship and assistance after leaving other church federations. Some were self-supporting church bodies while others required mission assistance.

As a result, BWM administrator Pastor Larry Schlomer was appointed to be part-time CICR administrator as well. CICR members were assigned to work in tandem with the reorganized BWM structure made up of “One Teams.” (See the BWM report on p. 113.) This has resulted in increasing blessings in our communication with the church bodies throughout the world with whom we are now in fellowship or are in the process of establishing fellowship. One or two CICR members are assigned to each of the BWM’s One Teams. The CICR representatives attend the regularly held One Team meetings and through that connection have a voice in how we interact with the various churches in that designated area of the world. The CICR representatives to the various One Teams are as follows:

- Asia One Team: Pastor Thomas Fricke, Pastor Benjamin Tomczak
- East Asia One Team: Pastor Steven Lange
- One Africa Team: Prof. Bradley Wordell
- One Europe Team: Prof. James Danell, Prof. Keith Wessel
- One Latin America Team: Pastor Bart Brauer

Here’s a brief overview of our work in the various continents:

Africa

Fellowship relationships and cooperation in work on the continent of Africa continue with our long-time partners in Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria, and Cameroon as well as with our more recent partner, the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia. As WELS began to receive more inquiries about church fellowship from churches in Africa, the CICR was asked to develop a toolkit giving step-by-step guidance for the process of taking a church body from its initial inquiry to fellowship with WELS. This toolkit has been useful in discussions with several inquiring church bodies.

At the 2019 WELS convention, the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ–Kenya (LCMC–Kenya) was welcomed into fellowship with WELS. The toolkit was developed as the One Africa Team was having doctrinal discussions with the LCMC–Kenya, and this particular case helped the CICR to refine the toolkit’s guidelines so that it now serves as a template for the process of working through the steps for establishing fellowship with inquiring church bodies.

The CICR has since assisted the One Africa Team in working toward establishing ties with the Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda, following the toolkit’s guidelines. Discussions have also taken place with churches in Liberia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Congo, although communication and visits have been hampered to a certain

extent due to COVID-19. The One Africa Team and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute are also coordinating work reaching out to South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya and offering theological education to South Sudanese men studying to be pastors.

Asia

WELS is working with churches and mission stations in Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Laos, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, India, Taiwan, East Asia, Japan, and Australia. The CICR has continued to stay in contact with and encourage them, although COVID-19 has had a major impact on our ability to interact with many of them. Several of our missionaries and expatriate educators in this part of the world have had to relocate to Chiang Mai, Thailand, or to the United States, in some cases due to COVID-19 restrictions, in others due to governments unfriendly to Christianity. As for the CICR representatives (Pastors Thomas Fricke, Benjamin Tomczak, and Steven Lange), they have been able to meet with their One Teams regularly online. Much of the theological education that WELS has been doing among these people groups through the seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute has been able to continue online so that we can continue to offer the support that these young churches need in order to reach greater doctrinal maturity.

Europe

In Europe we have fellowship with churches in Scandinavia, Germany, Latvia, Ukraine, Portugal, Albania, Russia, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic. Our relationship with our sister synods in Europe is quite different from the ones we have with the churches in the other continents because we have had long-time associations with independent church bodies that did not begin as our own missions or as fledgling church bodies that sought fellowship with us. The Scandinavian synods and the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) of Germany have been in fellowship with WELS for generations now. The ELFK will begin their seminary program again this fall after several years of being closed because they had no students. Pastor Holger Weiß, a graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Master of Sacred Theology program, has been called as the new president of the ELFK seminary. It is hoped that the seminary will be able to assist with pastor training among the various small church bodies we are in fellowship with in Europe.

Latin America

We continue contact with and encouragement to our sister churches in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, and Chile. Much of the work of our One Latin America Team is focused on *Academia Cristo*, our online education program that is sowing seeds of confessional Lutheranism throughout Central and South America. (For more on *Academia Cristo*, see the BWM report on p. 113.) It is the CICR's prayer that the individuals and small groups that *Academia Cristo* is educating will combine into a new pan-Latin American church body, WELS Internacional, which should be incorporated by October 2021. Our church body in Colombia is leading the way on the formation of WELS Internacional, which will, God willing, become an independent church body in fellowship with WELS by October 2023. The organizers of this new church body are working with our seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute to begin a Lutheran seminary run by Latin Americans with advisors from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

In the United States, our sister church body is the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). WELS has had fellowship with the ELS since its organization in 1918. The CICR interacts with the ELS on a regular basis in order to foster the unity of faith that we treasure with this sister synod. Our prayers are with the ELS at the recent, sudden passing to glory of their president, Pastor John Moldstad. ELS vice president, Pastor Glenn Obenberger, has succeeded him as president. Pastor Steven Lange will attend the 2021 ELS convention, although it has not been determined yet whether it will be a face-to-face convention, due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The CICR also carries on discussions with two American Lutheran church bodies that are not of our fellowship:

Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

The CICR continues to monitor developments in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS). In addition to staying current with their publications, leaders of WELS, the ELS, and the LCMS have held informal in-person meetings each year since 2012. This past year's meeting had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. A two-hour online meeting was held instead, in which each side simply gave updates on developments in their respective church bodies. They plan to meet again this coming December to discuss the following topics: the scriptural *sedes doctrinae* on ministry, the historical development of the LCMS's practice of prayer fellowship, and the WELS and ELS's recent documents on the role of men and women. Prof. Bill Tackmier, who serves as the WELS observer at LCMS conventions, will be the CICR representative at the meeting. Presidents Schroeder and Treptow are also participants, along with WELS Vice Presidents James Huebner and Joel Voss; Prof. Paul Wendland, Prof. John Brenner, and Prof. Tom Nass, members of the CICR when these visits first began; and Pastor Paul Prange, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education.

Church of the Lutheran Confession

Talks with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) remain at the same point they were in 2018. At that convention, the CLC neither adopted nor rejected the document that representatives from WELS, the ELS, and the CLC had drafted entitled “Joint Statement Regarding Termination of Fellowship,” resolving instead to make a final decision at its next convention. It is hoped that the adoption of this document will be an initial step on the path to establishing fellowship between WELS/ELS and the CLC, though in 2019 the CLC Board of Doctrine declared the statement inadequate, and the CLC’s General Pastors Conference recommended rejecting the Joint Statement. CICR representative Pastor Thomas Fricke will attend this year’s CLC convention June 24–27.

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference

Over the years, members of the CICR have also been involved in the leadership of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC), the international association of churches in fellowship with WELS. The CELC will be holding an online convention in May–June 2021. Six two-hour sessions spread over two weeks are planned, in which the main business of the CELC will be conducted and four essays will be read and discussed. Official representatives from the 32 member churches will participate live in Zoom meetings, while others can register to watch the sessions as they are streamed. Two churches are applying for membership, one in Taiwan and one in Kenya. The CELC originally planned an in-person convention for South Korea in 2020, which was postponed to 2021. Due to COVID-19, the CELC is now planning its next in-person convention for 2023 in South Korea. For more information, see the CELC website at celc.info.

A look ahead

This summer Pastor Steven Lange concludes his final term on the CICR. We thank him for his years of service, during which he served as our contact man for the ELS and our CICR representative to the East Asia One Team.

The creation of the One Team concept has allowed the members of the CICR to coordinate their work with our Board for World Missions. Whereas the work of the CICR was once more focused on interaction with established church bodies, we have found that with the way our world is developing, our work today focuses more on interacting with emerging churches throughout the world who require theological education and mentoring in order to bring them to a more mature confessional stance. The development of the One Teams allows the CICR to have a voice together with our leaders who work in missions. Our contribution to that discussion is to bring doctrinal clarity, advice, and encouragement to these young church bodies and individuals who are reaching out to our synod, while leaving financial assistance questions that are sometimes involved in these requests to the BWM, which is much more equipped to handle such matters. As the Western world becomes less and less Christian in its viewpoint, it’s exciting to see that other parts of the world such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America present us with many opportunities to give doctrinal and confessional encouragement and education to so many inquiring voices. We pray for God’s wisdom and strength as we respond to these requests and as we encourage our brothers and sisters throughout the world to remain faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

Prof. Bill Tackmier, reporter

Prof. James Danell, chairman
Rev. Bart Brauer, vice chairman
Prof. Bill Tackmier, secretary
Rev. Jonathan Balge
Rev. Thomas Fricke
Rev. Steven Lange
Prof. Joel Otto
Rev. Benjamin Tomczak
Prof. Keith Wessel
Prof. Bradley Wordell

Ex officio:

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations and WELS Board for World Missions
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Advisory:

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president
Rev. Paul Nitz, World Missions One Team counselor

Ministry of Christian Giving

Floor Committee #4

Our calling

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) serves on behalf of the Conference of Presidents to encourage every WELS member to “excel in the grace of giving” through Christ. It is our privilege to help God’s people offer gifts to Jesus for his work in their congregations, synod, and other WELS organizations.

The Ministry of Christian Giving assists the Conference of Presidents with its responsibility to fund the Lord’s work through our synod. This funding is provided through Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) as well as direct gifts to WELS from individuals, groups, and foundations.

- In the area of CMO, our efforts are focused on informing congregations of ministry opportunities and needs, particularly as they prayerfully set their annual commitments. We also send congregations quarterly reports of their offerings to WELS.
- In the area of direct gifts from individuals, we regularly mail and e-mail appeals highlighting our gospel work and encouraging support. We provide information to donors about Christian estate planning and other planned giving options that allow them to give in a way that is beneficial for them, their families, and the ministries close to their hearts. WELS Christian giving counselors (currently 12.4 FTEs including 1 semi-retired and 12 full-time) assist God’s people across all 12 districts of WELS. Their services are free and confidential.
- Gifts from foundations often result from consultation between the Ministry of Christian Giving director, other synod leaders, and the foundations regarding their goals for supporting WELS ministry.

Our current situation

Bentz Whaley Flessner review

The Conference of Presidents (COP) signed a contract with consulting firm Bentz Whaley Flessner to provide a “top to bottom review of WELS MCG.” Bentz Whaley Flessner conducted its review in early 2020 (this process included interviews with leaders of WELS and all areas of ministry, a donor survey, an in-depth review of our database, and a study of MCG’s policies and work). Bentz Whaley Flessner reported its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the COP in early summer 2020.

Bentz Whaley Flessner commended WELS Ministry of Christian Giving and its partners for their diligent, mission-focused service to donors. At the same time, Bentz Whaley Flessner recommended directing personnel and practices to focus more on nurturing relationships with prospective major and mid-level gifts donors and helping to connect donors’ Christian giving interests with our areas of ministry rather than approaching donors with rotating institutional campaigns. The first step in this enhanced service to donors is expanding MCG’s office staff to include a database specialist (hired) and a prospect analyst. These will enable the Ministry of Christian Giving to segment and strategically nurture donors according to their ministry interests, giving frequency, and how the Lord has blessed them. Concurrently, the Ministry of Christian Giving is working with Bentz Whaley Flessner to adjust our Christian giving counselors’ metrics (including the number of meaningful donor contacts, offering proposals, etc.) and approach to donors (more of a dual focus—both major and planned gifts), to review our direct response strategy, and to establish an advisory/engagement group of WELS leaders and active donors.

Congregation Mission Offerings

The Ministry of Christian Giving coordinates with WELS Communication Services to share Congregation Mission Offering updates and ministry impacts through WELS media. Each year the Ministry of Christian Giving oversees the process of collecting congregational offering subscriptions beginning in late summer and lasting through the first Friday of February. This involves mailed and e-mailed communications as well as direct follow up by our Ministry of Christian Giving district chairmen. We are happy to report a 98 percent participation rate in the subscription setting process for 2021 (the average participation rate over the past ten years has been 96 percent).

In addition, we collaborate with Communication Services to develop an annual video as well as the WELS annual report, *Your gifts, God’s blessings*, to inform members of the work being done through congregational offerings. We

praise our Lord and thank our congregations for their steady offerings year after year, which are a generous response to Christ's love. (For details on CMO pledged and received, see the report of the ministry financial plan on p. 79.)

Christian giving counselors

Through visits and presentations (more of which were done via phone calls and web conferences during this time of pandemic), our Christian giving counselors (CGCs) invite faith-prompted support of WELS ministries. During each one of the past 13 fiscal years (FY08–FY20), the CGCs (averaging 12.8 FTEs) have each made 278 meaningful face-to-face donor visits and have nurtured \$496,691 in immediate gifts (13-year total of \$83.5 million) and \$2,379,340 in new/revised deferred expectancies (13-year total of \$402 million). In the first seven months of FY21, WELS Christian giving counselors conducted 296 face-to-face visits and 440 phone/Zoom meetings that helped facilitate \$6.4 million in gifts received for WELS and \$13.5 million in new/revised expectancies for congregations, synod, and other WELS organizations. We have also received \$7.5 million in bequests. For the 2021–23 biennium, our church body will annually invest approximately \$1.6 million in our giving counselors and about \$850,000 in our office staff (includes appeals, Christian giving counselors' materials, and database fees) so that we may serve Jesus, his gifted people, and our areas of ministry. In view of the 13-year totals for immediate gifts and deferred expectancies mentioned above, we thank our Lord for the generous return he's given our investment in the Ministry of Christian Giving.

In January, Pastor Paul Lindhorst accepted the Conference of Presidents' call to serve as a full-time Christian giving counselor in WELS' Southeastern Wisconsin District. Pastor John Graf is retiring at the end of June 2021 after serving as a giving counselor for 31 years. We thank God for John's many years of faithful service and ask him to likewise bless Paul in his service to the saints.

Office staff

Pastor Reuben Schmitz accepted our offer to serve as our WELS database specialist. He has extensive experience with and knowledge of the Raiser's Edge database and started his work on Feb. 1, 2021. The Lord bless his labors with us!

"Equipping Christian Witnesses"

WELS Conference of Presidents approves special offering partnerships between the Ministry of Christian Giving and areas of ministry. From July 2019 through June 2022, the Ministry of Christian Giving is partnering with Martin Luther College to present "Equipping Christian Witnesses" (ECW) to both congregations and individuals. Donor visits continue, congregations are being encouraged to participate, and mailed and e-mailed appeals are being sent.

In December, our Ministry of Christian Giving field team and office staff participated in Bentz Whaley Flessner's Digital Gift Officer training, and we continue to coordinate major donor ECW campaign nurture with our Martin Luther College mission advancement teammates. Thanks to our Savior, we've already received the names of 50 previously unknown prospective students. Also, God's people have offered gifts, donor advised funds distributions, pledges, and church commitments totaling more than \$3.2 million for tuition assistance and facilities (as of March). In addition, Christian Giving Counselor John Graf and WELS Foundation were privileged to assist MLC Vice President of Mission Advancement Michael Otterstatter with the major gift for the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse. May the Lord continue to bless this special synodwide offering through his people's offerings and prayers! Congregations can learn how they may participate in the campaign by going to mlc-wels.edu/mlc-campaign, clicking on the ECW Campaign Toolbox, and downloading the congregational guidelines or ECW Sunday materials.

Appeals

The Ministry of Christian Giving works closely with our WELS areas of ministry and ministerial education schools to send about 14 mailed appeals as well as 4 to 12 e-appeals each year. Each of the synod's four main areas of ministry receives two of the annual mailed appeal slots and several e-appeals, while other initiatives (e.g., Commission on Inter-Church Relations, Christian Aid and Relief, Mission and Ministry, and WELS endowments) receive one mailed appeal slot per year. One or two of the annual appeals encourage specialized gifts such as a charitable gift annuity or qualified charitable distributions from an IRA. The appeals coordinate with other WELS media including *WELS Connection*, *Forward in Christ*, WELS' websites, and the "Together" e-newsletter. Over the past ten fiscal years, the appeals have produced an average net income of \$1.1 million per year.

WELS endowment funds

This year WELS Ministry of Christian Giving and WELS Foundation are celebrating 15 years of God's blessings—and the generosity of God's people—through our synod endowment funds. In 2005, synod convention delegates prayerfully considered how WELS could support gospel ministry in a predictable and ever-increasing manner. One answer was to establish the WELS endowments, which benefit the Lord's work in WELS Home, World, and Joint

Missions and at our four ministerial education schools. Out of gratitude for God's love and a desire to help more people know Jesus as their Savior, WELS members have faithfully contributed to these endowments over the last 15 years, resulting in more than \$100 million in gifts received (\$33.5 million) and expected (\$68.3 million). We praise God for these blessings!

Encouragement of planned gifts

The Ministry of Christian Giving's congregational planned giving manual helps congregations promote planned giving opportunities to members. It also provides guidance on setting up a planned giving committee as well as establishing and administering an endowment fund. Our Christian giving counselors are available to introduce the planned giving program to congregational leaders.

We continue to send our *Grace of Giving* newsletter to WELS members eligible for supporting ministry through planned giving instruments. The newsletter includes inspiring stories of faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, ministry updates, and planned giving opportunities.

In recent years qualified charitable distributions from IRAs have become a popular way for anyone 70.5 or older to support ministry. These distributions are free from federal and potentially state income tax, so donors can direct distributions to their church, synod, or other WELS ministry to save on taxes, then use the cash they would have given for other needs. The Ministry of Christian Giving is working with WELS Foundation to inform donors and churches of this opportunity and to provide resources to assist at wels.net/qcd.

Development counsel to other organizations

The Ministry of Christian Giving annually offers development training to Christian giving counselors, Ministerial Education mission advancement staff, Missions administrators, and anyone serving a WELS/ELS-affiliated ministry in development. One goal of such training is to encourage a consistent approach to God's people that's Christ-centered and donor-sensitive and that minimizes potential donor fatigue and the impression that we're competitors or trying to "get" something from our fellow Christians. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we were not able to offer this training in January 2021 but plan to offer it again in January 2022.

WELS-affiliated ministries can arrange a part-time "collaborative partnership" with the Ministry of Christian Giving where our counselors represent their organizations on visits with members. This allows both WELS and its affiliated ministries to broaden their audiences of prospective supporters. At the present time, the Ministry of Christian Giving has collaborative partnerships with Arizona Lutheran Academy and Great Plains Lutheran High School. Also, with Conference of Presidents approval, we are wrapping up a six-month (January–June 2021) test of a part-time planned giving partnership with a congregation.

A look ahead

God willing, WELS Ministry of Christian Giving will continue all the initiatives listed above with the following highlights:

- The Ministry of Christian Giving is transitioning to a new model of donor nurture as recommended by Bentz Whaley Flessner. This includes hiring a prospect analyst.
- The Ministry of Christian Giving is asking the Conference of Presidents to fill two Christian giving counselor vacancies.
- We look forward to our giving counselors gradually returning to in-person visits and presentations.
- This summer the MCG and WELS Foundation will mark the distribution of more than \$1 million from the WELS endowments for Ministerial Education and Home and World Missions.
- Our next WELS Christian Giving Training for WELS/ELS advancement personnel will take place Jan. 10–14, 2022. Contact us to register or receive more information (800-827-5482 or mcg@wels.net).

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving is privileged to serve our Savior and you by helping God's people to fund the ministries that touch their hearts. We are happy that these gifts in response to Christ's love are helping us as a synod to fulfill our calling of proclaiming Jesus' name to more and more people.

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, reporter

Communication Services

Floor Committee #5

Our calling

Communication Services exists to assist the Conference of Presidents in communicating WELS' mission to the members of the synod. It is responsible for a clear and consistent communication of the synod's mission from the synod's national office and for exploring, supporting, and expediting innovative media usage and shared communication for WELS ministries and congregations. It is also responsible for reviewing and authorizing all new communications originating in the synod's national office.

Our current situation

The major initiative this biennium was the redesign and new digital resources created for *Forward in Christ*, WELS' official monthly magazine. Since the first issue of the WELS periodical, *The Northwestern Lutheran*, in January 1914, we have continued to publish a monthly synodwide publication. We have enjoyed a faithful and dedicated group of readers over the years, but not only is our world changing around us, WELS is also undergoing some declining membership changes. Those changes contributed to a drop in readership to our current 31,000 subscribers. During this past biennium we chose to study how we might address the changes and increase the reader base.

The *Forward in Christ* staff together with WELS Communication Services and Northwestern Publishing House oversaw an extensive reader survey and received feedback from more than 5,300 participants. The survey highlighted four areas that could help us improve the magazine and appeal to more readers. They were redesign, marketing initiatives, content review, and the development of digital resources. January 2020 was the launch date for the new initiatives we identified and a complete redesign of the magazine. We agreed with our readers that *Forward in Christ* should take on a more contemporary look, with brighter and thicker paper, with more pictures and graphics to make it more interesting and appealing.

We also enhanced our approach to marketing the magazine to new readers. The enhancements included a more robust encouragement for subscriptions and ways to improve the subscription process and suggested ways to help congregations distribute *Forward in Christ* to their members. We created and distributed a counter display holder for congregations, which was designed to increase the visibility of the magazine. In addition, with each bulk shipment to our congregations we include a special highlight page for pastors entitled "Share what's inside" so that pastors can refer to these highlights when the magazine is delivered to their congregation each month.

A new dedicated *Forward in Christ* website and social media pages launched in January 2020 to offer readers a digital platform to interact with monthly articles as well as share their own stories. The **forwardinchrist.net** website is another way to engage with readers, and with the addition of *Forward in Christ* Facebook and Instagram social media sites, our members now have multiple ways to access and share the engaging content delivered each month by the magazine. Readers can also sign up to receive a free weekly e-newsletter filled with articles, photos, and sneak peeks. Sign up is available at **forwardinchrist.net**. From January 2020–March 2021, **forwardinchrist.net** has had more than 159,000 pageviews, and that number is increasing steadily. Most visitors are directed to the site from social media, primarily Facebook. Since the launch of its Facebook and Instagram accounts, the magazine has reached more than 100,000 unique users with its social media posts that highlight content from *Forward in Christ*.

A look ahead

The Communication Services staff is focused on creating and promoting the following communication initiatives to support the ongoing mission and ministry of the synod.

WELS Connection

WELS Connection, the monthly video viewed in more than 800 congregations, is entering its 34th year of providing stories that highlight the important work happening as a result of your Congregation Mission Offerings to the synod. *Forward in Christ* and the *WELS Connection* video have the proven ability to reach tens of thousands of people each month with uplifting stories and important information every member should know. We truly appreciate the strong partnership we share with our congregations that choose to subscribe to these inspirational products.

Free resources

Due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, we offered several free resources to help our members stay connected to WELS during this time of unrest and change. These resources included hymn downloads; Sunday school materials; digital access to *Forward in Christ* magazine; and free access to *Kids Connection* and *WELS Connection* videos during March, April, and May 2020.

“Together”

“Together,” a bi-weekly e-newsletter, is e-mailed to more than 8,000 subscribers the first and third Tuesday of each month. This newsletter reports on the news and events within our synod that every WELS member should know. We also produce a bi-weekly “Together” video update the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. We highlight important and interesting synod news in a short video that features an interview with a WELS newsmaker.

“Equipping Christian Witnesses”

Working with both Martin Luther College and the Ministry of Christian Giving, we created content to promote and encourage our members to participate in the synodwide three-year “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign. We will continue to feature stories of the progress of the MLC campaign pillars routinely in *Forward in Christ*, *WELS Connection*, and “Together.”

Lutheran Leadership Conference

Creative Services Coordinator Briana Lambrecht designed a new **lutheranleadership.com** website under Pastor Jon Hein’s direction to support the WELS 2020 National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. Fourteen promotional videos were produced to encourage members to attend, resulting in a capacity crowd. Fifteen hours of video presentations from the leadership conference were added to the conference website following the January conference.

Proposed Pension Plan changes

Working with the Benefits Plans Office, Communication Services created detailed information regarding the proposed changes to improve the WELS retirement program. This information was distributed to called workers and sponsoring organizations synodwide during March 2021. It is proposed that the WELS Pension Plan be frozen and replaced with a defined contribution plan, wherein all eligible workers would receive contributions to individual accounts in the WELS Shepherd Plan to be used for retirement benefits. The proposed changes have been reviewed and endorsed by both the Conference of Presidents and the Synodical Council (see p. 168.) We are committed to providing detailed, transparent information as we go through this decision-making process. The communication materials are available on the Benefit Plans website at **welsbpo.net**.

Benefit Plans Office

During the current biennium the Benefit Plans Office asked Communication Services if it could take on the work to design and update their annual communication pieces going forward, including the Annual Open Enrollment packet to all participants, New Worker Benefits Guide, and the Benefit Plans Annual Report. These documents were previously prepared by an outside marketing firm.

Annual report

Your gifts, God’s blessings: An annual report to our members is distributed every January and highlights the blessings that God has showered on WELS through the individual gifts of its members and gifts received from Congregation Mission Offerings the previous year. We see this report as being a communications tool that can be used year-round to encapsulate WELS’ ministry and clearly show our members how the synod is supporting ministry through their Congregation Mission Offerings. It is mailed to every congregation and to all WELS donors that made a gift in 2020. An online version of the annual report is created and shared with all parish pastors via e-mail in January, with an encouragement to forward the e-mail to their congregational leaders.

WELS Church Extension Fund

Communication Services continues to support WELS Church Extension Fund’s special rates campaigns to attract new investors. Promotion included broadcasts to investors and potential investors and the creation of a graphic that was used on **wels.net**, the WELS CEF website, social media, call reports, and in *Forward in Christ* magazine. In addition, Communication Services continues to help promote monthly CEF rates and activity to investors through broadcasts, bulletin inserts, rate sheets, “buck slips” in mailings, activity updates, and the annual Offering Circular.

WELS Foundation

Communication Services assists WELS Foundation in supporting our WELS Christian giving counselors and mission

advancement partners by providing access to monthly planned giving newsletters and free educational webinars. Marketing support also included conference reports, a survey of WELS donors, and the creation of donor stories for the *Grace of Giving* newsletter. Upcoming marketing efforts include the production of a series of WELS Foundation videos and a variety of marketing pieces that assist our Foundation partners in nurturing their donors. Marketing efforts also included assisting WELS Foundation in the coordination of the mission advancement sectionals at the annual WELS Association of Lutheran High Schools conference.

WELS Investment Funds

Communication Services' support of WELS Investment Funds included the production of two WELS Investment Funds videos, the dissemination of the quarterly WELS Fund Fact sheets and conference reports, live quarterly update webinars, and the inclusion of an investment cost comparison calculator on the WELS Investment Funds website. In addition, surveys were sent to current and potential investors. Future marketing efforts include the creation of an endowment fund media kit and the production of a third WELS Investment Funds video.

Congregation Mission Offerings

The Ministry of Christian Giving staff with Communication Services produced a special Congregation Mission Offering encouragement video called *Doing More Together*. The video features synod administrators of Home and World Missions, Ministerial Education, and Congregational Services listing the amazing blessings and opportunities God is granting our churches through their area of ministry's synodical work. The video also highlighted the ministry opportunities the Lord made available to us during the pandemic. The video concludes with the administrators thanking our congregations for their generous support of WELS. An e-mail was sent to all parish pastors with the video file link in September. The Ministry of Christian Giving mailed a DVD to each congregation with its annual Congregation Mission Offerings informational packet, which included print resources and weblinks to guide congregations in their discussion of their 2021 Congregation Mission Offering commitment.

In conclusion

Communication Services remains committed and able to continue developing content for all other essential internal communication tools, including *Book of Reports and Memorials*, *Report to the Twelve Districts*, *Proceedings*—the official record of each synod convention, livestreaming major WELS events, and video reporting of convention proceedings.

The Communication Services team consists of highly skilled writers and creative content producers who are experienced professionals that love their Lord and their synod. They approach every story, promotional project, and ministry campaign with a servant's heart. I am thankful to have the opportunity to lead such a dedicated team.

Mr. Lee Hitter, reporter

Congregational Services

Our calling

WELS Congregational Services exists to encourage and equip congregations for faithful and fruitful gospel ministry. Congregational Services serves under the Conference of Presidents (COP). It consists of six commissions that give focused attention to specific areas of congregational life. Commissions work with district coordinators and utilize Congregational Counseling reports to identify common needs within WELS parishes and schools. Those commissions then provide resources, training, and personal assistance to help meet those needs.

Congregational Services is also responsible for analyzing statistical trends within WELS. Congregational Services analyzes the data and shares the relevant information that is needed to make good decisions and also coordinates synodwide initiatives that, God willing, mitigate identifiable challenges.

For the synod to carry out its global mission, it needs to have the support of a broad swath of healthy congregations. WELS' ministerial education system, world mission efforts, and home mission work are all predicated upon having a broad base of congregations to support those efforts. Thus, by serving local congregations, Congregational Services hopes to also assist in the worldwide gospel efforts of WELS.



Our current situation

In addition to providing boots-on-the-ground assistance, Congregational Services produces resources to help churches in their gospel efforts to feed the faithful, reach the lost, and pursue the straying. Oftentimes, those resources are commission specific, e.g., the Commission on Worship's efforts with the Hymnal Project, the Commission on Special Ministry's resources for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, etc. Examples of current and future programs and resources, produced by the six commissions, are found in their individual reports.

However, the directors in Congregational Services also work in collaboration with one another on many Congregational Services programs. Here are examples from the past biennium.

Easter/Christmas worship and outreach programs

Since 2015, every Easter and Christmas WELS Congregational Services has produced customizable worship and outreach resources: worship plans, worship folder templates, outreach postcards, social media outreach tools, etc. These programs often will include Bible study materials, resources for children/schools, worship plans for individuals with special needs, etc. So, every commission in Congregational Services is involved in these efforts.

God's People Gather

One program that was not planned but born out of necessity was *God's People Gather*. This collection of resources had two aims. Most congregations in WELS have members who have not returned to in-person worship. For some, it was because they remained concerned about getting sick. For others, it was because they had come to enjoy the convenience of watching worship at home. Therefore, the first aim of *God's People Gather* was to help congregations with their efforts to encourage members to return to in-person worship. The second aim was to help congregations think through how to use technology in a post-pandemic world in ways that aid Christian discipleship while avoiding potential unwanted consequences.

The first WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership

This conference brought 800 WELS members—pastors, teachers, and lay leaders; men and women—together in Chicago, Ill., for three days to discuss the challenges before American Christianity and share some strategies and best practices to use in rising to meet those challenges. Every commission had presentations and speakers at that conference.

COVID-19 impact

Much of Congregational Service's work was not impacted by COVID-19. For example, the production of a once-in-a-generation collection of resources—the Hymnal Project—was able to continue. (See the Commission on Worship report on p. 43 for more information.)

Other Congregational Services work had to pivot. For example, the International Youth Rally was canceled, but a number of the rally presentations were turned into video-based resources that congregational youth groups could use on their own.

The work most directly impacted by COVID-19 was congregational and school counseling. Congregational Counseling programs, at times, bring together the entire congregation for listening and brainstorming sessions. That was generally not feasible during COVID lockdowns. With schools being forced to pivot to virtual, the WELS School Accreditation process had to be paused in some locations. Those efforts will be pushed into the first year of this upcoming biennium. (See Commission on Congregational Counseling and Commission on Lutheran Schools' reports on pp. 31 and 45, respectively, for more information.)

However, COVID-19 led to different types of congregational and school counseling: helping congregations plan for ways to stay connected to members during lockdowns, helping congregations navigate the Paycheck Protection Program, helping schools pivot to virtual learning. Congregational Services attempted to provide assistance and encouragement in a number of ways: holding virtual counseling sessions with church/school leadership; through a number of *For Such a Time As This* print resources that were produced during the pandemic; producing the *God's People Gather* program to help congregations encourage their members to return to in-person worship.

Circuit pastor partnership

WELS Conference of Presidents has two groups that help them serve their district's congregations: circuit pastors and Congregational Services. This past biennium Congregational Services Coordinator Jonathan Hein presented to most circuit pastors within WELS, sharing ways they might use Congregational Services' resources in the congregations they assist.

WELS Statistical Report

For decades, WELS Ministry of Christian Giving was responsible for a) collecting annual statistical information from congregations and b) collecting congregations' plans for their upcoming Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO). In this past biennium, Congregational Services assumed that first responsibility: collecting the annual statistical data.

Discussions with other areas of ministry led Congregational Services to modify the statistical report after finding out what data was helpful for planning their ministry efforts. Some fields were redefined. Some new ministration fields were added but were optional, i.e., a congregation could leave those fields blank and still submit their report. Demographic information was requested: congregational membership by age groups, by ethnicity, etc. (That demographic information will only be asked every five years.)

There were two underlying thoughts behind the statistical report update: 1) Good decisions are impossible without good information. 2) People have limited time; do not waste it.

With those thoughts in mind, the only information that was requested was data that will directly be used by the various areas of ministry in their planning and stewardship of synodical resources.

Compliance in submitting the statistical report was, as is always the case with WELS, incredibly high, despite the challenge of thinking through the new fields. Congregational Services sincerely thanks the men and women of our congregations who pulled that information together.

By the time of synod convention, a print version of the statistical report, including analysis, will be available at welscongregationalservices.net/stats.

A look ahead

What follows are some of what Congregational Services will make available in the next biennium. These are projects in which all commissions are involved. You will find upcoming programs that are commission specific in those individual reports.

The Foundation: Weekly ministry resources

St. Paul tells us the Church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20). Thus, we rightly look at the opportunity to gather around Word and sacrament as the highlight of the week. Ultimately, the gathering of the saints is the foundation of a congregation’s ministry. It is where the sheep are fed. It is where the Universal Priesthood gets the encouragement to be light and salt to a dark and dying world.

The Foundation is an effort to build upon the importance of public worship both on Sunday morning and throughout the week. We also hope it provides some time-saving benefits for busy pastors and church leaders. *The Foundation* is the natural evolution of programs like C20 and E21, widely utilized in WELS congregations, which shared worship, outreach, and other types of resources for Christmas and Easter. Congregational Services now will be providing those types of resources for every week of the year, including:

Worship resources

- **Seasonal thematic plans:** These capture a theme for each season of the Church Year (in some cases, more than one) and provide related themes of the day for each week. The plans illustrate how the three readings for that week, based on the updated lectionary in *Christian Worship*, all drive home that daily theme. Thus, the Church Year is carried out through lectionary-based worship series.
- **WELS Preachers Podcast:** The seasonal thematic plan recommends a sermon text. In the Preachers Podcast, a number of pastors dig into that text and provide some initial thoughts about how to handle that text within the context of the broader thematic plan.
- **Weekly worship plans:** These plans help pastors and worship leaders wisely roll out psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs from the new hymnal resources. There are options for the church that wants to move more slowly and options for the church that wants to be more aggressive with the introduction of new materials.
- **Lesson introductions:** These 5-to-15-word blurbs are meant to be inserted into a worship folder or possibly read before a Scripture reading. They demonstrate how that reading relates to the theme of the day.
- **Service Builder file:** Service Builder allows congregations to produce professional-looking worship folders. These weekly files are based on the weekly worship plan. They are entirely customizable, e.g., you can easily swap out one hymn for another. Yet, they mean one needn’t start from scratch in producing a worship folder.

Evangelism resources

- **Promotional text:** These are short paragraph blurbs that “tease” the theme of an upcoming season/series or theme of the day in a way that might strike an unbeliever or unchurched individual. They can be used on a church website, social media page, worship folder, mass mailing, etc.
- **Graphics:** Each seasonal/series theme comes with a corresponding graphics package: still images or animated, black and white or color, for print or for online or for projection. Everything is covered. Combined with the promotional texts, congregations have everything they need to “advertise” upcoming services. WELS Congregational Services owns the rights, so congregations can use these without any concerns about copyrights.
- **Video promotions:** Each seasonal/series theme has a brief promotional video that can be shared in any number of digital platforms.

- **Member mission plans:** Leading up to visitor-friendly worship services (e.g., Christmas Eve, Easter), there are resources for congregations to share with members that encourage them to think through how they are going to personally invite unchurched friends, relatives, and neighbors to church.

Discipleship resources

- **Online daily devotion:** WELS online daily devotion has been widely used for decades. Starting in Advent 2021, those devotions will expand on the theme of the day from the previous week's worship. It will allow members to explore all the lessons and the psalm, allowing them to meditate upon that Sunday's theme throughout the week.
- **Family devotions:** In 2020, the Commission on Discipleship began producing devotions to help parents restore "the family altar," i.e., parent-led Scripture study. Starting in Advent 2021, these devotionals will also explore the theme and lessons of the previous week. They will also help parents, if they so desire, utilize the hymnal and catechism in their family devotional life.
- **Small group planning help:** Many WELS congregations have trained facilitators lead small group Bible studies. Often, these are simply a discussion of the previous week's sermon and service. *The Foundation* will include training modules so pastors or other church leaders can quickly and easily build a small group discussion.

School resources

Devotions/chapel talks: These resources pull the themes of the season into our Lutheran schools. They highlight upcoming "key hymns" and rites from the seasonal thematic plan.

All these resources will be cataloged at **welscongregationalservices.net**. They are all free. (The use of the Service Builder files would require an annual subscription to that resource.)

The second WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership

Congregational Services hoped to hold the second WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership in Chicago in January 2022, two years after the inaugural conference. Given the success of the first conference, we planned on expanding capacity to 1,500. However, we also did not want the experience of the conference to be marred by having to wear masks and physically distance. At the time of the writing of this report, city leaders in Chicago and Milwaukee are unwilling to state that it is likely that 1,500 people could gather in January 2022 without those mitigation tactics in place. Therefore, we are pushing the second WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership to January 2023. More information will be made available at **welscongregationalservices.net** and **lutheranleadership.com** in the coming months.

The Institute of Lutheran Apologetics

The Institute of Lutheran Apologetics works under the auspices of the Conference of Presidents. The first meeting of the Institute of Lutheran Apologetics was supposed to take place in 2020. COVID-19 prevented that. The Institute of Lutheran Apologetics will have its inaugural meeting in the first year of the new biennium. This institute will bring together a group of pastors, teachers, and lay leaders with expertise in sciences that pertain to aspects of apologetics. The goal is two-fold. First, the Institute of Lutheran Apologetics will coordinate the discussion of this rapidly growing area of interest in our church body. Secondly, the Institute of Lutheran Apologetics will oversee the development of various apologetic-based resources: elementary and high-school curricula, evangelism training, etc. The prayer is that the Institute of Lutheran Apologetics will serve in helping us to "close the back door" by better equipping young WELS members to withstand the secular-humanistic worldview that dominates secondary education in America, as well as to "open the front door" by helping WELS members to talk about the truths of Christianity (specifically, Lutheranism) in a way that is winsome and compelling.

The Institute for Worship and Outreach

The Institute for Worship and Outreach works under the auspices of the Conference of Presidents. It was formed in 2010 to assist and encourage pastors as they strive for excellence in public worship and mission outreach. The Institute for Worship and Outreach consisted of a group of WELS pastors who have become convinced, on the basis of study and ministry experiences, that worship forms and outreach methods can and must intersect confessionally and evangelically in efforts to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. Since its inception in 2010 the institute has presented to eight districts, the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium, Martin Luther College Evangelism Day, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Mission and Ministry, and the National Conference on Worship Music and the Arts. When the Hymnal Project efforts ramped up, approximately half of the Institute for Worship and Outreach members were tied up with that work, and Institute for Worship and Outreach meetings were put on hiatus. With the Hymnal Project committee

work being completed, the Institute for Worship and Outreach will reconstitute and begin meeting again. The next meeting will take place in the first year of the biennium. Pastor Jonathan Schroeder serves as moderator with Pastor Jonathan Hein serving as co-moderator.

The Institute for Worship and Outreach carries out the following functions.

- Publishing: The institute publishes papers, articles, and blogs at worshipandoutreach.org.
- Studying: The institute is committed to an ongoing study of methods, practices, and customs that concern especially the interaction of worship and outreach. The institute assembles periodically and invites other WELS pastors to participate in the studying process.
- Training: Through resource development, program content, and publishing, the institute assists pastors interested in developing an overall strategy of outreach that includes an emphasis on public worship.
- Consulting: When invited, members of the institute will work with individual pastors and/or groups of pastors to offer advice and counsel concerning specific challenges in the field.

In summary

One of the mottos of Congregational Services is, “If we do all we can with the gospel, the numbers don’t matter.” Spiritual and numeric growth are the work of the Holy Spirit. Only he creates faith. Only he convinces someone to become part of a congregation. So “the numbers” are something only he can achieve. However, we also acknowledge that the Spirit works through our efforts to share the gospel, be that to “open the front door” or “shut the back door.” So, in gratitude to our Savior, we look at our ministry efforts, seeking ways we might possibly increase them. We want “to do all we can with the gospel.”

The Lord of the Church has promised that his Word is efficacious and his mercy never-ending. So, let us ask Christ to give us courage and strength. Let us encourage one another daily. Let us commit wholly to the mission of reaching the lost, retaining the straying, and feeding the flock. Congregational Services is ready to help in whatever way we can.

For more information about Congregational Services, please see the individual commission reports that follow or contact Pastor Jonathan Hein, 414-256-3227 or jonathan.hein@wels.net.

Rev. Jonathan Hein, reporter

Commission on Congregational Counseling Floor Committee #11

Our calling

The Commission on Congregational Counseling assists WELS congregations in assessing and evaluating ministry, reviewing biblical teachings and principles that impact mission efforts, developing plans to adjust and expand those efforts in appropriate ways, and carrying out their plans over time. The Commission on Congregational Counseling serves under the Conference of Presidents, providing a means for district presidents to offer encouragement and support to their congregations.

The Commission on Congregational Counseling is the commission within Congregational Services that offers the most boots-on-the-ground help to congregations. (The Commission on Lutheran Schools does the same for schools and early childhood ministries.) Trained counselors work onsite with congregations, utilizing one of the following programs.

Our current situation

The Commission on Congregational Counseling currently offers the following programs that help churches with strategic planning, tactical planning, and plan management. Congregations working through these programs are assigned a congregational counselor. If the congregation includes a Lutheran elementary school and/or some early childhood ministry, typically a two-person team is assigned.

Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program

The Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program allows for a thorough assessment of a congregation's community and current ministry. It includes demographic analysis, ethnographic interviews, SWOT analysis of current ministry efforts, and a pulse survey of the congregation. During the program, an assigned Commission on Congregational Counseling counselor leads the congregation in a day-long Bible study about various aspects of congregational ministry: worship, outreach, discipleship, youth ministry, fellowship, stewardship, etc. The members of the congregation then brainstorm ways they could adjust or expand their local ministry in those areas.

The Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program not only helps the congregations to assess and adjust their ministry, but it also allows the Commission on Congregational Counseling to uncover "commonly identified needs" among WELS congregations. The Commission on Congregational Counseling can then pass this information along to the other commissions within Congregational Services, enabling them to plan and prioritize upcoming efforts.

AXIS Program

The AXIS Program builds upon the Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program. AXIS helps congregations produce a long-range plan aimed at ministry revitalization or redevelopment. The assigned Commission on Congregational Counseling counselor helps the congregation define and commit to mission, clarify core values, and envision a desired future. He works with the various teams and leadership groups within the congregation to produce the long-range goals and annual objectives that help move the congregation in that direction. Those leaders also map out all the necessary ministry systems called for in the plan.

Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation

The Self-Assessment and Adjustment and AXIS Programs help congregations with strategic and tactical planning. The Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation Program then helps congregations determine what is needed in the way of human resources to carry out the plan. The assigned Commission on Congregational Counseling counselor helps the congregation determine what parts of the plan can be realistically fulfilled by volunteers and build a process to recruit and train them. Thus, the Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation Program also helps congregations in ascertaining the correct size and responsibilities of staff (both called workers and hired) to fulfill the ministry plan. Part of the program includes appraising the functionality of organizational structures and governance. The final part of the Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation Program includes leadership training for action planning and plan management, so that the congregation's goals and objectives are acted upon in a timely manner.

Merging for Mission Program

Church mergers are becoming more common in WELS. The Merging for Mission Program brings together multiple congregations that are considering merging either into a single entity or a multi-site church. The program begins with an exploratory meeting of potentially interested congregations located in geographic proximity. In that meeting the assigned Commission on Congregational Counseling counselor explains the various options and considerations for mergers. If any congregations in that exploratory meeting are interested in taking further steps, the assigned counselor helps them work through the necessary analysis, planning, and training to allow for a smooth merge.

COVID-19 impact

For a long-range plan to have any chance of success, there needs to be broad buy-in from the active members of the congregation. Therefore, the programs listed above include bringing together all active membership of the congregation at various times: for evaluation of ministry efforts, for brainstorming future direction, etc. That became challenging during the pandemic. For some, it was possible to carry out aspects of the Commission on Congregational Counseling programs virtually. But about half of all scheduled congregational counseling sessions were paused. Those sessions have been pushed into late 2021 and 2022.

Replacing those traditional programs, Congregational Counseling assisted with approximately 70 COVID-related planning efforts: navigating the qualifications of the Paycheck Protection Program, producing an area-specific plan for in-person ministry, helping churches pivot from offering envelopes to electronic forms of giving, producing elder plans to encourage members to return to in-person worship, etc. In a sense, COVID-19 provided the opportunity for congregations to assess their current ministry efforts and make some long-term ministry adjustments.

A look ahead

The biggest current challenge for the Commission on Congregational Counseling has been manpower. The Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program can be conducted by parish pastors who volunteer to work with, typically, one

church per year. AXIS and the Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation Program require multiple visits over 6 to 12 months, something not feasible for a pastor who also serves in the parish. Thus, funding was approved to call a full-time congregational counselor in this past biennium. That position has yet to be filled.

When that position is filled, it will allow time for the additional training of in-parish congregational counselors and for expanding upon the vision of a circuit-pastor/Congregational Services partnership.

“Encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). That is our goal in Congregational Counseling and the aim of all described in this report.

For more information, contact Pastor Jonathan Hein at 414-256-3227 or jonathan.hein@wels.net.

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Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president

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Commission on Discipleship

Floor Committee #11

Our calling

WEELS Commission on Discipleship exists to strengthen the connection of God’s people to Christ and to one another at every stage of life. To that end, our mission is “to provide resources, encouragement, and training to assist congregations on their ongoing walk of faith.” That walk of faith

1. spans the totality of life. Therefore, our calling encompasses ministry to all members of the Christian family in their unique callings: men and women, young children, teens, college-age and young adults, singles, parents, spouses, etc.
2. involves knowing and doing in conformity to Christ. Therefore, our calling extends beyond classroom instruction and contributes to a congregational culture that raises knowledge in Christ and activates God’s people in service to Christ and to each other.

Our current situation

The goal of the Commission on Discipleship in the last biennium was to pinpoint commonly identified needs and challenges that congregations face and put a repository of quality resources into the hands of church leaders and called workers to assist their ministries. Additionally, COVID-19 forced churches to adapt how they stayed connected with their members and keep growing spiritually. Following are resources that were developed.

WELS Family Devotions

This program was launched at the outset of COVID-19 to help parents to engage their children. These online devotions are uploaded three times per week. Each four-minute devotion includes age-appropriate questions to engage greater discussion with children. The devotions are provided in downloadable PDF formats for reading or they can be listened to in a podcast. They are already used by thousands of families. Congregations are encouraged to

share this devotional resource with their church and school families. The devotions are found at wels.net/serving-you/devotions/family-devotions as well as on the WELS Facebook page at facebook.com/welslutherans.

"A God-lived life" stewardship program

"A God-lived life" has a double meaning. In the person of Christ, God perfectly lived for us. That gospel truth produces in us a life lived for God. This four-part stewardship program will focus on the aspects of the God-lived life: a life of being a disciple, a life lived for others, a life of hospitality, and a life lived shrewdly. These parts are designed to be used once a month for four consecutive months. A set of challenges accompanies each Sunday. They ask people, moved by the grace of God and Jesus' life and death in their place, to act upon the encouragement that is provided. For example, the first month deals with the truth that a God-lived life is a life lived as a disciple of God's Word. So, the challenges include attending a Bible study (Sunday, midweek, small group, etc.), home or family devotions, personal Bible reading, and the like. The "A God-lived life" stewardship program provides highly-adaptable congregational resources: intro video, roll-out timetable, promotionals, videos, worship services, sermons and text studies, devotional and Bible studies. It is available at welscongregationalervices.net.

WELS Women's Ministry resources

WELS Women's Ministry produces a broad collection of excellent resources to help women's congregational ministry efforts: Bible studies, Advent by Candlelight programs, devotions, etc. Two new resources to highlight:

- *Equip Women to Teach the Word* is an online training module that helps congregations to assess women's ministry opportunities in their setting. It also provides training to Christian women, enabling them to teach the Word of God in an organized, step-by-step process in the home and congregation settings (Sunday school, small group study, etc.). This resource will be available in summer 2021 at welscongregationalervices.net.
- *Heirs Together* is a new bi-weekly, devotional series, meant to be used in the summer of 2021. It helps women explore how key biblical principles play out in their lives. You can find it and other WELS Women's Ministry resources at wels.net/womens-ministry.

Marriage resources

In the last biennium, the Commission on Discipleship began producing video-based marriage resources:

- "Marriage Moments"—Begun October 2020, thousands of couples have already subscribed to this video series that provides a brief, focused, weekly marriage thought to provide couples with encouragement and inspiration. Find out more at welscongregationalervices.net/ministry-resources/marriagemoments.
- "Marriage Maintenance"—These online video marriage-focused Bible studies come with discussion sheets to help couples engage in meaningful discussion. This resource can flex between a target audience of individual couples or small groups. Find more at welscongregationalervices.net/marriage-maintenance.

Kids Connection video

Kids Connection is a monthly video resource that keeps kids "connected to Christ and children around the world." Congregations use this video supplement for Sunday school, youth programs, and elementary schools. Subscriptions for this children's video increased 38 percent the past biennium in large part due to the convenience of a digital download option. Many churches choose to "bundle" *Kids Connection* with its parent video, *WELS Connection*. You can learn more at wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/discipleship/kids-connection.

Youth confirmation

COVID-19 forced churches to adapt catechetical classes to online learning. There is a thirst to find class materials that reflect a variety of learning ways as well as various degrees of pastor and parent partnership in spiritual growth. Samples of a pastor-family partnership, flipped-classroom, and other online, video-based models can be found at welscongregationalervices.net/catechism-class-sample-models.

Transformed teen devotions

Transformed is a weekly teen devotion posted every Sunday at wels.net/transformed. It discusses topics pertinent to teens' lives for their own personal devotion.

Youth rally resources

When the International Youth Rally was canceled the summer of 2020, the Commission on Discipleship had some of the scheduled presenters pivot to produce video-based youth ministry resources. Go to wels.net/youth-ministry to find:

- *Focused Living*—This is a four-part, youth Bible study based on Colossians. It includes video discussions, participant studies, and a leader’s guide.
- *How to Keep Youth Ministry Simple*—This is a youth ministry video training series that provides simple, practical steps for a congregation to assess and talk through key areas. Guidesheets facilitate discussion toward greater ministry planning and activity.

A look ahead

2022 WELS Youth Rally

The youth rally exists to provide youth and youth leaders from across the synod a large-scale worship, education, fellowship, recreation, and service opportunity that deepens commitment to Christ and his church. Planning has begun for next summer’s rally schedule, which will run June 28 through July 1, 2022, at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tenn.

WELS marriage website

We already shared the marriage resources produced in the past biennium. Building on their broad use, in the next biennium the Commission on Discipleship is building a marriage-specific website to house a menu of marriage resources. There will be Bible studies and devotionals that help couples maintain and strengthen their marriage. There will be resources to help couples when a marriage is troubled and needs mending. The marriage website is something couples can choose to use on their own. It can also provide a resource for pastors in their marriage counseling responsibilities. Finally, the website will share a schedule of local, in-person marriage enrichment seminars and provide online registration.

Small group ministry module

Pulse surveys in Congregational Counseling show that 40 percent of our members feel they are part of a church family “at times.” Only one in five feels strongly connected to others within the congregation. Many congregations have begun using small group programs to create stronger relationships within the church. This module will share various ways to approach using small groups: for Bible study, for service, for fellowship. Step-by-step instructions will lay out how churches can arrange for small groups in their ministry setting for better congregational connectedness. This module will be available at **welscongregationalservices.net** by the end of 2021.

Sunday school module

In the past decade, Sunday school enrollment has experienced sharp decline. This module will help congregations to assess their Sunday school program. It will provide examples of various approaches that can be utilized to revitalize this youth ministry. This module will be available at **welscongregationalservices.net** by summer 2022.

Volunteerism module

Does your congregation’s volunteerism reflect the Pareto principle, i.e., that 20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the volunteer work? This module will help congregations determine why that is the case. It will walk them through how to assess what types of work can be done by volunteers. It will share best practices for volunteer recruitment and training. This module will be available at **welscongregationalservices.net** by summer 2022.

The Well: Online resources for lifelong discipleship growth

One of the things congregations learned during COVID-19 is that people enjoy doing Bible study online. *The Well* is a systematic online curriculum of video-based discipleship resources for WELS congregations and individuals. Materials are grouped both systematically (like university 101, 201, 301 system) and demographically (teen resources, college-aged resources, parents, business owners, etc.). These resources will be able to be utilized multiple ways: congregational Bible study; facilitator-led, in-home small group studies; personal and family use. *The Well* would strive to move people along two spiritual spectrums: knowledge of Scripture and sanctified service of God and neighbor. The website would provide the option for congregations to set up joint, online study opportunities. Pending funding, *The Well* would begin being built in 2022 and launch in 2023.

Rev. Donn Dobberstein, reporter

Rev. John Boggs, chairman

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Commission on Evangelism Floor Committee #11

Our calling

The Commission on Evangelism exists to assist congregations and members to seize every opportunity the Lord provides to evangelize lost souls. Our service to WELS is:

1. To develop and promote evangelism resources that faithfully proclaim the truth of Scripture.
2. To promote evangelism attitudes, structures, and programs consistent with Christian doctrine and the situation into which God has called a church, its called workers, and its people.
3. To promote the “equipping of the saints” for both organized congregational evangelism and individual Christian witness.

Our current situation

The last two years has seen the Commission on Evangelism busy developing resources focused especially on encouraging and equipping WELS members to be interested and active in personal witnessing.

Let's Go!

Let's Go! is an online, video-based Bible study that trains Christians in a simple method for sharing the gospel with unchurched people God has brought into their lives. It may be used by a large-group Bible study, a small-group Bible study, or an individual Christian. It is available at welscongregationalservices.net.

Everyone Outreach

Everyone Outreach seeks to help congregations create a culture of outreach so that every member and every ministry is thinking about and active in reaching lost souls.

The program consists of:

1. A workshop in which a congregation gathers as many members as possible to help them understand their culture and how to shape their culture to be more outreach oriented.
2. Following the workshop, the congregation implements the resources on the Everyone Outreach website to help shift its culture to be more outreach focused. (For example, text messages and e-mails encouraging individuals to look for outreach opportunities, devotion starters to focus ministry areas on outreach, etc.)

The workshop was beta tested in three congregations in the spring of 2021. Workshop facilitators are currently being trained. More information at everyoneoutreach.com.

One by one

One by one is a personal witnessing Bible study based on Pastor David Rosenau's presentation at the 2020 National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. Using powerful personal stories and drawing from his wealth of experience both as a detective and a parish pastor, Rosenau helps Christians understand why it is so important to see every soul as a treasure and why we want to be willing to spend the time and effort necessary to share the gospel with each one.

The Congregational Evangelism Kit

The Congregational Evangelism Kit was released in fall 2020. The kit contains video-based training for evangelism leaders and committees to assist them in implementing key components of congregational evangelism, including how to provide a welcoming worship environment for guests, how to follow up on worship guests, how to set up and maintain a prospect database, and more. The videos, along with supplementary written materials, are available at welscongregationalservices.net.

Ongoing resources

Along with these new resources, we continue to offer the following tools to encourage and equip evangelism in WELS.

- The School of Outreach gathers congregations together for workshops to assist them in planning and implementing outreach efforts. From July 2019 through June 2021, a total of 10 workshops were attended by 61 congregations. Leaders from participating congregations attended two one-day workshops that were scheduled several months apart. At those workshops they heard presentations on key components of a congregational evangelism program. Additionally, there were breakout sessions at which the presenters worked with individual congregations to advise them regarding outreach plans and strategies. In the months following each of the workshops, those advisors were available to offer follow-up assistance specific to the needs of congregations.
- **WhatAboutJesus.com** is an outreach website produced by the Commission on Evangelism. It aims to be a source of information and inspiration for those seeking to know more about the Bible and its message.
- Daily Devotions are brief, daily encouragements from God's Word. They are produced both in print as well as via a podcast. The devotions appear on the home pages of wels.net and WhatAboutJesus.com as well as on WELS Facebook. Additionally, devotions are sent to about 10,500 e-mail subscribers every day.
- Online evangelism courses through Martin Luther College's online continuing education program. These courses are designed and intended for laypeople and called workers to help them lead their congregations with planning and implementing efforts to reach more people with the gospel. The courses make up the Evangelism Certificate Program at Martin Luther College. There are three one-credit courses: 1) The Mission of the Church, 2) Practical Evangelism for Congregations, and 3) Friendship Evangelism. Information available at wels.net/evangelism.
- Evangelism Day at Martin Luther College was held in January 2020 to enhance the evangelism training of students at the college. Students were reminded of the importance of reaching the lost and encouraged to be evangelism influencers in their future ministries.
- *Telling the Next Generation* is a workshop developed by the Commission on Evangelism, the Commission on Lutheran Schools, and Early Childhood Ministry. The program serves congregations with planning, assistance, and resources for implementation of outreach strategies utilizing Lutheran elementary schools and/or early childhood ministries. Information available at wels.net/tellingthenextgeneration.

A look ahead

The next biennium will see the Commission on Evangelism spending much of its time and resources implementing the Everyone Outreach program with the prayer that many WELS congregations will successfully use it to build true outreach cultures and reach many of the unchurched souls in their communities.

The commission will also be working to develop these resources:

- *Entertaining Angels* will encourage and equip Christians to practice hospitality outreach by showing love and service to the unchurched people God has brought into their lives. By letting their lights shine, they will open doors for the proclamation of the gospel.
- *Technology and Evangelism* will help WELS congregations and their members understand how technology can be used as an aid to congregational as well as personal evangelism.

Rev. Eric Roecker, reporter

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Prof. Samuel Degner, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Rev. Eric Roecker, director of WELS Commission on Evangelism

Commission on Special Ministries

Floor Committee #12

Our calling

The Commission on Special Ministries offers spiritual and practical guidance and training to congregations and individuals as they share God's love and bring the gospel to those with needs or circumstances that prevent them from being served through the congregation's usual ministry.

WELS Special Ministries reaches out to individuals, congregations, and families to offer specialized services and resources to address the special need(s) with which they are confronted. We help congregations serve people who are physically, mentally, or emotionally in need of special assistance or affected by their ability to learn, worship, or participate in local ministries and everyday living situations. Special Ministries also serves thousands of people who are away from their church home, such as military personnel, people living overseas, and those in prison or some other institution.

The commission carries out this work using appointed committees focused on specific areas of special need and cooperation with WELS-affiliated ministries that provide services in these areas of need. Resources are promoted through the work of district special ministries coordinators who bring our work to the district level.

While the commission is devoted to serving WELS members, our Lord continues to provide opportunities to also proclaim the gospel to people who are unchurched or have fallen away from their former church.

Our current situation

The Commission on Special Ministries employs three full-time called workers—the director of Special Ministries, a civilian chaplain to the military serving in Europe, and a prison ministry administrator. Our national civilian chaplain to the military serves part time. The positions of European civilian chaplain and prison ministry administrator are supported entirely by special gifts and grants. Under the direction and support of these and other leaders, the commission mobilizes thousands of unpaid volunteers in a worldwide effort to meet the spiritual needs of people who might otherwise be ignored or forgotten. The work of the commission is divided into eight areas of ministry.

Health and Wellness

The WELS Health and Wellness Committee encourages and assists WELS members and their congregations as they offer spiritual and other services in the following areas: ministry to aging; nursing and parish nursing; chaplain training; caregiver support; and hospital, nursing home, and assisted living ministries. The committee helps churches establish support groups to meet the needs of members of the congregation and the community who are caregivers or who struggle with addictions, grief, or other challenges.

Parish Nursing provides a practical way for congregations to demonstrate loving Christian care and a clear gospel witness to members and the community. For helpful guidelines on how to begin a program, contact the Special Ministries office, 414-256-3241.

WELS Chaplain Certification is a continuing education initiative that involves cooperation of leaders from Special Ministries and Martin Luther College (MLC). It requires ongoing education to renew the certification every three years. In an era of increasing security procedures in institutions, it has become difficult for local pastors to minister in prisons, military bases, and large health care facilities. Chaplain certification will be increasingly useful, especially if a pastor or layperson wants to reach out to more than one's own members. Online courses are taught through MLC. Costs for the program courses are the responsibility of the student; we encourage churches and other calling bodies to include funds in their continuing education budget for this purpose. Subject to funding and conditions set for specific scholarships, assistance is available. Visit wels.net/chaplain-certification-program for more information.

Pastor Robert Dick is the chairman of the Chaplain Certification Program Committee. E-mail him at chaplaincert@wels.net. Program applications are received by the Chaplain Certification Committee through Martin Luther College.

Samaritan Partners Caregiver Support is a program of Christian support for men and women who serve as caregivers. Whether the person is a spouse, adult child, parent, sibling, or neighbor, caregivers can often burn out

without spiritual care and personal encouragement. For helpful guidelines on how to begin a program, contact the Special Ministries office, 414-256-3241.

The Health and Wellness Committee cooperates with several WELS-affiliated organizations, including Christian Life Resources, Institutional Ministries, WLCFS—Christian Family Solutions, The Lutheran Home Association, Martin Luther Memorial Eldercare Ministries, Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS), The Association of WELS Chaplains, and WELS Nursing Association.

For more information on the work of the Health and Wellness Committee, contact Mr. Frank Penha, chairman, at fpenha@aol.com.

Military Services

The WELS Military Services Committee provides spiritual services to WELS members and others who serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. The committee carries out its mission through a full-time civilian chaplain in Europe and a national civilian chaplain and liaison to the military who coordinates stateside ministry and communicates with WELS members who are deployed in military service.

Civilian Chaplain John Hartwig serves military personnel and civilians in Europe. He and his wife, Helen, live in Spiesheim, Germany (near Mainz and Frankfurt). Besides worship services, counseling, and confirmation instruction, the chaplain in Europe usually conducts retreats at Reformation and Easter. During the pandemic no retreats were held and Hartwig made use of Internet communication tools to serve people when travel and gathering were curtailed or forbidden.

As WELS national civilian chaplain and liaison to the military, Pastor Paul Ziemer maintains regular contact with many WELS troops and their families. He orients and mentors new military contact pastors and coordinates training for WELS military contact pastors through conferences and online resources at welscongregationalservices.net/military-contact-pastor. He provides training to military members to equip them to serve fellow WELS military members spiritually while deployed or on a ship where it is not possible for a WELS pastor to provide ministry. The Military Services Committee ministry plan includes expanding the office of national civilian chaplain to a full-time called position.

One hundred twenty-five WELS pastors who live near military installations in the continental United States and select nations overseas stand ready to serve our military personnel and their families as part-time WELS civilian chaplains. In order to be proactive in our efforts to serve future WELS troops, members of our committee are in contact with all of our WELS high schools and annually visit students who are enlisting in our nation's armed forces. We encourage convention delegates to learn about civilian ministry to the military at wels.net/military.

The Military Services Committee sends free copies of *Meditations* to military and overseas civilians on our mailing list. Our national civilian chaplain communicates with WELS military personnel via phone and the Internet and offers devotions via e-mail or at wels.net/military-devotions.

WELS Military Services is funded primarily through designated gifts and grants. In view of our church's commitment to serving WELS military members directly instead of through U.S. military chaplaincy, we believe that this work should have its synodical funding restored. Previous WELS conventions restored a subsidy of \$45,000. Offerings from individuals and groups such as the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors and the Lutheran Military Support Group continue to flow into the Military Services Project Fund.

The Military Services Committee believes that the number of WELS members in the military exceeds 1,500. The referral rate is about one-third of that number. Please help us serve our military personnel and WELS members living in Europe. Send the names and contact information for those serving in the military or living in Europe. This year a poster urging every member to refer military members to our ministry will be sent to every congregation. Convention delegates are urged to ask the churches in their circuits to use the WELS referral link to provide Military Services with the names of every WELS member serving in our nation's military.

Our online referral service is readily available at wels.net/refer. Or you may mail the information to Special Ministries, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188.

WELS Military Services cooperates closely with the **Lutheran Military Support Group** (LMSG), a WELS-affiliated ministry of WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod veterans and active duty personnel. The Lutheran Military Support Group is dedicated to strengthening ministry to our military members and their families, as well as encouraging and

implementing ministry by veterans and for veterans. The Lutheran Military Support Group has strengthened our military ministry overseas (the Pacific and Europe), enhanced training of our military contact pastors, and helped with unbudgeted expenses such as our civilian chaplains' moves.

For more information, contact Pastor Paul Horn, chairman, at revhorn2004@gmail.com.

Prison Ministry

WELS Prison Ministry administers an extensive ministry-by-mail program and provides training opportunities for laypeople and pastors who would like to begin a local jail or prison ministry.

Through a central office in New Ulm, Minn., a small staff utilizes the services of hundreds of volunteers to manage a ministry-by-mail program that has reached more than 70,000 inmates. (An additional 30,000 inmates use our materials distributed through other ministries). The rate of response to our materials is high. Eighty-three percent of our Bible study course books that are distributed produce a response from an inmate. Volunteers prepare regular mailings, correct Bible correspondence tests, and serve as pen pals to inmates. We serve 1,500 correctional facilities nationwide. During the pandemic, demand for our Bible study courses soared.

WELS Prison Ministry, partnering with Institutional Ministries (a WELS-affiliated ministry), equips individuals and congregations for local jail and/or prison ministry and mentoring returning citizens.

WELS Prison Ministry and Institutional Ministries continue to seek out men and women for face-to-face jail and prison ministry. We identify and recruit laypeople to bring the gospel to inmates in local institutions. More than 400 lay volunteers have been trained to do face-to-face ministry in a local jail/prison throughout the United States.

WELS Prison Ministry continues to be a popular Bible study choice for prisoners, with our 23 Level 1 Bible correspondence courses (and more being written) and 14 Level 2 publications. Our latest book is *Parenting from Prison*. Almost all jail and prison ministry resources are available free of charge from WELS Prison Ministry.

Our prison ministry is modestly subsidized with \$15,000 annually from WELS budgetary funds. The ministry no longer receives the majority of its funding from grants from Lutheran foundations and organizations. It will become necessary to find increased support or curtail its operations.

For more information, contact Mr. Dave Hochmuth, administrator of WELS Prison Ministry, at prisonministry@wels.net, 414-256-3243, or at N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry

The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry promotes and encourages sharing the gospel with those who have special education needs or developmental disabilities. The ministry also urges churches to provide a supportive Christian network for people with special needs in our synod and encourages their active participation in the congregation. The ministry develops resources and provides information to parents, caregivers, children, adults, pastors, teachers, and congregations about education programs, mentoring networks, support groups, and printed and digital materials.

To access these materials, visit wels.net/iddm. Sample resources include:

- “Things You Should Know about People with a Developmental Disability,” an introduction to key Christian concepts;
- “Pastors: Your Piece of the Autism Puzzle,” information to assist with pastoral care;
- webinars for parents of children with special needs;
- “He Cares, We Care,” spiritual material and crafts mailed on a regular basis to people with intellectual or developmental disabilities upon request (call 414-256-3241 or submit names at wels.net/refer);
- “Guidelines for Establishing a Parent Special Needs Support Network,” a manual designed for congregations to use in serving parents in their congregation and reaching out to others in their community; and
- “Light for Parents,” a ministry of support for parents of children with extraordinary challenges (call 414-256-3241 or see the website lightforparents.com for resources).

This ministry works with Jesus Cares Ministries, a program of The Lutheran Home Association, which provides resources for Bible study, worship, and socialization needs for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

For more information, contact Pastor Joel Gaertner, chairman, at jpgaertner@tlha.org.

Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing seeks to help congregations share the gospel of Jesus Christ with members of WELS and others who are deaf or hard of hearing. Addressing the needs of these individuals will improve gospel ministry in worship services and Bible classes. Every congregation should make sure it communicates with every member, including those who cannot hear. The members of the Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing include deaf, people with hearing loss, sign language interpreters, family members, and called workers.

The Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing offers training, guidance, and resources for ministry to deaf and hard of hearing people. Installing a hearing loop in a worship area or classroom makes a speaker's voice clearer for people with hearing aids. Captioning of videos allows even people with modest hearing loss to understand the message of an online devotion or *WELS Connection*. A Martin Luther College online course on American Sign Language has been well received and now a high school online course on American Sign Language is available through Amazing Grace Virtual Academy at amazinggraceva.org. The committee, which published our nation's largest religious sign dictionary years ago, is now creating an online sign dictionary. In preparation for the new *Christian Worship* hymnal and worship resources, the committee is creating resources to help interpreters sign the new liturgies and hymns.

The pandemic had an impact on so many church activities. The best thing that occurred for deaf people who seek to have worship in sign language is that two WELS churches (St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis., and Bloomington Living Hope, Bloomington, Minn.) now offer weekly worship services online that are interpreted for the deaf.

For more information, contact Pastor Robbin Robbert, chairman, at mdhh@wels.net.

Mission for the Visually Impaired

The Mission for the Visually Impaired helps people who are unable to read normal-sized print, whether they are blind or have impaired eyesight. Much of the work is done by volunteers at the Mission for the Visually Impaired Workshop in South St. Paul, Minn. The work is planned and promoted by a committee that includes workshop volunteers, blind and visually impaired members, family members, and pastors. The mission produces devotional and other materials in Braille, large print, and online audio files. These materials are distributed free throughout the world to WELS and non-WELS people who are visually or print impaired.

The Mission for the Visually Impaired is growing an online audiobook library for people who are visually impaired or reading impaired, the WELS Listen Library at listen.wels.net. Our resource catalog of Braille, large print, and audio materials is available at wels.net/mvi.

This ministry has been totally dependent on generous private donations and offerings from schools and churches. Bequests from the estates of volunteers and families who benefited from this ministry have also kept the work funded.

To order materials or to learn more about this ministry, contact WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired, 651-291-1536, or 375 Bridgepoint Dr, South St. Paul MN 55075-2466.

For more information, contact Mr. Bill Bremel, chairman, at welsvisimp@wels.net.

Care Committee for Called Workers

The Care Committee for Called Workers exists to assist WELS calling bodies in the spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional care of their called workers. The committee functions by providing congregations and other organizations with called workers with resources and guidance for supporting called workers and their families, encouraging workers in their ministries, and enhancing their quality of life.

The committee provides a free resource, "Care to Care," which includes downloadable study materials that provide more detailed information including how to start a Care Committee, suggestions for the types of questions to ask during the visits, and suggestions for activities that the committee can carry out. An online "Care to Care" video provides a general overview of the purpose of the local Care Committee and portrayals of the three types of visits (entrance, annual, and transition) for which the local committee is responsible.

The committee has also published resources for congregations to help their called workers plan for retirement. Care Committee materials can be found at csm.welsrc.net/called-worker-care.

For more information, contact Mr. Kurt Holzhueter, chairman, at kpholz@juno.com.

Committee on Mental Health Needs

The Committee on Mental Health Needs assists WELS congregations, institutions, called workers, and lay members as they minister to one another in love, especially to those who are experiencing mental health needs.

Mental health needs are often addressed by professional counselors. This committee helps congregations and individuals find or provide the care needed. The committee has developed brochures (also available in digital form) that are helpful for WELS members as they seek to find a therapist, interview a therapist, and understand therapist language.

The **WELS/ELS Christian Therapist Network** encourages and strengthens therapists among our fellowship for Christ-centered biblical counseling and therapy. The website **christiantherapistnetwork.com** lists therapists throughout the nation who are affiliated with WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In partnership with Martin Luther College, the network provides "Acting on Hope," a 10-week online course that equips therapists to provide Bible-based counseling to their clients. A secure area of the website allows therapists in the network to share ideas in a confidential way as they seek to serve God's people with Christian counseling that is also evidence-based.

Conquerors through Christ helps Christians who struggle with the temptations of pornography, a growing problem now that the Internet brings such temptations to the privacy of a computer or mobile phone. Their website, **conquerorsthroughchrist.net**, has been effective in motivating people to seek help from their pastors or professional counselors. A Bible study, "Bought at a Price"; downloadable parenting resources; a preaching camp; and a steady stream of new resources can also be found on that website.

Freedom for the Captives has developed materials and training to improve the ability of our churches, schools, and leaders to address the needs of abused children and adult survivors of abuse in our congregations and communities. An online abuse prevention training course, "Standing Up for Children," and other materials are available at **freedomforcaptives.com**. The committee urges church and school leaders to not only receive training but also adopt policies to protect children. To better prepare our called workers to address the sin of child abuse, all students in the pastor or teacher tracks at Martin Luther College receive several hours of training in recognizing and responding to cases of child abuse. Additional training is provided to students attending Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

A look ahead

Christ said that Christian love would identify his followers to the world. Compassion for the special needs of a church member is often a door to serving people in the community with the same needs. In this way, WELS churches are leveraging ministries to people with developmental disabilities, support groups, and others special ministries as outreach. As American society no longer regards church membership as the norm, compassion ministry has grown as a way to reach into the community, and to engage members in compassion service within the congregation.

Possibly the greatest challenge facing Special Ministries is cultivating a compassionate mindset among the leaders and members of our congregations. If the heart is not set to help, many opportunities to share the gospel are passed over. For that reason, Special Ministries will focus on producing Bible studies and messages in compassion ministry training that cultivate a culture of caring among the members of our churches.

Special Ministries' resources for ministry have become more easily accessible via the Internet. Our Mission for the Visually Impaired is increasing the number of downloadable Christian audio books for the new Listen Library for the blind. Special Ministries teams will invest more effort in planning and creating instructional videos, Bible studies, and other resources for online distribution, saving us staffing and postage costs. We plan to expand Internet resources for families of those with intellectual or developmental disabilities, addictions, and mental health needs.

The resources that we have developed for one field of specialized ministry are finding applications in other areas of the ministry and in missions.

Special Ministries accepts the challenge and privilege of training and equipping the many men and women who are passionate about ministry to the "least of these." Much of this work is done by volunteers or by called workers assuming extra duties without pay. In the next biennium, such programs as chaplain certification, child abuse prevention, mentoring those returning to the community from incarceration, and military contact pastor conferences will equip and strengthen those whom the Lord is calling to serve.

We will need even more creative, talented, and dedicated laypeople as well as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers to selflessly devote their time to developing materials and training others to bring the gospel to those who cannot

access it through the usual congregational channels. Our work will require closer cooperation with the many WELS organizations that have sprung up to carry out the work not funded in the WELS budget.

The leaders of our special ministries will also need to increase their attention to communicating the financial needs of Special Ministries for the sake of financial support by interested Christians and organizations. Prison Ministry will need to find new funding sources to avoid cuts in programming. Military Services anticipates that the complex ministry of the national civilian chaplain to the military will need to become a full-time position.

All this ministry is in the hands of Christ, the head of the Church, who has shown that he has all authority in heaven and earth. He goes before us in our labors, creating opportunities and blessing the gospel, whether shared in a military contact pastor's living room or via sign language in a Sunday morning worship service. The prisoner and the Christian struggling with depression are finding that the Lord has compassion on them. We know that the Lord will hear our prayer, "Your kingdom come!" Our calling is to go into all the world. Join us in sharing the love of Christ our Savior in the forgotten parts of our communities.

For more information on any areas of Special Ministries, visit wels.net/special-ministries or contact Pastor Jim Behringer, director of the commission, at 414-256-3240 or jim.behringer@wels.net.

Rev. Jim Behringer, reporter

Rev. Joel Gaertner, chairman

Rev. Paul Horn, vice chairman and chairman of the Military Services Committee

Rev. Stephen Schmidt, secretary

Mr. Bill Bremel, chairman of the Mission for the Visually Impaired

Rev. Darren Green, chairman of the Prison Ministry Committee

Mr. Kurt Holzhueter, chairman of the Care Committee for Called Workers

Mr. Jerrell Lucht, chairman of the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Committee

Mr. Frank Penha, chairman of the Health and Wellness Committee

Rev. Robbin Robbert, chairman of the Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Mr. Kent Robinson, chairman of the Committee on Mental Health Needs

Advisory:

Rev. Jim Behringer, director of WELS Commission on Special Ministries

Mr. Dave Hochmuth, administrator of WELS Prison Ministry

Commission on Worship

Floor Committee #12

Our calling

The Commission on Worship exists to help parishes in their central activity of worship that glorifies God and strengthens his people. Music and liturgy consume much of the commission's time, but "worship" includes far more: an interest in the style, the forms, and the setting of worship; in preaching; in liturgical orders and rites; in church music for the congregation, choir, soloists, and instruments; in architecture and ecclesiastical arts.

Worship is the heart of all parish life, the time when the greatest number of members gather to proclaim the gospel and receive God's life-giving power in Word and sacrament. Worship is also a congregation's key point of contact with guests.

If you are a delegate and have never explored the work of the Commission on Worship, you can get a good idea of its scope by reviewing content at the Congregational Services Resource Center at welscongregationalservices.net as well as the older Commission on Worship website at worship.welsrc.net, which still contains the greatest amount of Worship content.

Our current situation

Hymnal Project

Most members of the Commission on Worship in recent years have been preoccupied with the forthcoming new WELS hymnal and its several ancillary volumes. This massive project receives only brief mention in BORAM since many details about the new hymnal “suite of resources” are available at christianworship.com. This website also gives details about video resources and events designed to help individuals and congregations explore and introduce the new hymnal. These resources are intended for congregations that have already decided to purchase the new hymnal, for those still exploring, and for those who do not expect to begin the process until sometime in the future. A special presentation about the hymnal to the synod convention is also available at this website.

Northwestern Publishing House began taking pre-orders in early 2021. Congregations that placed their orders before the middle of June will receive their hymnals in September, others throughout October and November. In summer the Hymnal Introduction Program will release various resources to assist with long-range worship planning. These include lectionary, hymn suggestions, and plans for both a cautious and a more ambitious introduction of new musical materials. The goal with these plans is to allow each congregation to decide how and when to best use new materials without overtaxing worshipers or accompanists.

A look ahead

Since 2019, two video-based training modules were released. 1) *Effective Service Playing: The Partnership between Organist and Congregation* offers coaching to organists, many of whom are somewhat or largely self-taught. 2) *Worship Led by a Modern Ensemble* demonstrates the potential for leading worship with an ensemble consisting of piano, guitar, and other instruments. The focus is on songs of the liturgy, psalms, and hymns. Some settings of the liturgy, slated for the new WELS hymnal, are crafted to work either with organ (and other instruments) or with a modern ensemble; the melodies remain the same while the musical accompaniment varies. A variety of additional modules are in the works for 2021, especially to support implementation of new hymnal resources. These modules are available at welscongregationalservices.net.

For additional information, contact Rev. Bryan Gerlach, 414-256-3265 or bryan.gerlach@wels.net.

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, reporter

Rev. Jon Zabell, chairman
Rev. Jason Hacker, secretary
Teacher Kevin Bode
Mr. Harvey Dunn
Prof. Craig Hirschmann
Teacher Michael Marquardt

Advisory:

Mr. Jeremy Bakken, Northwestern Publishing House
Prof. Aaron Christie, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
Rev. Bryan Gerlach, director of WELS Commission on Worship
Rev. Michael Schultz, director of the WELS Hymnal Project

Commission on Lutheran Schools

Floor Committee #13

Our calling

The Commission on Lutheran Schools exists to guide and assist congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening Lutheran schools. Lutheran Schools seeks to support both the district presidents and 431 early childhood, elementary, and secondary school ministries with a gospel-focused, servant-minded, excellence-driven, and partnership-committed approach.

Our current situation

COVID-19 has had its effect on our schools as all of them pivoted to virtual learning for the final months of the 2019–20 school year. The 2020–21 school year saw many schools open face-to-face with some hybrid and a few virtual only. WELS early childhood enrollment followed the nationwide trend of lower enrollment (-14 percent) as more workers were homebound and parents chose to keep their children with them in the home. Elementary enrollment and Lutheran high school enrollment each grew by about 1 percent. Visit cls.welsrc.net/stats for more school statistical information.

We're thankful for our school leaders, teachers, parents, and students who have endured a very different and challenging time for Christian education. Lutheran Schools partnered with our colleges and Christian Family Solutions to provide webinars and resources to help deal with some of the social and emotional challenges. Visit cls.welsrc.net/connect for further information. Amid the challenges did come blessings as many of our schools were able to connect with more unchurched families and share the gospel with their children.

As the Baby Boomer generation continues to retire, the need for called workers outpaced the students who prepared for the teaching ministry in the last biennium. Many teachers who were inactive have returned to the classroom and teachers not trained through our ministerial education system have transitioned to serving in our schools. The decreasing number of teachers has seen call activity greatly increase as more than 900 teacher calls were extended during the 2018–19 and the 2019–20 call seasons. The Conference of Presidents has adjusted the calling window for active called teachers on a two-year trial basis to October 15–April 15. The goal is to have a better understanding of the called worker needs by Martin Luther College assignment time in May, and then for those congregations who still have a vacancy after call day to have more time to address their vacancy.

Support

WELSSA, our nationally recognized WELS School Accreditation program, continues to grow. Teacher Paul Patterson replaced Teacher Tom Plitzuweit as WELSSA executive director on July 1, 2020. WELS School Accreditation is a process in which the school evaluates its current education practices and seeks sound methods to build on its strengths and determine new ways to grow and strengthen the educational ministry of the school for the benefit of the students and parents to the glory of God. There are 145 WELS schools currently accredited and 15 schools in candidacy, that is, working through the accreditation process for the first time. WELSSA is a sanctioned member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation.

Thanks to a grant, Lutheran Schools was able to add recently retired WELS principal James Sievert to the Lutheran Schools team as a part-time called school consultant during the biennium. School consulting exists to partner with congregational consulting to help support the overall ministry of a congregation. It also provides onsite support for both congregations seeking to start a new children's ministry or receive consulting support for an existing ministry.

Teacher Cindi Holman continues to serve as national coordinator for early childhood ministries to support those who serve as directors, teachers, and aides through resources that continue to be updated or developed. These include weekly online devotions for those who serve in early childhood ministries; support for newly assigned or aspiring directors through the Director Apprentice mentoring program, the Emerging Leader Cohort, and the Director Training Program; documents that include outreach and harvest strategies; and promotion of *Building Blocks: A Handbook for Beginning and Operating a Christian Early Childhood Ministry*. Early childhood district coordinators continue to develop and share resources and provide consultation and support for congregations and early childhood ministries.

The Lutheran Schools team represents WELS schools at many state and national agencies including holding board positions on the Council of American Private Education and the National Council on Private School Accreditation.

It continues to work hard to develop and maintain partnerships with district schools coordinators, early childhood district coordinators, Northwestern Publishing House, Martin Luther College, Wisconsin Lutheran College, WELS-affiliated ministries, and many others to provide resources to strengthen the instruction, materials, and curriculum within our schools.

Training

- **WELS Ministerial Growth and Evaluation Process**—Training modules and materials are now available to assist the growth of all WELS teachers through a Ministry Development Plan. New teacher growth tools and evaluations are also now available. More information and all the resources can be found at cls.welsrc.net/mgep.
- **Telling the Next Generation: Utilizing Our Schools for Outreach**—The Commissions on Evangelism, Discipleship, and Lutheran Schools continue to jointly offer a one-day seminar focused on effective outreach practices for WELS schools and early childhood ministries. This seminar comes at a time when nationwide 14 percent of Lutheran elementary school children and nearly 30 percent of our early childhood ministry children live in homes that report having no church membership. The six-hour seminar is designed for pastors, principals, early childhood directors, teachers, and church and school lay leaders of the congregation to gather for interactive presentations on maintaining a Christ-centered mission, the critical role of relationships, and a planned and effective harvest strategy. A live virtual presentation is now available, along with an online follow-up module. Visit welscongregationalervices.net/download/telling-the-next-generation.
- **Training for school leaders**—The shortage of principals and leaders in our schools has grown to over 10 percent. In addition to the programs for training directors referenced earlier, Lutheran Schools supports, mentors, and provides training for new and aspiring school leaders through Principal Apprentice Mentoring and the Principal Training Program and partners with Martin Luther College on the Principal Credential Cohort.

A look ahead

As we move into the next biennium, Lutheran Schools will continue to support school ministries as outlined above. We plan to develop modules and provide training for school financial sustainability, the role of the board and the pastor in the school and early childhood ministry, effective practices in school marketing and promotion, the calling and hiring of workers in early childhood ministries, and developing a mission and vision for your school.

Additionally, we'll seek to capitalize on the bimodal teaching and learning that emerged out of necessity during the COVID-19 outbreak to help us study both microschoools and online virtual schools in WELS.

As nearly 10 percent of students enrolled in our schools currently have a special need or learning accommodation, we'll continue to build on the work of the WELS Special Education Task Force and look to equip more schools with training and resources to support the growing numbers of students needing additional support.

We look forward to joining together and both celebrating our work in Christian education and learning together as a WELS education conference will be held in Pewaukee, Wis., on June 20–22, 2022. More information about the conference, titled *United in Christ, Diverse in Service*, can be found at welsedconference.com.

Finally, we ask for prayers for our schools and their leaders, teachers, parents, and students as we seek to share Jesus through our WELS school system.

Teacher Jim Rademan, reporter

Teacher Ryan Wiechman, chairman

Rev. Darin Aden, secretary

Teacher Kyle Bender

Mr. Ronald Conradt

Teacher Shawn Herkstroeter

Mr. Chris Joch

Rev. Phil Sievert

Advisory:

Teacher Cindi Holman, national coordinator of early childhood ministries for WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

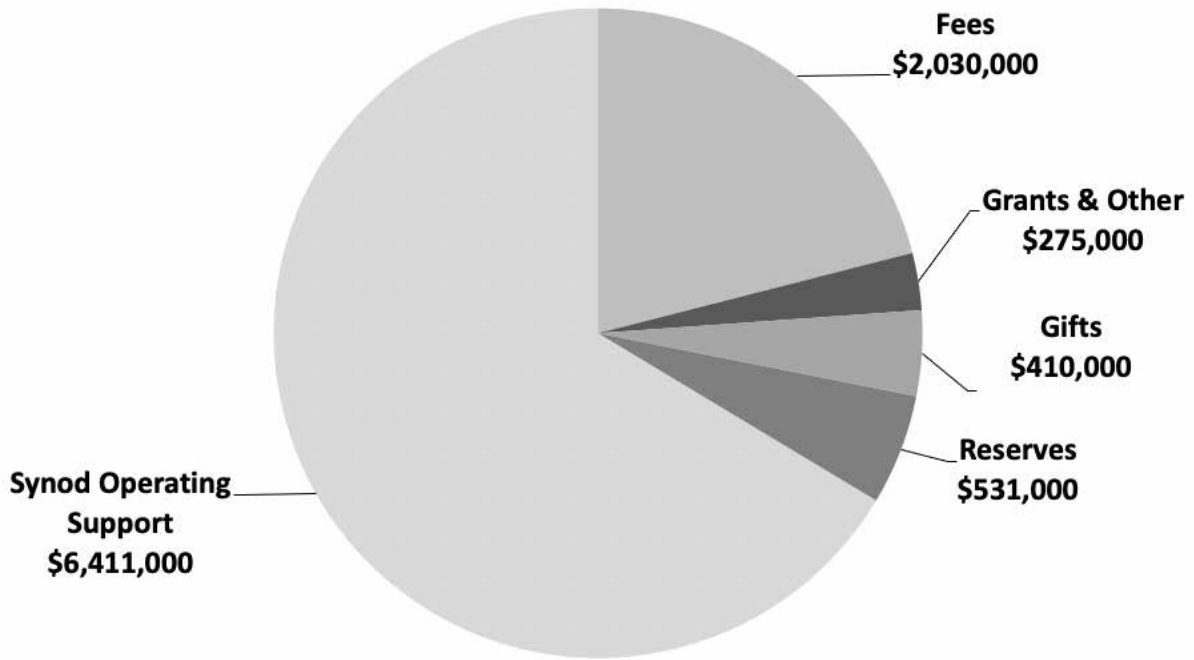
Dr. Robert Klindworth, Martin Luther College

Prof. Joel Otto, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

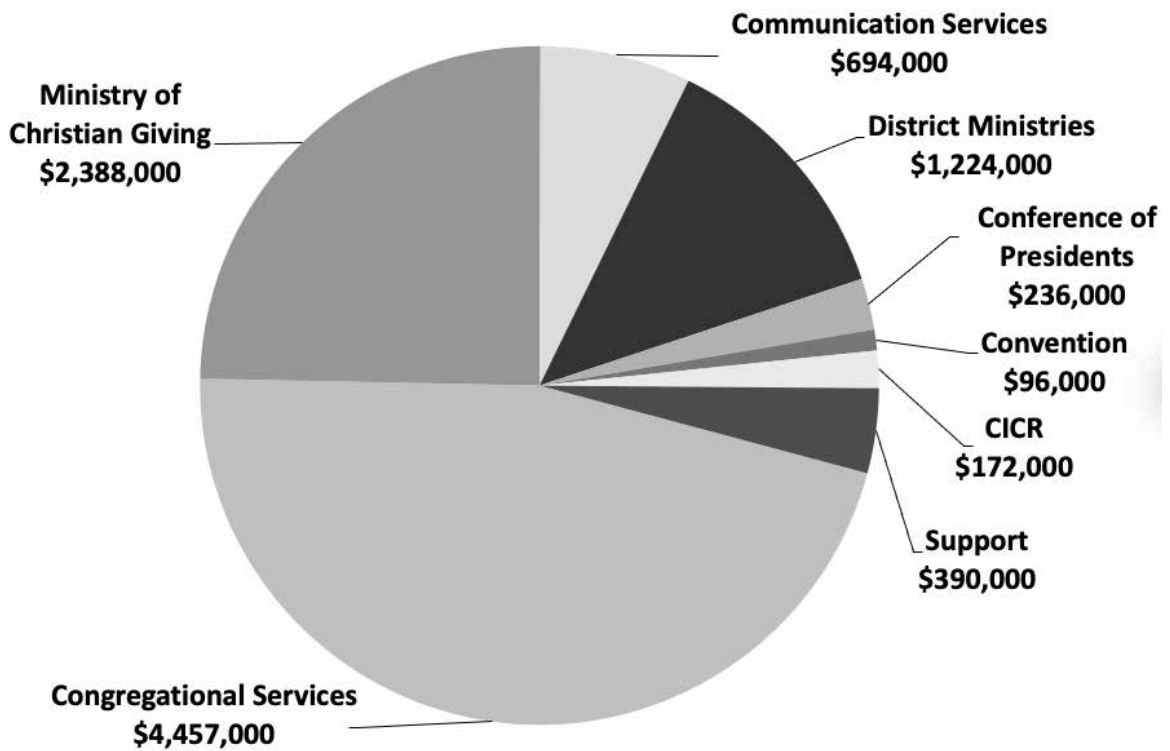
Teacher Paul Patterson, associate director of WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

Teacher Jim Rademan, director of WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

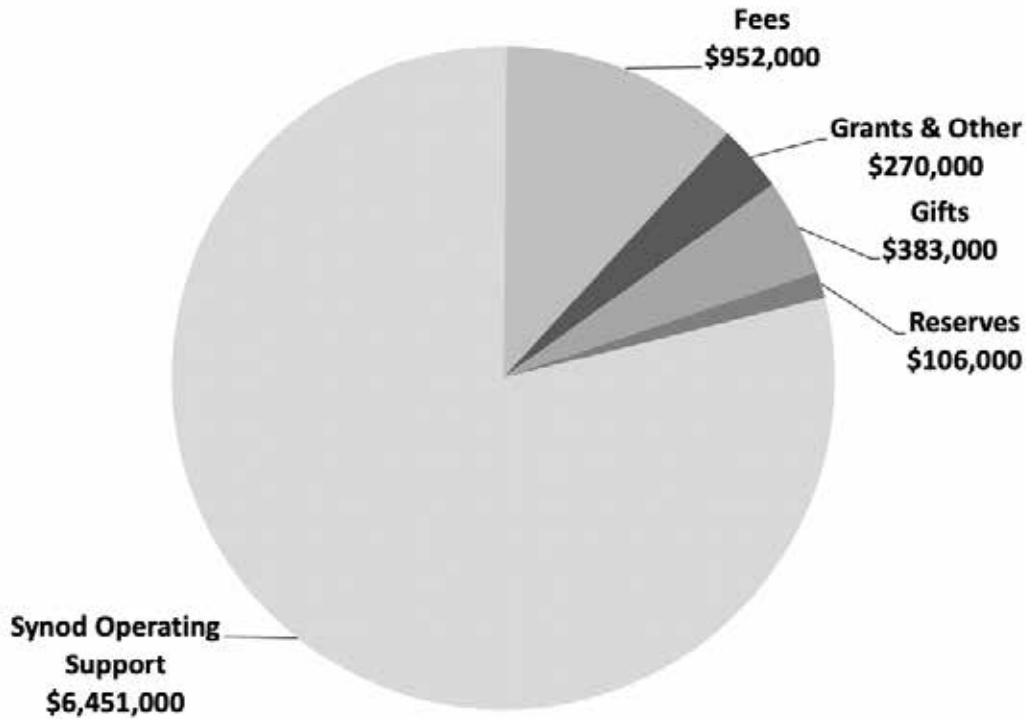
**FY 2021-22 Support
Congregation & District Ministry
\$9,657,000**



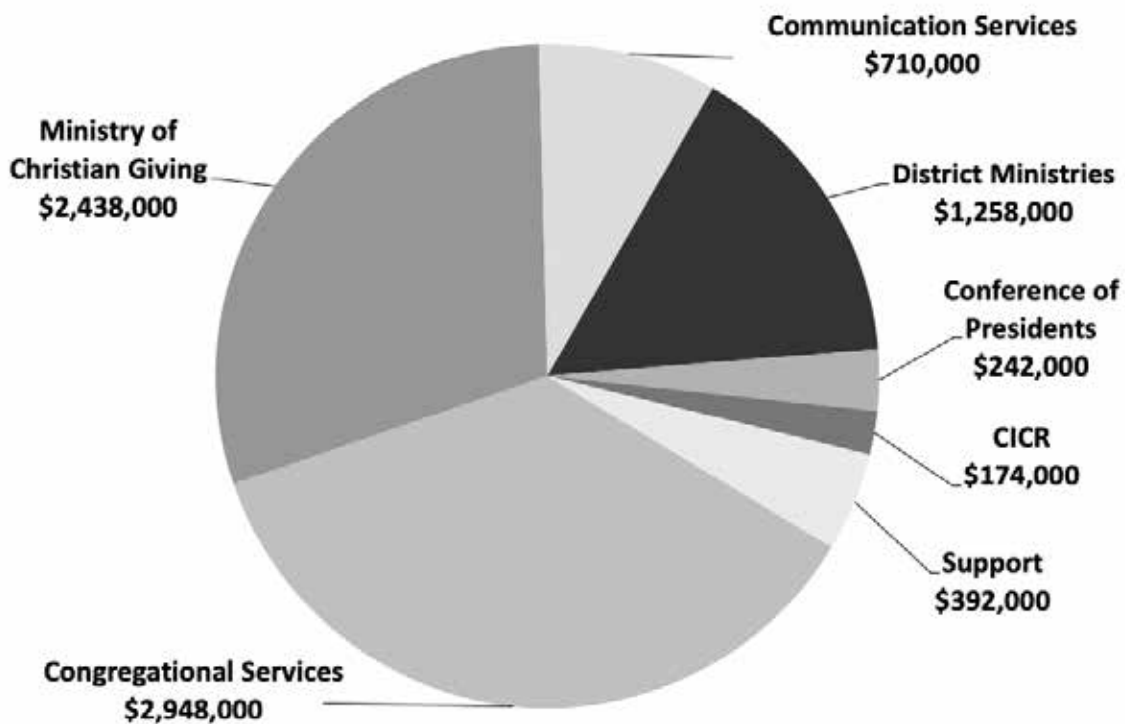
**FY 2021-22 Expenses
Congregation & District Ministry
\$9,657,000**



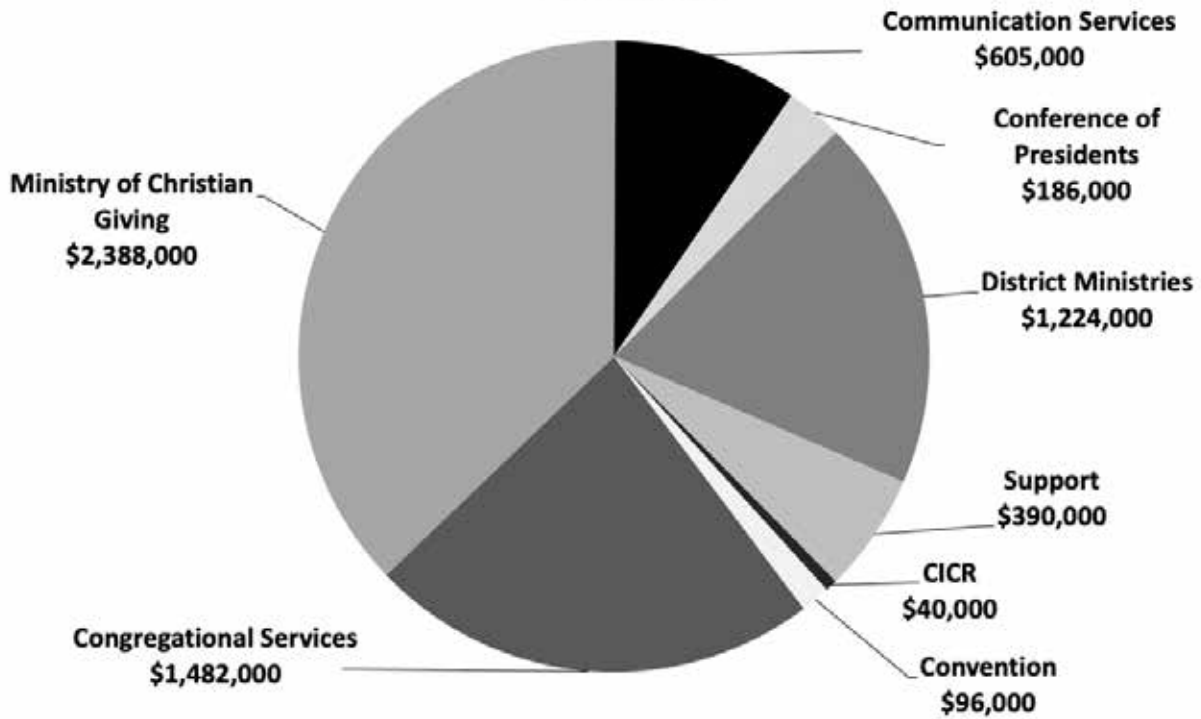
**FY 2022-23 Support
Congregation & District Ministry
\$8,162,000**



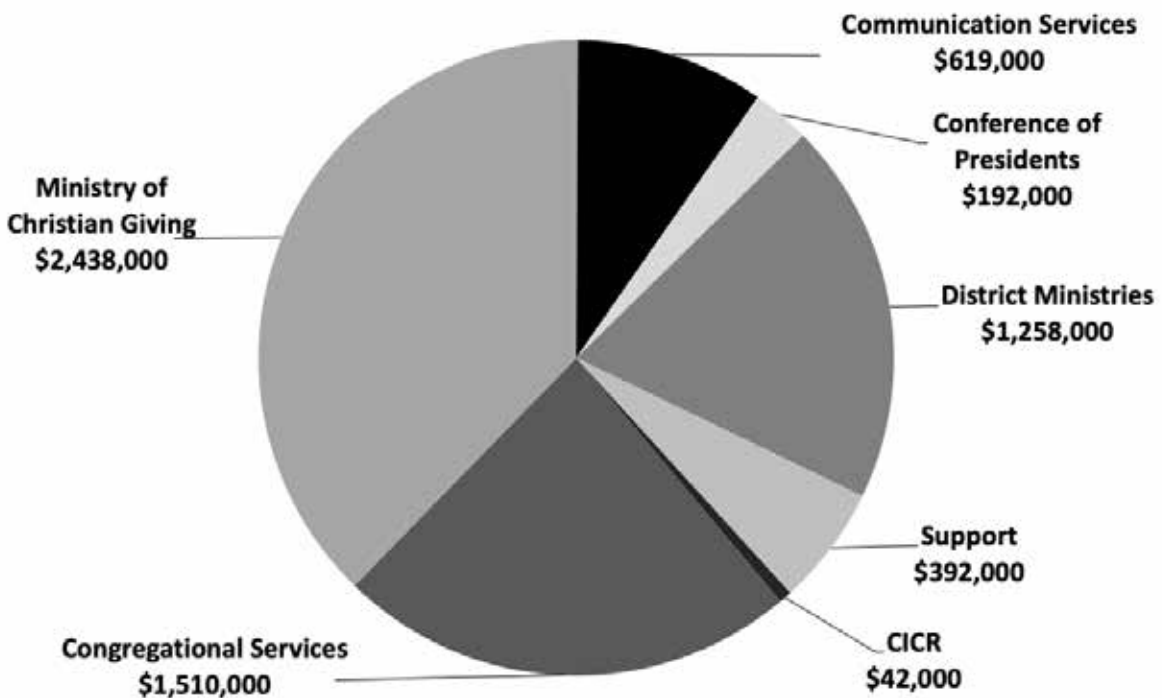
**FY 2022-23 Expenses
Congregation & District Ministry
\$8,162,000**



**FY 2021-22 Synod Operating Support Allocation
 Congregation & District Ministry
 \$6,411,000**



**FY 2022-23 Synod Operating Support Allocation
 Congregation & District Ministry
 \$6,451,000**



Ministry Support

The Ministry Support area of the ministry financial plan includes the Synodical Council and all entities overseen by the Synodical Council. These include:

Synodical Council

- Expenses for all regular and special meetings of the Synodical Council
- Expenses for the Accounting Oversight Committee
- Some insurance expenses

President's Office

- Compensation for the synod president
- Stipends to the congregations of the first and second vice presidents
- Office staff serving the president and the Synodical Council
- Travel expenses for the synod presidium
- Colloquy expenses

Facility Services

Expenses related to the maintenance and operation of the Center for Mission and Ministry, including insurance costs

Synod Archives

WELS Historical Institute (see p. 157)

Publication Coordinating Commission (see p. 173 in the report of Northwestern Publishing House)

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Expenditures related to humanitarian aid and relief programs; funding for the programs of Christian Aid and Relief is provided by gifts from individuals, congregations, and other organizations

Technology Services

Financial Services

Human Resources

Synodical Council

Floor Committee #6

The Synodical Council (SC) is responsible for the implementation of all decisions and resolutions made by the synod in convention and for overseeing all activities of WELS in pursuit of its mission (other than those that are the specific responsibility of the Conference of Presidents). In keeping with the WELS Constitution and Bylaws, the Synodical Council also has the authority to act on behalf of the synod between conventions when proper and necessary. The convention compliance listing is included in this report (p. 61) and provides an updated summary of the progress made to date in implementing convention resolutions.

As it carries out the broad oversight described previously, the Synodical Council is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and overseeing all programs of ministry carried out by WELS. Part of that oversight is the management of all financial activities of the synod, assuring fiscal soundness, preparing and updating support forecasts, and monitoring expenditures to maintain a balanced financial plan. In the years when the synod meets in convention, the Synodical Council is responsible for working with all areas of ministry to develop and propose a balanced biennial ministry financial plan (budget) that supports the work of WELS in keeping with its long-range ministry plan.

The Synodical Council receives regular reports from all areas of WELS mission and ministry, including subsidiary organizations and their operational and investment policies, as it carries out its oversight responsibilities.

Standing committees

The Synodical Council is organized into three standing committees. The Finance Committee is responsible for establishing the support forecast and for recommending the overall level of spending for financial planning. The Finance Committee also monitors the financial performance and works closely with the WELS chief financial officer to oversee the risk management, banking, and general financial situation of WELS. The Administration Committee is responsible for developing and implementing general policies and procedures, providing oversight of WELS' subsidiary organizations, overseeing WELS Human Resources and Technology, and providing recommendations for WELS called worker compensation (with the input of the Compensation Review Committee). The Ministry Committee oversees and coordinates the plans and activities of all areas of ministry and works to monitor and evaluate how the various areas of ministry are carrying out their tasks in keeping with WELS' long-range plan.

The Finance Committee establishes the recommended spending levels based on the support forecast, while the Ministry Committee then determines what portion of the synod's resources are allocated to each area of ministry. This arrangement, in place since 2011, has proven to be very beneficial as the areas of ministry work together cooperatively rather than competitively to allocate the levels of financial support.

The Compensation Review Committee is a special standing sub-committee that reports to the Administration Committee. The Compensation Review Committee reviews and recommends adjustments to the WELS compensation guidelines for called workers, subject to the approval of the Synodical Council.

New members

The SC welcomed six new members in 2020:

- Teacher Thomas Plitzuweit (teacher-at-large)
- Pastor Mark Gabb (chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions)
- Mr. Pete Aisbet (lay representative, Southeastern Wisconsin District)
- Mr. Chip Woods (lay representative, Nebraska District)
- Mr. Jake Lemke (lay representative, Western Wisconsin District)
- Mr. Kyle Egan (advisory member, WELS chief financial officer)

Long-range plan

The 2017 synod convention adopted a long-range plan entitled "Our Great Heritage." The plan is to serve as a guideline and roadmap for ministry and financial planning through the year 2025, the year in which, God-willing, our synod will celebrate its 175th anniversary. The plan can be found as an appendix to this report on p. 57.

The long-range plan outlines in broad terms the direction and focus of our work in the coming years. Following its adoption by the 2017 convention, areas of ministry began and have continued to undertake strategic plans to carry out the broad directives of the long-range plan.

Financial results (FY 2020)

For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020, Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) totaled \$21.4 million, \$466,000 more than planned and \$352,000 more than the prior year. WELS Operating Fund expenses were \$752,000 less than planned as a result of cost savings due to vacant positions, lower health care expenses, less travel, lower utility costs, and fewer meetings. As a result of the greater than planned offerings and lower than planned expenses, the Financial Stabilization Fund finished the year with a balance of \$16.1 million, an increase of \$1.8 million from the prior year. This does not include the proceeds from the \$2.7 million loan received from the Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), as the synod has applied for but has not yet received notice of loan forgiveness.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, WELS along with the four ministerial education schools and Northwestern Publishing House applied for and received PPP loans. Loan forgiveness was granted to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Luther Preparatory School, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, and Northwestern Publishing House. Martin Luther College is still waiting to hear back from the Small Business Administration on the forgiveness of its loan.

Operating expenses at the ministerial education schools were generally lower than planned by approximately \$1.7 million, mainly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Expenses were lower than planned at MLC and LPS due to the transition to virtual learning; the cancellation of spring extracurricular activities; and generally lower expenses for travel, utilities, maintenance, and other contract services. Expenses at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary were higher than planned due to capital projects on campus and maintenance on faculty homes. Expenses at Michigan Lutheran Seminary were in line with the plan.

Support without restrictions at the ministerial education schools was \$2.0 million above plan due to increased gifts, bequests, and satisfaction of restrictions, which offset lower than planned tuition and fees.

WELS Church Extension Fund, WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds, and Northwestern Publishing House all had strong financial results and saw increases in their net assets. WELS Church Extension Fund and WELS Foundation have continued to demonstrate their support for WELS ministries by transferring net assets beyond target level.

For calendar year 2020, Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) submitted by congregations to the synod totaled \$21.7 million, an increase of 2.3 percent (\$498,000) from the prior year and 3 percent (\$633,000) above projected receipts. The 2020 CMO totals were the highest in history, eclipsing the previous high in 2008.

This blessing is especially amazing because it took place in a year when congregational worship was severely disrupted, and the economy was significantly impacted by COVID-19. Our thanks to God for his gracious providence and to the faithful way, motivated by the gospel, in which congregations and their members did not let a crisis get in the way of their support for the mission and ministry of our synod.

For more complete financial information, see the report on financial matters on p. 79 and the reports of the WELS subsidiaries, which begin on p. 157.

Annual audit

The independent accounting firm of Baker Tilly US, LLP, has issued an unmodified opinion (the best opinion possible) on the fair presentation of WELS financial results. The SC approved the consolidated financial statements with thanks to the Financial Services staff at WELS.

Modifications of the ministry financial plan

The ministry financial plan adopted by the synod in convention sets the spending limits for all WELS entities. Any entity that desires to exceed that level of spending or increase its use of reserves may request that the Synodical Council modify the approved spending level, provided that the entity can demonstrate that funding is available and sustainable. The Synodical Council approved the following modifications during the last year that are funded with special or reserve funds on hand and do not represent an increase in support from the WELS operating budget:

Congregation and District Ministry

- \$400,000 expense reduction in FY21 due to postponed or canceled events, offsetting an expense increase in WELS Christian Aid and Relief.

Home Missions

- \$201,800 expense increase in FY21 for costs relating to two unsubsidized missions funded from external sources but administered by WELS.
- \$63,000 expense increase in FY21 for one-half the cost of a Campus Ministry mission counselor.
- \$63,000 expense increase in FY21 for two missions in the South Central District.

Joint Mission Council

- \$100,000 expense increase in FY21 for Mission Journeys.
- \$63,000 expense increase in FY21 for one-half the cost of a Campus Ministry mission counselor.
- \$75,000 expense increase in FY21 for new outreach in Bangladesh.
- \$90,000 for Muslim outreach.
- \$125,000 expense increase in FY21 for a North American Asian mission counselor.

Martin Luther College

- A net \$584,000 reduction in overall budget in FY21 related to various impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- \$2,945,000 expense increase in FY21, \$2,000,000 related to the construction of the new athletic fieldhouse and \$945,000 for emergency student aid funding through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds program.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

- \$185,000 expense increase in FY21 for outdoor athletic facility improvements.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

- \$100,000 expense increase in FY20 and \$140,000 in FY21 for increased cost of the vicar program.
- \$85,000 expense increase in FY20 for increased faculty home maintenance.
- \$100,000 expense increase in FY21 for one year of overlapping faculty salary.
- \$300,000 expense increase in FY21 for various maintenance projects.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

- \$400,000 expense increase in FY21 for relief grants related to COVID-19, offset through an expense reduction in Congregation and District Ministry.

It is a policy of the Synodical Council that WELS entities that desire to use more-than-planned reserves in amounts greater than \$50,000 or .5 percent of expenditures must receive prior approval from the Synodical Council.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

In 2020 the Synodical Council authorized WELS Christian Aid and Relief to call a full-time director. Pastor Daniel Sims accepted the call and is now serving in that role. He reported to the Synodical Council that his first task is to assure that the policies and procedures of WELS Christian Aid and Relief are clearly understood by WELS members. Another priority is to begin training WELS congregations and members to respond as effectively as possible to disasters. WELS Christian Aid and Relief is also now partnering with congregations in offering COVID-19 relief in their communities.

Health reimbursement account savings

In January 2016, the Synodical Council approved a program to self-insure a portion of WELS workers' health care costs.

WELS, the four ministerial education schools, and the subsidiaries, including Northwestern Publishing House (NPH), implemented a plan to reduce health care costs while maintaining benefit levels enjoyed by workers and their families. The plan changed health care coverage provided to workers from WELS VEBA Plan 2 (lower deductibles) to WELS VEBA Plan 4 (higher deductibles), self-insuring for the benefit difference between the two plans. Based on activity since the plan was implemented, a minimum reserve balance of \$500,000 has been set. During FY18, \$485,000 was returned to WELS, the schools, and subsidiaries as a result of the savings seen due to this change. At the end of FY18, 50 percent of the premium savings were passed on to the areas of ministry, schools, and subsidiaries through reduced contributions into the insurance reserve account since the targeted reserve balance was achieved and some history of incoming claims had been established. In FY19 and FY20, \$352,000 and \$120,000 respectively were returned to the Financial Stabilization Fund and the subsidiaries due to additional savings experienced in the respective claim years. Within six months of the end of each calendar year, the balance is reviewed, and savings are passed along if the balance is in excess of \$500,000.

Pension Plan proposal

At its November 2019 meeting, the Synodical Council passed a proposal concerning the WELS Pension Plan. The proposal was sent to all called workers. The original plan had been that the proposal would be discussed at all district conventions, and that each district would vote on the proposal and forward the results of the vote to the Synodical Council. Since the district conventions were all canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no votes were taken. Informal feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, so the Synodical Council passed the following resolution at its February 2021 meeting and is bringing this proposal to the 2021 convention:

A motion was made and seconded to recommend that the proposed retirement plan changes—which have been reviewed and endorsed by the Conference of Presidents and the Synodical Council—including freezing the current pension plan effective December 31, 2021, and implementation of the proposed defined contribution plan for future worker retirement benefits (administered through the WELS Shepherd Plan) effective January 1, 2022—be presented to the 2021 synod convention for discussion and ultimate approval.

The Pension Plan proposal will be addressed by Floor Committee #19. Details of the proposal can be found on p. 168.

Parsonage allowance for female teachers

For a number of years, questions have been raised about whether the parsonage allowance deduction available to pastors, male teachers, and male staff ministers should also be available to female called workers without violating scriptural principles. In the 1950s WELS had been told in a private letter ruling of the IRS that female called workers did not qualify for this tax benefit. Since then, however, even though WELS has not changed the way in which it describes the role and responsibilities of female called workers, court rulings and interpretations of IRS guidelines led the Synodical Council to engage a nationally recognized church tax attorney to investigate the matter. After a thorough investigation that included discussions with WELS representatives and reviewing existing court decisions and current IRS guidelines, the attorney provided an opinion that WELS female called workers do qualify for the parsonage allowance deduction. Based on that advice, the Synodical Council determined that by Jan. 1, 2021, all synod ministry certified female called workers will be treated in the same way for tax purposes as male called workers. We are gratified that our female called workers can now utilize this tax benefit.

Capital Projects Committee

The Capital Projects Committee, chaired by Synodical Council member Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, has worked to identify and prioritize all capital projects for the synodical schools and the Center for Mission and Ministry so that proper planning can be carried out. This includes capital projects of upgrades, maintenance, and new projects. Each ministerial school campus has provided an updated master plan so that the committee can begin work on an overall prioritization of projects and possible funding mechanisms. The report of the Capital Projects Committee can be found on p. 74. Upon recommendation of the Capital Projects Committee, Martin Luther College was authorized in November to spend \$134,000 for engineering and architectural fees for its planned fieldhouse.

Ministry financial plan for the next biennium

The development of the ministry financial plan (budget) being recommended by the Synodical Council to this convention began more than a year ago. A support forecast estimated the amount of financial resources that are conservatively expected to be available to support the various WELS ministries. This forecast takes into consideration the funds available from all sources, including the Financial Stabilization Fund. On the basis of that forecast and in keeping with the Synodical Council policy to maintain the Financial Stabilization Fund within an acceptable range, the Finance Committee of the Synodical Council recommended (and the Synodical Council adopted) the overall spending levels, as well as the planning assumptions that will be followed (compensation, cost of insurance and pension, etc.). The support forecast is adjusted if necessary to reflect changing financial information.

Each area of ministry and synodical department submitted its proposed ministry plans and requested operational support, along with planned use of special funds, to the synod president. The president, in view of the established priorities of WELS outlined in the long-range plan and in keeping with the spending levels adopted by the Synodical Council, crafted a draft comprehensive ministry financial plan. This draft was reviewed by the President's Advisory Council (PAC), in which representatives from all areas of ministry and departments reviewed the plan proposal and made suggestions for modifications. The President's Advisory Council then unanimously recommended the plan to the Synodical Council. The Finance Committee of the Synodical Council recommended that the full Synodical Council approve the level of funding provided in the ministry financial plan, and the Ministry Committee of the Synodical Council reviewed the plan and recommended to the full Synodical Council the allocation amounts for all areas of ministry and departments. In February 2021, the Synodical Council adopted the plan, which features a 2 percent increase in operating support and a 2 percent increase in compensation for workers, and is now forwarding it to the synod convention for discussion and approval. The plan can be found on p. 84 and will be handled by Floor Committee #7.

This process has been followed for 12 years and has served the synod well. All areas of ministry have demonstrated a great deal of brotherly cooperation and the willingness to consider the overall needs of WELS.

Special fund balances

The Synodical Council reviewed the special fund balances held by the various areas of ministry. By God's grace, FY20 ended with an increase in total reserves, with the total amount in special funds just over \$50 million. The collective balance of special fund reserves are expected to increase in FY21 as a result of increased gifts and bequests, partially offset by lower than planned spending due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To support and expand their work, the areas of ministry are collectively planning to increase the use of reserves by approximately \$4.2 million in FY22 and \$4.1 million in FY23.

WELS Building Fund

The WELS Building Fund is used to maintain the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry. As of June 30, 2020, the balance in the fund was about \$351,000, or \$111,000 more than the established target. No major projects are planned in the next two years, but the plan includes repaving of the parking lot in FY23. The HVAC system will likely need to be replaced in three to five years.

Unfunded Priority List

When the synod convention adopts a ministry financial plan, it is also required to adopt a prioritized listing of those programs that are desirable but not able to be funded with the anticipated resources. The Synodical Council is responsible for monitoring this list, approving projects when funds become available, and modifying the list in keeping with current needs.

The Unfunded Priority List that is being presented to the convention as a part of the ministry financial plan is:

1. \$125,000 BHM—mission expansion
2. \$125,000 BWM—mission support/expansion
3. \$125,000 BME—financial assistance at Martin Luther College
4. \$100,000 BWM—mission support/expansion
5. \$100,000 BHM—mission support/expansion
6. \$150,000 BME—top capital projects priorities
7. \$50,000 Special Ministries—WELS Military Services Committee
8. \$50,000 Special Ministries—WELS Prison Ministry Committee
9. \$120,000 Ministry of Christian Giving—additional counselor

The Synodical Council has adopted a policy that lists some of the events that would trigger the possible funding of items on the Unfunded Priority List. Such events would include, but not be limited to, 1) a projected balance in the Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) more than twice the projected subsidy for the next fiscal year; 2) a combination of increased CMO receipts 0.5 percent greater than planned and CMO subscriptions 0.5 percent greater than planned; 3) a new unrestricted source of funding, including increased unrestricted giving over a defined period of time, new grants that will continue over a period of time, or a new endowment that would support the unfunded program.

In keeping with that policy, at its February 2021 meeting the Synodical Council approved the expenditure of \$400,000 for items on the Unfunded Priority List and assigned the Ministry Committee of the Synodical Council to determine which items should receive funding. The Ministry Committee will bring its recommendations to the November 2021 meeting of the Synodical Council.

Appointments

Mr. Seth Hansen, Mr. Tim Gensmer, and Mr. Ron Kerr were reappointed to the Church Extension Fund Board of Directors. Mr. Joel Luehman, Mr. John Wenker, and Mr. Seth Hansen were reappointed to the WELS Investment Funds Board of Directors. Mr. Joel Raasch, Mr. Matthew Groth, and Prof. Steven Pagels were reappointed to the Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors. Mr. John Pratt was newly appointed to the Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors. Mr. Lee Miller was reappointed and Pastor James Turriff was appointed to the Retirement Program Commission. Mr. James Gabriel was appointed to the VEBA Commission.

Thanks

Six Synodical Council members completed their service in 2020. Teacher James Moeller, Pastor Wayne Uhlhorn, Mr. Tim Snyder, Mr. Dale Pohlman, and Mr. Art Tessmer either completed their terms or left the Synodical Council due to a change in call or retirement. We thank them for their faithful service and pray for God's continued blessings.

Also departing the Synodical Council due to retirement was Mr. Todd Poppe, the synod chief financial officer since 2004. Under Poppe's leadership, many financial policies and procedures were put into place that have increased the stability and transparency of the synod's finances. He oversaw the streamlining of the synod's Finance Office, enabling it to operate more effectively and with fewer personnel. He was also instrumental in creating both the Financial Stabilization Fund and the process currently used to develop the synod's ministry financial plan (budget). His other accomplishments and contributions are too numerous to list. We thank God for providing our synod with this faithful servant and we pray for God's blessings on his retirement. And we thank Todd for his service and his wife, Dawn, for her constant support.

Rev. Mark Schroeder, reporter

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president and chairman
Mr. Pete Aisbet, Southeastern Wisconsin District
Mr. John Fowler, South Atlantic District
Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions
Mr. Kenneth Gosch, Dakota-Montana District
Mr. Steven Hansen, Arizona-California District
Rev. Paul Janke, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions
Rev. Joel Jenswold, pastor-at-large
Mr. Bradley Johnston, South Central District
Dr. Timothy Kriewall, Michigan District
Mr. Jake Lemke, Western Wisconsin District
Mr. Brent Masters, Pacific Northwest District
Dr. Ryan Olson, North Atlantic District
Teacher Thomas Plitzuweit, teacher-at-large
Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Mr. Kurt Sames, Minnesota District
Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, Northern Wisconsin District
Rev. Jonathan Schroeder, pastor-at-large
Rev. Donald Tollefson, Conference of Presidents
Rev. Charles Westra, Conference of Presidents
Mr. Chip Woods, Nebraska District
Rev. Joel Zank, Conference of Presidents

Advisory:

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer
Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions
Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services
Mr. Lee Hitter, director of WELS communications
Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president
Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving
Mr. Dennis Maurer, WELS director of WELS human resources
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions
Mr. Martin Spriggs, WELS chief technology officer
Rev. Joel Voss, WELS second vice president (serves as the secretary of the Synodical Council)
Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

Appendix 1: WELS Long-Range Plan (Adopted 2017)

“Our Great Heritage” UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory.’” (Revelation 14:6-7a).

We exist to proclaim the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ. We affirm that only that gospel can create and sustain faith. Thus, spiritual results related to the growth of the Holy Christian Church in every nation, tribe, language, and people are completely in the hands of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the means of grace to accomplish the results that only he can work, and he has entrusted the means of grace to human beings as his messengers. We fear God, preaching and teaching the law. We give him glory, preaching and teaching the gospel. We do that as individuals and as congregations working together in a confessional Lutheran church body, that is, we carry out our gospel ministry

together while standing squarely on all the truths of Scripture as expressed by the Lutheran Confessions. At all times and in all we do our focus is the cross of Christ Jesus.

“To Spread Its Light From Age To Age Shall Be Our Chief Endeavor”

FOUNDATION FOR LONG-RANGE PLANNING—OUR PURPOSE

For the purposes of making it clear that we are an outreach organization, for planning and marshalling resources as good stewards of God’s blessings, and for encouraging unity in spirit, the leaders of our synod have noted the constitutional priorities articulated by recent synod conventions and have summarized the purpose of our work as a synod with this planning guide:

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to give all glory to God by upholding, defending, and proclaiming the truth of the Holy Scriptures as articulated in the Lutheran Confessions, and by providing a means for congregations and their members to extend the reach of their God-given mission of proclaiming the gospel in Word and sacrament through joint mission efforts at home and abroad, the training of called workers, and coordination of gospel applications to encourage spiritually healthy called workers in spiritually healthy congregations and schools.

“Through Life It Guides Our Way”

THE PICTURE IN 2025

Under God’s blessing and by grace alone, we hope to see the following ambitious and realistic snapshot of our work in 2025.

Worldwide Identity as Confessional Lutherans

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 and the 175th anniversary of WELS in 2025, we are engaging Christian leaders around the world to join with confessional Lutherans in North America and beyond so that by 2025 the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) will be more widely known as a confessional Lutheran church body firmly founded on the Holy Scriptures and joyfully partnering to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ in Word and sacrament to as many people as possible around the globe.

What you will recognize

- WELS materials will present the gospel with remarkable clarity as an authentic voice of the confessional evangelical Lutheran church.

What may look new

- Existing Christian church bodies around the world will be training their pastors and other called workers with WELS materials and personnel in order to become authentic Lutherans.

World Missions

Recognizing the need for every soul to hear the gospel, by 2025 the Board for World Missions (BWM) will be working with all of the other areas of the synod to serve more than 1,000,000 souls worldwide (160,000 souls in 2016).

What you will recognize

- A world mission team that agrees on a scriptural Lutheran understanding of missiological terms and philosophy, using planning tools to keep the work focused on the one thing needful.
- Regional seminaries, national theological professors, functional Bible institutes, and regular on-site training from catechetical level on up supplemented by distance learning.
- Catechetical, Bible institute level, and seminary course materials in many languages.
- Expatriate missionaries increasingly in a training function.

What may look new

- The majority of missionaries, pastors, and other congregational leaders from the people groups themselves.
- Mission networks and mission support networks that transcend national boundaries.

Home Missions

Recognizing that sharing the gospel through the establishment of new gospel outposts in North America is the primary purpose of Home Missions, by 2025 the Board for Home Missions will continue to seek every opportunity to plant new ministries and to enhance gospel outreach in existing congregations in order to serve more than 300,000 communicant members and more than 400,000 baptized members in the United States (298,899 communicant members and 376,177 baptized members in 2016).

What you will recognize

- The goal of opening at least 10 new missions a year.
- Support for ministry enhancements in existing congregations.
- Coordinated support for all stages of ministry development, including repayment of building loans, with some congregations and programs achieving self-support every year.

What may look new

- Increased multi-site opportunities throughout mission fields.
- Increased flexibility in facility acquisitions (especially in high-cost areas), including the option to buy and renovate existing buildings.
- Self-supporting immigrant groups in urban areas with the majority of missionaries, pastors, and other leaders from the people groups themselves.
- Purposefully enhanced relationships with subsidiaries and parasynodicals in supporting mission opportunities.

Joint Mission Council

With the combined resources and coordination of Home and World Missions, working with Ministerial Education programs for training non-traditional workers, by 2025 the Joint Mission Council (JMC) will coordinate the networking of confessional Lutherans from at least a dozen people groups with which WELS members come into contact.

What you will recognize

- Regular meetings of leaders from people groups in our fellowship.

What may look new

- Just-in-time Lutheran training at the appropriate doctrinal level for any individual who wants to serve as a pastor, teacher, or missionary anywhere in the world, building on our current Pastoral Studies Institute program.
- Organizational structures that facilitate the new ministry.

Ministerial Education

Recognizing God's grace in the precious Lutheran heritage of proclaiming the unconditional gospel that has been passed to our generation, by 2025 the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) will be working with all of the other areas of synod to provide the right number of pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and missionaries so that annual vacancy levels remain under 10 percent (8 percent vacancy rate in 2016).

What you will recognize

- Graduates who are willing to serve anywhere that the church needs them, who believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, and who subscribe without reservation to the Lutheran Confessions.
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), offering theological training that prepares men to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS or of churches within our confessional fellowship, and endeavoring to offer opportunity for theological and professional growth to called workers who already are serving in the ministry of our confessional fellowship.
- Martin Luther College (MLC), training a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of WELS and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. These Christian witnesses include men ready for pastoral training at WLS; men and women ready for service as teachers and staff ministers in the synod's churches, schools, and other institutions; men and women ready for other church ministries, both full and part time, responding to the needs of WELS; international students preparing for ministry in partnership with WELS mission fields; and men and women in programs of continuing education that meet the ministerial needs of WELS.
- Michigan Lutheran Seminary, preparing high school students for the public ministry of the gospel, encouraging them to enroll at MLC.
- Luther Preparatory School, preparing and encouraging young men and women for the full-time ministry in WELS.

What may look new

- Declining rates of educational debt held by graduates of MLC.
- Comprehensive long-term plans to maintain and improve the physical plants of the ministerial education schools.
- Growing participation with partners in Home and World Missions to serve diverse ethnic populations in global ministry.
- Rapidly growing numbers of teachers in self-supporting Lutheran schools in major U.S. urban areas.
- More comprehensive training and certification of principals and early childhood directors.

Congregation and District Ministry

Recognizing the vital importance of congregational health, by 2025, under the direction of the Conference of Presidents (COP), Congregational Services (CS) will serve congregations and their leaders by providing resources, training, and personal assistance so that they might carry out gospel ministry in the most faithful way on the local level.

What you will recognize

- The Commission on Worship, helping parishes in their central activity of worship that glorifies God and strengthens his people.
- The Commission on Evangelism, assisting congregations and members to seize every opportunity the Lord provides for personal witnessing to evangelize lost souls.
- The Commission on Special Ministries, offering spiritual and practical guidance and training to congregations and individuals as they share God's love to those with needs or circumstances that prevent them from being served through the congregation's usual ministry.
- The Commission on Lutheran Schools, guiding and assisting congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening both elementary and secondary Lutheran schools as well as early childhood ministries.

What may look new

- A new printed hymnal and psalter completely supported by electronic worship planning resources.
- The activities of all of CS generated by the needs and priorities identified by the COP through Commission on Congregational Counseling contacts with congregations and considered requests from individuals and parasynodical organizations.
- Expanded activities of the Commission on Adult Discipleship and the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry under one director.
- An emphasis on reclaiming wandering sheep.

"Lord Grant While Worlds Endure We Keep Its Teachings Pure"

Resources

It is the stated goal of WELS leadership and the synod in convention to have Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) serve as the foundational source of financial support for synodical ministries. In order to carry out the plans and goals listed in this long-range plan, under God's blessing and by his grace alone, the Conference of Presidents (COP) will coordinate the work of circuit pastors, WELS Communication Services, and the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving to encourage CMO gifts as well as special gifts from individuals and groups for the general work of WELS and for specific gospel projects. The Synodical Council (SC) will coordinate the use of CMO, general gifts placed in previous years in the Financial Stabilization Fund, and specific gifts in each biennial ministry plan.

Resource allocation

The synod president will consult with the President's Advisory Council (PAC) to develop a biennial ministry plan for presentation to the Synodical Council and the synod convention. The ministry plan will reflect continuity in our work of proclaiming the gospel as well as considered decisions for dealing with new circumstances and opportunities as they arise.

Faithful use of resources for mission and ministry

The work of the synod takes place properly with a scriptural worldview of 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. They listen to the Word, repent of their sin, return to the cross, and treasure the sweet news of full forgiveness in Jesus. They form visible churches to hold faithfully to the Word of God without compromise and then to proclaim the saving message of that pure Word to the world, throughout all generations.

Appendix 2: 2019 WELS convention compliance listing

Committee resolution	Responsible group	Resolution description	Status
Res 2-03	COP	2021 synod convention at Michigan Lutheran Seminary	<i>July 2021; location and format changed to mini-convention at Luther Prep due to COVID restrictions</i>
Res 2-04	COP	Encouragement to the COP to publicize the staff ministry program and encourage congregations to consider calling a staff minister when expanding their ministry	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 2-05	President	Forward the convention offering of \$5,038 to World Missions for the support of the Hmong Vietnam outreach effort	<i>Completed after convention</i>
Res 3-01	CICR	Declare formal fellowship with the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ–Kenya	<i>Completed at 2019 convention</i>
Res 3-02	CICR	Declare formal fellowship with the Christian Lutheran Evangelical Church of Taiwan	<i>Completed at 2019 convention</i>
Res 5-01	SC	Unfunded Priority List adopted; to be used as a guide for the SC if funding becomes available	<i>Ongoing</i>
Rpt 5-02	SC	SC is to clarify information regarding “Fair Market Value” as used in the salary matrix and to clarify how to implement cost of living adjustments after the first year of ministry	<i>Completed</i>
Res 6-01	SC	Ministry Financial Plan adopted; provides funding and spending plan for WELS ministries	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 8-01	World Missions	Encourage congregations to contact WELS Missions Promotions to schedule mission Sundays; encourage congregations to make use of Mission Journeys program	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 9-01	Ministerial Education; Ministry of Christian Giving; COP	Encourage support for MLC’s “Equipping Christian Witnesses” effort	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 12-01	SC; Board for Ministerial Education; Ministry of Christian Giving	SC and BME give prioritization to funding the 21st-Century Principal cohort; congregations and individuals be encouraged to support the program; congregations be encouraged to publicize the 21st-Century Lutheran Principal initiative and teachers be encouraged to participate	<i>Ongoing</i>
Res 12-02	SC	Consider additional funding for the Commission on Lutheran Schools	<i>Considered in the current planning process; part-time staff added</i>
Res 16-01	WELS Christian Aid and Relief	Encouragements to expand efforts	<i>Ongoing; full-time director called and is now serving</i>

Accounting Oversight Committee

Floor Committee #6

Our calling

The Accounting Oversight Committee serves WELS and its schools, subsidiaries, and affiliates that are under the oversight of the Synodical Council (SC). The committee serves the SC by assisting management with ensuring appropriate accounting policies and internal controls are established and financial systems are efficient and effective; retaining external auditors; assisting in ensuring that financial personnel have the requisite skills; and by assisting in ensuring that financial reports are prepared timely, accurately, and in compliance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (U.S. GAAP).

The Accounting Oversight Committee keeps the SC informed of its action through the SC's appointed member of the committee. The synod's schools, subsidiaries, and affiliate boards, commissions, and committees are informed through WELS' chief financial officer.

Our current situation

The Accounting Oversight Committee engaged the independent audit firm of Baker Tilly US, LLP (Baker Tilly), to conduct the annual audits of the consolidated financial statements of WELS, its schools, and its Support Services subsidiaries for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic forced these audits to be planned and performed entirely remotely. Through the cooperation of WELS and the schools' financial services teams and Baker Tilly, all of the audits were completed within four months of the fiscal year end (consistent with historical precedent), with all entities receiving an unmodified opinion—the best you can get—on the financial statements' compliance with U.S. GAAP. In addition, the auditors did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls. Copies of the annual financial statements, quarterly consolidated financial statements, and quarterly budget reports are available on WELS Financial Services' site at wels365.sharepoint.com/sites/finance/SitePages/Home.aspx.

WELS successfully implemented the following accounting guidance changes issued by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020, all of which did not have a significant impact on the consolidated financial statements of WELS:

- guidance related to revenue recognition from contracts with customers;
- guidance on improving disclosure related to contributions received;
- guidance related to fair value disclosures of financial instruments;
- guidance detailing changes to the statement of cash flows to include restricted cash in addition to all other cash and cash equivalents; and
- guidance on improving the presentation of pension and postretirement benefit costs.

In addition to the annual WELS financial statement audits, the Accounting Oversight Committee also engaged Baker Tilly to audit the WELS VEBA Group Health Plan and WELS Pension Plan for calendar year 2020. These financial statements received unmodified opinions for 2019, and the auditors did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls. The 2020 calendar year audits for these two entities won't be available until early summer 2021 and are expected to be similar to prior years' results.

The Accounting Oversight Committee has deliberated over the years whether to recommend that a financial statement audit be performed on the Shepherd Plan. An audit of the Shepherd Plan is not required as the plan is not subject to the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended (ERISA). In previous years, a review of the Shepherd Plans' controls was conducted with the assistance of Baker Tilly, the plan advisor and third-party administrator, noting that the control environment is strong and steps have been taken to inform participating entities of their responsibilities. As a result, the Accounting Oversight Committee continues to believe that the cost of an audit is not warranted.

During 2020, Mr. Kyle Egan started as WELS chief financial officer following the retirement of Mr. Todd Poppe, who served as WELS chief financial officer for the past 16 years. Egan was found through a search conducted by President Mark Schroeder with the input of the Synodical Council Executive Committee and the Accounting Oversight

Committee. In his retirement, Poppe has volunteered to work with Egan to ensure a smooth transition as Egan familiarizes himself with his new role. The Accounting Oversight Committee has also been assisting in acclimating Egan to the WELS financial reporting and control environment as well as the monitoring of WELS risk management and insurance programs.

A look ahead

The Accounting Oversight Committee will work with WELS Financial Services in assessing the impacts of new accounting guidance related to contributions made, leases, fair value measurements, collections, contributed nonfinancial assets, and credit losses. In addition, the five-year contract for audit services with Baker Tilly will be terminating with the fiscal year 2021 audits. The Accounting Oversight Committee will help to assess the strategy for either renewing services with Baker Tilly or transitioning to a new accounting firm.

Mr. Bill Schultz, reporter

Mr. Bill Schultz, chairman

Mr. Todd Backus

Mr. Jeff Fisher

Mr. Daniel Riebe

Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, Synodical Council liaison

Mr. Gary Schmid

Advisory:

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

WELS Archives Floor Committee #6

Our calling

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Archives is the official repository of the permanent records of WELS and its congregations, called workers, and WELS-affiliated ministries. These permanent records are those of significant historical value for the synod and its congregations, and they document all aspects of WELS administration, mission, and ministry. The mission of the archives is to preserve and protect these records and make them available for researchers as well as provide information services to the synod and its called workers and congregations.

Our current situation

As is the case with all our daily lives, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about many changes to the daily operations of the synod archives. Many of these changes are still in place as this is written. However, even with these changes the Lord has greatly blessed the archives.

Throughout 2019 and the first two months of 2020, the archives had six volunteers who came in on a weekly basis. These men and women generously gave of their own time to help with various projects in the archives. With their assistance, projects like inventories of collections, filing work, processing collections, and initial organization of newly donated collections were completed. In March 2020, with Wisconsin's stay at home order, the opportunity for volunteers to come in ceased. Without the help of the volunteers, many of the projects they were working on also came to a halt. As of March 2021, volunteers have not been able to return to the archives. It is hoped they will be able to return in the coming months.

In 2019 more than 1,000 visitors came to the Center for Mission and Ministry. Most of them also toured the Visitors Center and the Archives. While most of the tours were smaller groups of people, several large tours took place, including students from grade schools, Martin Luther College, and Luther Preparatory School. These tours are a great opportunity to help people understand how the archives can assist them and their congregations. The year 2020 only saw one tour come through the Visitors Center and Archives before the building closed to the public.

Outreach opportunities in 2019 and the first three months of 2020 were abundant for the archivist. The archives had a table at the 2019 Lutheran Women's Missionary Society Convention in Des Moines, Iowa; the 2019 synod convention in New Ulm, Minn.; the 2020 National Conference on Lutheran Leadership in Chicago, Ill.; and the 2020 Mission and Ministry Conference held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis. At the beginning of 2020 the archivist was able to give two small group presentations on the work of the archives. The first was to a retired pastor's group and the second was to an Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) group. In October 2020 the archivist was interviewed by the curator of the Chudnow Museum of Yesteryear for "Ask an Archivist Day." The interview was streamed on the Chudnow Facebook Page and the WELS Historical Institute Facebook Page. This was a great chance for people from a wider audience to learn about the archives and the work of an archivist.

During the last two years the archivist has participated in many professional development opportunities. In May 2019 the archivist was a panelist at the Archives and Education Symposium hosted by Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minn. In November 2019 she attended the Lutheran Historical Conference Archivist and Historian's Meeting hosted by Concordia Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. This conference was a great occasion to meet archivists from the other Lutheran synods, collaborate with them on how we can advance the knowledge of Lutheran archives to wider audiences, and brainstorm about problems we all encounter. After this conference the archivist joined the Lutheran Historical Conference and in October 2020 attended the digital Biennial Conference of the Lutheran Historical Conference.

Research requests are becoming a more prominent part of the archivist's daily workflow. In 2019 more than 175 research requests were handled by the archivist. These varied in range from assisting congregations with preparations for major anniversaries to genealogical research requests to assisting students with historical research projects. In 2020, the number of research requests were lower with just more than 100 requests being handled by the archivist. During the first three months of 2021, the archivist handled 33 research requests.

Donations continue to arrive at the archives for preservation. Major collections donated to the archives include additions to the Apache Mission Collection, materials for the Milwaukee Lutheran Chorale, the Frederick Nitz Collection, The South Central District Papers, the Organization for WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) Collection, and several congregational collections. These materials will be processed, cataloged, and made available for research as soon as possible. It is a blessing that people continue to think of the archives when it comes to preserving these important collections and make the effort to get the materials to the archives.

Despite the upheaval of 2020, or perhaps because of it, significant progress has been made on digital records and collections in the archives. Ten major collections had records added to the online catalog for the archives. These additions have proven beneficial as several of the research requests received in the last year have been the direct result of someone finding the records in the online catalog. Several significant collections have been digitized within the last year as well. The synod convention *Proceedings* have been scanned and made keyword searchable back to 1927. The *Book of Reports and Memorials* have also been scanned and made keyword searchable back to 1967. *The Northwestern Lutheran* has been scanned from the start of the publication in 1914 through 1952 as of March 2021. These three materials are extremely beneficial for researchers and help speed up response time to many research requests.

A look ahead

The archivist is highly anticipating the return of volunteers, researchers, student groups, and visitors to the Archives and Visitors Center. There is also optimism for the opportunity for outreach to take place at conferences and conventions near the end of 2021 and into 2022. The archivist plans to have a table at the 2021 synod convention in Watertown, Wis., and the 2021 OWLS Convention in New Ulm, Minn. Another conference currently scheduled for fall 2021 that the archivist hopes to attend is the Lutheran Historical Conference Biennial Conference in Baltimore, Md.

With a return of volunteers to the archives, it is hoped that much of the work that has been placed on hold since March of 2020 will be resumed. Processing work on congregational collections and inventories of large collections will resume in full when volunteers are able to return to the archives. Work will continue enhancing the digital collections. Once the *Book of Reports and Memorials* are completely scanned, the archivist plans to move on to the *Report to the Twelve Districts*. Work continues scanning *The Northwestern Lutheran*. The goal is to scan them to the year 2000, when it changed from *The Northwestern Lutheran* to *Forward in Christ*. This will hopefully be completed in the next few months.

Incoming collections will continue to be processed and cataloged. With more researchers finding and utilizing the online catalog, the archivist remains committed to continuing to expand and update the online catalog. There are several collections that have priority for being added to the online catalog.

The Lord has greatly blessed the work of the archives and continues to allow the archivist to help congregations and individuals explore and learn more about the history of our great synod. In the last two years the archives have grown and flourished by God's grace and we humbly ask that he continue to bless the work and efforts of the archivist and many volunteers.

Mrs. Susan Willems, reporter

WELS Christian Aid and Relief Floor Committee #17

Our calling

WELS Christian Aid and Relief (CAR) is one of our synod's compassion ministries, bringing physical relief to people suffering from natural disasters and severe medical and financial emergencies in the form of cash grants, food, clothing, medical supplies, and volunteer labor. Christian Aid and Relief also partners with WELS Home and World Missions to support humanitarian aid projects that lead to many opportunities to proclaim the gospel. In addition, Christian Aid and Relief partners with congregations to assist members who are going through an extreme medical or financial crisis. The theme passage that guides our mission is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (6:10). Because of God's gracious blessings to us, we are eager to reflect Christ's love and compassion to those in need. We seek to personalize our efforts by distributing funds through our churches and missions. We partner with them to encourage local relief efforts on behalf of their own members and community. We bring in trained volunteers to assist with relief efforts when appropriate.

Our current situation

On July 1, 2021, Pastor Daniel Sims was installed as the first pastor to serve as full-time director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief.

Christian Aid and Relief is not funded in the WELS budget but relies on the special offerings of WELS members. Thank you for your gifts of love.

Our expenditures are divided into two categories: relief expenditures and humanitarian aid projects. From July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, our relief expenditures were \$682,685 with \$432,695 designated for domestic relief efforts and \$249,990 for foreign relief efforts. From July 1, 2020, to Feb. 1, 2021, our relief expenditures were \$549,271 total with \$379,383 designated for domestic and \$169,888 for foreign.

There were numerous opportunities to provide disaster relief in the last two years. In May 2020 a rainstorm caused two dams to fail north of Midland, Mich., bringing widespread and catastrophic flooding to the area. The church and parsonage at Holy Scripture, Midland, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, our sister synod, was flooded and heavily damaged. One of our disaster trailers was dispatched to the scene as a crew of volunteers worked to clean out the buildings. We were also able to assist with cleanup costs.

In August 2020, a sudden "derecho" (inland hurricane with sustained winds of over 100 miles per hour) caused widespread damage to the city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and other nearby communities. Four disaster trailers were dispatched to Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, where a large crew of volunteers worked for more than two weeks at the homes of members and non-members alike to clear downed trees and debris and to provide generators for those who had no power. We are grateful for these faithful volunteers who often express what a joy it is to help others in their time of need.

Numerous disaster grants were also given to congregations and individuals impacted by hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and floods in places like Texas and the Philippines, Florida, and Bangladesh.

Pandemic relief has also been a large part of our work since March 2020. In January 2021, WELS Christian Aid and Relief partnered with WELS Home Missions to provide matching grants to mission congregations to encourage

them to reach out to those in their communities hit hard by the pandemic by providing physical, emotional, and spiritual support. Twenty-four mission congregations received \$166,300 in grants for this work. Since March 2020 an additional \$343,384 has been utilized to aid congregations and WELS organizations with COVID-19 relief. In addition, at the time of this writing, Christian Aid and Relief has offered a second round of matching grants open to any WELS congregation that has a plan in place to help those in their community who are struggling due to COVID-19. Congregations can apply for matching grants up to \$2,500.

Many thousands of dollars were also given to support humanitarian aid projects in Home and World Missions. \$466,212 was granted for humanitarian aid projects in 2019–20. \$515,719 was approved for 2020–21. These dollars fund such projects as food distribution to the poor; free health clinics; classes on sewing, knitting, and growing vegetables; lunch packs for breastfeeding mothers; winter fuel for refugees and orphans; medical supplies and equipment; warm clothes; boreholes (wells); mosquito netting; smokeless stoves; school backpacks for underprivileged children; meals for low-income seniors; and assistance for legal immigrants. This work is happening all over the world in places like Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria, Indonesia, Albania, Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine, Mexico, Canada, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and right here in the United States. \$74,000 was granted to support our Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMP) in Zambia and Malawi during the past biennium. These projects offer our home and world missionaries opportunities to show how much we care by bridging gospel proclamation with acts of compassion.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief also regularly provides help for families and individuals with catastrophic personal financial and medical crises by assisting the local efforts of congregations and missions as they reach out to those among them in need. Christian Aid and Relief has granted \$345,086 in grants for this purpose since July 1, 2019. Contact us if an opportunity arises in your own congregation.

There has been a change to how we manage the funds God's people entrust to our care. In the past Christian Aid and Relief offered seven options through our online giving page (wels.net/relief) for designating a gift for our work: the Christian Aid and Relief Fund (general use), the Humanitarian Aid Fund (gospel bridge-building efforts in Home and World Missions), the Earthquake Disaster Relief Fund, the Fire Disaster Relief Fund, the Flood Disaster Relief Fund, the Hurricane Disaster Relief Fund, and the Tornado Disaster Relief Fund. This year we have combined the various disaster funds into one general Disaster Relief Fund. (Note: Gifts remaining in the five designated disaster relief funds will be distributed for those purposes before the funds are closed.) There are two reasons for this change: simplicity and flexibility. Offering disaster relief through one fund simplifies the accounting process. Instead of five funds, there is just one fund to manage. In addition, this approach allows us the flexibility of using the gifts given by God's people where and when they are most needed for whatever disaster may have happened. We thank our gracious Lord for moving the hearts of WELS members to show how much they care with their prayers and gifts of love.

A look ahead

Each year the Christian Aid and Relief Commission reviews humanitarian aid grant requests forwarded to us from the Board for World Missions and the Board for Home Missions. These projects provide our missionaries with a vital tool to help them build bridges to proclaim the gospel to the precious souls they serve in our mission fields. Our home and world mission fields continually bring us new humanitarian aid opportunities.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is always looking for ways to improve communication to the members of our synod. Videos are regularly produced to educate people in WELS about our work and to let those who support this ministry see firsthand how their gifts are being used. More information can be found on our webpage at wels.net/relief or on our Facebook page. In addition, our webpage provides a convenient way to make an online donation toward Christian Aid and Relief projects. Committee members also make presentations to various church and school groups to "tell our stories," letting WELS members know about the needs and opportunities to help people through Christian Aid and Relief. Contact us to learn more. We are partnering with other WELS agencies, such as WLCFS—Christian Family Solutions, Kingdom Workers, and the WELS Nurses Association to coordinate volunteers to assist in relief efforts when appropriate.

One of our major goals for the next biennium is to train and equip our congregations in advance how to respond when a disaster strikes their congregation or community. Soon a task force will be formed to develop training procedures and training materials to assist our congregations to prepare to give aid and relief to people in their congregation and community when a disaster strikes. Our plan is to have district or regional disaster relief teams established and operational soon. We continue to build a database of individual volunteers ready to serve when called upon.

We thank outgoing member Mr. Tom Hering for his faithful service to our commission, and we welcome new member, Teacher Steve Vasold.

Rev. Daniel Sims, reporter

Rev. Robert Hein, chairman
Rev. Bruce Marggraf, secretary
Mr. Dennis Palmberg
Teacher Steve Vasold
Rev. Richard Warnecke

Advisory:

Mrs. Elizabeth Zambo, administrative assistant

Support Services Floor Committee #14

Support Services is the area that encompasses Financial Services, Technology, Human Resources, and Facility Services. These areas support the ministry of the synod and its four ministerial education schools.

Technology Floor Committee #14

Our calling

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

WELS Technology divides its work into 10 service areas:

1. Information Technology administration;
2. workstations, mobile, and peripherals;
3. project management;
4. security and disaster recovery;
5. servers and storage;
6. documentation and training;
7. end-user support;
8. network and telephony;
9. application and web development; and
10. application and web maintenance.

Through these services WELS technology supports the ministry efforts of Home and World Missions, Ministerial Education, Congregational Services, subsidiaries, other synod agencies, and individual churches and schools. Great care has been taken to organize according to ministry needs.

Our primary calling is connecting gospel-sharers with the available technologies that can better assist in the spread of that gospel. Time and resources are set aside to help with the process of making technologies available to those

who would like to share the good news by “any means possible.” We believe our calling is to find those intersections between technology and ministry.

Our current situation

The technology industry continues to evolve at light speed. WELS Technology attempted to incorporate necessary changes to ensure the security and privacy of synod assets but also implement appropriate technologies that supported new ways of accomplishing ministry tasks. The areas of attention were infrastructure, data, security, and resource availability.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is the underlying technology that supports the day-to-day operations of the synod. It involves data storage, telephony, information sharing, and the software and hardware necessary to help synod workers be as productive as possible.

WELS Technology leverages Microsoft technologies to fulfill many of its infrastructure requirements. As a non-profit entity, WELS can take advantage of favorable pricing from Microsoft and makes product selection and integration an easier and less risky endeavor. In early 2021 Microsoft Teams was rolled out to support internal and external telephony, instant messaging or “chat,” as well as digital “teams” that promote easy topical discussions and secure file sharing. This product has improved workflow, promoted freer information sharing, and provided a unified communications platform. It allows workers to have a portable communications center wherever they have their computer, tablet, or phone. With a partial rollout in 2020, this made work-from-home scenarios possible. There were very few things that could not be done during COVID-19 “safer-at-home” governmental orders. Many meetings are still being conducted via Teams videoconferencing as workers find it easy to set up and effective to use. Zoom video conferencing was also made available for most external meetings. In preparation to a full return to in-person work at the Center for Mission and Ministry, two “Teams Rooms” have been equipped with video cameras, speakers, and microphones to enable conferencing as desired. One “Zoom Room” is also available.

Over the past several years most employees have been equipped with portable laptop computers, moving away from the traditional and less mobile desktop units. This also contributed to our ability to function when away from the office as required. Care is taken to provide reliable equipment that can be easily maintained and supported, even remotely. The WELS Help Desk is well equipped to handle calls and help tickets in support of virtual workers.

Another initiative that allowed for more seamless support for virtual work and disaster preparedness is the use of secure, cloud-based servers and services. Less reliance on Center for Mission and Ministry infrastructure allows for work-from-anywhere possibilities. In general, the assets are more secure and more available. Care is taken to select hosting partners and software-as-a-service vendors with a good reputation and who demonstrate industry-leading security best practices.

Data

The hub of most synod data is an application called WELSource. It houses information about all our churches, schools, and called workers. Each teacher assessment, updated Yearbook entry, annual statistical report contribution, and call activity is maintained by WELSource. In 2020, the old platform called Progress was finally retired after more than 25 years of use and an eight-year project to upgrade to WELSource. It provides secure access from any Internet browser and is maintained by synod employees trained and supported by the WELS Technology team. A key aspect of building any data-driven application is a deep analysis of the data, how it relates to other data, and how the data is used.

Business analysts collaborated with areas of ministry to determine the best way to set up forms, edit screens, and complex reports. Here is just a sampling of some of the features of WELSource that were rolled out in the last year:

- congregation and school statistical reporting,
- Congregation Mission Offerings,
- called worker data maintenance (profiles, evaluations, call activity),
- Yearbook publishing,
- Pension Plan administration,
- Home Missions monthly reporting,
- teacher evaluations and assessments, and
- external request forms (examples include Christian Aid and Relief requests, conference registrations, contact forms, mission kit requests).

Security

The other major warehouse for synod data is through our Accounting and Donor Management vendor, Blackbaud. It houses financial and donor-related information. Unfortunately, in the summer of 2020 Blackbaud reported that a data breach had occurred, affecting most of their customers. While there is no evidence that the stolen data (including banking information and social security numbers) was ever made public, WELS was required to notify all individuals whose data was included in the breach. That amounted to about 7,000 people who received a notice about the breach and the availability of two free years of identity theft monitoring offered by CyberScout through Blackbaud. Blackbaud has made significant changes to their data security practices and assured its customers that a breach of this type would not be possible going forward. WELS continually evaluates its vendor relationships for both the value and integrity of their services.

The safety, integrity, and security of synod data is a priority. The synod maintains sensitive information about all called workers and their families, donors, college students, missionaries, churches, schools, and other institutions. Some systems receive financial information, credit card data, and other data that, in the wrong hands, would harm WELS members and the organizations they belong to. This could include attempts to ransom data, sell information, steal identities, or cripple operations. WELS is General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant. We also work closely with our synod schools to ensure compliance with prevailing security regulations. To date, no information housed in synod-owned and operated databases has ever been compromised.

The Center for Mission and Ministry, synod schools, and Northwestern Publishing House regularly undergo a thorough Security and Privacy Risk Analysis. This process analyzes, documents, and plans for issues that may arise in the areas of PCI, GDPR/Privacy, and HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act). Both Martin Luther College and the Center for Mission and Ministry engaged FRSecure, a Minneapolis-based security firm, to conduct an external 360-degree security review and provide an associated roadmap for improvements. Both are in the process of reviewing the in-depth results and have begun mitigation activities. There is a concern that the number of person-hours necessary for full mitigation suggests work over multiple years.

Recent security improvements include:

- encrypted e-mail and safe mailboxes for external data gathering,
- full database encryption,
- multifactor authentication,
- Microsoft Identity Theft Projection licenses for all users,
- upgraded firewalls, and
- the use of KnowBe4 for employee security training and “phish” testing.

Resource availability

WELS Technology spends considerable time and energy connecting people with digital resources. This happens primarily through websites and the applications, forms, and reports that live on them. A number of those resources were covered in previous paragraphs on WELSource. However, many websites and applications in addition to WELSource serve the varied needs of the synod. Websites that have recently launched or been reworked include:

- **FreedomForCaptives.com**—a site to assist child abuse survivors and those who support them,
- **Listen.wels.net**—a set of tools that take digital “printed” content and makes that available in a narrated audio form so they can be enjoyed by the visually impaired,
- **ConquerorsThroughChrist.net**—a site to help those suffering from addictions to pornography, and
- **ForwardInChrist.net**—the digital version of the printed magazine that provides rich media and images that might better appeal to younger audiences.

Other online tools that assist our members were also developed over the last couple of years. An upgraded “Contact Us” application was launched recently that allows for easy question submission and subsequent assignment to internal experts who then can answer the many questions we receive. This tool, available at **contactus.wels.app** helps members and other interested individuals contact real people to get questions answered or their voices heard. Another specialized tool launched last year and available this year as well is the WELS Retirement Program Comparison Calculator. This allows for current Pension Plan participants to compare their benefits if the synod freezes the current Pension Plan and moves to a Defined Contribution Plan. It is available at **wels.net/retirement-benefit-calculator**.

There are several other tools that continue to get wide use. In coordination with the Synod Compensation Review Committee, an online calculator is available to support congregations and called workers who wish to compute compensation based on synod salary and benefit recommendations. The calculator accepts input ranging from additional responsibilities and education to housing allowances and cost of living adjustments. Recently the ability to calculate compensation for less than full-time calls was added. The tool can be found at **cwcompcalc.wels.net**. In addition, the WELS App, found at **wels.app**, is a web-based application providing access to devotional content, synod news, call reports, and the WELS Yearbook. It is a PWA (Progressive Web App), which allows it to be viewed on the web or installed on any smartphone for wider access and accessibility.

WELS Technology is working on multiple projects at any one time. For an up-to-the-minute list of all current and completed projects, please visit **cloud.wels.net/techprojects**. A word should also be said about the dedicated men and women who serve within WELS Technology. They work tirelessly to maintain the infrastructure and make the resources available, which we all enjoy. Please pray for them, and as you have occasion, thank them.

A look ahead

In the coming biennium, work will continue to build out the WELSource platform. There remains key functionality that has yet to be migrated from legacy systems. This will be important as some of the legacy systems come with high maintenance costs that can be avoided.

The biggest challenge ahead is security improvement and compliance. Each of the four synod schools as well as Northwestern Publishing House has needs in this area. While technically “compliant,” work is needed to better protect digital assets in an increasingly hostile environment. Medium- to small-size businesses, and especially non-profits, are becoming targets for malware, ransomware, and other intrusions that could prove very disruptive and harmful to business operations. Each of these units is thinly staffed and lacks true security expertise to be as vigilant as might be required. The hope is to provide additional resources to augment these efforts. How and how much are questions that remain to be answered.

Several web projects are on the horizon, including an upgrade to **wels.net**, the Christian Therapist Network, Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, a marriage site, as well as improved technology behind our donation sites. Many of these require coordination amongst different areas of ministry, Communication Services, and WELS Technology. Each provides unique resources and services to different audiences across the synod. We are also hopeful that the **WhatAboutJesus.com** site can be better leveraged to provide evangelistic resources in new and innovative ways.

Finally, a focus on providing better support for our mission fields will be a priority. In many cases our fields provide their own “tech support.” With the technologies of today, it is more feasible to support their efforts from afar and make sure they are well equipped to use effective tools and be able to turn to WELS Technology for guidance and day-to-day tech support.

The WELS Technology team looks forward to opportunities for service. As God has made available modern technologies for our use, we strive to be good stewards of them and enable our synod’s ministries to use them to spread the precious news of Jesus Christ’s saving work. To him be the glory.

Mr. Martin Spriggs, reporter

Financial Services

Floor Committee #14

Our calling

Financial Services prepares and provides accounting and financial information and services that support and serve WELS ministries. This is done by providing timely, accurate, and complete financial statements, reports, and analyses. These reports facilitate ministry by providing God-pleasing, efficient, and effective financial services and operations that are in accordance with policies, procedures, and regulations. Financial Services also designs, implements, and maintains internal control systems that safeguard the assets God has provided.

Financial Services is led by the WELS chief financial officer (CFO) and generally provides the following services to WELS, WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF), WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds (WIF), WELS Retirement Program Commission, and WELS Voluntary Employee Benefits Association (VEBA) Commission:

- financial planning and forecasting;
- accounting and auditing services, including financial statement preparation;
- transaction processing including gifts, accounts payable, and accounts receivable;
- special funds accounting;
- financial analysis and reporting;
- payroll processing;
- insurance and risk management;
- short-term investments, banking, and cash management;
- trust and other gift administration;
- coordination of corporate-wide programs including the credit card, foreign travel, and vehicle rental programs;
- non-profit state and federal compliance reporting;
- tax research, contract review, and third-party legal services coordination;
- unclaimed property management; and
- records retention.

Financial Services also provides many of these services through consultation to Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) and WELS' four ministerial education schools. Outside of Financial Services, the CFO also oversees the Human Resources and Facility Services departments. The CFO is the WELS treasurer and an advisor to the Synodical Council as well as an advisor to the Board for Ministerial Education, the Publication Coordinating Commission, the Accounting Oversight Committee, and the Compensation Review Committee. In addition, the CFO serves on the Capital Projects Committee and as an ex-officio member of the board of directors of NPH, CEF, WELS Foundation, WIF, WELS Retirement Program Commission, and WELS VEBA Commission.

Our current situation

Financial Services is blessed with a dedicated, talented staff with complementary education, training, and work experiences. The following is a summary of significant events or projects the Financial Services team worked on in the past year:

- Successfully maintained general operating effectiveness while having the entire Financial Services department work from home during early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020 to June 2020).
- Secured a \$2.7 million Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan from the Small Business Administration (SBA), assisted the four ministerial education schools along with NPH in obtaining their own PPP loans (cumulatively totaling \$4.7 million), and led the effort for PPP loan forgiveness amongst the entities.
- Assisted in research and communication roll-out regarding the eligibility for the parsonage allowance deduction for all synod ministry certified female called workers.
- Onboarded the new WELS CFO (Mr. Kyle Egan) following the retirement of Mr. Todd Poppe, who served as WELS CFO for the previous 16 years.
- Completed all audits (including planning and fieldwork procedures of our auditor Baker Tilly US, LLP) entirely remotely, yet still finished the audits within four months of fiscal year end (consistent with historical precedent), with all entities receiving an unmodified opinion (the best possible) on the financial statements.

- Implemented new accounting standards including revenue recognition from contracts with customers and disclosure/presentation requirements related to contributions received, fair value, cash flows and pension, and postretirement benefit costs.
- Monitored the support forecast and ministry financial plan for Fiscal Year 2021 in challenging economic times.
- Developed planning assumptions, support forecast, and synod support allocations for the fiscal 2022 and fiscal 2023 biennium ministry financial plan.

A look ahead

In addition to maintaining daily operations, Financial Services will continue to identify, investigate, and implement strategies that improve efficiency and effectiveness, reduce costs, and/or strengthen internal controls within the department and across WELS. Our upcoming plans include:

- Completing a request for proposal (RFP) process for the synod’s banking services.
- Starting to research possible alternatives to the current general ledger system that could improve efficiency and effectiveness across all entities.
- Utilizing the full functionality of the WorldAware travel monitoring and reporting solution to ensure those working and traveling abroad remain safe in ever-changing environments.
- Implementing new accounting standards related to contributions made and fair value.
- Completing research on the implementation of the new lease accounting standard that won’t be implemented until fiscal year 2023.
- Assisting with the RFP for payroll services.
- Cross-training employees to ensure service continuity during vacations, vacancies, and extended absences.

The Financial Services team is honored to serve and is prepared to use the available resources and its God-given skills and abilities to support the ministries of WELS.

Mr. Kyle Egan, reporter

Human Resources Floor Committee #14

Our calling

The synod’s Human Resources department oversees the personnel functions for synod personnel, including development, communication, and implementation of personnel policies; recruitment; compensation; benefits; performance management; and managing employee relations. Human Resources provides advice to supervisors on matters such as federal and state legal requirements to ensure compliance with labor laws.

Human Resources (HR) also serves as a resource to WELS congregations and to affiliated groups and entities on the matters mentioned above as well as for risk management and federal and state legal requirements related to personnel matters. Further, in addition to legally mandated reporting to authorities, any charge, report, or allegation of sexual misconduct or physical abuse that has been made of an incident involving pastors, teachers, vicars, full- or part-time employees, and volunteers in any capacity must be reported to the synod president, director of Lutheran Schools, or director of Human Resources.

Our current situation

Current WELS Human Resources staff consists of two full-time employees—the Human Resources director and a Human Resources generalist. Beyond day-to-day human resource management activities, a few key initiatives include:

- Staffed the following key lay worker positions over the last year: WELS chief financial officer; marketing coordinator; systems administrator, Technology; database specialist; Missions liaison; accounting specialist; and administrative assistant (three).

- **Pandemic:** Much time and resources redirected to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic including the closing of facilities, work from home accommodations, limiting travel and facility access, safe return of workers to the Center for Mission and Ministry in stages, providing personal protective equipment, increased sanitation/disinfecting measures, mask mandating, social distancing accommodations, quarantining of staff as a result of “contact tracing,” applicable interpretation of the CARES Act, Family First Coronavirus Response Act, etc. A crisis management team consisting of senior leadership oversaw the efforts.
- **Called worker compensation:** Announcement in July 2020 of the updated legal interpretation of the Internal Revenue Code providing the parsonage allowance tax benefit to WELS ministry certified female teachers and female staff ministers necessitated ongoing education and training of congregational leadership to properly implement these payroll changes. Human Resources continues to work with the Compensation Review Committee of the Synodical Council on review of the WELS Called Worker Compensation Guidelines. The Called Worker Compensation Calculator has been well received as a useful resource to calling bodies for both budget purposes and to assist in the calling process.
- Human Resources continues to work with congregations and WELS district presidents related to risk and personnel matters, as well as general compensation, benefit, and policy issues.
- **Affordable Care Act reporting and compliance:** Per Affordable Care Act (ACA) compliance requirements, large employers must file annual reports and monitor measurement periods to comply with the ACA’s employer mandate. Human Resources oversees this annual reporting process for the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry and WELS’ four ministerial education schools.
- **Synod board/committee nominee vetting:** Human Resources assists in the process of filling board/committee openings for positions appointed by the Synodical Council, mainly with vetting of nominees to establish willingness to serve, procuring resume and/or bio forms, and creation of a central database to maintain all nominee data and vacancy records.
- **Religious Worker Visas (R1):** HR facilitates the process of securing Religious Worker Visas to assist Lutheran high schools with placement of Martin Luther College international student graduates in teaching positions within the United States.

A look ahead

The key area of focus for the HR team going forward will be to evaluate current operations and to identify where efficiencies could be implemented while maintaining effectiveness. Over the next biennium HR will, with God’s guidance and blessings:

- Work with the crisis management team to facilitate safe return to full staff and visitors to the Center for Mission and Ministry as the COVID-19 pandemic subsides and ensure ongoing safety measures are in place.
- Perform due diligence on the vendors and systems in place within the HR structure. This will be an important step to ensure both the outcomes provided, as well as the cost, are appropriate and expected. Review of Payroll Services provider underway.
- Work with our areas of ministry and synodical schools in coordinating timely information and support for our workers.
- Facilitate learning and development programs for the management and staff of the synod entities.
- Provide continued training with synod leaders to continue to reinforce and develop the supervisory skills required.
- Work with the Synodical Council’s designated committee(s) in reviewing and evaluating HR policies and procedures and compensation programs at our synod-operated organizations.
- Continue providing support to WELS organizations in areas related to our synod human resources.

For synodical salary ranges, WELS compensation guidelines, and other called worker compensation information, see pp. 100-103.

Questions can be directed to hro@wels.net or call 414-256-3268.

Mr. Dennis Maurer, reporter

Facility Services

Floor Committee #14

Our calling

Facility Services provides support services to the ministries conducted at or through the synod corporate headquarters known as the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry. This objective is accomplished by providing a God-pleasing physical workspace conducive to ministry operations and by creating a welcoming environment to passersby, visitors, guests, and employees.

Our current situation

The Center for Mission and Ministry is located in Waukesha, Wis., along I-94 on Stone Ridge Drive and has approximately 33,000 square feet of space on two main floors, as well as a lower level with approximately 16,000 square feet of space. The lower level has been built out to accommodate the synod's archives, the WELS visitors center, and Northwestern Publishing House. Many of the routine services, such as cleaning, landscaping, snow removal, window washing, and HVAC controls and maintenance have been outsourced. Overall, the building, grounds, and fixed equipment are in good to excellent condition.

A look ahead

The Synodical Council created a Building Fund policy to ensure that an adequate funding source exists for maintenance and improvement of the Center for Mission and Ministry. The policy directs a portion of rents paid by WELS subsidiaries and its affiliate (WELS Church Extension Fund, WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds, Northwestern Publishing House, WELS Benefit Plans) to the Building Fund. The balance in the building fund is nearly \$400,000. Although the building is fairly new in some respects, the parking lot and building systems (like the HVAC system) are starting to show their age and may need to be replaced in the next three to five years. The replacement of the parking lot has been included within the ministry financial plan for a fiscal year 2023 project funded through the Building Fund.

Mr. Kyle Egan, reporter

Capital Projects Committee

Floor Committee #6

Our calling

The Capital Projects Committee was formed by the Board for Ministerial Education and WELS Financial Services to ensure that the synod's capital needs (primarily for the ministerial education schools), both for the maintenance of and new or improved facilities, were a component of the synod's ministry plans in the near term and longer term.

Our current situation

The Capital Projects Committee believes that the synod's facilities are generally well maintained and updated when funds are available. Through a use of operating funds, reserves, synod support, distributions from the ministerial education building endowment fund, and gifts, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, and Luther Preparatory School can adequately keep up on normal maintenance projects and modernization of their facilities and grounds. Michigan Lutheran Seminary has limited reserves and thus relies primarily on distributions from the ministerial education building endowment fund and gifts from the Michigan Lutheran Seminary Foundation for its facility maintenance and modernization needs. Collectively, these sources have proven to be adequate for the maintenance of the ministerial education facilities and grounds.

The WELS Center for Mission and Ministry facility needs are funded from its Building Fund. The Center for Mission and Ministry Building Fund is funded by subsidiary and affiliate rent for space at the Center for Mission and Ministry and is adequately funded for the foreseeable future.

The Capital Projects Committee has worked closely with Martin Luther College on the scope and plan for its new turf athletic facility (the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse), which is included in the third pillar of the “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign. Gifts from many individuals, congregations, and schools throughout WELS, in addition to a transformational gift received from two very generous donors, allowed for construction on this new athletic center to commence in 2021 with an anticipated opening for student use by the beginning of 2022.

A look ahead

Looking forward, the Capital Projects Committee, the Synodical Council, and the school governing boards have concerns about WELS’ longer-term ability to maintain and modernize the facilities and grounds at its schools. These concerns are predicated on a funding model that relies heavily on Congregation Mission Offerings, which have slightly declined during the last decade while operating costs such as wages, benefits, utilities, and insurances have continued to rise.

For the 2021–23 biennium, the following is the total planned spending on capital maintenance for multiple projects costing less than \$100,000.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary: \$650,000

Martin Luther College: \$525,000

Luther Preparatory School: \$255,000

Michigan Lutheran Seminary: \$71,000

In addition to the above maintenance projects for the biennium, the following projects costing more than \$100,000 are planned.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

FY22: New faculty residence

Martin Luther College

FY22 & FY23: Window and door replacements

FY22: Dormitory elevator installation

FY22: Turfed recreation facility (Betty Kohn Fieldhouse)

FY23: HVAC system

Luther Preparatory School

FY22: Wartburg dorm window replacement (part 2)

FY22: Replace 75-passenger bus

FY23: Wittenberg dorm window replacement (part 1)

FY23: Wartburg dorm new desks and dressers

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

FY23: Gym bleachers

Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, reporter

Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, chairman and Synodical Council lay representative

Mr. Matt Burow, lay representative

Mr. Chris Eubank, Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Mr. Scott Schmudlach, Martin Luther College

Mr. Brian Treichel, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Mr. Jim Waack, Luther Preparatory School

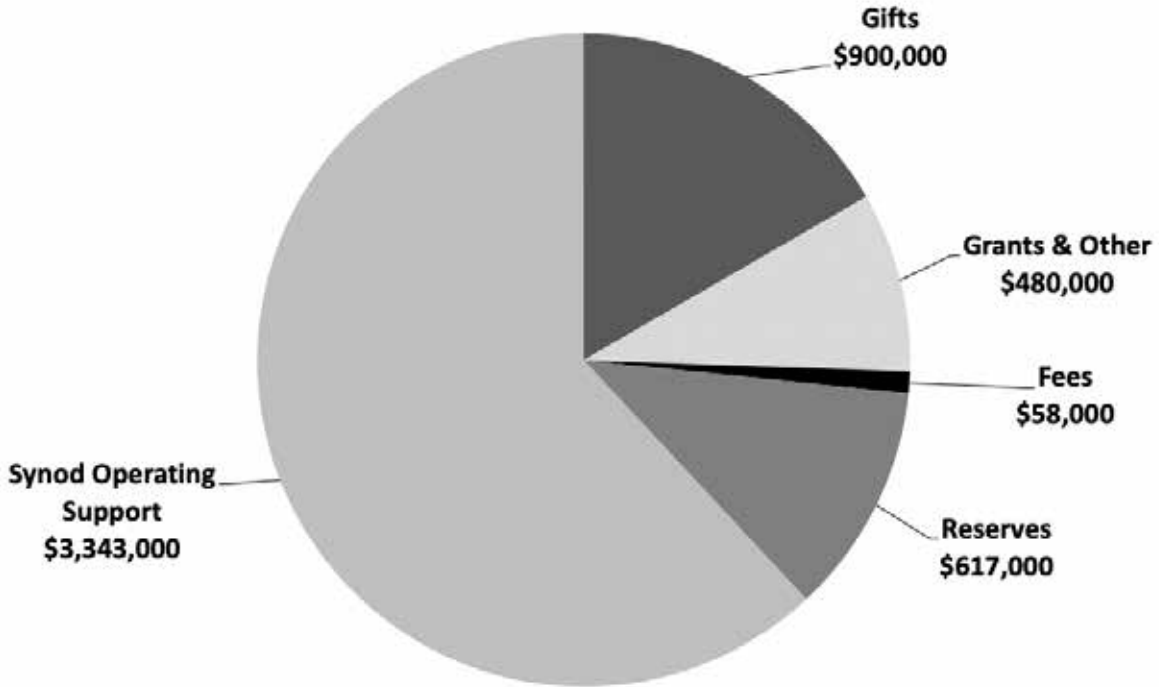
Mr. Dean Waldschmidt, WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Advisory members:

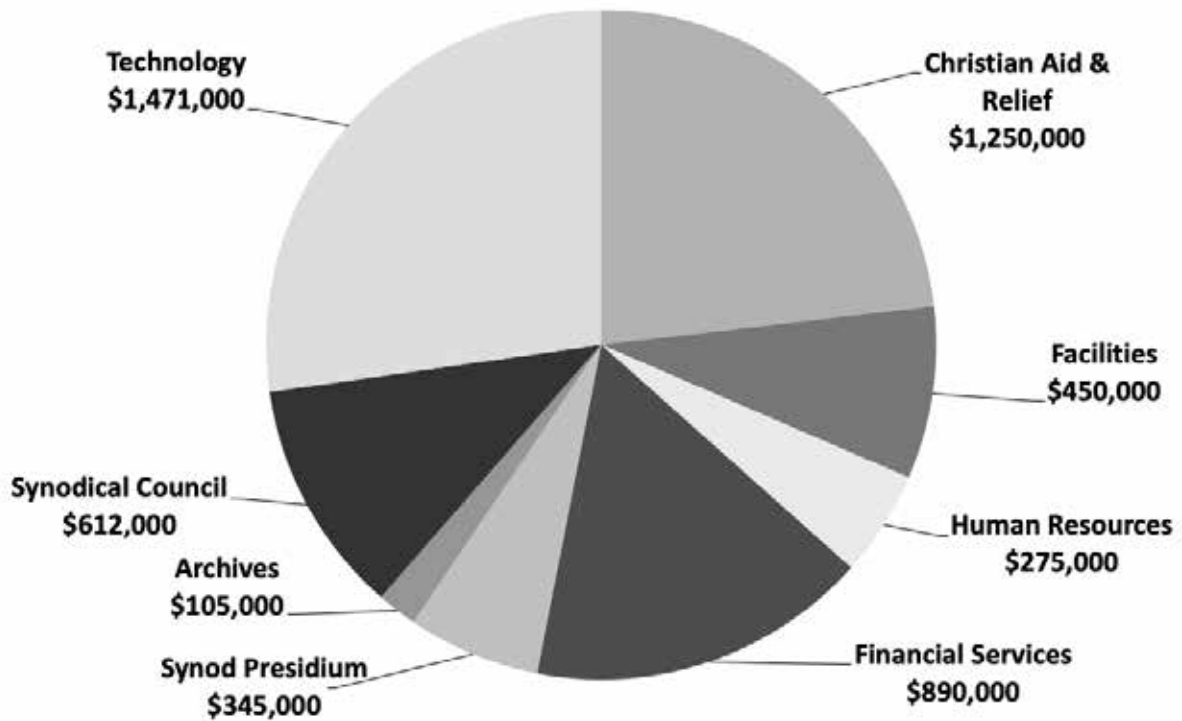
Ms. Carla Hulke, director of finance for Martin Luther College

Ms. Jamie Ristow, director of finance and accounting for WELS

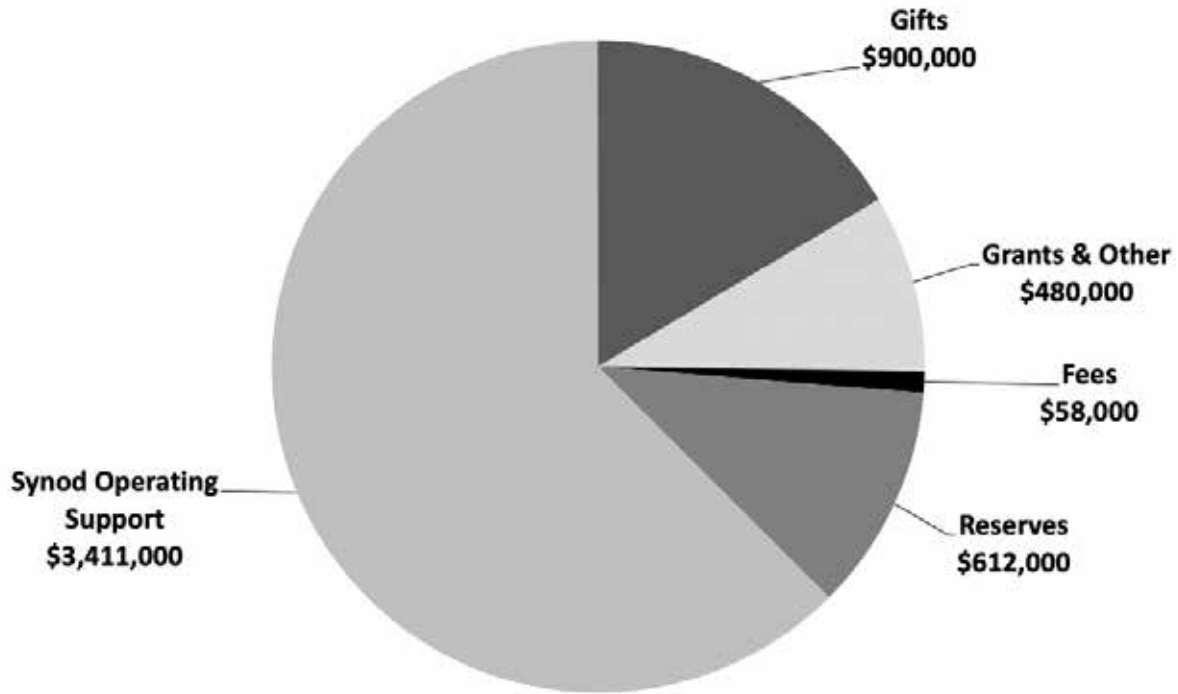
**FY 2021-22 Support
Ministry Support
\$5,398,000**



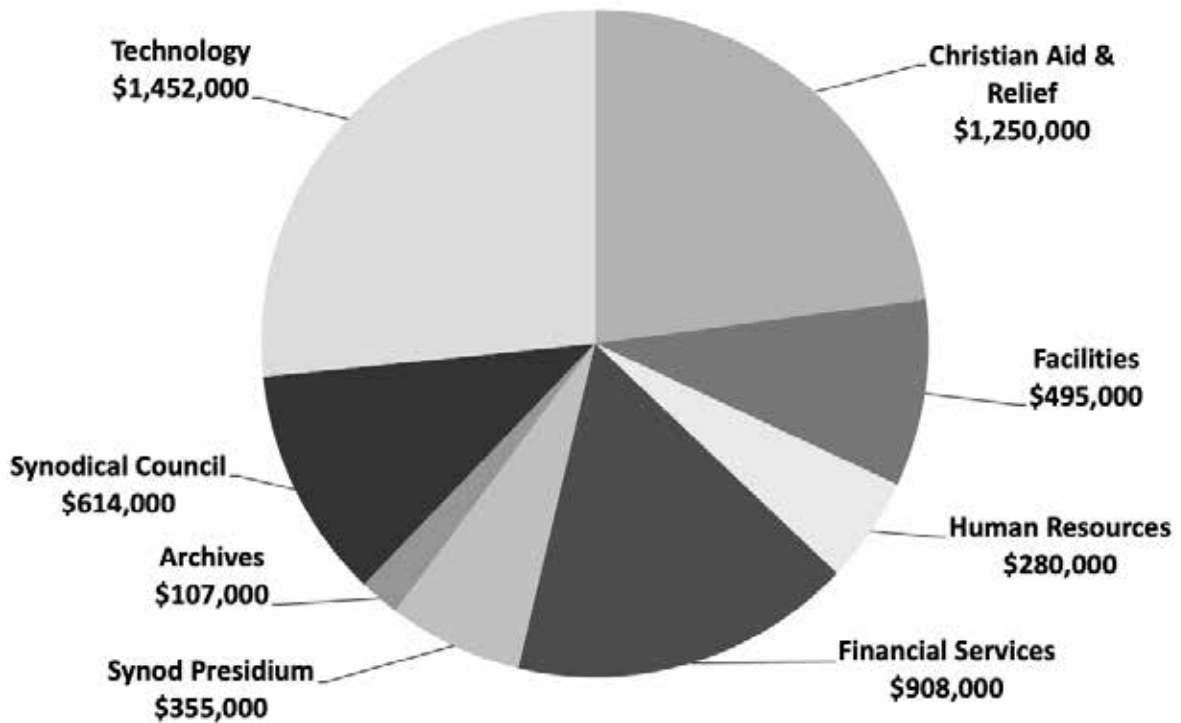
**FY 2021-22 Expenses
Ministry Support
\$5,398,000**



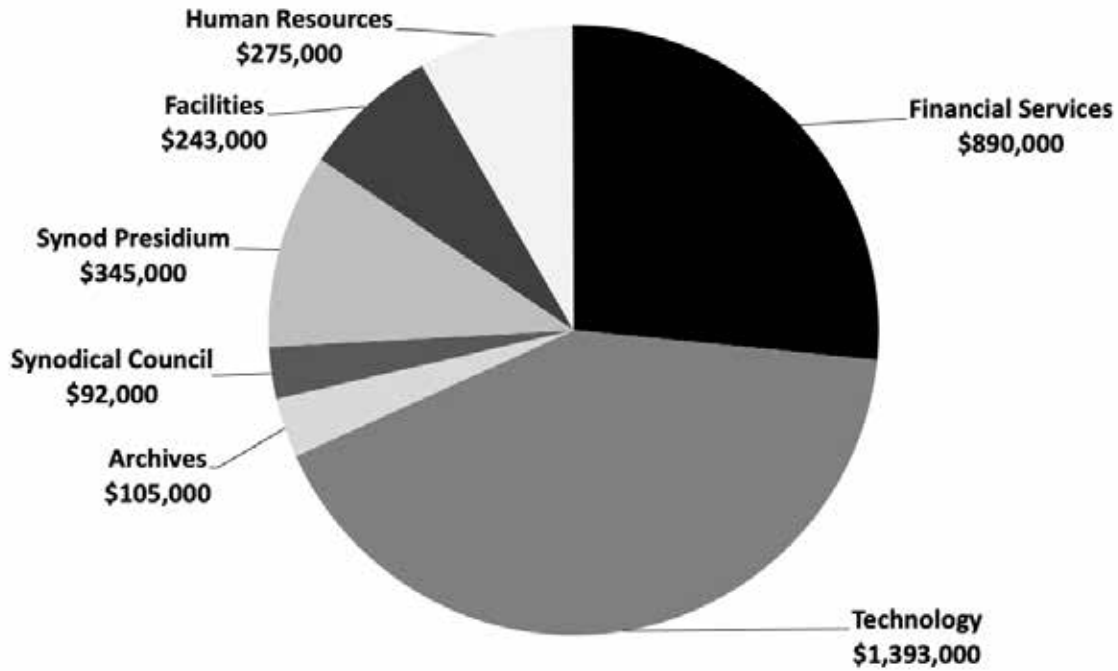
**FY 2022-23 Support
Ministry Support
\$5,461,000**



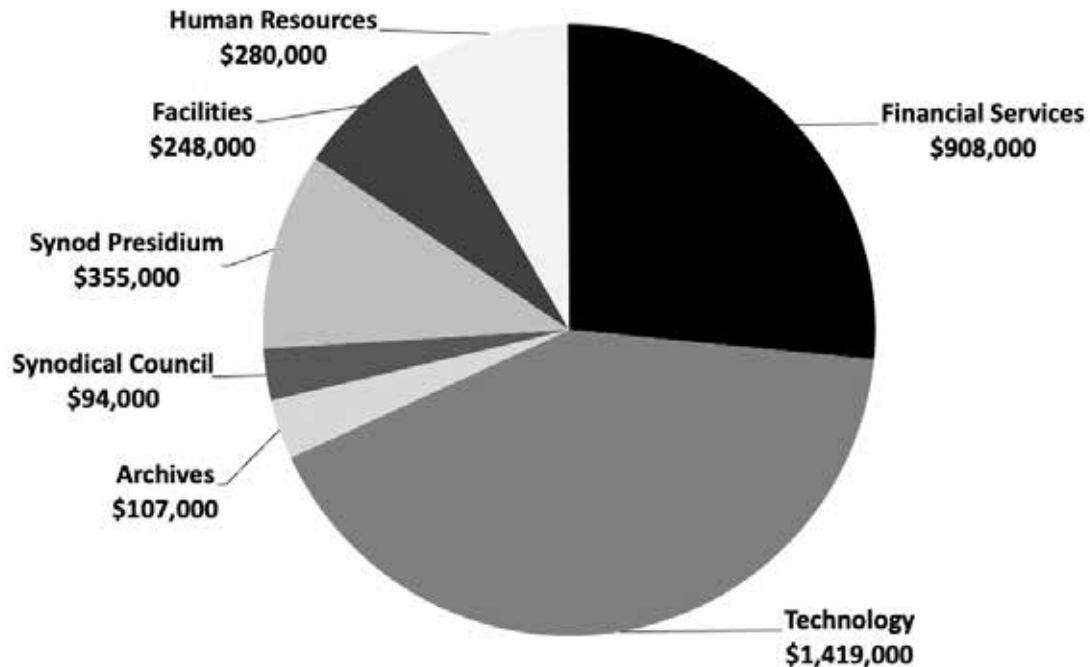
**FY 2022-23 Expenses
Ministry Support
\$5,461,000**



**FY 2021-22 Synod Operating Support Allocation
Ministry Support
\$3,343,000**



**FY 2022-23 Synod Operating Support Allocation
Ministry Support
\$3,411,000**



Financial results and ministry financial plan

Floor Committee #7

Overview

The Lord has and we pray will continue to bless WELS with gifts from congregations, members, and others. These gifts are used to reach the lost at home and abroad, train and nurture called workers, and provide services that facilitate and support ministry excellence in congregations and their schools and administration.

WELS manages and reports the gifts received, revenues generated, and how those moneys are used in various funds based on a fiscal year (FY) that runs from July 1 to June 30. The Operating Fund is used to account for ministry expenses with its largest source of support coming from Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) plus other gifts and revenues that do not have donor restrictions. These other gifts and revenues are accounted for in the Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF). The Financial Stabilization Fund was created to ensure that ministry plans did not need to be adjusted in the middle of a year if these difficult to predict funding sources turned out to be less than planned. The Synodical Council transfers funds from the Financial Stabilization Fund to the Operating Fund the year(s) after the gift is received. The amount transferred each year is based on the balance of the fund and ministry needs and opportunities. WELS uses Special Funds for gifts that are restricted by donors for a specific ministry. Some of these gifts are not immediately available for ministry. Planning for and use of these gifts is initiated by areas of ministry with guidance from Financial Services and approval from the Synodical Council.

WELS ministerial education schools and Support Services subsidiaries also use Operating and Special Funds for management and reporting. These entities are fully incorporated into the ministry financial plan (budget) to ensure all sources and uses of funds entrusted to WELS are reported and considered by the synod in convention. Delegates approve the ministry financial plan and prioritize ministries that were not able to be funded.

Fiscal Year 2019–20 (FY20)

WELS is financially strong. Collectively in FY20, WELS Operating Fund, Special Funds, and the Financial Stabilization Fund received support of \$51.0 million and expended \$48.1 million, which resulted in an increase in reserves without donor restrictions of \$2.9 million. While Congregation Mission Offerings during the months of March, April and May 2020 were below subscription levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a strong front portion of the fiscal year combined with a strong end in June helped to drive FY20 CMO of \$21.4 million, \$466,000 (or 2.2 percent) better than planned and \$352,000 (or 1.6 percent) better than FY19. This is despite the general trend of either flat or declining CMO that has been seen for more than a decade. Operating expenses were \$752,000 less than planned due to vacant positions, general cost savings, and lower utilities, maintenance, and travel costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial Stabilization Fund inflows were \$1.8 million more than outflows, leading to a strong ending balance in the Financial Stabilization Fund of \$16.1 million. Inflows were strong due to increased gifts, bequests, and investment income, while outflows were lower than planned due to increased CMO and operating expense savings. Special Funds reserves without donor restrictions increased \$1.1 million on support of \$13.0 million and expenses of \$11.9 million. The increase was driven primarily by lower than planned expenses due to reduced travel and canceled events from the COVID-19 pandemic. Separately, WELS received \$2.7 million of Payroll Protection Program (PPP) funds through the Small Business Administration (SBA) during FY20 recorded as a forgivable loan payable. These PPP funds were used to cover eligible payroll and benefit expenses. The PPP funds did not impact total support levels for WELS during FY20 as recognition of any gain would only occur upon forgiveness of the loan payable.

The four ministerial education schools were able to manage their financial positions well during FY20 in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced the schools to end the 2019–20 school year virtually.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY20 increased

\$176,000 to \$7.7 million on support of \$6.4 million and expenses of \$6.2 million. Gifts were greater than planned and more than offset lower than planned tuition and fees. Expenses were slightly greater than planned due to several capital projects on campus and within faculty residences. Separately, WLS received \$546,000 of PPP funds during FY20 recorded as a forgivable loan payable. These PPP funds were used to cover eligible payroll and benefit expenses. The PPP funds did not impact total support levels for WLS during FY20 as recognition of any gain would only occur upon forgiveness of the loan payable.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC) is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY20 increased \$2.0 million to \$12.2 million on support of \$22.4 million and expenses of \$20.4 million. The \$2.0 million increase in unrestricted net assets was driven by increased gifts, bequests, and satisfactions of donor restrictions; reduced expenses related to food service costs, utilities, contracted services, and travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the cancelation of extra-curricular activities in spring 2020; and funding from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), all partially offset by reduced room and board revenue due to refunds given. Separately, MLC received \$2.4 million of PPP funds during FY20 recorded as a forgivable loan payable. These PPP funds were used to cover eligible payroll and benefit expenses. The PPP funds did not impact total support levels for MLC during FY20 as recognition of any gain would only occur upon forgiveness of the loan payable.

Luther Preparatory School

Luther Preparatory School (LPS) is financially stable. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY20 increased \$650,000 to \$2.6 million on support of \$8.1 million and expenses of \$7.5 million. This improvement was primarily driven by lower expenses due to savings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic including lower travel, utilities, maintenance, cafeteria, and other contract services as well as the cancelation of extra-curricular activities in spring 2020. Separately, LPS received \$835,000 of PPP funds during FY20 recorded as a forgivable loan payable. These PPP funds were used to cover eligible payroll and benefit expenses. The PPP funds did not impact total support levels for LPS during FY20 as recognition of any gain would only occur upon forgiveness of the loan payable.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) is gradually increasing its financial strength after receiving \$350,000 in special grants from Ministerial Education in FY19. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY20 increased \$100,000 to \$408,000 on support of \$3.9 million and expenses of \$3.8 million. This improvement was driven by greater than expected gifts combined with lower than projected expenses, partially offset by room and board refunds due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lost revenue from dining sales and summer camp fees. Separately, MLS received \$494,000 of PPP funds during FY20 recorded as a forgivable loan payable. These PPP funds were used to cover eligible payroll and benefit expenses. The PPP funds did not impact total support levels for MLS during FY20 as recognition of any gain would only occur upon forgiveness of the loan payable.

WELS Church Extension Fund

WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF) is financially strong. In FY20, reserves without donor restrictions increased \$811,000 to \$78.0 million on support of \$9.1 million and expenses of \$8.3 million. This increase was driven by higher interest income on lending activities and improved investment returns. The loan portfolio increased by \$21.3 million to a total of \$182.5 million due to the funding of loans approved primarily before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the pandemic hit, CEF put in place a temporary moratorium on lending activities.

WELS Foundation

WELS Foundation is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY20 increased \$1.9 million to \$11.7 million on support of \$6.8 million and expenses of \$4.9 million. This increase was driven by higher gifts and investment returns and lower expenses associated with promotions, marketing, and travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic. WELS Foundation has a policy governing the management of excess reserves and transferred \$500,000 of its reserves to WELS as operating support in FY20.

WELS Investment Funds

WELS Investment Funds (WIF) also continues to be financially blessed. WIF does not have reserves because it invests and administers funds for others. While the COVID-19 pandemic drove significant market declines in early 2020, the WIF investment portfolio (managed through Vanguard) benefited from the market recovery that started in the late spring of 2020. Assets under management increased \$15.4 million in FY20 to \$238.9 million driven by market gains and allowed for WIF to reduce its administrative fee charged to its investors.

Northwestern Publishing House

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) is financially stable. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY20 increased \$500,000 to \$7.4 million on revenue of \$4.9 million and expenses of \$4.4 million. This increase was driven by better than anticipated sales of the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV) Bible and operating expense savings primarily due to several vacant positions and the move to outsourced warehousing and distribution. Separately, NPH received \$423,000 of PPP funds during FY20 recorded as a forgivable loan payable. These PPP funds were used to cover eligible payroll and benefit expenses. The PPP funds did not impact total support levels for NPH during FY20 as recognition of any gain would only occur upon forgiveness of the loan payable.

Fiscal Year 2020–21 (FY21)

Support and expense projections point to another strong year in FY21. CMO is projected to be \$21.8 million in FY21, approximately \$700,000 (or 3.4 percent) more than planned and \$345,000 (or 1.6 percent) more than FY20. This increase in CMO is being driven by strong calendar year 2020 receipts and the recently completed subscription process for calendar year 2021. The Financial Stabilization Fund is trending above planned levels due to increased gifts, bequests, and investment income, as well as savings from the WELS Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association (VEBA) and Pension premium holiday at WELS and the ministerial education schools. Lower than anticipated transfers out of the Financial Stabilization Fund are forecasted based on higher levels of CMO and projected operating expense savings within Congregation and District Ministry and Ministry Support. These factors are anticipated to lead to a FY21 ending balance in the FSF of approximately \$16.7 million, representing a \$550,000 increase from FY20. Additionally, WELS has applied for forgiveness of its \$2.7 million PPP loan with the SBA but, as of this writing, has not yet received notice of loan forgiveness. If forgiven, support levels would increase by \$2.7 million and would lead to an additional increase in the Financial Stabilization Fund.

WELS Special Funds reserves for Home Missions, World Missions, Ministerial Education, Congregation and District Ministry, and Ministry Support are expected to end FY21 with a collective balance of approximately \$26.0 million, which is slightly higher than the prior year, but \$10.1 million (or 63 percent) higher than planned due to increased gifts and bequests and significantly lower than planned spending due to restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In general, the four ministerial education schools have been able to manage their financial positions well so far in FY21 in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic through strong support levels largely trending above plan and prior year and cost-saving initiatives focused on lowering operating expenses.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

At Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, support has been trending higher than both the prior year and planned levels due to increased gifts and investment income. In addition, WLS applied for and received full forgiveness on its \$546,000 PPP loan through the SBA. These funds, plus accrued interest, have been recorded as a gain on debt extinguishment, directly increasing the support level for FY21. Expenses have been trending slightly above planned levels due to new faculty moving expenses and faculty residence renovations but have generally trended lower than the prior year.

Martin Luther College

At Martin Luther College, support has been trending better than both the prior year and planned levels due to increased gifts and investment income, additional government grants through the HEERF program, and satisfaction of restrictions related to the receipt of deferred gifts partially offset by lower tuition and fees. Expenses have been trending below both the prior year and planned levels due to lower utilities, travel, athletic costs, maintenance, and compensation and benefits costs. Additional funding has been received through the "Equipping Christian Witnesses" (ECW) campaign allowing MLC to move forward with the construction of the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse. MLC anticipates incurring approximately \$2 million of expense in FY21 as it starts construction of the fieldhouse with an additional \$3 million to be incurred in FY22. MLC has also applied for forgiveness of its \$2.4 million PPP loan with the SBA but, as of this writing, has not yet received notice of loan forgiveness. If forgiven, support levels would increase by \$2.4 million.

Luther Preparatory School

At Luther Preparatory School, support has been trending higher than both the prior year and planned levels due to increased gifts and investment income. In addition, LPS applied for and received full forgiveness on its \$835,000 PPP loan through the SBA. These funds, plus accrued interest, have been recorded as a gain on debt extinguishment, directly increasing the support level for FY21. Expenses have been trending below both the prior year and planned levels due to lower utilities, travel, athletic costs, maintenance, and compensation and benefits costs.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

At Michigan Lutheran Seminary, support has been trending higher than both the prior year and planned levels due to increased gifts and satisfaction of restrictions related to capital projects and student aid. In addition, MLS applied for and received full forgiveness on its \$494,000 PPP loan through the SBA. These funds, plus accrued interest, have been recorded as a gain on debt extinguishment, directly increasing the support level for FY21. These increases are offsetting lower tuition and activity fees due to lower than planned enrollment. Expenses have been trending slightly above both the prior year and planned levels as increased capital spending on the Big Backyard projects offset savings from position vacancies and lower benefit costs as well as travel, athletic, and utility expenses.

WELS Church Extension Fund

WELS Church Extension Fund has had a strong start to FY21 with total support trending higher than the prior year driven by increased interest income on lending activities. Expenses have been trending lower than the prior year primarily due to lower interest expense on the certificate portfolio from lower average interest rates. In March 2021, the CEF Board fully removed the temporary moratorium on lending, which allows the pipeline for new lending to reopen. The quality of the loan portfolio has been improving over the past few fiscal years with a higher percentage of individual loans being categorized as “performing” as compared to “impaired” status. In addition, CEF has consistently done a great job retaining most investments within the certificate portfolio.

WELS Foundation

WELS Foundation has also had a strong start to FY21 with a significant increase in support levels due primarily to higher investment returns as well as increased gifts. Expenses have been trending slightly above the prior year primarily due to an increase in distributions to ministry. WELS Foundation now manages more than 1,200 deferred giving instruments totaling more than \$175 million.

WELS Investment Funds

Since the end of FY20, WELS Investment Funds has continued to see increases in its investment portfolio primarily driven by investment returns from the rebounding economy, with net assets under management now approaching close to \$300 million. Returns for the WELS Endowment Fund and WELS Balanced Fund have exceeded their composite benchmarks showing that not only did WIF benefit from the general run up in the stock market in the back half of calendar 2020 but also from a portfolio that far outpaced the general market over that time as well. These returns combined with low administrative fees reflect the benefits that investors have in partnering with WIF.

Northwestern Publishing House

Northwestern Publishing House has continued to perform well operationally and has also benefited from a couple of one-time transactions in FY21 that have increased its net assets. Revenues are trending slightly behind the pace of FY20 primarily due to the demand for the new Evangelical Heritage Version Bible that had strong sales in the first half of FY20. Expenses continue to trend under both budget and the prior year due to efficient production and tight departmental cost controls. The NPH team is focused on the launch of the new hymnal and related suite of worship products that are slated for release in the fall of calendar year 2021. One-time items benefiting NPH include a gain on an asset sale and PPP loan forgiveness. In November 2020, NPH completed the sale of its former site of operations resulting in a gain on sale of approximately \$1.0 million. In addition, NPH applied for and received full forgiveness on its \$423,000 PPP loan through the SBA. These funds, plus accrued interest, have been recorded as a gain on debt extinguishment, directly increasing the support level for FY21.

Operating Fund								
	Actual FY20	Plan FY20	Change		Plan FY21	Feb '21 Fcsst FY21	Change	
			Increase / (Decrease) Amount	Percent			Increase / (Decrease) Amount	Percent
Support								
Gifts from Congregations – Actual/Forecast	\$ 21,426,617	\$ 20,960,200	\$ 466,417	2.2%	\$ 21,065,100	\$ 21,773,482	\$ 708,382	3.4%
Financial Stabilization Fund	7,380,430	8,599,300	(1,218,870)	-14.2%	9,079,700	7,732,818	(1,346,882)	-14.8%
Total Subsidy Support	28,807,047	29,559,500	(752,453)	-2.5%	30,144,800	29,506,300	(638,500)	-2.1%
Synod Support of –								
Home Missions	5,506,000	5,506,000	-	0.0%	5,680,500	5,680,500	-	0.0%
World Missions	6,602,000	6,602,000	-	0.0%	6,826,000	6,826,000	-	0.0%
Ministerial Education	8,231,957	8,193,800	38,157	0.5%	8,051,200	8,051,200	-	0.0%
Congregation & District Ministry Ministry Support	5,450,170	5,971,200	(521,030)	-8.7%	6,187,800	5,687,800	(500,000)	-8.1%
	3,016,920	3,286,500	(269,580)	-8.2%	3,399,300	3,260,800	(138,500)	-4.1%
Total Expenses	28,807,047	29,559,500	(752,453)	-2.5%	30,144,800	29,506,300	(638,500)	-2.1%
Surplus (Deficit)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	

Financial Stabilization Fund								
	Actual FY20	Plan FY20	Change		Plan FY21	Feb '21 Fcsst FY21	Change	
			Increase / (Decrease) Amount	Percent			Increase / (Decrease) Amount	Percent
Beginning Balance	\$ 14,330,679	\$ 13,787,000	\$ 543,679	3.9%	\$ 12,091,700	\$ 16,130,163	\$ 4,038,463	33.4%
Additions:								
Schwan Grants	2,053,500	1,868,000	185,500	9.9%	1,924,000	1,766,500	(157,500)	-8.2%
WELS FDN Net Asset Grant	500,000	400,000	100,000	25.0%	400,000	400,000	-	0.0%
Other Grants	732,260	758,000	(25,740)	-3.4%	635,000	1,377,000	742,000	116.9%
Gifts from Individuals								
Mission & Ministry	156,251	100,000	56,251	56.3%	100,000	300,000	200,000	200.0%
Walk Together/Mission Partners	34,126	50,000	(15,874)	0.0%	50,000	39,500	(10,500)	0.0%
Gifts and Memorials	1,066,339	900,000	166,339	18.5%	900,000	1,050,000	150,000	16.7%
Sub-Total Gifts from Individuals	1,256,716	1,050,000	206,716	19.7%	1,050,000	1,389,500	339,500	32.3%
Unrestricted Bequests	3,011,330	1,600,000	1,411,330	88.2%	1,600,000	2,200,000	600,000	37.5%
Investment Income	1,269,041	900,000	369,041	41.0%	900,000	1,200,000	300,000	33.3%
Endowment Distribution	103,410	101,500	1,910	1.9%	105,000	110,000	5,000	4.8%
Other Revenue	253,657	226,500	27,157	12.0%	230,000	239,000	9,000	3.9%
Total Additions	9,179,914	6,904,000	2,275,914	33.0%	6,844,000	8,682,000	1,838,000	26.9%
Unfunded Priorities	-	-	-	0.0%	-	(400,000)	(400,000)	0.0%
Transfer Out – Operating	(7,380,430)	(8,599,300)	1,218,870	-14.2%	(9,079,700)	(7,732,818)	1,346,882	-14.8%
Ending Balance	\$ 16,130,163	\$ 12,091,700	\$ 4,038,463	33.4%	\$ 9,856,000	\$ 16,679,345	\$ 6,823,345	69.2%

Proposed ministry financial plan for 2021–23 biennium (FY22/FY23 Biennium)

Planning for the FY22/FY23 Biennium was initiated in February 2020 or about 16 months before the start of the biennium. With the Financial Stabilization Fund balance above \$14 million at that time and the hope that CMO would increase slightly each year, the Synodical Council approved initial planning assumptions that would increase support levels by 3.0 percent annually to cover inflationary cost increases. The Synodical Council asked the WELS president to work with the areas of ministry to draft an initial ministry financial plan using this level of synod support for its review at their fall 2020 meeting. With this general direction by the Synodical Council, the areas of ministry, schools, and Support Services subsidiaries, working with their boards and commissions, proceeded to develop their ministry plans.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 health crisis escalated to a pandemic, causing unpredictable financial impacts for WELS and its affiliated ministries. To provide the WELS president and chief financial officer with enough information to determine the proper course of action to take for planning for the FY22/FY23 Biennium, the areas of ministry, schools, and Support Services subsidiaries were asked to provide three different scenarios of their planning schedules. Scenario 1 was to show their FY22/FY23 Biennium plan with flat synod support and flat wages. Scenario 2 was to show their FY22/FY23 Biennium plan with a 3.0 percent increase in synod support and a 2.5 percent wage increase. Scenario 3 was to show their FY22/FY23 Biennium plan with a 5.0 percent decrease in synod support and flat wages.

In late summer/early fall 2020, initial planning meetings were held with the areas of ministry, schools, and Support Services subsidiaries to walk through their plans. Once the WELS president and chief financial officer could see the possible impacts each scenario would have on the ministry financial plan and had a better understanding of some of the short-range and mid-range implications the COVID-19 pandemic was having on WELS ministries, a decision was made to go with a proposed plan of 2.0 percent annual increases in synod support, including a 2.0 percent increase in wages. This decision was made given the compounding impact a 3.0 percent increase in synod support was estimated to have on the Financial Stabilization Fund in the outyears of the biennium. After review of the proposed plan at its fall meeting, the Synodical Council approved the FY22/FY23 Biennium plan as presented.

In February 2021, the WELS president submitted a slightly modified ministry financial plan to the Synodical Council, updated for the carryforward impact of operational savings forecasted in FY21 and slightly modified CMO projections for FY22 and FY23 based on 2021 subscriptions and projected annual increases of 0.2 percent.

CMO has historically been flat to slightly declining since 2008. However, even during a global pandemic, calendar year 2020 CMO came in at its highest historical level of \$21.7 million. Further, calendar year 2021 CMO subscriptions have come in at \$21.6 million, just 0.6 percent lower than calendar year 2020 and the highest level of subscriptions on record. In the ministry financial plan provided to the Synodical Council in November 2020, a 0.5 percent increase in CMO was assumed, but that was based on a lower level of base CMO. Looking ahead to calendar years 2022 and 2023, it is difficult to determine if this level of CMO for calendar year 2021 is a new baseline or if we are sitting on any sort of bubble given the various economic relief programs that have been put in place to help both individuals and organizations over the past year.

To assess this potential level of CMO, several key economic indicators since the great recession of 2008–09 were compared to CMO trends over the same time. This included a general economic indicator in the Dow Jones Industrial Average, an indicator of output in Real Gross Domestic Product, an employment indicator in the Unemployment Rate, and inflationary indicators including the Consumer Price Index and the Producer Price Index. The key takeaway of this analysis was that calendar year 2008 CMO levels of \$21.6 million were at an all-time historic high point during a time period of economic hardship, and then over the next few years as these major economic indicators recovered, CMO declined over \$1.0 million (or 5 percent) to \$20.5 million in calendar year 2011. This analysis along with the most recent five-year average CMO trend of a 0.2 percent annual increase led to utilizing a 0.2 percent increase in estimated CMO levels for the FY22/FY23 Biennium from the 0.5 percent increase presented in November 2020. Overall, CMO levels projected for the FY22/FY23 Biennium are higher than what was presented with the November plan based on higher calendar year 2020 receipts.

The proposed ministry financial plan for FY22 includes synod support of \$30.8 million, other expenses in areas of ministry and at the schools of \$53.7 million, and \$14.7 million of expense at the subsidiaries for a total ministry financial plan of \$99.2 million. The FY23 proposed plan includes synod support of \$31.3 million, other expenses in areas of ministry and at the schools of \$49.4 million, and \$14.9 million of expense at the subsidiaries for a total ministry financial plan of \$95.7 million. The proposed financial plan relies heavily on the drawdown of the Financial Stabilization Fund—approximately \$4.4 million over the FY22/FY23 Biennium—and on areas of ministry and schools

using \$10.4 million of reserves in addition to other funding sources or one-time funds to sustain ongoing ministry. The planned drawdown of reserves in the Financial Stabilization Fund, areas of ministry special funds, and at the schools are not sustainable in the long term.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

The financial position of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will remain strong with a combined projected deficit, or use of reserves, of \$35,000 planned over the biennium. The use of reserves is planned to fund the construction of a new faculty home on campus. Enrollment is projected to increase over the biennium by 11 students.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College continues to remain in a strong financial position with reserves projected to remain flat to FY20 levels. Synod support is planned to increase at MLC, and enrollments are projected to increase by five students over the two years.

Luther Preparatory School

While in a stable financial position, Luther Preparatory School is projecting a combined deficit of \$360,000 over the biennium, due mainly to planned capital projects. The use of reserves is anticipated due to the planned replacement of dorm windows and the replacement of a bus. Enrollment is projected to decrease by five students over the biennium.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Michigan Lutheran Seminary plans to improve its financial situation over the upcoming biennium. Reserves without donor restrictions are planned to increase a combined \$200,000 over the next two years. Enrollment is planned to increase by 16 students over the biennium, with the corresponding increases in tuition planned to offset inflationary cost increases.

WELS Church Extension Fund and WELS Foundation

The plans for WELS Church Extension Fund and WELS Foundation continue the trends of the last several years with no significant variations. Both entities are projecting surpluses that will allow them to continue serving the needs of their constituents and making the grants they have historically been able to make to WELS. The planned grants to Home Missions from CEF are expected to be \$1.1 million annually, and the planned grants to WELS for general operations from WELS Foundation are expected to be \$400,000 annually.

WELS Investment Funds

WELS Investment Funds is projecting stable results based on steady market conditions and a low administrative fee. The administrative fee may fluctuate from plan levels based on actual market conditions and the size of the WIF portfolio.

Northwestern Publishing House

Northwestern Publishing House is continuing to improve its financial strength. It is projecting a sizeable surplus from core operations for each year of the biennium due to improved top-line revenue and continued strong management of operating costs. A key driver to the top-line revenue improvement is the anticipated adoption of the new hymnal, which is being released in fall 2021, over a multi-year time horizon.

Please refer to the area of ministry reports contained elsewhere in this book for more details of the ministry financial plans for each area. Following is a summary of the support forecast and the proposed financial plan for each year of the biennium along with comparative information for the current biennium.

Support forecast

The support forecast for the FY22/FY23 Biennium is based on trends and assumptions related to CMO and the Financial Stabilization Fund, including assumed levels of grants, gifts, unrestricted bequests, investment income, endowment distributions, and other income sources. Calendar year 2021 subscriptions serve as the base for CMO in the FY22/FY23 Biennium. CMO subscriptions for 2021 are \$21.6 million, down only 0.6 percent compared to actual 2020 CMO receipts but 3.5 percent higher than 2020 CMO subscriptions. Given the continued economic uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, CMO is planned to increase 0.2 percent for calendar years 2022 and 2023.

The Financial Stabilization Fund holds all non-CMO operating support for the year(s) after receipt and includes the following support categories:

- **Grants** (\$2.7 million in both FY22 and FY23)—The majority of the grants come from the Schwan Foundation and are projected to be approximately \$1.8 million per year for FY22 and FY23. WELS Foundation's unrestricted net

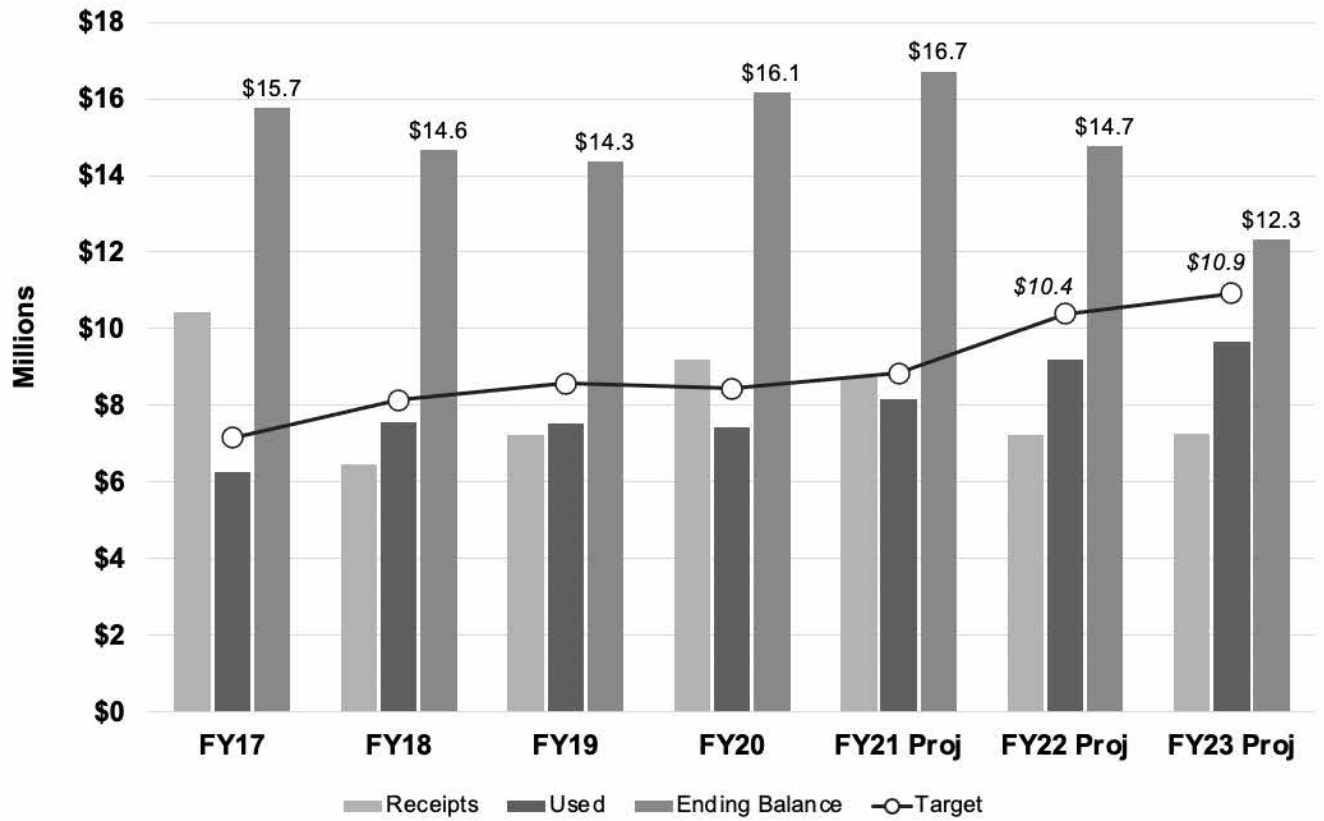
asset policy facilitates the transfer of undesignated net assets to support WELS general ministries with projected grants of approximately \$400,000 per year for FY22 and FY23. Other grants include distributions of approximately \$400,000 per year from a gifted interest in a Limited Liability Company (LLC) that was terminated near the end of FY17 and anticipated excess reserves transferred from the insurance reserve.

- **Gifts from individuals** (\$1.2 million in both FY22 and FY23)—The vast majority of these unrestricted gifts come from individuals and congregations and are projected to be approximately \$1.0 million per year for FY22 and FY23. This continues the trend of relatively flat gift levels over the last few years with the assumption that donors will continue to prefer to direct their gifts to specific ministries. In addition, gifts are forecasted from various special appeals for WELS Mission & Ministry and the discontinued programs of Walking Together and Mission Partners. Gifts to these programs are projected to be approximately \$188,000 per year for FY22 and FY23.
- **Unrestricted bequests** (\$1.6 million in both FY22 and FY23)—Unrestricted bequests represent estate gifts to WELS without donor restrictions and are projected to be approximately \$1.6 million per year for FY22 and FY23. These estimates are based on recent trends. However, due to the unpredictable timing of the distribution of an estate gift, they are difficult to project. In addition, recent trends have shown that donors are becoming better informed of the opportunities to restrict their estate gifts to specific ministries, which could add to the unpredictability of these unrestricted bequests.
- **Investment income** (\$1.3 million in both FY22 and FY23)—Investment income represents returns on non-endowed funds, the continued investment returns from existing annuity contracts, and an anticipated decrease in investable reserves. Current annuity contracts will terminate upon the death of each annuitant. In FY20, several contracts held by CEF and WELS Foundation were consolidated under WELS, which provided cash to those entities to reinvest in operations. Given current annuity contract returns of between 3.0 percent and 4.0 percent and investments in other banking instruments at lower interest rate levels, investment income is projected to be approximately \$1.3 million per year for FY22 and FY23.
- **Endowment distributions and other** (\$371,000 in FY22 and \$387,000 in FY23)—Includes distributions from WELS operating endowment funds and other miscellaneous income sources, including but not limited to subsidiary rental payments as defined by the Synodical Council's Building Fund policy; the synod's workers compensation dividend program, which fluctuates based on WELS' overall annual loss ratio; and proceeds from the corporate credit card rebate program. Slight increases during the biennium were assumed.

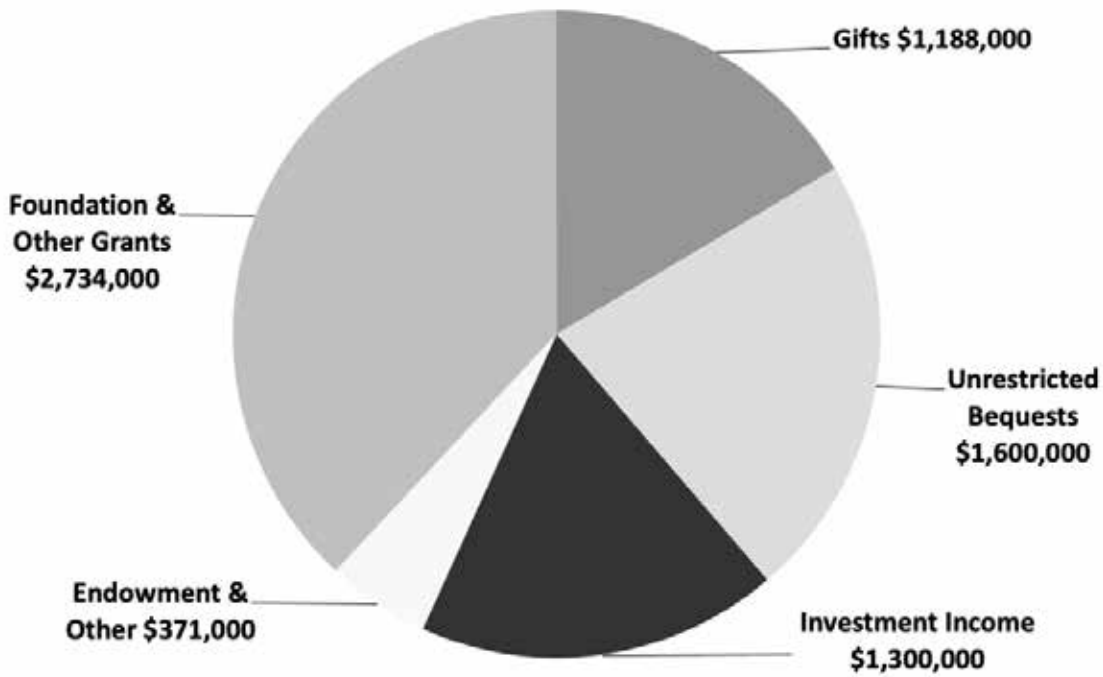
The cumulative total of these sources of support into the Financial Stabilization Fund are projected to be approximately \$7.2 million per year for FY22 and FY23. With planned synod support of \$30.8 million in FY22, transfers out of the Financial Stabilization Fund are planned to be approximately \$9.2 million, resulting in a forecasted decrease in the Financial Stabilization Fund of approximately \$2.0 million to end FY22 with a Financial Stabilization Fund balance of approximately \$14.7 million. In FY23, synod support levels are forecasted to reach approximately \$31.3 million with CMO projections of \$21.7 million, leading to an increased level of transfers out of the Financial Stabilization Fund at \$9.6 million. This results in a forecasted decrease in the Financial Stabilization Fund of approximately \$2.4 million to end FY23 with a Financial Stabilization Fund balance of approximately \$12.3 million, just slightly above the target balance as noted in the Synodical Council's Financial Stabilization Fund policy.

Two primary factors (other than the noted levels of non-CMO operating support above) that could impact the balance of the Financial Stabilization Fund in the upcoming biennium include how each area of ministry performs as compared to their operating budgets (synod support levels) as well as the level of CMO received as compared to subscription levels. If savings are seen within area of ministry operating budgets and/or congregations can exceed the 0.2 percent increase in CMO, less will need to be transferred from the Financial Stabilization Fund to cover WELS' operating expenses. However, if CMO receipts fall short of the 0.2 percent increase, additional transfers out of the Financial Stabilization Fund may be needed (which would draw the balance of the Financial Stabilization Fund lower) or spending reductions may be deemed necessary.

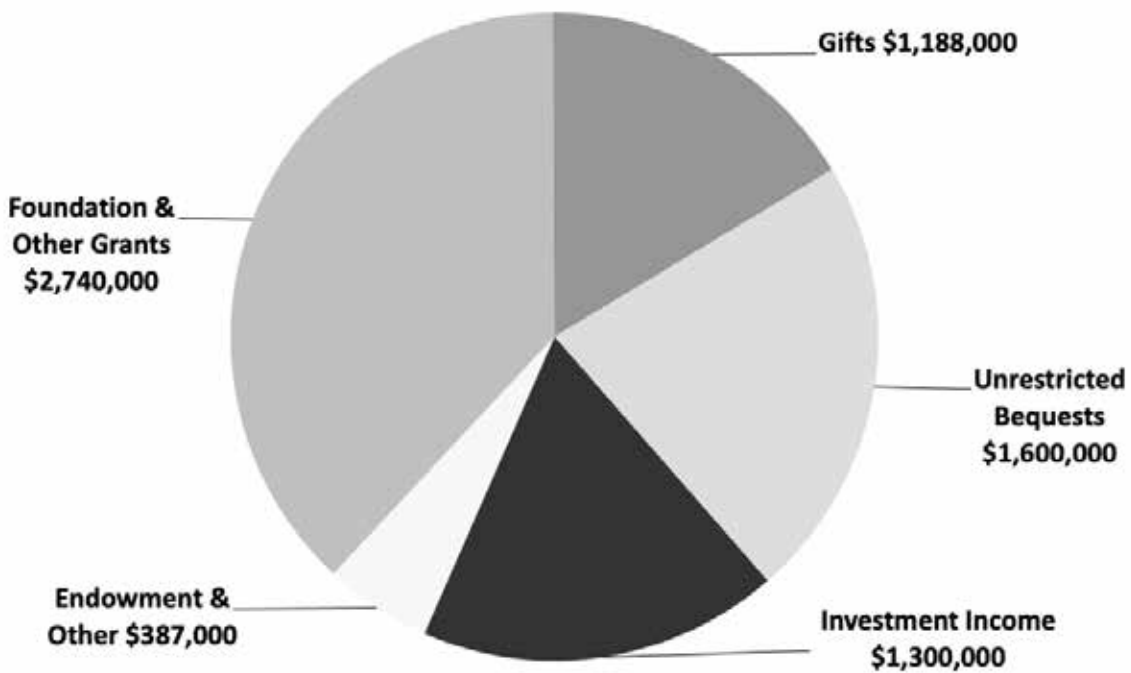
Financial Stabilization Fund



**FY 2021-22 Support
Financial Stabilization Fund
\$7,193,000**



**FY 2022-23 Support
Financial Stabilization Fund
\$7,215,000**



Plan Summary of Expenses Funded by Synod Support and Special Funds, Gifts, Tuition and Fees

	FY20 Actual				FY21 Plan				FY22 Plan				FY23 Plan				
	Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		
		FTE	Total Expense	% of total		FTE	Total Expense	% of total		FTE	Total Expense	% of total		FTE	Total Expense	% of total	
SUMMARY																	
Home Missions	5,506,000	11.25	9,448,835	19.1%	5,680,500	12.75	10,203,000	18.8%	5,794,000	13.25	10,812,000	18.9%	5,910,000	13.25	10,870,000	18.5%	
World Missions	6,602,000	52.50	9,690,809	22.9%	6,826,000	55.70	10,759,800	22.6%	6,962,000	57.75	11,937,000	22.7%	7,101,000	57.25	12,028,000	22.7%	
Ministerial Education	8,231,957	326.35	39,176,323	28.6%	8,051,200	333.00	37,089,400	26.7%	8,280,000	332.73	46,656,000	27.0%	8,447,000	333.73	44,234,000	27.0%	
Congregation & District Ministry	5,450,170	41.35	7,445,718	18.9%	6,187,800	43.70	8,452,600	20.5%	6,411,000	44.80	9,657,000	20.6%	6,451,000	44.80	8,162,000	20.6%	
Ministry Support	3,016,920	25.80	4,860,870	10.5%	3,399,300	26.00	5,872,100	11.3%	3,343,000	26.80	5,398,000	10.9%	3,411,000	26.80	5,461,000	10.9%	
TOTAL	28,807,047	457.25	70,622,555		30,144,800	471.15	80,428,100		30,790,000	475.33	84,460,000		31,320,000	475.83	80,755,000		

	FY20	% of total	FY21	% of total	FY22	% of total	FY23	% of total
Synod Support	5,506,000	19.1%	5,680,500	18.8%	5,794,000	18.8%	5,910,000	18.9%
Home Missions	5,506,000	19.1%	5,680,500	18.8%	5,794,000	18.8%	5,910,000	18.9%
World Missions	6,602,000	22.9%	6,826,000	22.6%	6,962,000	22.6%	7,101,000	22.7%
Ministerial Education	8,231,957	28.6%	8,051,200	26.7%	8,280,000	26.9%	8,447,000	27.0%
Congregation & District Ministry	5,450,170	18.9%	6,187,800	20.5%	6,411,000	20.8%	6,451,000	20.6%
Ministry Support	3,016,920	10.5%	3,399,300	11.3%	3,343,000	10.9%	3,411,000	10.9%
TOTAL	28,807,047		30,144,800		30,790,000		31,320,000	

	FY20	% of total	FY21	% of total	FY22	% of total	FY23	% of total
Total Expenses	9,448,835	13.4%	10,203,000	12.7%	10,812,000	12.8%	10,870,000	13.5%
Home Missions	9,448,835	13.4%	10,203,000	12.7%	10,812,000	12.8%	10,870,000	13.5%
World Missions	9,690,809	13.7%	10,759,800	13.4%	11,937,000	14.1%	12,028,000	14.9%
Ministerial Education	39,176,323	55.5%	45,140,600	56.1%	46,656,000	55.2%	44,234,000	54.8%
Congregation & District Ministry	7,445,718	10.5%	8,452,600	10.5%	9,657,000	11.4%	8,162,000	10.1%
Ministry Support	4,860,870	6.9%	5,872,100	7.3%	5,398,000	6.4%	5,461,000	6.8%
TOTAL	70,622,555		80,428,100		84,460,000		80,755,000	

	FY20 Actual				FY21 Plan				FY22 Plan				FY23 Plan			
	Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees	
		FTE	Total Expense	% of total		FTE	Total Expense	% of total		FTE	Total Expense	% of total		FTE	Total Expense	% of total
Support Services Subsidiaries																
WELS Church Extension Fund	-	6.85	8,277,961	11.7%	-	6.80	6,518,000	8.2%	-	6.85	7,869,000	9.8%	-	6.85	8,147,000	10.2%
WELS Foundation	-	3.50	1,046,028	1.5%	-	3.45	1,002,300	1.2%	-	3.20	1,028,000	1.3%	-	3.20	1,033,000	1.3%
WELS Investment Funds	-	1.75	412,088	0.6%	-	1.55	414,400	0.5%	-	2.00	437,000	0.5%	-	2.00	472,000	0.6%
Northwestern Publishing House	-	29.00	4,424,940	6.3%	-	27.00	4,342,200	5.4%	-	30.00	5,402,000	6.7%	-	24.00	5,271,000	6.5%
TOTAL	-	41.10	14,161,017		-	38.80	12,276,900		-	42.05	14,736,000		-	36.05	14,923,000	

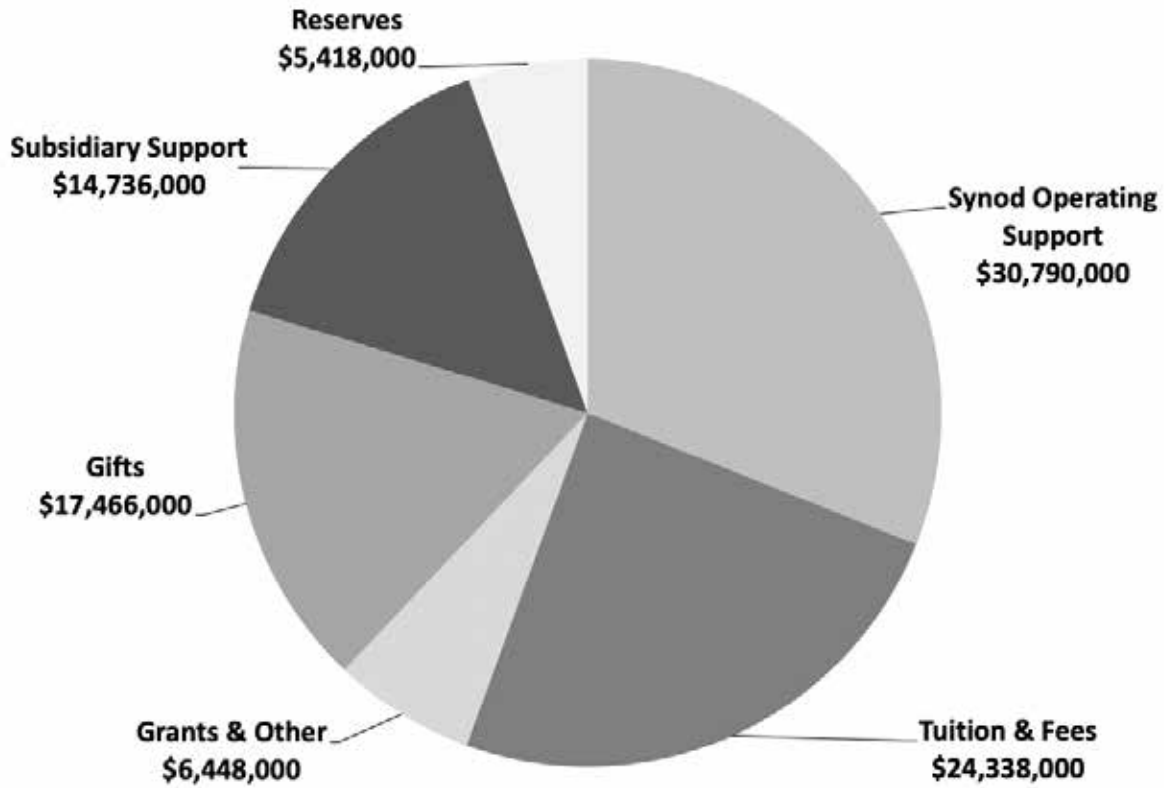
	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
TOTAL WELS & SUBSIDIARIES	28,807,047	30,144,800	30,790,000	31,320,000
	498.35	509.95	517.38	511.88
	84,783,572	92,705,000	99,196,000	95,678,000

Plan Summary of Expenses Funded by Synod Support and Special Funds, Gifts, Tuition and Fees																
	FY20 Actual				FY21 Plan				FY22 Plan				FY23 Plan			
	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expense	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expense	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expense	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expense	FTE
Home Missions																
Board and Administration	592,549	7,459	600,008	4.25	703,075	95,900	798,975	5.25	712,000	23,000	735,000	4.75	721,000	23,000	744,000	4.75
Multi-cultural Ministry	1,371,935	916,124	2,288,059	1.00	1,344,005	938,300	2,282,305	1.00	1,284,000	805,000	2,089,000	1.00	1,238,000	766,000	2,004,000	1.00
Campus Ministry	347,677	10,000	357,677	0.50	417,185	114,000	531,185	1.00	414,000	101,000	515,000	1.00	418,000	99,000	517,000	1.00
Outreach Ministry	3,193,839	2,555,746	5,749,585	3.00	3,216,235	2,366,100	5,582,335	3.00	3,384,000	2,981,000	6,365,000	3.00	3,533,000	2,955,000	6,488,000	3.00
Joint Mission Council Ministry	-	453,506	453,506	2.50	-	1,008,200	1,008,200	2.50	-	1,108,000	1,108,000	3.50	-	1,117,000	1,117,000	3.50
TOTAL	5,506,000	3,942,835	9,448,835	11.25	5,680,500	4,572,500	10,203,000	12.75	5,794,000	5,018,000	10,812,000	13.25	5,910,000	4,960,000	10,870,000	13.25

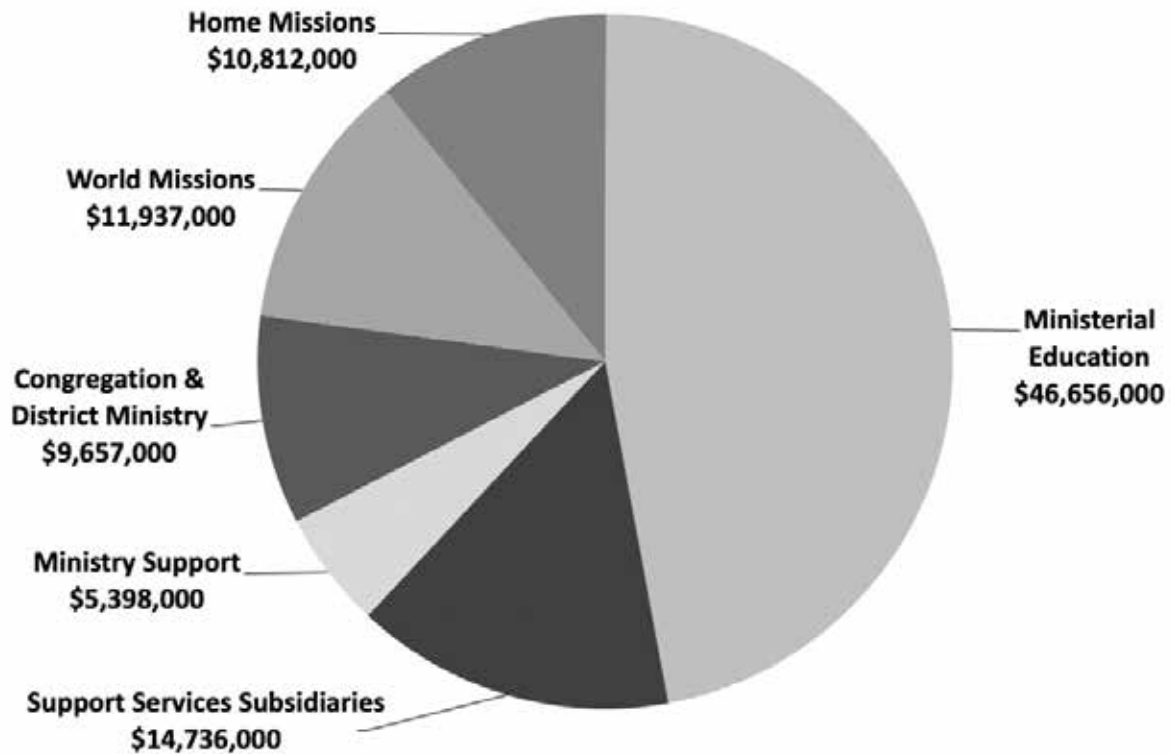
World Missions																
Board and Administration	491,058	308,520	799,578	4.25	370,400	293,700	664,100	5.25	324,000	452,000	776,000	5.75	309,000	462,000	771,000	5.75
Africa	1,157,459	525,639	1,683,098	11.20	1,487,800	795,600	2,283,400	12.20	1,431,000	619,000	2,050,000	11.20	1,461,000	639,000	2,100,000	11.20
Europe	555,248	121,106	676,354	1.00	580,800	103,000	683,800	1.00	590,000	245,500	835,500	1.00	582,000	100,000	682,000	1.00
Latin America	757,432	162,033	919,465	6.00	786,000	147,500	933,500	6.50	836,000	178,200	1,014,200	6.00	842,000	178,000	1,020,000	6.00
Native America	381,861	98,936	480,797	3.50	426,000	174,500	600,500	3.50	406,000	179,800	585,800	3.50	414,000	179,000	593,000	3.50
East Asia	1,409,447	169,080	1,578,527	8.75	1,374,200	142,500	1,516,700	10.00	1,329,000	118,000	1,447,000	8.50	1,320,000	144,000	1,464,000	8.00
Asia	1,108,176	245,492	1,353,668	6.50	1,231,300	511,000	1,742,300	7.75	1,238,000	1,027,000	2,265,000	9.50	1,296,000	1,061,000	2,357,000	9.50
New Initiatives	-	-	-	0.00	-	250,000	250,000	0.00	-	570,000	570,000	0.00	-	575,000	575,000	0.00
Multi-Language Publications	576,332	727,289	1,303,621	8.00	409,600	978,000	1,387,600	6.50	633,000	949,000	1,582,000	9.00	700,000	1,004,000	1,704,000	9.00
Joint Mission Council	-	527,451	527,451	3.30	-	538,000	538,000	3.00	-	531,500	531,500	3.30	-	520,000	520,000	3.30
Other	164,987	203,263	368,250	0.00	159,900	50,000	209,900	0.00	175,000	105,000	280,000	0.00	177,000	65,000	242,000	0.00
TOTAL	6,602,000	3,088,809	9,690,809	52.50	6,826,000	3,933,800	10,759,800	55.70	6,962,000	4,975,000	11,937,000	57.75	7,101,000	4,927,000	12,028,000	57.25

Ministerial Education																
Board and Administration	145,059	1,075,243	1,220,342	1.00	138,700	920,000	1,058,700	1.00	208,000	1,125,000	1,333,000	1.00	213,000	1,180,000	1,393,000	1.00
Retiree Health Care	70,858	-	70,858	0.00	33,000	-	33,000	0.00	34,000	-	34,000	0.00	36,000	-	36,000	0.00
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary	983,000	5,214,149	6,197,149	36.20	983,000	5,097,000	6,050,000	37.60	867,000	6,114,000	6,981,000	36.50	884,000	5,370,000	6,254,000	36.50
Martin Luther College	3,469,000	16,509,412	20,378,412	185.25	3,469,000	21,838,000	25,307,000	191.40	3,672,000	22,338,000	26,010,000	190.73	3,744,000	20,098,000	23,842,000	191.73
Luther Preparatory School	2,422,000	5,041,494	7,463,494	64.40	2,422,000	5,961,000	8,383,000	64.00	2,371,000	6,041,000	8,412,000	65.00	2,418,000	6,217,000	8,635,000	65.00
Michigan Lutheran Seminary	1,142,000	2,704,068	3,846,068	39.50	1,005,500	3,303,400	4,308,900	39.00	1,128,000	2,758,000	3,886,000	39.50	1,152,000	2,922,000	4,074,000	39.50
TOTAL	8,231,957	30,544,366	39,176,323	326.35	8,051,200	37,089,400	45,140,600	333.00	8,280,000	38,376,000	46,656,000	332.73	8,447,000	35,787,000	44,234,000	333.73

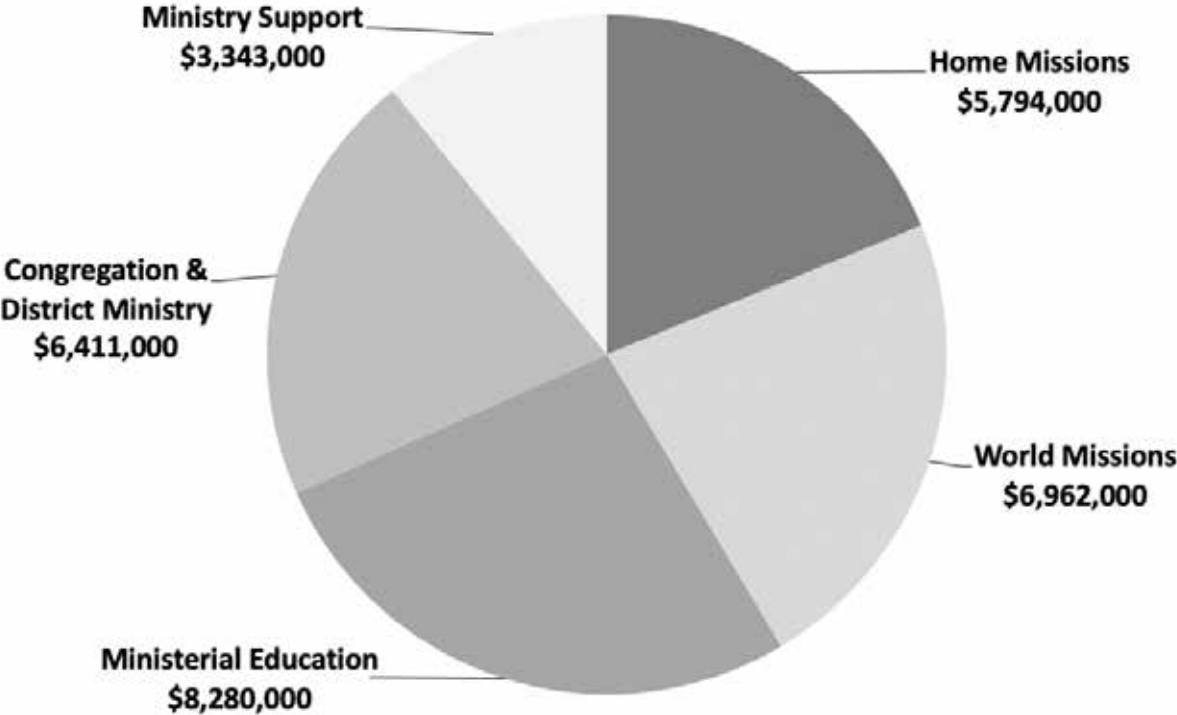
**FY 2021-22 Total Ministry Plan Support
\$99,196,000**



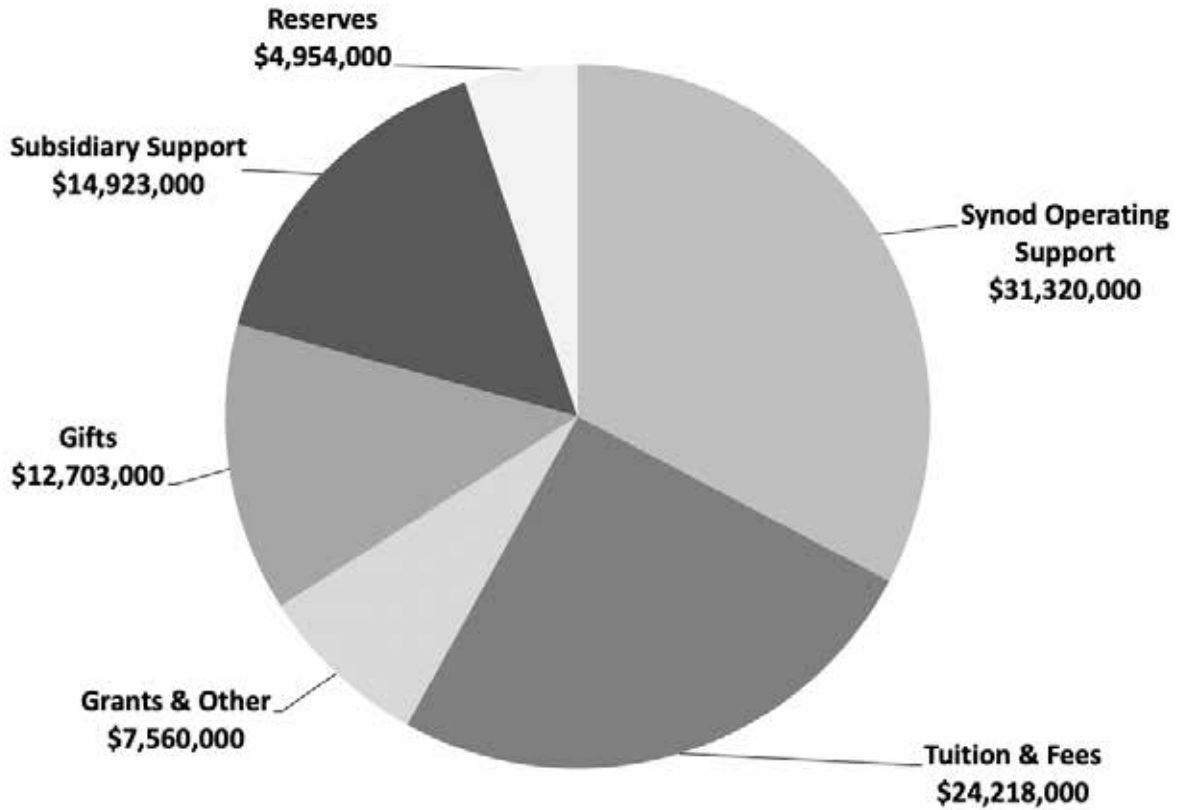
**FY 2021-22 Total Ministry Plan Expenses
\$99,196,000**



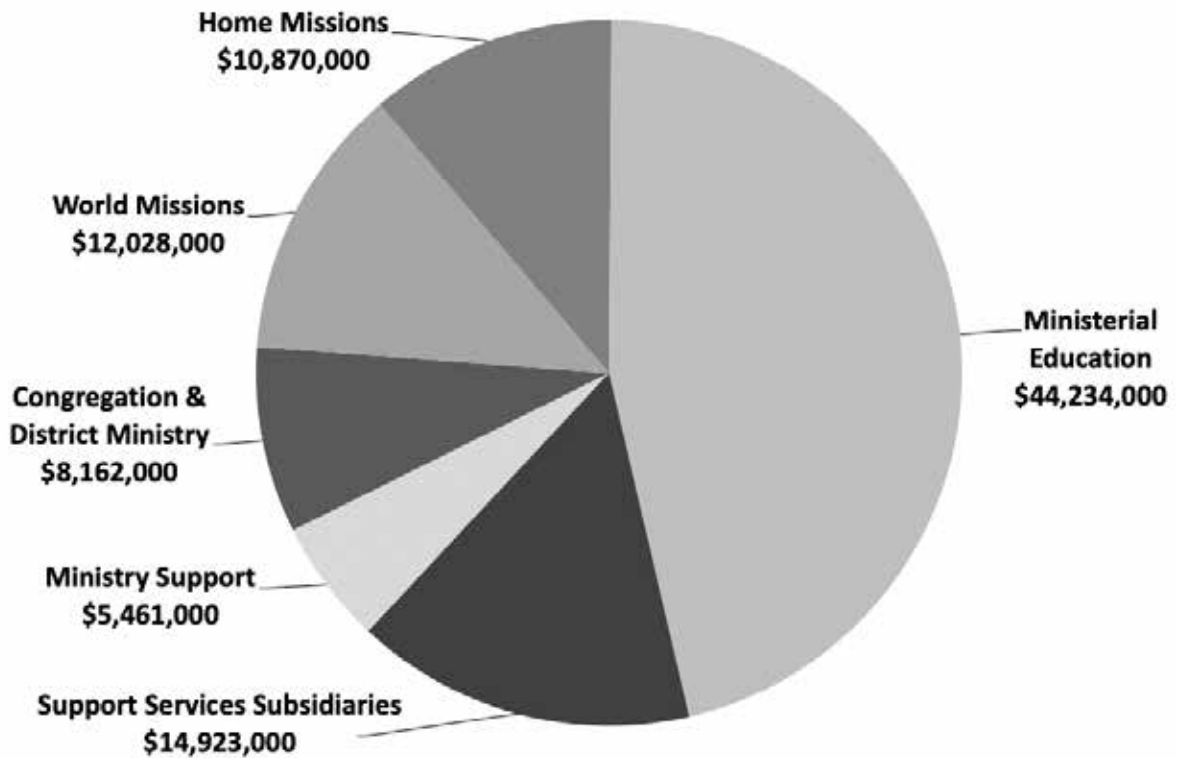
**FY 2021-22 Synod Operating Support Allocation
\$30,790,000**



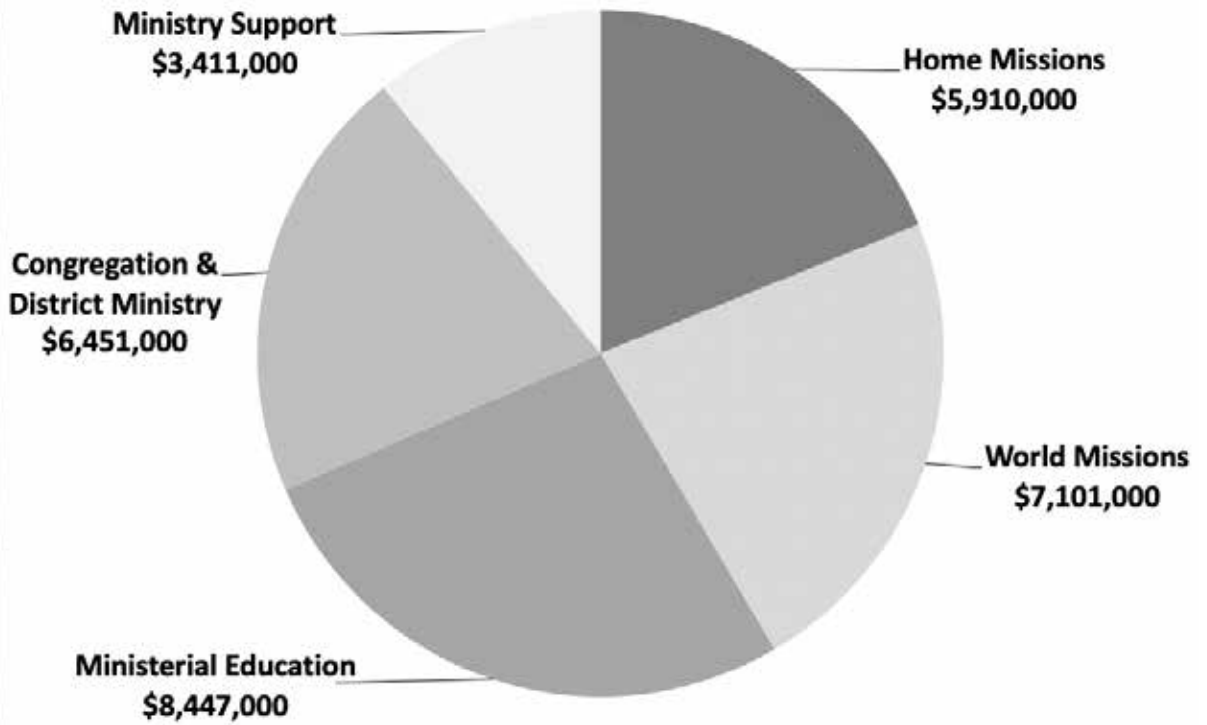
**FY 2022-23 Total Ministry Plan Support
\$95,678,000**



**FY 2022-23 Total Ministry Plan Expenses
\$95,678,000**



**FY 2022-23 Synod Operating Support Allocation
\$31,320,000**



WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position
As of June 30, 2020

ASSETS

	WELS	M/LC	WLS	M/LS	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WPH	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
ASSETS												
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 46,421,827	\$ 4,130,298	\$ 593,388	\$ 1,277,408	\$ 11,111,176	\$ 4,742,858	\$ 1,788,975	\$ -	\$ 8,705	\$ 1,218,840	\$ 151,106	\$ 71,444,581
Cash restricted for gift annuities and trusts payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	813,029	-	-	-	-	813,029
Investments	3,947,202	203,021	23,256	48,638	3,622	28,076,255	147,781,888	238,450,728	-	1,703,749	(181,295,760)	238,664,062
Accounts receivable, net	599,860	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	536,513	(21,010)	1,393,900
Gifts and bequests receivable, net	1,696,591	45,560	-	47,734	32,010	190,000	489,859	-	-	-	-	2,501,754
Accrued interest receivable	-	-	-	-	-	500,919	-	-	-	-	-	500,919
Inventories, net	-	159,460	73,487	31,827	20,805	-	-	-	-	1,906,718	-	2,192,297
Loans to students, net	-	747,957	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	747,957
Property and real estate held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	436,000	1,450,750	-	-	695,698	-	2,583,248
Loans receivable from congregations, net	-	-	-	-	-	176,997,256	-	-	-	-	-	176,997,256
Cash surrender value of life insurance policies held in trust	-	51,418	41,579	13,737	-	-	1,195,153	-	-	-	-	1,301,887
Assets held in trust outside WELS	1,576	1,142,296	-	124,288	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,268,160
Other assets	499,229	341,208	88,781	2,448	88,943	31,801	1,187	-	-	83,588	-	1,137,185
Interest in net assets of WELS Foundation	16,586,651	2,062,999	1,704,279	2,203,422	300,319	306,824	-	-	-	-	(23,164,484)	-
Beneficial interest in net assets of WELS Foundation	17,297,238	2,880,983	2,337,900	286,620	562,618	-	-	-	-	-	(23,347,359)	-
Property, plant and equipment, net	7,055,544	22,794,727	4,234,217	5,422,936	7,977,394	-	-	-	-	1,076,396	-	48,561,214
Investment in CEF certificates	4,001,836	3,077,901	1,090,467	13,037	-	-	2,873,877	-	2,383	1,028,451	(12,085,932)	-
Interest in assets of WELS Foundation	21,961,279	14,528,289	17,494,465	1,406,663	2,411,514	-	-	-	-	-	(57,802,210)	-
Due from related party	(732,149)	5,376,626	1,958,875	(141)	(8,115,951)	(54,469)	(32,406)	744,369	(3,354)	780,591	78,009	-
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 115,389,482	\$ 61,489,945	\$ 29,640,894	\$ 10,880,617	\$ 14,392,450	\$ 211,229,244	\$ 156,362,312	\$ 239,195,097	\$ 7,714	\$ 9,028,544	\$ (297,487,650)	\$ 550,107,449

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position (continued)
As of June 30, 2020

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
LIABILITIES												
Accounts payable	\$ 848,425	\$ 234,824	\$ 102,379	\$ 21,734	\$ 44,510	\$ 11,227	\$ 234,053	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 180,389	\$ -	\$ 1,675,541
Accrued expenses and other liabilities	2,787,219	359,453	78,487	87,444	208,100	5,041,840	55,977	342,994	-	293,250	(363,714)	8,891,050
Deferred revenue	-	984,022	212,215	86,025	217,753	-	-	-	-	590,507	-	2,050,522
Retiree health benefits payable	1,158,381	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,158,381
Certificates payable	-	-	-	-	-	98,830,509	-	-	-	-	(12,065,212)	87,765,297
Deposits held in custody	138,297	13,054	4,244	5,413	47,229	-	-	-	-	-	-	206,237
Liabilities to other beneficiaries	-	1,361,801	-	-	-	-	17,070,325	-	-	-	-	18,432,126
Liabilities to outside agencies and organizations	1,891,499	327,165	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	57,899,337	60,118,001
Gift annuities payable, at fair value	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,988,810	-	-	-	-	7,988,810
Trusts payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,794,709	-	-	-	-	14,794,709
Loans payable	2,668,000	2,393,700	545,700	494,000	835,400	-	-	-	-	423,300	-	7,360,100
U.S. government grants refundable	-	674,777	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	674,777
Due to WELS and Schools	744,369	(574,850)	44,503	227,242	(493,603)	-	57,855,764	-	-	-	(57,855,764)	-
Due to related party	10,232,190	5,753,946	987,528	901,858	859,369	104,883,576	97,799,538	342,994	-	1,487,446	(12,133,014)	211,115,551
NET ASSETS												
Without donor restrictions	39,858,509	12,184,274	7,658,820	407,660	2,642,321	77,961,600	11,701,833	238,852,103	1,705	7,439,399	(201,618,521)	197,087,703
With donor restrictions	65,289,783	43,551,725	20,996,346	9,551,099	10,890,740	28,383,058	46,860,841	-	6,009	101,599	(83,736,115)	141,904,195
Total Net Assets	105,157,292	55,735,999	28,653,166	9,958,759	13,533,061	106,344,658	58,562,674	238,852,103	7,714	7,541,998	(285,354,636)	338,991,898
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 115,389,482	\$ 61,489,945	\$ 29,640,694	\$ 10,860,617	\$ 14,392,450	\$ 211,228,244	\$ 156,362,312	\$ 239,195,097	\$ 7,714	\$ 9,026,544	\$ (297,487,650)	\$ 550,107,449

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Activities
As of and For the Year Ended June 30, 2020

WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
MEMBER SUPPORT, REVENUE AND RECLASSIFICATIONS												
Member support:												
Offerings from congregations	\$ 21,426,617	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 21,426,617
Gifts and grants	4,060,492	1,357,300	678,035	169,247	620,860	82,391	2,656,827	-	4,935	-	(1,883,560)	8,146,527
Bequests	2,529,973	939,320	249,856	3,327	-	316,421	11,514	-	-	-	-	4,050,411
Total Member Support	28,017,082	2,295,620	927,891	172,574	620,860	398,812	2,688,341	-	4,935	-	(1,883,560)	33,623,555
Revenues:												
Tuition and student fees, net	-	11,647,063	591,990	1,545,213	3,704,363	-	-	-	-	-	-	17,488,649
Activity fees and retail sales	2,167,593	824,644	66,924	93,561	80,296	-	-	13,981,766	4,480	4,333,954	(14,530,753)	7,022,695
Investment returns, net	1,247,162	344,512	524,254	19,053	70,790	7,539,172	408,718	15,539,275	-	155,488	(15,132,276)	10,716,148
Net gain on sale of property and real estate held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	839	-	-	-	-	839
Change in value of trust agreements	-	2,968	207,017	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	(207,017)	2,984
Other	323,699	88,683	15,062	12,608	91,492	-	640,074	-	-	349,733	(58,476)	1,442,765
Transfer from other funds	1,277,057	3,932,345	2,212,168	1,339,758	2,818,795	-	87,254	-	6	26,451	(11,693,832)	-
Total Revenues	5,015,411	16,820,415	3,617,403	3,010,209	6,765,756	7,539,172	1,136,885	29,521,041	4,486	4,665,626	(41,822,354)	36,674,070
Net assets released from restrictions	10,594,918	3,254,030	1,827,607	770,706	728,416	1,151,041	2,753,414	-	5,215	81,383	(3,907,978)	17,356,752
Total Member Support, Revenues and Reclassifications	43,627,411	22,371,065	6,372,901	3,853,489	8,113,032	9,089,025	6,758,640	29,521,041	14,636	4,947,009	(47,113,872)	87,654,377
EXPENSES												
Program Services:												
Ministerial education	9,306,078	17,003,387	5,163,080	3,210,136	6,512,006	-	-	-	-	-	(11,298,300)	29,896,387
World missions	9,657,922	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(391,827)	9,266,095
Home missions	9,415,850	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(809,858)	8,605,992
Congregational and district ministry	6,478,848	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(528,222)	5,950,626
Northwestern Publishing House	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,460,168	(55,183)	3,403,985
Total Program Services	34,858,798	17,003,387	5,163,080	3,210,136	6,512,006	-	-	-	-	3,460,168	(13,084,450)	57,123,085
Support Services:												
Ministry support subsidiaries	-	-	-	-	-	7,947,373	1,380,575	-	12,468	-	(1,161,704)	8,178,710
General and administrative	3,732,596	2,688,942	717,387	622,221	898,696	330,588	314,349	406,999	465	964,772	(443,197)	10,221,818
Mission advancement	2,162,038	688,094	316,682	13,711	52,792	-	-	-	-	-	(3,256)	3,240,011
Transfer to other funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,160,271	13,715,343	-	-	(16,875,614)	-
Total Support Services	5,694,634	3,375,026	1,034,069	635,932	951,488	8,277,961	4,855,195	14,122,342	12,931	964,772	(16,483,811)	21,640,539
Total Expenses	40,753,432	20,378,413	6,197,149	3,846,068	7,463,494	8,277,961	4,855,195	14,122,342	12,931	4,424,940	(31,588,301)	78,763,624
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS												
NET ASSETS - Beginning of Year	36,984,530	10,191,622	7,481,068	300,239	1,992,783	77,150,536	9,798,388	223,453,404	1,705	6,917,330	(186,072,950)	188,196,950
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 39,658,509	\$ 12,194,274	\$ 7,656,820	\$ 407,660	\$ 2,642,321	\$ 77,961,600	\$ 11,701,833	\$ 238,952,103	\$ 1,705	\$ 7,439,399	\$ (201,618,621)	\$ 197,087,703

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Activities (continued)
As of and For the Year Ended June 30, 2020

	WELS	MLC	WLS	M.S	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WH	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
MEMBER SUPPORT, REVENUE AND RECLASSIFICATIONS												
Member support:												
Gifts and grants	\$ 8,722,591	\$ 2,672,315	\$ 1,673,983	\$ 318,474	\$ 341,487	\$ -	\$ 1,131,156	\$ -	\$ 11,224	\$ 114,550	\$ -	\$ 14,985,760
Bequests	889,760	548,958	622,278	-	248,865	-	869,574	-	-	-	-	3,179,455
Total Member Support	9,612,371	3,221,273	2,296,261	318,474	590,352	-	2,000,730	-	11,224	114,550	-	18,165,235
Revenues:												
Investment returns, net	1,365,540	990,960	618,280	65,368	132,086	1,676,676	4,805,049	-	-	-	-	9,654,059
Net loss on sale of property and real estate held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	(12,280)	-	-	-	-	(12,280)
Change in value of trust agreements	3,299,359	605,047	460,002	12,363	84,498	72,550	(1,278,209)	-	-	-	(4,973,902)	(1,718,252)
Redesignated fixed asset additions	-	628,109	604,036	166,459	268,706	-	-	-	-	-	(1,567,310)	-
Other	73,752	-	4,547	-	-	-	28,866	-	-	-	-	107,168
Transfer from other funds	-	-	17,299	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(17,299)	-
Total Revenues	4,738,791	2,224,116	1,704,164	244,190	485,290	1,749,226	3,543,429	-	-	-	(6,958,511)	8,030,695
Net assets released from restrictions	(10,594,318)	(3,254,030)	(1,827,607)	(770,706)	(726,416)	(1,151,041)	(2,753,414)	-	(5,215)	(81,383)	3,807,978	(17,356,752)
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	3,756,244	2,191,359	2,172,818	(208,042)	349,226	598,185	2,790,745	-	6,009	33,167	(2,950,533)	8,839,178
NET ASSETS - Beginning of Year	61,542,539	41,360,366	18,823,528	9,759,141	10,541,514	27,784,883	44,070,096	-	-	68,532	(80,865,882)	133,065,017
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 65,298,783	\$ 43,551,725	\$ 20,996,346	\$ 9,551,099	\$ 10,890,740	\$ 28,383,068	\$ 46,860,841	\$ -	\$ 6,009	\$ 101,699	\$ 183,736,115	\$ 141,904,195

Synodical salary range assignments

Salary matrices are available on pp. 102 and 103.

Early childhood ministry teacher (no degree)	A
Early childhood ministry teacher (associate degree)	B
Teacher (BS or BA base)	C - F
Secondary teacher	D - G
Early childhood ministry director	D - G
Prep professor	D - G
Staff minister	D - G
Principal	E - H
Christian giving counselor	E - H
Prep vice president	E - H
Prep dean	E - H
College professor	E - H
Pastor	E - H
Home missionary	E - H
World missionary	E - H
CMM associate administrator	E - H
CMM associate director	E - H
CMM national coordinator	E - H
Mission counselor	E - H
CMM administrator	F - I
CMM director	F - I
Prep president	F - I
College vice president	F - I
College dean	F - I
Seminary professor	F - I
Seminary vice president	F - I
College president	G - I
Seminary president	G - I
Synod president	J

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 adjustment.

NOTES:

1. The online Called Worker Compensation Calculator at cwcompcalc.wels.net helps a calling body consider the impact of additional responsibilities and education in determining where in the suggested salary range the worker ought to be placed.
2. Columns C-J increase in 5 percent increments over column C. (For example, Rate Range E is 10 percent greater than Rate Range C, Rate Range F is 15 percent greater, etc.)
3. Each called worker's actual salary is determined by finding the applicable experience row and determining the appropriate rate range. (For example, for FY 2021–22 a teacher with 10 years' experience should receive a salary between \$34,948 and \$40,189. Salaries greater than \$34,948 would recognize additional education credentials and responsibility levels. This range increases to \$35,210–\$40,492 for FY 2022–23.)
4. The basis for the housing equity allowance is the entry level base salary (matrix column "C," 0 years of service).
5. The cost of living adjustment (COLA) is applied to the worker's salary.
6. SECA tax reimbursement, housing allowances, and housing equity are provided in addition to the salary amount.

Above base compensation components for called workers

1. Cost of living adjustment using Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) 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 2021–22 and 2022–23 this adjustment would be .75 percent).
3. Social Security (SECA) allowance (7.65 percent of salary, cost of living, and housing value/cash housing/fair market rental of parsonage-teacherage).
4. Housing equity of 2 percent of entry-level base (Column C, 0 years of service) for workers in provided housing (parsonage/teacherage). Amount is \$599 for 2021–22 and \$604 for 2022–23.
5. VEBA health insurance.
6. WELS Pension.
7. Reimbursement for business-related expenses such as travel and conferences.

Note: A web-based Called Worker Compensation Calculator can be found at cwcompcalc.wels.net.

Additional called worker compensation resources including the salary matrices are available at welsrc.net/human-resources or on the Human Resources page under “compensation” on WELS Cloud at cloud.wels.net.

Compensation for synod president and congregational support for vice presidents

The synod president is compensated with a salary based on column “J.” In addition to the base salary and the other components of compensation listed with the compensation guidelines, in 2021–22 the president will receive above base compensation in the amount of \$63,137, as established by the Synodical Council. This amount shall be reviewed annually for possible adjustment by the Synodical Council during its February meeting.

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.

WELS Compensation Plan Worksheet

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

WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES**Salary matrix
2021-22**

Range spread	11,982	12,731	14,978	15,727	16,476	17,224	17,973	18,722	19,471	20,220
<i>Service increments</i>	399	424	499	524	549	574	599	624	649	674
Ranges	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Experience</i>										
0	23,964	25,462	29,955	31,453	32,951	34,448	35,946	37,444	38,942	40,439
1	24,363	25,886	30,454	31,977	33,500	35,022	36,545	38,068	39,591	41,113
2	24,763	26,311	30,954	32,501	34,049	35,596	37,144	38,692	40,240	41,787
3	25,162	26,735	31,453	33,026	34,599	36,170	37,743	39,316	40,889	42,461
4	25,562	27,159	31,952	33,550	35,148	36,745	38,342	39,940	41,538	43,135
5	25,961	27,584	32,451	34,074	35,697	37,319	38,942	40,564	42,187	43,809
6	26,360	28,008	32,951	34,598	36,246	37,893	39,541	41,188	42,836	44,483
7	26,760	28,433	33,450	35,123	36,795	38,467	40,140	41,812	43,485	45,157
8	27,159	28,857	33,949	35,647	37,344	39,041	40,739	42,437	44,134	45,831
9	27,559	29,281	34,448	36,171	37,894	39,615	41,338	43,061	44,783	46,505
10	27,958	29,706	34,948	36,695	38,443	40,189	41,937	43,685	45,432	47,179
11	28,357	30,130	35,447	37,219	38,992	40,763	42,536	44,309	46,081	47,853
12	28,757	30,554	35,946	37,744	39,541	41,338	43,135	44,933	46,730	48,527
13	29,156	30,979	36,445	38,268	40,090	41,912	43,734	45,557	47,379	49,201
14	29,556	31,403	36,945	38,792	40,640	42,486	44,333	46,181	48,028	49,875
15	29,955	31,828	37,444	39,316	41,189	43,060	44,933	46,805	48,678	50,549
16	30,354	32,252	37,943	39,840	41,738	43,634	45,532	47,429	49,327	51,223
17	30,754	32,676	38,442	40,365	42,287	44,208	46,131	48,053	49,976	51,897
18	31,153	33,101	38,942	40,889	42,836	44,782	46,730	48,677	50,625	52,571
19	31,553	33,525	39,441	41,413	43,385	45,357	47,329	49,301	51,274	53,245
20	31,952	33,949	39,940	41,937	43,935	45,931	47,928	49,925	51,923	53,919
21	32,351	34,374	40,439	42,462	44,484	46,505	48,527	50,549	52,572	54,593
22	32,751	34,798	40,939	42,986	45,033	47,079	49,126	51,173	53,221	55,267
23	33,150	35,222	41,438	43,510	45,582	47,653	49,725	51,798	53,870	55,941
24	33,550	35,647	41,937	44,034	46,131	48,227	50,324	52,422	54,519	56,615
25	33,949	36,071	42,436	44,558	46,681	48,801	50,924	53,046	55,168	57,289
26	34,348	36,496	42,936	45,083	47,230	49,375	51,523	53,670	55,817	57,963
27	34,748	36,920	43,435	45,607	47,779	49,950	52,122	54,294	56,466	58,637
28	35,147	37,344	43,934	46,131	48,328	50,524	52,721	54,918	57,115	59,311
29	35,547	37,769	44,433	46,655	48,877	51,098	53,320	55,542	57,764	59,985
30	35,946	38,193	44,933	47,180	49,427	51,672	53,919	56,166	58,413	60,658
31	36,345	38,617	45,432	47,704	49,976	52,246	54,518	56,790	59,062	61,332
32	36,745	39,042	45,931	48,228	50,525	52,820	55,117	57,414	59,711	62,006

See pp. 100 and 101 for current synodical salary range assignments and above base compensation for called workers.

WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

**Salary matrix
2022-23**

Range spread	12,072	12,827	15,090	15,845	16,599	17,354	18,108	18,863	19,617	20,372
<i>Service increments</i>	402	428	503	528	553	578	604	629	654	679
Ranges	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Experience</i>										
0	24,144	25,653	30,180	31,689	33,198	34,707	36,216	37,725	39,234	40,743
1	24,546	26,081	30,683	32,217	33,751	35,285	36,820	38,354	39,888	41,422
2	24,949	26,508	31,186	32,745	34,305	35,864	37,423	38,983	40,542	42,101
3	25,351	26,936	31,689	33,273	34,858	36,442	38,027	39,611	41,196	42,780
4	25,754	27,363	32,192	33,802	35,411	37,021	38,630	40,240	41,850	43,459
5	26,156	27,791	32,695	34,330	35,965	37,599	39,234	40,869	42,504	44,138
6	26,558	28,218	33,198	34,858	36,518	38,178	39,838	41,498	43,157	44,817
7	26,961	28,646	33,701	35,386	37,071	38,756	40,441	42,126	43,811	45,496
8	27,363	29,073	34,204	35,914	37,624	39,335	41,045	42,755	44,465	46,175
9	27,766	29,501	34,707	36,442	38,178	39,913	41,648	43,384	45,119	46,854
10	28,168	29,929	35,210	36,971	38,731	40,492	42,252	44,013	45,773	47,534
11	28,570	30,356	35,713	37,499	39,284	41,070	42,856	44,641	46,427	48,213
12	28,973	30,784	36,216	38,027	39,838	41,648	43,459	45,270	47,081	48,892
13	29,375	31,211	36,719	38,555	40,391	42,227	44,063	45,899	47,735	49,571
14	29,778	31,639	37,222	39,083	40,944	42,805	44,666	46,528	48,389	50,250
15	30,180	32,066	37,725	39,611	41,498	43,384	45,270	47,156	49,043	50,929
16	30,582	32,494	38,228	40,139	42,051	43,962	45,874	47,785	49,696	51,608
17	30,985	32,921	38,731	40,668	42,604	44,541	46,477	48,414	50,350	52,287
18	31,387	33,349	39,234	41,196	43,157	45,119	47,081	49,043	51,004	52,966
19	31,790	33,776	39,737	41,724	43,711	45,698	47,684	49,671	51,658	53,645
20	32,192	34,204	40,240	42,252	44,264	46,276	48,288	50,300	52,312	54,324
21	32,594	34,632	40,743	42,780	44,817	46,854	48,892	50,929	52,966	55,003
22	32,997	35,059	41,246	43,308	45,371	47,433	49,495	51,558	53,620	55,682
23	33,399	35,487	41,749	43,836	45,924	48,011	50,099	52,186	54,274	56,361
24	33,802	35,914	42,252	44,365	46,477	48,590	50,702	52,815	54,928	57,040
25	34,204	36,342	42,755	44,893	47,031	49,168	51,306	53,444	55,582	57,719
26	34,606	36,769	43,258	45,421	47,584	49,747	51,910	54,073	56,235	58,398
27	35,009	37,197	43,761	45,949	48,137	50,325	52,513	54,701	56,889	59,077
28	35,411	37,624	44,264	46,477	48,690	50,904	53,117	55,330	57,543	59,756
29	35,814	38,052	44,767	47,005	49,244	51,482	53,720	55,959	58,197	60,435
30	36,216	38,480	45,270	47,534	49,797	52,060	54,324	56,588	58,851	61,115
31	36,618	38,907	45,773	48,062	50,350	52,639	54,928	57,216	59,505	61,794
32	37,021	39,335	46,276	48,590	50,904	53,217	55,531	57,845	60,159	62,473

See pp. 100 and 101 for current synodical salary range assignments and above base compensation for called workers.

Missions

Board for Home Missions Floor Committee #8

Our calling

The synod directs Home Missions to plant churches so there are more locations from where the gospel of Jesus Christ can be proclaimed. That life-giving and life-saving message needs to be shared for the sake of lost souls. God's people have a clear calling from our Savior Jesus. One way we carry out Jesus' directive to go and make disciples is by planting churches.

Yet, not many would have faulted Home Missions had there been a sabbatical from this directive in 2020, would they? After all, there was a worldwide pandemic. The best way to fight the virus per world health experts was to keep one's distance. That makes it more difficult to witness about the Lord of lords and King of kings. Wait until the hardships associated with the virus passed over and then get back to witnessing might have seemed the way to operate.

Thankfully, motivated by our Savior's supreme sacrifice and the Spirit-blessed realization that people who die without faith in Christ Jesus are going to hell, mission members and mission pastors continued to share the gospel truths. While there was a pause, in the fall of 2020 Home Missions authorized another five missions. In addition, during 2020 five mission churches had first public worship services. Other mission facilities were dedicated, and facility construction began or continued in a number of a places. Numerous reports let us know that God's people didn't stop telling others about Jesus or didn't stop doing what was going to assist in the sharing of the gospel.

As you think about this, we see again the grace of God in action. Saved by grace through the life and death of Christ, God's saved people just can't keep quiet. Whether the sun is shining or a world is under siege from a virus, God's people continue to witness. During the early Christian church Peter was before the Sanhedrin. These enemies of Jesus were telling Peter to stop witnessing. Peter's response, "We can't help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Under threat by the powers that were, Peter said, "Nope. It's too important a message. It needs to be shared. We will keep speaking and proclaiming and witnessing." As he wills, we pray for God to bless WELS to start more missions so Jesus' name can go out into the next communities.

Our current situation

When the pandemic initially hit, Home Missions had to quickly pivot from a full 37-men Board for Home Missions (BHM) face-to-face meeting at the end of March 2020 to a meeting of just the 7 men of the Board for Home Missions Executive Committee via Zoom. The task of the BHM Executive Committee was to go through and act on the Mission Program Support Agreements that missions had submitted (55 in all), the Vicars in Mission Settings Program requests (30 in all), and to look at new mission and ministry requests (13 in all). There is a voluminous amount of material the BHM Executive Committee reads through and discusses. As best they could, the BHM Executive Committee followed its process using Zoom for the first time. And while Mission Program Support Agreements were renewed and Vicars in Mission Settings Program requests were prioritized, due to the unknowns about finances, no new missions were authorized. This meant no financial subsidy was granted to start any missions.

Following appropriate health guidelines (and certainly excusing any BHM members who did not feel comfortable attending a face-to-face meeting) in September the Board for Home Missions did have a face-to-face meeting at the Wildwood Lodge in Pewaukee, Wis. With life a little more stable and finances being better understood, the Board for Home Missions ratified the action of the BHM Executive Committee, which recommended starting five missions.

Those missions are:

- **West San Antonio, Texas**—Supported by Our Savior, San Antonio, 10 families form the core group for this new mission. This group started worship services on March 1, 2020. The first three Sundays an average of 40 people attended worship. Then worship services were suspended due to coronavirus precautions.
- **North Liberty, Iowa**—Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has been working to develop a mission in this growing community for years. Nestled between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, North Liberty is seeing rapid growth. Over the past three years, members of Good Shepherd have been active in various ministry events including worship at the Community Center in North Liberty.
- **Amarillo, Texas**—Located more than 100 miles from the nearest WELS church, a group of 15 WELS members form the core group. The WELS pastor from Lubbock, Texas, comes to Amarillo twice a month to serve the members with Word and sacrament. The prayer is that a full-time pastor will have many opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ so that this small group may blossom into a growing church.

Two more missions were authorized under the title of “mission restart.” While these two locations—Santa Clarita, Calif., and Dix Hills, N.Y.—have been in existence for many years, in the past years both congregations have experienced decline and challenges in continuing ministry. They were no longer able to “afford” a full-time pastor. Working with their respective district mission boards and mission counselors, these two ministries submitted requests that indicated they are willing to resume ministry as a mission church as they had done years before. With financial support from Home Missions, both of those locations are now able to call for a full-time pastor to lead the mission in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the lost and unchurched in their respective neighborhoods.

While the above five locations were authorized in September 2020, during the spring 2020 meeting, an unsubsidized mission start request was approved in Tigard, Ore. While most new missions are subsidized (receive financial support), there were various factors as to why this new mission in Tigard did not need Home Missions subsidy. Thanks to the work of the Pacific Northwest District Mission Board, this unsubsidized mission start came to fruition. A 2020 seminary graduate, Pastor Paul Bourman, was assigned as the mission’s first pastor.

During the 2020–21 fiscal year, Home Missions has been supporting 82 subsidized missions, which includes 19 cross-cultural ministries. There are another 42 unsubsidized missions supported by Home Missions. These unsubsidized missions are missions in every way except these missions don’t receive financial support.

On April 15 and 16, 2021, the Board for Home Missions met face to face at the Holiday Inn in Pewaukee, Wis. During the meeting, the BHM ratified the actions of the BHM Executive Committee. This included authorizing four new missions, which include:

- **Dickinson, N.D.**—A committed core group has been meeting regularly for livestreamed worship and monthly gatherings since 2012, served by pastors from WELS churches in Mandan and Bismarck, N.D. Those two congregations as well as a church in Circle, Mont., will be supporting this new mission start named Amazing Grace. Dickinson, the hub of the area, has seen recent economic growth alongside the oil industry that is drawing new young families to the community.
- **Durham, N.C.**—Gethsemane, the WELS congregation in Raleigh, N.C., is launching a second site in nearby Durham. The three universities in Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill are creating jobs and drawing a diverse group of young professionals and families to the area. The gospel is especially needed in this area, as studies show that 75 percent of people in the area do not know their Savior.
- **Parrish, Fla.**—This new mission plant in Parrish is being started and supported by Risen Savior in Lakewood Ranch, Fla., a previous home mission church that recently became self-supporting. Ascension in Sarasota, Fla., is also supporting this new mission site. Between 20,000 to 30,000 homes are expected to be built in Parrish in the next 10 years, and this new mission will be reaching out with the gospel to a community that is 85 percent unchurched.
- **Waco, Texas**—The Heart of Texas mission core group has been meeting regularly since March 2020. They are active in the community and participate in family-friendly activities around town while representing their new church plant. This mission is being supported by Trinity in nearby Temple, Texas.

At this spring 2021 meeting, the BHM also approved financial support to mission-minded ministries in Hutto, Texas; Summerlin, Nev.; and Willoughby, Ohio; approved the renewal of 58 Mission Program Support Agreements, which means that 58 missions had their financial support approved for the coming fiscal year; worked with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to approve the requests of 23 congregations to be assigned a vicar through the Vicars in Mission Settings Program; and thanked previous BHM chairman, Pastor Wayne Uhlhorn, for his four-plus years of leadership.

In addition, the BHM wholeheartedly and unanimously approved a memorial be submitted to the 2021 synod in convention about Home Missions starting 100 missions in 10 years (see pp. 182 and 183 for the full memorial). This ambitious goal would start July 1, 2023. To work at having all district mission boards and mission counselors working together on this, there will be an all district mission board/mission counselor meeting at a site yet to be determined on Jan. 30–Feb. 1, 2022. All district mission boards are working on pipelines for future mission locations. The district mission boards are also being encouraged to share four to six locations in their districts where Hispanic ministry has the potential to connect with a local ministry.

District mission boards and mission counselors

A question that is frequently asked is how does Home Missions determine where to start the next missions? That happens through the work of district mission boards and mission counselors. The Board for Home Missions has 14 district mission boards. The BHM relies on each district mission board and the mission counselors to do the “heavy lifting” of researching, identifying, and recommending new locations to the BHM for funding. Please understand, new missions just don’t happen. There is a lot of faithful, persistent work that takes place long before any paperwork is submitted to the BHM or a mission pastor knocks on the first door. These district mission boards are also responsible for supporting existing missions in their districts, with the end-goal that a mission becomes self-sustaining in 8 to 12 years after inception. Of course, the overarching goal is that the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed to countless numbers of the redeemed.

District mission board members usually serve from 6 to 12 years. As district mission board members finish their service, move to another district, or have life changes that no longer allow them to serve, new men are elected at district conventions or are appointed by district presidents. With an ever-changing roster of district mission board members, every two years Home Missions offers a district mission board orientation the last Monday and Tuesday in July. In July 2020 close to 20 district mission board members attended this orientation. Every winter Home Missions also looks to provide ongoing training for all district mission board members.

Each district mission board has a chairman. Over the past two years, seven district mission boards have a new chairman. There are also a number of new district mission board members. The every-two-year orientation and every-winter training is vital for assisting Home Missions volunteers to carry out their important work.

Over the last 12 months there have been some personnel changes in those who are active in serving Home Missions. In fall 2020 Pastor Wayne Uhlhorn accepted the call to serve as a mission counselor, filling a vacant position. He began serving the Arizona-California, Northern Wisconsin, South Atlantic, and Southeastern Wisconsin Districts on Jan. 1, 2021. Since Uhlhorn had been the BHM chairman, WELS President Mark Schroeder appointed Pastor Mark Gabb to serve as the next BHM chairman. Since Gabb had been serving as the South Atlantic District Mission Board chairman, the South Atlantic district president appointed South Atlantic District Mission Board member Pastor Ben Zahn to be the South Atlantic District Mission Board chairman. We are thankful for these men assuming these roles and thankful for all the men on district mission boards who serve the cause of Home Missions.

Thanks also goes to current mission counselors Pastor Mark Birkholz and Pastor Matt Vogt. Those men serve a number of districts. And thanks to Pastor Tim Flunker, who serves our church body as the Hispanic outreach consultant. As needed and requested, he is willing to serve any WELS North American congregation as it relates to Hispanic ministry. These men along with Uhlhorn help home missions and missionaries make the most effective use of human and financial resources for mission outreach. Humanly speaking, the desire is to assist missions to work toward becoming self-sustaining. As full-time gospel servants doing this work across the spectrum of Home Missions, the value of mission counselors can’t be overstated.

Home Missions staff

In supporting and serving the subsidized, unsubsidized, and campus ministries (along with the ever-expanding ministry of the Joint Mission Council and the Board for World Missions), give thanks for the six Missions staff working at the Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis. The Missions staff is overseen by Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations, who serves both Home and World Missions.

WELS Campus Ministry

While Home Missions’ primary purpose is to plant missions, through the Campus Ministry Committee, Home Missions also serves students on college campuses. During the 2020–21 fiscal year our church body has been celebrating 100 years of campus ministry. For almost 40 years, support for campus ministry has come through the Campus Ministry Committee. The Campus Ministry Committee chairman is Pastor Scott Wolfram.

During the fiscal year (2020–21) of the 100th anniversary celebration, Campus Ministry was blessed to take a major step. The Campus Ministry Committee, working with the Joint Mission Council, extended a call for a full-time campus ministry mission counselor to Pastor Dan Linder, who accepted the call and began serving Nov. 1, 2020. We pray for the Lord's blessings as he serves our church body to support existing campus ministries and to encourage more congregations to have a campus ministry. Lindner also will be working with area Lutheran high schools to connect graduating seniors (domestic and international) to campus ministries around North America.

Currently Campus Ministry financially supports 11 campus ministries with what is called "significant" funding (anywhere from \$5,000 to \$65,000) and provides funding for another 18 campus ministries with funding usually under \$1,000. There are approximately 7,300 names of college students in the Campus Ministry database.

During the 2020–21 fiscal year, WELS congregations have been encouraged to have a special worship service/prayer in thanks to God for blessing our church body with 100 years of campus ministry. Special offerings have also been received. Through March 2021, more than \$130,000 in gifts have been offered in support of Campus Ministry. We thank God from whom all blessings flow. To learn more about Campus Ministry, visit wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/campus-ministry.

COVID-19 community outreach grants

At the 2020 November Synodical Council virtual meeting, Pastor Dan Sims, Christian Aid and Relief director, indicated that the Christian Aid and Relief Executive Committee had designated a portion of its funds to be matched by congregations who were working to assist communities and individuals dealing with the fallout from COVID-19. After hearing what Christian Aid and Relief was looking to do, Home Missions asked Sims if mission congregations could have the first opportunity to apply for grants.

The program that was agreed to was that a mission church would raise funds for its specific COVID-19 program(s). The mission could raise between \$500 to \$2,500. From special designated outreach project funds, Home Missions would match what the mission raised. And then, that total (the mission congregation total and the Home Missions total) would be matched by Christian Aid and Relief up to \$5,000. So, if a congregation raised \$2,500, Home Missions would match that with \$2,500. That total of \$5,000 would then be matched by Christian Aid and Relief with another \$5,000. Thus, in total there was now another \$10,000 available for community COVID-19 relief/assistance.

During the process, 24 missions made requests, and all were approved. Seventeen missions maxed out by raising \$2,500. With the additional grants from Christian Aid and Relief and Home Missions, those missions had \$10,000 with which to work. Overall, Christian Aid and Relief granted \$110,400 and Home Missions granted \$52,700. Mission churches raised \$52,700. As the mission churches carry out their programs, more will be shared on the projects and the Lord's blessings on these projects.

Joint Mission Council

Home Missions also works closely with the Board for World Missions and the Board for Ministerial Education through the Joint Mission Council. The Joint Mission Council provides opportunities to coordinate ministry efforts that overlap Home and World Missions. See p. 120 for a full report on the Joint Mission Council.

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.

Another vital Home Missions partner is WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF). Through the ministry of CEF, loans are made to mission churches to purchase land and help build or purchase/renovate their first worship facility. Not only does CEF provide loans, through its grant programs mission churches receive additional financial support, which lowers the loan and the amount of interest paid over the life of the loan. Since 1993, more than \$39 million in grants have been made to mission congregations.

Since the summer of 2016, CEF has been making an annual missions endowment payout to Home Missions. Over the past six years, Home Missions has been blessed with \$5,498,000. Additionally, in September 2018 the CEF Board approved a special one-time grant of \$1 million. Please understand that without these generous grants, Home Missions would not have been able to authorize the number of missions it has these past years. Give thanks that CEF not only assists missions directly but also is supporting Home Missions in its efforts to plant churches.

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) is another active and generous partner serving both Home and World

Missions. The LWMS produces an annual prayer calendar featuring an aspect of WELS Missions. The LWMS supports the Befriend a Missionary program. At its spring and fall rallies, the LWMS features mission work in North America as well as around the world. At LWMS rallies, offerings are collected. Both Home and World Missions' special project funds receive additional financial support so that missions can do "extra ministry" over and above their budgets. And at the annual national convention, sometimes close to \$200,000 in gifts are offered to Missions. While the 57th and 58th national conventions of the LWMS have been held virtually, the financial support has remained steady. We give thanks to the Lord for all the ways the LWMS continues to support Home Missions.

Supporting WELS Missions

Join with brothers and sisters from around the world for Taste of Missions, an online missions experience, from July 11–17, 2021. Get to know our home and world missionaries like you never have before, and experience mission work firsthand through short video updates, live Q&A sessions, activities and recipes for the entire family, daily devotions, and a live worship service where (God willing) we commission new missionaries on July 17. Visit tasteofmissions.com to learn more and register for this free event.

A WELS Missions Facebook page shares so much about Home Missions. "Like" the page at [fb.com/WELSMissions](https://www.facebook.com/WELSMissions) for an easy way to stay up to date on news from mission fields, read inspiring stories of the gospel at work, and take advantage of the many resources WELS Missions has to offer. Another way in which the message of Home Missions is getting out is through weekly blogging. To subscribe to Missions Blogs, visit wels.net/subscribe. For any promotional materials (videos, blogs, fact sheets, PowerPoints, photos, etc.) to use in making Home Missions presentations, visit the WELS Resource Center: missions.welsrc.net. You can also learn more by visiting wels.net/homemissions.

A look ahead

As WELS looks to celebrate 175 years as a church body in 2025, Home Missions is bringing a memorial to the 2021 synod convention asking for its blessing and its support to help Home Missions plant 100 mission churches in 10 years. In addition, Home Missions looks to enhance 75 existing ministries during those 10 years. This "goal" would begin with the 2023–24 fiscal year. In starting new churches and in enhancing existing churches to do more gospel outreach, the prayer is that many more hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and through the Spirit's power are brought to faith in our Savior.

Why was the goal of 100 Missions and 75 enhancements chosen? Why not 1,000 new missions in 10 years? From 2011 to 2020 Home Missions was blessed to start 59 missions and enhance 35 ministries. Thus, the 100 new missions is in essence doubling what Home Missions has done the past 10 years. While that is an ambitious goal and will require a concentrated effort of our entire church body to support Home Missions in this endeavor, with the Lord's blessings it is an achievable goal. No doubt it will take more resources than Home Missions currently has available. Here are some additional thoughts to consider:

Scripturally, our Savior directs us to reach more souls with the good news. Over the course of time new mission plants usually are fulfilling Christ's commission and are reaching lost souls. No doubt about it, all gospel proclaiming churches can reach lost souls. In many self-supporting churches, though, as they grow, there are more hospital visits and more counseling situations and more Bible classes and more meetings. In a mission church, the focus is primarily on reaching the next soul with the gospel of Jesus.

Synodically, it is not a secret that WELS' membership has been declining numerically. Over the past 28 years we have seen a decline of almost 89,000 souls. More congregations have been closing. If we desire to have a confessional Lutheran presence long after the current generations of WELS members are in heaven's glory, starting more churches is imperative.

Financially, Home Missions encourages mission churches to offer 10 percent of their offerings in support of synod ministry. As these missions develop, they help to support the overall mission and ministry of WELS. A mission started in 1989 is offering more than \$100,000 in Congregation Mission Offerings. A mission started in 1997 is offering more than \$55,000 in Congregation Mission Offerings. Mission churches that are blessed with growth can be generous supporters of our church body through their Congregation Mission Offerings.

Practically, our church body continues to train men to serve as shepherds in congregations. A strong recruitment pitch for more men to serve is the opportunity to serve in new mission starts. An expanding church body offers such opportunities.

Although the formal goal of WELS working to start 100 mission in 10 years won't start until the 2023–24 fiscal year, over the next two years Home Missions will work with a number of ministry groups in our church body in gearing up to work toward reaching this ambitious goal (humanly speaking). It is apparent to us in Home Missions that to work toward attaining this goal, it is going to take the efforts of not just Home Missions but the concentrated efforts of our church body.

Of course, as we talk about setting this human goal, we know the results are in the hands of our gracious God. In Proverbs 19:21 we hear, “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” Thus, as we plan and work and collaborate with others, we pray for the Lord’s blessing and guidance. We pray he allows us to reach many more lost souls with the precious message of full and free forgiveness, found only through faith in his Son, our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus Christ. We pray his will be done.

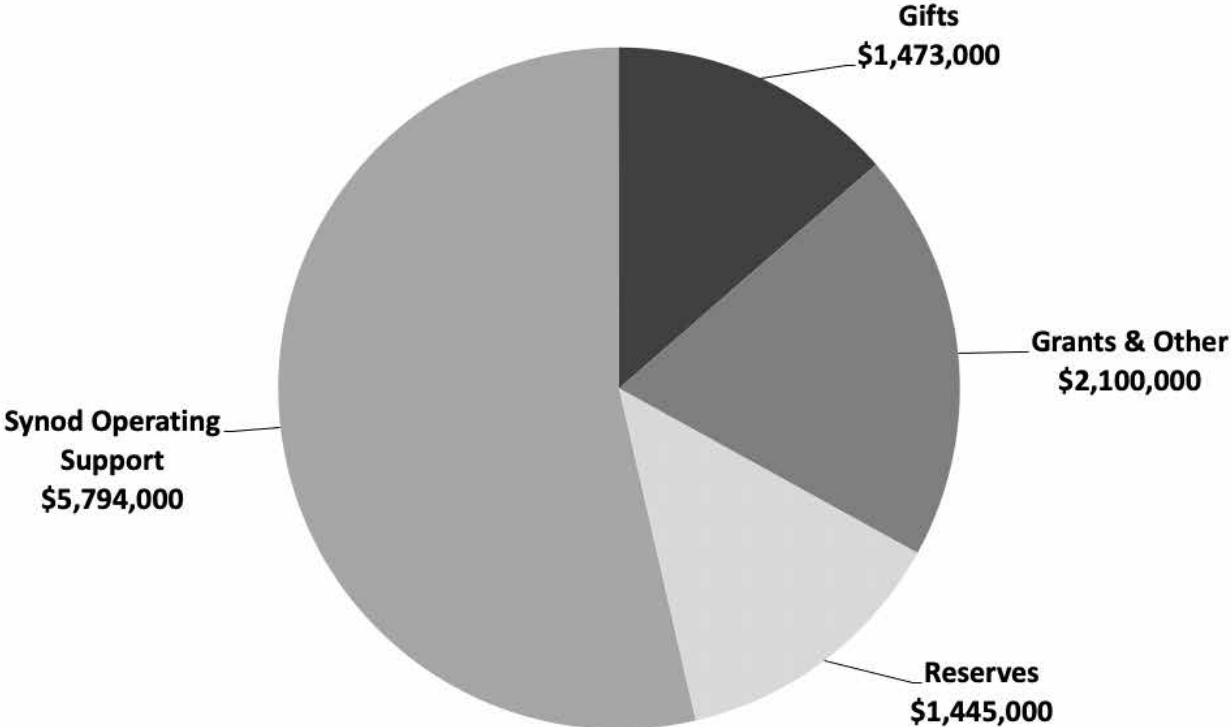
Rev. Keith Free, reporter

Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman
Rev. Frederic Berger, Nebraska Mission District
Mr. Dallas Christ, Nebraska Mission District
Mr. John Deschane, Northern Wisconsin Mission District
Mr. Matthew Dettmann, Colorado Mission District
Rev. Benjamin Enstad, Northern Wisconsin Mission District
Rev. Matthew Frey, Colorado Mission District
Rev. Harland Goetzinger, WELS–Canada Mission District
Mr. Paul Hahm, North Atlantic Mission District
Mr. Mark Hartman, South Central Mission District
Mr. Mel Kam, Pacific Northwest Mission District
Rev. Jonathan Kolander, Arizona-California Mission District
Mr. Scott Krause, Western Wisconsin Mission District
Rev. Robert Krueger, Michigan Mission District
Mr. Noel Ledermann, Arizona-California Mission District
Mr. Werner Lomker, WELS–Canada Mission District
Rev. Jeffrey Mahnke, Western Wisconsin Mission District
Mr. Thomas Metzger, Michigan Mission District
Senior Master Sergeant Gerald Pepke, Dakota-Montana Mission District
Dr. Douglas Rall, South Atlantic Mission District
Mr. David Sauer, Minnesota Mission District
Rev. Nathan Sutton, South Central Mission District
Rev. Steven Waldschmidt, Minnesota Mission District
Rev. Craig Wasser, Pacific Northwest Mission District
Rev. Kevin Wattles, North Atlantic Mission District
Rev. Jonathan Werre, Dakota-Montana Mission District
Mr. Steven Wolf, Southeastern Wisconsin Mission District
Rev. Benjamin Zahn, South Atlantic Mission District
Rev. Michael Zarling, Southeastern Wisconsin Mission District

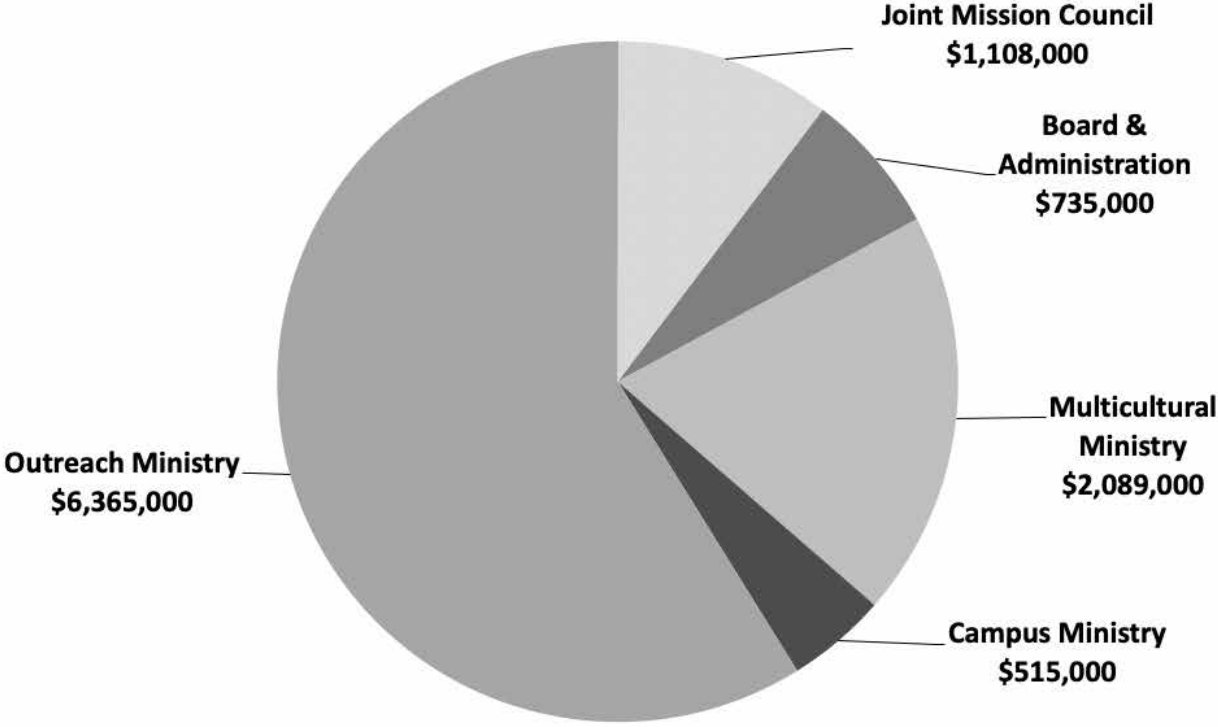
Advisory:

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

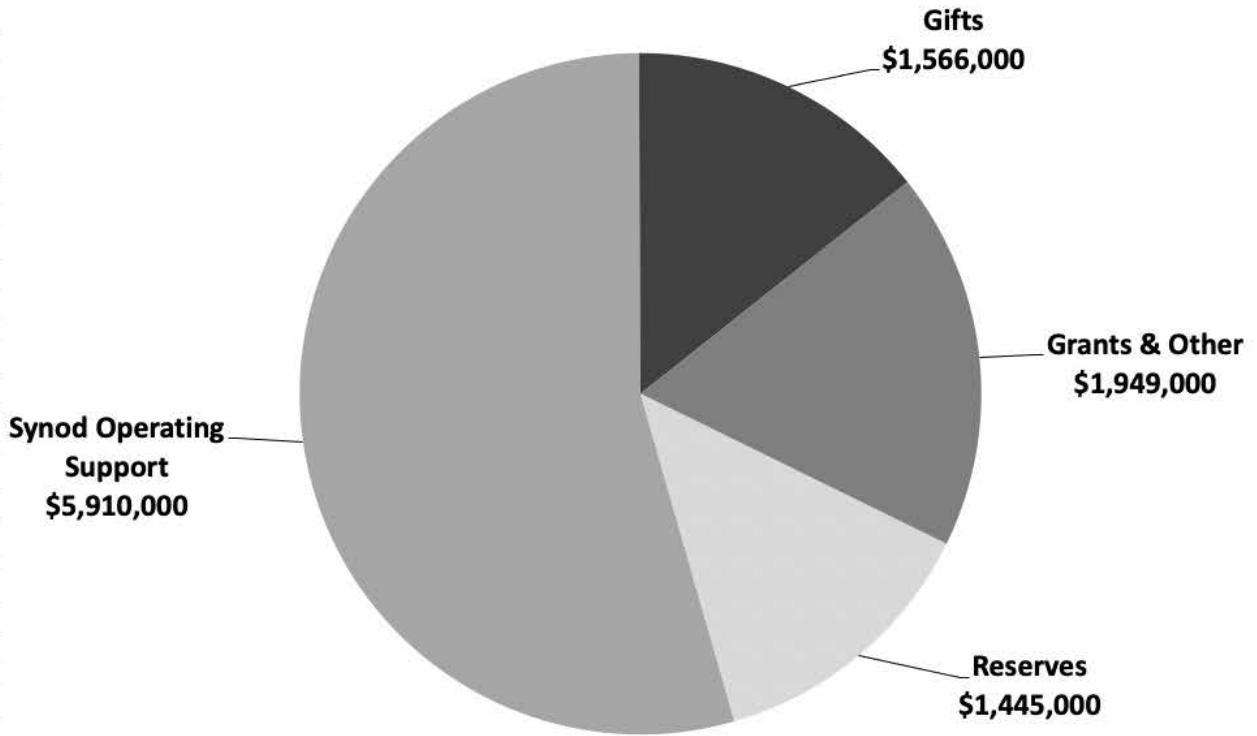
**FY 2021-22 Support
Home Missions
\$10,812,000**



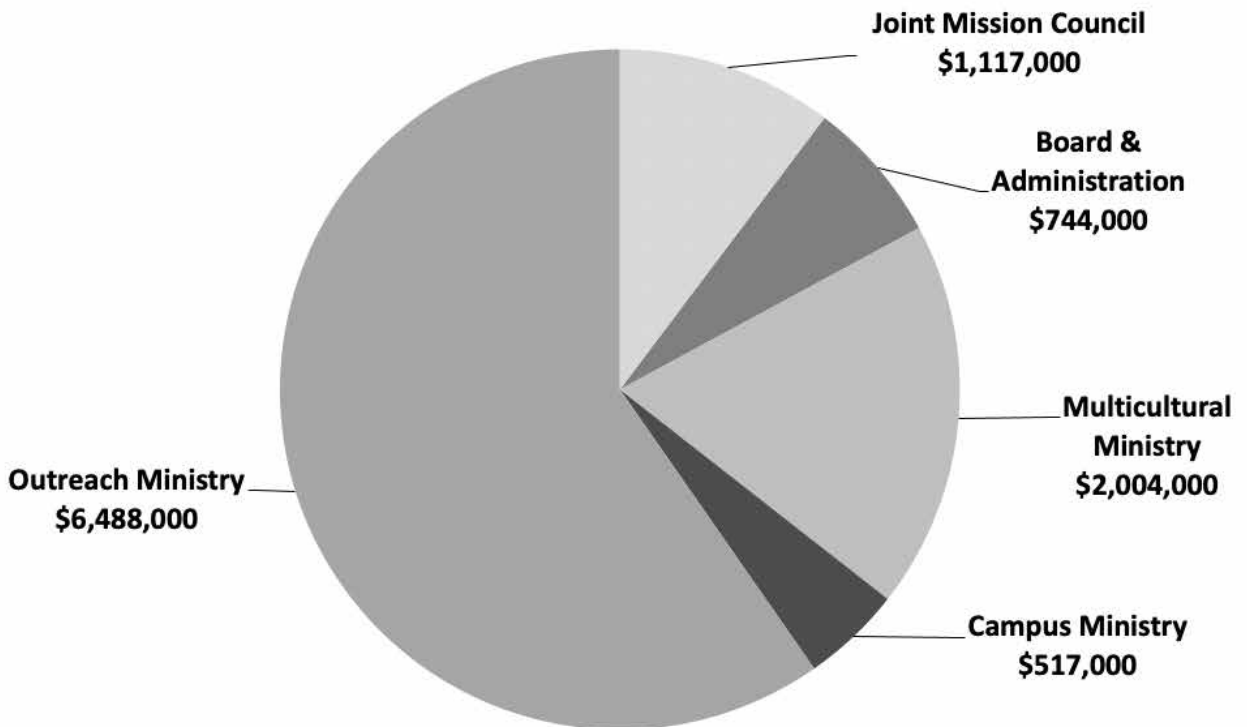
**FY 2021-22 Expenses
Home Missions
\$10,812,000**



**FY 2022-23 Support
Home Missions
\$10,870,000**



**FY 2022-23 Expenses
Home Missions
\$10,870,000**



Board for World Missions

Floor Committee #9

Our calling

Christ's love has done what no human being could ever imagine. He came to this world and gave himself to guarantee our eternity at his side. This love fills our hearts and by God's powerful Spirit overflows to touch the lives of those around us. Christ has called us to keep reaching even further with his love. Our calling includes being witnesses to the multitudes on this planet who still do not know what our loving Savior has done. In response to our calling, the Board for World Missions is directed to carry out ". . . the responsibility of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ for the discipling of all people living outside the United States of America and Canada and those people who, because of cultural barriers, have not been made the responsibility of other agencies of WELS" (WELS Bylaws, Sec. 6.1). Into a world of almost 8 billion people who desperately need it, our missionaries and national church partners bring the light of God's Word. With this powerful tool deployed and in the hands of the Lord of the Church, our work is bearing much fruit.

Our current situation

WELS World Missions conducts and encourages gospel outreach in 42 foreign countries and is exploring outreach opportunities in 17 prospective new mission fields. World Missions brings the light of God's Word through evangelism efforts, church planting, training national workers for ministry, and providing religious materials in foreign languages. Forty-one world missionaries partner with more than 400 national pastors to conduct outreach and train more than 380 seminary students for service in Christ's kingdom. The advance of technology around the world has allowed us to reach with the gospel through the Internet into places that were before unreachable.

The Board for World Missions (BWM) has four main functions.

1. Reach out to those who have not heard about Jesus yet.
2. Reach out to church bodies who contact us asking for help.
3. Mentor and train pastors and leaders to be confessional Lutherans.
4. We support this work in many languages through the production of materials such as videos, literature, publications, websites, advertising, and gospel tools through Multi-Language Productions.

World Missions teams

World Missions has been working on clarifying and making the best use of its teams. The ministry of World Missions is divided by the BWM into broad administrative areas according to geography and/or culture. Teams (often referred to as "One Teams") carry out ministry in each area.

The members of each team are the WELS missionaries called by the Board for World Missions to that administrative area and the team's administrative committee, appointed by the board. A new feature of the teams is the close integration of three partners—the Pastoral Studies Institute, the Commission on Inter-Church Relations, and the diaspora ministry facilitator.

Pastoral Studies Institute

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in collaboration with the Joint Mission Council provides representatives to each team to assist with theological education efforts.

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

The Commission on Inter-church Relations (CICR) has representatives on each team to assist in WELS' maintenance of relationships with sister synods.

Diaspora ministry facilitator

A diaspora ministry facilitator is being appointed to each team. Diaspora ministries refer to the USA- and Canada-based ministries WELS does or might do with new immigrant or culturally cohesive groups, such as Hmong, Nuer, Hindu, or Native American.

World Missions partners and missions

Every country and opportunity has its own story. It would be impossible to report on all the work that is currently going on in this report. To give you an idea of the scope of this work, take a look at the following list of countries where WELS World Missions conducts, partners, supports, or encourages gospel outreach.

*Countries where missionaries reside.

Africa

Mission partners

- Cameroon
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Malawi*
- Nigeria
- Zambia*

Exploratory mission work

- Burundi
- DRO Congo
- Liberia
- Mozambique
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- South Sudan
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zimbabwe

Asia

Mission partners

- Australia
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Laos
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- Thailand*
- Vietnam

Exploratory mission work

- Bangladesh
- Native Thai People

East Asia

Mission partners

- China
- Hong Kong*
- South Korea
- Taiwan

Europe

Mission partners

- Albania
- Bulgaria
- Czech Republic
- Finland

- Germany
- Latvia
- Moldova
- Norway
- Portugal
- Russia*
- Sweden
- Ukraine

Exploratory mission work

- London, England

Latin America

Mission partners

- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Cuba
- Dominican Republic
- Haiti
- Mexico
- Peru
- Puerto Rico
- Venezuela

Exploratory mission work

- Argentina
- Ecuador*
- Honduras
- Nicaragua
- Paraguay*
- Tequila Villages of Mexico

North America

Mission partners

- Apache Reservation*

Exploratory mission work

- Navajo Reservation

Every aspect of the work our mission teams carry out in so many ways and so many places is worthy of note. Summaries of this work can be found at wels.net/missions.

Information concerning independent sister churches who receive specialized help from WELS can also be found in the report of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (p. 18). Notice the gospel work that WELS encourages through our worldwide fellowship with the church bodies in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC).

News from World Missions teams

Asia One Team

Bangladesh

Our team was able to make two trips to Bangladesh last quarter.

Pakistan

The team is in daily and weekly online contact with Christians there doing Bible institute classes, Bible studies, and daily devotions.

Nepal

Nepalese are reaching across the border in India. Several aid grants have been given by the WELS Committee on Christian Aid and Relief. There is a possibility of working with Pakistani and Nepalese immigrants in Ohio.

Vietnam

Our WELS missionaries have not yet been able to move to Vietnam but have been teaching online courses to Hmong in Vietnam. The local Hmong Fellowship Church leaders have visited all churches in the country. After a long pause because of the pandemic, the training center project will soon be operational.

East Asia One Team

There are 55 groups in the mainland. Our team conducts quality online in-person courses with more than 200 students and are experimenting with new automated "TELL Mandarin" courses (see Multi-Language Productions Team report below).

One Africa Team

The best outreach opportunities continue to be groups in Uganda and Liberia. Limited online contact has been possible. Our Africa team has been hampered the most by lockdowns. After months of waiting, the new team leader, Pastor Howard Mohlke, has been able to move to Malawi.

Europe Team

World Missions administrator Pastor Larry Schlomer is also now the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) administrator and has been working closely with CICR chairman Prof. James Danell. Progress is encouraging in the past quarter regarding the integration and better clarity on how the CICR representatives and contact men for various European countries will work with the World Missions Europe Team to maintain relationships with our sister synods.

One Latin America Team

We continue to praise God for the timing of lockdowns and the release of the robust series of courses offered to Hispanics throughout the world by our One Latin America Team. The misfortune turned into the perfect unintentional promotions campaign. Just as the *Academia Cristo* suite of courses were tested and ready, people were sitting at home looking for something just like that to study. The program begins with automated courses that draw thousands. There are 60 men who have finished higher level courses face-to-face with our team's teachers. Those men are gathering groups to hear the Word across Latin America. New missionary Pastor Matthew Behmer has landed well in Ecuador.

Native America Team

Work on the Apache reservations continues. The new Native Christian Network plans are moving ahead. The vision is to reach the wider Native American population in the USA (98 percent non-Christian). The Apache Christian Training School (ACTS) will serve that wider group.

Multi-Language Productions Team

Multi-Language Productions (MLP) continues to support the various teams. MLP continues to be integral to the *Academia Cristo* work of the One Latin America Team and is continuing to develop its own online Christian teaching courses for English speakers worldwide known as TELL.

Exploratory areas

The board is moving forward with plans to send a pair of new WELS missionaries to each country to reach the Wolof tribe in Senegal, start a mission in London, reach the unreached Thai in Thailand, and if security concerns are removed, an underserved area in Mexico (Tequila Villages).

Missionary "recruitment"

The board anticipates needing up to 10 new missionaries over the next five years. A rough plan would be to call half of those from among WELS parish pastors, three from WLS graduates, and two from other areas (teachers, staff ministers, or laymen).

WLS vicar to Colombia

Plans are set to send a May 2021 vicar assignment to work among our Colombian brethren.

A look ahead

The number of people on this planet who need to hear about the love of the God who came into this world to save them is growing. More than 6.5 billion people need what we already have. Without the gospel message, they will be lost for eternity.

Online contacts are still booming. Shutdowns and lockdowns around the world have people more connected online than ever. We are working to connect people with online communities that provide a more complete understanding

of the Bible. These people are planting churches. Church bodies in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference provide additional contacts to explore. The Board for World Missions also serves as the World Missions exploration arm of WELS. There are efforts to plant churches underway in Argentina; Costa Rica; Cuba; Ecuador; Nicaragua; Paraguay; Venezuela; among the Roma people in Europe; Liberia; Mozambique; Rwanda; Sierra Leone; South Sudan; Uganda; Zimbabwe; Bangladesh; London; Senegal; the Tequila Villages of Mexico; Native Thai speakers in Thailand; and Navajo, Sioux, and Mescalero Native American tribes in the USA.

Over the next two years the Board for World Missions hopes to finalize exploration of London, Bangladesh, Thailand, Mexico, and Senegal. As the Lord allows, we will send two missionaries to serve each of those locations. This reflects one of the main functions the Board for World Missions hopes to accomplish. These beginning stages are the start of a path we pray will lead to much more. Even as we reach into these unreached areas, we will also continue to follow up with church leaders who contact us for help and partnership. We will continue to train and mentor leaders and national churches in our fellowship. And we will keep looking for new places where the gospel has not yet reached.

All of this is being done with an eye on what we see as a very realistic possibility. The Board for World Missions is organizing its work to be ready for a worldwide fellowship that may number a half million people outside of North America within the decade. If the Lord would bless these emerging churches with that type of growth, it will have a significant impact on what we do together as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Your World Missions team treasures the ongoing support of the members of WELS. Your prayers, attention, and gifts allow us to carry out the witnessing work the Lord has given to us all. May the Lord bless our work together as we hear his calling and take the treasure of Christ's love to share it with a world that will be lost without it.

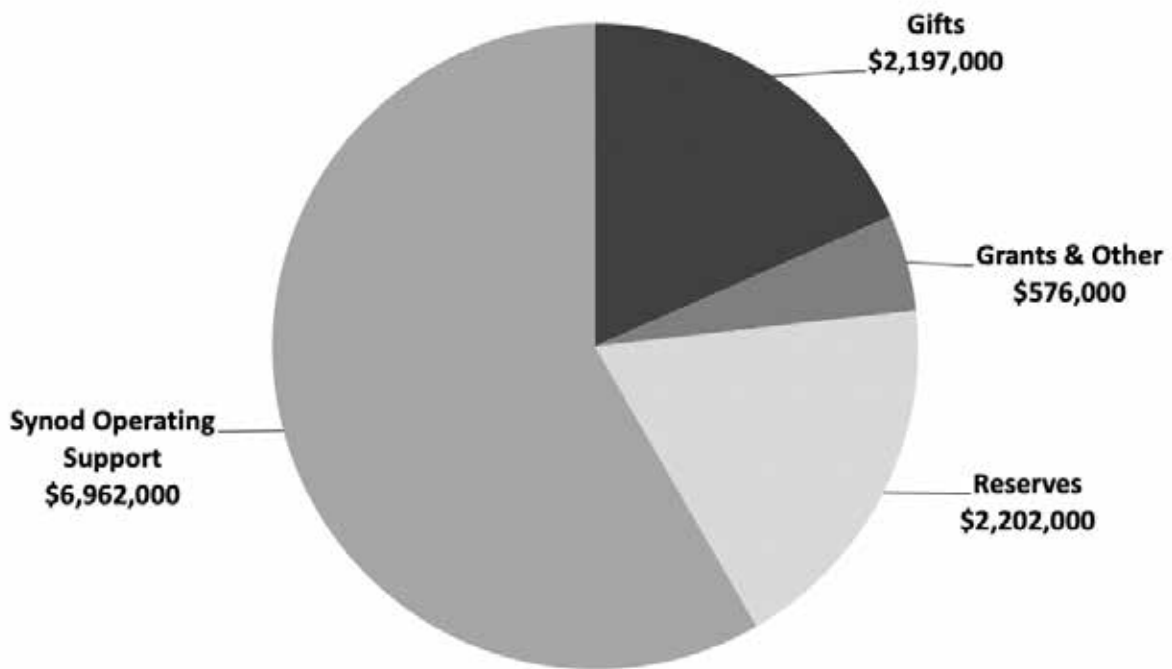
Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, reporter

Rev. Paul Janke, chairman
Mr. Matt Doering, secretary
Mr. Arlin Bornschlegl
Rev. Glen Hieb
Mr. Mark Schulz

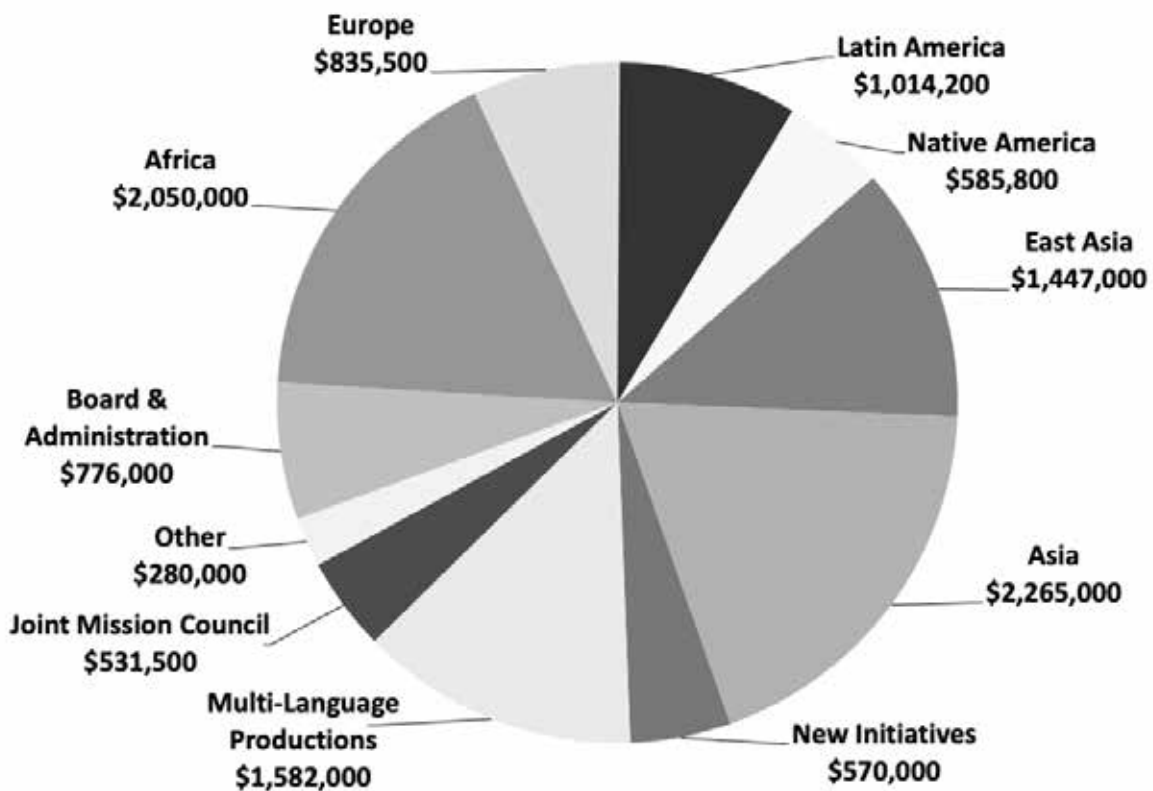
Advisory:

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

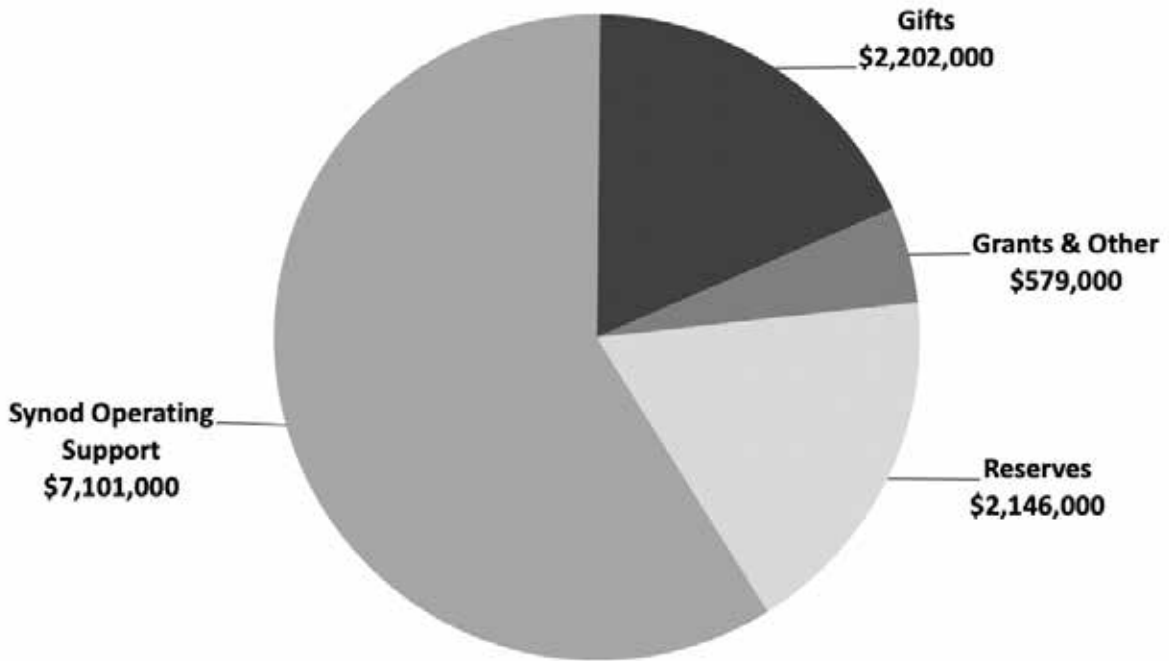
**FY 2021-22 Support
World Missions
\$11,937,000**



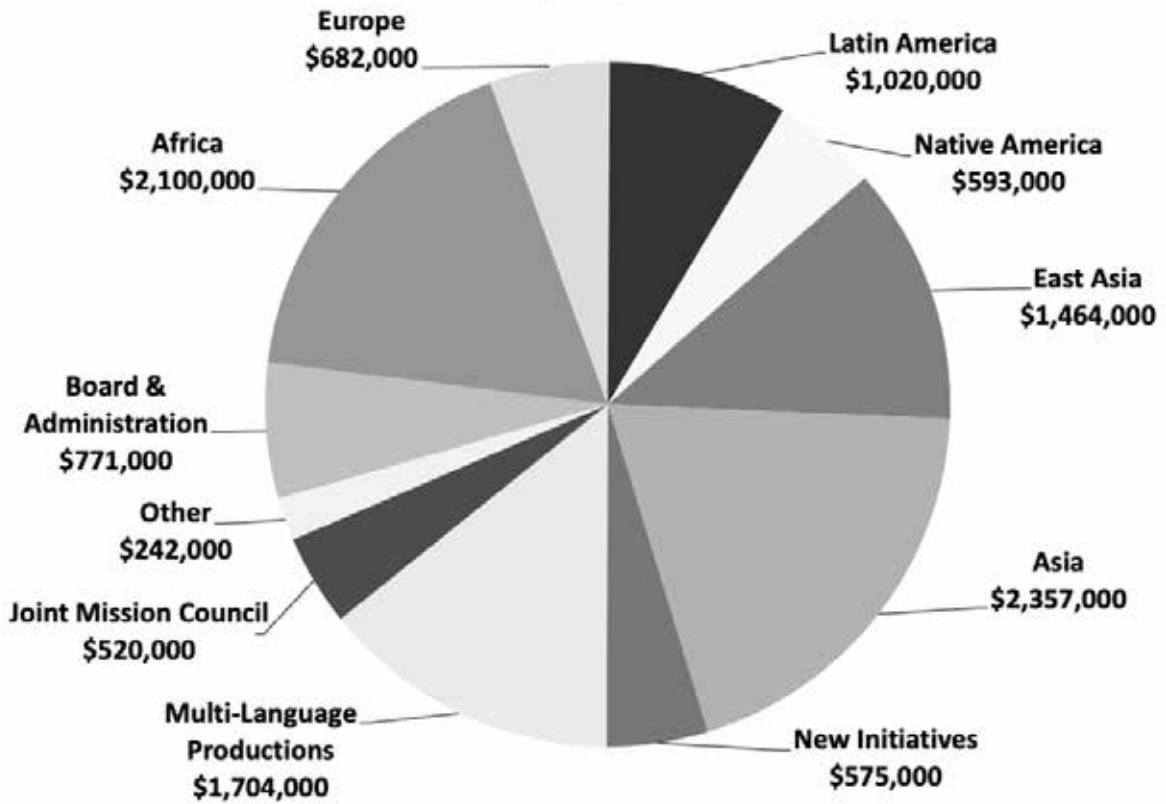
**FY 2021-22 Expenses
World Missions
\$11,937,000**



**FY 2022-23 Support
World Missions
\$12,028,000**



**FY 2022-23 Expenses
World Missions
\$12,028,000**



Joint Mission Council

Floor Committee #9

Our calling

WELS Joint Missions supports mission opportunities that are the responsibility of Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education. Much of this work centers around people group ministries, where immigrants who have joined our fellowship in the United States and Canada are able to take the gospel back to friends and family in their country of origin. These are often called diaspora ministries, and the Joint Mission Council has begun appointing diaspora ministry facilitators to assist in the work. The Joint Mission Council administers the work of the Pastoral Studies Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, assists in other cross-cultural outreach efforts, and supervises new programs like WELS Mission Journeys and Asian outreach in North America.

Coordination and cooperation are helpful to all of WELS and the church bodies in our fellowship. Since the gospel is for all people, we want to reach everyone even if it is difficult, and the Joint Mission Council is proactively looking for opportunities to make connections by being flexible in structure.

Our current situation

Pastoral Studies Institute

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary facilitates much of the work of the Joint Mission Council. Prof. Jon Bare, Prof. Brad Wordell, and Prof. E. Allen Sorum make up the Pastoral Studies Institute Team. They are called jointly by the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board and the Joint Mission Council.

In Africa, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is integrated into the One Africa Team in the areas of theological education, consulting, and assisting One Africa Team's Confessional Lutheran Institute to carry out formal continuing education, seminary consultation, and professional development throughout Africa. Some examples of the work include: 1) collaboration with One Africa Team and the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA) to offer Bachelors of Divinity (BDiv) and Masters of Theology (MTh) degrees to pastors in our sister church bodies; 2) collaboration with the Global South Sudanese Committee and national churches in Kenya and Ethiopia for the training of Nuer pastors in refugee camps in those countries; and 3) consultation with One Africa Team and the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ–Kenya on the training and continuing education of pastors.

In Asia, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is similarly integrated into the newly formed Asia One Team to provide strategic coordination of the team's theological education function. Some specific areas of this work include development of curriculum, organizing the course schedule, coordination of visiting instructors, and continuing education workshops. An example of this would be an annual continuing education seminar for the pastors of the church body of our fellowship in Indonesia. They are also helping to develop the curriculum, organize the course schedule, and arrange the visiting teachers for pastors of the Hmong Fellowship Church who have been chosen to study at the new training center in Hanoi, Vietnam.

In Latin America, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is consulting with the World Missions One Latin America Team members to determine the partners, the structure, and the program for an online seminary for all of Latin America. The Joint Mission Council is also partnering with the One Latin America Team to determine the scope and direction of further Spanish-speaking outreach in North America.

In Europe, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is integrated into the One Europe Team in Russia, providing seminary training for a Russian man in Novosibirsk, continuing education for four pastors in Russia, and Masters in Sacred Theology (STM) course work to our missionary in Russia. Team members recently began working with a Lutheran pastor seeking partnership with our sister church body in Russia. In Bulgaria, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team works with Gypsy (Roma) outreach sites.

In North America, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team continues to train immigrants to the United States for service to their local people group. Twenty-one such men are currently enrolled in the program and are committed to completing the Pastoral Studies Institute training program. In addition, the formation of an Urban Advisory Board is coordinating efforts under the Pastoral Studies Institute to train urban Black men for local urban Black ministry. This new program is the Joshua Urban Ministry Program, and a first cohort has been formed.

People group committees

The Joint Mission Council has formed the Global South Sudanese Committee so that South Sudanese immigrants of our fellowship can take administrative responsibility for outreach to Nuer speakers in the U.S. and abroad. The Joint Mission Council has also formed the North American Hmong Committee so that Hmong immigrants of our fellowship can take administrative responsibility for outreach to Hmong speakers in the U.S. and Canada. When Spanish-speaking immigrants are interested in similar efforts, the Board for World Missions' One Latin America Team has been handling those arrangements, but the Joint Mission Council has recently begun exploring forming people group committees of Spanish-speaking WELS members based on their countries of origin.

Mission Journeys

WELS Mission Journeys, the official WELS program for short-term mission trips, provides an opportunity for all WELS members to walk together in the Great Commission. Through church- or school-based volunteer trips to WELS mission fields at home and abroad, members have the opportunity to engage in Christian service. Pre-trip training led by a congregational team leader equips volunteers to have significant impact during their trip. While volunteering, the learning and sharing of outreach ideas allows teams to explore how they can use their God-given abilities to lead an outreach event upon their return home. With the Lord's blessing, these trips will inspire a lifelong journey of service and outreach for all who volunteer.

Campus ministry for international students

In a normal year, almost 400 international students enroll at WELS schools. Connecting them to one another, to believers of our fellowship from their people group, and to WELS congregations when they transfer schools is a large undertaking. When the Board for Home Missions decided to call Pastor Daniel Lindner as a Campus Ministry mission counselor for all campus ministries, the Joint Mission Council asked whether he could direct some special attention to international students. The new North American Asian mission counselor, Pastor Neil Birkholz, is assisting Lindner in this work.

Individual efforts

The Joint Mission Council has identified people from Bangladesh, China, Colombia, Cuba, India, Korea, Liberia, Mexico, Pakistan, Ukraine, Vietnam, and other countries who have interest in training to take the gospel to their own people groups here in the United States and in their countries of origin.

Pastor Paul, a Pakistani man who relocated to the U.S. due to security concerns, leads outreach to Hindus in the greater Milwaukee area. Small group Bible studies, family fun nights, driver's education classes, and English classes are just a few of the ways Pastor Paul and his wife reach out in love to their community.

Opportunities seem to arise daily for us to take the gospel to all nations.

Rev. Paul Prange, reporter

Rev. Paul Prange, chairman

Rev. John Bortulin, secretary

Mr. Arlin Bornschlegl, representative of WELS Board for World Missions

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions

Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions

Rev. Paul Janke, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions

Mr. Thomas Metzger, representative of WELS Home Missions

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions

Rev. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

Board for Ministerial Education

Floor Committee #10

Our calling

“**A**nd the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2).

The scriptural purpose of our ministerial education program is the preparation of candidates for the public ministry of the gospel. Pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and missionaries are prepared to proclaim Christ’s love in the congregations, schools, and mission fields of our fellowship. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College also include in their purpose the continuing education of those who already serve in the ministry of the gospel. Our report gives you an overview of the efforts to coordinate the work. The WELS Resource Center always has the most recent reports from the individual schools at **bme.welsrc.net**.

Our current situation

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis., offers a theological training program for men who intend to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS. It serves both first-career and second-career students, and is involved in an effort with the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) this year to improve retention and support of second-career students. It began the year with 134 enrolled. Grow in Grace, the Institute for Pastoral Growth at WLS, has significantly expanded opportunities for the theological and professional growth of called workers already serving in the ministry of our confessional fellowship. Efforts to address the resignation rate for new pastors in WELS through a mentoring program have been blessed with a significant reduction of that rate, a special blessing in this era of high pastoral vacancy rates. For the sake of improving its domestic programs, and to offer support for our sister schools overseas, WLS has taken the first steps in the process of accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools. WLS is also in the middle of a strategic planning process that will guide them in determining ministry priorities and potential campus improvements like expanded classroom facilities. More information is available on p. 129 and at **wisluthsem.org**.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., is the WELS College of Ministry. It trains a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of WELS and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions. MLC began the second semester of the 2020–21 school year with 668 undergraduates—488 in the education track, 176 in the preseminary track, and 4 in the staff ministry track, representing 33 states and 6 countries. There were 1,113 students enrolled in continuing education and graduate studies programs. To celebrate the silver anniversary of the college, the synod is conducting a campaign called “Equipping Christian Witnesses” (ECW). ECW includes special efforts in the areas of recruitment, financial assistance, and facilities. The new president of MLC, Pastor Richard Gurgel, began his duties on July 1, 2020. More information is available on p. 135 and at **mlc-wels.edu**.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) is a boarding high school in Saginaw, Mich., with the single purpose of preparing high school students for the public ministry of the gospel and encouraging them to enroll at Martin Luther College. Michigan Lutheran Seminary receives grants from the MLS Foundation, including financial assistance and sponsorship of capital improvements. Michigan Lutheran Seminary began the year with 184 students. More information is available on p. 148 and at **mlsem.org**.

Luther Preparatory School

Luther Preparatory School (LPS) is a boarding high school in Watertown, Wis., with the single purpose of encouraging and preparing young people for a lifetime of service in the public ministry of WELS. LPS participates in the Racine, Milwaukee, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs, allowing some Wisconsin families to use vouchers from the state to pay for the cost of education. Luther Preparatory School began the year with 400 students. More information is available on p. 151 and at lps.wels.net.

Coronavirus

The disruptions to the onsite delivery of instruction caused by the worldwide pandemic in early 2020 demonstrated the resilience of faculty, students, and staff as online classes were quickly established and routine maintenance projects normally done in the summer were moved into the time frame that students were not on campus. As of this writing, the Wisconsin campuses were able to carry out the 2020–21 school year face-to-face while the Minnesota and Michigan campuses have had both virtual and face-to-face instruction. God's blessing of stable financial situations at our ministerial education schools has allowed them the flexibility to make sound decisions during this uncertain time.

Finances

The Board for Ministerial Education (BME) distributes synod support to the ministerial education schools from a block grant supplied by the Synodical Council. The model has resulted in stable reserves and normal annual tuition increases at all of the schools. MLC has established a working group to address the educational debt of its graduates, and the BME has established a parallel task force whose report follows this one (see p. 125). "Equipping Christian Witnesses" addresses student educational debt with its second pillar. The Congregational Partner Grant Program provides matching funds for tuition assistance provided by congregations to students who attend MLC. In most cases this assistance is given in addition to any other financial assistance the student might receive.

Vacancy rates

Pastoral vacancies in WELS stabilized in 2018 but are still over 100. The average size of the graduating classes at WLS is projected to increase in 2023, just in time for the initiative from Home Missions to open 10 new missions per year. Vacancies in principal and early childhood director positions remain difficult to fill. The trends that caused those vacancy rates have been addressed. MLS and LPS are seeing increasing numbers of their graduates entering the preseminary course at MLC. The 21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative, approved by the 2017 synod convention, is a process to recruit and fully train experienced teachers to serve as principals and should help with the principal vacancy rate. A similar program is being considered for early childhood directors.

Capital projects

Capital campaigns for buildings at the schools are conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Christian Giving, reviewed and adopted as a regular part of WELS' ministry planning process. The Conference of Presidents approved the "Equipping Christian Witnesses" partnership of MLC and the Ministry of Christian Giving for 2019–22. That campaign is underway. Congregations are encouraged to participate.

For more information on capital projects, see p. 74.

Partnerships

With the blessing and encouragement of Home and World Missions, the ministerial education schools have established good partnerships with the world mission fields and self-supporting churches in our fellowship in order to help develop their particular ministerial education programs. In the past few years, we have seen a dramatic increase in requests to the Pastoral Studies Institute at WLS for help in training existing pastors and evangelists of various people groups to become confessional Lutherans. The reports of the Joint Mission Council (p. 120) and the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (p. 18) detail some of those efforts. Our domestic ministerial education schools have seen some success in their plan to increase the numbers of underrepresented minorities on their campuses and in their programs.

A look ahead

We give thanks that the Lord of the Church continues to supply our synod with young men and women who are willing to serve anywhere that the Church needs them. It's an extraordinary blessing that they believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, treasure the precious Lutheran heritage of proclaiming the unconditional gospel that has been passed to our generation with remarkable clarity, and present themselves for service as faithful ministers of the gospel who subscribe without reservation to the Lutheran Confessions. We also give thanks for the individual

congregations and members in those congregations who still think—contrary to the practice of just about every other national church body—that the investment of energy and financial resources in the thorough preparation of candidates for the public ministry of the gospel and the deepening of those who are already serving is a sound and wise synodical commitment.

Rev. Paul Prange, reporter

Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman

Rev. John Bortulin, secretary

Rev. Gregory Gibbons

Mr. Paul Hahm

Mr. Kyle Koltz

Teacher Daniel Markgraf

Teacher Kurt Rosenbaum

Rev. Jonathan Scharf

Mr. Brian Scheele

Rev. Timothy Spaude

Mr. Dean Waldschmidt

Rev. Michael Woldt

Teacher Gerald Zeamer

Advisory:

Rev. Matthew Crass, Luther Preparatory School president

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Rev. Richard Gurgel, Martin Luther College president

Rev. Mark Luetzow, Michigan Lutheran Seminary president

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Rev. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Appendix: Task Force on Student Educational Debt

In October 2020, the WELS Board for Ministerial Education established a task force to address student educational debt at all levels of our ministerial education program. Because we value the unconditional gospel of forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus, we value the people who preach and teach that gospel on our behalf. We demonstrate our love for them by being concerned about their financial situation, especially as they begin their ministry among us.

The case of Matt

Matt (not his real name) is a student in the preseminary program at Martin Luther College (MLC). His parents are separated. His father is regularly employed but struggles to file his taxes in a timely way. The MLC financial assistance office has tried to encourage Matt's dad with his tax paperwork every year so that Matt can be eligible for federal grants through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process. Matt's mother has a job but also has a hobby that costs more than she makes each year. Both Matt's father and mother have told him that they really can't help him with college costs much beyond incidentals.

Matt is on his own to find summer jobs at home, and he usually makes about \$4,000 in a typical summer. He applies and qualifies for on-campus jobs at MLC, which help him pay room and board. When he finds out that he is allowed to take out federal loans of \$5,500 in his freshman year, \$6,500 in his sophomore year, and \$7,500 in both his junior and senior years, for a total of \$27,000, he thinks he has a clear path to financing his college education. In the end, he realizes that he has to ask a relative to underwrite a private loan of just over \$3,000 to get every last bill paid before graduation. When he begins to pay back his loans, his monthly payment will be around \$300 for ten years. If he marries someone with similar educational debt but only one of them works, the payments could end up looking far less manageable.

Helping Matt

Matt is one of the 75 percent of MLC students who graduate with debt. In 2020, the debt for that 75 percent averaged about \$26,000 per student. When Matt matriculates at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), his educational debt will be taken into account in the WLS financial assistance formulas, which will be helpful. If he marries during his time at WLS, any educational debt of his wife will be taken into account as well.

Thirty years ago, preseminary students did not graduate with that kind of educational debt. It was possible to make enough money in the summer to pay what was owed, and federal grants (not loans) were available for a larger percentage of tuition expenses. Matt's dad remembers those years and wonders what has changed. He wonders if the significant change is because of a reduction in what the synod pays for the education of each student.

Thirty years ago, the college did not set the tuition rate. It was determined by the synod through the work of the Coordinating Council (the predecessor body of the Synodical Council). Since 1967, WELS ministerial education college students have been asked to pay the full cost of their room and board. They have also been asked to pay 50 percent of the remaining cost of their college education, with the synod paying the other 50 percent. That synod portion was commonly referred to as "subsidy." Tuition and subsidy paid the entire cost of college operations.

Since the synod established the ministerial education school Mission Advancement offices in 2005, that synod portion is supposed to be calculated both from the subsidy and from gifts provided by WELS donors directly to the ministerial education schools (gifts from WELS donors are sometimes called Individual Mission Offerings—IMO). The MLC Governing Board is responsible for the calculations. From 2005 to 2020, subsidy and donations to MLC from individual WELS donors have supported about 50 percent of the college's expenses, excluding the cost of room and board. As a result, the MLC Governing Board has maintained the historic student contribution percentage. In school year 2019–20, tuition revenue received from undergraduates, graduates, and continuing education students covered almost exactly 50 percent of MLC's expenses excluding room and board costs. Tuition revenue has never exceeded 53 percent of those same costs since school year 2005–06, averaging 46 percent over that period.

Matt's dad can hardly follow the math. Why is college so much more expensive for the average person than it was even 30 years ago? If the synod through congregations and individuals continues to cover 50 percent of tuition at MLC and students (perhaps with parental help) pay 50 percent, why the rapid increase in student debt?

First, what Matt's dad may not realize is that college costs across our country have risen faster than the inflation rate. Because we value the American college model for ministerial education, that trend has also touched MLC. The MLC Governing Board has worked hard to keep tuition as reasonable as possible without sacrificing a quality college experience. That hard work has found MLC listed at or near the top of many "Best Value" college lists. Yet, MLC's costs—and therefore its tuition—have also risen faster than inflation. Keep in mind that a large percentage of MLC's costs are salaries and benefits for called faculty and hired staff. In 2001, the synod adopted significant and long overdue salary and benefit increases for called workers and has kept up with inflation since then. Hired staff pay increases have also kept up with called worker pay increases. The result is that, even with careful stewardship, MLC's tuition has risen faster than the inflation rate. The 50 percent of the costs that students cover ends up being a far larger dollar amount than a generation ago even when adjusted for inflation.

When he thinks back to his own summer jobs, Matt's dad has to admit that wages for work like that have not kept up with inflation. When stagnant wages for college students combine with tuition costs rising faster than inflation, suddenly the 50 percent of costs covered by students becomes much more challenging for Matt and many others like him.

It's a challenge. One way we can address the challenge is by increasing financial aid and reducing student debt pre-graduation. We can also look at remedies post-graduation. After Matt graduates, is there also a way for congregations, schools, or other groups of our fellowship to help him with his loan repayments? Companies like Price Waterhouse Cooper and Walgreens sometimes offer to match student educational debt repayment by their employees. Perhaps some congregations with schools are in a position to do the same. If the congregation to which Matt is called would be willing to match his monthly payments dollar for dollar, the repayment period could be cut to under 5 years. At present, the law encourages it. Employers can make tax-free contributions of up to \$5,250 a year—or \$437.50 a month—to their employee's student debt through 2025. Employees do not have to pay taxes on those contributions.

The case of Luke

Luke (not his real name) has finished his first year of teaching in a WELS high school. He attended MLC for five years in order to be certified to teach at both the elementary and the secondary level. His parents agreed to pay up to half of

his college costs. They also helped him find and keep a job when he was home for breaks and summer vacation. Luke sometimes worked three different part-time jobs when he was in college and admits that there were many nights with only a few hours of sleep. Luke graduated without any educational debt.

Luke's starting salary was \$30,987. When he was surveyed by Payscale Financial Group, that's the number he reported to them. He did not know if he should include his monthly housing allowance of \$897 (\$10,764 per year), and he didn't know how he would include the WELS VEBA health insurance provided by his calling body (\$8,106 per year), nor the pension contribution they began making on his behalf (\$4,528 per year). It didn't even dawn on him that he might include the moving expenses that his calling body paid (just \$2,200). All he knew was that he was glad to be paid instead of paying to be at school.

Helping Luke

The Payscale Financial Group ranks MLC low in Return on Investment, but the MLC administration knows why. Preseminary graduates now at the seminary report only part-time jobs, and the rest of the graduates, all from the educational program like Luke, report annual income of \$30,987 rather than including their benefits (an additional \$25,598 annually) as well. When benefits are factored in, an average MLC graduate teaching in a WELS school is typically in slightly better financial shape than an average new public school teacher in Wisconsin and Minnesota. When the significant tax benefits of housing allowances are factored into net, after-tax income, called workers often take home thousands of dollars more than their public school counterparts with equal base salaries.

There are a number of MLC administration members with a deep understanding of the statistics and dynamics of student financial assistance and the budget details of recent graduates. Closest to what the students are thinking is JoElyn Krohn, MLC's financial literacy coordinator. Mark Bauer is the director of financial aid. Carla Hulke is the director of finance. In January 2021, President Gurgel, in his first year of administration, decided to form a new working group on financial assistance with those key people along with representatives from admissions, mission advancement, the governing board, and the Board for Ministerial Education.

That new working group plans to develop a common narrative and accessible reports, a clear vision for the future, and annual goals. MLC has already committed to the goal of cutting student indebtedness in half in 10 years using the metric of starting salary. The current ratio of debt to starting salary is 92 percent. The goal is to reduce that ratio to 46 percent in 10 years. Some steps along that way may include:

1. Using students like Luke to advise students like Matt how to graduate with less debt.
2. Helping parents like Matt's father understand the importance of parental contributions toward college expenses. Noting the difference between Matt and Luke, MLC has committed to encourage parents to help fund their children's college education in ways consistent with their resources.
3. Surveying MLC graduates to measure the long-term results of JoElyn Krohn's excellent stewardship training programs for college students and publishing what is discovered as best practices.
4. Dedicating an MLC Mission Advancement officer to financial assistance.
5. Setting a Mission Advancement goal each year that more than covers any increases in cost.
6. Building the existing MLC endowment for financial assistance.
7. Continuing to increase merit aid.

Recommendation #1

Subject: *Commendation for Martin Luther College's efforts to reduce educational debt*

WHEREAS 1) Martin Luther College (MLC) has formed a Working Group to address student educational debt; and

WHEREAS 2) MLC has set a goal of cutting student indebtedness in half in 10 years using the metric of starting salary; and

WHEREAS 3) MLC is considering many worthy efforts to achieve that goal; therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2021 synod convention commend MLC for its redoubled efforts to address the educational debt of its graduates.

The case of John

John (not his real name) is a high school senior in Wisconsin. His grades and standardized test scores are good enough that he thinks he might be able to get a full-ride scholarship to his state college. But he really wants to be a teacher, and if he can, he wants to be a teacher at a Lutheran school.

Would MLC be the cheapest college experience for him? When he compares the expenses and financial assistance packages of the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater (without the full ride), private colleges in the Midwest, and MLC (with lower tuition but also lower student aid), he is amazed to find that his predicted net price is about the same. It is lower at MLC, but not by much (just \$900).

John’s parents are called workers. They qualify for the Wisconsin Parental Choice voucher program because only their salaries, not many of their benefits, are taken into account. They are paying the tuition for John to attend his Lutheran high school from their voucher, not from their other resources. As a result, they have been able to set aside a substantial amount for John’s college expenses that they would otherwise have paid for high school. In the back of their minds, they would like to avoid entanglements with the federal government college loan program.

Helping John

How can MLC have more dollars available to offer merit aid for John in the range of most other colleges? What if loans were not necessary for John because MLC had enough dollars available for grants rather than loans? There are perceived advantages to getting away from reliance on the federal government for loans and other means of support. For example, one American college famously says, “To maintain our institutional independence, we accept no state or federal funding—even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. Our financial aid packages are thanks to the gifts of hundreds of thousands of generous donors nationwide.”

For MLC to maintain its present level of support and then make up for the present federal government level of support, that would take \$4 million more per year. If that were funded by disbursements from an endowment, that would be a \$100 million endowment with a conservative 4 percent annual disbursement policy. Are there other ways for donors to support such efforts? With God’s blessing, an expanded partnership between WELS Ministry of Christian Giving and MLC’s development office could help donors facilitate that kind of support.

If the floor committee wants to ask the synod to take action on this issue, it might use the following sample resolution as a starting point.

Recommendation #2

Subject: *Encouraging donors to help with financial assistance at Martin Luther College*

WHEREAS 1) WELS Ministry of Christian Giving is making a special effort to identify major donors who want to support Martin Luther College (MLC); and

WHEREAS 2) MLC has identified student financial assistance as one of its greatest needs; and

WHEREAS 3) WELS Ministry of Christian Giving and MLC are inviting interested donors to provide student financial assistance through the Congregational Partner Grant Program portion of the “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign (through June 30, 2022); and

WHEREAS 4) identifying long-term solutions for funding MLC student financial assistance might be an appropriate follow up to the “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign; therefore be it

Resolved, that the delegates of the 2021 synod convention approve the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving and the Martin Luther College Mission Advancement office to continue seeking donors during and after the “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign who are willing to make major gifts to MLC student financial assistance.

“The earth is the Lord’s and everything that fills it, the world and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1). We thank the Lord for the tremendous privilege of being stewards of what belongs to him. The funds, the institutions, and especially the students willing to prepare for the ministry of the gospel—these are all gifts from his gracious hand. We ask his blessing on our attempts to increase financial assistance and lower student educational debt. “May the kindness of the Lord our God rest upon us. Establish the work of our hands for us. Yes, establish the work of our hands” (Psalm 90:17).

Contributors to this report include Mr. Mark Bauer, Rev. John Bortulin, President Matthew Crass, Mr. Kyle Egan, Prof. Stephen Geiger, President Richard Gurgel, Mr. Paul Hahm, Ms. Carla Hulke, Ms. JoElyn Krohn, Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, President Mark Luetzow, Vice President Michael Otterstatter, Rev. Paul Prange, Rev. Duane Rodewald, Vice President Scott Schmudlach, Vice President Jeffrey Schone, WELS President Mark Schroeder, Prof. Mark Stein, Mr. Michael Valleau, Prof. David Wendler, Vice President Jeffery Wiechman

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Floor Committee #10

Our calling

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) equips pastors for the worldwide mission of WELS, including churches and cultural groups within its confessional fellowship. In partnership with sister seminaries and theological training programs of its fellowship, WLS accomplishes that singular purpose with two distinct emphases. Primarily, the seminary prepares men to begin pastoral ministry by providing the spiritual, theological, and professional training needed to enter that ministry. The seminary also partners with pastors in their ministry-long pursuit of spiritual, theological, and professional growth in their God-given callings.

Our current situation

Enrollment

At the beginning of the 2019–20 school year, there were 123 men enrolled in the seminary’s four-year program. Twenty-three of them completed their training in May 2020 and were assigned to their first fields of service. The graduation of one of the smallest classes in the last fifty years—only the class of 2014, with 22, had fewer—contributed to an increased enrollment for the 2020–21 school year: 134 students. At the time of this writing there are 130 students preparing for service as pastors: 28 seniors, 28 vicars, 41 middlers, and 33 juniors. Approximately 55 percent are married. Lord willing, 28 candidates for the holy ministry will receive calls through the synod’s Assignment Committee in May, and 41 will be assigned to serve as vicars for a year to gain invaluable practical ministry experience.

At a time of increasing pastoral vacancies, interest in the seminary’s enrollment heightens. Each student is viewed (rightly!) as a potential answer to the Church’s prayer for more workers. Sometimes those who watch enrollment numbers express concern that not every student who enrolls at the seminary ultimately ends up serving as a pastor in WELS. While it is true that some talented men with strong gifts for ministry do not complete the seminary program, that doesn’t need to be seen negatively. Some students discover, as they move closer to the end goal, that they no longer desire to be a shepherd of God’s flock. Recognizing the importance of the ministry and how critical it is to be fully committed to the work, they decide it would be better for them to serve the Lord in another way. While the members of the faculty strongly encourage men toward pastoral ministry, they do not want anyone to take up the work with something other than eagerness and joy. We trust that the Lord of the Church, who desires to send workers forth into his harvest field even more than we do, will continue to raise up candidates for ministry through the encouragement of parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, and pastors.

For the 2021–22 school year, we anticipate an enrollment of 136 students, with 95 on campus. We thank God for the talented men he continues to bring to the seminary for pastoral training.

Navigating a pandemic

In the months leading up to the 2019–20 school year, no one on the seminary campus gave much thought to the possibility that we might have to move from face-to-face instruction to an online environment. Students, staff, and faculty all learned the importance of flexibility as they adjusted to a new approach in March 2020. We thank God for the tools he provided that made online instruction a possibility. While most would say that Zoom classes worked in the short term, allowing students to continue working toward the goal of serving the Lord and his people in pastoral ministry, the online version paled in comparison to face-to-face instruction. We had taken for granted the blessing of being together in a classroom, with the helpful interaction that occurs in that setting. We have become even more convinced that the best way to form pastors who are prepared to proclaim God’s praise is to spend time with them, working with them on a personal level, and observing them in interaction with others. All of that happens in a face-to-face environment.

The month of May is an exciting time on the seminary campus. Students, staff, and faculty all look forward to the day when candidates for ministry are assigned as pastors. The auditorium is filled to overflowing and the excitement is palpable as the assignment service begins. In May 2020, however, there was no large gathering on the seminary campus. The seniors missed out on the normal events that serve as a culmination of their preparation for ministry. Yet the Lord would not be stopped from sending out another group of pastors to proclaim his Word to his people.

The 2020–21 school year began with a number of COVID-related protocols in place, including the wearing of face coverings and social distancing in classrooms. That required some creative use of space, turning the chapel into a classroom, for example, and having the auditorium serve both as a classroom and the campus worship space. Staff, students, and faculty alike adjusted to the protocols, thankful for the privilege of being able to have face-to-face instruction. There were a significant number of cases during the first semester, which required many to quarantine and join class via Zoom. In the second semester, however, there were far fewer—only two at the time of this writing.

As of this writing, plans are being made to hold 2021 assignment day and graduation services in person. Though attendance will be limited, it will still be higher than 2020, when there was no service on campus.

Field services

Vicars

In the early 1960s, at the encouragement of the synod convention, the seminary instituted a mandatory year of practical training for students. The vicar year has proved to be a critical component in the preparation of pastors. The challenge has become addressing the cost involved in providing this year of training. It costs about \$44,000 to fund a vicar for a year. That amount does not all go directly to the vicar. He receives a modest stipend each month. The rest is used to provide health insurance and to subsidize rental costs, so that no vicar has to use the majority of his stipend to cover his housing. On average, about 10 to 12 congregations that apply for a vicar have the resources to cover the full cost for the year. That means approximately two-thirds of each vicar class will be assigned to congregations that are only able to cover a portion of the cost. The seminary has worked in partnership with the Board for Home Missions and its Vicars in Mission Settings Program to identify places where a vicar could receive excellent training in gospel outreach. The Board for Home Missions and WLS cooperate financially in the program. The seminary commits between \$200,000 and \$250,000 on an annual basis to the training of vicars in mission-minded congregations. The need for gifts to support this work is critical, particularly as we pray that the Lord would send more students to be prepared for pastoral ministry.

In each of the last four summers, the seminary has provided a seminar aimed at equipping the supervising pastors who oversee vicars to do their important work. Faculty members explain the training the vicars have received and outline the experiences they hope the vicars will have in their vicar congregation. Each new supervising pastor is expected to attend; experienced supervising pastors are asked to participate in a training seminar at least once every five years. We thank the Lord of the Church for providing faithful pastors (and supportive congregations) who are willing to invest in the training of a future gospel servant.

Summer assistants

Seven students spent the summer of 2019 serving in our Summer Student Assistant program. They worked with pastors and congregations in Iowa, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. Six of them had just completed their first year of training, while one had finished his second. Summer 2020 also saw, in spite of the pandemic, seven men serving as assistants. They worked with congregations in Arizona, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington, and Wisconsin. Again, six had just finished their first year and one had completed his second. The program, a joint effort by the seminary and the Board for Home Missions, helps students gain valuable parish and outreach experience before their vicar year. Some students have found it a helpful way to assess if they will find the day-to-day work of ministry enjoyable and challenging.

Early field training

The Early Field Training program has been around for two decades. In it, first- and second-year students are assigned to a Milwaukee-area congregation. They attend services each week and get involved in different activities to gain some perspective on congregational life, with the goal of preparing them for their vicar year. Recently, the program was streamlined to be more Sunday-focused, in recognition of the students' busy schedules during the week. Early reviews of the revision have been positive, both from pastors and students, who believe the new requirements are more realistic. Four of the congregations participating in the program offer seminarians with Spanish abilities the opportunity to use them in ministry.

Student ministry program

Nearly all the students at the seminary work part time during the school year in order to pay tuition and cover their living costs. Most work in secular jobs and take advantage of opportunities to witness as they work alongside others. Some of the students work in ministry positions. During the 2020–21 school year 17 seniors are serving in a ministry

position, with responsibilities in preaching, teaching, and visitation. Some receive housing as part of their compensation. About a dozen underclassmen are serving in ministry positions with duties that fit the training they have received.

Education costs

The total cost of education is around \$35,000 per student per year. No student has to cover that entire cost, however. Tuition and fees for the 2020–21 school year were in the range of \$12,000. The students who live in the dorm pay approximately \$9,000 for room and board. The difference in cost is addressed through the portion of the synodical Congregation Mission Offerings that is designated for the seminary and through the generous gifts God's people offer directly to the seminary.

In the 2020–21 school year, every student who applied for financial assistance received aid to help defray the costs of attending the seminary. The 102 on-campus students received grants and awards from the seminary's scholarship funds averaging more than \$9,400. All told, the seminary disbursed approximately \$981,700 in assistance. Most of that came in the form of grants based on the student's declared financial need. There were also campus service awards, which acknowledge students who carry out tasks for the well-being of the seminary family, and academic achievement awards, which recognize classroom performance as reflected in the student's grades. Generous grants from Salem Lutheran Foundation to every student who applied, combined with direct gifts on a student's behalf from congregations and individuals, raised the average amount of aid each student received (\$13,600) to an amount that exceeded tuition.

In the 2019–20 school year, students received grants and awards from the seminary's scholarship funds averaging about \$8,600. The 93 on-campus students received a total of approximately \$797,500 in assistance, most in the form of grants based on the student's declared financial need. Grants from Salem Lutheran Foundation, combined with direct gifts from congregations and individuals, raised the average amount of aid each student received (\$11,880) to an amount that exceeded tuition.

Student indebtedness remains a concern. In the 2019–20 school year, the average reported debt of all students was \$17,813. However, 27 percent of the students had no debt, making the average debt of those students who had debt \$24,362. Those numbers include spousal debt for the 55 percent of the student body that is married. In the 2020–21 school year, the average debt for all students increased to \$19,015, with the 72 percent who had debt owing an average of \$26,520. By way of comparison, in the 2015–16 school year the average debt of students with debt was \$24,717. The seminary's financial aid officer, Prof. Stephen Geiger, keeps careful tab on student debt. Students do not leave the seminary with more debt than that with which they entered, though they may acquire additional debt through marriage.

Strategic planning

In the fall of 2020, the faculty and governing board adopted a new strategic plan with the theme "Pastors Forming Pastors to Proclaim God's Praise." While it is the Lord alone who forms pastors who will be able to serve him and his people faithfully, he chooses to work through human beings to do so. All the professors have served as pastors or missionaries and know personally the ministry for which they are preparing men. The synod established the seminary not for the sake of providing a theological education to interested parties but to prepare faithful shepherds who know God's Word and are eager to proclaim it to others.

The strategic plan was finalized in the midst of the pandemic, a powerful reminder that all planning ought to be carried out in a spirit of humility. Human beings can only propose plans. It is God who disposes. "Many are the plans in a person's heart," Solomon wrote, "but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21). The seminary views the strategic plan as its proposal for the next five years and its earnest petition. The strategic plan identifies six goals with four or five initiatives supporting the fulfillment of each goal. The Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by Prof. Steven Pagels, will oversee the implementation of the plan.

Faculty

The seminary faculty is in the midst of a significant turnover. In a six-year span, from 2015 to the end of the 2020–2021 school year, nine faculty members have either retired or accepted calls to serve in another part of the Lord's kingdom. Those nine professors had a combined total of 218 years of experience on the seminary faculty. Prof. James Tiefel retired at the end of the 2019–20 school year after 38 years of serving on the faculty. Only Prof. J. P. Meyer (1920–1964) and Prof. August Pieper (1902–1941) had longer tenures. After 21 years of service, Prof. Richard Gurgel moved to New Ulm in July 2020 to take up duties as president of Martin Luther College. Prof. John Hartwig, who had announced his plans to retire at the end of June 2020 after 25 years of service, accepted a call to serve as civilian chaplain in Europe. Prof. John Brenner is retiring at the end of the 2020–2021 school year, after 30 years of service.

We thank the Lord of the Church for working in and through these servants for the glory of his name and the benefit of his people. The blessings he bestowed on the seminary through these talented and faithful workers are many.

In the summer of 2019, after 15 years of faithful service as president of the seminary, Prof. Paul Wendland returned to a full-time teaching load. President Wendland's passion for the gospel of Christ, his zeal for the mission of the church, and his commitment to the seminary's task of preparing pastors served the seminary and synod extremely well. We praise our ascended Savior for the gifts he bestowed through President Wendland.

There are currently 17 faculty members, meaning that more than half of the faculty has six years of seminary experience or fewer. In fact, the opening service of the 2020–21 school year included the installation of four new professors: Prof. David Bivens, Prof. Aaron Christie, Prof. Nathan Ericson, and Prof. Jonathan Micheel. Never before had four new professors been installed at the same time.

The turnover in faculty has also created some turnover in administrative offices. Prof. Thomas Kock has taken over as director of Grow in Grace, the seminary's continuing education arm, to replace Prof. Gurgel. Prof. Bill Tackmier was appointed to serve as academic dean, to replace Prof. Kock, who had served in that role for only one year. Prof. Earle Treptow accepted the call to serve as the seminary's president and took up that work in June 2019, when President Wendland returned to full-time teaching. The governing board appointed Prof. Steve Geiger to serve as vice president, taking over for Prof. Treptow. Prof. Nathan Ericson is serving as the library director and director of educational technology, taking over duties previously held by Prof. Hartwig. Prof. Aaron Christie is the dean of chapel, replacing Prof. Tiefel.

In 2019, Prof. Joel Otto earned a ThM in church history from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill. Prof. Bill Tackmier, in 2020, earned a PhD in exegetical theology from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., with an emphasis on Old Testament. There are now six professors who have earned a doctorate. Five faculty members are currently in a doctoral program, one is in a master's program, and two others are in the process of applying for admission into a program. The governing board is committed to supporting every faculty member who desires to pursue an advanced degree, both with funding for the program and with a reduced teaching load to accommodate the additional study required of them.

During the past biennium, President Paul Wendland celebrated his 40th anniversary in ministry. Professors Geiger and Otto celebrated their 25th anniversary in ministry.

Governing board

The governing board, like the faculty, has experienced some turnover as well. Of the eight voting members on the board, only three have been on the board for more than five years. Pastor Steven Pagels concluded his service to the board in March 2019 when he accepted the call to serve as professor of systematic theology and homiletics at WLS. He served for less than a year on the board. Mr. James Lucht, from Raleigh, N.C., ended his service to the governing board in June 2020. Mr. Lucht, who had been appointed to complete the term of Mr. Daniel Shinnick, served on the board for two years. Pastor Nathan Buege, from Katy, Texas, also completed his service on the governing board in June 2020. Pastor Buege, who was appointed to complete the term of Pastor Eric Hartzell, served on the board for five years. We thank the Lord for their faithful service and the contributions they made to the seminary's work. Pastor Karl Walther, from Watertown, Wis., was appointed to complete the term of Prof. Steven Pagels. Mr. Greg Green, from Omaha, Neb., and Pastor Nathan Wagenknecht, from Anchorage, Alaska, began their service on the board in July 2020. May the Lord bless them with wisdom and joy as they serve!

Staff changes

In the past biennium there has also been some turnover in staff. Mrs. Joanne Vandeventer retired from her role as director of food services after 35 years of service. Mr. Curtis Wenthur, director of buildings and grounds, who had served on the campus for 34 years, retired, as did his wife, Linda, who had served on the campus for 24 years. Mrs. Diane Heisler, who had served as faculty secretary for 16 years, retired. We thank God for their long and faithful service to the seminary and for the many blessings he bestowed on the seminary through them. We pray that the Lord will bless those who are stepping in to continue the work: Mr. Dennis Sprenger (director of buildings and grounds), Ms. Jean Goljenboom (director of food services), and Mrs. Nola Zemlicka (faculty secretary).

Pastoral Studies Institute

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of WLS, in collaboration with WELS Joint Mission Council, continues to oversee

pastoral training for men from various ethnic groups—Vietnamese, Hmong, and Liberian, to name a few—in places across North America. The PSI Team consists of Prof. E. Allen Sorum, who serves as the director; Prof. Brad Wordell; Pastor Jon Bare; and part-time administrative assistant Mandy Degner. Prof. Wordell has classroom responsibilities at WLS in the first semester but not the second. Prof. Sorum teaches classes at WLS in the second semester but not the first. They use the semester in which they have no seminary classroom responsibilities for travel, unless there's a pandemic. The PSI Team provides some of the instruction to the 18 men currently enrolled in the training program and then works with local pastors who teach other courses in the program's four levels. The prayer is that the men being prepared for ministry will not only be able to pastor a flock of their people group, but will also be able to assist in bringing the gospel to their country of origin, as the Lord provides opportunities.

The PSI Team assisted in the recent establishment of the Joshua Urban Ministry Program (JUMP) in Milwaukee, with the prayer that the Lord will provide more Black men for service as pastors in WELS urban settings. The JUMP Board, consisting of local pastors and laymen, will administer the program. They will enroll students, secure instructors, and fund the program. The PSI office will oversee student transcripts and, as the students make sufficient progress in their studies, present JUMP students to the seminary faculty for formal admission into a degree program.

The members of the PSI Team, who are called jointly by the seminary's governing board and WELS Joint Mission Council, work with each world mission field's "One Team." Their duties and responsibilities vary by field, from vetting mission opportunities to providing instruction to developing curriculum to offering counsel on various aspects of mission and ministry. (See the report from the Joint Mission Council on p. 120 for additional information.) The PSI Team collaborates with the One Team leader and the group that WELS is seeking to reach in order to determine the best way for WELS to facilitate distinctively Lutheran ministries led by solidly Lutheran native leaders.

Grow in Grace

Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, partners with pastors for lifelong growth in their callings. Grow in Grace offers courses and events, retreats and mentoring, study packages, and informal resources, all intended to encourage and equip pastors to serve where the Lord has placed them.

As previously mentioned, Prof. Richard Gurgel's decision to accept the call to serve as president of Martin Luther College meant that he had to step aside from his role as director of Grow in Grace at the end of June 2020. The Lord blessed Prof. Gurgel with the creativity, zeal, and skill needed to establish Grow in Grace. Humanly speaking, the program would not be where it is today, offering a valuable service to the pastors of our church body, if not for his faithful efforts. Prof. Thomas Kock consented to serve as the new director.

This past biennium marked a significant change in delivery of continuing education courses. Rather than have summer quarter courses only on campus, those courses went on the road in summer 2019. Satellite summer quarter courses were held in 9 of the 12 districts, with 628 pastors participating. The feedback from those who attended was overwhelmingly positive. The plan will be to offer satellite courses out in the districts in the odd-numbered years and invite pastors to the seminary for courses in the even-numbered years.

In 2020, summer quarter courses were to be held on campus, but the pandemic made that unworkable. Courses then moved online. The result was the highest "on campus" attendance in years: 104. Lord willing, a genuine "on campus" summer quarter will be held in 2022. There is great benefit for pastors to come to the seminary campus, to spend time with brothers in ministry outside of the classroom, and to find refreshment for ministry by time focused on study. God's people benefit when their pastors stretch themselves with additional study.

Grow in Grace would like to offer two online courses each semester of the school year. The faculty turnover and the number of professors who are pursuing coursework of their own have made that challenging in the short term.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on one of Grow in Grace's most important events: the retreats that are offered for pastors (and their wives) celebrating 3, 10, 25, and 35 years since graduating from the seminary. Both the 2020 and 2021 retreats had to be postponed. Grow in Grace is planning a retreat in April 2022, to which 12 classes will be invited, though space limitations will likely make it necessary to hold two retreats, back to back.

A look ahead

Accreditation

The seminary is pursuing accreditation through the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological

Schools. The Association of Theological Schools, a membership organization of more than 270 graduate schools that conduct postbaccalaureate professional and academic degree programs, welcomes schools in the Christian and Jewish faiths. Currently an associate member of the Association of Theological Schools, WLS officially expressed its desire to pursue initial accreditation in October 2020. In the beginning of March 2021, at the request of the Association of Theological Schools, the seminary submitted a readiness report meant to demonstrate that we have the institutional resources and will to complete a self-study within 2 years. The readiness report interacted with the Commission on Accrediting's 10 standards of accreditation, noting both where WLS already meets the standards and where some work will need to be done. For instance, a number of practices in place need to be committed to paper.

A liaison with the Association of Theological Schools plans to visit the campus virtually in late April to discuss the readiness report. If the liaison concurs that WLS is in a position to complete a self-study within two years, representatives from the seminary will be invited to participate in a workshop in September to learn how to conduct a complete self-study. A self-study plan will be prepared, a coordinator appointed, a steering committee chosen, and subcommittees empaneled by the end of October. The self-study itself would begin in November 2021. An aggressive plan would have the self-study conclude by December 2022. In that scenario, an evaluation team from the Association of Theological Schools would visit campus in spring 2023 and offer an assessment of the self-study report, including recommendations of areas that need to be addressed before the seminary could be accredited.

The self-study at the heart of the accreditation process will require a significant amount of work, stretching faculty and staff that already have plenty to do. The self-study will be a great blessing, however, as we consider the work the Lord has given us to do, evaluate our performance, and identify ways to improve. While the loss of the collective memory of a number of retired faculty and staff will make the work challenging, perhaps the new professors and staff will come to the work of the self-study with fresh eyes and new ideas. The accrediting agency will ask us to consider best practices and help us evaluate if we are fulfilling our mission. Becoming an accredited institution promises to be beneficial for the work we do in assisting sister church bodies in providing training and degrees for their pastors.

There are, however, some potential costs of achieving and maintaining accreditation. There may be a need to call additional faculty members to decrease faculty workload and to hire additional support staff to manage the business side of maintaining accreditation. Should the accrediting agency require us to do something that would compromise our long-standing mission of preparing pastors, which seems an unlikely scenario, the seminary would simply withdraw from the process.

Campus projects

Construction of an 18th home on campus is set to begin this spring, with the goal of completing the home by December. In the short term, this additional home will allow the governing board to call faculty members a year before their predecessor retires. By coming to campus a year early, the new faculty member will be better equipped to step into a seminary classroom. In the long term, an 18th home will allow all 17 faculty members and the non-faculty PSI member to live on campus. (Currently, one professor lives off campus. When he retires, the governing board will have to decide whether it will ask his replacement to live on campus.) The governing board has designated the new home as the president's home, with the expectation that whoever serves as president will reside there, unless there are exceptional circumstances that make it impractical.

The seminary's strategic plan calls for the development of a plan to update or add classrooms, large- and small-group educational and fellowship space, and accessible faculty and staff offices. The current classroom space is functional, but some of the rooms are rather small and do not allow for different configurations. Many of the rooms have limited outside light. There is a need for places for students and faculty to gather for fellowship. Faculty members all have offices in their on-campus homes, but they do not have space in the main classroom building to facilitate private meetings with individual students. Work on that plan will be done during the coming biennium.

Rev. Earle Treptow, reporter

Rev. Jonathan Scharf, chairman

Rev. Jon Bitter, vice chairman

Teacher Greg Milbrath, secretary

Mr. Gregory Green

Mr. Thomas Kissinger

Rev. Nathan Wagenknecht
Rev. Karl Walther
Mr. Gerald Zimpelmann

Advisory:

Rev. Jonathan Balge, adjunct member
Rev. David Kolander, Southeastern Wisconsin District president
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Rev. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Martin Luther College Floor Committee #10

Our calling

In the midst of the challenges in our nation and world this past year, it has been a great blessing to Martin Luther College (MLC) to have a unique and unchanging mission. Our mission has kept our eyes fixed on our reason for existence as the WELS college of ministry. That mission is to train a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the college desires

- To strengthen the student in a consecrated spirit of love for God and his Word;
- To educate the student for faithful, capable, intelligent citizenship in today's world;
- To assist the student in acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for service in the church and for lifelong learning; and
- To encourage the student in developing and demonstrating a heart for service in the church, community, and world.

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

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

With that mission and those goals in mind, this report lays before you the current activity and future plans of your college of ministry.

Our current situation

God's gracious gifts to MLC are richly evident.

God's gifts to MLC: Our undergraduate students

The opening enrollment for fall 2019 was 714. The enrollment at the beginning of the second semester was 668. We give thanks for each student as a unique gift of God to MLC. Yet we are also concerned for a second consecutive year of a decreasing enrollment at MLC. With the significant number of vacancies throughout our synod, and with opportunities to share the gospel throughout the world, we are reminded why we need to continue to heed our Savior's encouragement to pray for workers. Part of God's answer to that prayer is to open our eyes to see gifted young people in our congregations whom we can encourage for ministry, as well as those who are older who may be willing to consider public ministry as a second career.

Enrollment trends		
<i>School year</i>	<i>Semester 1 enrollment</i>	<i>Semester 2 enrollment</i>
2011-12	697	665
2012-13	708	693
2013-14	714	694
2014-15	727	709
2015-16	723	685
2016-17	742	710
2017-18	756	729
2018-19	764	730
2019-20	731	697
2020-21	714	668

Here is the breakdown by program of study as of the beginning of our second semester:

Program of Study	Number of Students
Double major - Early childhood education and elementary	17
Double major - Early childhood education and special education	8
Double major - Elementary and secondary	88
Double major - Elementary and special education	12
Double major - Parish music and education	1
Double major - Staff ministry and education	2
Early childhood education	67
Educational studies	3
Elementary education	167
Pre-seminary studies	168
Secondary education	111
Staff ministry	8
Synod Certification	4
Theological Studies	4
Unclassified	4
Undeclared	4
	668

High School Type	Number of Students
Area Lutheran High School	331
Home School	6
Other	8
Preparatory School	258
Public	61
WELS	4
Total	668

District	Number of Students
Arizona-California	41
Dakota-Montana	15
Michigan	77
Minnesota	87
Nebraska	22
North Atlantic	17
Northern Wisconsin	100
Pacific Northwest	10
South Atlantic	37
South Central	11
Southeastern Wisconsin	112
Western Wisconsin	127
International	2
ELS	5
Non-WELS	5

God's gifts to MLC: Graduate and continuing education students and New Teacher Induction

Graduate studies

MLC offers WELS teachers, administrators, and staff ministers three graduate degrees to grow in their ministries. The Master of Science in Education degree has four areas of emphasis—special education, technology, instruction, and leadership. The Master of Science in Education degree has three areas of emphasis—principal, early childhood director, and technology director. Our newest degree is the Master of Arts in Theological Studies for teachers and staff ministers. MLC serves roughly 140 graduate students, most of whom are WELS teachers and administrators. Since 2008, 190 people have earned a master's degree from MLC.

Continuing education

MLC fulfills its mission by providing ministry-focused professional growth in a variety of formats. Annually, MLC serves about 1,000 teachers, pastors, staff ministers, and laypeople with continuing education. In June 2020, a committee of college entrepreneurs launched OpenLearning@MLC, a free, two-day, online conference designed to help teachers quickly transition to online learning. Over 1,000 WELS teachers tuned in to the conference either live or recorded. In June 2021, we offered a second free conference entitled Serving in Times of Crisis.

New Teacher Induction

MLC partners with the Commission on Lutheran Schools to support each beginning teacher with a mentor for the first two years of ministry. During the most recent school year, 192 beginning teachers were served by 128 mentors.

God's gifts to MLC: Staff and faculty personnel

Anniversary recognitions

The pandemic necessitated a delay in celebrating ministry milestones for the 2019–20 and the 2020–21 school years. They are now planned for fall 2021.

2019–20

- Peter Baganz, 25 years in ministry
- Paul Bases, 40 years in ministry
- William Pekrul, 40 years in ministry

2020–21

- Gregory Diersen, 25 years in ministry
- Joel Fredrich, 40 years in ministry
- Jennifer Krause, 25 years in ministry
- Cheryl Loomis, 40 years in ministry
- James Pope, 40 years in ministry
- Mark Tacke, 40 years in ministry

Faculty retirements/conclusions of service

2019–20

- Mark Zarling, president—retirement
- Paul Koester, tutor and instructor—conclusion of service

2020–21

- Thomas Hunter, professor of English and director of international services—retirement
- James Pope, professor of theology and staff ministry—retirement
- John Schmidt, professor of Greek—retirement
- Paul Tess, professor of education and director of field services—retirement
- Hans Thomford, tutor and instructor—conclusion of service

Faculty additions

2019–20

- Theodore Klug, admissions counselor
- Breanna Olson, professor of physical education
- Hans Thomford, tutor and instructor
- Joel Thomford, admissions counselor

2020–21

- David Biedenbender, admissions counselor
- Richard Gurgel, president
- Martin Santos, admissions counselor
- Jordan (JD) Uhlhorn, tutor and instructor

Faculty calling activity for school year 2020–21:

- Aaron Robinson has accepted the call to serve as professor of English and cultural diversity coordinator.
- Luke Thompson has accepted the call to serve as professor of theology and history.
- Daniel Waldschmidt has accepted the call to serve as professor of Greek.
- Calling continues for professor of education and director of field experiences.
- Calling continues for an Early Childhood Learning Center lead teacher position to replace Erin Keese who has accepted a divine call to serve at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.

Other faculty changes for school year 2021–22:

- Greg Holzhueter will move to director of the academic success center and continue as men's basketball coach.
- Randy Cox will move from director of the academic success center to the supervisor of the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse and continue as assistant athletic director.
- JoElyn Krohn will teach MTH1012 Organizational and Personal Finance and continue as Financial Literacy Coordinator.
- Megan Kassuelke will serve as the cultural engagement center director and will teach three 1-credit courses for students who spend a semester abroad.
- Tingting Schwartz will serve as international services coordinator and teach Introduction to Minority Cultures and Teaching World Languages.
- Mark Stein will move to an admissions counselor and continue as head football coach.
- Ted Klug will become the director of admissions.

God's gifts to MLC: Financial

In regard to finances, there are many reasons for MLC to be grateful to the Lord. The following chart highlights a few of the many areas in which MLC has been blessed.

	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>
Opening enrollment	742	756	764	731	714
Tuition, room & board	\$19,490	\$20,470	\$21,490	\$22,130	\$22,900
Synod operating support	\$3,011,660	\$3,300,238	\$3,300,238	\$3,469,000	\$3,469,000
Gifts and bequests	\$2,133,706	\$2,262,854	\$2,182,235	\$5,146,797	\$3,210,365*
Net assets without donor restrictions at year end	\$6,056,514	\$9,969,108	\$10,191,622	\$12,184,274	not available
Asset transfer to MLC in FY 2018		\$3,015,733			*As of 2/2021

Financial aid—student cost and indebtedness

MLC continues to work to raise tuition assistance for students while limiting increases to tuition and room and board. Between fiscal years 2020–22, the MLC Board approved increases of 3.5 percent or less to tuition and room and board and 5 percent increases annually in tuition assistance. MLC’s commitment to tuition assistance is evidenced by the following chart:

	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>
Tuition assistance—funded	\$963,862	\$1,458,220	\$1,722,517	\$1,845,837
Tuition assistance—unfunded	<u>\$2,035,945</u>	<u>\$1,623,615</u>	<u>\$1,756,179</u>	<u>\$1,473,595</u>
Total tuition assistance	\$2,999,807	\$3,081,835	\$3,478,696	\$3,319,432*

*Enrollment decrease

Net assets restricted for tuition assistance have also increased in recent years:

	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>
Purpose restrictions	\$3,398,671	\$4,050,264	\$3,949,369	\$4,183,468
Perpetual restrictions	<u>\$6,230,318</u>	<u>\$6,633,471</u>	<u>\$7,141,984</u>	<u>\$7,939,454</u>
Net assets restricted for tuition assistance	\$9,628,989	\$10,683,735	\$11,091,353	\$12,122,922

Even with these efforts in place, increases to tuition and room and board have outpaced increases to tuition assistance and WELS operating support.

	<u>Increase to Full-time Tuition, Room and Board</u>	<u>MLC Tuition Assistance</u>	<u>Average Per Student Receiving Aid</u>	<u>WELS Operating Support Per Student</u>
2015-2016	\$900 – 5%	\$2,592,604	\$4,073	\$4,165
2016-2017	\$570 – 3%	\$2,999,807	\$4,456	\$4,059
2017-2018	\$980 – 5%	\$3,081,835	\$4,348	\$4,365
2018-2019	\$1,020 – 5%	\$3,478,696	\$4,746	\$4,320
2019-2020	\$640 – 3%	\$3,319,432	\$4,576	\$4,746
2020-2021	\$770 – 3.5%	\$2,596,852*	\$3,880*	\$4,859

*As of 2/2021—additional distributions were scheduled after the date of this report.

MLC remains concerned about student debt. The following chart indicates the ongoing challenge in educational debt for college graduates both at MLC and elsewhere in our country.

	% MLC Graduates with Debt	Average Amount of Debt Per MLC Graduate	National Debt Average Per Graduate
2015-2016	74%	\$22,822	\$28,350
2016-2017	77%	\$24,153	\$28,650
2017-2018	75%	\$27,926	\$29,200
2018-2019	78%	\$27,196	\$28,950
2019-2020	75%	\$26,186	not available

We are thankful that the average educational debt for MLC graduates continues to be below the national average. While too early to call it a trend, we are also thankful to note a reduction in the average debt for the last two graduating classes. Additional gifts for student assistance and the growth of the Congregational Partner Grant Program may help explain this reduction.

We also thank God for his Spirit’s work in the hearts of our students’ parents who have taught biblical stewardship to their children. MLC graduates honor their Savior with an outstanding debt repayment rate. The latest report from the Department of Education (received in September 2020) shows that 183 MLC students entered Federal Student Loan debt repayment in 2017. Of students that entered repayment in 2017, only one MLC student defaulted between 2017, 2018, and 2019, which equates to a 0.5 percent cohort default rate. The draft of fiscal year 2018, to be finalized in September 2021, also indicates a 0.5 percent cohort default rate. The national average default rate is 9.7 percent for this same cohort.

Keeping bottom line costs down

While we still have much work to do here, MLC’s efforts have been blessed to keep bottom line costs as affordable as possible for our students. The chart below summarizes the average amount paid per full-time, resident student, once all grant aid has been accounted for.

	Full-time Tuition, Room & Board	Average Paid Per Full-time Student	Percentage Paid Per Full-time Student
2015-2016	\$18,920	\$12,300	65%
2016-2017	\$19,490	\$12,400	64%
2017-2018	\$20,470	\$12,800	63%
2018-2019	\$21,490	\$12,700	59%
2019-2020*	\$22,130	\$12,800	58%

*Excludes room and board refunds due to pandemic

Use of MLC net assets without donor restrictions

As of June 30, 2020, net assets without donor restrictions at MLC totaled \$12,184,274. The MLC Governing Board has designated these net assets in this way:

Fund	Amount	Description
Assets invested in library books and equipment	\$2,598,908	In fiscal year 2018, WELS transferred ownership of library books and equipment to MLC. These assets plus additions are included in net assets without donor restrictions.
Economic Sustainability Fund (ESF)	\$5,217,393	The MLC Governing Board has designated these funds for unforeseen or emergency needs. Having such reserve funds meets the best practice directives from the Higher Learning Commission who oversees MLC’s continuing accreditation. The board has set a minimum balance of 10% of annual operating expenses (about \$2.3 million). MLC’s internal goal is to reach 25% of the annual operating expenses (approximately \$5.5 million).
Scholarship Fund	\$3,582,581	Amount set aside equals two years of MLC’s internal funding for scholarships. If government regulations would make it impossible for MLC to continue to receive federal financial aid, these funds could provide MLC time to react without immediately reducing student assistance.
Program Maintenance	\$105,000	In many years the MLC campus has campus and facility improvement needs that go beyond what was budgeted. This money is set aside to provide a small cushion to address emergency needs that may arise on campus.
Operating support	\$680,392	This funding represents net assets that have been designated for any unforeseen operating needs.

Current enrollment and MLC’s financial situation

Enrollment at MLC for the past two years was lower than planned, resulting in about \$1 million less in tuition revenue in each year. While that is a substantial hurdle for MLC to overcome, the college continues to be blessed in many ways.

The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), as authorized under the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), provided MLC with \$1.48 million of emergency student aid and institutional support. Of the initial \$531,000 award, half was disbursed as emergency student aid in 2020. The remaining half was retained by MLC to cover expenses related to the pandemic, specifically room and board refunds to students. The second HEERF distribution provides \$945,500 to MLC. Our college’s administration and Governing Board determined to devote just over \$650,000 of this second distribution (March 2021) as emergency aid to our students.

MLC also participated in the Paycheck Protection Program under the CARES Act. The college obtained a \$2.4 million forgivable, low interest loan through the Small Business Administration (SBA). MLC applied for loan forgiveness in September 2020 and still awaits the SBA decision.

Donors continue to support the college with generous gifts in spite of instability in our nation and world. The “Equipping Christian Witnesses” (ECW) campaign continues to be supported by WELS members. In addition, many of God’s people have remembered MLC in estate plans. MLC has received substantial bequests without donor restrictions over the last two fiscal years.

At the same time, the college seeks to be a wise steward of financial resources. During the pandemic, MLC has focused on essential spending. Expenses in FY 2020 were \$1.1 million below plan. As of February 2021, expenses for FY 2021 are \$1.9 million below plan. With students (thankfully!) back on campus for the whole semester, MLC's expenditures returned to a more normal pattern for the last five months of the academic year. Yet, even so, MLC still anticipates expenses will remain about \$1 million below budget for this fiscal year.

MLC does expect to end FY 2021 with an unrestricted deficit. However, the deficit is generated by building activity funded through ECW. Although the ECW campaign will provide the funds to construct the new Betty Kohn Fieldhouse, donations cannot be satisfied until the building has been placed in service during FY 2022. For this reason, MLC expects to report a deficit in FY 2021 and a corresponding surplus in FY 2022 related to the construction project.

For the coming biennium, budgets have been prepared to align with MLC's strategic plan. The college plans to use \$820,000 of unrestricted funds (excluding building activity) during the next biennium. As God has blessed MLC in recent years, we look to give back to our students through higher financial aid, lower tuition increases, and controlled costs.

God's gifts to MLC: Campus buildings, improvements, and maintenance

Betty Kohn Fieldhouse

MLC is thankful for the gifts received from individuals, congregations, and schools throughout WELS. Those gifts provided a generous financial foundation for facilities, and now, God has moved the heart of a very generous donor to provide a transformational gift to the athletic center that will allow construction to commence. This athletic center, named the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse, will be a 36,000-square-foot indoor turfed facility that will feature large practice areas, baseball/softball batting cages, golf simulators, and locker rooms. In April 2021, the MLC campus family celebrated groundbreaking, with student use anticipated by the beginning of January 2022.

The Betty Kohn Fieldhouse will serve our student body well for our athletic teams, intramurals, and physical education classes. It is also a significant beginning to our long-range plans for making our campus even more attractive to prospective students.

Cultural Engagement Center

Construction began in November and was completed by the first week of January. This new Cultural Engagement Center, a repurposed area within the Luther Student Center, was created to serve MLC's international students and students of color. The Center will serve as a gathering and work space for students of color and other underrepresented students, as a place for meetings related to cultural understanding, and for other meetings as scheduling allows.

New Welcome Center

The Wittenberg Collegiate Center Link is getting a new look designed to enhance the first experience of MLC guests and prospective students. Construction and space modification began this spring to relocate Admissions to the current Financial Services office complex at the main entrance to the Wittenberg Collegiate Center. The plan includes construction of an inviting and engaging space easily identifiable as the MLC Welcome Center. Welcome Center construction will be in July 2021.

Residence hall updates

There are plans to update the existing residence halls with or without the construction of Luther Heights (ECW Pillar 3). Concord Hall restrooms received a facelift in summer 2020. This project included new sinks, faucets, water and sewer lines, and tiled walls with solid-surface counters. Centennial Hall will get new carpeting this summer.

Preventive maintenance

Funds have been budgeted for tuckpointing to meet the most immediate needs for masonry and sealant maintenance and repairs on the Wittenberg Collegiate Center and the Admin/Wittenberg Collegiate Center/Link buildings. Work includes selective tuckpointing and brick repair, various sealant joint modifications and replacement, minor stone repairs, and masonry water repellent application.

Fishers of Men statue update

The Fishers of Men campaign sponsored by the MLC Alumni Association successfully ended on June 30, 2020. The project gives thanks to God for 25 years of blessings on our alma mater. COVID restrictions and supply delays moved the installation/dedication of the statue to spring 2021. The statue was dedicated on MLC Day (May 5).

God's gifts to MLC: Training students in financial literacy

MLC has established its financial literacy program, called MLC Direction, to promote healthy financial skills so that our students can grow in being faithful stewards of God's blessings.

Many different methods are utilized to bring financial education to our students. First-year students have an opportunity to review money management basics as an online workshop. Juniors also have a similar opportunity to review the topic of credit. Through the non-profit organization CashCourse, we have been able to assign students different financial topics in a simple yet educational way. Senior financial review meetings are held each spring as graduates set up individual meetings to review loan totals, to receive a primer on taxes as gospel ministers, and to work through a budgeting exercise for the future. The five-week Money Management Bootcamp workshop that was started in 2020 had a great fall participation, despite having to transition to virtual meetings. The last week in February was America Saves Week. We partnered with AmericaSaves to help students understand the importance of saving funds for emergency and major future goals. Through the use of social media and drawings for prizes, we aim to make the financial education impactful and fun.

God's gifts to MLC: Gifts through our Mission Advancement office

The Office of Mission Advancement is responsible for overall development, public and community relations, alumni relations, and advancement efforts at MLC.

Although it is difficult to quantify all of the blessings that MLC receives through the efforts of the Mission Advancement Office, as of Feb. 28, 2021, we have received \$1,933,210 in gifts, which represents 63 percent of our FY 2020–21 goal of \$3,047,000. Those gifts were received from 1,453 donors. We have conducted 98 face-to-face visits in 9 different states. These gifts are in addition to what has been received through the ECW campaign.

We are also pleased to report that the year-to-date totals in FY 2021 supported 18 percent of MLC's operating costs. Subsidy from WELS provided an additional 20 percent of operating support. We offer our sincere thanks to those who have given so generously to make this happen.

Scholarships—annual and endowed

Another significant factor in helping to ease the financial burden on students can be seen in the number of endowed and annual scholarships established at MLC. For the 2019–20 school year, there were 85 endowed scholarships and 39 annual scholarships that provided funding for MLC scholarships and grants. Just in the last biennium (2019–21), 4 endowed and 5 annual scholarships have been established with several more in the initial steps of the process.

Congregational Partner Grant Program

Through the Congregational Partner Grant Program, MLC matches dollar for dollar, up to \$1,000, the gift a congregation gathers to apply to the tuition of their student(s) at MLC. As a renewable effort, the Congregational Partner Grant Program can provide four or five years of financial aid support—up to \$10,000 to each student—in addition to the other financial aid the student receives. The Congregational Partner Grant Program has taken off in a big way. For the 2020–21 school year, more than 600 students from approximately 250 congregations received congregational grants that were matched by MLC. This resulted in more than \$1,000,000 in financial aid to our students!

"Equipping Christian Witnesses" campaign

We are in the midst of a three-year capital campaign that will come to an end on June 30, 2022. The campaign has three main goals: 1) to increase enrollment at MLC toward 800, 900, or more full-time students; 2) to provide even more financial aid to our students, especially through our Congregational Partner Grant Program; and 3) to upgrade facilities to enable our campus to be even more inviting to prospective students.

So far, representatives from MLC and our WELS Ministry of Christian Giving have made 1,594 ECW visits to households within WELS. These encouragements to individuals and families, along with encouragements to our congregations, have begun to bear fruit. Here are the gifts God has given us through this campaign through February 2021:

Campaign Totals	Received	Pledge Balance	Total
General Campaign:	\$1,432,298	\$51,710	\$1,484,008
Facilities:	\$562,363	\$0	\$562,363
Congregational Partner Grant Program:	\$1,104,734	\$0	\$1,104,734
Total ECW	\$3,099,395	\$51,710	\$3,151,105

God's gifts to MLC: Admissions and student retention

With pastoral and teaching vacancies in our synod remaining high, our admissions department has worked hard to increase the visibility of MLC's ministry in our synod. Our admissions team has taken a different approach to staffing the department by calling admissions counselors with years of experience in the classroom and pulpit. This approach has allowed our counselors to leverage their real-life ministry experience as they work with students considering public ministry. That experience of our recruiters also leverages relationships established through years of ministry in our WELS churches and schools. We have also added a co-curricular admissions counselor who reaches out to high school students with special gifts in co-curricular activities such as sports and music.

A look ahead

If the pandemic has taught us anything as the WELS college of ministry, it is that our world remains desperately in need of the good news of Jesus Christ. For the encouraging and equipping of the saints, and for reaching out to our nation and world, it is essential to prepare as large a corps as possible of well-equipped and capable ministry candidates. The ECW campaign's three pillars provide MLC with a foundational focus for this next biennium.

ECW Pillar #1: Significantly increase enrollment at MLC

One key way we are working to increase enrollment is pursuing a greater gospel-shaped diversity on campus. We are committed to working toward a student body that reflects the gracious reality that Christ has purchased souls "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). We pray for God's blessings on our new Cultural Engagement Center with a full-time director (Mrs. Megan Kassuelke) partnering with our International Student Coordinator (Prof. Tingting Schwartz) and our Cultural Diversity Coordinator (Prof. Aaron Robinson). Our whole campus will be partnering with this team to make MLC an even more inviting place for students of color as well as for international students.

A second key way we are looking to work on this challenge is through new efforts in our admissions department. Our director of admissions and recruiters are looking for ways to strengthen MLC's presence within synodical prep schools, our area Lutheran high schools, as well as reaching out more effectively to WELS students who are homeschooled or who attend public schools. Through increased training for our high school teachers who serve as on-campus liaisons, increased amounts and frequency of Focus on Ministry trips, increased boots on the ground efforts at the high schools by our counselors and MLC students, and the increased usage of technology and social media with our recruits, we pray God can use these efforts to provide even more candidates for ministry. We are also increasing our work with pastors and congregations in outlying areas or districts to target candidates for public ministry who have not attended a WELS high school. Please continue to pray that God will bless our efforts with many students eager to consider serving in our schools and congregations.

In partnership with MLC's faculty, our admissions department is also aggressively focusing on strengthening our retention of current students. While MLC has one of the highest retention rates in the country, we look to strengthen current retention efforts as well as exploring new ideas that can help us hold on to even more students.

ECW Pillar #2: Increasing financial aid and reducing student debt

Increasing financial aid and reducing student educational debt remain a major emphasis on MLC's campus and play a significant role in being able to attract more students to campus (pillar #1). Because many colleges and universities have significantly greater financial aid resources, those schools often are able to offer more attractive financial aid packages to prospective MLC students. While that may not deter the prospective student who is fully committed to studying for ministry, there are many prospective students who are unsure about their future. We do not want to lose such undecided prospective students by allowing studying for public ministry to appear to be the greater cost than the other options before them.

With that in mind, MLC will be working in this new biennium to find answers to increasing our financial aid packages for students and simultaneously reducing student debt.

Already last year the MLC Governing Board signaled this intention by passing a resolution that included this broad outline:

MLC is GRATEFUL for the continued support from WELS, our donors, and programs provided through the CARES Act. MLC is CONCERNED about the increased cost of attendance at MLC and corresponding student debt. MLC is RESPONDING by focusing on:

- Increased gifts to financial aid so more competitive aid packages can be given to prospective students.
- Capping tuition increases to attract additional students to meet the need for called workers in WELS, and thus reducing student debt in the future.
- Investing in college facilities to attract and retain students for ministry.

OUR PRAYER: In this, as in all things, we ask God to help us. May our efforts ease the financial burden our graduates carry, remove hindrances to ministry recruitment, and raise an even larger corps of Christian Witnesses who are qualified to meet the needs of WELS ministry.

We realize this effort has important elements for what MLC can do as well as calling on our partners in the synod to work with us. As far as that on-campus element, the initial fruit of our governing board's resolution was the establishment of a Working Group on Financial Aid and Student Debt. This working group is made up of MLC administration, faculty, staff, as well as representatives from the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) and our Governing Board. This working group has outlined three goals for its work:

- **Develop a vision for the future:** Establish a clear and compelling vision for where we are headed with increasing financial aid and reducing student debt.
- **Develop a common narrative and accessible reports:** Agree on a narrative and set of reports/numbers that accurately define the status quo (both good and not so good) of financial aid and student debt at MLC. This would allow us to make sure we are all speaking the same language and that we can accurately assess progress (God-willing!) toward the established vision. This would also allow us to deliver clear and consistent information on financial aid and student debt to multiple critical audiences (current students, prospective students/parents, donors, governing board, BME, synod).
- **Develop and monitor annual goals:** Set and monitor annual coordinated goals for each department that has a part in moving us toward the envisioned future. This will help to break down the "silos" in which we have wonderful but too often disjointed efforts.

In regard to strengthening our partnership with our synod, the BME established a task force that seeks to identify what can be done beyond MLC's campus—throughout our synod—to assist with the challenge of increasing financial aid and reducing student debt. That report is found as an appendix to the BME's report on p. 125.

We pray for God's blessings on the labor of our working group as well as the fruit of the task force's report and recommendations to our synod. Together we pray we can develop a path forward that provides significantly more financial aid for our students and that continues to reduce educational debt for our MLC graduates.

We also would be remiss if we didn't underline the importance of our financial literacy program on campus. We are fully aware that helping students and their families to be wise stewards of God's gifts is another key piece to this puzzle. MLC's financial literacy coordinator, JoElyn Krohn, is pursuing ways to increase contact with the parents of current and prospective students.

We are also aware that wise stewardship of resources at MLC by our administration and governing board is a final key piece in meeting the challenge of increasing financial aid and reducing student educational debt. MLC remains committed to finding ways to be even more careful stewards of its resources so as to keep tuition and room/board costs as low as possible without sacrificing a quality college experience attractive to current and prospective students.

ECW Pillar #3: Improving campus facilities

Pillar #3 is also focused on student recruitment and retention (pillar #1). Many prospective students are weighing multiple options for a vocation to pursue and where to prepare for that vocation. It is pivotal that MLC has a well-equipped and attractive campus that is inviting to such students. As those students seek to decide on what campus to call home for the next four years, we want to have a well-equipped campus that makes MLC an inviting option.

The building of the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse is a significant beginning to renewing our commitment to provide such a well-equipped campus. But that is only a beginning. The newest residence hall on campus has already celebrated its 50th birthday. Much has changed in the expectations of prospective college students in regard to what is comfortable residence hall space. The building of a new residence hall, tentatively named Luther Heights, would be a significant step forward in attracting the current generation of college students. Adding a new residence hall, even before enrollment grows (God willing), allows MLC systematically to rebuild our older residence halls, making all of them more attractive living spaces.

But even the building of the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse and the new residence hall will not end the need to continue to invest in facilities at MLC. The MLC campus master plan envisions multiple opportunities to enhance the beauty and function of campus facilities, such as

- completion of music instruction spaces in the Chapel of the Christ basement,
- renovation of the Music Hall,
- remodeling of the social spaces in the Luther Student Center, and
- construction of a physical education and student activity center.

The executive summary of that master plan is available with the supplemental online BORAM documents at **wels.net/2021synodconvention**.

In pursuing the three pillars of the ECW campaign, and for the realization of the campus master plan, God's blessings on the work of our Mission Advancement office will be crucial. Even after the ECW campaign concludes on June 30, 2022, the need for gifts to support student recruitment, financial aid, and facilities will continue. MLC's Office of Mission Advancement has begun developing plans to continue to partner with donors who have a special love for MLC's ministry as well as working to keep everyone in our church body informed as well.

One focused way of nurturing donors and providing a predictable source of revenue for our college of ministry is through our annual fund—the MLC Fund. Gifts to the MLC Fund supply between 10-15 percent of MLC's regular annual operating needs.

Looking ahead in academics

We are also aware that continuing to strengthen academic excellence for our undergraduates—and our graduate and continuing education students—is vital to MLC's mission. Here are some initiatives at MLC that are seeking, under God's blessing, to strengthen our academic program.

Growth in training for special education

In response to the growing need for qualified special education (SPED) teachers in Lutheran schools, the undergraduate and graduate special education programs have been coordinated to help students save time and money. Qualifying SPED majors can take graduate-level SPED courses that will apply to both the bachelor's and master's degree, saving both time and cost.

Continuing work to maintain accreditation

MLC is currently in year 2 of its 10-year cycle of accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission. Two years ago (in year 10), we had a successful comprehensive onsite visit from a team of Higher Learning Commission peer reviewers. We "fully met" 19 of the 21 criteria for accreditation and "partially met" the other 2 with a request to submit updates in these areas by November 30, 2020. Those reports were submitted. While we await word on the acceptance of these updates, planning will begin for our next step in the process. This summer, our vice president for academics will begin preparing MLC's "Year 4 Assurance Review." The date for this review's submission will be October 2022. The Year 4 Assurance Review is a virtual review where MLC will demonstrate that it continues to meet Higher Learning Commission criteria for accreditation.

Ongoing program review

Part of pursuing excellence in our academic offerings is the ongoing program review of each of our existing undergraduate programs. Here are highlights of that work:

- The pre-seminary program will experience a change in the dean's office at the end of the school year. As Prof. Dan Balge transitions to a full-time role in the classroom, Prof. Jim Danell will become the Dean of Pre-Seminary Studies. The new dean will oversee progress on specific recommendations made to strengthen our pre-seminary program when review was completed in 2018. Advisers in this program will be pursuing the possibility of expanding study options to include academic minors. Other conversations yet to come involve studying how to strengthen first-year Greek instruction as well as investigating establishing an early ministry experience program. These conversations will be aided as MLC and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) partner to facilitate more regular meetings between MLC's pre-seminary professors and the WLS faculty.
- Last year's elementary education program review now provides quarterly updates on the improvement initiatives suggested. The initiatives were assigned to various oversight/responsible parties. Twenty-seven different faculty members are involved in carrying out these improvement initiatives.

- The early childhood education program review has completed its initial study of all aspects of the major. A preliminary report was delivered to the entire faculty in February. After external reviewers are selected and their feedback received, the committee will make any final adjustments to their study. During the coming summer, work will be assigned to responsible parties and quarterly progress reporting will begin.
- At the direction of the governing board, MLC continues to discuss potential methods for non-traditional students to study for teaching ministry in non-traditional ways.
- MLC will offer its first studio art course (Drawing) in the Spring 2022 semester. Other courses are being designed with the goal of creating an academic minor in art.
- MLC continues to study the possibility of adjusting its academic calendar to include a J-Term (or Winterim) to more creatively and efficiently offer programs of study.
- In conjunction with WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools' efforts, MLC faculty will participate in the Ministerial Evaluation and Growth Process along with all called workers in our elementary and secondary schools.
- MLC continues to study ways to make candidates seeking very specific teacher licensing options more available and serviceable to the wider variety of ministry opportunities that present themselves on assignment day.

MLC asks for your prayers that God will bless the current efforts and future plans noted in this report so as to provide a growing number of equipped and capable public ministers for gospel ministry. "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37,38).

Rev. Richard Gurgel, reporter

Rev. Michael Woldt, chairman

Teacher Joe Archer

Rev. Geoffrey Kieta

Mr. Thomas Klaudt

Mr. Dale Krause

Teacher Joel Lauber

Rev. Daniel Leyrer

Rev. Michael Lindemann

Mr. Timothy Petermann

Teacher David Uhlhorn

Mr. Michael Valleau

Mr. Andrew Van Weele

Rev. Mark Wessel

Advisory:

Rev. Richard Gurgel, Martin Luther College president

Rev. Dennis Klatt, Minnesota District president

Mr. Michael Krueger

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Mr. Thomas Walters

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Floor Committee #10

Our calling

Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) has existed as a preparatory high school for the WELS since its re-opening on Sept. 13, 1910. Prior to that it served as a traditional seminary preparing pastors for the Michigan Synod in its days before the amalgamation of the synods into WELS. However, in its 110 years of existence as a preparatory high school, MLS has not wavered in its mission to encourage and equip high school students for a lifetime of service in the public ministry of the gospel. MLS is very proud and grateful to its synod to fulfill the special purpose of Michigan Lutheran Seminary to prepare high school students for the public ministry of the gospel, encouraging them to enroll in the WELS college of ministry, Martin Luther College.

As a preparatory high school of WELS, MLS is owned and operated by the people of WELS. It is a treasured fact that those who serve and those who study at MLS are supported and encouraged by a fellowship of saints who treasure the gospel of Jesus and support the holy ministry of his Word.

Our calling as a preparatory high school of WELS is recognized in the hundreds of alumni currently serving as pastors, teachers, missionaries, and staff ministers throughout WELS ministries across the globe. Traditionally about half of MLS graduates enroll at Martin Luther College (MLC), providing a steady stream of eager servants for gospel ministry. This past year the largest number of MLS graduates in two decades entered the pre-seminary program and over half of the 2020 graduates enrolled at MLC. In an era of rising public ministry vacancies, we are grateful for these future gifts to the church.

MLS consistently fulfills its calling as a preparatory high school of WELS by encouraging international students to enroll at MLC. The MLS international program regularly receives students from multiple countries with the goal of raising up an international generation of gospel heralds for ministry in their own countries and ours. Over the past decade, more MLS international students have enrolled at MLC and more have been assigned into WELS ministries than any other high school. A special relationship exists between MLS and our sister synod in Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK). Nearly every year one or more students from German congregations attend MLS for an audited year of high school in which they experience American life and foster meaningful relationships within our fellowship.

MLS also fulfills its calling by operating a fiscally responsible preparatory ministry. Receiving no annual government support, MLS relies on the support of WELS members through subsidy from the Board for Ministerial Education, special gifts from God's people across the globe, and tuition and room and board payments. Each source is evidence both of God's fulfillment of his promise to provide for his people and the love that the people of WELS have for MLS and its mission.

Our current situation

Enrollment

There have been significant variances of enrollment at MLS since the 2008–09 financial downturn and financial adjustments across WELS ministries. At the beginning of the 2020 school year, 184 students enrolled at MLS representing 10 different states, 6 districts of WELS. Almost 10 percent of those students originate from countries other than the United States. More than 80 percent of MLS students come from lay member families representing potential first generation gospel ministers for the church. Sixty percent of MLS students live in the dormitory.

Recruitment

Recruitment for gospel ministry is a concentrated focus of everyone on the MLS campus. Events such as Cardinal for a Day; children's theater; summer sports and fine arts camps; boys, girls, and co-ed basketball tournaments; 3 on 3 tournaments; fine arts fair; and a Junior Cardinals flag football and poms program all are focused on exposing children to the MLS family and its ministry. Prospective students are invited to shadow a current Cardinal to experience classes and a night in the dormitory. A travel fund has been established to provide financial assistance to families to visit MLS and experience the MLS family environment firsthand.

Once on campus, every student is given the opportunity each year to have hands-on ministry experiences to assist in the decision to pursue gospel ministry as a vocation. All students have the opportunity to teach a lesson for grade school students at the biannual Cardinal for a Day. Freshmen participate in a Ministry Day in which pastors, teachers, and MLC representatives share their experiences in gospel ministry. Sophomores and their parents are treated to a ministry night with MLC representatives and MLS alumni who are currently enrolled at MLC who share their journey and excitement for ministry. Juniors travel to MLC on “college tour,” visiting our other ministerial education schools and the Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis. Seniors participate in a Taste of Ministry experience where they join experienced WELS pastors and teachers across the United States for real-life ministry work. Several times a year senior boys take a trip to WLS to participate in classes and experience that aspect of pastoral studies. Senior boys also are given the opportunity to lead the evening chapel by writing and delivering their own devotion for their classmates as well as presiding over the liturgy for morning chapel on Tuesdays. Approximately 20 percent of students are chosen to participate in Project Titus, a program that connects MLS students with mission-minded congregations to assist with outreach and fellowship activities. The entire student body participates in an annual “Mission Seminar” in which a special area of WELS ministry is highlighted. Additionally, MLC admissions counselors come to MLS several times each year to talk with students about college options and how MLC trains a core of Christian witnesses. Needless to say, recruitment for ministry is a robust and continual effort on the MLS campus.

Mental health services

MLS partners with WELS’ Christian Family Solutions counseling services to provide invaluable services for the rising mental health needs of today’s teenagers. An onsite trained Christian therapist meets regularly with individuals to encourage and support the mental health needs of the faculty and students. MLS has been the model for WELS high schools in this area even as it seeks to expand the partnership with Christian Family Solutions.

In addition, during the 2020–21 school year the MLS faculty spent time discussing “Mental wellness and school culture.” These discussions took place formally in our professional development sessions held throughout the school year and were led by counselor Kent Robinson and Dean David Koehler. The sessions were an opportunity to evaluate how our institutional systems, policies, and procedures affect our students. All of this is an indication that MLS strives to care for its students spiritually, academically, socially, and emotionally because they are precious souls loved by God.

Curricular and extracurricular activities

MLS offers a high-quality, Christ-centered curriculum that prepares high school students for entrance into the college of their choosing. MLS graduates exceed the standards established by the State of Michigan and Martin Luther College in most subjects. The average class size of 21 and student to teacher ratio of 8:1 ensures that students receive personalized attention and academic encouragement. While standards are high, MLS students averaged a 3.51 GPA in 2020. A special emphasis is placed on music and languages in preparation for future service in the church. More than 95 percent of MLS students participate in keyboard (piano or organ). The addition of a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) program in the 2020–21 school year expands the MLS science curriculum and better equips future WELS teachers for their own classrooms.

Because of the smaller size of our campus, students have more options for participation in interscholastic competition with more than 90 percent of MLS students participating in one or more extracurriculars. MLS regularly achieves postseason athletic awards in most major sports.

Faculty

At the end of the last biennium, MLS experienced a significant turnover in most administrative positions and other faculty positions. The continued success of the school is a testament to the hard work of everyone on staff and the familial culture that has been established. With a new president, vice president, athletic director, business manager, admissions counselor, and administrative assistant, several key positions are now positioned to set the pace of the school for the next decade, God willing.

At the end of the 2020–21 school year, Prof. Leonard Proeber and his wife, Laurel, will retire from public ministry after a combined total of 77 years. Their cumulative impact on church musicians has been a blessing for churches and schools across our synod. We thank the Lord for both of them and their faithful service to the church.

Accreditation—exemplary

After 18 months of a comprehensive self-study and a site visit from a team of experienced educators and administrators, MLS was awarded exemplary accreditation status by the WELS School Accreditation group (also recognized by Middle

States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools and the National Council for Private School Accreditation). MLS achieved that status by meeting or exceeding 96 percent of the 280 established standards. Work continues via the School Improvement Plan that will position MLS for an even stronger quality Christian education for future pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and missionaries in WELS ministries. Parents who elect to enroll their child at MLS can be assured they will receive the highest quality of education and ministry encouragement.

COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced that all K-12 schools were to close to slow the spread of COVID-19. Within a week, the MLS faculty and students responded admirably by pivoting to online instruction for what would become the balance of the year. In-person instruction began again in August 2020. In November 2020, along with all Michigan schools, MLS once again pivoted to online instruction for the balance of the semester. Students responded by increasing the percentage of students on the honor roll (3.5 GPA or higher) from 55 percent to 64 percent. At the start of the second semester, in-person instruction began once again and continues to this point.

In spite of significant financial challenges posed by COVID-19, MLS committed to maintaining all faculty and staff at current levels during the mandated closure. Room and board refunds were offered to families whose students returned home. Host families graciously adopted international students who did not return to their home countries because of visa uncertainties. Significant mitigation strategies are in place to maintain in-person instruction and a safe learning environment for our students and faculty.

Campus improvements

This biennium saw the completion of necessary upgrades to our athletic complex. New bleachers on both the home and visitor sides and a newly constructed pressbox consisting of a concession stand and restroom facilities all provide an enhanced spectator experience for MLS Cardinal events. The remodeling of the old computer lab into an expanded administration office has provided better communication between departments and a natural reduction in support staff. All of those projects have been funded entirely by the MLS Foundation, a separate 501(c)(3) organization that supports the ministry of MLS. A new roof was installed on the dormitory building and a theater room was installed in the lower level of the dormitory for viewing game film and for movie nights in the dorm.

A look ahead

MLS remains committed to partnering with parents to never turn away a student for financial reasons. 90 percent of students who apply for financial aid receive some financial aid. The average award is more than \$3,000. Support from WELS members, endowments, and the MLS Foundation make an MLS preparatory education within reach for all WELS members.

MLS is also committed to enrolling students from all districts of WELS. A grant program has been established to provide additional assistance for students who come from a distance and exhibit gifts in leadership, music, and ministry. Prospective families are invited to meet the MLS family and experience the small school with worldwide opportunities.

Efforts are being made to better connect our alumni scattered across the United States to the MLS ministry and engage them in recruitment and support for their alma mater. MLS already gives more financial support to its students matriculating to MLC than any other high school, but additional ministry encouragement scholarships for MLS graduates that enroll at MLC are being developed to help reduce the student debt of MLS alumni at MLC.

At times it is challenging to appreciate the lifelong effect that a quality Christian education has in someone's life. Every once in a while the Lord allows you a glimpse of such effects. To appreciate the MLS ministry from that perspective, a portion of a letter addressed to MLS administration from a student from the class of 1960 is included below.

This is a long overdue "Thank You" to Michigan Lutheran Seminary for the great kindness shown to me as a student. I am now closer to 80 years old than 18. I was a child of poverty. My parents divorced. Mother and I lived in a 12' x 12' tar building (no running water or plumbing). Our transportation was on our hand. We hitchhiked wherever we went—church every Sunday. I believe our pastor must have made some arrangement through his father, the director of MLS. I received four years of education, room and board. I was never made aware of this generous gift. Mother only shared this with me in her late years. I was never treated with any bias. MLS opened opportunity and a future for me. Wonderful roommates, tremendous friends, great education, and lots and lots of

fun. MLS granted me many opportunities. Thank you for taking a chance on me—for investing in my future. You, MLS, made a difference in my life. I came to school empty-handed and graduated with a future.

Please visit mlsem.org for more information about your WELS preparatory high school in Saginaw, Mich.

Rev. Mark Luetzow, reporter

Rev. Greg Gibbons, chairman

Rev. Adam Bode, vice chairman

Mr. Brent Diehm

Rev. Craig Engel

Mr. Mark Eubank

Teacher Josh Glowicki

Rev. Andrew Schroeder

Teacher Stephen Schultz

Advisory:

Rev. Mark Luetzow, Michigan Lutheran Seminary president

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Rev. Snowden Sims, Michigan District president

Luther Preparatory School Floor Committee #10

Our calling

Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., has a single mission given to it by the synod when the prep department was first established on the Watertown campus in 1865: To encourage and prepare high school students for service in the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. That mission is central to everything we do—in the classroom, in co-curricular activities, in our worship services, and in the personal guidance given to every student.

LPS is owned and operated by WELS. The synod has given LPS the privilege and responsibility to carry out this important work. The LPS Governing Board, faculty, and staff are grateful to our church body, which supports the work of LPS with its prayers, gifts, and gospel-laced encouraging words.

That LPS fulfills its purpose is seen by the fact that since its beginning as a stand-alone prep school in 1995, 57 percent of all Luther Prep graduates have enrolled at Martin Luther College (MLC). Three years ago LPS witnessed a historical high when 70 percent of our graduates continued at MLC, with 40 young men entering the pastor track that year. Historically LPS graduates have comprised 37 percent of traditional Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) graduates. Twenty eight percent (200) of the students enrolled at MLC this past year were Luther Prep graduates. God graciously blesses the work done at LPS, which in turn benefits our synod and our calling in Christ's Church.

Luther Prep depends on three sources of funding to carry out its calling: 1) synod support, 2) payments for tuition and room and board, and 3) special gifts from congregations, groups, and individuals. We are grateful for the gospel's work of prompting such generosity and thankful hearts in God's people.

Our current situation

Enrollment

Enrollment has remained fairly stable over the past ten years. LPS opened school year 2020–21 with an enrollment of

402. Our students come from 25 states, 5 foreign countries, 173 congregations, and all 12 WELS districts. More than two-thirds of our students come from lay families. Ninety percent of LPS students reside in the dormitories. Thirteen percent are minorities.

Recruitment to LPS, with an eye on future full-time gospel ministry, remains a top priority. We always invite and welcome all WELS upper grade students to visit our campus, “shadow” a Prep student, and spend a night in one of the dormitories to get a feel for Prep life. We host annual recruitment events such as WELS area and national co-ed basketball tournaments, Phoenix for a Day, the fall play, children’s theater, and the musical, as well as numerous summer athletic camps. Each year these events bring 4,500 WELS grade school students from across the country to our campus.

The LPS Governing Board, faculty, parents, and students were grateful that God in his grace allowed LPS to hold face-to-face instruction every single school day over this past school year, with most activities being only mildly affected.

Preparing for the mission

The Word is central in all we do. Chapel services—the heartbeat of Prep’s daily living—are held twice daily. All classes are taught from a scriptural perspective, and students are encouraged in their personal devotional lives. The Holy Spirit works through the means of grace to encourage and prepare our young people for lives of gospel ministry and service.

The LPS curriculum is designed to prepare students to meet or exceed the requirements of MLC. LPS recognizes the need and desire for future musicians in our Lutheran congregations and classrooms. More than 95 percent of our students take piano lessons. The LPS organ program produces the most organ students for MLC. All students participate in chorus their first year, with more than 90 percent continuing thereafter. Well over one hundred students are involved in the concert band, jazz band, brass choir, and string and guitar ensembles. Our select Prep Singer group sings at worship services in area congregations throughout the year and tours outside of Wisconsin every year during our spring break. All students take at least one year of Latin and three consecutive years of a foreign language in order to thoroughly prepare them for future language studies, especially those in the biblical languages.

Because our purpose is to prepare future pastors and teachers, LPS offers age-appropriate ministry experiences to its students. All of our seniors take part in our Taste of Ministry program, in which prospective pastor students spend two days with an area WELS pastor, and our prospective teacher students spend two days in a classroom with an area elementary school teacher. Project Timothy is a program designed to provide mission, ministry, and cross-cultural experiences to LPS students. Though the pandemic has taken away the opportunity these past two summers for trips outside of the country, approximately 50 students will assist with outreach and education programs of mission congregations in Florida, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, and Alaska. Also, senior boys are given the opportunity to prepare and speak an evening devotion to the student body. It is a common practice for their classmates to speak words of encouragement to these young men after the devotion is given.

Each year the entire junior class visits Martin Luther College. By the time our students graduate, each one will have met at least four times with an MLC recruiter. An array of missionaries, professors, teachers, pastors, and MLC and WLS students present topical ministry workshops at our annual Ministry Day. The entire student body takes part in Ministry Day. Sophomores also take an annual trip to the seminary, and seniors in the LPS pastor track visit the seminary each fall for worship, class visitation, and a tour.

Six years ago LPS began to fully integrate a 1:1 initiative to create a technology-rich environment for both teaching and learning. Every LPS student is equipped with a Chromebook for use in class and in the dormitory using the wireless secure student network. This has allowed LPS faculty to have additional options for presentation of information in classes along with access to current information in the classroom. Our students learn to use these tools, which they in turn will utilize in their future classrooms and congregations.

The State of Wisconsin offers three Parental Choice Programs for Wisconsin residents: Milwaukee, Racine, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs. In these programs parents, who fall under a designated family-size based income threshold, receive a voucher from the State of Wisconsin that pays the tuition costs of education for their children at participating private and religious schools.

The governing board approved Prep’s entry into these programs in 2017. Each year the governing board reviews these programs to ensure that they are consistent with the mission of LPS. Approximately 150 students participate in these Parental Choice programs. These programs have proven to be financially beneficial to our parents who are

offering their sons and daughters for ministry. They have also afforded LPS the opportunity to award additional financial aid to many other families who are not able to participate in the programs.

After 44 years each of service in ministry, Prof. Ken Taylor retired in 2020 and Prof. Robert Huebner retired in 2021. We thank God for their faithful labors in the Lord.

Capital projects/improvements

Though the capital projects and improvements have not been glitzy over the past biennium, they have been necessary to maintaining the synod's beautiful 40-acre campus and its buildings. Some of those projects were three new roofs, new dormitory windows, tuckpointing on several buildings, repaving of driveways and parking lots, new bleachers, crowning the soccer field, resurfacing the track, etc.

A look ahead

Music is an integral component of our heritage, the Church, and Lutheran worship. The Lord has blessed LPS with an excellent music program and numerous musically gifted students, all preparing for service in the Church. The LPS music auditorium, built during the President William Howard Taft administration, is 109 years old. The Luther Prep Governing Board has addressed the construction of a new music center. When a new music center is built, the present auditorium would be repurposed to its original use and serve as a secondary gymnasium to accommodate our freshmen teams, wrestling team, dance team, and plethora of intramural teams, as well as functioning in other capacities. LPS also plans to add additional parking. Tredo Group from Milwaukee, Wis., has been hired to provide a conceptual design for a new music center. Before the synod convention begins, LPS should have an estimated cost, size, location, etc. for a new music center. We plan to bring this conceptual design to synodical leadership for approval before the end of the year.

LPS welcomes all WELS/ELS students to apply for enrollment with a recommendation from their pastor and, if applicable, teacher. We know that very few eighth grade students have a definite plan for their lives after college. They will be encouraged and prepared for full-time ministry in their years at Prep. Should they choose a different direction after graduating, we know that they will be firmly grounded in faith and will serve the Lord Jesus and his Church in some other vocation.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Luke 10:2). The saints have been praying that prayer for the past two millennia. With the large number of vacancies in WELS pastoral and teaching ministries, and with our desire to establish even more home and world missions, the Lord's invitation to prayer becomes even more compelling. We pray fervently that the Lord will move the hearts of parents to offer their sons and daughters for gospel ministry, and that young people will consider the high calling of gospel ministry.

Much more information can be found at lps.wels.net or by calling LPS at 920-261-4352.

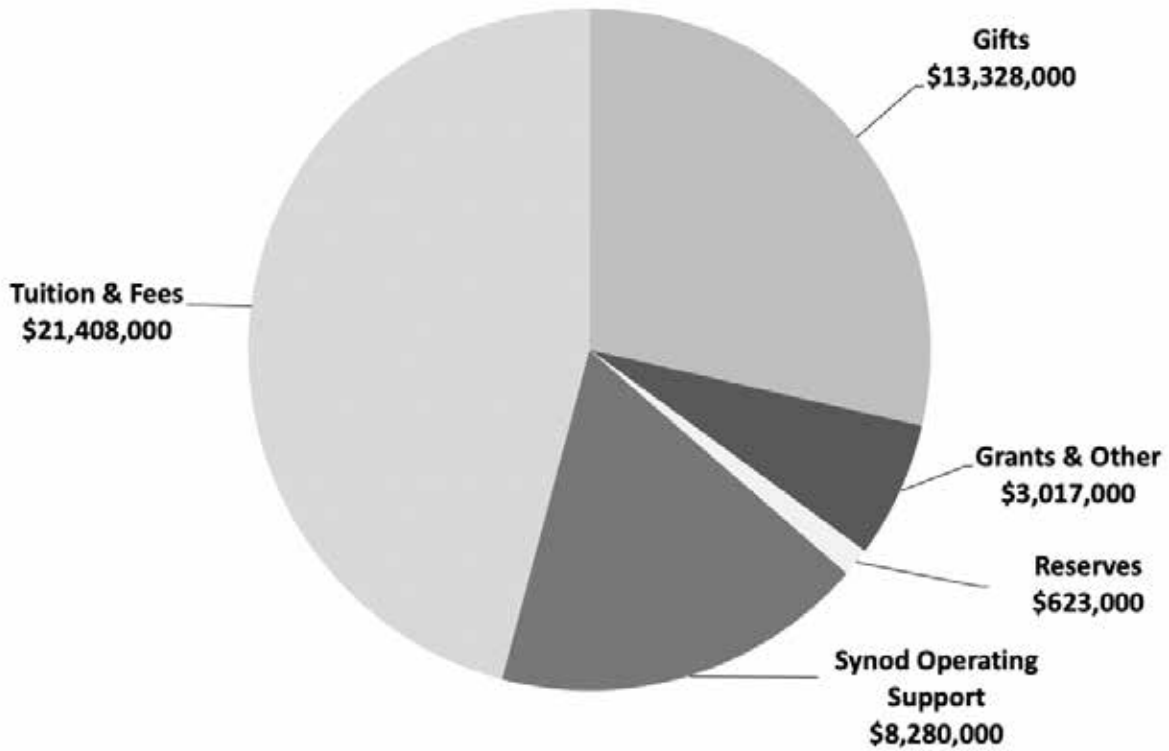
Rev. Matthew Crass, reporter

Rev. Timothy Spaude, chairman
Rev. Kevin Westra, vice chairman
Teacher Adam Glodowski, secretary
Mr. Stephen Balza
Teacher Seth Fitzsimmons
Mr. Charles Mauer
Rev. Thomas Moldenhauer
Rev. Daniel Schmidt

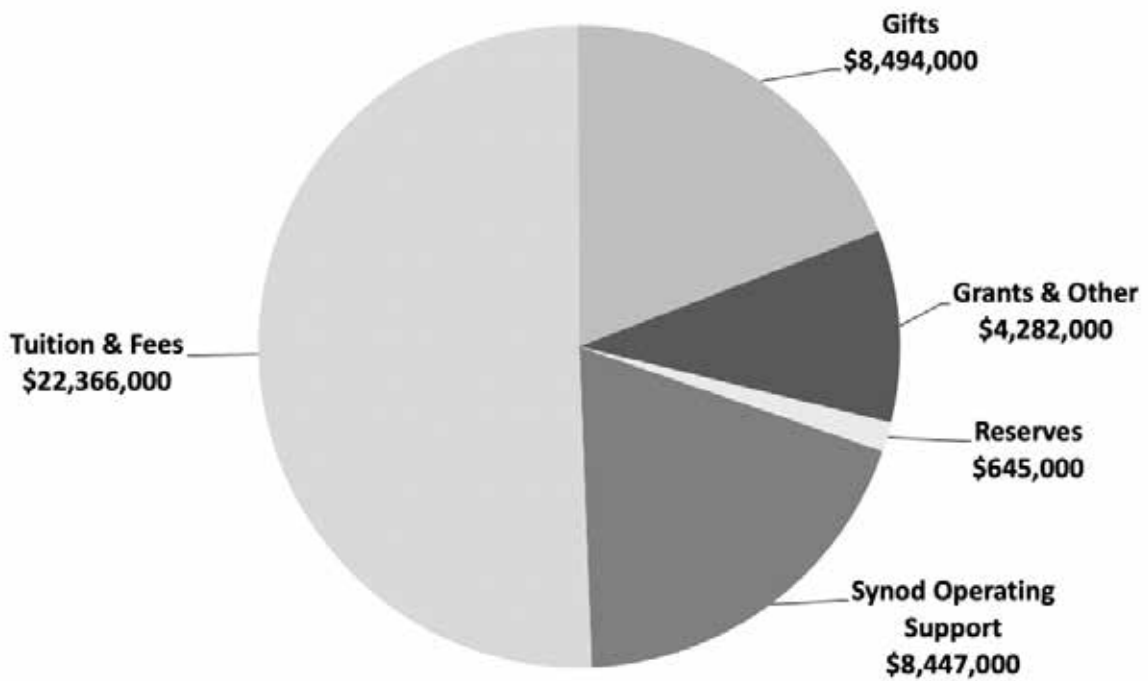
Advisory:

Rev. Matthew Crass, Luther Preparatory School president
Rev. Michael Jensen, Western Wisconsin District president
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

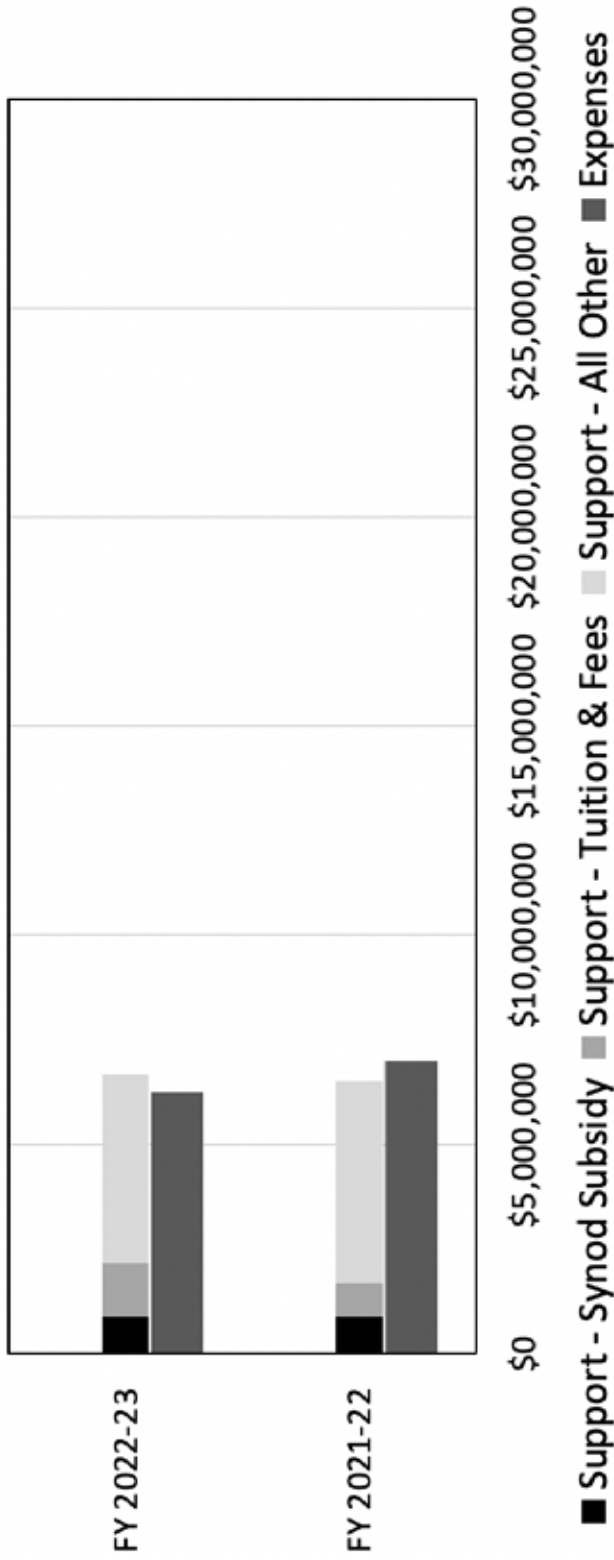
**FY 2021-22 Support
Ministerial Education
\$46,656,000**



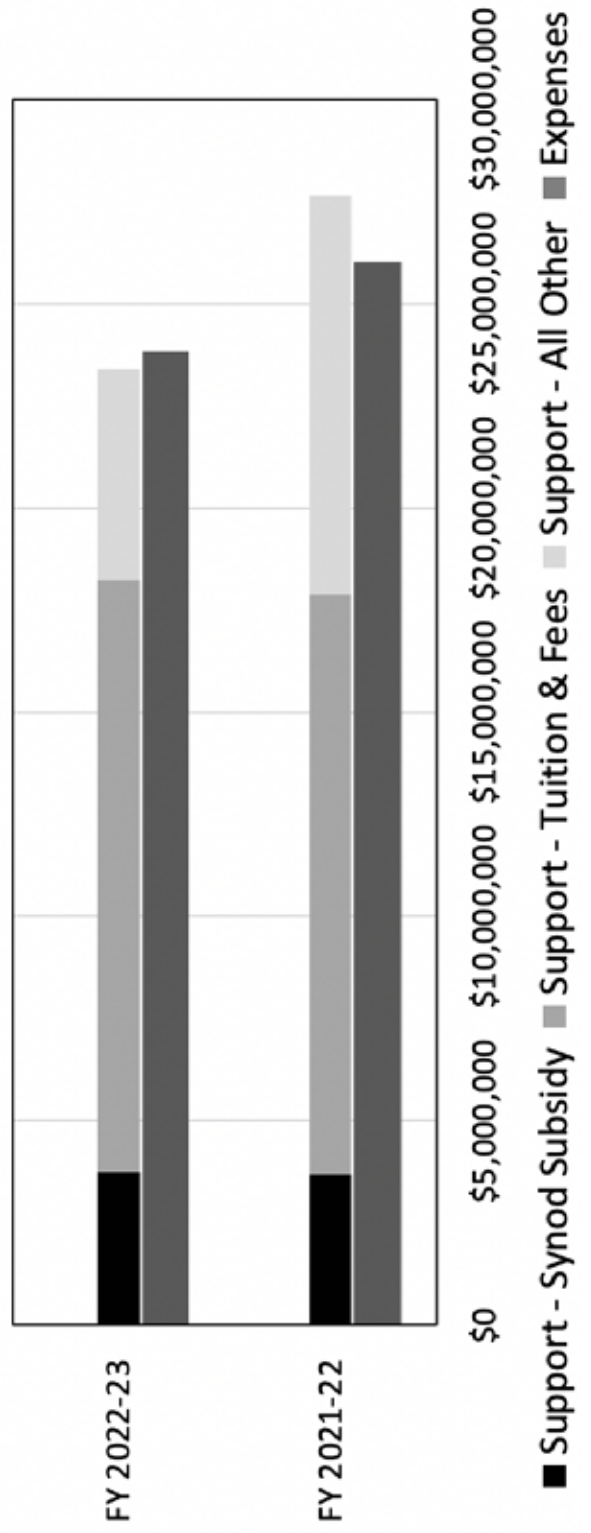
**FY 2022-23 Support
Ministerial Education
\$44,234,000**



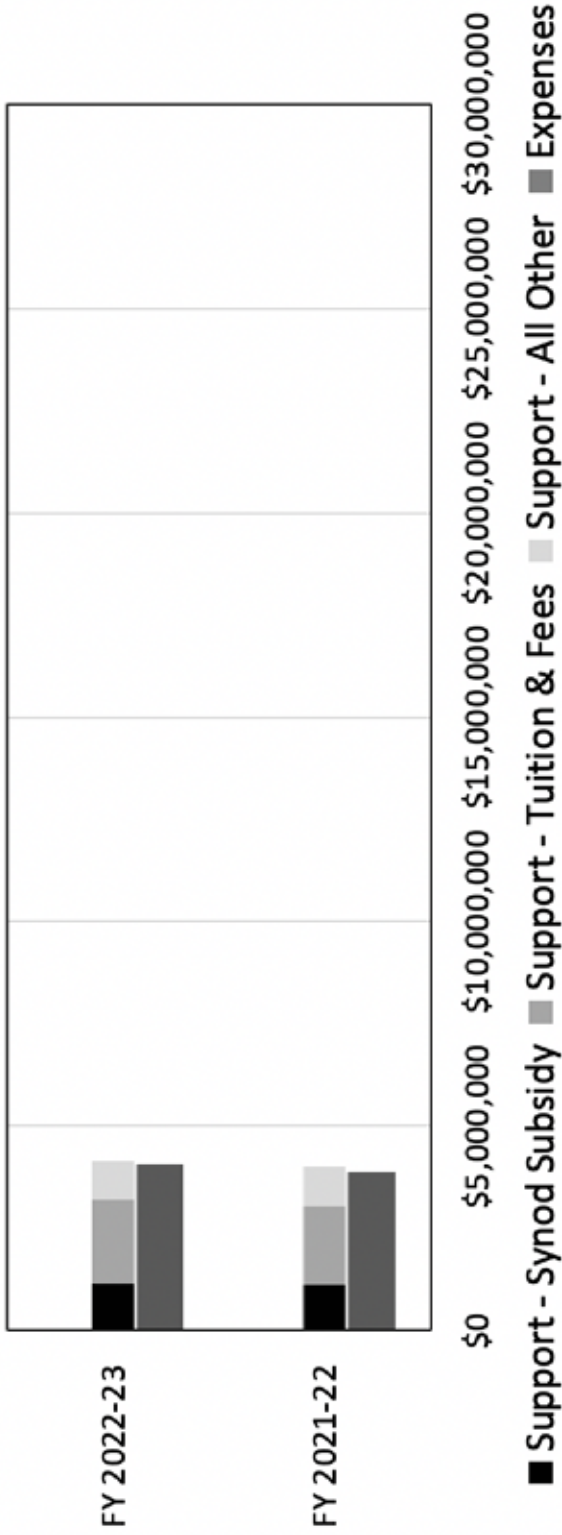
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
FY2021-22 and FY2022-23 Support and Expenses



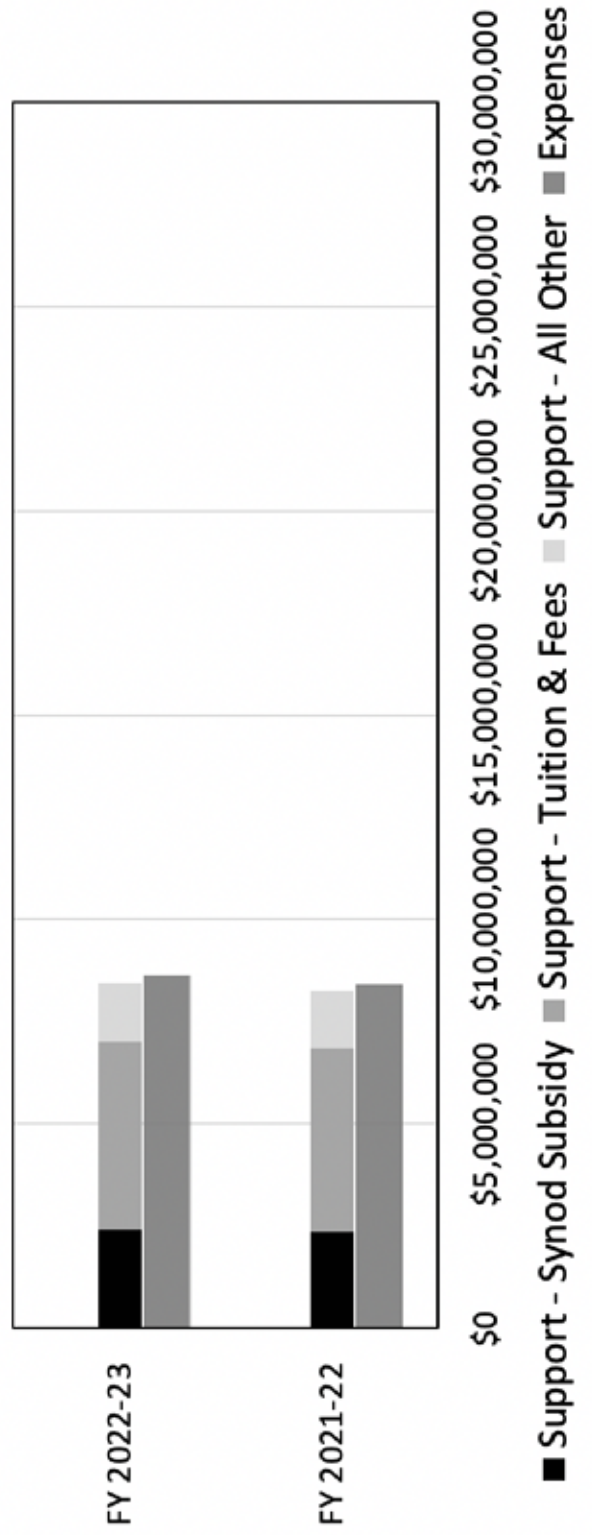
Martin Luther College
FY2021-22 and FY2022-23 Support and Expenses



Michigan Lutheran Seminary
FY2021-22 and FY2022-23 Support and Expenses



Luther Preparatory School
FY2021-22 and FY2022-23 Support and Expenses



Subsidiaries and Benefit Plans

A number of subsidiary groups and one affiliate serve the synod. These entities do not receive support from the synod's operating budget. Each is governed by a board that is accountable to the synod via the Synodical Council.

WELS Historical Institute Floor Committee #15

Our calling

The year 2021 marks the fortieth anniversary of WELS Historical Institute, which was founded to preserve and communicate the history of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It has been a challenging year for all of humanity and for furthering the kingdom of God on this earth. Yet amidst an ongoing global pandemic, we confess with the sacred writer: "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

The leadership and the membership of the WELS Historical Institute give all glory to God for guiding our organization over the past forty years. The institute had its first meeting on Oct. 28, 1981, at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. For nearly all of its history, the institute's center of activity has revolved around Salem Lutheran Landmark Church, located on 107th Street and Fond du Lac Avenue. At this location the constituting convention of WELS was held in a log church on May 26, 1850. At the time this log church was located in the Town of Granville, which was later incorporated into the northwest side of Milwaukee. Thirteen years after the synod was founded, the members of Salem—in the middle of the Civil War—constructed a brick church, located across the street from the site of the original log structure. It is this 1863 building that continues to serve as the official museum of WELS.

The institute's bylaws outline the scope of its work: 1) To promote interest in the history of WELS and Lutheranism in general; 2) To assist WELS' archivist in the collection and preservation of articles and artifacts of historical value; 3) To stimulate historical research and to publish its results in journals and newsletters; 4) To maintain Salem Lutheran Landmark Church as the synod's museum.

The work of WELS Historical Institute is under the authority and supervision of the Synodical Council. The institute does not receive any funds directly from the synod. We are a self-funded organization, entirely dependent on membership dues, gifts, and memorials provided by our constituency and friends to fund our ongoing work. The current institute's membership constitutes only a tiny (a fraction of 1 percent) portion of the synod's communicant membership, yet the institute's constituency has managed over the course of four decades to not only continue the operation of the Landmark Church as the synod's museum, but also to complete numerous capital improvement projects at Salem. Responsibly curating and updating a structure that is nearly 160 years old is an expensive and ongoing task, but WELS Historical Institute continues to meet this challenge.

Our current situation

The current institute membership has stabilized at around 200 members. The membership dues were raised at the 2020 annual meeting, which has brought a much-needed increase of revenue for the institute. The board of directors continues to recruit interested individuals to become members of the institute and to offer themselves in service to the organization. We are also reaching out via Facebook, encouraging everyone who visits our page to take an interest in synodical history and the work of the institute. Our Facebook page has received 555 "likes" since it went online. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WELS Historical Institute was not able to host any of its usual in-person public lectures and events in late summer and fall. A group of students from Luther Preparatory School toured Salem in

December 2020, and this was the only tour given in 2020. In a normal year approximately a dozen tours of the Landmark Church are given by tour guides Mr. Steve Miller and Dr. Joel Pless. The board of directors wishes to convey to the synod's membership that Salem is open for tours in 2021 and would welcome all who come to learn more about our synod's history. Capital improvement projects completed at the Landmark Church in 2020 included a new water heater, the cleaning and refurbishment of the eight chandeliers with LED bulbs, and a new exterior door to the lower level of Salem. Thanks to everyone who worked to complete these projects.

A socially-distanced tour of West Granville Cemetery by Teacher James Moeller was held in June 2020. Via Zoom, the institute sponsored Tutor Nathanael Jensen's presentation, "The 25th Anniversary of the Amalgamation of DMLC and NWC" in September 2020. Board member Teacher Carl Nolte gave a presentation on the birth of WELS to the Peace, Hartford, Wis., Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) in October 2020.

At last year's virtual annual meeting held on Oct. 11, 2020, Pastor Christopher Royce gave the presentation "100 Years of WELS Campus Ministry." Mr. Ryan Haines was re-elected as our treasurer, Mr. Steve Miller was re-elected as a lay board member; and Pastor Justin Dauck of Plymouth, Neb., was elected as a first-time board member. Ms. Mary Rindfleisch was appointed to a three-year term on the board. After many years of faithful service, the longtime secretary of the WELS Historical Institute Board, Ms. Naomi Plocher, decided not to run for re-election. The institute wishes to sincerely thank Naomi and her husband, Pastor David Plocher, for their years of volunteer service and their contributions to WELS history.

A look ahead

Since the institute's fiscal year now begins on July 1, the board of directors will decide whether to start holding its annual meeting before this fiscal year commences or whether it will continue its practice of having its annual meeting in October. The annual meeting of the WELS Historical Institute consistently features a presentation on either WELS or Lutheran history. The date of the 2021 annual meeting will be announced in late spring along with the featured speaker and title of the presentation.

WELS Historical Institute plans to celebrate its forty years of existence by conducting interviews with its past presidents and then posting these interviews to its Facebook page. Moreover, an open house and lecture event is planned at the Landmark Church on Saturday, Sept. 25, 2021. More information will be forthcoming.

The institute continues to assume responsibility in stewarding Salem Lutheran Landmark Church as the official WELS museum. The 1863 building is amicably leased from Salem Ev. Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, by the institute for a nominal fee of \$1.00 per year. The extended goal is to have the Landmark Church completely restored to its 1863 appearance by the time WELS celebrates the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Lutheran Church on June 25, 2030.

At its winter meeting on Feb. 28, 2021, conducted via Zoom, the board of directors voted to implement the completion of a waterproofing and electrical upgrade project, quoted at a total cost of \$11,405. A sump pump will be installed underneath the stairwell going down into the lower level and the building's storm drainage will be significantly improved. God willing, this capital project will eliminate the rain water problem. The institute is grateful for the generous gifts that have made this project possible.

Salem Lutheran Landmark Church has plenty of other maintenance needs and upgrading possibilities. The building's furnaces are nearing the end of their lives. Replacement is in order as funds become available. Tuckpointing work needs to be done on the exterior and finish work needs to be completed on Salem's bell tower. A long-term goal is to restore a steeple to the top of the bell tower. The 1863 building was constructed with a steeple that regrettably was damaged in a storm nearly a century ago and later taken down. Another long-term project is to refurbish the church's interior wall in the balcony and then the entire ceiling, removing the layers of paint, and then repainting and restoring everything to its original 1863 appearance. Contributions large and small are needed and appreciated to keep Salem Lutheran Landmark Church in good repair and usable as the synod's official museum.

The monthly financial operations of WELS Historical Institute are now conducted by the accounting office at WELS' Center for Mission and Ministry. Mr. Ryan Haines, the elected treasurer of the institute, continues to oversee the institute's overall finances. The institute's finances are in capable and competent hands, and the organization is in solid financial shape. The process of the renewal of memberships and the receiving and acknowledging of contributions to the institute has been significantly improved. The board of directors will continue to shepherd the institute's finances and will continue to approve all bills.

WELS congregations, schools, organizations, and individuals have a standing invitation from the institute to tour the Landmark Church and its grounds. Normally tours are conducted from March through November, although special arrangements can be made for out-of-town guests. To arrange a tour, contact Dr. Joel Pless at 414-443-8930 (office), 262-677-2109 (home), or joel.pless@wlc.edu.

The worldwide pandemic forced the WELS bus tour to be put on hold for a second consecutive year. It has now been tentatively rescheduled as an all-day event on Friday, Aug. 5, 2022. Currently plans are to board a chartered motor coach in the Milwaukee area and then travel to several WELS churches in Jefferson County, with a catered lunch at St. John, Jefferson, Wis., finishing with a tour of Luther Preparatory School. Look for online registration to begin in early 2022. The two times the institute has hosted a bus tour to area WELS sites have been well received. Watch for further announcements.

What the institute needs and will continue to need are human resources in the form of new members. Despite the recent increase in dues, membership in the institute remains a well-rewarded investment. Members semi-annually receive both the *WELS Historical Institute Journal* and a newsletter, in addition to receiving invitations to attend various events and presentations throughout the course of the year, not to mention the joy of preserving and telling the history of WELS. For information on becoming a member of WELS Historical Institute and participating in its historical preservation work, visit wels.net/about-wels/history/wels-history.

The board of directors of the WELS Historical Institute perennially wishes to direct the attention of the synodical membership to some significant church history anniversaries happening in the current year. The 500th anniversary of Luther's courageous stand at the Diet of Worms before Emperor Charles V took place on Sunday, April 18, 2021. The 500th anniversary of Frederick the Wise's arranged "kidnapping" of Luther to the protective custody of the Wartburg Castle was Tuesday, May 4, 2021. The year 2021 also marks the 500th anniversary of the beginning of Luther's translation of the Bible into German.

At the time of the writing of this update, the world continues to struggle with the effects of the global pandemic even as it welcomes the appearance of effective vaccines. Yet we at WELS Historical Institute find great spiritual comfort in the sentiment expressed by the godly patriarch Job: "He knows the way I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). The Lord of the Church has indeed tested us, never with the intention of harming us, but only to cleanse and strengthen us. WELS Historical Institute will continue "to come forth as gold" as we continue the privileged task of telling God's story of amazing grace through the history of our beloved Wisconsin Synod.

Dr. Joel Pless, reporter

Dr. Joel Pless, chairman
Mr. Daniel Nommensen, vice chairman
Rev. William Schaefer, secretary
Mr. Ryan Haines, treasurer
Rev. Justin Dauck
Rev. David Dolan
Mr. Steve Miller
Mr. Carl Nolte
Prof. Joel Otto
Ms. Mary Rindfleisch
Rev. Benjamin Schaefer
Rev. Robert Weiss

Advisory:

Prof. John Brenner, editor, *WELS Historical Institute Journal*
Mrs. Amanda Raabe, co-designer and curator
Ms. Charlotte Sampe, co-designer and curator
Mrs. Susan Willems, WELS archivist

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.

Floor Committee #15

Our calling

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc. (CEF), is a self-supporting, not-for-profit, wholly-owned subsidiary corporation of WELS. Its primary purpose is to provide loans and grants for mission congregation projects under the direction of WELS Board for Home Missions and loans to mission-minded self-supporting congregations so that they can acquire parsonages, land, and facilities as tools for gospel outreach.

Our current situation

Funding to carry out our calling comes primarily from three sources: member investments, operating revenue, and gifts and bequests. Individual members, congregations, and affiliates of WELS may invest in CEF certificates and savings accounts and as of March 2021, 3,088 investors have entrusted CEF with more than \$106.6 million. While our investor count reduced 4.1 percent over the prior 12 months, CEF's total investment dollars grew by 9.1 percent this past year. CEF investments fund the loan program while net revenues from operations, investments, and gifts and bequests made to CEF provide funding for the congregational grant program and special grants to Home Missions.

Loan program

The CEF loan portfolio continues to grow and is now at 206 loans with dollars outstanding of \$188.6 million, which is a 16.7 percent increase in our loan portfolio since FY2019. Currently we have 18 congregations in the construction process with \$12.9 million yet to disburse to complete those projects. The new loan application pipeline has slowed considerably from prior years largely due to the pandemic-related lending moratorium instituted by the CEF Board in April 2020. In March 2021, the CEF Board fully removed the temporary moratorium on lending. CEF's lending interest is published annually in our offering circular and communicated by CEF lending officers as changes occur. Presently, our lending rate for new loans is 4.62 percent. "Mission" status congregations receive a 0.25 percent reduction of the lending rate for their initial 5-year note.

Grant program

CEF provides matching grants to eligible mission congregations after they have provided a minimum 10 percent down payment for their initial land purchases, existing facility purchase, or new facility construction projects. A congregation's down payment combined with a CEF matching grant allows the mission congregation to move forward with a more manageable loan payment. Matching grants totaling more than \$1.7 million for nine congregations have been approved through February of FY2021. We anticipate up to \$0.72 million of additional grant approvals to 2 congregations by the end of the fiscal year. Since 1993, more than \$40.2 million in CEF matching grants have been approved for mission congregations across North America and the West Indies.

Special grants to Home Missions

WELS CEF has distributed nearly \$9.8 million to the Board for Home Missions in the past 11 fiscal years through special grants (\$3.3 million from 2009–2014) and through CEF's endowment fund grant program (\$6.5 million) since 2015.

A look ahead

We pray by God's grace that WELS CEF will continue to benefit from positive operational results and be able to continue to provide loans and grants over and above our matching and endowment grant programs to assist more mission congregations and Home Missions.

We anticipate that our loan portfolio will maintain its present level through the remainder of FY2021 and into the first half of FY2022. We also hope to continue to grow the portfolio after the pandemic-related environment returns to its normal state. Maintaining a healthy and disciplined approach regarding operations and a fair and competitive interest rate environment for investors and borrowers is critical for CEF's financial health.

We continue to encourage individual WELS members, congregations, and affiliated organizations to consider investing in CEF loan, savings, and retirement/IRA certificates and to consider gifts and bequests to CEF to help support our calling and partnership with Home Missions.

Contact WELS CEF at 1-866-511-7793 or cef@wels.net. Visit our website at wels.net/cef.

Mr. Scott Page, reporter

Mr. Seth Hansen, chairman

Mr. Timothy Boerneke, vice chairman

Mr. Ron Kerr, secretary

Mr. James Bodendorfer

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Rev. Timothy Gauger

Mr. Timothy Gensmer

Mr. Mark Hartman

Mr. David Hirons

Mr. Joel Kock

Advisory:

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions

Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

WELS Foundation, Inc. Floor Committee #15

Our calling

Established in 1965, WELS Foundation, Inc., serves the Synodical Council by organizing exclusively to provide, direct, channel, and manage funds for religious, charitable, and educational purposes consistent with the principles of the synod.

Our current situation

WELS Foundation exists to help God's people support gospel ministry through WELS. It provides planned giving services and administrative support for gifts benefiting WELS congregations and ministries. WELS Foundation strives to be the foundation of choice for members, entities, and affiliates of WELS. It is the only foundation whose purpose is to facilitate donors' desires to support synod ministries. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, WELS Foundation had the privilege to administer and distribute \$5.9 million in donor-directed planned gifts to various ministries throughout WELS. During the six-month period ending Dec. 31, 2020, an additional \$7.3 million was distributed.

WELS Foundation provides various planned giving opportunities, including charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, donor advised funds, and endowment funds. It currently administers nearly 1,219 charitable gifts on behalf of WELS members for the benefit of WELS ministries.

As of Dec. 31, 2020, the total assets were \$183.9 million with net assets of \$73.5 million. The net assets held by WELS Foundation are managed for the benefit of WELS ministries as designated by the donor. These ministries include WELS Missions and Ministerial Education schools (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary), congregations, and numerous affiliated ministries such as area Lutheran high schools. Assets held with a long-term time horizon are invested through WELS Investment Funds.

Endowment funds

Endowment funds are permanently restricted funds established to receive and administer all gifts that are designated by the donor(s) for an endowment from sources such as cash, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, bequests, life insurance, charitable gift annuities, insurance policies, trusts, real estate, personal property, or any other gift, whether current or deferred.

Lord willing, expenditures from endowments further the work of the church by providing ongoing financial support for ministry until the Lord returns.

Donor designated endowments can be established through WELS Foundation for the benefit of WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, or other WELS-affiliated ministries. WELS Foundation also administers synodical endowment funds for WELS, WELS Home and World Missions, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary.

As of Dec. 31, 2020, WELS Foundation administered 356 endowment funds with a total market value of \$114.9 million.

Charitable gift annuities

A charitable gift annuity is a contract between a WELS member and WELS Foundation, by which the member makes a gift of cash or securities in exchange for fixed quarterly annuity payments for life. After the donor calls the member home, the remainder of the gift annuity will be distributed to the congregation or ministry as designated. Income payments from a charitable gift annuity may begin immediately, may be deferred until a specific date in the future, or may be deferred until an unspecified date in the future.

As of Dec. 31, 2020, WELS Foundation administered 642 charitable gift annuities with a total market value of \$12.7 million.

Charitable remainder trusts

A charitable remainder trust is created when a donor transfers cash, securities, or real estate into a charitable trust but keeps a specified income interest—usually for life. When the trust ends per the donor’s designation, the assets in the trust pass to the designated beneficiaries such as the church and/or synod.

As of Dec. 31, 2020, WELS Foundation served as trustee for 136 charitable remainder trusts with a combined market value of \$32.8 million.

Donor advised funds

A donor advised fund is a charitable giving vehicle wherein an individual, family, or corporation makes an irrevocable, tax-deductible contribution of cash, securities, or other property to WELS Foundation and at any time thereafter can recommend grant distributions to qualified WELS ministries. The fund can be established with current gifts, deferred gifts (i.e. charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts), and testamentary gifts (i.e. wills, living trusts, beneficiary designations of life insurance policies, or retirement accounts).

The WELS Foundation donor advised fund program provides an alternative to a private family foundation. WELS members can accomplish many of the same goals but with far less administrative work and expense.

As of Dec. 31, 2020, WELS Foundation administered 77 donor advised funds with a total market value of \$6.1 million.

Pass-through gifts processed

Not all WELS ministries have the capacity to process complex gifts. At the request of donors, during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, WELS Foundation distributed \$3.0 million to WELS ministries from nearly 500 pass-through gifts. These gifts included assets such as appreciated securities, qualified charitable distributions from IRAs, real estate, life insurance contracts, and agricultural crops. Proceeds from these gifts are distributed to the WELS ministries designated by the donor.

Educational webinars

In 2020, WELS Foundation hosted a series of 12 educational webinars. The monthly webinars were timely presentations on various planned giving topics and made available by WELS Foundation at no cost to WELS Christian giving counselors, mission advancement officers, and congregational planned giving committee leaders.

A look ahead

Marketing and communication efforts include a survey of WELS donors, a series of WELS Foundation videos, an endowment fund media kit, marketing pieces that describe the different gift planning instruments, donor welcome packets, and a monthly newsletter for our Foundation partners about giving topics that they can share with their donors. WELS Foundation also coordinated the mission advancement sectionals at the WELS Association of Lutheran High Schools Conference in March and will have an in-person presence at WELS conferences and conventions as circumstances allow. Learn more at wels.net/foundation.

To carry out its mission, WELS Foundation will continue to identify the most cost-effective means to:

- Provide knowledgeable planned giving support to members through WELS Christian giving counselors and other WELS mission advancement representatives.

- Provide various planned giving opportunities, including charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, donor advised funds, and endowment administration.
- Provide printed and online educational material regarding planned giving opportunities benefiting WELS ministries.

Mr. James Holm, reporter

Mr. Mark Maurice, chairman
 Mr. Timothy Boerneke, vice chairman
 Mr. Michael Brereton, secretary
 Mr. Nathan Birkholz
 Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer
 Rev. Jonathan Kolander
 Mr. Michael Krueger
 Mr. Scott Neitzel
 Mr. Mark Schulz
 Mr. Ken Zehm

Advisory:

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving
 Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

WELS Investment Funds, Inc. Floor Committee #15

Our calling

WELS Investment Funds, Inc., was established in 1997 to serve under the Synodical Council by providing investment portfolios for the benefit of WELS and its schools, congregations, and other affiliated organizations.

Our current situation

WELS Investment Funds provides cost-effective, professionally-managed investment portfolios. WELS Investment Funds currently manages approximately \$300 million for WELS ministries, including more than 220 congregations and affiliated ministries. WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, and other affiliated ministries are encouraged to utilize WELS Investment Funds for their long-term investment needs, such as endowment and scholarship funds. By pooling our God-given talents and resources with other congregations, we can take advantage of lower-cost, institutionally-priced investment opportunities that would not otherwise be available. As more congregations and organizations invest in WELS Investment Funds, the cost-reduction benefits also increase. It's another way we can help support each other.

The WELS Investment Funds Board of Directors is responsible for the overall operations of WELS Investment Funds. The directors are members of WELS congregations, nominated from throughout the synod, vetted by WELS Human Resources, and appointed by the Synodical Council. Currently there are eight qualified directors serving on the board. The day-to-day operations are carried out by WELS employees.

The board has retained Vanguard Institutional Advisory Service as the investment consultant for WELS Investment Funds. As a co-fiduciary, Vanguard Institutional Advisory Service is responsible for making investment recommendations to the board. Once the recommendation is approved by the board, the investment consultant has the discretion to implement and oversee the investment recommendations.

WELS Investment Funds offers four investment portfolios, collectively know as the WELS Funds. The WELS Balanced Fund seeks long-term capital growth and a low to moderate level of current income. It has a target asset allocation comprised of 60 percent equity and 40 percent fixed income and has a mid- to long-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Endowment Fund seeks long-term capital growth with some current income and is designed primarily for endowment funds. It has a target asset allocation comprised of 75 percent equity and 25 percent fixed income and has a long-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Equity Fund seeks long-term capital growth by investing in a portfolio of equity securities that is diversified by industry and company size. It is composed of 100 percent equities and has a long-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Income Fund seeks to provide income by investing primarily in investment-quality debt securities. It is composed of 100 percent fixed income securities and has a short- to mid-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Balanced Fund and WELS Endowment Fund invest in differing ratios of the same underlying mutual funds as the WELS Equity and WELS Income Funds. The WELS Equity Fund and WELS Income Fund are for ministries that desire an asset allocation other than the WELS Balanced Fund and WELS Endowment Fund.

Investment performance continues to be strong. In the *Council on Foundations—Commonfund Study of Investment of Endowments for Private and Community Foundations®* (Council on Foundations Study), WELS Endowment Fund's 2019 net investment return of 22.39 percent placed in the 90th percentile of all foundations that participated in the study.

From the September 2020 Council on Foundations Study press release:

With 265 participating foundations representing combined assets of \$104.7 billion, the Study is believed to be the most comprehensive annual survey of its kind. This is the eighth year that Commonfund Institute and the Council on Foundations—two leading organizations in the field of foundation investment and governance policies and practices—have partnered to produce this research.

WELS Investment Funds does not receive financial support from the WELS operating budget but instead charges a fee to the portfolios it manages to cover its operating expenses. Over the last 20 years, the operating expense fee has been reduced from the initial fee of 0.48 percent to the current fee of 0.17 percent. The underlying mutual fund expense ratios have also declined from more than 0.50 percent to approximately 0.15 percent.

Additional information, including director biographical information, the investment policy statement, audited financial statements, and the 2020 annual report to WELS ministries, is available at wels.net/welsfunds.

A look ahead

WELS Investment Funds is committed to continuing to serve WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, and other affiliated ministries. Those responsible for overseeing the long-term investments for their organization are encouraged to review their investment objectives, asset allocation, investment costs, and time horizons.

Marketing and communication efforts include the production of two WELS Investment Funds videos, the dissemination of the quarterly WELS Fund fact sheets, live quarterly update webinars, and the inclusion of an investment cost comparison calculator on the WELS Investment Funds website. In addition, surveys were sent to current and potential investors. Future plans include the creation of an endowment fund media kit, the production of a third WELS Investment Funds video, and an in-person presence at WELS conferences and conventions as circumstances allow.

WELS Investment Funds is hoping to continue to grow the investment portfolios and is willing to work with ministries to review their investment needs. To schedule a free review, either in person or via conference call or video call, contact us at 414-256-3206 or jim.holm@wels.net.

Mr. James Holm, reporter

Mr. Dennis Walters, chairman

Mr. Joel Luehmann, vice chairman

Rev. Charles Degner

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Mr. Seth Hansen

Mr. Ronald Schmitz

Mr. Max Wenck

Advisory:

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving

WELS Benefit Plans

Floor Committee #19

Our calling

The WELS Benefit Plans Office (the “Benefit Plans”) serves synodical workers and organizations through the administration of the WELS Voluntary Employees’ Beneficiary Association (VEBA), the WELS Pension Plan, and the WELS Shepherd Plan. Oversight of the VEBA Plan is the responsibility of the WELS VEBA Commission, and oversight of the Pension and Shepherd Plans is the responsibility of the WELS Retirement Program Commission. The commission members are appointed by the WELS Synodical Council. Each commission is composed of four laymen, a pastor, and a male teacher from the called worker roster. Contributions toward the cost of plan benefits and operations are held in separate trusts, each invested in diversified accounts with outside money managers overseen by an independent investment advisory firm. The plans employ outside professionals that provide benefit design, actuarial, consulting, banking, legal, and auditing services.

Our current situation

Since the 2019 convention, much of the efforts of the commissions and Benefit Plans has been dedicated to responding to the national public health emergency caused by COVID-19. In recognition of the unexpected financial challenges experienced by many calling bodies, the VEBA Commission approved a premium holiday for VEBA Plan medical benefits for the month of August 2020, and the Retirement Program Commission approved a Pension Plan contribution holiday for the October–December 2020 quarter. In total, these rate holidays provided more than \$9 million in relief to calling bodies, while maintaining the long-term financial viability of each plan.

In addition, the commissions amended the VEBA and Shepherd Plans to provide enhanced benefits, greater access to health care, and increased flexibility for participants while remaining compliant with applicable law. The VEBA Plan was amended to cover eligible costs at 100 percent to diagnose COVID-19 and treat Plan members who are diagnosed with COVID-19, to cover eligible costs for telehealth consultations with health care providers, and to extend certain timeframes for requesting special enrollment and filing claims. The Shepherd Plan was amended to allow participants to waive their required minimum distributions to be paid in 2020. The commissions are grateful that the Lord has blessed the plans with the financial flexibility to provide these relief measures to calling bodies and these benefit enhancements to participants during this unprecedented time.

In addition to the foregoing relief measures, the commissions and Benefit Plans have continued their efforts to maintain stability within the plans, which is vitally important for the workers and calling bodies that we serve. Growing participation levels, better-than-expected investment returns, and enhanced cost control opportunities have supported these efforts.

- VEBA Plan rates increased by 2 percent for 2020 and did not change for 2021; both rate actions were significantly below the national averages for employer group health plans in those years. More than 80 percent of all WELS calling bodies continue to participate in the VEBA Plan.
- Pension Plan rates increased by 6 percent for 2020 and did not change for 2021.
- The ongoing administration fee paid by Shepherd Plan participants was reduced by 20 percent effective Jan. 1, 2020, preserving assets in participants’ accounts for their future needs.

The Pension Plan has returned to near-fully funded status (which compares the Plan’s assets with the benefit payments earned by participants), achieving a 97 percent funded status as of Jan. 1, 2021. This marks an improvement of 25 percent in only two years, as the Plan’s funded status was 72 percent as of Jan. 1, 2019. The substantial improvement is primarily due to strong investment returns during this period, in addition to the gradual realization of the intended effects of the Retirement Program Commission’s recovery plan since 2012. The commission’s recovery plan has included the following actions:

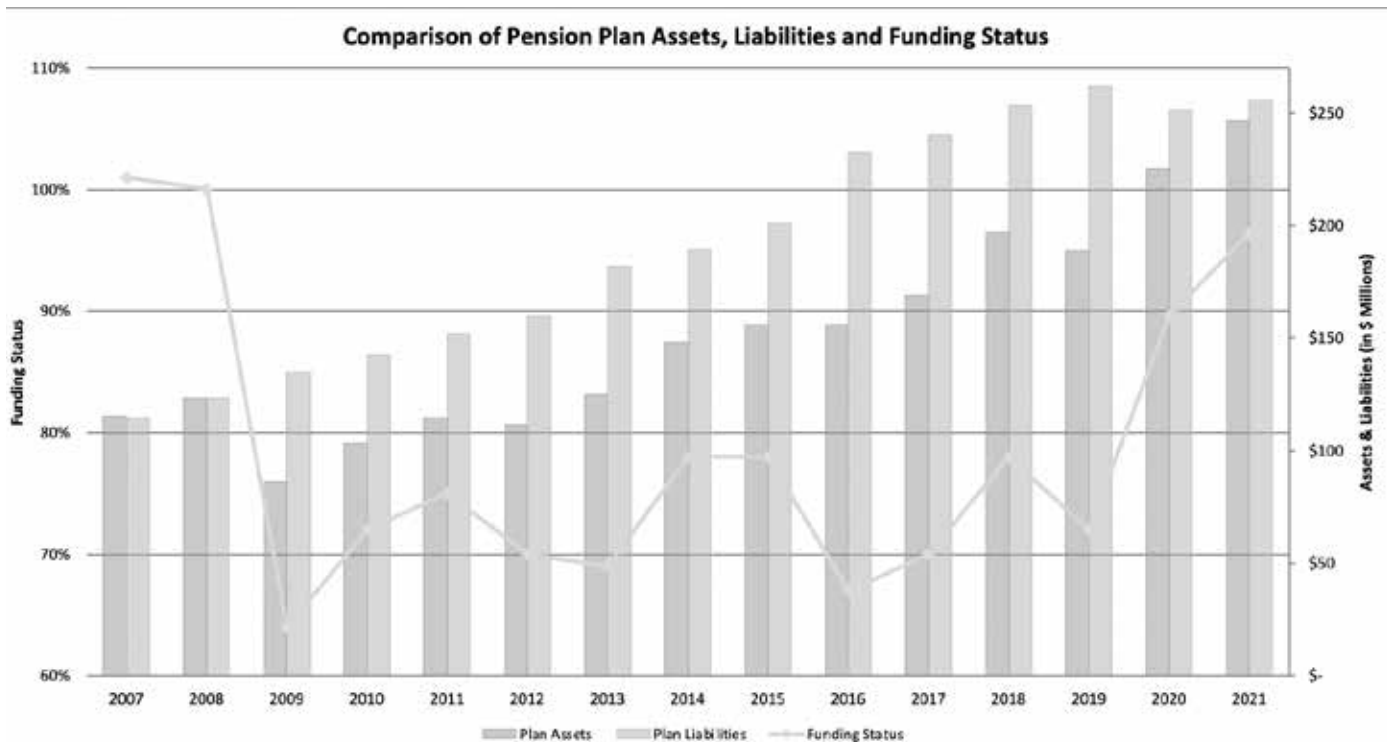
- The contribution rate charged to calling bodies has more than doubled since 2012 (+121 percent), although rate increases have moderated over the past two years.

- Contributions paid after the due date are subject to a late payment penalty that recoups lost investment earnings to the Pension Plan trust.
- To slow the long-term growth rate of benefit liabilities, the benefit basis for new retirees has not increased since 2012.
- The overall volatility of investments in the Pension Plan trust portfolio has been reduced to protect against future market downturns while maintaining a target annual investment return (net of fees) of +7.5 percent.

These changes have been made to preserve the security of benefits for current and future retirees while minimizing the financial impact on workers and calling bodies. The Retirement Program Commission closely monitors the Plan’s contribution level and its impact on the Plan’s funded status, and the recent improvement to the Plan’s funded status may provide the Commission with an opportunity to consider decreasing the contribution rate and/or increasing the Plan’s benefit basis for new retirees in the near future.

The Pension and VEBA trusts achieved investment gains of 11.4 percent and 9.5 percent, respectively, in 2020, while the trusts achieved investment gains of 18.1 percent and 13.8 percent, respectively, in 2019. Unaudited results from the 2020 plan year show net assets available for benefits in the Pension and VEBA trusts as \$246.2 million and \$40.7 million, respectively. In comparison, final audited results from the 2019 plan year show net assets available for benefits in the Pension and VEBA trusts as \$225.2 million and \$39.9 million, respectively. Both commissions continue to evaluate investment allocation and diversification strategies that are expected to achieve target returns with reduced risk.

Over the past two years, participation in the Shepherd Plan has grown significantly, with the Plan gaining 70 new calling bodies and 414 new workers during this period. The total market value of Shepherd Plan assets as of Dec. 31, 2020, was \$185.1 million, compared to \$156 million as of Dec. 31, 2019 (+18.6 percent).



A look ahead

Benefit Plans will continue its emphasis on maintaining long-term stability for the VEBA, Pension, and Shepherd Plans while considering new ways to engage participants and calling bodies through improved communications.

Given the uncertainties with the future of the Affordable Care Act, the U.S. health insurance market, and the long-term impacts of the pandemic, the VEBA Commission and its advisors will carefully monitor developments in these areas and their impact on the VEBA Plan. In addition, the VEBA Commission and Benefit Plans will be more closely observing worker participation in the VEBA Plan and health care arrangements at participating calling bodies to protect the Plan’s long-term sustainability in the rapidly-changing health care environment. Providing an affordable health plan with consistent nationwide benefits is essential to supporting synodwide mission and ministry activities.

Significant changes to the Pension and Shepherd Plans have been proposed for consideration by the 2021 convention. In summary, the WELS Retirement Benefit Strategy Committee recommends that the Pension Plan be frozen on Dec. 31, 2021, and eligible workers will be provided with contributions to be used for retirement benefits through a defined contribution plan administered through the Shepherd Plan beginning Jan. 1, 2022. The proposed changes have been reviewed and endorsed by the Conference of Presidents and Synodical Council. Additional details regarding the proposed changes are provided on p. 168. The Retirement Program Commission will continue to work with the Retirement Benefit Strategy Committee and the Synodical Council during the ongoing review of the retirement program and will take any necessary actions related to the proposed changes that will be considered during this convention.

Benefit Plans, as well as the VEBA and Retirement Program Commissions, are acutely aware of the need to keep benefit plan costs as low as possible to allow calling bodies to preserve valuable assets to fund ministry efforts. The primary goal for the benefit plans going forward is to strike the best balance between acceptable costs to calling bodies and meaningful benefits to participants.

Mr. Joshua Peterman, reporter

WELS VEBA Commission:

Mr. Charles Adrian, chairman

Mr. Jon Wirkkula, vice chairman

Mr. Robert Bullens, secretary

Teacher Douglas Dast

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Mr. Kyle Koltz

Rev. Joel Sauer

Advisory:

Ms. Christine Hitter, membership manager

Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of WELS Benefit Plans

Ms. Lori Schrank, claims manager

WELS Retirement Program Commission:

Mr. David McCulloch, chairman

Mr. Thomas Medema, vice chairman

Mr. James Brenn, secretary

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Teacher James Hahm

Rev. Philip Hoyer

Mr. Lee Miller

Advisory:

Ms. Christine Hitter, membership manager

Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of WELS Benefit Plans

Proposed changes to WELS Pension Plan

Floor Committee #19

Our calling

The WELS Retirement Benefit Strategy Committee was formed in fall 2017 by the Synodical Council with the charge to research options for providing future retirement benefits to called workers. The committee is comprised of current and former members of the Conference of Presidents, Synodical Council, and Retirement Program Commission. The committee's mission statement is to develop an informed recommendation on the future retirement program that best serves the synod, our sponsoring organizations, and our workers.

Our current situation

The committee has completed its work and recommends changes be made to the WELS Pension Plan (the "Pension Plan") and the WELS Shepherd Plan (the "Shepherd Plan") to support the adoption of a new defined contribution plan for future worker retirement benefits. These proposed changes have been reviewed and endorsed by the Conference of Presidents and Synodical Council and are now being presented to the 2021 synod convention for discussion and voting. If the proposed resolution is approved by the 2021 convention, the Synodical Council will determine how and when to proceed.

A video was produced that summarizes the proposed changes. An online tool was created for workers to compare the estimated value of retirement benefits available under the Pension Plan and the proposed defined contribution plan. Also, a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document was created to provide detailed information about the proposed changes. These materials were communicated to workers and sponsoring organizations in the months preceding the 2021 convention. Below are selected questions and answers from the FAQ.

What changes are being proposed?

It is proposed that the Pension Plan be frozen on Dec. 31, 2021, which means that no new benefits will be earned under the Pension Plan for any service performed after Dec. 31, 2021. Beginning Jan. 1, 2022, eligible workers will be provided with contributions to be used for retirement benefits through a defined contribution plan that will be administered through the Shepherd Plan platform.

Why does the Synodical Council, the Conference of Presidents, and the Committee recommend that the proposed changes be approved?

After an extensive and prayerful study of many options, these changes are recommended because the proposed defined contribution plan will better support our workers and our overall ministry efforts than the Pension Plan. Under the proposed defined contribution plan, workers would receive meaningful contributions for retirement benefits at costs that are stable over time for sponsoring organizations.

In consultation with the actuaries, the proposed plan was designed with the intent of having the projected defined contribution plan account balance at retirement, plus the Pension Plan benefit earned as of the Pension Plan's freeze date, for each worker to be at least as valuable (based on actuarial assumptions) as the Pension Plan benefit the worker would have earned at retirement if the Pension Plan had not been frozen. In addition, for many workers, the value of the proposed contributions to the defined contribution plan is estimated to be significantly greater than the value of benefits earned under the current Pension Plan. Furthermore, the contribution rates charged to sponsoring organizations for worker retirement benefits would be more stable over time under the proposed defined contribution plan compared to the Pension Plan.

What are the main differences between the Pension Plan and the proposed defined contribution plan?

Under the Pension Plan, sponsoring organization contributions are placed into one group trust and invested with the oversight of the Retirement Program Commission. A worker generally vests for future Pension Plan benefits upon performing five years of eligible service without an intervening five-year break in service. Pension Plan benefits are paid in the form of a monthly annuity for the life of a retired worker and, if elected, to that worker's surviving spouse. After retirement, the Pension Plan benefit earned by a worker generally does not change.

In contrast, under the proposed defined contribution plan, sponsoring organization contributions would be placed into each worker's own account in the defined contribution plan and would vest immediately for the worker. Each worker would be responsible to manage the investment of the funds in that account throughout his or her working years and retirement years. Each worker could customize the frequency and amount(s) of distributions received from his or her defined contribution plan account based on his or her needs in retirement. Assets remaining in a worker's defined contribution plan account after the worker is called to heaven could be passed to a beneficiary (e.g., surviving spouse) and/or included in the worker's estate. The value of the worker's defined contribution plan account will change over time based on his or her investment returns, distributions, and fees.

Upon distribution, may the contributions to a worker's defined contribution plan account be excludable from the worker's gross income for federal income tax purposes as housing allowance under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 107?

Yes, for workers considered ministers for federal tax purposes by the Internal Revenue Service, subject to the limits of amounts that can be excluded under IRC Section 107.

What if a worker does not participate in the Shepherd Plan but has a different employer-sponsored retirement plan (e.g., a 403(b) plan)?

Beginning Jan. 1, 2022, the worker will not be able to make new contributions based on WELS service to an employer-sponsored retirement plan that is not the Shepherd Plan. Subject to applicable IRS rules, the worker may move to the WELS defined contribution plan any other employer-sponsored retirement plan account that was created before Jan. 1, 2022, in accordance with the terms of that plan.

Will the proposed changes affect benefits earned under the Pension Plan, including for current retired workers and surviving spouses who are receiving a Pension Plan benefit?

No. All benefits earned under the Pension Plan prior to the proposed freeze date will be honored and paid according to the Pension Plan's terms. Pension Plan benefits earned will not be lost as a result of the proposed changes.

What are the anticipated impacts on sponsoring organizations?

The main advantage of the proposed changes for sponsoring organizations is that the contribution rates charged to sponsoring organizations for worker retirement benefits are anticipated to be more stable over time under the proposed defined contribution plan compared to the Pension Plan.

If the proposed changes are approved, the contribution rate charged to sponsoring organizations for worker retirement benefits would remain at \$4,528 per full-time worker in 2022, which is the same as the 2021 Pension Plan contribution rate.

In addition, to support the proposed defined contribution plan's compliance with IRS rules, all sponsoring organizations would be required to join the Shepherd Plan, and attest that they do not sponsor any other employer-based retirement plans on behalf of workers (except for the Pension Plan).

Is additional information available regarding the proposed changes?

Yes. Additional resources, which include the main features of the proposed defined contribution plan, are available on the WELS Benefit Plans Office website as follows:

- Summary video: welsbpo.net/proposed-changes-to-wels-retirement-program-2021
- Detailed "Frequently Asked Questions" page: welsbpo.net/retirement-changes-faq
- Benefit comparison tool: wels.net/retirement-benefit-calculator
- Form to share feedback: gf.wels.net/retirement-feedback

A look ahead

The committee encourages workers, sponsoring organization representatives, and convention delegates to carefully and prayerfully consider the proposed changes by reviewing the resources listed above prior to the 2021 convention. Please feel free to submit comments and questions to WELS using the feedback form listed above.

Given the anticipated improvements for workers and sponsoring organizations, the committee recommends that the 2021 convention approve the resolution in support of the proposed changes.

Mr. Joshua Peterman, reporter

Mr. Paul Holzhueter, chairman
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Rev. Doug Free, Dakota-Montana District president
Rev. David Kolander, Southeastern Wisconsin District president
Mr. James Brenn
Mr. Warren Ehlke
Mr. Scott Heins

Advisory:

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer
Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of WELS Benefit Plans

Northwestern Publishing House Floor Committee #16

Our calling

The WELS constitution indicates, “The object and purpose of the synod shall be to extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.” As outlined in the constitution, Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) fulfills this object and purpose “by printing, publishing, purchasing, selling, and disseminating literature that maintains Lutheran doctrine and practice” and “by furnishing appropriate literature for parish schools, Sunday schools, missions, institutions, and churches.”

The mission of Northwestern Publishing House is to deliver biblically sound, Christ-centered resources within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and beyond. For 130 years, NPH has prepared materials that are consistent with this mission and aligned with Lutheran doctrine and practice. The proceeds NPH receives from sales of materials to individuals, congregations, and schools are used to develop and publish new materials. Our calling, then, is to continue to proclaim God’s love in Christ through the careful use of the resources God grants to us through purchases of the materials we make available.

Our current situation

God is good. We humbly approach him with thanksgiving for all he has done to protect our workers and set before us many ministry opportunities over the past 24 months. Through God’s blessing, NPH sold its previous office building and has transitioned to a more financially secure position. While challenges to Christian publishing remain, NPH is positioned, God willing, to provide long-term sustainable service to the Church and fulfillment of the synod’s objective of publishing literature that maintains our Lutheran doctrine and practice.

Print publishing program

NPH continues to publish new books, music, and other materials for our pastors, teachers, and WELS members. These new materials along with previously published NPH books, Bible studies, curriculum, church supplies, and a selection of books and materials from other publishers are available through NPH’s website, **nph.net**, and by phone at 800-662-6022.

During the last biennium, NPH published the *Holy Bible: Evangelical Heritage Version, Luther’s Catechism EHV*, 3 books for pastoral growth, 5 books for layperson growth, 7 Bible studies, 4 worship resources, 2 vacation Bible school courses, and 26 music titles. NPH also produced a new adult Bible instruction course, the first year of a three-year course on hymnology for Lutheran grade schools, and 2 *WELS Yearbooks*. In addition, NPH continues to publish *Forward in Christ*, *Meditations*, and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* periodicals. Visit the NPH website regularly to discover resources that support your ministry and materials that will strengthen the faith of you and your fellow members.

Digital publishing program

NPH continues to expand content in ways that are relevant today with 220 books in e-book format, distribution of 143 titles through Logos, 592 downloadable products, digital *Forward in Christ*, and the *Meditations Daily Devotional*

app for both iOS and Android platforms. While digital publishing is an important strategy for NPH, distribution of digital products represents a relatively small portion of a publisher's sales, and therefore print versions remain critical to NPH's success as a ministry.

Bible studies

NPH publishes Bible studies on a variety of subjects, including books of the Bible; current religious, moral, and social topics; and studies of our Lutheran heritage. With the objective of serving our churches with timely and relevant Bible studies, NPH released the *Politics Is Driving Me Crazy* Bible study and *Civil Government: God's Other Kingdom* small group study along with a suite of thematically related resources during the recent national election cycle. We pray that these resources helped pastors answer questions and provide a more solid understanding of God's Word as it relates to our earthly citizenship and our place in God's family.

Bible studies specifically for women are a growing focus for NPH. Developed by members of the WELS Women's Ministry Committee and other theologically mature WELS women, the approach is trustworthy, Christ-centered, and authentic. *In God's Orchard* Bible study, *The Full Accessories of God* Bible study, and *My 180: Loving God More* book and discussion guide are the first resources developed by NPH in this important area of ministry.

NPH Bible studies are offered in a variety of formats to meet the needs of churches today including traditional adult group studies and small group studies, both adaptable for online virtual learning. Further, NPH, in collaboration with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and WELS Commission on Discipleship, produces the monthly *Teach the Word* e-newsletter that provides practical advice and information to help pastors better understand adult and child learning and to strengthen their teaching skills. At present, more than 900 pastors subscribe to *Teach the Word*. To subscribe, visit nph.net/teach-the-word.

Individual Bible study

5-Minute Bible Studies is a new series that confronts the reality that people today are busy, and their time in God's Word is becoming increasingly compromised. Many, in fact, have simply stopped regular personal study. To address this trend, 5-Minute Bible Studies provide a "read anywhere," quick but thought-provoking study of God's Word. Each study includes an application, questions for reflection, and a simple yet meaningful prayer. The first two books in the series, 5-Minute Bible Studies for Teens and 5-Minute Bible Studies for Families, are now available.

Hymns for Life curriculum

Hymns for Life, a new three-year, multi-level hymnology curriculum for Lutheran elementary schools, was introduced in mid-August. Through the curriculum, students study 90 hymns while learning about each hymn's background and connection to their faith in Christ. This downloadable curriculum features an extensive teacher's guide, review materials for parents to use with their children at home, accompaniment and demo files, and more. *Hymns for Life* Year A will be reintroduced for the 2021–22 school year to align with the release of the new *Christian Worship* hymnal. Additional information is available at nph.net/hymnsforlife.

Collaborative projects

NPH continues to collaborate with WELS commissions, committees, and parasynodical agencies. Current projects with WELS Commission on Worship include the new *Christian Worship* hymnal suite and the *Hymns for Life* curriculum. Close collaboration continues between NPH and Multi-Language Productions with NPH providing content that is translated by Multi-Language Productions for use throughout the world. Additionally, NPH has assumed responsibility from Multi-Language Productions for the printing, subscription services, and mailing in North America of a German devotional periodical, *Gott ist Für Uns*, which is published by our sister church the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church–Germany. Additionally, NPH provides customer service, marketing, sales, and distribution services for Multi-Language Production's materials and resources to support its ministry.

NPH recently partnered with WELS Military Services Committee (part of WELS Special Ministries) to produce the *Christian Service Members' Handbook*. This is a devotional tool for personal and group use, written especially for active and retired military service members. A devotional pamphlet that WELS Christian Aid and Relief and NPH will produce for free distribution to victims in areas impacted by disasters is also in development.

Forward in Christ

In collaboration with WELS Communication Services, an in-depth *Forward in Christ* survey and research project was completed in 2020. The goal of the project was to gain deeper insights into reader preferences and congregation usage. Input from the survey was evaluated and updates to the content and design of the periodical along with the addition of

new digital resources were pursued to ensure *Forward in Christ* remains relevant to readers and effective in meeting its objectives. Additionally, all print subscribers now also receive access to a full digital version and extra online content. For a full description of the many changes made to better reach and serve our members, see the WELS Communication Services report on p. 24.

Pandemic response

For the past 15 months, nearly all NPH employees and called workers have worked from home. Technology and infrastructure were quickly adapted to ensure the safety of the NPH team. Serving customers and shipping orders continued uninterrupted. Throughout the pandemic, NPH has had the opportunity to provide support that addressed the needs of our churches, schools, and WELS members in meaningful ways. Following is a brief listing of some of the steps taken and programs offered to those NPH serves.

- Made nearly 100 *Christian Worship* hymns available free via download including arrangement and organ and piano audio files. Both churches and individuals took advantage of this with 1,000 downloads in the first 24 hours.
- Discounted the *Christian Worship* hymnal 50 percent to encourage family usage during virtual worship.
- Discounted the book *Bible Stories for School and Home* for use by parents.
- Quadrupled online content distributed through Facebook with free devotions, prayers, and encouraging Bible readings.
- Extended payment terms for churches and schools from 30 to 90 days, including current balances.
- Provided free digital *Forward in Christ* for those who normally get them at their church.
- Distributed free printed copies of *Meditations Daily Devotional* if pastors wanted NPH to send them to their members who could not get them at church.
- Worked with WELS Communications Services to offer *Kids Connection* for free download to schools and homes.
- Developed and distributed an in-home family vacation Bible school, *Build on the Rock* staycation Bible school.
- Launched Faith Care Packages for congregations and individuals to stay in touch during stay-at-home restrictions. Faith Care Packages include three to four relevant books offered at deep discounts and shipped directly to families, schools, and nursing homes. Faith Care Packages include Train Up a Child Package, Family Spiritual Development Kit, Faith Strengthening for Teens, Prospect Connection Package, Family Faith Formation Package, New Christian Support Package, Family Devotion Starter Kit, and Aging Christian Support Package. To see the full offering of Faith Care Packages, visit nph.net/carepackages.
- Offered wellness supplies for churches and schools, including prefilled wine/wafer cups, hand sanitizer, masks, gloves, and directional signage. To see the full selection of wellness supplies, visit nph.net/safety.

Christ-Light at-home Sunday school

In response to initial COVID-related gathering limitations, NPH offered free digital *Christ-Light* Sunday school lessons for churches to send to their families who could not bring their children to in-person Sunday school. In fall 2020, NPH introduced *Christ-Light* at-home Sunday school (nph.net/ss-remote) to help churches continue to offer Sunday school during a time of continued gathering limitations. The program included video-recorded lessons taught by WELS teachers and were available each Sunday (via YouTube) for viewing in homes along with printed student lessons for the child to follow and parents to use to reinforce the lesson.

More than 1,600 children viewed the lessons each week throughout the Sunday school year. Additionally, a number of churches showed the lessons to students in socially-distanced classroom settings. This helped in situations where churches struggled with recruiting teachers, especially at this time.

A look ahead

New hymnal

In the past biennium the WELS Hymnal Project led by Pastor Michael Schultz has largely transitioned from hymnal project committees developing the content to NPH working on production (copy editing, layout proofreading, and printing) and securing copyright permissions. With a planned introduction in fall 2021, the new hymnal program will include an extensive line of print and digital resources. Print materials include:

For members

- Hymnal—pew edition
- Hymnal—gift edition
- Psalter—pew edition

For musicians

- Accompaniment for hymns
- Accompaniment for services
- Accompaniment for the Psalter

For presiding minister

- Altar book
- Pastor's companion
- Pastor's agenda

Pastor resources

- Planning guide
- Commentary on the Propers: Year A
- Commentary on the Propers: Year B
- Commentary on the Propers: Year C

Other supporting resources

- Foundations
- Guidebook
- Musician's manual
- *Our Worth to Him: Devotions for Christian Worship*

Other print resources being planned include *Christian Worship: Easy Accompaniment for Hymns* and *Christian Worship: Gospel Acclamations—Cantor's Edition*.

Christian Worship: Service Builder will greatly assist pastors, musicians, and support staff in their worship planning and production of worship materials. The program will provide digital access to the hymnal and Psalter's vast resources while dramatically reducing time committed to worship preparation.

Development of the web-based *Christian Worship: Musicians Resource* has also begun. This powerful tool will allow musicians to access, purchase, and print scores for a wide variety of instruments for the rites, psalms, and hymns in the new hymnal and Psalter, enabling them to contribute their talent in worship.

As part of the introduction of the new hymnal suite of resources, *Christian Worship: Preview* was published in January 2020, with multiple copies sent to all WELS congregations. *The Preview* features the colors, look, and design layout of the new hymnal resources, along with samples of new rites, psalms, and hymns. The goal of the preview is to assist churches in their efforts to gain an understanding of the breadth of content available with the new hymnal, to generate enthusiasm for the new hymnal, and to begin developing funding plans.

Additional information on the WELS Hymnal Project is available at christianworship.com.

Curriculum 22:6

A large project in the planning stage is a new religion curriculum for our churches and schools. The new curriculum will be developed in collaboration with a broad group of areas of ministry and will include input from educators. It will be forward-focused to address significant anticipated changes in classroom composition, teaching methodology, learning styles, and technology.

Initial work on the project has included fielding an in-depth survey that provided significant insights into the current and anticipated curriculum needs identified by pastors, principals, teachers, early childhood directors, and parents. By God's grace, a grant was received that will help fund continued work, including creation of the project budget and funding plan as well as completion of the development plan and timeline.

Curriculum 22:6 will be developed independently of and not as an extension of the current *Christ-Light* curriculum. At the same time, it will remain scripturally sound and achieve the very important expectation of effectively training our children in and equipping them with God's Word. For this reason, the working title for the project is "Curriculum 22:6" in reference to Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Publication Coordinating Commission

The Publication Coordinating Commission (PCC) helps to subsidize publishing projects of NPH that are deemed valuable but due to limited market size would not recover the cost of production. The current balance of the

Publication Coordinating Commission is \$142,000. During the last year, \$23,500 was utilized to fund development and production of the upcoming movie *Luther and the Diet at Worms*. Approved for funding through the Publication Coordinating Commission and currently under development are the books *The Scroll of Isaiah* by Dr. Seth Erlandsson and *A Commentary on Mark* by Prof. Daniel Deutschlander.

Our thanks

Throughout the past year and more, we have all experienced levels of uncertainty. As a result, our churches and schools, pastors and teachers have made changes in the way they carry out their God-given ministry of preaching and teaching the gospel. The same has been true for Northwestern Publishing House. Through it all, we recognize that the Lord has always been in control, that he has blessed us and makes all things work for the good of his people. We humbly and gratefully give thanks to our gracious God who has sustained us and has allowed us to continue serving him in his kingdom work of spreading the gospel.

We also thank our pastors, teachers, and other called workers who have continued to recognize and value the partnership NPH has with them in supplying Christ-centered, biblical resources to help them with carrying out their work in the Lord.

We also praise God that he provided many years of wise counsel through board members Prof. John Hartwig and Mr. Christopher Snyder, whose terms are now complete.

Finally, we glorify our Father in heaven for richly blessing the ministry of NPH and the lives of so many through the now sainted Prof. Daniel Deutschlander. As an author, Prof. Deutschlander was and, through his works, remains a deep yet accessible well of God's truth.

"You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" (Psalm 118:28,29).

Mr. Bill Ziche, reporter

Rev. Luke Werre, chairman

Mr. Christopher Snyder, vice chairman

Rev. Nathaniel Biebert, secretary

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Mr. Matthew Groth

Prof. Brian Hennig

Mr. Michael McCormick

Mr. Jeremy Korell

Prof. Steven Pagels

Mr. Joel Raasch

Administrative officers:

Mr. Bill Ziche, president

Rev. Curt Jahn, vice president, publishing services

Mr. Eric Krueger, vice president, finance and accounting

Committee on Constitutional Matters Floor Committee #18

Our calling

The Committee on Constitutional Matters serves under the Conference of Presidents to interpret the constitution and bylaws for the synod and its constituency. It is responsible for maintaining and distributing accurate updates of these documents as changes are made by the synod in convention. The current WELS Constitution and Bylaws and the Constitution for the Districts are available at wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports. If you are unable to access the documents on the website, you may contact the President's Office to request a printed copy.

Our current situation

In addition to revising the document to incorporate the amendments approved by the 2019 convention, the committee has been asked to address six specific questions on constitutional matters since the convention to the date of this report. The delegates to the 2021 convention will have several proposed amendments to the bylaws to consider. They have been submitted by the Conference of Presidents and directly follow this report. These proposed amendments will be assigned to the Floor Committee on Constitutional Matters, Floor Committee #18. The convention may also consider any other proposed amendments to the constitution or bylaws that have been sent to all voting and advisory delegates at least 60 days prior to the convention.

A look ahead

Our committee will meet as soon as possible after the convention to incorporate any amendments approved by the delegates and publish the revised Constitution and Bylaws. Notice will be given when the document is complete. It will be available, as it is now, at wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports, or by contacting the President's Office for a printed copy.

The Conference of Presidents has been working on a revision of the bylaws that deals with discipline and appeals. These proposed changes will be ready for the district conventions to consider in 2022.

Rev. Eric Steinbrenner, reporter

Rev. Eric Steinbrenner, chairman

Mr. Kenneth Gosch

Rev. Richard Waldschmidt

Proposed bylaw revisions

The following bylaw changes have been recommended by the Conference of Presidents. Background rationale is provided for each recommended change and is italicized. Only those areas of the bylaws recommended for change are included here; those not being amended are not printed here but can be found in the WELS Constitution and Bylaws. Note: Strikethrough indicates deletion and underlining indicates an addition.

Synod Bylaws

Recommendation #1

Background: The term "synodically certified" is no longer used by Martin Luther College or the Commission on Lutheran Schools. This change reflects the term currently being used.

DEFINITIONS

Section 1.00

(c) “Teacher” means anyone who is synodically ministry certified and listed on the most current synodical rosters of “men teachers—active” or “men teachers—retired” who is holding a permanent call, except that teachers who still have a program of education to complete and female teachers listed in the most current synodical roster are also included in Sections 8.20 and 8.60.

(d) “Staff Minister” means any male who is synodically ministry 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.

Section 3.10

Conventions: Delegates

(a) At conventions of the synod, districts shall be represented by three classes of voting delegates: congregation representatives (lay delegates), pastors, and male synodically ministry certified teachers. Only these official delegates shall be entitled to make motions and to vote at the convention of the synod.

Recommendation #2

Background: With today’s communications tools, the timeline for calling these positions can be made shorter, providing greater ease and timeliness in calling for these positions.

Section 5.60

Administrators

(a) The administrators for Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education shall be accountable and reportable to their boards and to the president.

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

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

(d) Administrators of the synod shall be called in the following manner. Notice of a vacancy shall be published on the official internet site of WELS and/or to congregations by mail or e-mail, and all pastors, professors, male teachers, congregations, and voting members of congregations shall be invited to nominate candidates within ~~20~~ 10 days from the date of publication. The list of candidates shall be published on the official internet site of WELS and/or to congregations by mail or e-mail, and the calling board shall call from the published list no earlier than ~~30~~ 20 days from the date of publication.

Recommendation #3

Background: This change keeps the calling process at the two terminal ministerial education schools but changes the calling process at the two prep schools to be similar to that of area Lutheran high schools.

Section 6.48

Calling Procedure

(a) The calling of professors ~~to the ministerial schools~~ shall be conducted by the governing board.

(b) In the case of Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, the governing board of the school in which a vacancy may have occurred shall publish such vacancy on the official internet site of WELS and/or to congregations by mail and shall request the nomination of qualified candidates.

(c) All pastors, male professors, male teachers, congregations, and voting members of congregations shall be entitled to nominate a candidate or candidates within ~~20~~ 10 days from the date of publication of the vacancy. The submitted names shall be published on the official Internet site of WELS and/or to congregations by mail or e-mail the first business day after nominations close. The calling board may issue a request for additional candidates at any time. Additional names may be submitted to or by the president of the district in which the school is located at any time.

(d) In the case of the prep schools, the president of the district in which the school is located shall prepare a call list for the school’s governing board. Individuals or congregations may submit names to the district president for consideration as he assembles the call list.

(e) Presidents of the ministerial schools shall be called in accordance with the procedure for the calling of administrators of the synod as outlined in section 5.60.

Recommendation #4

Background: Changes terms of Board of Appeals members to four-year terms with the ability to succeed themselves twice. This is consistent with other elected and appointed positions.

Section 8.10 Synod Board of Appeals

(a) The Synod Board of appeals shall be composed of 10 members: a chairman, three pastors, three teachers, and three laymen. The Synod Board of Appeals shall be elected by the synod in convention from a slate of candidates submitted by the synod's Nominating Committee. The chairman shall be a pastor. Members' terms shall be for ~~six~~ four years and they may succeed themselves ~~once~~ twice. Terms shall be staggered. Members of the Synod Board of Appeals may hold other elective or appointive offices.

District Bylaws

Recommendation #5

Background: Changes terms of district Ministry of Christian Giving members to four-year terms with the ability to succeed themselves twice. This is consistent with other elected and appointed positions.

ARTICLE XVI Ministry of Christian Giving

Section 1. There shall be a commission entitled "Ministry of Christian Giving" consisting of no more than six pastors and laymen, each appointed by the district president for a term of ~~six~~ four years. Commission members may succeed themselves ~~once~~ twice. The chairman of the commission shall be appointed by the district president. The president shall be an advisory member of the commission.

Recommendation #6

Background: Changes terms of district Committee on Constitutional Matters to four-year terms with the ability to succeed themselves twice. This is consistent with other elected and appointed positions.

ARTICLE XIX Committee on Constitutional Matters

Section 1. There shall be a committee on constitutional matters composed of three members appointed by the president and vice presidents. The term of office shall be ~~six~~ four years. ~~The term of one member shall expire every two years.~~ A member may succeed himself ~~once~~ twice.

Recommendation #7

Background: Changes terms of district Board of Appeals members to four-year terms with the ability to succeed themselves twice. This is consistent with other elected and appointed positions.

Constitution for the Districts

ARTICLE XXII District Board of Appeals

Section 1. The District Board of Appeals shall be composed of 10 members: a chairman, three pastors, three teachers, and three laymen. It shall be elected by the district in convention from a slate of candidates submitted by the district nominating committee. The chairman shall be a pastor. Their term shall be for ~~six~~ four years and they may succeed themselves ~~once~~ twice. Terms shall be staggered. Members of the District Board of Appeals may hold other elective or appointive offices.

This bylaw change was submitted by the Office of the President

Unfunded Priority List

Background: The requirement for the convention to approve an unfunded priority list was originally a component of the old decision package budget model, in which all areas of ministry divided their work into prioritized discrete packages, all of which were requested, and some of which were funded. Those that were not funded were to be put on an unfunded priority list adopted by the convention.

That budgeting process, which was discontinued in 2003 did not take reserves, special funds, or programs funded by special appeals into account as the current budgeting process does.

In addition, while the current bylaws require the ministry financial plan to include an unfunded priority list, that list often features generic items rather than specific programs. And, even when unfunded programs are specific in nature, priorities of ministry can and do change after the list is adopted by the convention. The Synodical Council monitors and identifies unfunded priorities on an ongoing basis, and when funds do become available, it approves funding for what it has judged to be the highest priority at the time.

In addition, areas of ministry are well aware that they can decide to fund continuing projects by a prudent use of reserves and can request Synodical Council approval for a modification of their plan if funding is available.

The rest of the description of Establishing the Ministry Financial Plan in Bylaw Section 5.30 still applies to how we operate today. It would not be harmed by the removal of subpoints (d) and (g). Since the Synodical Council has already resolved to change the way it develops the unfunded priority list, removing the current requirement of the bylaws seems to be a necessary first step.

Recommendation

That Bylaw Section 5.30 of the WELS Constitution be modified by the removal of subsections (d) and (g).

Section 5.30 Establishing the Ministry Financial Plan

(a) The Synodical Council shall establish a support forecast which shall serve as a basis for determining operating support available for ministry. The forecast for Congregation Mission Offerings shall be established in consultation with the Conference of Presidents.

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

(c) The Synodical Council shall review the ministry financial plan proposed by the president, seeing to it that the expenditures do not exceed anticipated support and resources, that the plan reflects the overall purposes and goals of the synod, and that the use of reserves is fiscally responsible.

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

~~(e)~~ (d) The synod in convention shall review ministry financial plan proposed by the Synodical Council, and, after making any desired changes, approve a complete ministry financial plan including the areas of ministry, ministerial education schools, and Support Services subsidiaries that is fiscally responsible.

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

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

~~(h)~~ (f) At any time during the biennium, an area of ministry, synodical school, or Support Services subsidiary may request the Synodical Council to consider a request to modify the approved plan. The request shall be submitted and considered in accordance with procedures established by the Synodical Council.

Memorials

Memorial (2021-01)

Subject: *Statement on divorce*

Floor Committee #2

- WHEREAS 1) divorce is prevalent in society and is occurring within our own congregations; and
- WHEREAS 2) there is no guidance provided within present WELS doctrinal statements or enumerated upon in any statement of beliefs (such as *This We Believe*); and
- WHEREAS 3) there may be some disparity among us on understanding of what justifies the breaking of the marriage bond as stated by the Lord through the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, and as presented in the Conference of Presidents' paper, "A Study of Marriage, Divorce, Malicious Desertion, and Remarriage in the Light of God's Word," December 1989; reviewed and updated by the Conference of Presidents in May 2015; and
- WHEREAS 4) any disparity of teaching among us is unacceptable and could ultimately lead to false teaching and division within the synod; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the WELS Conference of Presidents prepare a doctrinal statement; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that the doctrinal statement be presented to the 12 districts for review; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that the doctrinal statement be approved at a synod biennial convention.

Mr. Glenn M. Brunner, Kewaskum, Wis.

Memorial (2021-02)

Subject: *Reevaluation of the calling process*

Floor Committee #2

- WHEREAS 1) the Holy Scriptures nowhere dictate what process is to be used for extending a divine call; and
- WHEREAS 2) the calling process that our synod has inherited from our synodical forefathers dare never become a ceremonial law by which the freedom of Christians is undermined; and
- WHEREAS 3) it is wise from time to time to reassess carefully whether or not improvements might be made to the way the church carries out its ministry, especially under changing circumstances, to the benefit of God's people and the spread of the gospel; and
- WHEREAS 4) some in our synod have expressed frustration with the current calling process, especially with what they perceive as a dearth of information about the candidates being considered, whereas the scriptural examples we have of divine calls being extended by the church indicate the calling bodies were intimately familiar with the candidates being considered (Acts 1:23; 6:3); and
- WHEREAS 5) the calling process has not been subjected to any recent study and consideration by a committee independent of the Conference of Presidents; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the synod president appoint an ad hoc committee to complete an exegetical, historical, and fact-finding study of the calling process utilized within our synod; and be it finally
- Resolved. b) that this committee be instructed to report its findings and recommendations for alterations to the 2023 convention.

Rev. Peter Prange, Kenosha, Wis..

Memorial (2021-03)

Subject: *Growing our spiritual maturity*

Floor Committee #11

- WHEREAS 1) communicant membership of WELS is declining; and
- WHEREAS 2) statistics indicate our failure to retain many younger people (“millennial”) and those now leaving high school; and
- WHEREAS 3) unchristian worldly influence on the church as a whole, and especially on the young, is increasing in many ways such as: acceptance of being “good” as a way to heaven, acceptance of homosexuality, declining sexual moral values, challenges to the sanctity of the marriage bond, greater focus on self-centered life values, and the ever-increasing greed for more, etc.; and
- WHEREAS 4) the greatest influence on the young is normally parents, the peers of parents (congregations), teachers, and pastors; and
- WHEREAS 5) failure of congregations and parents to grow the faith of fellow members and children toward ever greater spiritual maturity will result in members and/or their children to stray, which may result in their ultimate loss from God’s kingdom; and
- WHEREAS 6) there appears to be a need to equip each other for the application of our faith in our daily lives and to grow in spiritual maturity, a maturity that should be demonstrated well beyond regular Sunday church service attendance; and
- WHEREAS 7) in 2017 the Commission on Congregational Counseling had encouraged congregations to: engage in regular planning and ongoing self-assessment of ministry efforts, and to implement a curriculum of ongoing evangelism training [2017 *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 49]; and
- WHEREAS 8) in the 2018 *Report to the Twelve Districts*, Congregational Services reports (pp. 12,13) that if the trend continues approximately 73,000 members will be lost over the next two decades; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that over this biennium the Conference of Presidents direct all pastors and teachers to specifically incorporate teaching adult discipleship and lifestyle witnessing in Bible classes and from the pulpit; and be it further
- Resolved, b) that congregations specifically focus on inactive or straying membership as part of their ministry plans over the next biennium and report results and issues to the director of Discipleship via their districts; and be it finally
- Resolved, c) that additional emphasis be placed on training and equipping future pastors and teachers at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College to be able to teach principles of adult discipleship and lifestyle witnessing.

Mr. Glenn M. Brunner, Kewaskum, Wis.

Memorial (2021-04)

Subject: *The spiritual family*

Floor Committee #11

- WHEREAS 1) over the last half century the declining spiritual health and well-being of WELS families has been consistently viewed as a high-priority concern, as expressed by a blue-ribbon taskforce,¹ synodical publications,² strategic plans,³ research studies,⁴ and educational programs⁵ that directly or indirectly addressed the critical role parents have in the spiritual training of their children; and
- WHEREAS 2) WELS leaders have again recently observed a demonstrable need to strengthen the spiritual profile of member families;⁶ and
- WHEREAS 3) our synodical leaders recognize the significant correlation between the spiritual leadership of godly parents in the home and member retention;⁷ and

- WHEREAS 4) discipleship among WELS members is largely limited to age-segregated forums, which can create generational barriers that hinder, undermine, or obstruct the biblical role of godly parents; and
- WHEREAS 5) God has spoken clearly and forcefully in numerous passages of his inspired Word about the critical role that he has mandated for godly parents to play in the spiritual nurture of their children;⁸ and
- WHEREAS 6) the church and her ministry should not impede the right, privilege, and responsibility of godly parents to serve as their family's spiritual leader, but rather enable and assist parents in their roles; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the Conference of Presidents appoint a task force, chaired by the administrator of the Commission on Discipleship, to develop strategies, initiate plans, and seek ongoing funding that will instruct and equip parents to carry out their God-given roles as the spiritual leaders of their families, especially as it relates to family Bible reading, prayer, and the proper application of law and gospel in the home (Deuteronomy 32:47, Romans 15:14); and be it further
- Resolved. b) that the task force encourage WELS congregations to adopt and implement ministries designed to assist parents in carrying out their mandate as the spiritual leaders of their own families (Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:5, Proverbs 22:6); and be it further
- Resolved. c) that the task force encourage WELS congregations to find ways and means to gather God's people in intergenerational assemblies that integrate the idealism of youth, the realism of middle age, and the wisdom of old age for faith-sharing and mutual encouragement (2 Timothy 1:5); and be it further
- Resolved. d) that the task force encourage all WELS families to faithfully study and apply God's will for their lives, which stands in stark contrast to the human moral norms and standards that dominate contemporary secular forums and public educational models (Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Malachi 3:14-18, and Malachi 4:1-6); and be it further
- Resolved. e) that the task force encourage all WELS parents to keep Jesus at the center of their family's faith-life by daily observing God's special blessings, seeking God's intervention during times of crises, observing religious festivals, and marking important spiritual events in their own homes (Joel 1:3,15,16,19 and 2:17-27); and be it finally
- Resolved. f) that the task force encourage WELS institutions, especially WELS schools and their educational programs, to stress a generational worldview that emphasizes the responsibility parents have for preparing future generations of godly parents who will steadfastly maintain an active faith-life in their own homes (Psalm 78:1-8).

Mr. Glenn M. Brunner, Kewaskum, Wis.

¹ Family Ministry Task Force: *Report to the Twelve Districts*, 1989, Alan Zahn/Donald Sutton, task force chairmen.

² *Wellspring*, NPH, 1993-1995. *Lutheran Parent*, NPH, 1996-2005. *Parents' Crosslink*, NPH, 2005-Present.

³ *The Family of God*, Wisconsin Lutheran High School Federation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1996.

--, Fox Valley Federation of WELS Churches, Kenneth Kremer, 2015.

--, Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services, 2012.

⁴ "Why Young People Leave WELS: A Summary of Findings from the Commission on Youth Discipleship," Joel Nelson, 2007.

"Survey of WELS Teens," March 2007, WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship, Joel Nelson.

"A Survey for Parents of School-Age Children," Kenneth Kremer, Appleton, Wisconsin, (unpublished), 2015.

"A Demographic Study of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod," Jonathan R. Hein, 2016.

⁵ *God Bless Our Families: A Manual for Christian Family Living*, Area WELS Churches of the Greater Fox River Valley.

Parents Touched by the Word, 1985, by Kenneth Kremer, Kremer Publications, Inc.

⁶ "A Demographic Study of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod," Jonathan R. Hein, 2016, p. 25. "Studies have shown that the greatest factor in retaining young church members is the spiritual growth activity that takes place within the family."

⁷ Hein, p. 12. "Approximately 20 years ago, it was estimated that WELS lost about 40% to 45% of its youth confirmands by the time they finished college. Today it (the loss of young confirmands) appears to be closer to 50%."

⁸ Bible texts directly related to God's mandate to parents include: Ge 9:15-16; Ge 17:9; Ex 3:4-8, 14-15; Ex 20:1-17; Nu 15:37-41; Dt 4:1, 9-10; Dt 6:1-9; Dt 11:2-21; Dt 32:45-47; Jos 22:5; Jos 24:15; 1 Sa 3:2-10; Ps 78:4-7; Pr 22:6; Is 6:9-12; Mal 4:1-6; Mt 5:1-12; Mt 7:26 ff; Mk 10:13-16; Lk 2:40, 46-52; Lk 11:27-28; Ac 1:8; Ep 6:1-4; 2 Ti 1:5; He 2:1-4; He 3:3-19; Re 1:3; Re 3:3.

Memorial (2021-05)

Subject: *Declare 2022 the year of the Sunday schools in WELS*

Floor Committee #11

- WHEREAS 1) WELS has been blessed with the Holy Scriptures and God's plan of salvation and that Christian education is a top priority in WELS; and
- WHEREAS 2) WELS elementary schools and early childhood schools are supported by three full-time called workers; and
- WHEREAS 3) at the end of 2019 WELS had 1,269 congregations, and 1,030 congregations had Sunday schools with 16,549 students and 3,541 teachers, and student enrollment in Sunday schools has taken a steep decline; and
- WHEREAS 4) God willing, more time, talent, and attention should be given to WELS Sunday schools during 2021-22; and
- WHEREAS 5) in the WELS booklet "For Generations to Come" the plan for future direction does not even mention Sunday schools; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that WELS Commission on Discipleship encourage a Sunday school institute in the fall of 2022 in each district; and be it further
- Resolved, b) that Pastor Donn Dobberstein and willing volunteers be asked to plan a 2022 national Sunday school convention with proper synod funding; and be it further
- Resolved, c) that Pastor Dobberstein consult with Spirit-filled Pastors Karl Gurgel and Wayne Mueller, who were the dynamic leaders of the first and only WELS national Sunday school convention in the 1990s; and be it further
- Resolved, d) that the Commission on Discipleship also seek input from the presidents of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Wisconsin Lutheran College, and Bethany Lutheran College for planning purposes; and be it further
- Resolved, e) that a virtual conference be considered with the advice of President Richard Gurgel and Dr. John Meyer of Martin Luther College; and be it further
- Resolved, f) that Rev. John Braun be asked to continue publishing Sunday school articles in *Forward in Christ*; and be it further
- Resolved, g) that President Mark Schroeder, the Conference of Presidents, and the Synodical Council declare 2022 the year of WELS Sunday schools together with major evangelism efforts; and be it finally
- Resolved, h) that WELS call a full-time Sunday school coordinator who would become part of WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools.

Carl W. Toepel, Howards Grove, Wis.

Memorial (2021-06)

Subject: *100 new missions and 75 new or enhanced ministries in North America*

Floor Committee #8

- WHEREAS 1) our God revealed his love for fallen humankind when he promised to send a Savior to redeem and restore Adam and Eve and all their descendants to himself; and
- WHEREAS 2) our God in love kept his promise when "he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16); and
- WHEREAS 3) our God, in the person of the God-Man Jesus Christ, carried out his saving mission by living a perfect life, by suffering and dying to pay for the sins of all people, and then by rising from the dead in glorious victory; and

- WHEREAS 4) our God showed his desire that this good news be proclaimed throughout the world when he gave to his disciples of all time the important responsibility and the joyous privilege of being his ambassadors to carry the message of reconciliation to the world (Matthew 28 and 2nd Corinthians 5); and
- WHEREAS 5) our God has graciously allowed the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to exist as a visible body of believers in Christ so that in 2025 we will be able to celebrate 175 years of his grace to us; and
- WHEREAS 6) Recent times and events around the world, and especially in North America, have revealed once again that many of our fellow citizens, neighbors, friends, and relatives are searching in vain for lasting peace, comfort, stability, and relief from anxieties and fears; and
- WHEREAS 7) we desire to share the good news of forgiveness and deliverance through our Savior Jesus Christ, the one solution for the world's problems and everyone's true need for this life and eternity; and
- WHEREAS 8) the Board for Home Missions encourages all of our congregations and members to be mission minded, outreach focused, and aware of the help and encouragement available from WELS Commission on Evangelism to reach with the gospel those in our country previously mentioned (see "Whereas 6"); and
- WHEREAS 9) the establishment of a new mission church in a community is often, by God's grace and with his blessing, an effective way to reach with the gospel those in our country previously mentioned (see "Whereas 6") and bring them into our fellowship; therefore be it

Resolved, that being fully convinced that grace received is grace to share, we commemorate the 175-year milestone of our synod's history (1850–2025) by challenging ourselves, under God's grace and with his blessing, to set a goal of establishing 100 new missions and 75 new or enhanced ministries throughout North America over the next ten years, starting July 1, 2023, under the auspices of Home Missions, working together with WELS areas of ministry and their traditional mission partners.

WELS Board for Home Missions



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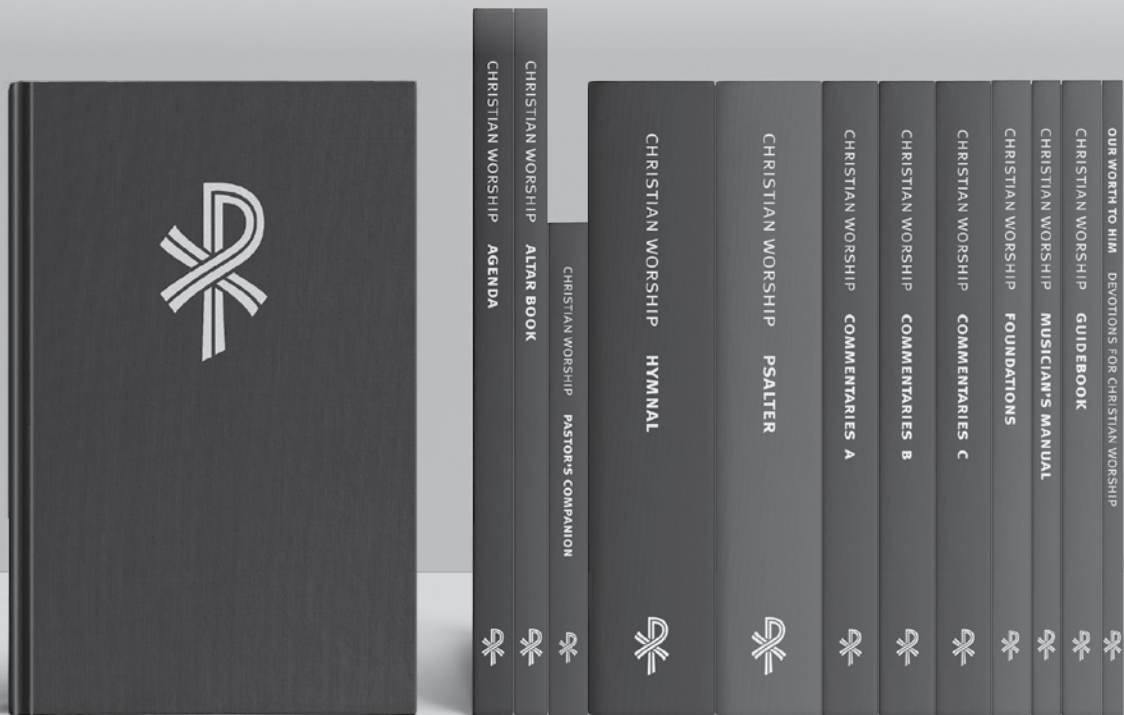


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