



Your gifts,
God's blessings

An annual report to our members

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Message from the President

FRONT COVER: (From left) Trung Lê and Grant Hagen greet worshippers after their ordination and installation service at King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif., in August 2023. Learn more about King of Kings' trilingual ministry on p. 14.



God blesses us every day in so many ways that it's easy to take those blessings for granted. That's true for us as individuals, and it's also true for us as a synod. This annual report is intended to review some of the ways that God has blessed our work together during the past year.

The blessings begin close to home, as well-trained pastors and teachers serve our congregations with God's Word. We will want to remember that those workers are gifts of God and are able to serve us because God himself has sent these workers into his harvest field.

We will look back on how God blesses our congregations as they gather around Word and sacrament and as their members reach out into their communities with the good news of our Savior and with Christian love and compassion for those in need.

Looking a little farther beyond our own congregations, we have seen how God has blessed the first year of our "100 missions in 10 years" effort, with 10 new home missions established and 10 existing ministries enhanced to enable them to serve more people with the gospel.

Then we look to see what God has been doing to bring his saving message to people of all cultures and nations. Cross-cultural ministry has been expanded here in the United States

and beyond. God is giving us numerous new opportunities to reach the lost in places like Vietnam, Africa, and Asia. He's not only giving us the opportunities, but he is also providing the manpower and opening the hearts of WELS people to support those efforts with their thank-offerings.

God's mercies and blessings are new every morning.

He proved it every day during the past year, and he will continue to prove it in the year to come.

Mark Schroeder

REV. MARK SCHROEDER
WELS President



PICTURED LEFT: In early July, WELS President Mark Schroeder traveled to Vietnam to celebrate the formal building dedication of the new Theological Education Center in Hanoi and the graduation ceremony of the first class of 55 pastors from the Hmong Fellowship Church. Schroeder also traveled to rural villages throughout Vietnam to see the rural training program that is thriving there.

On July 31, Schroeder served as presiding minister at the opening worship service of WELS' 67th Biennial Synod Convention. Three hundred forty-eight convention delegates gathered at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., under the theme "Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown." For more information about the convention, visit welsconvention.net.





Called to **prepare**

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

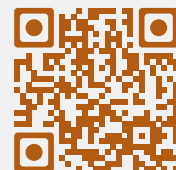
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) prepares men to serve in the pastoral ministry by providing them with spiritual, theological, and professional training. Students attend classes for two years, serve as full-time vicars during their third year, and then attend classes and write a thesis in their fourth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

On May 26, 2023, 39 students graduated. The day before, the seminary held its assignment service, where nine of those graduates were assigned to home and world mission fields, including Caleb King (pictured middle in the inset photo), who was assigned to a mission start in North Collin County, Texas. After the service, graduates met with their district presidents and in King's case, with representatives from WELS Home Missions, including Matthew Vogt (pictured right), a mission counselor.

Following graduation, the seminary provides pastors with opportunities for continued growth through its institute, Grow in Grace. Grow in Grace offers continuing education courses, a mentoring initiative for new graduates, a clearinghouse of resources for pastors, and an annual retreat for pastors who are celebrating milestones in their ministries.

The mentoring program in particular is a blessing to new graduates. Participation is optional but the program has proven so valuable in recent years that nearly every graduate chooses to have a mentor. Resignation from the ministry has significantly decreased since the mentoring program began in 2010.

For more information,
visit wisluthsem.org.





Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Ministerial Education and coordinator of **Christian Worship: Psalter**, served as a guest lecturer in November 2023 and taught the seminary's seniors about the settings for all 150 psalms that can be found in the new psalter.

WINTERIM

In January, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary offers students a two-week learning opportunity known as Winterim. Classes range from special topics presented in the classroom to trips to important biblical locations (pictured right is a group in Turkey) to time working with home mission congregations.

In 2023, the seminary teamed up with WELS Home Missions to organize a church planting course during Winterim hosted at The Way, Fredericksburg, Va. The course was led by home missionaries Jared Oldenburg and Matt Rothe and mission counselor Mark Birkholz, each of whom came with a wealth of experience and knowledge to share. Eleven seminarians traveled to Virginia to learn more about starting new churches in places where WELS may not have an established presence.

"We want to offer students the opportunity to spend time with church-planting pastors who can open their eyes to the challenges and blessings of starting a congregation," says Bill Tackmier, the WLS professor who organized the trip to Virginia.



During their time at The Way, seminarians studied core principles of confessional Lutheran mission work and were challenged to apply these concepts to actual WELS mission fields. The capstone project for the course was a presentation of each seminarian's mission strategy.

"Mission planting is an enormous undertaking," notes Justin Steinke, who is pictured left giving his capstone presentation. **"From the early stages on it takes a community of believers who love to share the gospel and a whole synod's support!"**



DID YOU KNOW?

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is pursuing accreditation through the Association of Theological Schools. The school began the process by conducting an in-depth self-study that faculty members believe has already led to improvements in the school's program.

PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

When David, a member at **Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada**, expressed interest in attending a seminary in 2020, his pastor, Mark Henrich (pictured with David and his wife), encouraged him to study through WELS and contacted the Pastoral Studies Institute, a program coordinated by WELS Joint Missions and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, that guides and assists spiritual leaders around the globe through pre-seminary and seminary training.

Once he was accepted into the program, the Pastoral Studies Institute coordinated instructors—including Henrich—to take David through four levels of courses. Some classes are taught in Mandarin, David's first language. Many classes are online. Most students take one or two classes at a time since they also work full time. David is taking four—and asking for more. He currently is in level three of the program.

David began to lead an online Bible study from his home in March 2022, which has led to 40 East Asians from 20 cities around the world being baptized.

To learn more about David's story, visit forwardinchrist.net/delightful-trouble.



40

EAST ASIANS FROM
20 CITIES AROUND
THE WORLD WERE
BAPTIZED



MISSION AND MINISTRY

Each February, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary hosts a Mission and Ministry seminar for its students. The seminar teaches students about the resources available and the ministry taking place through the synod's areas of ministry and affiliated ministries. The event includes displays, devotions, keynote presentations, and breakout presentations.

Karl DeMarce is one of four graduates of the class of 2023 who received a Master of Divinity degree and is considered a "non-traditional" or second-career student.



SENIOR THESIS

In his final year of study, each seminary student chooses a topic to explore in depth in a thesis, which is then presented to his classmates.





The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society sponsored a card-signing event for Martin Luther College students during fall 2023. The students wrote notes to missionaries and their families.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC),
New Ulm, Minn.:



- 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.

DID YOU KNOW?

Martin Luther College launched a new and improved curriculum for child development associates titled the CDA Prep Series. The Child Development Associate credential is considered the best first step in early childhood credentialing. Learn more at mlc-wels.edu/continuing-education/cda-prep-series.

COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

On Aug. 21, 2023, Martin Luther College installed seven new faculty members. Doctors Martin and Nichole LaGrow (front row, left) are helping develop the college's new nontraditional elementary education degree. Martin is the instructional designer and Nichole serves as the program director.

Beginning in January 2023, Nichole began putting the pieces into place for this new degree program, which utilizes Competency-Based Education, a method that awards degrees based on proven competence instead of credit hours, taking into account students' past experiences and previous job skills. Competency-Based Education is an alternative pathway to ministry for those who are unable to move to New Ulm for a traditional on-campus program. It allows WELS members to obtain education degrees while staying in their own communities and their own jobs—some of which are in WELS schools.



The first students to enroll in the program will begin coursework in fall 2024. For more information, visit mlc-wels.edu/nep.

FALL 2023 BY THE NUMBERS

620 

UNDERGRADUATE
ENROLLMENT

465 

EDUCATION/STAFF
MINISTRY MAJORS

155 

PRESEMINARY
MAJORS

27 

STATES
REPRESENTED IN
STUDENT BODY

5 

COUNTRIES
REPRESENTED IN
STUDENT BODY

133 

GRADUATE STUDIES
ENROLLMENT

Resident assistants
help fellow students
move into the dorms
in August 2023.



EXCITED TO SERVE

One-hundred sixty-six students graduated from Martin Luther College on May 13, 2023. Many of them also received their first calls into full-time ministry that day. Pictured below are Maria and Josiah Klatt at MLC's assignment service. The Klatts were assigned to serve at Apostles, San Jose, Calif. Josiah is a staff minister and Maria teaches fourth grade.



EARLY MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

When preseminary students step on campus as freshmen, it's an eight-year journey to the pulpit, which can feel distant and daunting. A new field experience at Martin Luther College, known as Early Ministry Experience 1, now provides early encouragement to men on this journey by taking them directly into the life of a congregation for several days.

Matt Koelpin, Zach Maedke, and Ben Schoch (pictured) participated in the pilot of the program in spring 2023. They traveled to San Antonio, Texas, to shadow Micah Koelpin (also pictured), who is pastor at Our Savior–San Antonio West, a young daughter congregation of Our Savior–San Antonio East.

They participated in the worship services at Our Savior, helped with the congregation's Easter outreach program, learned how to write and format a devotion, discussed the ministry and the logistics of a mission congregation with Pastor Koelpin, and visited members. As Zach noted, "I'm glad I'm just a first-year and I have seven years left, because I have a lot more to learn!"

The experience taught Matt that **"being a pastor doesn't just revolve around what you do on Sunday and how you get people to church. . . . It's also just being a friend to your neighbors, helping out in every and any way you can. . . . I have a newfound passion for going out and talking to people, initially about their lives, and then, more importantly, about God's Word."**

Thank you to Martin Luther College InFocus for the information and photo

For more information,
visit mlc-wels.edu.





Preparatory schools

Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., and Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., prepare high school students for future service as pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and congregational leaders. Both schools offer “Taste of Ministry” opportunities for students, which include shadowing called workers to learn more about their work. Students also are given firsthand gospel experiences on campus and during mission trips. Michigan Lutheran Seminary opened the 2023–24 school year with 192 students, and Luther Preparatory School opened the year with 410 students.

MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

Six students from Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) traveled to Asheville, N.C., to help with Living Savior’s soccer camp in June 2023 (see photos above and below).

“Living Savior has been partnering with Michigan Lutheran Seminary for more than 10 years through their Project Titus program,” says Caleb Kurbis, pastor at Living Savior, Asheville.

“Church members and these young people from MLS mutually encourage one another as they serve the Lord and share in gospel ministry together.

These young people and their chaperones greet new families, lead games and Bible lessons, and experience the impact of reaching diverse families in a harvest field they’ve never seen before. In addition, church members get

to learn more about our ministerial training system and see the impact firsthand.”



LUTHER PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Arthur Robinson and Cristian Ferrer Bonilla, two Luther Preparatory School seniors, shadowed Thomas Kock, pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis., in October 2023. The students read Scripture during a worship service, observed a middle school religion class, helped plan the upcoming Advent worship services, and visited with members who are homebound or in assisted living.

“Every young man needs some degree of encouragement along the way,” says Kock. **“Can I really do it? ‘Yeah, you probably can, if you’re willing to work at it!’ If I can be an encourager for some of these young men, that’s worth it.”**



Called to proclaim

Home Missions

WELS officially launched its 100 missions in 10 years initiative in 2023. The initiative includes plans to plant 100 new home mission churches and enhance 75 existing ministries from 2023–2033, and it is off to a strong start. In 2023, the Board for Home Missions approved support for 10 new missions and 10 enhancements.

NEW MISSIONS

- **Bentonville, Ark.:** Bentonville, the headquarters of Walmart, is anticipated to see 35 percent population growth in the next three years. Only two churches of any denomination are located in the target area of southwest Bentonville/Centerton. The 12-person core group has been active in the community and looks forward to planting a new church in an area with no current WELS presence.
- **Panama City Beach, Fla.:** Amazing Grace, Panama City, is looking to expand west and start a second site in the greater Panama City Beach area. The core group of about 12 members has been meeting regularly for more than two years as they make plans to reach a growing retirement population and the young families that serve the aging population and tourists.
- **Idaho Falls, Idaho:** The greater Idaho Falls area is experiencing tremendous growth due to jobs, quality of life, and cost of living. The Mormon church has a strong historical presence in the area so the 11-person core group has been working with Truth in Love Ministries, a WELS-affiliated organization that reaches out to Mormons and equips others to do so.
- **Boston, Mass.:** Boston, a city with 4.3 million souls, is known as “America’s College Town” with 53 colleges and universities. The closest WELS church to the urban center is a 90-minute drive to the south. This unique urban mission is being modeled after church plants in Atlanta and New York City and has strong potential for college and cross-cultural ministries.
- **Marquette, Mich.:** Marquette serves as the hub of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and 52 percent of the people in and around Marquette do not have a home church or attend a church. It is also home to 7,000 students at Northern Michigan University, a ripe opportunity for a campus ministry program. A group of WELS members live in Marquette, and many students remain in the area after graduation.

(continued on next page)



Joseph Lindloff was installed as the new home missionary in **Marquette, Mich.**, in October 2023. Marquette received funding as a new mission in March 2023 in the first round of missions approved as part of WELS’ initiative to launch 100 missions in 10 years. Pictured with Lindloff are his wife, Julie, and their three children.

- **Kalispell, Mont.:** Kalispell is considered the fastest-growing micropolitan city (population 10,000-50,000) in the United States and is 100 miles away from the nearest WELS church. The dedicated core group has been gathering for worship on a regular basis for years, first in private homes and currently in a motel conference room. The pastor at Living Savior, Missoula, Mont., leads onsite worship twice a month while lay leaders organize other weekly Bible studies and outreach events.
- **Cincinnati, Ohio:** Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio, is starting a second site in the Oakley and Hyde Park neighborhoods, just northeast of downtown. A core group of 20 members have been meeting regularly for fellowship, Bible study, and outreach since fall 2022. This new location would put Beautiful Savior closer to three colleges in the area, opening opportunities for campus ministry growth.
- **North Collin County, Texas:** A core group of 15 members from Atonement, Plano, Texas, are starting a new church in North Collin County, a northern suburb of Dallas. Divine Savior Ministries, a WELS-affiliated ministry with four church/school campuses, has committed to providing guidance and resources to the new mission and is planning to build a Divine Savior Academy by year five of the mission start.
- **Kronenwetter, Wis.:** Five WELS churches in the greater Wausau, Wis., area are supporting a new mission in Kronenwetter. This growing community south of Wausau is home to Northland Lutheran High School, which houses this new church. The 22-member core group has been meeting monthly since December 2021 for Bible study and mission planning.

- **Buffalo, Wyo:** A group of 27 WELS members living in the Buffalo area have been worshipping weekly in the local civic center since March 2020, led by the pastor from Lord of Lords in Casper, Wyo. Core group members have started three different Bible study/book study opportunities outside of Sunday worship and Bible study and are actively inviting friends to join.

ENHANCEMENTS

- Beautiful Savior, West Des Moines, Iowa
- Our Redeemer, Ladysmith, Wis.
- Good Shepherd, Midland, Texas
- Fairview, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Christ the King, Port Charlotte, Fla.
- Divine Savior–Sienna, Missouri City, Texas
- Mount Calvary, Redding/Anderson, Calif.
- Christ the King, Palm Coast, Fla.
- Hope in Deerfield, Wis.
- Cross of Christ, Las Cruces, N.M.

DID YOU KNOW?

WELS Home Missions supports **145 home mission congregations**, including churches in 38 states, Canada, and the English-speaking West Indies.

NORTH COLLIN COUNTY, TEXAS

“We are so humbled and excited to have been chosen for mission status in this first year of WELS’ 100 in 10 mission initiative,” says Brad Johnston, the core group leader of Divine Savior, North Collin County. “We have learned so much about our community and the needs of our neighbors and friends over the past two years of active outreach efforts. They have no greater need than to hear the message of peace that comes from knowing their Savior Jesus.”

Johnston and other members of the core group in North Collin County have been meeting every other week since 2021 for planning meetings and Bible studies. They have also participated in community outreach opportunities, including cleaning up litter. In July 2023 Caleb King was installed to serve as a home missionary for Divine Savior in North Collin County.





Kevin Boushek baptizes a Divine Savior Academy student.

DIVINE SAVIOR—SIENNA

In March 2023, members of Divine Savior—Sienna submitted a request through our district mission board to the Board for Home Missions for an enhancement grant to allow us to call for a second pastor. The Board for Home Missions granted that request.

Dan Laitinen was the first pastor we called. He moved with his family to Sienna in July 2023, and we celebrated his installation on July 30 with worship and a massive serving of Texas-smoked pulled pork.

So . . . how's it going? Incredibly!

As we partner with Divine Savior Academy on our campus, there are so many opportunities for ministry. This year, the school has grown to 350 students in PreK–11th grade. We anticipate more students next year with the completion of a building project.

So much ministry can happen with two pastors! While I serve 10th graders and teach the Old Testament, Pastor Laitinen can study the Bible with Kenneth, our security officer, and Keith, our technology specialist, progressing toward membership at Divine Savior Church. While Pastor Laitinen invites Connect Group leaders to his home to encourage and equip them for our small group ministry, I am the invited guest at the homes of academy parents like Jake and Amanda or Will and Jordan, who take our START class to become members. While I take time to engage and interact specifically with worship visitors and guests, Pastor Laitinen leads a Sunday morning small group study. While Pastor Laitinen works with our youth group leaders to plan consistent events to connect teens to Christ, I work with the outreach team to plan our soccer camp and Easter egg hunt.

More kingdom work is happening. More people are equipped to serve in our mission. More souls are connected to Christ!

Kevin Boushek, home missionary at Divine Savior—Sienna

CAMPUS MINISTRY IN ATLANTA

Colleen Thorson didn't grow up in the church. In fact, when she started at Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Ga., she hadn't ever set foot in a worship service. On the other hand, Colleen's new roommate, Megan Smith, a member at Victory of the Lamb, Katy, Texas, had been going to church her whole life. When Megan asked if she wanted to check out a new church together, Colleen joined her at **Intown Lutheran Church, a mission congregation in the heart of Atlanta, Ga.**

After that first worship service, Colleen didn't waste any time making plans to come back. "All I could think about was that I wanted to learn more," she says. "I felt incredibly blessed to worship with so many kind people and was very inspired by the beautiful message Pastor Lucas was sharing."

Lucas Bitter accepted the call to start a new mission in Atlanta in 2017. He sees the city's college students as souls hungry to hear about the peace and security Jesus offers. When Megan and Colleen first attended worship at Intown, Bitter quickly learned their names and invited them to attend that week's Campus Ministry Bible study. If there was any doubt in the roommates' minds that they belonged at Intown, these weeknights spent in the Word dispelled them immediately.

"When things get tough during the week," explains Colleen, **"this time in the Word is a great reminder of what's really important. We're always trying to get more people from the area involved, to show them how much of a difference Jesus can make in their lives too."**

When Colleen approached Bitter one Sunday after worship and asked what she needed to do to prepare herself to take Holy Communion, he saw an opportunity. He invited her to take the church's Bible Basics course. She completed the course and was baptized and confirmed on Easter Sunday 2022.

"Since Colleen completed the course and got baptized, several other students have enrolled in the class," says Bitter. "Lord willing, there may be more adult baptisms coming soon!"

Visit wels.net/college to learn more about WELS Campus Ministry.



WELS missionary Benjamin Foxen and the members of Kyakojogoma church in northwest Tanzania outside the temporary shelter they built for worship.



19

PROSPECTIVE
WORLD MISSION
FIELDS

World Missions

WELS World Missions conducts gospel outreach in 45 countries and is exploring outreach opportunities in 19 prospective new mission fields. World Missions brings the light of God's Word to the world through evangelism efforts, church planting, training national workers for ministry, and providing religious materials in foreign languages through Multi-Language Productions. Forty-four world missionaries partner with more than 400 national pastors to conduct outreach and train more than 380 students for service in Christ's kingdom.

World Missions supports mission work:

- on **Native American** reservations, where the gospel is being shared on the Apache reservations in Arizona and exploratory mission work is beginning on other reservations throughout North America;
- in **Africa**, where missionaries partner with national church bodies in seven countries and are exploring outreach in at least six more countries throughout the continent;
- in **Asia**, where 16 missionaries have joined together to equip, encourage, and empower others to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to 1.8 billion unreached souls;
- in **Latin America**, where hundreds of thousands of people are being reached through *Academia Cristo* online courses and more than 25 individuals are actively leading a group in worship and study;
- in **Europe**, where missionaries partner with national churches to train the next generation of church leaders and bring the true gospel to countries without a strong Lutheran presence; and
- through **Multi-Language Productions**, which has produced materials in more than 56 languages and reaches tens of thousands of English-speakers in more than 30 different countries through the TELL online training platform.

AFRICA

WELS world missionaries in Africa spend much of their time exploring outreach in other countries and relationships with other national church bodies. In August 2023, members of WELS' One Africa Team visited congregations in Tanzania that are part of the Africa Mission Evangelism Church, a Lutheran church body of almost one hundred congregations. WELS first visited in 2021 to start discussions to see if the church bodies share the same scriptural beliefs and practices and could one day be in fellowship.

At the 2023 synod convention, WELS declared fellowship with Obadiah Lutheran Synod of Uganda, which it began working with in 2017.

For more information,
visit wels.net/missions.



LATIN AMERICA

When 17-year-old Tonny Quintero walked up the hill in the barrio of Medellín, Colombia, in 1980, he thought he was going to learn English. But Larry W. Schlomer, a WELS missionary, taught him “something much more beautiful,” says Quintero. He was confirmed by Schlomer three years later.

On Aug. 2, 2023, Quintero (pictured) stood before delegates of WELS’ 67th biennial synod convention representing *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*, with which WELS affirmed fellowship. When addressing the delegates, Quintero, now a pastor in Medellín, brought greetings and thanks. “Instruments that God used were sent by you to share the Word of God with me and others,” he says.



He went on to share how the Word of God has grown in Latin America to the point that in 2021 *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional* was formed by five WELS sister churches—all of which originally started as WELS missions—from Colombia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Bolivia, and Venezuela. This new church body

is the landing point for new congregations in Latin America that grow out of *Academia Cristo*, a multi-faceted program that shares the message of God’s grace with as many people as possible, identifies and trains potential leaders, and encourages these leaders to make more disciples who plant churches.

“Why was *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional* formed? So that these new churches that are being formed aren’t left alone but they have a group to become a member of,” says Quintero. A church in Bolivia recently was accepted into this church body; more than 25 are now working through the process.

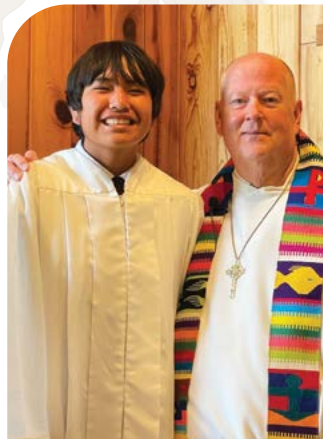
VIETNAM

In July 2023, God’s grace could be seen on WELS’ work in Vietnam with the formal building dedication of the new Theological Education Center in Hanoi and the graduation ceremony of the first class of 55 pastors from the Hmong Fellowship Church who have completed their seminary training. WELS President Mark Schroeder and WELS Missions representatives Sean Young and Larry Schlomer attended the events. Among others present were Jon Bare, president of Asia Lutheran Seminary; Bounkeo Lor, Hmong Asian ministry coordinator; and Joel Nitz, Hmong Asian missionary.



“We are grateful to the government of Vietnam for granting WELS permission to carry out this training and to erect a building in which to do it. We are thankful to the Hmong Fellowship Church for inviting us to train its pastors. We thank the members of our synod for their generous gifts of love and faith to make this possible. Above all, we are thankful to our gracious God for giving us this amazing opportunity to share the gospel in Vietnam,” says Schroeder.

Meet pastors from the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam at wels.net/vietnam.



NATIVE AMERICAN MISSIONS

Eight churches, one preaching station, and two Lutheran elementary schools serve those on the Fort Apache and the San Carlos Apache Reservations. **David Bostedt** (pictured) serves at East Fork and Canyon Day.

WELS MISSION JOURNEYS

Seven people from St. Martin’s Lutheran Church in Wauertown, S.D., participated in a WELS Mission Journeys trip to **London** in October 2023. They volunteered at two different charities in the area to assist WELS missionaries in building connections in the community. Pictured here are St. Martin’s members as well as members of WELS’ mission in London and WELS’ two missionaries in London, Mike Hartman and Conifer Berg. Interested in participating in a short-term mission trip with members of your congregation? Visit wels.net/missionjourneys for more information.



Joint Missions

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.

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE GOSPEL

“I would use the illustration of a switchboard operator from the early days of telephone communication to explain the work of a diaspora ministry facilitator,” says Neil Birkholz, WELS’ Asian ministry consultant and diaspora ministry facilitator for East Asia.



Steve Gabb, pastor at Hope, Los Angeles, Calif., baptized Amber in February 2023. Neil Birkholz connected Amber, originally from East Asia, with Gabb when he learned that she was looking for a WELS church in the Los Angeles area.

Birkholz further explains, “If someone from Korea is looking to connect their son with a WELS church in the United States, I help connect them with the local WELS church where their son will be living. If a member of my WELS church in California is returning to their home country of Thailand, I help connect them with our WELS World Mission One Team in Thailand so this member can continue to worship with other confessional Lutherans while living in Thailand.”

Diaspora ministry—or people-group ministry—involves both World Missions and Home Missions. Each World Missions One Team (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Native American) has at least one diaspora ministry facilitator, which is a role that a pastor takes on in addition to his full-time call.

Learn more at wels.net/jointmissions, including how to contact diaspora ministry facilitators to connect people groups.

ONE CAMPUS, THREE LANGUAGES

In August 2023, **King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif.**, ordained and installed its second and third pastors in a trilingual worship service. The three languages woven throughout the service reflected the congregation’s three distinct ministries: English, Vietnamese, and Spanish. Trung Lê (right), a recent graduate of the Pastoral Studies Institute, is leading the Vietnamese ministry, which is funded by the WELS Joint Mission Council. Grant Hagen (middle), a 2023 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, is leading the Hispanic ministry. Lê and Hagen serve alongside Brian Doebler (left), lead pastor at King of Kings.

When King of Kings was established in 1962, the community surrounding it looked—and sounded—very different than it does today. The population in Garden Grove was largely English-speaking Anglo. Today, about 40 percent of Garden Grove is Hispanic and 40 percent is Vietnamese. King of Kings’ members knew that to reach their neighbors with the gospel they would have to embrace the changes around them and adapt their ministry.



“Our prayer is to have a thriving gospel ministry in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese and a congregation that [works] together to share the gospel,” says Doebler. **“We want a campus that reflects the diversity of our community, like in Revelation 7—a glimpse of what we can anticipate in heaven.”**

TASTE OF MISSIONS

Many of WELS’ newest home and world missionaries attended Taste of Missions 2023. This family-friendly event aimed at giving WELS members a “taste of missions” is being held again on June 15, 2024, at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., and online. Learn more at tasteofmissions.com.





Called to serve

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

WELS Christian Aid and Relief reflects Christ's love and compassion to those suffering as the result of disasters or other hardships as well as through humanitarian aid distributed through WELS' home and world missions.

Leaders from WELS Christian Aid and Relief traveled to a predominantly Hindu country in South Asia early in 2023 to see how humanitarian aid grant money is being used there. While there, Christian Aid and Relief leaders attended the following humanitarian aid events:

- **Sewing schools:** These schools provide women with a skill that enables them to set up a small business in their village and earn income to support their families. The women are given the foot-pump sewing machine on which they are trained.
- **Free medical camps:** These two-day medical camps serve about 500 people, offering basic dental, medical, and vision care.
- **Education for young mothers:** Infants and toddlers are weighed and given check-ups. Participants receive information about proper nutrition and basic food staples.
- **Smokeless stove distribution:** Many heat their homes and cook their meals over open fires inside their homes. The smoke causes respiratory illnesses and negatively impacts vision. At this event, one hundred smokeless, wood-burning steel stoves with chimneys were distributed, offering families a safer alternative.

"It's a joy to know that these acts of kindness lead to many opportunities to share the reason for our hope in Christ," says Daniel Sims, director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief. WELS is working with 89 congregations and 7,000 Christians in this area of South Asia.

Domestically, WELS Christian Aid and Relief provides matching grants of up to \$2,500 to self-supporting WELS congregations once a year to carry out compassion ministry in their communities. In October 2023, WELS Christian Aid and Relief approved a Community Care and Compassion matching grant for Christ, Denver, Colo., to assist the congregation as it reaches out to Venezuelan migrants in its area.

Only a month after receiving the grant, Paul Biedenbender, pastor at Christ, Denver, noted: "After a Bible study on baptism, six children were baptized (two others will be soon when the fathers have a day off of work). Combined with a similar event two weeks before, we have baptized 15 children. Warm clothing and coffee during the week keeps bringing people in who then also receive pastoral care."

For more information, visit wels.net/relief.



Check out the August 2023 *WELS Connection* that discusses merging for ministry at wels.net/welsconnection.

Congregational Services

WELS Congregational Services exists to encourage and equip congregations for faithful and fruitful gospel ministry.

THE MORE MINISTRY THE BETTER

After analyzing *WELS' 2022 statistics*, Jonathan Hein, coordinator of *WELS Congregational Services*, wrote the following:

A little over a decade ago, some WELS congregations began exploring multi-site ministry. In a multi-site ministry, the congregations are one entity: one governance, one budget, and typically one name. The one church simply operates on multiple sites.

In more recent years, this has evolved to the next step—consolidation, where multiple churches merge into one. A recent *WELS Connection* told the story of Living Hope Lutheran Church in West Allis, Wis., which is a merger of three WELS congregations that were located within two miles of each other.

In 2022, WELS had almost 460 congregations with an average weekly worship attendance under 50. A little more than half of those congregations (about 230) are within a 10-minute drive of another WELS congregation, many in a similar worship attendance situation. If those congregations were

to consolidate at a 2:1 ratio, it would mean 115 fewer congregations.

One might ask, “Why do that? The more congregations the better.” **But in our shared effort in WELS to proclaim the gospel, is the total number of congregations what really matters? Or is it the ability to do zealous ministry?** Could consolidation help some congregations achieve a sort of “critical mass” that might potentially assist ministry efforts?

Imagine three WELS congregations in close proximity. Each has a sanctuary that can seat about 120. Each has a weekly worship attendance in the low 30s, which means the church is about 25 percent full.

Now imagine those three congregations consolidate at one location. Worship attendance is now in the 90s, meaning the sanctuary is more than 70 percent full. Does it enable the church to better do certain things—youth group, a choir, simply singing during worship? Does it help evangelism efforts

when a guest walks into a church that is mostly full versus mostly empty?

If nothing else, that consolidation allows the same number of people to be served by one pastor instead of three. In 2022 WELS had almost exactly the same number of active pastors as it did in 1990. Yet, at the end of 2022, WELS had almost 91,000 fewer members than in 1990.

There is a common obstacle to this strategy—an understandable sentimental attachment to location. Overcoming that understandable attachment will require time and the Spirit-wrought understanding that “the end” is Christ’s glory and mission. Church facilities are a means to the end. Thus, a strategy of consolidation will also take something of a culture shift, away from the mindset of “the more churches the better” to the mindset of **“the more ministry the better.”**

WELS Congregational Services is available to help leaders learn more about collaborating with area congregations to carry out more ministry. Contact congregationservices@wels.net.

RESOURCES TO BUILD UP CHRISTIANS OF ALL AGES

YOUTH MINISTRY



"Who am I? Your identity in Christ" is a three-part youth ministry resource that takes an in-depth look at real-life problems that overwhelm teens. The videos explore the identity crisis among teens and look to root teens' identity in Christ through the facts of God's Word rather than personal feelings. The series is adaptable for use in a youth group setting, home setting, or for personal teen viewing.



"Never too young to talk about Jesus: Why your witness matters" is a two-part video study for teens that shows why sharing their faith is their responsibility and privilege.

Multiple "pause points" give teens a chance to engage in discussion with one another and apply what they learn about sharing their faith. This study highlights the important role teens have in sharing Christ with their generation.

FAMILY MINISTRY



"Fostering faith in the next generation: Making time for what matters the most" is a webinar from WELS Women's Ministry that features panelists who are parents

in the trenches of discipling children for a lifetime of spiritual growth. These women speak to the challenges that come with the desire to live counterculture in a world that is so good at keeping us distracted and busy.

COMPASSION MINISTRY



"Helping the hurting with hope" is a five-lesson Bible study to help Christians appreciate the role of compassion in their personal and congregational lives. It provides gospel motivation to go beyond our comfort zones and act in compassionate ways through the Holy Spirit's power.

MILITARY SERVICES



WELS Military Services produces a **weekly video devotion** for members of the military, their families, and their loved ones. You can subscribe to have these devotions

e-mailed to your inbox each week at wels.net/subscribe.

WELS Military Services commissioned two new full-time chaplains in August 2023 to serve WELS members in the military and their families. **Robert Weiss** was commissioned as the new European civilian chaplain. **Paul Horn** (pictured) was commissioned as the new WELS national civilian chaplain. To receive support from these pastors, visit wels.net/refer.

Learn more at welscongregationalservices.net.

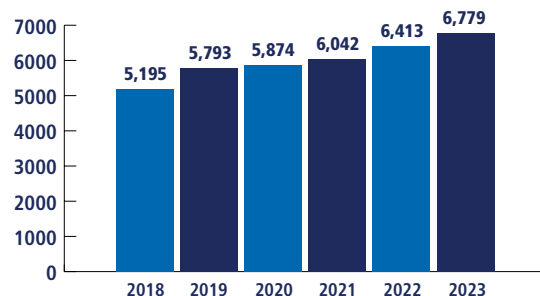


RECORD ENROLLMENT

Area Lutheran high school enrollment is up five percent for the 2023–24 school year in comparison with the year before. Enrollment has been steadily increasing, resulting in 20 percent more students attending area Lutheran high schools today than five years ago.

"In these trying and troubling times in America, we are seeing more people saying, 'I want Jesus for my kids' or 'I want Christian values.' They want to know that's what their kids are going to hear at high school," says James Rademan, director of WELS Lutheran Schools. "And our 30 high schools are excited and poised to share that gospel message."

AREA LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT





LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE EQUIPS MEMBERS TO SERVE

More than 1,300 WELS members gathered in Chicago in January for the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. For three days they dedicated themselves to learning about leading in the congregation and community as well as enjoying worship and fellowship. The conference was for all WELS members, both called workers and laypeople, men and women of all ages, current leaders and future leaders. About 47 percent of attendees were called workers, 44 percent were lay members, and 9 percent were high school or college students.

Sixty-one teenagers from WELS high schools attended the conference. One of the breakout sessions even featured a panel of high school students discussing their experiences and views.

"[Our church body] is hemorrhaging young adults, and you often hear people my age (or even older) speculating on why that is the case," says Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services. "So we wanted to have some presentations where we actually listened to young people. What are their views on why their generation is quitting church? What do they think we can do better to attempt to retain and reach young people today?"

Hein adds, "**Teens want to be more than consumers of gospel ministry. They want to be doers of gospel ministry.**" The conference exposed them to some of the very real conversations happening in the synod surrounding leadership, ministry, and outreach.

Videos of select presentations are available at lutheranleadership.com. To learn more about topics covered at the conference, visit forwardinchrist.net/lutheran-leadership.

The **WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership** was held Jan. 16–18, 2023, in Chicago.

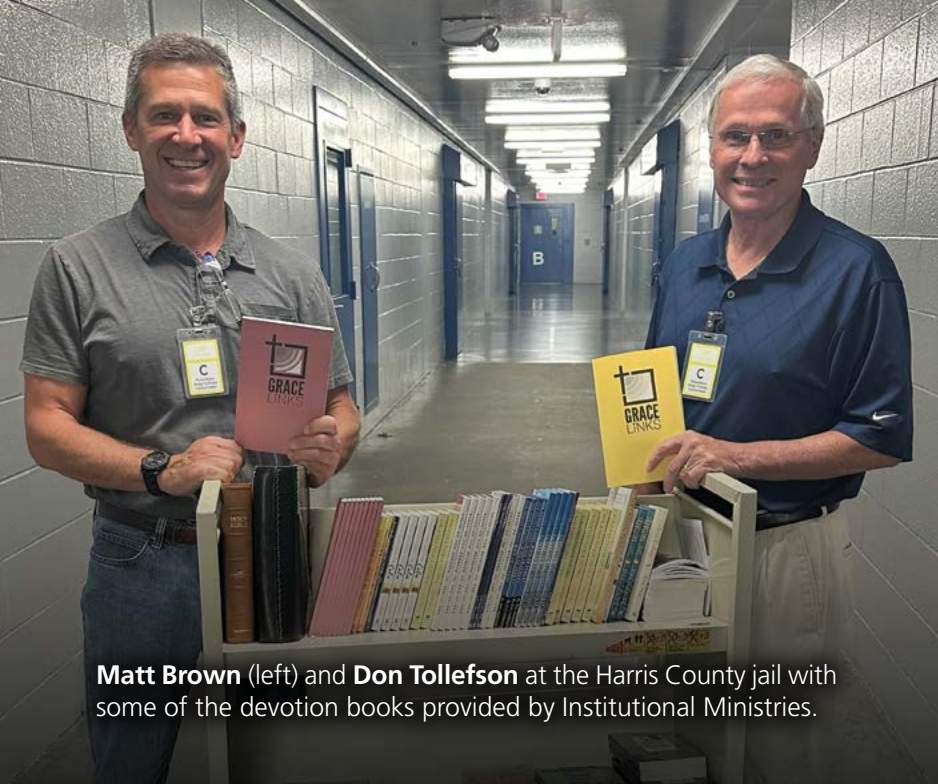
EVERYONE OUTREACH

Thirty-six WELS congregations participated in an Everyone Outreach workshop in 2023. Everyone Outreach was designed by Kurt Nitz (pictured presenting at the National Conference on Lutheran Leadership) and Eric Roecker, the director of WELS Evangelism, to help congregations build a culture of outreach so that every member and every ministry is thinking about and participating in outreach.

When a congregation participates in Everyone Outreach, a facilitator visits the congregation for a two-day workshop. During the workshop, the facilitator uses group exercises and reflection, grounded in God's Word, to help members focus on outreach. After the workshop, the facilitator continues to encourage and support the congregation in maintaining an outreach mindset.

Learn more at everyoneoutreach.com.





Matt Brown (left) and **Don Tollefson** at the Harris County jail with some of the devotion books provided by Institutional Ministries.

PRISON MINISTRY

“The prisoners are able to live their faith. . . . It’s amazing to see how God works [and] gets his Word out through these guys,” says Matt Brown about his ministry at the Harris County jail.

Since 2017, Brown, pastor at Abiding Word, Houston, Texas, has been ministering to prisoners at the Harris County jail, the third largest jail in the country with more than 10,000 prisoners. With the support of his congregation and help from volunteers, Brown has reached more than 3,000 prisoners with God’s Word. Not only have Brown and the volunteers shared God’s Word with the inmates but they also have preached the gospel to healthcare and detention workers.

“God’s Word does work,” says retired pastor Don Tollefson about his experience volunteering at the Harris County jail. “Many [prisoners] are open and willing to listen—they’re at this point in life that they need something that is more than themselves.”

Dave Hochmuth, director of WELS Prison Ministry, says, “Jesus died for these people too. . . . There are some huge barriers to getting people back to the body of Christ, and we need people who have the heart for that, who are willing to reach out to somebody who is not like them.”

Numerous partnerships have developed to support this ministry. WELS Prison Ministry provides training for the volunteers. Brown uses existing materials from Institutional Ministries, WELS Prison Ministry, Time of Grace, and WELS Multi-Language Productions to preach the good news of Jesus to the inmates. Having some of these resources available in both English and Spanish has increased the reach even more, especially as other chaplains have begun to use these materials.

Through the partnerships and relationships formed, thousands of people have heard God’s saving Word. “This is what God has called us to do—to serve in love,” says Brown.

Learn more about how you can get involved in prison ministry work in your community or through serving as a pen pal at wels.net/prison-ministry.

Look what’s coming in 2024

WELS Congregational Services is coordinating three national conferences in 2024:

June 25–28

WELS International Youth Rally

Fort Collins, Colo.



July 28–30

WELS Women’s Ministry Conference

Pewaukee, Wis.



July 30–Aug. 2

National Worship Conference

Kenosha, Wis.



Learn more at wels.net/events

DID YOU KNOW?

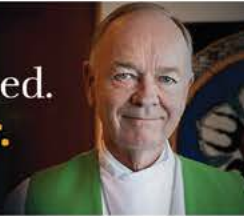
The 2024 WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts will feature a 120-voice festival choir with full orchestra, a 120-voice high school honor choir with full orchestra, and a 70-voice children’s choir.

Stay informed all year through these WELS news sources



WELS CONNECTION monthly video

Get Connected.
Get Together.



TOGETHER
weekly e-news + video updates



FORWARD IN CHRIST monthly magazine

Learn more at
wels.net/news-media



Support Services

MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN GIVING

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving works on behalf of the Conference of Presidents, assisting with gathering Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) and encouraging direct gifts to WELS through mailed appeals, coordination of special offerings, and WELS Christian giving counselors.

We praise God that Congregation Mission Offerings have set new records each year since 2019 and as of this writing, 2023 is also looking to finish with strong congregational offerings.

In 2023, the Ministry of Christian Giving worked with Martin Luther College to promote competency-based education, a program that provides training to second-career teachers. We rejoice that \$581,000 was given through November.

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving is working with WELS Home Missions on the effort to plant 100 new home mission churches and enhance 75 existing ministries from 2023–2033. From July 2021 through November 2023, 1,587 individuals and groups have offered 2,285 gifts/commitments totaling \$2.76 million. Christian Giving is also working with Luther Preparatory School on a capital campaign to build a new music center on the Watertown, Wis., campus.

In fiscal year 2023 Christian giving counselors made thousands of contacts with WELS donors and helped them arrange 202 major gifts and expectancies totaling \$40.5 million. Visit wels.net/givingcounselors to find your giving counselor and receive free, confidential assistance with offering a gift to WELS.



PLANNING FOR 175TH ANNIVERSARY UNDERWAY

The 175th anniversary of the founding of the Wisconsin Synod will occur in 2025. A WELS 175th Anniversary Planning Committee began meeting in January 2023 to discuss and carry out plans to help WELS celebrate this milestone of God's grace. Two major projects are being planned—a new pictorial history of WELS and an accompanying video. All WELS members are invited to submit historical photos (such as the one above) for consideration in these projects. Submissions can be made at wels.net/175-photos. Watch for more information about anniversary projects and events at welshistoricalinstitute.org.

Pictured is the dedication of the new seminary campus in Thiensville (now Mequon), Wis., on Aug. 18, 1929. The service was one of the largest gatherings of WELS members in history with more than 10,000 people estimated to have attended.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can find information about WELS churches, schools, called workers, and WELS-affiliated ministries at yearbook.wels.net. WELS Technology maintains a database that allows for this comprehensive look-up service. Wondering where the closest WELS church is in a particular city? Visit yearbook.wels.net and choose "Organizations."

Called to support

WELS FOUNDATION

For Don and Joyce Frisque, supporting Christ's gospel ministry is close to their hearts. Joyce served as a WELS teacher for more than 35 years, and Don served as a WELS teacher for 6 years and as a school social worker for 31 years. Their two children, Deb and Paul, have also devoted their lives to ministry.

As they planned their retirement, the Frisques wanted to thank the Lord for his goodness to them. "God has blessed us, and we want to pass those blessings on," Joyce says. "We don't need anything more for ourselves, so we are going to give it back where we can to the church." They also wanted to share their blessings with their children and grandchildren.

The Frisques knew that funding a legacy gift from their individual retirement accounts (IRAs) could help them fulfill their giving goals, but they were searching for the right type of planned gift. When they met with WELS Christian Giving counselor Tom Mielke, he explained the benefits of a legacy charitable remainder trust (often called a "give it twice" trust), which would allow Don and Joyce to support both the people *and* the ministries they love, in addition to providing tax benefits.

The Frisques set up a legacy charitable remainder trust, with WELS Foundation serving as trustee. When they are in heaven, their children will receive quarterly income payments from the trust for 15 years. After that, the remainder

will support the multiple WELS ministries that the Frisques have chosen.

"Everything we have been given has been entrusted to us, and we are responsible for managing it in a God-pleasing way," says Don. **"In this way we believe we are doing that."**



Scan the QR code or visit wels.net/legacy-charitable-remainder-trust to watch a video about how a legacy charitable remainder trust can be a blessing both to your family and the ministries you love.



As the Frisque family (pictured) learned, there are many ways to leave gifts to support gospel work, based on your situation and giving goals. Visit wels.net/foundation to learn more or contact your local WELS Christian giving counselor at wels.net/givingcounselors.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial Services provides finance and accounting services that support WELS ministries and safeguard the assets that God has provided.

“WELS is in a very strong financial position as we enter the fiscal year 2023–24 and 2024–25 biennium,” notes Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS’ chief financial officer and treasurer. “It is with joyful thanks to our gracious Lord that the synod has continued to see strong levels of unrestricted support through gifts, grants, and bequests, which allows for the continued expansion of mission and ministry. We ask God to provide pure hearts, clear vision, and patient faith as the plans for this biennium are carried out.”

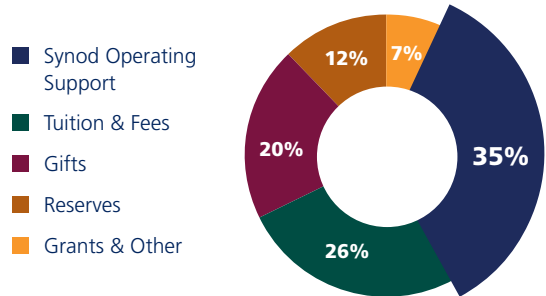
Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) are critical to WELS’ financial position as they fund approximately 70 percent of WELS’ operating budget every year. WELS finished fiscal year 2023 (year ended June 30, 2023) with CMO of \$23.4 million, which was 1.3 percent higher than the previous year. **WELS is thankful for the continued generosity of its people in supporting ministry efforts.**

Other critical components to WELS’ financial position are strong reserves, including the Financial Stabilization Fund, which is utilized every year to support approximately 30 percent of WELS’ operating budget. The Financial Stabilization Fund holds all undesignated non-CMO funding sources (gifts, grants, bequests, investment income, and other support) to assist in supporting the synod’s annual operating expenses.

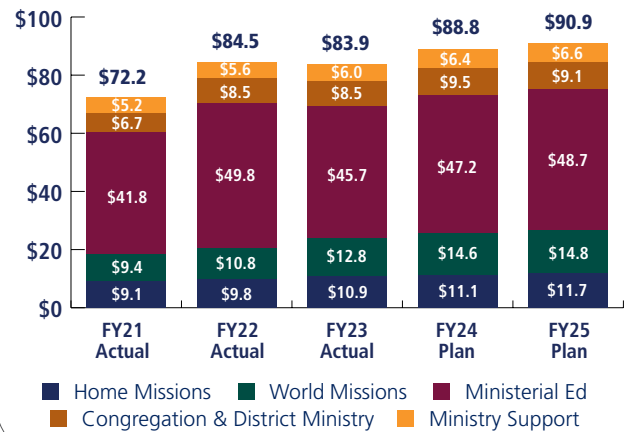
Synod convention delegates passed the proposed fiscal year 2023–24 and 2024–25 ministry financial plan in July 2023, which includes support for WELS ministerial education, home and world missions, congregation and district ministry, and general ministry. Total synod expenses (including the four ministerial education schools) for the biennium are expected to be approximately \$90 million each year supported by synod

operating support consisting of CMO and the Financial Stabilization Fund (approximately 35 percent) as well as tuition, reserves, individual gifts, and grants (approximately 65 percent).

SUPPORT FOR SYNOD EXPENSES (in millions)



SUMMARY OF SYNOD EXPENSES BY FISCAL YEAR (in millions)



WELS BENEFIT PLANS

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

The WELS VEBA Health Plan provides benefits for church and school workers and their family members in accordance with God’s Word while remaining compliant with applicable law. The VEBA Plan provides comprehensive, nationwide coverage. **More than 80 percent of WELS workers and calling bodies participate in WELS VEBA.**

The WELS Shepherd Plan is the retirement savings plan for synod workers. WELS called workers earn retirement benefits through defined contributions made to their Shepherd Plan accounts. In addition, workers can save

and invest a portion of their earnings and calling bodies can make employer contributions to provide income to workers during their retirement years.

The WELS Pension Plan provides WELS called workers with a valuable source of guaranteed income during retirement. The Pension Plan was frozen on Dec. 31, 2021. All Pension benefits earned through the freeze date will be paid to participants but no new Pension benefits can be earned for service performed after the freeze date.

Coverage and benefits provided through WELS Benefit Plans are uniform throughout all 50 states. This supports WELS ministry and the call process by providing access to high-quality, affordable benefits for workers and calling bodies regardless of geographic location. Visit welsbpo.net for more information.

NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) provides Christ-centered, biblically sound resources to the members of WELS and beyond. NPH publishes *Forward in Christ* and *Meditations: Daily Devotional*, elementary and Sunday school curricula, Bible studies, worship materials, music, and faith-strengthening books. In 2023, NPH released more than 30 Christian resources in print and digital formats, including:

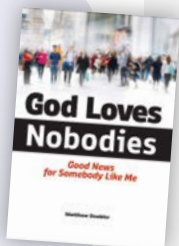
- **An Ever-Present Help in Trouble:** A portable devotional booklet containing 40 devotions that offer gospel comfort for any personal or widespread crisis, whether economic, natural, medical, a loss, or another traumatic experience. The reflections share the comfort of God's love and providence with those suffering from life's disasters, reminding you of God's promises of strength.
- **Esther: Providential Persian Queen:** Invites participants to examine Esther's epic saga in this seven-session Bible study. Each session includes an opening prayer, references to other parts of Scripture, and multiple discussion questions ideal for either individual or group study.
- **Hymns for Life Hymnology Curriculum:** A three-year, three-level curriculum for K-8 that studies 90 hymns from *Christian Worship: Hymnal*.
- **The Splendid Task of the Ministry: A Pastoral Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles:** This professional commentary features verse-by-verse translations from the Greek text and extensive "Thoughts for Ministry" applications throughout. It is one of the relatively few current commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus written from a conservative Lutheran law and gospel, Word and sacrament perspective.
- **Christian Worship resources:** Resources released in 2023 include "Easy Hymn Accompaniments: Chorale and Piano Editions," "Foundations," "Commentary on the Propers Year B," "Playlist," and "The Service: Setting Five."

NPH released several other titles to strengthen faith, including *The Baptismal Life*, *The Heart of Faith*, *My Christian Worship*, *Singing the Small Catechism*, and many additional books, Bible studies, and music pieces.

Visit nph.net or call **800-662-6022** to learn more about the ministry of NPH.

DID YOU KNOW?

Northwestern Publishing House launched an online book club in 2023. The first book being discussed is *God Loves Nobodies*. Learn more at nph.net/god-loves-nobodies.html.



WELS CHURCH EXTENSION FUND

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., (WELS CEF) provides financing through loans and grants to mission congregations so they can acquire land and ministry facilities to be used for gospel outreach in coordination with WELS Home Missions. WELS CEF also provides loans to mission-minded self-supporting

WELS congregations and schools for land and facility projects. The

money to carry out WELS CEF's mission comes from investments and gifts from WELS members, congregations, and affiliated organizations.

In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, \$55.8 million of new loans and \$2.7 million of new grants were approved to mission and mission-minded self-supporting congregations. In

addition, WELS CEF disbursed \$2.1 million of endowment and unrestricted net asset grants to Home Missions.

Good News, Mount Horeb, Wis. (pictured), a WELS home mission, received support from WELS Church Extension Fund as it built its new church.

For more information, visit wels.net/cef.



WELS INVESTMENT FUNDS

Since 1997, WELS Investment Funds has been providing investment portfolios to benefit WELS and its affiliated ministries.

We know that we are better together, which is why **255 WELS organizations have invested nearly \$300 million with WELS Investment Funds** (as of June 30, 2023). By pooling our resources, we can enjoy benefits we wouldn't have by investing individually.

Our investors benefit from lower investment costs, oversight by a national board of directors made up of WELS members with relevant experience, the expertise of professional institutional investment consultants, and ease of use as investors work directly with our professional WELS staff to set up and manage accounts.

Does your congregation or school have funds that you are considering investing? Contact us at WELSFunds@wels.net or **877-888-8953** to explore your options.

Learn if WELS Investment Funds can be a blessing to your ministry at wels.net/welsfunds.



WELS *in brief*

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

WELS is the third largest Lutheran church body in the United States with 1,243 churches, 335,648 baptized members, and 269,032 communicant members.

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

WELS congregations—either individually or as federations—operate one of the largest parochial school systems in the United States. This system includes 280 Lutheran elementary schools, 356 early childhood ministries, and 30 area Lutheran high schools. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis., a liberal arts college for Christian men and women, is a WELS-affiliated ministry.

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

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

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

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

Known as the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, the synod's headquarters in Waukesha, Wis., houses WELS' areas of ministry and support staff as well as the subsidiaries, WELS Archives, and the WELS Visitor Center.

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

Tours to the WELS Visitor Center may be scheduled by e-mailing cmmtours@wels.net or by calling 414-256-3200.

For more information about the **Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod**, including a directory of local congregations and schools, visit wels.net.



WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive
Waukesha, WI 53188-1108
wels.net

