



Your gifts,
God's blessings

An annual report to our members

Message from the President

FRONT COVER: Mark Panning, a missionary on WELS' One Africa Team, traveled to Dukem, Ethiopia, to teach a course on the pastoral epistles to the students of Maor Theological Seminary, the worker training school of the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia.

BELOW: In fall 2022, WELS President Mark Schroeder traveled to Kenya and Ethiopia with WELS World Missions and visited with members of WELS' sister church bodies, the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ—Kenya and the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia. Here he is pictured preaching in Nairobi, Kenya.



"This is why, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I never stop giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, will give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing Christ fully. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope to which he has called you, just how rich his glorious inheritance among the saints is, and just how surpassingly great his power is for those of us who believe" (Ephesians 1:15-19).

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is not primarily a Christian denomination. It is not primarily a non-profit Christian organization. It is not primarily to be defined as a building in Waukesha or as a group of full-time leaders who direct the mission and ministry of our church body.

The synod, above all, is people. People like you, the members of your family, the people who sit beside you in church to worship, and the workers who have been

of Ephesus. And he prayed that God would continue to strengthen people to be faithful to him and faithful in carrying out their mission.

This annual report is really a story about God and his people. It's a summary of the blessings that God has showered on our synod in the past year. It's a snapshot of the many opportunities that God has placed before us and of how his Word has equipped his people to seize those opportunities to share the gospel.

"Join me in marveling at the grace of God."

called to serve in the public ministry. It is people—all of whom have been given an amazing mission by God to preserve his Word and to share that Word with the world. **It is people who have been joined together in a common faith and to carry out a common mission.**

No wonder the apostle Paul wrote the words above to his fellow Christians in the city of Ephesus. He thanked God for people whom God called to be his own and to serve him. He thanked God for the message that had worked faith and hope in the hearts of the people

As you read this annual report, join me in marveling at the grace of God—the grace of God that has brought us into his family and given us an eternal inheritance, and the grace of God that has blessed the work that he has privileged us to carry out.

Serving with you in Christ,

Mark Schroeder

REV. MARK SCHROEDER
WELS President

Your gifts, God's blessings



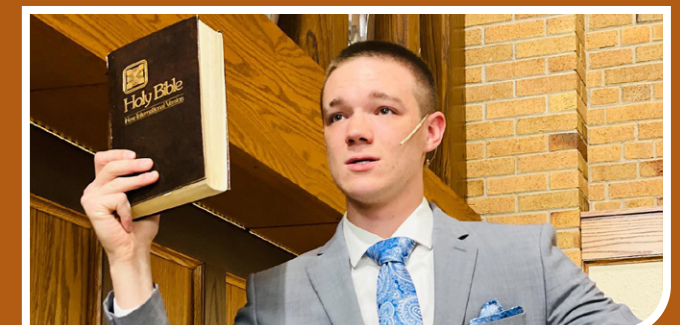
Richard Gurgel, president of Martin Luther College, installs Nathan Savage as a tutor for the college. Savage graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in May 2022.

Called to prepare

WELS Ministerial Education

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2).

The purpose of WELS' 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. WELS supports ministerial education on three levels at four schools—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.; Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.; and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.



Luther Preparatory School senior **Ethan Schmidt** giving chapel in fall 2022. Senior males are given this opportunity to work with a dean to prepare a message from God's Word for the student body.

An annual report to our members



Parker Brown, a senior preseminary student from Conroe, Texas, preaching at MLC's evening chapel.



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.

On July 1, 2022, Martin Luther College launched a new strategic plan to direct the college's work for years to come. Richard Gurgel, president of MLC, explains that *Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross* has three foundational beliefs and four key initiatives.

Foundational beliefs:

- We pursue excellence not as slaves but as loved children under Christ's cross.
- We pursue excellence by offering him our best with the unique talents given to each of us.
- We pursue excellence under our cross by dying to mediocrity and rising with the courage to risk all for the gospel.

Key initiatives:

- We embrace our family's identity as a Lutheran college dedicated to preparing gospel ministers for our synod and its mission fields.
- We empower our family's formation as we help everyone grow spiritually and academically while also supporting emotional and physical health.
- We expand our family's reach as we reflect the multicultural reality of the Church before Christ in eternity.
- We endow our family's home as we make MLC more affordable while providing an excellent college experience.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2022–23, Martin Luther College awarded a total of almost \$1.25 million to its students through the **Congregational Partner Grant Program**. This program encourages congregations to support members who attend MLC. MLC then matches up to \$1,200/student (\$1,325 in 2023–24) in the form of a grant to offset tuition costs. For more information, visit mlc-wels.edu/cpgp.



CLASS OF 2022

One hundred seventy students graduated from Martin Luther College on May 14, 2022. Pictured is Richard Gurgel, college president, presenting a diploma to **Emily Flatau**, who received an assignment to serve as an early childhood education teacher at Resurrection, Aurora, Ill.



EVANGELISM DAY

Nov. 9, 2022, was Evangelism Day at MLC. Twenty-six electives offered students the opportunity to learn more about evangelism strategies in the United States and around the world. Pictured is **Jim Rademan**, director of WELS Lutheran Schools, presenting on the topic "Blessings, opportunities, and challenges . . . a look at WELS schools in 2022 and beyond."

629

UNDERGRADUATES
WERE SERVED BY MLC
IN 2022–23



CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

Paul Wang, a Chinese international student at MLC, reading books about the Mid-Autumn Festival to students at the MLC Early Childhood Learning Center in September 2022.

For more information,
visit mlc-wels.edu.





On May 27, 2022, 26 men graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and began their pastoral ministries.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

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

The seminary also provides pastors with opportunities for continued growth in all their callings through 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.

28
VICARS IN
2022-23

VICARING IN TORONTO

Jeremiah Wallander spent his vicar year serving Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Here he's pictured with a student at Hope's summer music camp. Each seminary student spends an internship year as a "vicar," learning and serving under experienced pastors in mission-minded congregations.



STUDYING IN SAN DIEGO

When **Mark Jiang** (pictured middle) first came to Reformation, San Diego, Calif., he was interested in the congregation's school. But soon, he joined the congregation and thought about becoming a pastor himself. That's when he met David Choi, an Evangelical Lutheran Synod seminary student who served as a vicar at Reformation. Choi, who also grew up in China, encouraged Mark to pursue the public ministry.

Mark began taking courses in 2020 through WELS' Pastoral Studies Institute, which provides seminary training to

students from a variety of countries and cultures. He and Choi studied together throughout the year.

"It was a very good chance for me to learn with Vicar Choi," says Mark. "He helped teach me the Foundations 101 class in Mandarin, then we went through again and reviewed it in English. It was good for us to look into the English verse or Greek verse and use different languages to help us gather the meaning of the Bible."

Mark appreciates that he is able to complete some of his seminary training in person

with the pastors at Reformation, in addition to taking courses with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professors via Zoom.

"It is a pleasure for me to learn God's Word," Mark says. "I am very thankful to my teachers for giving me the right teaching from God, and I am happy I can put what I learn into practice and share

the good news with other brothers and sisters. I hope to have many chances to serve and help people, and I hope God gives me the strength to do this."

Also pictured are (left) **Neil Birkholz**, WELS' North American Asian ministry consultant; and **David Choi**.

WHAT IS THE PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE?

The **Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI)** guides and assists spiritual leaders around the world through pre-seminary and seminary training. Team members spend much of their time visiting and teaching PSI students. Harland Goetzinger accepted the call to be the director of the PSI in fall 2022.



TEACHING CATECHISM

Nathaniel Wranovsky, a second-year student at WLS, is helping teach catechism at Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis. Students participate in a number of hands-on ministry experiences throughout their time at the seminary.

For more information, visit wisluthsem.org.





Four Luther Preparatory School students traveled to **Germany** with their professor, Souksamay Phetsanghane (fourth from left). There they worked with Michael Herbst (third from left), president of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church—Germany.

Called to proclaim

World Missions

WELS World Missions conducts gospel outreach in 44 countries and is exploring outreach opportunities in 18 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 (MLP).

World Missions supports mission work:

- on **Native American** reservations, where the gospel has been shared on the Apache reservations in Arizona for more than 125 years and exploratory mission work is beginning on other reservations throughout North America;
- in **Africa**, where missionaries partner with national church bodies in six countries and are exploring outreach in at least seven more countries throughout the continent;

- in **Asia**, where the two missionary teams 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 40 individuals are being trained to plant a church;

- 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.



Henry Herrera, a pastor in **Colombia** and president of *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*, teaching in Cuernavaca, Mexico

Preparatory schools

Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., and Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich., prepare high school students for future service as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. 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. Here are two examples of how the preparatory schools are offering students hands-on ministry experiences.

MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

"When the Board for Home Missions announced the initiative to open 100 new missions in 10 years, at Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) we contemplated how we could play an even larger role in providing workers for those ripe harvest fields," says Mark Luetzow, MLS president. "We quickly recognized that those future missionaries were already on our campus. That's why we partnered with Home Missions to place this year's senior boys who desired a pastor Taste of Ministry into mission settings."

A total of 10 MLS seniors traveled to mission settings across the United States for a long weekend in October 2022. Pictured from left are three of those young men, who shadowed home



missionaries in Texas and then attended the South Central District's annual missionaries conference. From left: **Andrew Nemmers**, Hope in the Heights, Houston; **Jason Hanania**; **Daron Lindemann**, CrossLife, Pflugerville; **Ryan Dabe**; **Hans Thomford**, Amazing Grace, Amarillo; and **Will Eubank**.

Jason commented, "This was an awesome experience. I was already thinking of being a pastor, but this experience settled it for me."

LUTHER PREPARATORY SCHOOL

In June 2022, **Souksamay Phetsanghane**, a professor at LPS, took four students to visit WELS' sister church body, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church—Germany (ELFK). Students worked with a congregation there to present a joint English/German worship service. They also attended and sang at the synod's convention.

"Traveling to Germany with Pastor Souk and getting to know Pastor Drechsler and the members of his congregation showed me the importance of keeping in touch with our fellow synods," says **Sandra Toyoda-Bell**, now studying at Martin Luther College to be a teacher. "This trip gave me the experience to practice my German in real-life settings and a teacher who encouraged us to engage in conversations with the people there and witness how God is working through the church in Germany."

For more information, visit wels.net/missions.





Latin America missionaries visit members of a house church in Cuernavaca, Mexico

61
ACADEMIA CRISTO
STUDENTS
CONFIRMED

World Missions

ACADEMIA CRISTO

Meet **Marli** (above, front row, second from right) in Cuernavaca, Mexico. After intensive study with *Academia Cristo*, Marli now participates in the advanced classes of the program and is personally guided by a missionary as she shares the Word of God with the small group in her community (pictured). Her group meets regularly, digging into the Word of God, sharing Sunday school lessons with youth, and even doing periodic humanitarian services in the area.

As *Academia Cristo* has grown, many of those studying God's Word are women. **Elise Gross** is now serving as the dean of women for *Academia Cristo* to encourage these women to carry out the Great Commission in their homes and respective communities while embracing biblical principles and Christian freedom.

Gross's primary focus is the same as that of the rest of the *Academia Cristo* mission team:

- 1. Make disciples** in Latin America by sharing the message of God's grace with as many people as possible.
- 2. Identify and train** potential leaders.
- 3. Encourage** those leaders to make disciples who plant churches.

For more information, visit wels.net/academia-cristo.

TELL

Over a year ago **Joseph** stumbled across a Facebook ad for TELL and had to see what it was all about. After completing the three self-study courses, he began live group classes with a pastor, studying the Bible and Lutheran catechism on Zoom. He formed friendships with students thousands of miles away. His best friend is from

Trinidad. They make TELL T-shirts and share what they're learning with others.

In October **Dan Laitinen**, a TELL missionary, visited Joseph's home in Nairobi, Kenya. The two (pictured right) finally had a Bible study together in person. Sitting knee to knee, Joseph told Laitinen his story. He is the eighth of eight children, raised by his oldest sister. His parents passed away before he knew them. As a child, he learned how to work and paid for his own schooling through grade twelve.

Joseph could identify that sin was the problem and God's grace was the solution. He has learned how to read the Bible and express his faith to others. Throughout the visit, Laitinen encouraged Joseph in his studies; introduced him to the local church affiliated with WELS' sister church body, Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ—



Kenya; and presented the next steps for him to gather in a Bible study group.

"Did you go to church as a child?" Laitinen asked. "No," Joseph said, "We did not go to church."

"Are you going to church now?" Laitinen asked. "I am," Joseph replied, "with you and the teachers at TELL Network."

UKRAINE

WELS is supporting the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, our sister church body, by providing aid for clothing, food, medicine, and other supplies. Before Russia invaded Ukraine, the Ukrainian Lutheran Church had 700 baptized members in 17 congregations served by 11 national pastors.



AFRICA

Mission work in Africa is changing. Missionaries working with WELS' established missions—**Cameroon, Malawi, Nigeria, and Zambia**—focus on assisting the national synods and their churches as they mature, while also helping with their pre-seminary and seminary programs. Two synods in **Ethiopia and Kenya** reached out for assistance and are now in full fellowship with WELS and partner in outreach initiatives.

The new work before WELS missionaries is outreach, as individuals and church groups in seven additional African

countries have reached out to WELS and the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA) for fellowship and theological training. Visits have been made to **Liberia, Mozambique, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe**.

Pictured below are participants of an evangelism workshop held for members of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa—Zambia in November 2022. The workshop was a joint effort of WELS' One Africa Team and Pastoral Studies Institute.



DID YOU KNOW?

Forty-nine world missionaries partner with almost 500 national pastors to conduct outreach and train more than 380 students for service in Christ's kingdom.

INDONESIA

WELS Friendly Counselor Greg Bey visited WELS' sister church in Indonesia, Gereja Lutheran Indonesia, to attend its synod convention, visit with leadership and discuss ministry ideas, and teach courses at the seminary there. Bey also visited Hosiana congregation to celebrate its 31st anniversary. Pictured is Bey with two of the founding members of Hosiana, who opened their home as a meeting place when the congregation first formed. Their son is now a pastor serving Gereja Lutheran Indonesia.



29
CONGREGATIONS IN
INDONESIA



FOUNDATION, FOLSOM, CALIF.

Clark Woods was in the right place at the perfect time to hear the message of free grace, forgiveness, and peace in Jesus when he most desperately needed it. Watch a video to learn more about Clark and how God used Foundation, Folsom, Calif., a home mission congregation, to deliver that message. Visit wels100in10.net to watch God's plan unfold for Clark (pictured here with David Koelpin, pastor at Foundation).



Home Missions

In 2022, the Board for Home Missions approved 12 new home mission starts and enhancements.

New missions

- **Windsor, Colo.:** WELS congregations in Ft. Collins, Loveland, and Greeley are supporting this new mission start in a rapidly expanding area in northern Colorado. Currently 20 WELS families are located in the target area, which has no Lutheran churches. Stephen Koelpin has accepted the call to serve this new mission.
- **Wichita, Kan.:** Messiah is looking to start a second site on the east side of the city to better serve the 650,000 people in the greater metropolitan area. The area population is expected to grow by 10 percent over the next 10 years. Jacob Jenswold has accepted the call to start this new mission.
- **Canton, Ga.:** Members and leadership from Beautiful Savior, Marietta, Ga., have identified Canton, a quickly growing suburb of Metro-Atlanta, as a prime location to plant a new mission church. Population has doubled in the past twenty years, and that growth is expected to continue. Cale Mead has accepted the call to start this new mission.
- **Conroe, Texas:** Conroe, the northernmost suburb of Houston, is the fifth fastest-growing city in the United States. Abiding Word in Houston, Texas, is helping this new mission get off the ground. Jeremy Mattek has accepted the call to start this new mission.

- **Lodi, Wis. (unsubsidized):** Zion, Leeds, Wis., is establishing a second site in Lodi. They leased a ministry center where the 17-person ministry team helped launch public worship on Oct. 16, 2022.

Enhancements

- St. John, St. Paul, Minn.
- Cross of Glory, Baton Rouge, La.
- Divine Savior, Delray Beach, Fla.
- Abiding Savior, Killeen, Texas
- Our Savior, Burlington, Iowa

Unsubsidized mission status

- Mt. Calvary, Redding/Anderson, Calif.
- Living Faith, Midlothian, Texas

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN UNSUBSIDIZED MISSION?

Home Missions provides assistance to unsubsidized mission congregations through its district mission boards, mission counselors, synodical support staff, and special project funds, but does not provide direct financial support.

CARBON VALLEY, FIRESTONE, COLO.

Jesse Jensen had recently moved to Firestone with his folks. He had just graduated from nursing school and was working full time, but he knew something was missing. He grew up “Christian” in the sense that he knew of Christ and knew of church, but he had never actively practiced or been a member anywhere. What he did have was a grandfather who was a believer and an interest in knowing more, so he picked up a phone and called me.

I told Jesse, “We aren’t actually worshiping in person, and we don’t actually have a building . . . but I’ll buy you a coffee.” He said yes, and his journey to Christ and Carbon Valley began.

Over the next year and a half, we systematically walked through the Bible. Jesse couldn’t get enough, which meant our classes went long and we added about four or five “bonus” lessons. It was incredible to talk through the Ten Commandments with someone who had never read them before.

Jesse stuck with us. He learned what worship looks like, built relationships, and watched how our members treated one another and modeled Christian living. But most of all, he heard about his Savior over and over again, and that Savior worked in his heart. So much so that when Jesse’s grandfather died, his family asked Jesse to say something and lead the memorial. I gave him some prayers and thoughts, and he took them and led his family to give thanks for his grandfather’s life but also to see Jesus. And after all that, Jesse was the first adult baptism and new member in our new building.

Tim Spiegelberg, home missionary at Carbon Valley Lutheran Church, Firestone, Colo.



CAMPUS MINISTRY IN RENO, NEV.

When **Light of the Valleys, Reno, Nev.**, discovered it was going to have a vicar for the first time in 2021, it decided to embark on a new ministry opportunity—a campus ministry. The congregation—along with its two sister congregations in the Reno area—gathered resources from WELS Campus Ministry and started putting together a core group of students to determine how to minister to and reach college-age adults.

Enter **Sam Schulz**. Sam, a student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., was assigned as a vicar to Light of the Valleys in May 2021. When he and his wife, Maddie, arrived a few months later, the campus ministry was just getting started. Sam and Maddie got to work making contacts and planning events.

Besides studying the Bible, the group always did some sort of activity—things like playing games, bowling, rock painting. “We were solidifying friendships first, so they were comfortable talking about uncomfortable things,” says Sam. The group started small but grew to about a dozen who regularly attended the twice-monthly gatherings. Members of the group started bringing their friends and even began getting together socially outside of the scheduled meetings.

But the group wasn’t only about fun and games. “Members were so dedicated and so excited to get into God’s Word,” says Sam. “They really wanted to study it and they really cared about each other too.”

April (pictured above on her confirmation day) is a prime example of the students that are being reached through the group. April’s parents already had joined Light of the Valleys, but she only had been attending sporadically. The campus ministry group made her feel more comfortable, so she started attending Bible information classes and worship and was then baptized and confirmed.

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



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.



TASTE OF MISSIONS

(From left) **Benjamin Foxen** and **Keegan Dowling** were commissioned as missionaries to Africa at Taste of Missions on June 11, 2022, at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Taste of Missions offers WELS members an opportunity to connect with brothers and sisters in Christ from around the globe. Those who can't attend in person can participate online at tasteofmissions.com. The 2023 event will be held on June 10.

HMONG NATIONAL CONFERENCE

From July 29–31, 170 Hmong members from 5 different congregations across the United States gathered at Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis., for the Hmong National Conference. The theme of the conference was “One Faith, One Family.” Learn more about Hmong ministry in the United States at wels.net/hmong.



8
CHINESE OUTREACH
MINISTRIES IN
NORTH AMERICA

CHINESE MINISTRY IN CANADA

Abiding Love, Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada, launched public worship on Nov. 27, 2022. The congregation will also continue to offer Chinese worship twice a month in Vancouver, which is central to many members of Abiding Love. **Qiang Wang**, a graduate of the Pastoral Studies Institute, serves Abiding Love, which began as an outreach ministry of Saviour of the Nations, Vancouver. Saviour of the Nations is also currently reaching out to the South Sudanese Nuer population in nearby Surrey.



WELS INTERNATIONAL YOUTH RALLY

More than 2,220 teens and youth leaders traveled to Knoxville, Tenn., for the WELS 2022 International Youth Rally June 28–July 1 at the University of Tennessee. Participants joined together for worship, service, recreation, workshops, fellowship, and music under the theme “Here and now,” based on Esther 4:14. The rally was coordinated by **WELS Discipleship**.



Called to serve

Congregational Services

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

Congregational Services shares its resources, including all the pieces of The Foundation, at welscongregationservices.net. The Foundation focuses on a specific theme for each season of the church year and then a sub-theme each

week. These themes are reflected in the Bible readings, sermons, and music in church and can be customized to fit each congregation's needs. The Foundation includes images, videos, and bulletin blurbs to help congregations spread the word about each week's theme and to invite people to worship.

Learn more at welscongregationservices.net.





Members of the WELS Women's Ministry executive team at the group's 2022 conference

WOMEN'S MINISTRY CONFERENCE

The WELS Women's Ministry Conference was held July 21–23, 2022, at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. More than 330 women attended. The theme of the conference, *Won to be One*, really dug deep into the book of Ephesians and God's grace that gives believers their identity in Christ.

"As a woman, I constantly ask what my role is in the church and in the ministry. I cannot be a pastor and I am not a teacher, so how can I be an asset to my congregation and

to the church of Christ as a whole? **This conference put the Great Commission in the forefront of everything and refocused my place and identity as an ambassador of Christ.** We minister in everything we say and in all we do," says **Janet Block**, member at New Hope, West Melbourne, Fla.

To learn more about all the resources that WELS Women's Ministry offers, visit wels.net/women.



MILITARY CONTACT PASTOR WORKSHOP

WELS Military Services, a part of WELS Special Ministries, held its annual workshop for military contact pastors in April 2022 at Risen Savior, Pooler, Ga., near Army Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield. Part of the workshop included visiting Fort Stewart, which also sponsored a meeting between attendees and more than a dozen of the post's military chaplains. WELS has 125 congregations and their pastors near military installations providing care to men and women who serve in the United States Armed Forces and their families. Learn more at wels.net/military.



TELLING THE NEXT GENERATION

Enrollment in WELS schools was up 9.8 percent during the 2021–22 school year, with 26,586 students in 282 Lutheran elementary schools and 11,672 students in 363 early childhood ministries.

This is the highest ever recorded enrollment for WELS early childhood ministries and the highest number for Lutheran elementary schools since the 2004–05 school year, according to **Jim Rademan**, director of WELS Lutheran Schools.

Nearly 70 percent of WELS schools increased their enrollment in 2021–22, while 25 percent decreased and about 5 percent stayed the same.

More and more students attending WELS schools are mission prospects, with nearly 33 percent of families in early childhood ministries and

16 percent in Lutheran elementary schools identifying either as non-Christian or no church home.

"Enrollment is up in our schools," says Rademan. "Now how can we take advantage of the opportunity? Conditions have been favorable for having more students sit at the feet of Jesus in our classrooms. But how long will that window be open and how well are we going to take advantage of that open window and be as urgent and resolute as we possibly can about sharing the gospel with those children and their families?"

Telling the Next Generation is one tool to help congregations with planning, assistance, and resources for outreach strategies in Lutheran elementary schools and/or early childhood ministries. Visit welscongregationservices.net/telling-the-next-generation to learn more.



Pictured is **Blythe**, a student at Cross of Glory, Peoria, Ariz., who was baptized at one of the school's outdoor chapel services, with her parents. Cross of Glory has seen steady growth over the past five years, growing from 80 students in 2016 to 125 in 2021.



CONNECTING YOUR DEVOTIONAL LIFE TO SUNDAY WORSHIP

Devotions prepared by WELS Congregational Services follow the theme that is set for each week's worship in The Foundation's resources. That means that the message that you hear on Sunday can be reinforced and expanded on in the devotions you read or hear. Here are the three devotions that offer this connection.

- 1. Daily Devotions:** Published every day for general use by individuals and groups. Available as text and audio.
- 2. Family Devotions:** Published Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for families. Available as text and audio.
- 3. Teen Devotions** (titled "Transformed"): Published on Sunday to connect teens to Christ. Available as text.

Subscribe for free to any of these devotions at wels.net/subscribe.

HYMNAL INTRODUCTION RESOURCES

WELS Commission on Worship is sharing resources to help people gain an understanding of key features of the new *Christian Worship* hymnal and to help pastors orient people when the books are first used.

Visit welscongregationservices.net/hymnal-introduction-resources to find the resources that are right for your congregation.



WELS YOUTH NIGHT

In fall 2022 almost 30 congregations hosted WELS Youth Nights, offering area-congregation teens and youth leaders opportunities to grow in God's Word and build relationships with one another.

Introduced at the 2022 International Youth Rally, WELS Youth Night is a series of three youth-focused events to bring teens and youth leaders together in between large rallies. WELS Discipleship provides all the resources to help congregations plan and run the events, which include games, food, music, prayer, a keynote address, and small group discussion.

King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif., invited youth from 16 congregations in southern California to its WELS Youth Night in October. More than 50 6th- through 12th-graders from 8 different congregations attended.

"I had this dream of pulling [area youth groups] together out here just because when we get together it's so special. But I was intimidated by all the work to make it happen," says **Josh Robertson**, a teacher at King of Kings and the congregation's youth and family elder. "At the youth rally, as I sat in on the WELS Youth Night presentation, I was floored by God and his goodness because literally my entire dream was already being planned by the synod."



Learn more about WELS Youth Night at welscongregationalervices.net/wels-youth-night.



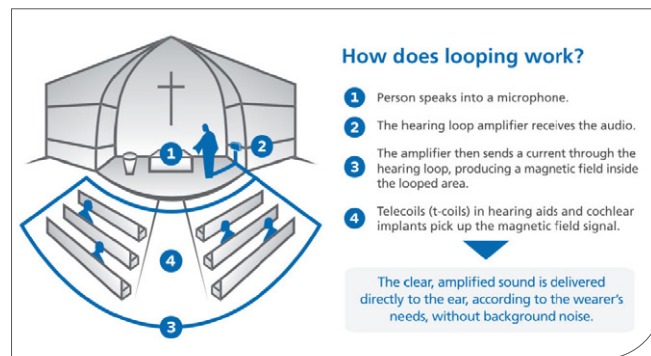
EVERYONE OUTREACH

WELS Commission on Evangelism designed the Everyone Outreach program to help congregations build a culture of outreach among their members. In August 2021, the commission trained 21 pastors to facilitate these workshops. In January 2022, 20 more were trained (pictured). More than 2,400 WELS members have participated in 59 Everyone Outreach workshops as of December 2022.

When a congregation makes the commitment to participate 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 its outreach mindset.

One participant noted, **"It helped me realize that if we each do our part to reach out it can have a huge impact on the lost souls in our community."**

Learn more at everyoneoutreach.com.



GRANTS AVAILABLE TO HELP MORE PEOPLE HEAR THE WORD

WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, part of WELS Commission on Special Ministries, is offering \$500 grants toward the installation of a hearing loop to WELS congregations that apply for it. A hearing loop works with people's hearing aids to provide a clearer sound directly into their ears. The Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing can point congregations toward additional research, contacts, and other resources around hearing loops.

Tom Schultz, a member at St. Luke, Watertown, Wis., which has a hearing loop installed, explains, "I think one of the key factors is the clarity. Without the hearing loop, I pick up a lot of it, but with the hearing loop, I pick up everything; it's crystal clear."

If your congregation is interested, contact mdhh@wels.net for more information. Learn more about the Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at wels.net/mdhh.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

COMMUNITY CARE AND COMPASSION GRANTS

In 2020, Bethlehem, Richland Center, Wis., an exploratory mission, was looking for a ministry space to call home. After one option fell through, God provided a perfect fit—a former elementary school that had just come on the market. The building was more than just a former school. It was also home to a crucial community service—a county-run program that provides hot meals each week to senior adults. **Daniel Lewig**, pastor at Bethlehem, said it wasn't even a question as to whether the congregation would continue to house the meal program.

"We didn't just purchase a facility," says Lewig. "We got a ministry right along with it—and an open door to see where God leads."

Supported by offerings and a pandemic relief grant from WELS Christian Aid and Relief, Bethlehem members went to work upgrading the former classroom in which the meals are served. The revitalized dining area is so

much more than a place to provide a hot meal. It also serves as Bethlehem's fellowship hall, and seniors from the community are invited to all church activities. In addition, Lewig visits with guests each week and leads them in prayer. Bethlehem members help serve the meals or simply spend time getting to know their neighbors.

Once seniors are in the building, it's a natural progression to introduce them to the renovated worship space in the gym. Several have attended worship, and some have taken Bible information classes and become members.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is offering matching grants to congregations that want to reach out in their communities through a compassion ministry. Grants are available up to \$2,500.

"When we act with compassion and love, it gains us opportunities to talk about our Savior," says **Daniel Sims**, director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief.

"I encourage congregations to find the people who are hurting in your community, formulate a plan to help them, and get in touch with us. Let

us help you to reach out to them in love."

Learn more at wels.net/relief.



25

COMMUNITY CARE AND COMPASSION GRANTS DISTRIBUTED

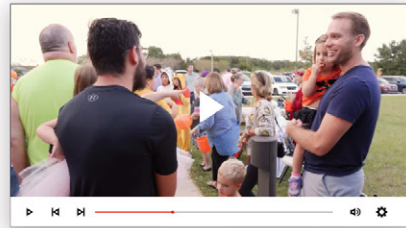
Hurricane Ian relief volunteers

DISASTER RELIEF

Hurricane Ian made landfall in Florida on Sept. 28, 2022, as a powerful Category 4 storm. Thirteen WELS congregations were in the vicinity of the storm. Although they had no loss of life, each congregation had varied degrees of damage to their church building and in their community. WELS Christian Aid and Relief responded with monetary relief and also helped coordinate manpower for cleanup and rebuilding.

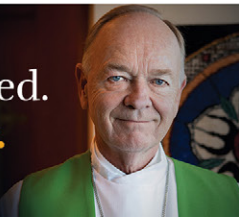


Keep up to date through **WELS publications.**



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 encourages congregations and individuals to offer gifts of thanks to our Savior because of his love for us. These offerings support Christ's gospel ministry through WELS. God has blessed WELS with two years of record-breaking Congregation Mission Offerings in 2020 and 2021, and, as of this writing, 2022 is also looking to finish with strong congregational offerings. We praise our Lord and thank his people for such generosity!

The Ministry of Christian Giving partnered with Martin Luther College to present the "Equipping Christian Witnesses" campaign, which received \$9.6 million to fund tuition assistance and build the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse (pictured the day of its dedication, Oct. 8, 2022). This 36,000 square foot indoor turf facility includes batting cages, golf simulators, indoor practice fields, and more.

The Ministry of Christian Giving is currently working with Home Missions to share the 100 missions in 10 years



100 MISSIONS IN 10 YEARS
WELS HOME MISSIONS 2023-2033

initiative with members. This initiative seeks to plant 100 new home mission churches and enhance 75 existing ministries from 2023-2033.

In fiscal year 2022 Christian giving counselors made thousands of contacts with WELS donors and helped them arrange 190 major gifts and expectancies totaling \$36.9 million. Visit wels.net/givingcounselors to find your giving counselor and receive free, confidential assistance with offering a gift to WELS.



DID YOU KNOW?

WELS Technology maintains a "Contact us" tool for the WELS website through which **more than 1,000 questions or comments** are submitted per year. The tool tracks and routes questions to those who can respond to the inquiry and provides reminders throughout the process. Have a question? Visit wels.net/contact-us.

Your gifts, God's blessings

Called to support

WELS CHURCH EXTENSION FUND, INC.

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, 2022, \$24.1 million of new loans and \$2.4 million of new grants were approved to mission and mission-minded self-supporting congregations. In addition, WELS CEF provided grants of \$1.13 million and \$0.5 million to the Board for Home Missions from its annual endowment distribution and its annual unrestricted net asset grant program.



Pictured above are members of Good News, Mt. Horeb, Wis., at the site of their future church building. As a Home Missions qualified congregation, WELS Church Extension Fund provided \$747,914 in land and facility grants to Good News, along with a low-interest loan for the remainder of the cost of the land and construction of its new church.



In 2022, Living Shepherd, Laramie, Wyo., bought the facility it had been worshipping in for a year with the help of WELS CEF.

For more information, visit wels.net/cef.



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 2022, NPH released more than 725 Christian resources in print and digital formats:

- *Musicians Resource* (found online at nph.net) released more than 700 various digital resources that support, enhance, and add variety to congregational singing.
- *Deep as the Sea* uses doctrinal expertise to address trauma through a Christian lens.
- *God Loves Nobodies* offers gospel-centered hope for average believers in a world that recognizes and praises only the most exceptional people.
- *From Egypt to Sinai* is a devotional commentary exploring the relationship between the events recorded in Exodus and the Christian's daily struggle to trust in God alone.
- *Wauwatosa Theology IV* is a comprehensive offering of the literary work of three significant Wisconsin Synod theologians during the first 30 years of the 20th century—J. P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller.
- *Inashood* tells the love story of dedicated Lutheran missionaries and the Apache people on eastern Arizona's Fort Apache and San Carlos Reservations.

In addition, NPH released *Christian Worship: Service Builder*, a custom-designed software application that allows planners to manage the complexity of worship planning and service folder creation. To learn more, visit christianworship.com/products/service-builder.

NPH continues to increase and grow audiobook offerings via audible.com.

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



FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial Services provides finance and accounting services that support WELS ministries and safeguard the assets that God has provided. These services include financial planning and analysis, financial statement preparation and audit coordination, transaction processing, payroll services, insurance and risk management, cash and investment management, and legal-related services.

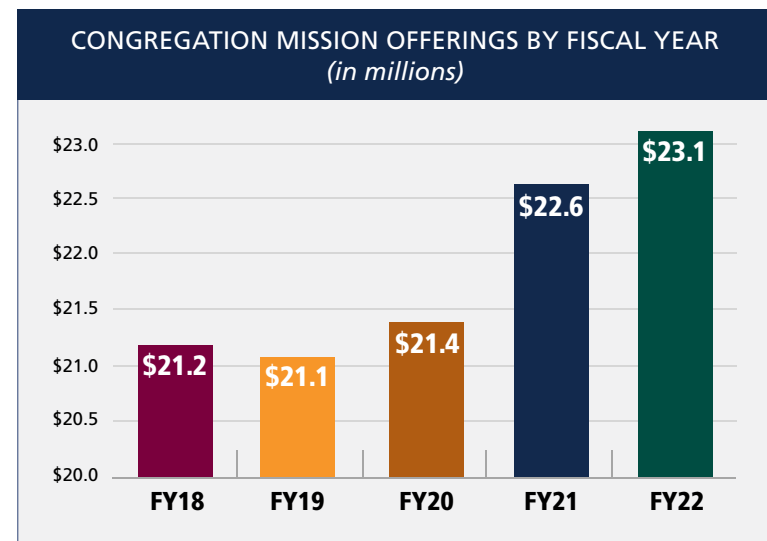
"WELS is financially strong," notes **Kyle Egan**, WELS' chief financial officer, "as God continues to provide the financial gifts needed to grow funding levels, which allows for expanded mission and ministry initiatives."

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 2022 (year ended June 30, 2022) with CMO of \$23.1 million, which was \$0.5 million higher than the previous year and the first time CMO exceeded \$23.0 million. 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 balance of the Financial Stabilization Fund increased during fiscal year 2022 due to higher than planned levels of CMO and overall operating expense under-spending. The Financial Stabilization Fund is not an emergency or contingency fund. Rather, it holds all undesignated non-CMO funding sources (gifts, grants, bequests, investment income, and other support) to assist in supporting the annual operating expenses of the synod. WELS is blessed to have this stability in managing the operating budget year to year while allowing for the regular expansion of mission and ministry.

During the summer of 2022, the collaborative process of developing the synod's ministry financial plan (budget) for the next two fiscal years began among the areas of ministry, ministerial education schools, synod leadership, and the Synodical Council. The ministry financial plan will be finalized at the July 2023 synod convention.



Your gifts, God's blessings

WELS BENEFIT PLANS

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

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

Delegates of the 2021 synod convention authorized significant changes to the WELS retirement program. Beginning January 1, 2022, WELS called workers earn retirement benefits through defined contributions made to their accounts in the WELS Shepherd Plan, which is the name of WELS' retirement savings plan for synod workers. In addition to the defined contributions, workers can save and invest a portion of their earnings in the Shepherd Plan to

provide income during their retirement years. The WELS Pension Plan was frozen on December 31, 2021, which means that 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.

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

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

Visit welsbpo.net for more information.

WELS FOUNDATION

Over the last three years, WELS Foundation has been privileged to distribute \$37.5 million in donor-directed gifts to various WELS ministries. We praise God for his blessings and are so grateful to God's people for continuing to support gospel work.

One of the more popular charitable giving plans is the charitable gift annuity. In addition to quarterly income payments for life, the donor can also receive significant tax benefits from the gift. Then when the Lord calls the donor home, the remainder

of the gift will be distributed to the ministry or ministries that the donor has chosen.

Visit wels.net/foundation for more information.

WELS members **Carol and Arnie Nommensen** have set up multiple charitable gift annuities to support the ministries they love. Scan the QR code or visit wels.net/charitable-gift-annuity to watch Arnie and Carol's story and to learn more about charitable gift annuities.



WELS INVESTMENT FUNDS

Despite the uncertainty of the last year, God continues to bless WELS Investment Funds. We are especially blessed through the WELS ministries that have chosen to invest in the WELS Funds. As of Sept. 30, 2022, WELS Investment Funds managed \$250 million in assets for more than 245 WELS ministries.

Grace, Yorba Linda, Calif., is an example of how a congregation can use the services of WELS Investment Funds. After the congregation received a generous gift from a member, Grace's leadership wanted to explore different options for investing the gift. Grace's church council and its pastor, **Phillip Sievert**, met via video with **Jim Holm**, executive director of WELS Investment Funds, to discuss their investment options.

Sievert was grateful for the meeting and the direction it provided: "It gave our council confidence in WELS Investment Funds and a sense of relief knowing that we can leave the gift in good hands without having to worry about constant decision-making," he says. "What I was really pleased with is the mission-mindedness that came out of our discussion."

Sievert concludes, "WELS Investment Funds uses its time and talents and expertise in making the most of our congregation's gifts and investments. This frees us up to focus on what Jesus has called us to do, to 'go and make disciples of all nations.'"

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

An annual report to our members



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 1,250 churches, 340,511 baptized members, and 272,555 communicant members.

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

WELS Congregational Services provides resources, training, and personal assistance to congregations, schools, and their leaders so that they may carry out gospel ministry in the most faithful way on the local level.

WELS congregations—either individually or as federations—operate one of the largest parochial school systems in the United States. This system includes 284 Lutheran elementary schools, 362 early childhood ministries, and 29 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, visit wels.net.



WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive
Waukesha, WI 53188-1108
wels.net

