

Book of Reports and Memorials

May 2023

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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Foreword

Convention theme

The theme of the 2023 WELS convention is “Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown.” The theme reflects the biblical truth that Christians in this world live under the cross. We live under the cross in the sense that our relationship with God as his people was brought about by the sacrificial death of our Savior on the cross. We preach Christ crucified. Living under the cross also means that we recognize, as Jesus himself told us, that in this world God’s church will endure difficulties and trials, but that all of those difficulties and trials are intended by God for our eternal good. Our convention theme will focus on the fact that, in both cases, we embrace the cross, because of what Christ did for us there and because we know that even in times of difficulties and trial, God is working to bless his church. And when we embrace the cross we can look forward with joyful anticipation to when we and all believers will receive the crown of life.

Major items for consideration at the 2023 convention include the proposed ministry financial plan (budget) for 2023–25, the declaration and affirmation of fellowship with two Lutheran church bodies, and the increasing opportunities God is giving our synod to proclaim the gospel to an increasing number of people around the world.

The Book of Reports and Memorials

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

Floor committees

The convention’s business will be addressed by floor committees. All delegates are assigned to a floor committee. Each committee is assigned specific matters to address or a task to perform prior to and during the convention. Floor committees will meet via videoconference in the months prior to the convention to address the business assigned to them. Most, if not all, of the committee reports and resolutions will be completed prior to the convention. Floor committees will have the opportunity to meet at the convention either to make changes to their reports or to address matters that come up during the convention. The floor committees, along with their chairmen, are listed on p. 1.

Delegates

Delegates are expected to attend all convention sessions. Advisory delegates may attend floor committee meetings upon invitation of the floor committee or by mutual agreement. Floor committee chairmen may at any time request that the committee conduct its work without the presence of advisors.

Memorials

A memorial is a formal request for the synod to take specific action. Memorials will be assigned to the floor committee already dealing with the subject matter or area addressed by the memorial. Sometimes memorials are submitted after the deadline for inclusion in BORAM. These are referred to as “unprinted memorials” because they are not printed in BORAM. Instead, they are printed and distributed to delegates prior to the convention and are assigned to appropriate floor committees for the same kind of consideration given to memorials printed in BORAM. You can find the memorials beginning on p. 169.

Schedule

The convention begins with a delegate orientation session on Monday, July 31, at 4:00 p.m. The opening worship for the convention takes place on Monday, July 31, at 6:30 p.m., at St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich. The convention itself begins on Tuesday morning at 8:00 a.m. Evening sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday are scheduled for special mission presentations. The convention will conclude with a closing worship service on Thursday, Aug. 3, around 11:00 a.m.

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

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Organizational chart

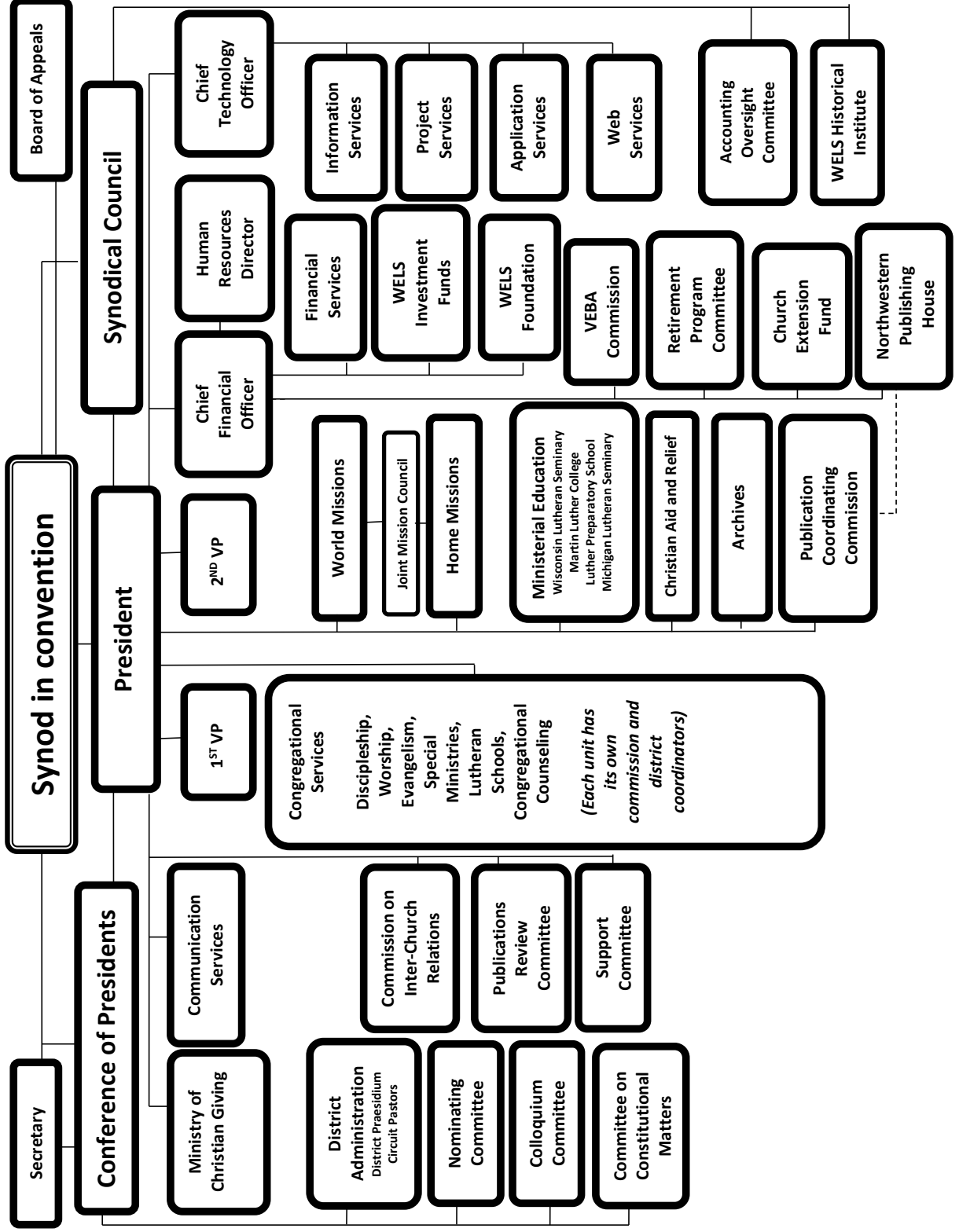


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For more information, visit welsconvention.net.

Convention floor committees

Committee	Assignment	Chairman
#1	President's Report	Pastor Jason Hacker
#2	Conference of Presidents	Pastor Andrew Mueller
#3	Commission on Inter-Church Relations	Pastor David Kolander
#4	Ministry of Christian Giving	Pastor William Carter
#5	Communication Services	Pastor Adam Zimpelmann
#6	Synodical Council	Pastor Carlos Leyrer
#7	Ministry financial plan (budget)	Pastor Matthew Brown
#8	Home Missions	Pastor David Koelpin
#9	World Missions, Joint Mission Council	Pastor Paul Seager
#10	Ministerial Education	Pastor Scott Mosher
#11	Congregational Services A (Congregational Counseling, Discipleship, Evangelism)	Pastor Benjamin Tomczak
#12	Congregational Services B (Worship, Special Ministries)	Pastor Bart Brauer
#13	Congregational Services C (Lutheran Schools)	Teacher David Gartner
#14	Support Services Technology Financial Services Human Resources Facility Services	Teacher David Barkow
#15	Subsidiaries and Benefit Plans WELS Historical Institute WELS Foundation WELS Church Extension Fund WELS Investment Funds WELS Benefit Plans	Pastor Geoff Cortright
#16	Northwestern Publishing House	Pastor Korey Van Kampen
#17	WELS Christian Aid and Relief	Pastor Joel Seifert
#18	Constitutional Matters	Pastor Daniel Balge
#19	Elections	Pastor Scott Schwertfeger
#20	Steering	Pastor Jon Buchholz

Congregation and District Ministry

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

Conference of Presidents

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

Support Committee

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

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

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

Ministry of Christian Giving

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

Communication Services

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

Synod Nominating Committee

Selection of nominees for convention elections

Congregational Services

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

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee

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

Translation Liaison Committee

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

Synod convention

District ministries and functions

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

Conference of Presidents

Floor Committee #2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Overseeing matters of doctrine and practice

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

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

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

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

Assignment of ministerial candidates

In its role as the Assignment Committee of the synod, the Conference of Presidents continually monitors the number of candidates graduating from Martin Luther College (MLC) and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The vast majority of assignments are made in May, with a smaller number of teacher and staff minister candidates assigned in December in conjunction with the mid-year graduation at MLC.

The Assignment Committee also assigns third-year seminary students to their place of vicarship. These assignments are made by the Conference of Presidents after extensive consultation with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and WELS Board for Home Missions. Since the vicar year is actually a part of the seminary's program of education, the seminary provides input into the vicar assignment process to ensure that the candidates are placed in locations where they can receive thorough training in the practical aspects of the pastoral ministry. Candidates who are identified as having gifts for evangelism/outreach are often assigned to supervising pastors with proven gifts for the same so that the vicar's evangelism/outreach gifts may be further developed. The Vicars in Mission Settings Program has worked well to provide outreach-ready graduates for assignment.

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

Funding for the synod's mission and ministry

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

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

The Conference of Presidents works to encourage congregations to increase their CMO commitments and to meet or exceed those commitments by the end of the year. Prior to 2020, CMO had been relatively flat for ten years. We are grateful that in each year since then congregations have exceeded the congregational subscriptions. That upward trend has continued in calendar year 2023. This growth in CMO, unexpected gifts, the wise use of undesignated special funds, and efforts by areas of ministry and departments to economize have made it possible not only to maintain synodical ministries but to expand those ministries as God has given the opportunity. The Conference of Presidents is grateful for our congregations' commitment to CMO and the generous way in which our members have provided gifts beyond expectations.

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

Need for called worker recruitment

Vacancies in both pastor and teacher positions have been increasing in recent years, and the current supply of candidates has not been able to keep pace with the need. At the March 2023 meeting of the Conference of Presidents, it was reported that there were 196 pastoral vacancies, 169 of which were in the parish, and 215 teacher vacancies. We are thankful that larger classes are now at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and should provide some relief to the pastoral vacancy problem in the next few years, and concerted efforts are being made at Martin Luther College to increase recruitment efforts. The Conference of Presidents continues to encourage increased efforts by pastors, teachers, congregations, parents, and grandparents to recruit young people for full-time ministry.

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

Ministry certification

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

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

The Conference of Presidents has tasked the second vice president of each district with monitoring the progress of teachers enrolled in the WELS Ministry Certification Program. They will inform teachers whose enrollment in the program has lapsed or is about to lapse, thus making them ineligible for the parsonage allowance deduction. They will also inform calling bodies of the tax implications that are involved if enrollment lapses and eligibility is lost.

Congregational Services

Congregational Services is directly accountable to the Conference of Presidents and provides the COP with regular reports. Congregational Services includes six commissions: Lutheran Schools, Worship, Evangelism, Discipleship, Special Ministries, and Congregational Counseling. Directors of these commissions are called by the COP, and members of the commissions (except for the chairmen) are appointed by the COP. The chairman of each commission is elected by the synod in convention. Each of these commissions will report to this convention. Pastor Jonathan Hein serves as the coordinator for Congregational Services.

The Conference of Presidents approved the addition of a staff person to assist Hein and his team in providing assessment, planning assistance, and resources to congregations. This will be a hired lay position. Congregational Services is currently studying ways to restructure to meet the needs of the various commissions and to carry out most effectively the ministries entrusted to them.

Doctrinal studies

In 2019, the Conference of Presidents noted that our WELS doctrinal statements on the subject of male/female roles

could, in places, be misunderstood or misapplied. There is no fundamental dispute on the doctrine itself, but there are areas of application that need to be explained more clearly. To avoid confusion and to enhance the clarity of our statements, the Conference of Presidents appointed a committee to review our doctrinal statements and other published materials dealing with the roles of men and women and to provide recommendations for improvement. A draft document was prepared and shared with pastoral conferences for review and input. That document has undergone several revisions and continues to be a “work in progress.” The latest version of the document will be discussed in pastor and teacher conferences in fall 2023 and at district conventions in 2024. Once it is in its final form, the document is intended to meet the standards of a confessional statement, be a clear summary of scriptural truths, and mark the Creator’s good design as the dominant theme of the statement.

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

Doctrine Committee

To foster our unity in doctrine and practice in WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Doctrine Committee of the Conference of Presidents holds regular meetings with the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The Doctrine Committee of the Conference of Presidents is also in frequent communication with the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to ensure ongoing good communication between the group charged with overseeing doctrine and practice and the school that trains future pastors.

WELS-affiliated ministries and organizations

There are dozens of organizations and ministries carried out by WELS members that are not part of the synodical structure. These are referred to as “affiliated ministries.” Because WELS-affiliated ministries carry out their work among our WELS members and congregations, the Conference of Presidents believes that it should foster close communication and cooperation between these ministries and the COP. A three-man standing special committee of the Conference of Presidents makes regular contact with the leaders of these ministries to accomplish this goal on an ongoing basis.

Guidance for congregations that are considering merging or closing

Because of demographic changes, a number of congregations in the synod are considering whether to merge with one or more neighboring congregations or to close altogether. Other congregations have not considered this, but good stewardship of God’s resources may mean that they should consider these options. The Conference of Presidents has asked Congregational Services to provide counsel and guidance to congregations as they make these decisions.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief seeks district liaisons to coordinate disaster relief

WELS Christian Aid and Relief has requested that each district identify a person who can serve as a district liaison to work with WELS Christian Aid and Relief in providing assistance to congregations and individuals in times of natural disaster. At its March meeting, the Conference of Presidents adopted plans to have these liaisons in place by July 1.

Triennial convention proposal

The Conference of Presidents received a proposal to change the synod convention from a biennial convention to a triennial convention. The rationale for this proposal indicated that a three-year cycle for synod conventions would allow for better scheduling of other synodical events such as the National Conference on Lutheran Leadership; the WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts; and the WELS International Youth Rally. It would also make time available for district events in the years that the synod and the districts do not meet. Another possible benefit of a three-year cycle would be that the Synodical Council, working with parameters established by the convention, would be able to move to annual rather than biennial budgetary planning.

There are several other things that would be affected by the proposal. Terms of synod officers and other elected positions would need to change from four-year terms to either three-year or six-year terms. If three-year terms are

implemented, it would mean that synod officers (president, first and second vice presidents, secretary) would all be elected at each convention; six-year terms would allow for staggered elections as is currently done. It should also be noted that under the current biennial system, most male called workers are able to serve as convention delegates at least twice during their ministries. A triennial convention would likely mean that some called workers would only serve as a delegate at one convention during their ministries.

District conventions and elections are regulated by the district constitutions, which are established and/or amended by the synod convention. That means that the synod convention would need to determine the frequency of district conventions as well as the terms of office for district elections. It would seem logical that the district constitutions would mirror the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the synod.

The biennial convention is something that is mandated by the synod constitution, not by the bylaws. That means that for such a proposal to be approved, the constitution itself would need to be amended. To do that, one convention needs to refer the proposal to the district conventions the following year, and, after the districts provide their input, it would need to pass by a three-fourths majority at the next convention.

The Conference of Presidents has not taken a position on the proposal. To enable full discussion of this significant change, the COP is not asking for any action on this at the 2023 convention. Rather, the COP will place the proposal along with rationale and ramifications to the districts for discussion and input in 2024. After discussion and input by the districts, the matter would be brought up for consideration at the 2025 synod convention and, if that convention favors it, it would be discussed again at the district conventions in 2026 and come before the 2027 synod convention for final action. If the 2027 convention amends the constitution, the first triennial convention would be held in 2030.

On the basis of this report, the 2023 convention does have the ability to express approval to the proposal and forward it to the 2024 district conventions. In that case, based on input from the districts, a final decision could be made by the 2025 convention.

Assistance for the presidents of the largest districts

The three largest districts of the synod have hundreds of congregations and called workers. This has meant that there is an increasing workload on the presidents of those districts. To better serve congregations and called workers, the presidents of the Western Wisconsin, Southeastern Wisconsin, and Northern Wisconsin Districts have been offered additional assistance to enable the three district presidents to serve their large districts as effectively as possible. In the case of the Southeastern Wisconsin District, a full-time assistant has been called to assist in the call process for the many schools in the district. We will continue to look for ways to provide assistance to the other two Wisconsin district presidents.

Need for additional options for congregational bylaws

The current model constitution and bylaws for the synod, dating from the 1970s, offers only one type of structure for congregations. In recent years, a number of congregations have desired different models that provide various ways to organize while faithfully maintaining biblical principles. The Conference of Presidents has been discussing whether it would be wise and orderly for the synod to offer several options for congregational structures. Examples of alternative structures will be made available by WELS Congregational Services.

Two major changes for called workers

Two major changes affecting called workers have been implemented during the past biennium. First, the last synod convention authorized a change in the synod's retirement plan, moving from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan. That change has been accomplished smoothly. Second, changes in IRS regulations and the interpretation of those regulations for the first time allowed female WELS called workers to be eligible for the parsonage allowance. Once again, that change was implemented by calling bodies throughout the synod and represents the addition of an important tax benefit for female called workers and their families.

Monitoring potential federal and state regulations

The Conference of Presidents is aware of the potential impact of proposed new regulations regarding "transgender affirming" policies of businesses and schools. The COP will continue to monitor these developments and will be prepared to address them if necessary. Similar regulations proposed in the state of Minnesota may impact the teacher licensure process. The Conference of Presidents, along with Martin Luther College and Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), will also monitor these potential regulations and determine how best to respond to them.

Revisions to the bylaws

The Conference of Presidents is recommending two bylaw changes. One is a recommendation to eliminate the Publication Coordinating Commission. The other is modification of some of the procedures dealing with the discipline and appeals process. These recommended amendments, along with the rationale for the changes, can be found beginning on p. 162 and will be addressed by Floor Committee #18 (Constitutional Matters).

Feedback for pastors

The Conference of Presidents is convinced that it is good and healthy that congregations have the opportunity to present evangelical feedback to their pastors. This is not meant as a way for congregations to express criticism or complaints. Rather, such feedback can provide encouragement to pastors as they carry out their work, as well as brotherly input as to areas in which they might improve in their ministry to God's people. The COP has asked Congregational Services to develop and make available tools that will facilitate evangelical feedback between congregational leaders and their pastor.

175th anniversary of the synod

The synod will celebrate its 175th anniversary in 2025 under the theme "Christ through us." The COP has appointed a committee, chaired by Prof. Joel Otto, to begin planning for the celebration. The COP has also approved the gathering of a special anniversary offering that will be used to support specific projects or efforts identified by Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education.

Development of a new K-12 religion curriculum

Upon the recommendation of Northwestern Publishing House, the Conference of Presidents directed the Commission on Lutheran Schools to develop a new K-12 religion curriculum to replace the *Christ-Light* curriculum now in use. A special task force was formed to plan and carry out this work. The COP extended a half-time call to Melanie Giddings to serve as the coordinator of the project. She has accepted that call and begun her work.

New hymnal

It's estimated that between 60 and 70 percent of WELS congregations have adopted the new hymnal. That level of adoption is certain to increase in the coming months and years. We are grateful to the hymnal committee for completing its monumental task on time and for producing a new hymnal that will enhance the worship and devotional life of our WELS members.

Change in the assignment process at Martin Luther College

Every year, a few candidates for the teaching ministry graduate from Martin Luther College without completing some final requirements for state licensure, usually due to scheduling problems involving the final tests administered by the state of Minnesota. In May 2022, a change was made in how these candidates are assigned. Previously, such candidates were assigned to a provisional one-year call, with their calls being made permanent when the work was completed. As of last year, candidates who had not completed their licensure requirements were given one-year emergency calls through Martin Luther College outside of the assignment process. Upon completion of their requirements, they are eligible to be assigned permanently. The new procedure is working well and will be continued in the future.

Retaining the Lutheran character of our worship

In March 2021, the Conference of Presidents arranged for a meeting of representatives from the Conference of Presidents, Home Missions, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to identify what characteristics are essential to preserving the Lutheran character of worship in WELS congregations, while at the same time upholding the Christian freedom that we enjoy. The intent of this study is not to produce a legalistic directive of exactly what worship should look like in all our congregations. Rather, it is intended to identify principles of worship that cannot and should not be set aside when Lutherans gather for public worship. The Conference of Presidents recognizes that worship forms and styles are matters of adiaphora and Christian freedom. At the same time, when worship forms and styles are considered, we address these matters of Christian freedom by asking the questions, "Is this wise? Is this beneficial? Is this loving?" Work on this is continuing.

Memorials

Three memorials have been received. Two will be considered by Floor Committee #2 (Conference of Presidents): 1) Memorial (2023-01) "Statement on Critical Theory and Social Justice" (p. 169) and 2) Memorial (2023-02) "Reevaluation of the call process" (p. 169). The third memorial will be considered by Floor Committee #3 (Commission on Inter-Church Relations) and is titled Memorial (2023-03) "Informal doctrinal discussions with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod" (p. 170).

The members of the Conference of Presidents and the Commission on Inter-Church Relations will be available to discuss these memorials with the floor committees.

Retirements and new members

Last summer, Pastor David Kolander chose not to run for re-election as president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District. He has since been called to serve as the assistant to the newly elected president of the district, Pastor Daniel Leyrer. On June 30, 2022, Pastor Don Tollefson retired from full-time ministry and completed his service as president of the North Atlantic District. Pastor Michael Seifert was elected to succeed him.

We thank these servants for their faithful service as district presidents and members of the Conference of Presidents, and we pray for God's blessings on our new district presidents.

A look ahead

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

In addition, the Conference of Presidents will:

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

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

Rev. Mark Schroeder, reporter

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president and chairman
Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president
Rev. Joel Voss, WELS second vice president
Rev. Jon Buchholz, Arizona-California District president
Rev. Douglas Free, Dakota-Montana District president
Rev. Philip Hirsch, Nebraska District president
Rev. Michael Jensen, Western Wisconsin District president
Rev. Dennis Klatt, Minnesota District president
Rev. Daniel Leyrer, Southeastern Wisconsin District president
Rev. Donald Patterson, South Central District president
Rev. Michael Seifert, North Atlantic District president
Rev. Snowden Sims, Michigan District president
Rev. John Steinbrenner, Pacific Northwest District president
Rev. Charles Westra, South Atlantic District president
Rev. Joel Zank, Northern Wisconsin District president

Advisory:

Rev. Robert Pasbrig, WELS secretary

Nominating Committee

Floor Committee #2

These candidates have been chosen by the synod Nominating Committee to be presented to the delegates of the 67th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The delegates will elect one man for each position listed unless otherwise indicated. Incumbents are noted by an asterisk (*). To view position descriptions and nominee biographies, visit welsconvention.net. This list does not include nominations that may be made from the floor.

Board for World Missions

Layman (choose two)

Richard Bakken, Medford, Mass.

Arlyn Bornschlegl, Rochester, Minn.*

Mark Greiner, Columbus, Ohio

Jeff Hanel, Northglenn, Colo.

Mark Schulz, Milton, Wis.*

Kevin Traub, Middleville, Mich.

Board for Ministerial Education

Chairman (parish pastor)

Philip Kieselhorst, Westminster, Colo.

Steven Lange, Louisville, Ky.

Duane Rodewald, Simpsonville, S.C.*

Layman (choose three)

Leon Brands, Crete, Ill.

Paul Hahm, Hilton, N.Y.*

Gary Jeffers, Litchfield Park, Ariz.

Benjamin Leyrer, Milwaukee, Wis.

Kenneth Prost, Watertown, Wis.

Peter Sahlstrom, Decatur, Ga.

Brian Scheele, Plymouth, Neb.*

Peter Trapp, Hartford, Wis.

Dean Waldschmidt, Fond du Lac, Wis.*

Teacher or staff minister from Lutheran high school

David Gartner, Maple Grove, Minn.

Mark Heckendorf, Kewaskum, Wis.

Gerald Zeamer, Jackson, Wis.*

Teacher or staff minister from the MI, MN, NW, SEW, or WW District

Justin Danell, Appleton, Wis.

Nathan Kieselhorst, Watertown, Wis.

Daniel Markgraf, Germantown, Wis.*

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board

Chairman (parish pastor)

Jonathan Scharf, Covington, Ga.*

Kenneth Brokmeier, Brookings, S.D.

Michael Quandt, St. George, Utah

Michigan Lutheran Seminary Governing Board

Chairman (parish pastor)

Jason Baldwin, St. Charles, Mich.

Matthew Holtz, Appleton, Wis.
Andrew Retberg, Saginaw, Mich.

Luther Preparatory School Governing Board

Chairman (parish pastor)

Karl Schultz, Rhinelander, Wis.
Timothy Spaude, Greenfield, Wis.*
Kevin Westra, Hortonville, Wis.

Commission on Congregational Counseling

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

Adam Mueller, Tucson, Ariz.
David Scharf, New Ulm, Minn.*
Paul Seager, Southlake, Texas

Commission on Discipleship

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

John Boggs, Watertown, Wis.*
John Koelpin, Dallas, Texas
Daniel Schroeder, Palm Coast, Fla.

Commission on Special Ministries

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

Gary Juergens, Tappen, N.D.
Steven Wagenknecht, Weslaco, Texas
Timothy Wagner, Appleton, Wis.

Commission on Worship

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

Michael Schultz, Tallahassee, Fla.
Johnold Strey, Hubertus, Wis.
Dale Witte, Fond du Lac, Wis.

Board of Appeals

Pastor

William Brassow, Osceola, Wis.
Ross Henzi, Brillion, Wis.
David Rosenau, Yalaha, Fla.

Layman

Jonathan Hood, Yakima, Wash.
William Schaefer, Lannon, Wis.
Wesley Schroeder, Pueblo, Colo.

Rev. Robert Pasbrig, reporter

Rev. Robert Pasbrig, WELS secretary and chairman
Rev. Paul Cole, Northern Wisconsin District
Rev. Jason Free, Southeastern Wisconsin District
Rev. Gary Kluba II, North Atlantic District
Rev. Michael Kober, South Atlantic District
Rev. Bruce McKenney, Western Wisconsin District
Rev. Joel Pankow, Michigan District
Rev. James Panning, Minnesota District
Rev. David Reichel, Dakota-Montana District
Rev. Joshua Stahmann, Arizona-California District
Rev. Luke Tembreull, Pacific Northwest District
Rev. Steven Wagenknecht, South Central District
Rev. David Wietzke, Nebraska District

WELS Support Committee

Floor Committee #2

Our calling

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

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

Our current situation

The Support Committee is composed of five district first vice presidents of WELS. The first vice president in every district is the contact person for the Support Committee. Each year the district first vice presidents reach out to local pastors, circuit pastors, and district officers to request their help in making sure the Support Committee is made aware of retired called workers and/or their surviving spouses who may need financial help. Once a possible recipient is identified, a simple application form is used to help determine the level of need. The Support Committee then reviews all the applications received and must approve them before assistance begins. The annual amount budgeted for this work is \$300,000. Currently 23 individuals or couples throughout the synod receive support, which in total matches the budgeted amount. It also often happens that during the course of the year new requests are made to the Support Committee. What a blessing that our Lord allowed our synod to take care of all those who sought assistance.

A look ahead

The Support Committee will continue to provide assistance to retired called workers and/or their surviving spouses as long as synod finances make it possible. Please speak with your pastor, circuit pastor, or district first vice president to inquire about gifts through the Support Committee.

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

Rev. Brett Brauer, reporter

Rev. Brett Brauer, chairman

Rev. Timothy Ehlers

Rev. Michael Enderle

Rev. Stephen Helwig

Rev. Wayne Schoch

Translation Liaison Committee

Floor Committee #2

Our calling

The Translation Liaison Committee was established in 2013 “to evaluate major Bible translations; to communicate with their editors and publishers; to offer, when appropriate, suggestions to improve such translations; and to share its findings with the synod at large” (2013 *WELS Proceedings*, p. 68). The same seven members who were appointed by the Conference of Presidents in 2013 continue to serve.

Our current situation

Three Bible translation revisions in the past three years

The Translation Liaison Committee—as it monitors the busy world of Bible translation—noted three major Bible translation revisions in the past three years. About each, the Translation Liaison Committee wrote a review article that was published in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*.

In 2020, the Lockman Foundation published a revision of the New American Standard Bible (NASB), which, among other things, updates gender language. In 1 Timothy 2:4 the revision says that God wants “all people” to be saved, instead of “all men.” Instead of “brethren,” the new NASB has “brothers and sisters.” The Lockman Foundation will continue to publish the earlier edition for those who prefer it. The new edition will be referred to as NASB; the older edition as NASB1995. For more, see *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 118:4 (Fall 2021), 297-299.

In 2021, a revision of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) was published, called the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVue). This revision presents “approximately 12,000 substantial edits and 20,000 total changes.” As a product of scholars who do not hold to the inerrancy of the Bible, the NRSV has never seen widespread use in WELS. Still, the NRSV is the most widely used translation in mainline Protestant churches and in academic study. For more, see *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 119:1 (Winter 2022), 62-64.

In 2022, a second revision of the NASB appeared, calling itself the Legacy Standard Bible (LSB). Scholars from the Master’s University and Seminary in California—the school associated with evangelical preacher John MacArthur—produced the LSB. This revision does not update the gender language of the NASB1995, but it does make some novel changes. The LSB is the first major conservative Christian translation to use “Yahweh” consistently in the Old Testament (the Holman Christian Standard Bible used it inconsistently), and the LSB translates “slave” in many places where other translations have “servant.” For more, see *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 119:4 (Fall 2022), 323-325.

New International Version

The Translation Liaison Committee continues to draft suggestions for improvement in the New International Version (NIV). In May 2022, the Translation Liaison Committee submitted another 28 translation suggestions to the Committee on Bible Translation—the independent, 15-person committee that oversees the text of the NIV. This brings the total number of suggestions submitted in the past seven years to 119, all of which are posted at bibletranslation.welsrc.net. Once again, Committee on Bible Translation Chairman Douglas Moo received the suggestions graciously and said that they will receive careful consideration.

Dr. Moo has not given any hint as to when another revision of the NIV may be published. He stated that the Committee on Bible Translation is behind in its agenda of proposals, and they are working hard. The committee met for two weeks during the summer of 2022, rather than one. The Committee on Bible Translation has been meeting every summer since the 1970s to work on improvements in the NIV.

A look ahead

The Translation Liaison Committee will continue to be on the lookout for news in the world of Bible translation that might be of interest to WELS, and the committee will continue to draft suggestions for improvement in the NIV. The Translation Liaison Committee has also given thought to doing some writing on the topic of Bible translation. Members of WELS are encouraged to share thoughts on these matters with our committee.

It has been stated that no other written work in all of human history has been translated more often into a different language than the Bible into English. Certainly, God has blessed us as English-speaking Christians with a remarkable, ever-growing variety of Bible translations. The Translation Liaison Committee considers it a privilege to give attention to this topic on behalf of WELS.

Prof. Thomas Nass, reporter

Prof. Thomas Nass, chairman

Rev. Brett Brauer

Prof. Kenneth Cherney, Jr.

Prof. Joel Fredrich

Rev. Geoffrey Kieta

Rev. Glenn Schwanke

Rev. Paul Zell

Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee Floor Committee #2

Our calling

The Continuing Education for Called Workers (CECW) Committee coordinates our synod's efforts to assist called workers to grow in faith, knowledge, and skill in order to carry out their unique vocations. Growth for our called workers is not about advancing in a career, gaining recognition, or increasing compensation. Growth for our called workers is about growing in the gospel in order to be a clearer presenter of God's mercy wherever God has called, whether that is in the home, the church or school, or the community.

The Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee works to help synodical leaders and calling bodies clearly understand why it is wise for calling bodies to invest in the growth of their called workers in order to let Christ's love be ever more clearly seen. To that end the committee also seeks to urge lay leaders to understand the importance of investing in assisting current called workers toward growth.

The Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee includes representatives from the Board for Ministerial Education, Martin Luther College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as well as representatives from WELS Congregational Services. By the synod's constitution, our chairman is the first vice president of the synod, and we report to the Conference of Presidents (COP). Our report is divided into the committee's work for pastors, for teachers, and for staff ministers.

Pastors

Our current situation

We thank God for the good work that is being done by so many entities in our church body in regard to encouraging pastors to grow. A considerable part of that work has been entrusted to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). The seminary carries out most of this work through Grow in Grace. Grow in Grace seeks to partner with pastors for spiritual and professional growth in informal (not-for-credit) and formal (for-credit) ways.

To supplement informal study by pastors of our fellowship, Grow in Grace provides the following: a monthly digital newsletter called *Grace Notes*, a monthly digital newsletter called *Four Branches*, periodic book reviews called *Shepherd's Study*, study packets, a three-year mentoring program called Pastor Partners, and celebrations of ministry retreats for men who have served in the pastoral ministry for 3, 10, 25, and 35 years. Last year, the Conference of Presidents asked Pastor Paul Prange to investigate whether another entity should be responsible for the 25- and 35-year celebrations.

Grow in Grace spends approximately \$2,000/year to make thousands of journals available to all WLS alumni. This is a valuable resource for both informal and formal continuing education.

Grow in Grace offers formal courses in a Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree program. The best time for pastors to commit to earning an STM degree is after they have been serving for a few years and before they celebrate 20 years in ministry. A certificate or an STM degree can be earned in one of nine focus areas: Biblical Theology–New Testament, Biblical Theology–Old Testament, Church History, Education, Missions and Evangelism, Pastoral Care, Pastoral Leadership, Preaching and Worship, and Systematic Theology. In 2022, the departments of the faculty have reviewed and updated the goals and courses for their STM focus areas. Pastors may take these for-credit courses through on-campus Summer Quarter in even-numbered years, satellite Summer Quarter courses in the districts in odd-numbered years, online courses in any year, and WLS Winterim courses in January. Our goal is to have 100 pastors on campus for Summer Quarter 2024. Qualifying credits from partner institutions and guided research under the supervision of an advisor may also contribute to a certificate or an STM degree. Pastors are also able to audit satellite Summer Quarter courses in their districts in odd-numbered years.

More than 180 pastors have been mentored by Pastor Partners, a program formally adopted by the synod in 2015 that provides new seminary graduates with three years of focused encouragement from a trained pastoral mentor. God is blessing us with retaining a higher percentage of new pastors than we have seen since the 1980s. There may be many reasons for this; humanly speaking the mentoring program seems to be a key component. Prof. em. Forrest Bivens has served as the coordinator for Pastor Partners, working with a Mentor Leadership Team of seven pastors. On July 1, 2022, Prof. em. John Brenner assumed the role of coordinator.

Three essay/workbook resources were prepared under former WLS Prof. Richard Gurgel’s leadership to help pastors plan for growth. “Guard What Has Been Entrusted to Your Care” encourages pastors to guard the gifts of time, faith, health, and brothers/sisters. “Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage” helps pastors strengthen their devotional life. “Fan God’s Gifts into Flame” helps pastors approach planning for growth from a biblical perspective. The seminary continues to offer these resources on its website at wisluthsem.org.

About 30 parish pastors partner in *Shepherd’s Study*, an e-newsletter that shares several book reviews each month. Pastor Aaron Jensen is the current editor. About 20 pastors partner in *The Four Branches*, an e-newsletter shared with all pastors each month that offers a brief article of interest in each of the four areas of theological study. Pastor Jeremy Belter serves as the current editor. Each month, each newsletter is opened by about 900 pastor recipients with a 35 percent click-through rate.

A look ahead

Prof. Bradley Wordell of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has assumed leadership of Grow in Grace. Prof. Robert Wendland and Prof. Stephen Geiger are working on a report about the manpower needed to sustain our continuing education programs. Grow in Grace will continue to work with the WLS faculty and valued adjunct instructors to provide a quality formal continuing education program that will serve the needs of WELS pastors and congregations in the 21st century.

Staff ministers

Our current situation

The analogy of physician assistants (PAs) and physicians may help in understanding the difference in roles between a staff minister and a pastor. A PA is not a doctor, and PA training is not as broad and deep as the training doctors receive in medical school and their residencies. However, PAs are provided with the academic knowledge and clinical skills to provide health care services under the direction and supervision of a physician.

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

There are regular informal opportunities for continuing education available for staff ministers on the circuit, conference, and district levels. One continuing education event specific for staff ministers is the three-day Staff Ministers Conference held each year at the end of April. A graduate-level opportunity now in place at Martin Luther College is a Master of Arts in Theological Studies (MATS) degree program that is open to staff ministers and teachers

alike. There are 12 individuals currently in the program, a relatively small but growing number. To put that in context, that number is higher than were ever enrolled at one time in the former Master of Arts in Religion program once offered by WLS that has now, in essence, been replaced by the MATS.

Teachers and staff ministers

Our current situation

As schools emerge from the effects of COVID protocols, there are many ways your synod is providing spiritual and mental renewal for called workers.

Resources for educators from Christian Family Solutions

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

Christian Family Solutions has partnered with WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools to deliver presentations and other resources that support those serving in ministry. One of those resources is Cornerstone, which empowers congregations to embrace mental wellness education as a ministry. The program provides congregations with the opportunity to reach people with mental wellness strategies while opening the door for the gospel to be shared. Cornerstone shares the game-changing grace of God through the teaching of practical resilience skills in six modules. It can be offered as a member service and a community outreach program. Other resources are regularly updated and can be found at cls.welsrc.net/connect.

Continuing education resources from Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC) strives to offer relevant, high-quality, affordable courses to help meet the needs of called workers. Thanks to the hard work of its extraordinary instructors, MLC is happy to offer a long list of courses, including several new courses, to help do just that.

Courses are available in:

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

2023 Open Learning Conference

MLC's fourth annual free virtual learning conference is scheduled for June 13–14, 2023, 10:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m. (Central). Under the theme "Navigating Change—Seizing Opportunities," individual participants or entire faculties can grow in their use of technology to deliver meaningful education at all levels.

Two new graduate degree programs at Martin Luther College

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

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

The Master of Science in Educational Administration—Technology Director program expands on the existing educational technology emphasis to target the activities and skills specific to directors, including managing infrastructure, budgeting, and leading technology professional development. A new elective focuses on enhancing all areas of ministry with technology.

A look ahead

Expanded support for existing early childhood teachers

In response to the need for onboarding and training early childhood teachers for developmentally appropriate teaching and ministry, MLC and the Commission on Lutheran Schools are developing tiered support with multiple entry-points.

- Tier One: Free resources for use by directors for onboarding new hires for ministry and teaching.
- Tier Two: A three-credit, one-semester basics of early childhood resulting in a CDA credential.
- Tier Three: A practical Lutheran training for ministry in an early childhood setting resulting in ministry certification open to called and hired teachers.
- Tier Four: An Associate's of Applied Science in Early Childhood degree for existing lead and assistant teachers.

WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools is looking for future school leaders

The Principal Credential Cohort equips veteran teachers to serve as principals before they receive a principal call.

Members of the Principal Credential Cohort receive encouragement and support from mentors and other cohort members and attend at least three leadership training events, including a national leadership conference. They also enroll in MLC's Master of Science in Educational Administration program and/or demonstrate competence in the WELS Principal Standards.

Those enrolled in MLC's master's program receive a 50 percent scholarship for their coursework.

The Emerging Leader Cohort for early childhood directors provides professional development and training to those not yet serving as an early childhood director or those new to the director role. The cohort provides support from mentors and fellow participants, three leadership training events, and ongoing opportunities to grow and learn as a leader.

New cohorts begin each summer. To find more information or to nominate a teacher for the Principal Credential Cohort or Emerging Leader Cohort program, visit cls.welsrc.net/school_leadership or contact lutheranschools@wels.net.

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

Rev. Paul Prange, reporter

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president and chairman

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

Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services

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

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

Teacher Jim Rademan, director of WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

Prof. Bradley Wordell, director of continuing education, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Commission on Inter-Church Relations

Floor Committee #3

Our calling

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

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

Our current situation

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

As a result, Pastor Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions, was appointed to be part-time administrator of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations as well. Commission members were assigned to work in tandem with the reorganized World Missions structure made up of “One Teams.” (See the report of the Board for World Missions on p. 104.) This has resulted in increasing blessings in our communication with the churches and church bodies throughout the world with whom we are now in fellowship or are in the process of establishing fellowship. One or two commission members are assigned to each One Team. The commission representatives attend the regularly held One Team meetings and through that connection have a voice in how we interact with the various churches in that designated area of the world. The Commission on Inter-Church Relations representatives to the various One Teams are as follows:

- Asia One Team: Pastor Benjamin Tomczak, Pastor John Koelpin
- One Africa Team: Prof. Bradley Wordell
- One Europe Team: Prof. James Danell, Prof. Keith Wessel
- One Latin America Team: Pastor Bart Brauer

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

Africa

Fellowship relationships and cooperation in work on the continent of Africa continue with our long-time partners in Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria, and Cameroon as well as with our more recent partners, the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia and the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ–Kenya.

The many requests that WELS has received for fellowship over the last five years or so from church bodies in Africa led the Commission on Inter-Church Relations to develop a four-stage toolkit for the process of establishing fellowship. The toolkit contains guidelines for the various visits, interviews, and official communication that take place between WELS representatives and inquiring church bodies as they are informed about the confessional beliefs of WELS and indicate their understanding and agreement with the various teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Guided by this toolkit, discussions are currently taking place with the African Missions Evangelical Church in Tanzania. The One Africa Team and Pastoral Studies Institute are also coordinating work reaching out to South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya and offering theological education to South Sudanese men studying to be pastors.

The toolkit was also helpful in establishing a successful dialogue these past two years between the leaders of the Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda and WELS representatives in Africa. On the basis of this two-year dialogue and visitation between the WELS One Africa Team and the Obadiah Lutheran Synod, and after reviewing the doctrinal statement in their constitution, which included their commitment to the Lutheran Confessions, the Commission on Inter-Church Relations recommends to the synod in convention that WELS formally declare fellowship with Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda.

Asia

WELS is working with churches and mission stations in Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Laos, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, India, Taiwan, East Asia, Japan, and Australia. It is becoming increasingly difficult (in some cases impossible) for WELS representatives to travel to countries like India, East Asia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. As a result, much of our contact with our brothers and sisters in these countries must be done online or by having the growing numbers of WELS missionaries in Chiang Mai, Thailand, make brief visits to these areas. The Asia One Team together with our Commission on Inter-Church Relations representatives are working on ways to offer the support that these young churches need in order to reach greater doctrinal maturity. It will be especially important for the Asia One Team to find ways of staying in contact and giving encouragement to those in East Asia in the future. The commission looks forward to advising and assisting in the education of pastors in Asia through our seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute. As Asia Lutheran Seminary eventually relocates to Thailand and the new theological education center opens in Hanoi, Vietnam, we pray that God gives to his church faithful pastors who can strengthen the confessional Lutheran presence in Asia.

Europe

In Europe we have fellowship with churches in Scandinavia, Germany, Latvia, Ukraine, Portugal, Albania, Russia, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic. Our relationship with our sister synods in Europe is quite different from the ones we have with the churches on the other continents because we have had long-time associations with independent church bodies that did not begin as our own missions or as fledgling church bodies that sought fellowship with us. The Scandinavian synods and the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) of Germany have been in fellowship with WELS for generations. The war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on our sister churches in Ukraine and Russia. Our long-time missionary in Russia, Pastor Luke Wolfgramm, had to leave Russia last year because of its war with Ukraine. He relocated to Albania temporarily but is in the process of getting established in Leipzig, Germany. It's our prayer that he will be able to coordinate pastor education and continuing education for all of our sister churches in Europe when stationed at the ELFK's seminary in Leipzig.

Latin America

We continue contact with and encouragement to our sister churches in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, and Chile. The past two years have seen our synod's online education program in Central and South America, *Academia Cristo*, blossom as groups of Christians throughout Latin America have formed. Our sister church in Colombia has led the way in the formation of *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*. These emerging congregations are being attached to the new church body. A constitution and bylaws for the new church were developed and submitted to the Commission on Inter-Church Relations in 2021 for review and feedback. The commission offered its advice, much of which was incorporated into the revised documents. On the basis of this constitution and bylaws, *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional* was incorporated in October 2021. The Commission on Inter-Church Relations is recommending to the synod in convention that WELS publicly affirm church fellowship with *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*. The organizers of this new church body are working with the Pastoral Studies Institute to begin a Lutheran seminary run by Latin Americans with advisors from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

In 2022 Prof. Kenneth Cherney, on behalf of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations, traveled to Brazil to take part in the ordination and commissioning of Pastor Denício Godoy as missionary to Brazil for the Lutheran Church of Portugal. Godoy, a graduate of a Brazilian Lutheran seminary, had come into contact with the Lutheran Church of Portugal and was colloquized into that church by Pastor Artur Villares. As a pastor of our fellowship, Godoy is now reaching out, mainly online, to Brazilian laypeople and pastors who are interested in confessional Lutheranism.

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

In the United States, our sister church body is the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). WELS has had fellowship with the ELS since its organization in 1918 and even further back through its parent church body, the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, from which the ELS emerged. The Norwegian Church and the Wisconsin Synod were both members of the Synodical Conference when it was created in 1872. This past year the leaders of

WELS and the ELS officially acknowledged the 150th anniversary of this fellowship. The Commission on Inter-Church Relations and the Doctrine Committee of WELS' Conference of Presidents interact with the ELS on a regular basis in order to foster the unity of faith that we treasure with this sister synod. Pastor Thomas Fricke, a member of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations, attended the 2022 ELS convention, at which Pastor Glenn Obenberger was elected to his first full term as president and Pastor Michael Smith was elected vice president.

Other church bodies

The Commission on Inter-Church Relations has for the past decade carried on discussions with two American Lutheran church bodies that are not of our fellowship.

Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

The Commission on Inter-Church Relations continues to monitor developments in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS). Leaders of WELS, the ELS, and the LCMS have held informal in-person doctrinal discussions each year since 2012. At last year's meeting, held Dec. 5–6, the topics of discussion were 1) how the three church bodies interpret the Lutheran Confessions, 2) comparison of the three synods' hymnals, and 3) continued discussion on where WELS/ELS and LCMS agree and where they differ on the doctrine of ministry. WELS representatives at these meetings are WELS President Mark Schroeder; Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary President Earle Treptow; WELS First Vice President James Huebner; WELS Second Vice President Joel Voss; Professors Paul Wendland, John Brenner, and Thomas Nass, who were members of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations when these visits first began; Pastor Paul Prange, Ministerial Education administrator; and Prof. Bill Tackmier, who serves as the commission's contact man for the Missouri Synod. Tackmier will be WELS' observer at the LCMS convention this summer, July 29–Aug. 3, in Milwaukee, Wis.

The Commission on Inter-Church Relations strongly endorses the continuation of the informal talks with the Missouri Synod and has full confidence in those who represent the commission in them. The Commission on Inter-Church Relations has monitored developments in the Missouri Synod since WELS suspended fellowship with Missouri in 1961, regularly sending observers to LCMS conventions and monitoring LCMS publications. The commission recommended the informal talks at the time they began in 2012, and members of the commission have participated in the talks every year since then. At each of our meetings, those who represent us in these informal talks provide an update and answer all questions that are asked. There has also been an article in *Forward in Christ* that outlined the general content and purpose of these visits (see forwardinchrist.net/purposeful-discussions). These talks allow us to hear firsthand from Missouri's leaders about the developments within their church body rather than hearing about them through other channels. Since they are informal, and not formal talks, their goal is not to reestablish fellowship. Our world today has a much different attitude toward churches than it did when we suspended fellowship with Missouri in 1961. There is a greater divide than ever before between Lutheran churches that are accommodating themselves to the extreme social changes in the Western world and Lutheran churches who are committed to traditional Lutheran views on social issues. The only public statements that our two synods have made together have been appeals to governments that have infringed on Christian freedoms and that have the potential of severely curtailing Christian witness. So the Commission on Inter-Church Relations feels strongly that continued informal talks with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod are beneficial for both synods as well as for our sister synod, the ELS, which is a full partner in the talks.

Church of the Lutheran Confession

Formal doctrinal discussions had been going on between the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), the ELS, and WELS for a number of years. The talks are unfortunately currently at an impasse because at their summer 2022 convention, the Church of the Lutheran Confession introduced conditions for continued discussion that the ELS and WELS committee members could not accept. The convention resolved that if the ELS and WELS are not willing to accept the conditions, "the current formal intersynodical discussions cease." (Formal doctrinal discussions take place when there is reason to believe that there may be doctrinal agreement.) Pastor Michael Eichstadt recently resigned as president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession because of health issues. Pastor Michael Wilke of Saginaw, Mich., is the new president.

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference

Members of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations regularly monitor and participate in the activities of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC), the international association of churches in fellowship with WELS. On June 6–8, 2023, in South Korea, the CELC will hold its first in-person convention since 2017, and God willing, it will be the most widely represented CELC gathering ever. As this report is written, 111 individuals have

registered from 31 different countries, representing 28 of the 34 churches of the CELC. This robust registration was aided by the CELC Travel Assistance Fund, which received contributions from many WELS members since it was set up in 2018. WELS voting delegates at the convention will be WELS President Mark Schroeder and First Vice President James Huebner. Representing the Commission on Inter-Church Relations will be Prof. James Danell. WELS members who currently serve on CELC committees include Prof. em. John Hartwig, Prof. Thomas Nass, Layman Mark Schulz, and Pastor Nate Seiltz on the Planning Committee; Prof. em. John Brenner on the Commission on Theology; and Prof. Bradley Wordell on the Global Theological Education Commission. For more information about the CELC and its 2023 convention, see the CELC website at celc.info.

A look ahead

This summer Prof. Keith Wessel concludes his final term on the commission. We thank him for his years of service, during which he served as our contact man for our sister churches in Scandinavia.

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

Formal recommendations to the synod in convention

As we bring our report to a close, we highlight here the two formal recommendations it contains.

- After reviewing its doctrinal statement and constitution, the Commission on Inter-Church Relations is recommending to the synod in convention that WELS publicly affirm church fellowship with *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*.
- On the basis of a two-year dialogue and visitation between the WELS One Africa Team and Obadiah Lutheran Synod, and after reviewing the doctrinal statement in Obadiah Lutheran Synod's constitution, which included its commitment to the Lutheran Confessions, the Commission on Inter-Church Relations recommends to the synod in convention that WELS formally declare fellowship with Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda.

Prof. Bill Tackmier, reporter

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

Ex officio:

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Advisory:

Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president
Rev. Paul Nitz, World Missions One Teams counselor
Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations and WELS Board for World Missions
Rev. Earle Treptow, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Ministry of Christian Giving

Floor Committee #4

Our calling

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

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

- In the area of CMO, our efforts are focused on informing congregations of ministry opportunities and needs, particularly as they prayerfully set their annual commitments. We also send congregations quarterly reports of their offerings to WELS.
- In the area of direct gifts from individuals, we regularly mail and e-mail appeals for support of our gospel work. We provide information to donors about Christian estate planning and other planned giving options that allow them to give in a way that is beneficial for them, their families, and the ministries close to their hearts. WELS Christian giving counselors (currently 12.4 full-time equivalents including 1 semi-retired and 12 full-time) are called workers serving all 12 districts of WELS who apply scriptural principles to the gift planning process. Since their services are funded by our church body, there is no cost to individuals or congregations for their assistance.
- Gifts from foundations often result from consultation between the Ministry of Christian Giving director, other synod leaders, and the foundations regarding their goals for supporting WELS ministry.

Our current situation

Congregation Mission Offerings

The Ministry of Christian Giving coordinates with WELS Communication Services to share Congregation Mission Offering updates and ministry impact through WELS media. Each year the Ministry of Christian Giving oversees the process of collecting congregational offering subscriptions beginning in late summer and lasting through the first Friday of February. This involves mailed and e-mailed communications as well as direct follow up by our Ministry of Christian Giving district chairmen. We are happy to report a 98 percent participation rate in the subscription setting process for 2023 (the average participation rate over the past ten years has been 97 percent).

In addition, we collaborate with Communication Services to develop a yearly video as well as the WELS annual report, *Your gifts, God’s blessings*, to inform members of the work being done through congregational offerings. We praise our Lord and thank our congregations for a third record-setting year of CMO in a row in 2022, a generous response to Christ’s love! (For details on CMO pledged and received, see the report of the ministry financial plan on p. 71.)

Donor nurture

At the direction of the Conference of Presidents, the Ministry of Christian Giving contracted with consulting firm BWF from 2020–2023 to especially focus on nurturing relationships with prospective major and mid-level donors and to connect donors’ Christian giving interests with our areas of ministry. We hired a prospect analyst in 2021 and are hiring a database specialist to enable the Ministry of Christian Giving to segment and intentionally nurture each family according to their Christian giving interests, giving frequency, and how the Lord has blessed them. Since September 2021, we have held monthly portfolio review meetings with each Christian giving counselor to review their recent donor service and God’s blessings on their efforts.

Here are the results of this nurture of individual donors by our WELS Christian giving counselors and director in FY22:

- 1,464 meaningful meetings (in-person, Zoom, phone);
- 2,883 meaningful contacts;
- \$14.4 million in immediate gifts from assigned donors;
- \$19.7 million in deferred expectancies from assigned donors;

- 992 potential major donors were assigned; and
- 190 opportunities for major gifts (current and deferred) were funded, totaling \$36.9 million.

WELS President's Advisory Engagement Group

In November 2022, President Mark Schroeder convened an advisory group of WELS men and women from around our church body. This group, suggested by consulting firm BWF, has the opportunity to provide the president and other synodical leaders valuable feedback and insight on the work the synod is presently doing and explore ideas and suggestions for new efforts and initiatives. The participants enjoyed the initial gathering. As of this writing, the next meeting has yet to be scheduled.

Christian giving counselors

Through face-to-face, phone, and Zoom visits and presentations, our Christian giving counselors invite faith-prompted support of WELS ministries. During each of the past 15 fiscal years (FY08–FY22), the Christian giving counselors have averaged (per full-time equivalent) 256 meaningful face-to-face donor visits and have nurtured \$540,737 in immediate gifts (15-year total of \$103 million—annual average of \$6,879,648) and \$2,260,969 in new/revised deferred expectancies (15-year total of \$437 million—annual average of \$29,145,709).

From July 1, 2022, through March 17, 2023, WELS Christian giving counselors conducted 1,991 meaningful contacts with donors in their portfolios; made 991 meaningful contacts with donors beyond their portfolios; presented 90 times on WELS' mission and ministry, WELS Home Mission's 100 missions in 10 years initiative, tax-wise giving, and Christian estate planning; and helped donors fund 170 major gift opportunities (current and deferred), totaling \$32.6 million. We have received by God's grace \$8 million in immediate gifts from those to whom our Christian giving counselors are assigned, \$24.3 million in new/revised expectancies arranged, and \$2.7 million in new irrevocable expectancies (charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts).

For the 2023–25 biennium, our church body will annually invest approximately \$1.68 and \$1.71 million in our field staff and about \$832,000 and \$878,000 in our office staff (including appeals, materials, and database fees) so that we may serve Jesus, his gifted people, and our areas of ministry. In view of the 15-year totals for immediate gifts and deferred expectancies mentioned above, we thank our Lord for the generous return he's given our investment in the Ministry of Christian Giving.

At the end of 2022, Mr. Rick Kneser retired, and Mr. Scott Wagner was reassigned from serving the Dakota-Montana and Nebraska Districts to the Southeastern Wisconsin District. Pastor Michael Dietz also fully retired after serving the Northern Wisconsin District as a current giving counselor, and Mr. Pat Ruerhdanz accepted the call to serve as the current giving counselor for the Northern Wisconsin District. Mr. Terry Helton accepted the call to serve as Christian giving counselor for the Michigan and North Atlantic Districts.

Martin Luther College competency-based education campaign

The Ministry of Christian Giving helped Martin Luther College during FY23 with encouraging gifts for a new mode of education that will assist individuals who want to be WELS teachers but cannot pursue the traditional four-year on-campus experience. For each of the next two years, \$300,000 is needed to fund the competency-based education program until tuition revenue begins. As of mid-March, God's people have given \$474,901, which enabled the college to call the program director and course designer.

100 missions in 10 years

The Ministry of Christian Giving is coordinating with Home Missions through June 2024 on the 100 missions in 10 years synodwide initiative that was approved at the 2021 synod convention. From July 1, 2021, through March 17, 2023, the Lord has graciously allowed WELS to receive 1,504 gifts from 1,235 individuals/groups totaling \$1.43 million to be used toward establishing 100 new home missions and enhancing 75 mission congregations during 2023–2033.

Luther Preparatory School auditorium

The Ministry of Christian Giving worked with Luther Preparatory School and consulting firm Generis to prepare materials and interview prospective donors as part of a feasibility study to gauge support for building a new music auditorium and renovating the former auditorium into a second gym. We support the study's recommendations to move ahead with a capital campaign and look forward to working with Luther Preparatory School on this initiative.

Appeals

The Ministry of Christian Giving works closely with our WELS areas of ministry and ministerial education schools to send about 13 mailed appeals as well as 4 to 12 e-appeals each year. Each of the synod's four main areas of ministry

receives two of the annual mailed appeal slots and several e-appeals, while other initiatives (e.g., Commission on Inter-Church Relations, Christian Aid and Relief, Mission and Ministry, and WELS endowments) receive one mailed appeal slot per year. Another annual appeal encourages charitable gift annuities managed by WELS Foundation. The appeals coordinate with other WELS media including *WELS Connection*, *Forward in Christ*, WELS' websites, and the *Together* e-newsletter. Over the past 10 fiscal years, the appeals have produced an average net income of \$1 million per year.

WELS endowment funds

In 2005, synod convention delegates prayerfully considered how WELS could support gospel ministry in a predictable and ever-increasing manner. One answer was to establish the WELS endowments, which benefit the Lord's work in WELS Missions and at our four ministerial education schools. Out of gratitude for God's love and a desire to help more people know Jesus as their Savior, WELS members have faithfully contributed to these endowments, resulting in more than \$112 million in gifts received (\$30.9 million) and expected (\$81.1 million) through 2022. In July 2022, the annual distribution from the WELS endowments was \$1.2 million. We praise God for these blessings!

Encouragement of planned gifts

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

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

In recent years qualified charitable distributions from IRAs have become a popular way for anyone 70.5 or older to support ministry. These distributions are free from federal and potentially state income tax, so donors can direct distributions to their church, synod, or other WELS ministries. As of 2023 donors can also use qualified charitable distributions to establish charitable gift annuities. The Ministry of Christian Giving is working with WELS Foundation to inform donors and churches of this opportunity and to provide resources to assist at wels.net/qcd.

Development counsel to other organizations

The Ministry of Christian Giving annually offers development training to Christian giving counselors, Ministerial Education mission advancement staff, Missions administrators, and anyone serving a WELS/ELS-affiliated ministry in development. One goal of such training is to encourage a consistent approach to God's people that is Christ-centered and donor-sensitive and that minimizes potential donor fatigue and the impression that we're competitors or trying to "get" something from our fellow Christians. Nineteen people participated in this 2023 training.

WELS-affiliated ministries can arrange a part-time "collaborative partnership" with the Ministry of Christian Giving where our counselors represent their organizations on visits with members. This allows both WELS and its affiliated ministries to broaden their audiences of prospective supporters.

WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership

Pastor Kurt Lueneburg and Mr. Adam Goede presented a breakout session on behalf of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving called "Christian Giving Now and for the Future." The presentation covered biblical stewardship principles, new methods for giving our regular offerings, and planned gift opportunities that provide future support for congregations. The presentation can be found along with the other resources we offer at mcg.welsrc.net.

A look ahead

God willing, WELS Ministry of Christian Giving will move forward with the following specific initiatives over the next couple of years:

- We look forward to training our two new Christian giving counselors for service in WELS.
- We will continue seeking an office database specialist.
- We intend to add a mid-level donor giving counselor to our office team.
- We will continue working with WELS Home Missions and Luther Preparatory School on their campaigns.
- We will expand the use of our database to enhance events, online donations, and e-mails.
- Our next WELS Christian giving training for WELS/ELS advancement personnel is tentatively scheduled to take place Jan. 8–12, 2024. Contact us to register or receive more information (800-827-5482 or mcg@wels.net).

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

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, reporter

Communication Services Floor Committee #5

Our calling

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

Our current situation

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

Forward in Christ

Forward in Christ (including its predecessor name, *The Northwestern Lutheran*) has been the official magazine of WELS for 110 years. Published monthly in both print and digital formats, *Forward in Christ* brings Lutherans together through shared stories of faith and articles that address important issues facing Christians today. *Forward in Christ* also provides an in-depth look at important biblical truths while striving to inspire its readers to live lives of Christian service. As WELS' official magazine, *Forward in Christ* shares news from its congregations, schools, ministry affiliates, and synodical areas of ministry. Each issue of the magazine is designed to educate, inform, and inspire readers with quality content.

Pastor John Braun retired as executive editor of *Forward in Christ* on Dec. 31, 2022, after serving faithfully in that position for 16 years. Pastor James Pope, recently retired from Martin Luther College, accepted the call to succeed Braun. Pope joins the editorial staff with Managing Editor Julie Wietzke and Staff Editor Nicole Balza.

Currently *Forward in Christ* has more than 29,000 monthly subscribers; bulk subscriptions to congregations comprise the great majority of that number. Congregational subscriptions are a budget-friendly way for churches to keep members connected to quality Christian reading material. Monthly issues of the magazine can be delivered to congregations in bulk or sent directly to members' homes. With each bulk shipment to congregations, *Forward in Christ* includes a one-page newsletter for pastors entitled "Share what's inside" that highlights that issue's content and easy ways to share the content with members. Visit nph.net/fic for current subscription information.

Forward in Christ's dedicated website, forwardinchrist.net, provides content from each monthly issue as well as supplementary materials. Readers also can sign up at forwardinchrist.net/subscribe to receive a free weekly e-newsletter filled with articles, photos, and sneak peeks. In 2022, forwardinchrist.net had about 100,000 users (up almost 27 percent from 2021) and almost 185,000 pageviews (up almost 11 percent). Through *Forward in Christ's* Facebook and Instagram social media sites, WELS members have multiple ways to access and share the magazine's engaging content. *Forward in Christ* reached almost 100,000 people via Facebook and 2,500 via Instagram in 2022.

If you are interested in creating more awareness of the magazine in your congregation, the executive editor is available for preaching engagements and Bible classes. Submit your request at forwardinchrist.net/submit. There you can also submit photos, articles, and questions for possible inclusion in the magazine.

wels.net

The synod's official website, **wels.net**, had 918,002 unique visitors with more than 4.5 million page views last year. The most popular pages viewed by our visitors were Devotions, 526,000 views (daily devotions 378,000); home page, 516,000 views; call reports, 229,000 views; Through My Bible in Three Years, 53,000 views; and the WELS Online Yearbook, 33,000 views. The synod's website continues to provide timely content both for WELS members and non-members who want to learn more about WELS and what we believe.

WELS Connection

WELS Connection, the monthly video viewed in more than 800 congregations, is entering its 36th year of providing stories that highlight the important work happening as a result of your Congregation Mission Offerings to the synod. *Forward in Christ* and the *WELS Connection* video have the proven ability to reach tens of thousands of people each month with uplifting stories and important information every member should know. We truly appreciate the strong partnership we share with our congregations that choose to subscribe to these inspirational products. With the continuing decline of DVD usage and DVD player availability, subscribers are encouraged to consider switching to the video file download option available to all subscribers. The video files are available on the *WELS Connection* subscription page on the Northwestern Publishing House website at **online.nph.net/wels-connection-subscription.html**.

Together

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

Annual report

Your gifts, God's blessings: An annual report to our members is now available online and in print. The annual report highlights the blessings that God has showered on WELS through Congregation Mission Offerings and individual donors. To view the report online, visit **wels.net/annualreport**. Print copies were mailed to every congregation and to all WELS donors that made a gift in 2022. Free print copies are available from Northwestern Publishing House at **online.nph.net/wels-annual-report.html**. We see this report as being a communications tool that can be used year-round to encapsulate WELS' ministry and clearly show our members how the synod is supporting ministry through their Congregation Mission Offerings. An online version of the annual report is created and shared with all parish pastors via e-mail in January, with an encouragement to forward the e-mail to their congregational leaders.

A look ahead

The Communications team creates promotional print materials, logos (if requested), and videos for use on WELS' social media channels along with written stories in *Together* and *Forward in Christ* for WELS campaigns and events. The team will work on these upcoming projects:

- WELS Ministry of Christian Giving staff with Communication Services will once again produce a special Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) encouragement video called *Doing more together*. The video will include the blessings and opportunities God is granting our churches through the synodical work of WELS' areas of ministry. The video will highlight the ministry opportunities the Lord is providing us around the world. An e-mail will be sent to all parish pastors with the video file link in September 2023. The Ministry of Christian Giving will mail a DVD to each congregation with its annual Congregation Mission Offerings informational packet, which includes print resources and weblinks to guide congregations in their discussion of their 2024 Congregation Mission Offering commitments.
- The 2024 WELS International Youth Rally will be held next summer at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. The goal is to have more than 2,500 people in attendance for the three-day rally in June. Monthly promotional videos will begin in February 2024 along with stories in *Together* and *Forward in Christ*. We will provide partial live coverage of the event via our social media channels.
- The 9th annual WELS Night at the Brewers will be held Friday, July 7, 2023. Discounted tickets for WELS members and guests are reserved all together in a block of seats. Ticket link: **brewers.com/wels**. As of this writing, more than 1,100 tickets have been sold.
- Taste of Missions will be held on Saturday, June 10, 2023, on the campus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis. The event kicks off with a special worship service where new home and world missionaries will be commissioned. This in-person event will be livestreamed.

- Communication Services continues to support the campaign to start 100 home mission congregations in 10 years as well as support 75 enhancements to help existing congregations reach more souls. A donor case statement was produced for Christian giving counselors' one-on-one visits. A dedicated website was created for the initiative. We will continue to include stories in *Together, Forward in Christ*, *WELS Connection*, *wels.net*, and WELS' social media platforms. We encourage our churches and individuals to participate in supporting the campaign.
- Planning is underway for the print materials and online resources needed to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, which was established May 26, 1850.

Other ongoing communication initiatives include:

- Editorial development of the synod social media sites, Facebook and Instagram. Our Facebook page, [facebook.com/weslutherans](https://www.facebook.com/weslutherans), has more than 105,000 page followers. Our Instagram page, [instagram.com/weslutherans](https://www.instagram.com/weslutherans), has more than 7,000 page followers.
- A monthly Ministry Connection media kit sent to all parish pastors each month that includes digital display graphics, bulletin blurbs, and prayers featuring the synod areas of ministry.
- Management of all synodwide electronic communication tools, including broadcast e-mails, surveys, e-newsletters, and the monthly Ministry Connection. During 2022 we facilitated the sending of 2,744,379 e-mails that averaged a unique open rate of 41.16 percent and a delivery rate of 97.8 percent. We currently manage an active newsletter subscriber list of 23,746.
- Video production. In 2022 we added a video production coordinator to record and edit the more than 100 videos we produce each year for our areas of ministry, including *Together* video news updates and several livestreamed events. All new ministry initiatives and programs now include video content. Social media promotional videos are also created to promote synod events. You can view and download synod videos at [vimeo.com/wels](https://www.vimeo.com/wels).

WELS Church Extension Fund

Communication Services continues to help promote monthly WELS Church Extension Fund rates and activity to investors through website updates, broadcasts, bulletin inserts, rate sheets, activity updates, and the annual Offering Circular. In addition, a graphic was created to attract new investors that was placed in *Forward in Christ* magazine and on [forwardinchrist.net](https://www.forwardinchrist.net).

WELS Foundation

Communication Services assists WELS Foundation in supporting our WELS Christian giving counselors and mission advancement partners by providing access to monthly planned giving newsletters and free educational webinars, in addition to a quarterly newsletter with content to help them serve their donors. Marketing support also includes creation of the annual report, quarterly conference reports, and donor stories for the *Grace of Giving* newsletter, which is mailed to more than 14,000 donors. Upcoming marketing efforts include additional video content and more resources on the WELS Foundation resource center.

WELS Investment Funds

Communication Services' support of WELS Investment Funds includes the creation of the annual report, dissemination of the quarterly WELS Fund Fact sheets and conference reports, and execution of the live quarterly video webinars featuring Mr. Bill Burns, a senior investment consultant at Vanguard Institutional Advisory Services.

In conclusion

The goal of Communication Services is to work with each area of ministry and subsidiary to identify priorities and then communicate these priorities to laypeople and called workers alike through a multi-platform communication strategy. The dedicated Communication Services staff remains committed and able to continue developing content for all other essential internal communication tools, including the *Book of Reports and Memorials*, *Report to the Twelve Districts*, and *Proceedings*—the official record of each synod convention.

Mr. Lee Hitter, reporter

Congregational Services

Floor Committee #11, #12, & #13

Our calling

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

That encouragement comes through Congregational Services' members working onsite with churches and schools. Congregational Services offers several programs (described below) where an individual or team from Congregational Services will visit the congregation and assist church and school leaders as they attempt to evaluate current ministry efforts and plan for the future. Additionally, Congregational Services organizes a number of national conferences where called workers and laity alike can discuss best ministry practices and receive encouragement for our shared mission.

To help equip congregations for ministry, Congregational Services produces a wide variety of resources that churches and schools can utilize in their efforts to feed the faithful, reach the lost, and pursue the straying. Most of these are disseminated at welscongregationservices.net.



Congregational Services consists of six commissions:

- **Commission on Congregational Counseling**—Exists to serve congregations in their efforts to evaluate ministry efforts, congregational organization, and staffing needs; develop plans to adjust and expand ministry efforts over time; and equip lay leaders in their vital roles.
- **Commission on Discipleship**—Exists to serve congregations in their efforts to help their members grow in both their knowledge of God's Word and their sanctified service of Christ and neighbor.
- **Commission on Evangelism**—Exists to serve congregations in their efforts to seize every opportunity the Lord provides to evangelize lost souls, both through congregational outreach efforts and through personal witnessing.
- **Commission on Lutheran Schools**—Exists to serve congregations in their efforts to provide Christian education through Lutheran schools and other early childhood ministries.
- **Commission on Special Ministries**—Exists to serve congregations in their efforts to bring the gospel to those with needs or circumstances that prevent them from being served through congregations' usual ministries.
- **Commission on Worship**—Exists to serve congregations in their efforts to glorify God and strengthen God's people through Word and sacrament.

Congregational Services is also responsible for studying WELS statistical trends. It analyzes the data and shares the relevant information that is needed to make good decisions.

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

Our current situation

This report is intended to share a cursory view of the work of Congregational Services. Space prohibits going into detail about all of Congregational Services' programs as well as listing all the resources produced over the last biennium or scheduled to be produced this upcoming biennium. For more information about those things, please see the online individual commission reports available at welsconvention.net.

Onsite programs

Congregational Services offers several programs where members or teammates are onsite at churches and schools. In some cases, they work with a large segment of members as they assess ministry efforts and plan for the future. In other cases, the Congregational Services team provides training to church and school leadership.

In 2022, Congregational Services worked with just over 150 congregations in one of these planned programs, approximately 12 percent of congregations in WELS. The goal is that by 2025, Congregational Services would have the capacity to serve 20 percent of congregations in a year if requested.

Some examples of Congregational Services' onsite programs follow.

Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program

The Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program allows for a thorough assessment of a congregation's community and current ministry. During the program, an assigned congregational counselor leads the congregation in a day-long study about various aspects of congregational ministry: worship, outreach, discipleship, youth ministry, fellowship, stewardship, etc. The members of the congregation then brainstorm ways they could adjust or expand their local ministry in those areas.

AXIS Program

The AXIS Program builds upon the Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program. AXIS helps congregations produce a long-range plan aimed at ministry revitalization or redevelopment. The assigned congregational counselor helps the congregation define and commit to mission, envision the congregation's desired future, and identify the long-range goals that would help move the congregation in that direction.

Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation Program

The Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation Program builds upon the AXIS Program. It looks at the human resources called for in a long-range plan. It assesses the volunteerism potential in a congregation and attempts to maximize it. The assigned congregational counselor works with leadership to help produce updated position descriptions and align skills and interests.

Everyone Outreach Program

Everyone Outreach is designed to help congregations build a mission culture so that every member and every ministry is thinking about and participating in outreach. The program kicks off with a two-day onsite workshop where participants discover thought habits that may be keeping them from reaching out with the gospel as well and as often as they would like. Following the workshop, resources are provided that help create new thought habits resulting in new behaviors and, Lord willing, more evangelism.

WELS School Accreditation Program

WELS School Accreditation is an onsite process in which the school evaluates its current education practices and seeks sound methods to build on its strengths. The program determines new ways to grow and strengthen the educational ministry of the school for the benefit of the students and parents to the glory of God. Protocols at all levels have been reviewed over the past biennium, with adjustments made to several of the standards. WELS School Accreditation is a sanctioned member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation.

Telling the Next Generation Program

This one-day seminar is designed for pastors, principals, early childhood directors, teachers, and church and school

lay leaders. These individuals gather for a day of interactive presentations. The seminar assists congregations in the development of a harvest strategy, a plan that focuses on intentional ways for congregations to connect unchurched families with the gospel.

School consultations

School consulting exists to partner with congregational consulting to help support the overall ministry of a congregation. It also provides onsite support for both congregations seeking to start a new children's ministry or receive consulting support for an existing ministry.

Merging for Mission Program

Church mergers are becoming common in WELS. The Merging for Mission Program brings together multiple congregations in geographic proximity that are considering a partnership or even congregational consolidation. In an exploratory meeting the assigned congregational counselor explains the assorted options for mergers. If the congregations are interested in taking further steps, the assigned counselor helps them work through the necessary analysis, planning, and training to allow for a smooth merge.

Resource production

Congregational Services produces a variety of resources to help churches in their gospel efforts to feed the faithful, reach the lost, and pursue the straying. Most of these are disseminated at **welscongregationalservices.net** and are free.

The Foundation: Weekly ministry resources

The Foundation is a suite of resources that attempts to build upon the importance of public worship both on Sunday morning and throughout the week. Resources included in *The Foundation* include seasonal thematic worship plans, weekly worship plans, WELS Preachers Podcast, and worship series promotional graphics and videos. In addition to these free resources, all the Congregational Services devotions—WELS online daily devotions, family devotions, school devotions—capture the worship themes for that week. Thus, congregations that use *The Foundation* have a coherent, focused spiritual message that is repeated throughout the week in the homes of members who utilize those devotions. In the first year after these resources were launched, there were 81,502 unique “user events.” (That is when an individual engages with the webpage for a longer period of time and, if applicable, downloads the resources there.)

In Season and Out of Season: A personal witnessing Bible Study

In his second letter to Timothy, St. Paul wrote, “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season” (4:2). Based on St. Paul's experiences in the city of Philippi, this video-based, online Bible study seeks to encourage and equip God's people to share the gospel in any and every situation. It provides congregations another opportunity to encourage members to be the ambassadors Christ says they are.

WELS Youth Night

This resource provides a series of youth-focused events, held three times a year, to gather youth from congregations in geographic proximity for fellowship and Scripture study. This resource provides all the pieces needed to plan, train, promote, and host a Youth Night event. Every package in the series has its own unique event theme, keynote video, and small group discussion guide.

Marriage resources

Congregational Services produces several resources designed to help churches encourage their married members in that high calling. In addition to weekly devotional videos titled *Marriage Moments* and Bible studies titled *Marriage Maintenance*, two new resources were developed in this past biennium. *Marriage Keys* is a three-part small group discussion with leader guides for congregations to strengthen the Christian bond between husbands and wives. *Marriage for Life* is a pre-marital course for pastors to adapt for use in their setting, if so desired.

Helping the hurting with hope

In an increasingly post-Christendom country, compassion ministry is helpful in developing opportunities to both reflect and speak of Christ's love. This Bible study helps participants appreciate the role of compassion in a Christian's personal and congregational life. Where the Bible class succeeds in cultivating compassion, congregations will be better spiritual refuges for people with broken lives and welcome people looking for a church family where they can walk a new path.

Heart Imprints

Whether you are giving a children's sermon or planning chapel for your Sunday school, early childhood ministry, or Lutheran elementary school, this resource provides ideas for your message that will coordinate with the church year and the worship being planned on Sunday. *Heart Imprints* dovetails with *The Foundation* resources.

Christian audiobooks

WELS Listen Library (listen.wels.net) offers Lutheran Bible commentaries and other books, *Forward in Christ* magazine, *Meditations*, and *Christian Worship* resources in a digital audio form to anyone who is blind or has other reading disabilities.

Women's ministry resources

Through online webinars, Bible studies, devotionals, and programs like Advent/Lent by Candlelight, Women's Ministry seeks to nurture, encourage, and equip the women of our congregations to faithfully use their gifts for service in God's kingdom.

"Who Am I?" youth resources

"Who Am I?" is a three-part video-based youth ministry resource that takes an in-depth look at real-life problems that overwhelm teens with feelings of being unloved, worthless, guilty, anxious, lonely, and more. The videos explore the identity crisis among teens and look to root their identity in Christ through the facts of God's Word instead of personal feelings. Each video contains numerous "pause points" for the youth leader (or a parent) to stop the video and interact in personal discussion before continuing. The series is adaptable for use in a youth group ministry setting, home setting, or for personal teen viewing.

Ministry training

Congregational Services also offers ministry training to help individuals (both called workers and laity) carry out their ministry efforts.

Church Systems Workshop

A "system" is a series of tasks that begins after some trigger event. For example, imagine a guest visits worship. That is a trigger event. A worship-guest follow-up system specifies what all happens and when to thank that guest for joining you and to encourage them to come again. The Church Systems Workshop is a weekend seminar that helps churches plan their systems in key areas: worship-guest follow-up, shepherding and delinquent work, member assimilation, crisis care work, etc.

WELS chaplain certification

This continuing education initiative is a joint effort of the Commission on Special Ministries and Martin Luther College (MLC). It requires ongoing education to renew the certification every three years. In an era of increasing security procedures in institutions, it has become difficult for local pastors to minister in prisons, military bases, and large health care facilities. Chaplain certification will be increasingly useful, especially if a pastor or layperson wants to reach out to more than one's own members. Online courses are taught through MLC.

Future leader training

WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools and Martin Luther College partner on two programs designed to support future principals and early childhood directors. The Principal/Director Training Program pairs a newly assigned individual with a veteran and high performing leader for the first three years of ministry while they receive training, coursework, and authentic experiences supporting their host leader.

The Principal/Director Credential Cohort identifies and fully trains teachers with at least three years of teaching experience for the role of leader. Participants are able to enter their leadership position with a master's degree in administration. The growing number of people who have completed this program have served well in our schools.

Mentoring a returning citizen

This training course helps prepare church members returning to the community from incarceration. WELS has a robust prison ministry program. This training can help a congregation learn how to be a landing space for those attempting to return to their community. Materials can be studied privately, but group training is also available. Mentoring returning citizens can be an effective way to put faith into action. The course provides skills that are useful for Christians in other settings as well.

Standing up for children: A Christian response to abuse and neglect

Schools, youth ministries, and congregations will find this training an excellent resource for preparing volunteers, staff, and called workers to prevent abuse, while preparing them to respond in a knowledgeable, Christian manner to evidence of abuse. In addition to the training, a website called Freedom for the Captives (freedomforcaptives.com) provides policy insight, best practices, and resources for survivors.

Welcome Home—soul care/elder training

This video-based program is designed to help equip lay leaders of your congregation to identify and reach out to missing members from your church family. The videos are short yet focused and include accompanying guide sheets to facilitate discussion about how to increase the congregation's shepherding activity. *Welcome Home* aims to create a culture within your congregation where it is understood that straying members will be pursued lovingly and aggressively. Creating that culture requires congregational leaders who themselves are strengthened and encouraged for this endeavor. That is why "before" and "after" devotionals are included with every video chapter.

Effective soul care partnership

This is a collaboration of Christian Family Solutions and Special Ministries' Christian Therapist Network. Pastors and WELS/Evangelical Lutheran Synod therapists will benefit from participating in conference presentations that demonstrate how they can partner with and learn from each other. Participants can better understand their unique perspectives and expertise, discuss overlapping areas, and identify best practice procedures in both the clinical and pastoral roles. More information can be found at christiantherapistnetwork.com/wectn-effective-soul-care-partnership.

Trauma-informed parenting workshop

Parenting children who have experienced trauma is different from parenting those who haven't. Special Ministries' Light for Parents offers training workshops to provide parents with an approach and Christian resources that provide hope and peace to parents of foster or adopted children or children who experienced trauma in other ways. To learn more, contact Light for Parents at lightforparents@gmail.com.

Assistance with special ministry needs

Through its Commission on Special Ministries, Congregational Services also offers spiritual and practical guidance to congregations and individuals as they bring the gospel to those with needs or circumstances that prevent them from being served or serving with their gifts through a congregation's usual ministry.

Military Services

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

Prison Ministry

WELS Prison Ministry administers an extensive ministry-by-mail program and provides training opportunities and resources for laypeople and pastors who would like to begin a local jail or prison ministry. Prison Ministry serves 1,500 correctional facilities nationwide. Through a ministry-by-mail program, Prison Ministry has reached more than 70,000 inmates.

Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing seeks to help congregations share the gospel of Jesus Christ with members of WELS and others who are deaf or hard of hearing. Addressing the needs of these individuals will improve gospel ministry in worship services and Bible classes.

Mission for the Visually Impaired

The Mission for the Visually Impaired helps people who are unable to read normal-sized print, whether they are blind or have impaired eyesight. The mission produces devotional and other materials in Braille, large print, and online audio files. These materials are distributed free throughout the world to WELS and non-WELS people who are visually or print impaired.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry

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

Conferences and gatherings

As part of its mission to encourage congregations in their ministry efforts, Congregational Services also operates several different conferences and gatherings for WELS members. The following were held in the past biennium.

“United in Christ, Diverse in Service”—WELS Education Conference—June 2022

More than 400 teachers, school leaders, and pastors gathered in Pewaukee, Wis., for worship, keynotes, sectionals, and fellowship displaying their unity in Christ. Another WELS Education Conference is being planned for summer 2025.

“Here and Now”—WELS International Youth Rally—June 2022

More than 2,200 teens and youth leaders traveled to Knoxville for the 2022 WELS International Youth Rally June 28–July 1 at the University of Tennessee. For almost 50 years, this synodwide event has brought high school youth and youth leaders from across our church body together for worship, workshops, service opportunities, and plenty of recreational fun. The theme reminded teens that God has a plan and a purpose for everyone—not just for someday down the road, but “right here” and “right now.” The next youth rally will be held in summer 2024.

“Won to be One”—WELS Women’s Ministry Conference—July 2022

Held July 21–23 on the campus of Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis., more than 330 women of all ages were in attendance to learn how to identify barriers that get in the way of knowing their purpose, stand firm on Scripture in the face of conflict, and extend grace in their everyday relationships. The next Women’s Ministry Conference will be held in summer 2024.

Institute of Lutheran Apologetics—August 2022

The Institute of Lutheran Apologetics consists of about 20 pastors, teachers, and individuals with acumen in the sciences. The group meets annually to hear presentations on various topics related to apologetics. They also discuss how to better utilize apologetics in our synodical efforts to train believers to give the reason for the hope they have and to equip young people to face a world that is increasingly hostile to Christianity. Pastor Justin Cloute was appointed as moderator and Pastor Samuel Jeske was appointed as the co-moderator.

WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership—January 2023

This conference brought together about 1,300 individuals, evenly split between called workers and laity. Five plenary presentations looked at broader cultural and strategic issues virtually all WELS congregations are facing. Forty-seven breakout presentations discussed “best practices” for a broad spectrum of ministry issues: recruitment and training of lay leaders, shaping healthy congregational culture, cross-cultural ministry, making better use of the gifts of women, retaining and gaining younger members, equipping members for service, utilizing small groups, large church management, church communication, social media, etc. Resources and videos of select presentations can be found at lutheranleadership.com. The next WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership will be held in January 2026.

Commission news

Full reports from each commission are available at welsconvention.net.

Congregational Counseling

The Commission on Congregational Counseling thanks Pastor Adam Mueller, one of the original commission members who has termed out, for over a decade of service. The commission welcomes Pastor Jonathan Bauer, Mr. Kurt Nitz, Pastor Nathan Strutz, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary President Earle Treptow (advisory member), and Pastor Kevin Westra as new members.

The Commission on Congregational Counseling also has more than a dozen parish pastors and a half-dozen laymen who assist with some onsite congregational counseling. A grateful church body thanks these individuals for the encouragement and advice they provide.

Discipleship

The Commission on Discipleship welcomes Prof. Luke Thompson (Martin Luther College) and Prof. Paul Waldschmidt (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) as new advisory members to its commission. The commission also welcomes four new district discipleship coordinators: Pastors Gary Pufahl (Arizona-California), Mark Voss (North Atlantic), Caleb Kurbis (South Atlantic), and Aaron Voss (Southeastern Wisconsin).

In the past biennium, the Commission on Discipleship assembled an ad hoc group of pastors, educators, and counselors who have experience ministering to individuals wrestling with their identity and/or sexuality. That task force identified enough work to be done in this area that it has become a standing sub-committee within the commission.

Evangelism

The newest Congregational Services onsite program, developed this past biennium by the Commission on Evangelism, is Everyone Outreach. Thirty-eight facilitators are trained. Launched in 2022, just over 70 workshops were conducted by the end of that year in 22 different states.

WELS Commission on Evangelism welcomes two new members, Mr. Brian Urbanek and Mrs. Alli Pappathopoulos.

Lutheran Schools

WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools has focused heavily on supporting an educational system at 428 locations nationwide that has seen strong growth over the last biennium. A recent data review shows that from the pre-COVID year of 2019–20 to the current post-COVID school year of 2022–23, enrollment has grown by 4.9 percent at the early childhood level, 13.8 percent at the Lutheran elementary school level, and 10.9 percent at the Lutheran high school/preparatory school level. WELS schools served more than 12,000 at the early childhood level and more than 7,000 at the high school level. During that same period, the number of called teachers in our schools has increased by 168. The level of graduates from Martin Luther College entering the teaching ministry has not kept pace with both the current growth of our schools and the natural attrition through retirements and resignations. We rejoice that over the biennium more than 150 ministry-trained teachers who had been inactive have returned to the teaching ministry, and more than 115 WELS members with secular education degrees have been called provisionally to serve in WELS schools as well.

Special Ministries

After ten years of leadership of WELS Commission on Special Ministries, Pastor Jim Behringer is retiring as director at the end of June. The Lord led Pastor Joel Gaertner, who had been the chairman of the Commission on Special Ministries, to accept the call to be director. During the biennium, Mr. Lawrence Povinelli, Pastor Stephen Schmidt, Mr. Peter Larson, and Mr. Jason Jonker accepted positions on the commission.

European Civilian Chaplain John Hartwig and National Civilian Chaplain Paul Ziemer also are retiring this summer. Pastor Robert Weiss has accepted the call to serve in Europe. The national civilian chaplain position will become a full-time position. We thank Pastors Behringer, Hartwig, and Ziemer for their years of service. We also thank commission members who completed their service: Mr. Bill Bremel, Mr. Jerrell Lucht, Pastor Robin Robbert, and Mr. Kent Robinson.

Worship

The Commission on Worship was heavily involved in the production of *Christian Worship 2021*. While the completed hymnal was presented at the 2021 synod convention, supporting resources continue to be developed. Those congregations just beginning to consider adopting the new hymnal will find a wealth of resources at two websites: christianworship.com and welscongregationalservices.net/hymnal-introduction-resources.

Pastor Jon Zabell has termed out as commission chairman. This was an extremely busy function due to the commission's involvement with the Hymnal Project, which he also chaired. A grateful synod thanks him for his faithful service.

A look ahead

WELS Congregational Services will continue to identify common needs within our congregations and schools and produce the resources or programs that help meet those needs. Here are just a few of the resources, efforts, and events being planned that you can look for in the upcoming biennium.

Teacher retention guidance and school board support

Lutheran Schools continues to look for ways to retain the teachers currently serving and encourage more young people and those looking for a second career to consider the teaching ministry. Supporting congregations with tools for board members and support and guidance for supervising instruction by our school leaders will continue to be an area of focus.

A leader's reflection program

In recent years, Congregational Services has focused on the importance of organizational culture. Culture is the thought habits within an organization that frame how that organization thinks and acts. So, for a congregation to carry out zealous ministry well, it is not enough to have sound strategies. It needs a healthy congregational culture. Culture is shaped in large part by leadership. This program will help both called workers and lay leaders understand how they can foster a stronger church and school culture.

Schools theology standards and curriculum

Ms. Melanie Giddings has been called half time by the Conference of Presidents to join the Lutheran Schools team and coordinate the efforts to lay the foundation for new theology standards for WELS schools. These standards will help guide curriculum development to meet the needs of children and families being served by our WELS schools today.

National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts

The 2021 worship conference was canceled due to the pandemic. Rather than scheduling its replacement in the same year as the 2023 WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership, the next National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts will be held in July 2024. For more up-to-date information, see wels.net/worshipconference.

WELS Committee on Identity, Gender, & Sexuality

Gender identity and human sexuality have become key spiritual issues with massive cultural pivots in the past decade. This standing committee has been constituted to provide encouragement and guidance to congregations and individuals who seek to share God's Word with those facing these struggles. This committee has adopted the following objectives for the upcoming biennium: 1) development of a website that offers spiritual guidance and encouragement from a confessional Lutheran perspective to help struggling individuals and families; 2) the formation of a speakers bureau of individuals who can give presentations on a variety of related topics to congregations, schools, conferences, etc.; and 3) updated resources to help churches and schools produce policies, statements, and handbooks that help our ministries proclaim and practice the truth in a loving and faithful way and protect the congregation from accusations of discrimination.

Military contact pastors training

Military Services will offer a training workshop for military contact pastors this fall to provide insight into the spiritual needs of military members. Since our chaplains cannot be present on a ship or in an area of deployment, Military Services is creating lay ministry training for military members. Called "Shepherding Military Members as a Lay Leader," this training will equip WELS individuals in the armed forces to conduct devotions and Bible studies for fellow WELS members serving with them. The course focuses on doctrine and practice, with a special emphasis on navigating military regulations.

"A Time for Everything" stewardship program

Stewardship is the lifelong management of all the resources God has given us, including our time. So much competes for our time. "A Time for Everything" provides four weeks of worship, sermon, Bible study, and devotional resources as congregations consider these important times: "A Time to Prioritize," "A Time for Perspective," "A Time to Plan," and "A Time to Pause." In addition to "A Time for Everything," in the coming biennium, four more similar sets of resources will be developed for other aspects of stewardship: talent, treasure, temple, and truth. Together, they will be "The Stewardship Legacy Series" and provide congregations with multiple years of resources that encourage whole-life stewardship.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this report, we discussed the work that Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education does for you: starting new churches across the country, planting new gospel beachheads around the world, providing called workers. WELS Congregational Services is the ministry group that works with you as you proclaim the gospel in your corner of the world. We are thankful for that privilege. Please don't hesitate to let us know how we can better serve you as you seek to share the life-giving gospel in your corner of a dying world.

As mentioned previously, this report does not describe everything the six commissions of Congregational Services have done or are doing. For more information, please refer to the digital reports at welsconvention.net or contact any member of WELS Congregational Services.

Rev. Jonathan Hein, reporter

Appendix:

Report from the Teacher Shortage Task Force

Discussion during the days of assignments at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in May 2022 resulted in WELS President Mark Schroeder appointing a task force to study the teacher shortage issue from all angles to provide concrete recommendations to the Conference of Presidents. The appointed committee included district presidents, Martin Luther College representatives, Center for Mission and Ministry workers, and called and lay workers in the field.

The task force quickly identified 140 angles, and through discussion narrowed its focus to issues involving training and culture. Subcommittees for each of those two broad topics were formed, and the group met periodically for updates and direction. What follows is a brief update of some information and action taken by the Conference of Presidents and other groups, including continued study by the current task force or other individuals.

Factors leading to the shortage

Teacher attrition (including resignations, retirements, and the age of called teachers) has certainly contributed to the current shortage. In the four school years leading up to the appointment of the task force, between 175 to 200 called teachers annually had either resigned, retired, or been called to heaven while serving. Those numbers exceeded the number of new teachers brought into the called teacher pool through ministry training. Additionally, WELS schools saw an overall increase in enrollment of over ten percent from the 2019–20 school year to the 2022–23 school year, as Pre-K-12 enrollment rose from 42,233 to 46,601 students. The number of called teachers required to instruct the growing enrollment also grew from 2,814 to 2,978 in that same period. While the number of students and teachers has grown, the actual number of locations where schools operate dropped from 436 to 422.

Culture subcommittee recommendations

Several recommendations were made in hopes of greater retention of our teachers, including:

- Further research on the optimal amount and/or structure of teacher release (prep) time during the day and outside of classroom duties expected from new teachers.
- Continued support of the New Teacher Induction and Commission on Lutheran Schools administrator training and ministerial growth plans, with additional research or action in developing procedures and resources for schools with leadership vacancies.
- Martin Luther College continue to address classroom management and family relations before graduation and making those aspects a stronger part of our administrator training.
- Conference of Presidents reviewing aspects of the assignment process to gain an even greater understanding of how and where candidates might best serve.
- Reduce the number of one-year assignments by assigning urban candidates permanently and reducing the number of assignments to limited teaching roles such as dorm supervisor.
- Further study of ministries where called workers appear to thrive and other places with a high degree of turn-over or resignations.

Training updates

Interviews with focus groups and leaders of schools throughout WELS endorse the strong blessing and quality of having the ministry mindset of our Martin Luther College (MLC) graduates, which is nurtured over years of on-campus study. The committee sees MLC as the primary trainer of future called workers.

An exhaustive historical study and future student projections reported by MLC Vice President of Admissions Ted Klug indicated the number of workers produced at MLC over the next six years may continue to fall short of the needed workers. The trend in the last four years is 25 fewer students per year enrolling in the education program. There should be one more year of 25 fewer students, then a stabilization, and then growth.

Preliminary teacher needs projections indicated that teacher needs would continue to grow at the early childhood and elementary levels but that secondary needs may stabilize. All schools were asked to project the number of teachers needed over the next four school years when annual statistics were submitted. That survey indicated teacher need exceeding the available pool at all levels.

Many committee conversations and interviews included discussion on training teachers in alternate ways to supplement the number of candidates supplied by MLC. It was learned that over the past two years, six graduates

from Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC) and four graduates from Bethany Lutheran College have accepted calls to WELS schools immediately out of college. Though this has provided some workers, it has not produced a significant amount. Though discussions were held with WLC education department leadership, no recommendation was made for a formal partnership in training workers.

Two task forces on early childhood that were in place prior to the teacher shortage task force appointment shared their findings on called and hired workers in early childhood, levels of training for early childhood, and WELS and non-WELS teachers in early childhood ministries. We are happy to report that MLC has a new program in development to provide both pedagogical and ministry training to assist schools whose teachers have limited post high school training. Additional tools and supports for both leaders and school boards are being developed to help strengthen early childhood ministries and also provide a clear understanding of support needed and realistic workload expectations.

The task force further recommended:

- MLC continue its five-year vision to significantly increase financial aid and significantly reduce student debt.
- MLC vigorously pursue the Competency-Based Education program, and that it work with the Conference of Presidents or the Synodical Council to address any financial barriers to beginning the program.
- Lutheran Schools and MLC assist calling bodies in a position to provide local alternate paths to ministry with guidance and potential local ministry training opportunities while the Competency-Based Education program is under development.
- When possible, all new provisionally called teachers are encouraged to take the ministry certification course Principles of Christian Education before the first school year. MLC is committed to making the necessary sections available.

Updates

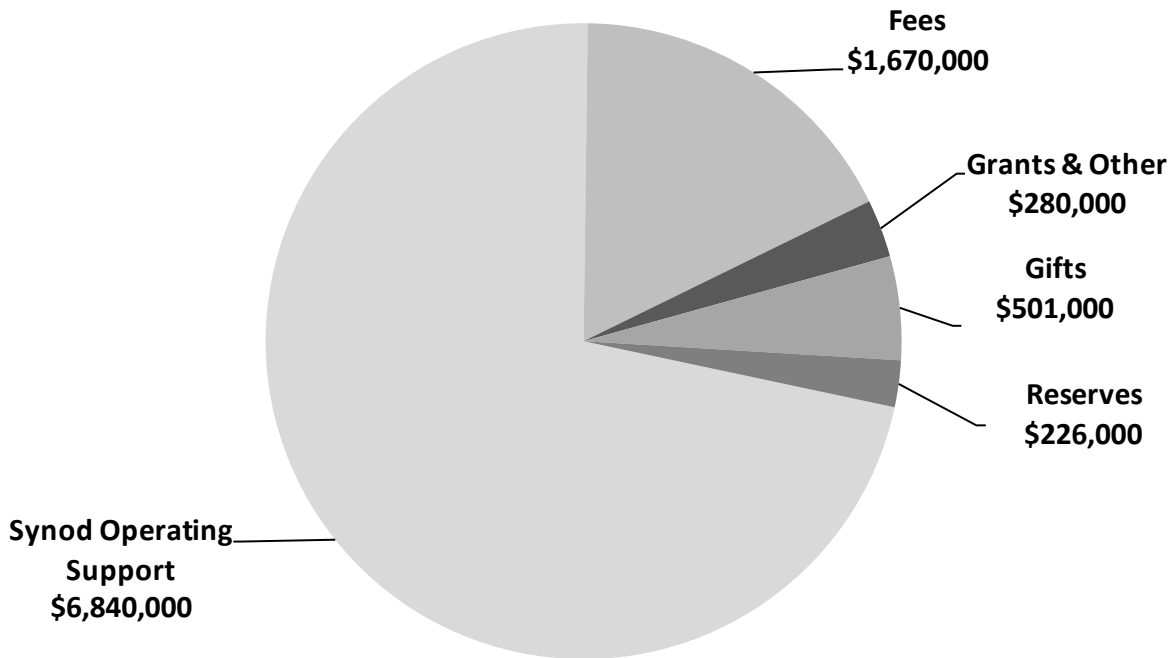
This spring Martin Luther College shared news of new scholarship programs and reduced student debt. We pray that trend continues. Additionally, two professors have accepted calls to launch the non-traditional education programs to provide new and broader paths to ministry.

The Lord has also provided teachers to help reduce the teacher shortage gap. Over the course of the last two calling seasons, more than 160 ministry-trained teachers who served in the past but had not served in at least a year have returned to serve as called workers in WELS schools, and more than 115 WELS members with secular education degrees have accepted provisional calls to serve in WELS schools.

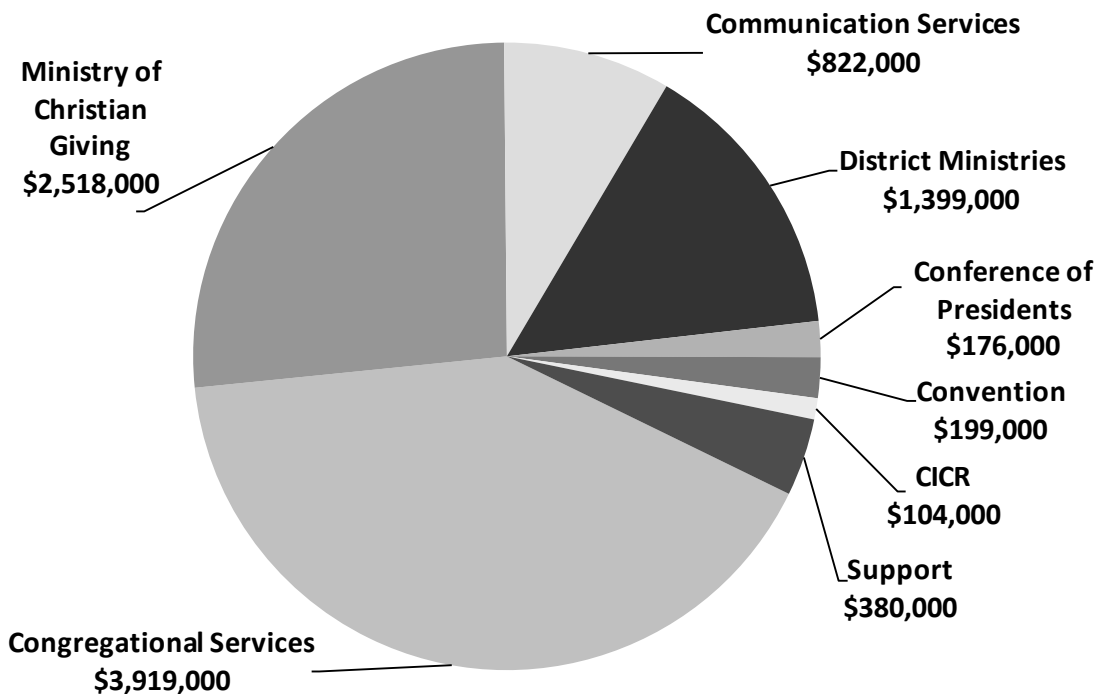
We are thankful for blessings and continue to seek the Lord's guidance as the opportunities to share Jesus through our schools continue to exceed the available workers.

Mr. Jim Rademan, chairman and reporter

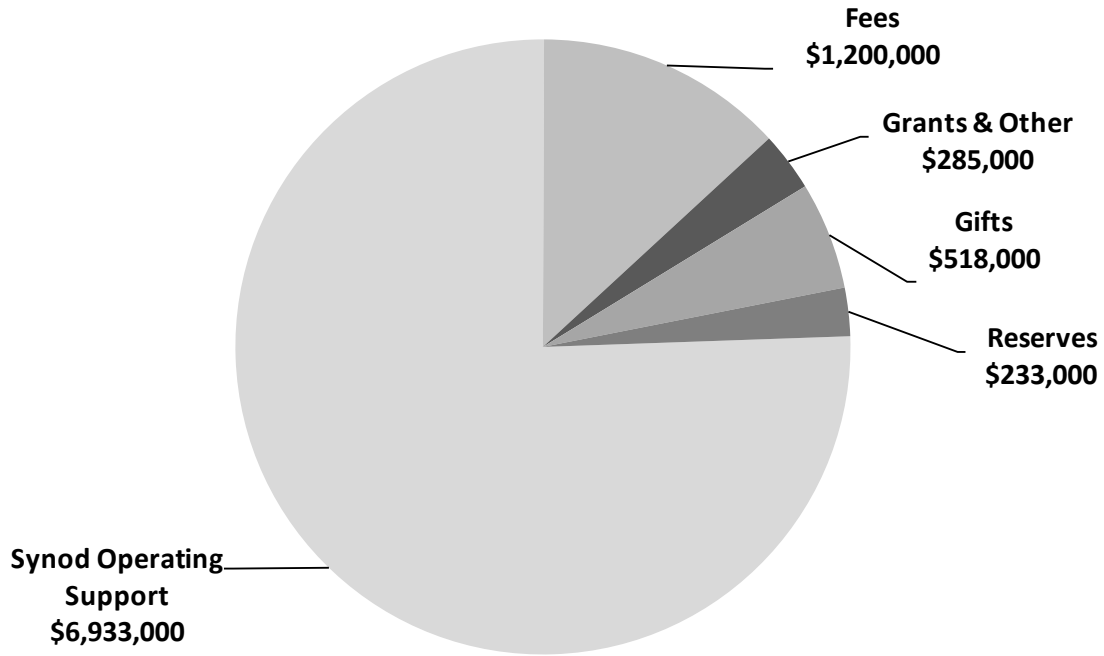
**FY 2023-24 Support
Congregation & District Ministry
\$9,517,000**



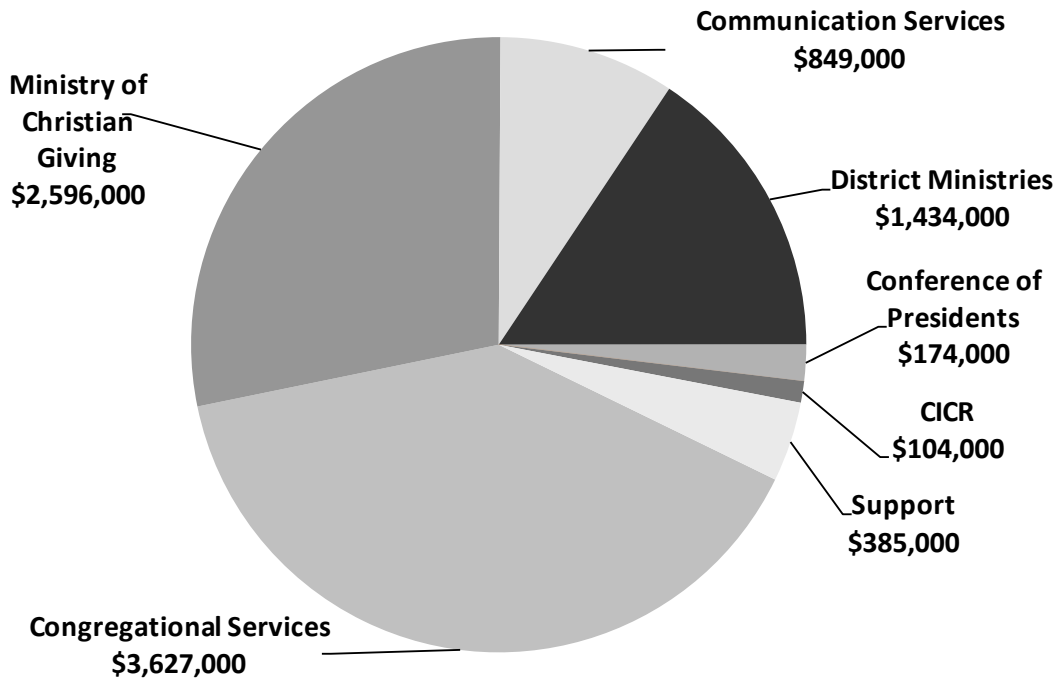
**FY 2023-24 Expenses
Congregation & District Ministry
\$9,517,000**



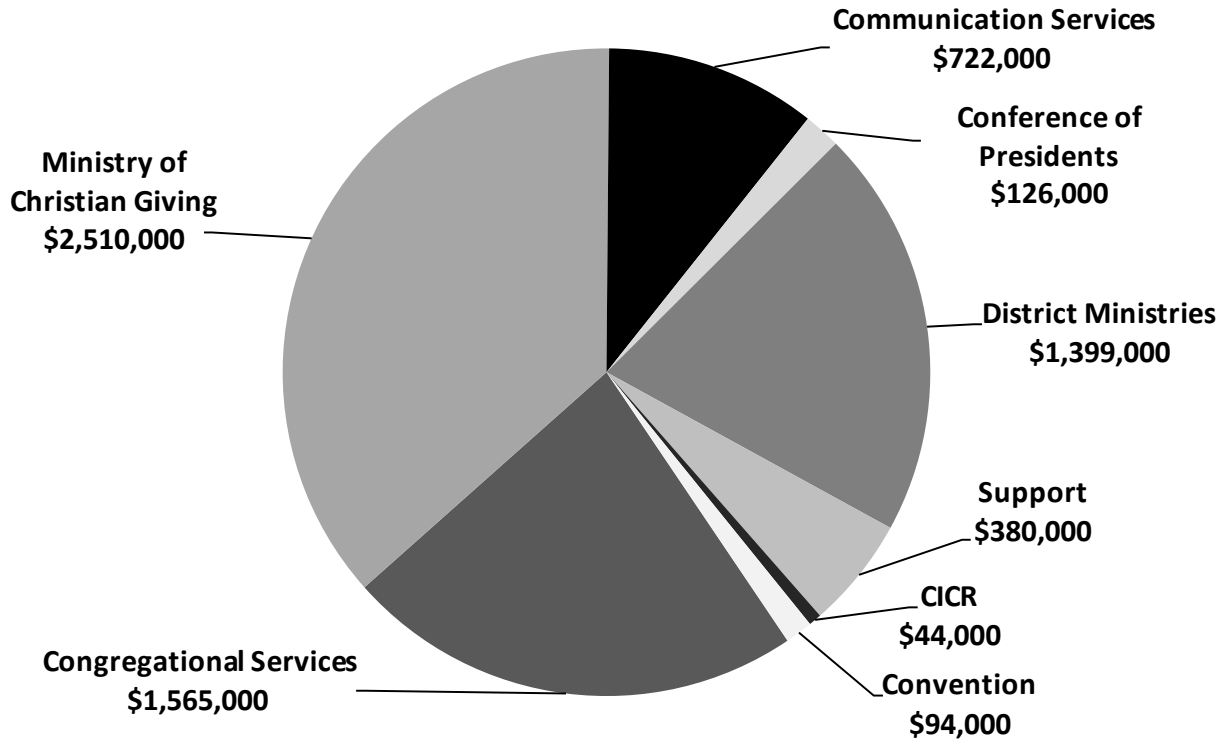
**FY 2024-25 Support
Congregation & District Ministry
\$9,169,000**



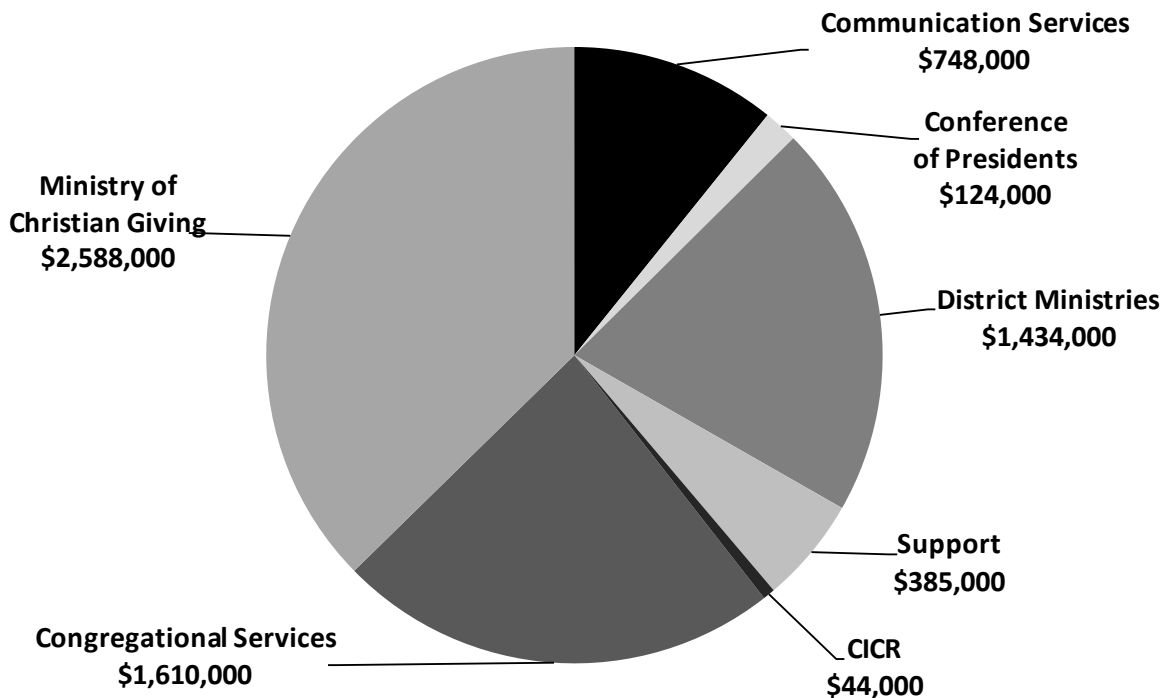
**FY 2024-25 Expenses
Congregation & District Ministry
\$9,169,000**



**FY 2023-24 Synod Operating Support Allocation
Congregation & District Ministry
\$6,840,000**



**FY 2024-25 Synod Operating Support Allocation
Congregation & District Ministry
\$6,933,000**



Ministry Support

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

Synodical Council

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

President's Office

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

Facility Services

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

Synod Archives

WELS Historical Institute (see p. 145)

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

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

Technology Services

Financial Services

Human Resources

Synodical Council

Floor Committee #6

The Synodical Council (SC) is responsible for the implementation of all decisions and resolutions made by the synod in convention and for overseeing all activities of WELS in pursuit of its mission (other than those that are the specific responsibility of the Conference of Presidents). In keeping with the WELS Constitution and Bylaws, the Synodical Council has the authority to act on behalf of the synod between conventions when proper and necessary. The convention compliance listing is included in this report (p. 50) and provides an updated summary of the progress made to date in implementing the resolutions of the 2021 synod convention.

As it carries out the broad oversight described previously, the Synodical Council is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and overseeing all programs of ministry carried out by WELS. Part of that oversight is the management of all financial activities of the synod, assuring fiscal soundness, preparing and updating support forecasts, and monitoring expenditures to maintain a balanced financial plan. In the years when the synod meets in convention, the

Synodical Council is responsible for working with all areas of ministry to develop and propose a balanced biennial ministry financial plan (budget) that supports the work of WELS in keeping with its long-range ministry plan.

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

Standing committees

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

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

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

Departing and new members

The following members of the Synodical Council have completed their service:

- Dr. Tim Kriewall (lay representative, Michigan District)
- Pastor Don Tollefson (Conference of Presidents representative)
- Pastor Paul Janke (chairman, WELS Board for World Missions)
- Mr. Brad Johnston (lay representative, South Central District)
- Pastor Keith Free (administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions)

We thank them for their faithful service!

The Synodical Council welcomed five new members in 2022:

- Mr. Chris Kestner (lay representative, Michigan District)
- Pastor Joel Heckendorf (pastor-at-large)
- Mr. Brent Nemmers (lay representative, South Central District)
- Pastor Phil Hirsch (Conference of Presidents representative)
- Pastor Jonathan Schroeder (chairman, WELS Board for World Missions)
- Teacher Jim Rademan, advisory (director, WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools)

We pray for God's blessings on their service.

Long-range plan

A new long-range strategic plan is under development by the Synodical Council, anticipated to be ready in time for the 2025 synod convention and the celebration of the synod's 175th anniversary. The draft plan is being developed by the Long-Range Planning Committee, whose members include Pastor James Huebner as chairman, Pastor Jonathan Hein, Mr. Lee Hitter, Mr. Kurt Nitz, Pastor Paul Prange, Pastor Larry Schlomer, Mr. Martin Spriggs, Mr. Sean Young, and the new administrator of Home Missions when that position is filled. A brief summary of the new plan can be found as Appendix 3 on p. 54.

Financial results

The Synodical Council monitors the financial results for the synod and all its subsidiaries. Broadly speaking, the financial results in terms of financial support from congregations and individuals were extremely positive. Expenses

have continued to be diligently managed leading to some underspending in several ministry and ministry support areas. Areas of ministry and ministerial schools reported significant increases in their special funds and reserves, and the balance of the Financial Stabilization Fund remains strong.

The details of the financial results for the previous biennium covering fiscal years 2021–22 and 2022–23 can be found in the Financial Results and Ministry Financial Plan report on p. 71.

These blessings are especially amazing because they came during a period of time when congregations were still recovering from the effects of COVID on worship attendance and when economic uncertainty was looming. Our thanks to God for his gracious providence and to the faithful way, motivated by the gospel, in which congregations and their members continue their faithful support for the mission and ministry of our synod.

Annual audit

The independent auditing firm of Baker Tilly LLP (Baker Tilly) conducted annual audits of the consolidated financial statements of WELS, its ministerial education schools, and its support service subsidiaries for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2022. Baker Tilly issued an unmodified opinion (the best possible) on the financial statements and did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls. The Accounting Oversight Committee reviewed the financial statements and the auditor report and recommended approval. The Synodical Council approved these at its November 2022 meeting.

District and district mission board cash management

The Synodical Council reviewed a report by the WELS chief financial officer and treasurer related to the level of funds held by both districts and district mission boards, including key legal, tax, accounting, and governance concerns. The Synodical Council developed new policies governing district and district mission boards' cash and investments to ensure compliance with accepted accounting principles and to protect the tax-exempt status of the synod. These policies were approved in consultation with the Conference of Presidents.

Modifications of the ministry financial plan

The ministry financial plan adopted by the synod in convention sets the spending limits for all WELS entities and areas of ministry. The Synodical Council is authorized to make necessary and/or prudent modifications to the ministry financial plan. WELS entities that desire to exceed their approved level of spending (whether or not the increase requires additional synod support) or add new staffing beyond what was approved in the ministry financial plan must submit their request, along with rationale, to the Synodical Council for approval.

During the past year the Synodical Council approved the following modifications to fiscal year 2022–23 (FY23) that are funded with special or reserve funds on hand or because of timing of hiring and savings in other areas. None of them require an increase in synod support from the WELS operating budget:

Area of ministry FTE (full-time equivalent) position additions

- Missions Communications specialist for Home and World Missions (1.0 FTE)
- World Missions Asia One Team Operations Manager (1.0 FTE)
- Financial Services staff (1.0 FTE)

Congregational Services

- \$250,000 of additional special fund expenses related to the National Conference on Lutheran Leadership

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

- \$400,000 expense increase to address increased levels of requests for relief grants

Luther Preparatory School

- \$244,000 expense increase related to the timing of payments for Wittenberg dorm window project
- \$100,000 expense increase related to required emergency elevator repairs in the auditorium
- \$55,000 expense increase related to the replacement of refrigerator and cooking units in the cafeteria
- \$20,000 expense increase for costs related to consulting fees for the upcoming generosity campaign
- \$29,000 expense increase for miscellaneous equipment purchases

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

- \$400,000 expense increase related to 2.75 FTE positions consisting of a professor, tutor, part-time vice president, and part-time piano instructor; unplanned faculty moving expenses; various equipment, maintenance, and facility projects funded either through gifts or the Emergency Assistance for Nonpublic Schools program.

Martin Luther College

- \$621,000 deficit increase driven by a significant decline in enrollment, costs associated with renovating the campus student center, and increase in FTE positions including a hired strength coach/assistant coach/site manager (1.0 FTE), a called head softball coach/physical education professor (1.0 FTE), a called admissions counselor (1.0 FTE), and staffing for the new Competency-Based Education program (2.5 FTE). Martin Luther College has worked to reduce overall expense levels to partially offset the spending deficit.

World Missions

- \$700,000 expense increase related to the timing of the completion of the theological training center in Vietnam, aid for Ukraine, and higher than planned missionary moving expenses, partially offset by savings related to position vacancies in various mission fields.

The Synodical Council also approved a plan modification request that required synod support in excess of what was approved in the ministry financial plan:

Technology

- \$146,000 expense increase for costs related to hiring a new web consultant (1.0 FTE), increasing Internet bandwidth at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, and changes in wages/benefits related to internal staffing changes.

Further, in February 2022, recognizing the impact of inflation on called and hired workers, the Synodical Council approved a plan modification that adjusted the planned salary increase from 2.0 percent to an average of 3.5 percent for FY23. While not covering the full inflationary increases within the economy, this action was intended to provide workers with at least some relief and was consistent with projected wage increase expectations for U.S. employers. The salary matrix was adjusted to reflect this change.

Relocation reimbursement rates and rental cash housing allowances

Within the last few years, tax law changes now consider moving expenses to be taxable to called and lay workers. To address this the synod adopted the policy of providing a relocation reimbursement that covered additional taxes owed by the workers. At its November 2022 meeting the Synodical Council reviewed those rates and adjusted them to ensure that it was sufficient to cover the added tax liabilities of workers. The new relocation reimbursement rates are 19.65 percent of the moving cost for lay workers and 27.3 percent of the moving cost for called workers. The difference between the two rates is due to the additional employer portion of Self-Employed Contributions Act (SECA) taxes that called workers are required to contribute. The Synodical Council recognizes that these reimbursements will be discontinued if and when relocation expenses cease to be taxable.

The Synodical Council also updated the synod compensation guidelines to indicate that cash housing allowances for called workers who rent (rather than own) are to be evaluated by the calling body at least annually to reflect changes in the cost of renting. This reevaluation should occur until such time as the called worker purchases a residence, at which point the ongoing base cash housing allowance would be established.

Ministry financial plan for the next biennium

The Synodical Council has the responsibility of crafting and recommending to the synod convention a ministry financial plan (budget) for the coming biennium. The development of the ministry financial plan being recommended by the Synodical Council to this convention began more than a year ago. A support forecast estimated the amount of financial resources that are conservatively expected to be available to support the various WELS ministries. This forecast takes into consideration the funds available from all sources, including, but not limited to, Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO); gifts, grants, bequests; investment income; tuition and student fees; special funds/reserves; and the Financial Stabilization Fund. On the basis of that forecast and in keeping with the Synodical Council policy to maintain the Financial Stabilization Fund within an acceptable range, the Synodical Council adopted the overall spending levels, as well as the planning assumptions that will be followed (compensation, cost of insurance, retirement benefits, etc.). The support forecast is adjusted periodically, if necessary, to reflect changing financial circumstances.

Each area of ministry and synodical department submitted its proposed ministry plans and requested operational support, along with planned use of special funds, to the synod president. The president, taking into consideration the established priorities of WELS outlined in the long-range plan and in keeping with the spending levels adopted by the Synodical Council, crafted a draft comprehensive ministry financial plan. This draft was reviewed by the President's Advisory Council, in which representatives from all areas of ministry and departments reviewed the plan proposal and suggested modifications. The President's Advisory Council then unanimously recommended the plan to the Synodical

Council. The Finance Committee of the Synodical Council recommended the approval of the level of funding that would be provided in the ministry financial plan. The Ministry Committee of the Synodical Council reviewed the plan and recommended the allocation amounts for all areas of ministry and departments. In April 2023, the Synodical Council adopted the plan and is forwarding it to the synod convention for discussion and approval. The plan is found on p. 76.

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

Ministry Opportunity Fund

In November 2021, the Synodical Council established the Ministry Opportunity Fund. The Ministry Opportunity Fund was funded through a \$5 million transfer from the Financial Stabilization Fund. The Ministry Opportunity Fund is intended to be used either to expand existing mission and ministry efforts or to address new mission and ministry opportunities that could not be anticipated or otherwise funded. It replaced the previous practice of creating an “unfunded priority list,” which often became outdated and needed continuing adjustments.

Upon the establishment of the Ministry Opportunity Fund, the Synodical Council approved the commitment of the first \$3 million of the fund to WELS Board for Home Missions to support the synod’s 100 missions in 10 years initiative. The remaining balance of the Ministry Opportunity Fund is available for other new or unfunded ministry needs.

Appointments by the Synodical Council

The following appointments and reappointments to various boards, commissions, and committees were approved by the Synodical Council:

Synodical Council

Appointment:

Teacher Jim Rademan, advisory

WELS Foundation, Inc., Board of Directors

Appointments:

Mr. John Pahmeier
Mr. David Wendland
Mr. James Brenn

Reappointments:

Rev. Jonathan Kolander
Mr. Mike Krueger
Mr. Scott Neitzel

WELS Investment Funds, Inc., Board of Directors

Reappointments:

Rev. Charles Degner
Mr. Seth Hansen
Mr. Joel Luehmann
Mr. John Wenker

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., Board of Directors

Reappointments:

Mr. Joel Kock

WELS VEBA Commission

Appointments:

Mr. Dan Markgraf
Mr. Todd Poppe

Reappointments:

Mr. Kyle Koltz
Rev. Joel Sauer
Mr. Robert Bullens

Retirement Program Commission

Reappointments:

Mr. Samuel Kruschel
Mr. Lee Miller
Rev. James Turriff
Mr. Thomas Medema
Mr. James Hahm

Accounting Oversight Committee

Appointments:

Mr. David Maccoux
Mr. Kevin Rusch

Reappointments:

Mr. Jeffrey Fischer
Mr. William Schultz
Mr. Daniel Riebe

Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors

Appointments:

Rev. Justin Dauck

Appendices to this report

Following this report, Appendix #1 provides the WELS Convention Compliance listing as a means of reporting how the resolutions of the previous convention have been addressed. Appendix #2 is the current long-range plan of the synod adopted in 2017. Appendix #3 is an update on the development of WELS' next long-range plan.

A look ahead

Those who serve on the Synodical Council are deeply mindful of the trust that has been placed in them by the members of our synod. They recognize that they can carry out their responsibilities faithfully only with the help and guidance of our gracious God. The members of the Synodical Council look forward to continuing their service to the synod and to doing everything they can to communicate both blessings and challenges and to make decisions that give glory to God and support the proclamation of his saving gospel.

Rev. Mark Schroeder, reporter

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president and chairman
Mr. Pete Aisbet, Southeastern Wisconsin District
Mr. John Fowler, South Atlantic District
Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman of WELS Board for Home Missions
Mr. Kenneth Gosch, Dakota-Montana District
Mr. Steven Hansen, Arizona-California District
Rev. Joel Heckendorf, pastor-at-large
Rev. Phil Hirsch, Conference of Presidents
Rev. Joel Jenswold, pastor-at-large
Mr. Chris Kestner, Michigan District
Mr. Jake Lemke, Western Wisconsin District
Mr. Brent Masters, Pacific Northwest District
Mr. Brent Nemmers, South Central District
Dr. Ryan Olson, North Atlantic District
Teacher Thomas Plitzuweit, teacher-at-large
Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Mr. Kurt Sames, Minnesota District
Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, Northern Wisconsin District
Rev. Jonathan Schroeder, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions
Rev. Charles Westra, Conference of Presidents

Mr. Chip Woods, Nebraska District
Rev. Joel Zank, Conference of Presidents

Advisory:

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

Appendix 1: 2021 WELS convention compliance listing

Committee resolution	Responsible group	Resolution description	Status
Res 2-02	COP	2023 convention at Michigan Lutheran Seminary	<i>Planning completed</i>
Res 2-03a	COP	Bible study on divine call distributed	<i>Completed</i>
Res 2-03b	COP	Educational articles on divine call for <i>Forward in Christ</i>	<i>Completed</i>
Res 2-03c	COP	Create organized way to receive congregational feedback regarding the call process	<i>District presidents seek feedback on an ongoing basis</i>
Res 2-04	COP	Convention offering to the Grace Hmong Outreach in Vietnam	<i>Completed</i>
Res 7-01	SC	Adopt proposed Ministry Financial Plan	<i>Completed and implemented</i>
Res 8-01	Board for Home Missions	Adopt plan to start 100 new missions in 10 years, beginning in 2023	<i>Planning ongoing; project began in spring 2023</i>
Res 10-01	Ministerial Education	Commend MLC for effort to reduce student debt	<i>Completed</i>
Res 10-02	Ministerial Education	MLC to continue seeking donors for “Equipping Christian Witnesses”	<i>Funding effort completed; additional gifts still being sought and received</i>
Res 12-01	SC	Restore funding to WELS Military Services	<i>Additional funding provided in proposed ministry financial plan</i>
Res 12-02	SC	Provide additional funding to WELS Prison Ministry	<i>Additional funding provided through special Schwan grant</i>
Res 14-01	Support Services	Express thanks to former WELS CFO Todd Poppe	<i>Completed</i>
Res 16-01	Northwestern Publishing House	Encourage NPH to pursue completion of the Curriculum 22:6 project and to seek supplemental funding as needed	<i>Project became responsibility of the COP; task force appointed to work with MLC and NPH; project coordinator in place</i>
Res 18-01 Res 18-02 Res 18-04 Res 18-05 Res 18-06b Res 18-07 Res 18-08	President	Changes made to synod and district bylaws	<i>Completed</i>
Res 19-01	Synodical Council	Implement approved change to the synod retirement plan	<i>Completed</i>

Appendix 2: WELS Long-Range Plan (Adopted 2017)

“Our Great Heritage”

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

FOUNDATION FOR LONG-RANGE PLANNING—OUR PURPOSE

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

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

“Through Life It Guides Our Way”

THE PICTURE IN 2025

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

Worldwide Identity as Confessional Lutherans

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

What you will recognize

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

What may look new

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

World Missions

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

What you will recognize

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

What may look new

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

Home Missions

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

What you will recognize

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

What may look new

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

Joint Mission Council

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

What you will recognize

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

What may look new

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

Ministerial Education

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

What you will recognize

- Graduates who are willing to serve anywhere that the church needs them, who believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, and who subscribe without reservation to the Lutheran Confessions.
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), offering theological training that prepares men to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS or of churches within our confessional fellowship, and endeavoring to offer opportunity for theological and professional growth to called workers who already are serving in the ministry of our confessional fellowship.

- Martin Luther College (MLC), training a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of WELS and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. These Christian witnesses include men ready for pastoral training at WLS; men and women ready for service as teachers and staff ministers in the synod's churches, schools, and other institutions; men and women ready for other church ministries, both full and part time, responding to the needs of WELS; international students preparing for ministry in partnership with WELS mission fields; and men and women in programs of continuing education that meet the ministerial needs of WELS.
- Michigan Lutheran Seminary, preparing high school students for the public ministry of the gospel, encouraging them to enroll at MLC.
- Luther Preparatory School, preparing and encouraging young men and women for the full-time ministry in WELS.

What may look new

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

Congregation and District Ministry

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

What you will recognize

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

What may look new

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

“Lord Grant While Worlds Endure We Keep Its Teachings Pure”

Resources

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

Resource allocation

The synod president will consult with the President's Advisory Council (PAC) to develop a biennial ministry plan for

presentation to the Synodical Council and the synod convention. The ministry plan will reflect continuity in our work of proclaiming the gospel as well as considered decisions for dealing with new circumstances and opportunities as they arise.

Faithful use of resources for mission and ministry

The work of the synod takes place properly with a scriptural worldview of history. When the forces of Satan have conspired and risen up to attack God's church and the gospel itself, God has enabled faithful believers to stand firm. They listen to the Word, repent of their sin, return to the cross, and treasure the sweet news of full forgiveness in Jesus. They form visible churches to hold faithfully to the Word of God without compromise and then to proclaim the saving message of that pure Word to the world, throughout all generations.

Appendix 3: WELS' next long-range plan: "Christ through us"

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Christ asks believers to serve as his ambassadors—official messengers of the King. His will is that through us the world would learn of his saving love.

In 2025, WELS will celebrate its 175th anniversary. Under the theme "Christ through us" we will rejoice over all that Christ has accomplished in those seven generations, taking our synod from just three congregations in the greater Milwaukee area to what is now a worldwide church body. We will thank our gracious God that he chose to do those things through us, despite our sins, flaws, and weaknesses.

However, at that 175th anniversary, we want to do more than look backward, praising God for past blessings and accomplishments. We also want to look forward and commit to the Lord our plans for the future. So, 2025 will also mark the launch of WELS' next long-range plan, spanning 2025 to 2035. It too will be titled "Christ through us."

Like previous long-range plans, "Christ through us" will establish some aggressive goals for our church body over the next decade.

- Christianity might be in decline in America, but it is growing in other parts of the world—Asia, Africa, South America. "Christ through us" will outline our world mission objectives, that through us God would establish new beachheads of confessional Lutheranism in half the countries around the world by 2035.
- We have already begun to plant new home missions as part of the 100 missions in 10 years initiative. "Christ through us" will share new opportunities for mission plants across the United States, Canada, and the English-speaking West Indies. It is not simply about having more churches but about God reaching more souls in more places through us.
- God has brought "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) to our shores, as each year our country grows increasingly multi-ethnic. "Christ through us" will include plans for expanding our cross-cultural mission efforts, so that through us the Spirit might reach more from "every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation 7:9).
- For seven generations, God has supplied the pastors, teachers, and staff ministers needed for WELS' gospel ministry. "Christ through us" will share the next decade's worth of objectives for our ministerial education system, asking that God would continue to provide workers for the harvest.

"Christ through us" will share these and other synodical goals—a collective undertaking for the saints of WELS to support with their prayers and offerings. However, "Christ through us" will also provide encouragement for individual congregations.

The next decade in WELS is going to come with new challenges, some quite large. At previous synod conventions, we have discussed the sharp deterioration in American Christianity in the past half-century. We have noted the corresponding numeric decline of WELS and the contributing factors: back-door losses, a large drop in the birth rate, etc. The loss of critical mass in many congregations has made certain ministry efforts difficult to maintain. "Christ through us" will also provide resources and encouragement for WELS congregations, helping them navigate these challenges. One component of the "Christ through us" plan will be the launch of a program that supports congregations in geographic proximity as they consider if their ministry efforts might be strengthened through cooperation or even consolidation. Another component will be a discipleship program that aims at helping each WELS member identify their personal mission field—neighbors who do not understand the gospel, friends without a

church home. The objective is that every WELS member would embrace the calling of Christ to be his ambassador. He seeks to make his appeal through us . . . all of us.

“Christ through us.” It will contain aggressive goals for our church body. But it also calls on all of us to realize the role we play in this collective effort. Our prayer is that, with each one doing all he can with the gospel, then in 2035 . . .

- We won’t just have 100 new congregations. We will have more than 1,000 congregations that operate with the evangelistic zeal of a mission church.
- We won’t just think of a new mission field being a country on another continent. We’ll think of a new mission field being a neighbor across the street.
- We won’t just have a couple hundred new called workers. We’ll have a couple hundred-thousand Lutherans acting as the priests Scripture says we are . . . the ambassadors Christ has made us to be.

The work of the Church is Christ’s. But he does that work through us. As we enter the eighth generation of WELS, may he bless our work together!

Accounting Oversight Committee

Floor Committee #6

Our calling

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

The Accounting Oversight Committee keeps the Synodical Council informed of its action through the Synodical Council’s appointed member of the committee. The synod’s ministerial education schools and its subsidiary and affiliate boards, commissions, and committees are informed through WELS’ chief financial officer.

Our current situation

The Accounting Oversight Committee engaged the independent audit firm of Baker Tilly US, LLP (Baker Tilly), to conduct the annual audits of the consolidated financial statements of WELS, its ministerial education schools, and its support service subsidiaries for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2022. All of the audits were completed within four months of the fiscal year end (consistent with historical precedent), with all entities receiving an unmodified opinion—the best you can get—on the financial statements’ compliance with U.S. GAAP. In addition, the auditors did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls. Copies of the annual financial statements, quarterly consolidated financial statements, and quarterly budget reports are available on WELS Financial Services’ site at wels365.sharepoint.com/sites/finance/SitePages/Home.aspx.

WELS successfully implemented the following accounting guidance changes issued by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2022, all of which did not have a significant impact on the consolidated financial statements of WELS:

- guidance related to financial statement presentation and disclosures of contributed nonfinancial assets, and
- guidance related to financial statement presentation and disclosures of defined benefit pension or other postretirement benefit plans.

In addition to the annual WELS financial statement audits, the Accounting Oversight Committee also engaged Baker Tilly to audit the WELS VEBA Group Health Plan and WELS Pension Plan for calendar year 2022. These financial statements received unmodified opinions for 2021, and the auditors did not identify any significant deficiencies or

material weaknesses in internal controls. The 2022 calendar year audits for these two entities won't be available until early summer 2023 and are expected to be similar to prior years' results.

A look ahead

The Accounting Oversight Committee will work with WELS Financial Services in assessing the impacts of new accounting guidance related to leases and credit losses.

Mr. William Schultz, reporter

Mr. William Schultz, chairman

Mr. Todd Backus

Mr. Jeffrey Fisher

Mr. David Maccoux

Mr. Daniel Riebe

Mr. Kevin Rusch

Mr. Thomas Schermerhorn, Synodical Council liaison

Advisory:

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

WELS Archives Floor Committee #6

Our calling

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

Our current situation

During 2022 the archives hosted numerous volunteers, researchers, and tours. With the help of volunteers, work has progressed on many collections including congregational collections, world missions, special ministries, and district collections. Transcription on Prof. J. P. Koehler's Index of the Early Presidential Collection is complete thanks to a dedicated volunteer and numerous hours spent on that collection. This index is now being reconciled with the full inventory of this collection that was completed in 2021, and the final reconciliation appears in the archives' online catalog. A full inventory of the congregational files found in the archives is being completed. Preservation has begun on some of the oldest district material in the archives. After the initial preservation and rehousing of this material is finished, a complete inventory of this material will be finalized and added to the online catalog. Much of this material dates back to the early years of each of our districts and will be valuable to researchers.

Digitization continues on *Report to the Twelve Districts* with digitization completed back to 1960. Other projects included digitizing the ledger book that contains the original constitution of our synod along with the earliest convention proceedings. The fragile condition of this ledger led it to be a high priority scanning project on Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's new book scanner. The digital collection continues to grow as more material is requested. Processing and weeding continues on a variety of collections including congregational materials, biographical collections, district materials, and world missions collections.

In 2022, 16 tour groups visited WELS' Center for Mission and Ministry. Many of these tours were small groups, but several school and congregational groups toured as well. Along with these tours, the archives had 16 in-person research appointments throughout 2022 with 6 in-person research appointments taking place in early 2023. During

2022, the archives received just over 120 research requests. These requests covered topics from genealogical research to congregations preparing to celebrate major anniversaries. Along with these research requests, the archivist also consulted on a variety of projects this last year including assisting several congregations with anniversary projects and meeting with congregations concerned with preserving their own archives.

Donations arrive to the archives with regularity. Many of the donations are one-time smaller mailings of bulletins, church histories, or other items to be added to biographical or congregational files. The archives continue to be a repository for church records of congregations that have closed. In 2022, the archives received the records of two congregations that closed as well as other accruals to existing collections. One area where significant donations have accrued is our district materials. Large donations of material relating to the Nebraska District were received last year. These donations containing district materials help to fill a large gap in the holdings of the archives.

This past year the archives had a joint table with the WELS Historical Institute at numerous conferences and events including the 2022 Southeastern Wisconsin District Convention, the 2022 WELS National Education Conference, the 2023 WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership, and the 2023 Mission and Ministry event. Each of these events offered the opportunity to reach out to different groups within our synod. The archivist also attended the biannual meeting of the Lutheran Historical Conference held in St. Louis, Mo., in October 2022. Here the archivist met and networked with archivists and historians from the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The archivist was a panelist for the discussion entitled “The State and Future of Lutheran Archival Work.” In late fall 2022, the archivist spoke to the senior church history students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This presentation focused on how the archives can assist them in their future ministries and how they, in turn, can support the archives.

A look ahead

In early January 2023 the archivist was asked to serve on the synod’s 175th anniversary committee. This committee has already begun the work of planning this very special anniversary. Many plans are still being discussed for the anniversary, but much of what will be decided will influence the digitization efforts of the archives over the next two years. Digitization of photographs and other records for the purpose of the anniversary will take precedence over other ongoing projects. Reconciling Koehler’s index with the Early Presidential Collection will continue in the online catalog, as will cataloging on other collections. Processing work on donations will progress in order to make those collections available for research in a timely manner. Fulfillment of research requests will be a high priority for the archivist in the coming year. As more complex research requests are received, the amount of time it takes to gather the needed information increases. With the help of volunteers and more detailed catalog records, it is hoped that the amount of time spent on fulfilling each request will decrease.

In 2023 there will be several outreach opportunities including the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society National Convention in La Crosse, Wis., and the synod convention in Saginaw, Mich. The archives will also have a table at the 150th Wisconsin Lutheran State Teachers Conference held at Wisconsin Lutheran High School at the end of October. This will be the first time the archives has had a table at this conference. Other outreach opportunities include tours and speaking engagements with congregations and schools.

With the upcoming synod anniversary in 2025, it is hoped many congregations and schools will take a renewed interest in our history and consider tours of WELS’ Center for Mission and Ministry and the archives. One way the archivist hopes to engage more members in synod history is utilizing the new WELS Historical Institute website, **welshistoricalinstitute.org**. In the last year the archivist worked closely with board members of the Historical Institute and members of WELS Technology to develop this new website, which also features a page on the WELS Archives and Visitors Center. One goal for this website is to be a resource for those wishing to teach synod history by including an interactive timeline of synod history to be completed by the anniversary year. The timeline will be a useful tool for pastors and teachers who wish to teach our synod’s history whether in a Bible study or to students in our schools. With the approaching 175th anniversary, the opportunity is presented for us to look back with thanksgiving at all the blessings God has graciously granted our synod.

Mrs. Susan Willems, reporter

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

Floor Committee #17

Our calling

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is one of our synod's ministries of compassion, sometimes also called "mercy ministry." Our goal is to reflect Christ's love and compassion to souls suffering as the result of disasters or other hardships by helping them with their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Christian Aid and Relief provides this help in the form of financial grants, food, clothing, medical supplies, and trained volunteer labor. Christian Aid and Relief also partners with WELS Home and World Missions to support humanitarian aid that delivers basic needs to people in our mission fields all around the world. These efforts help to build trusting relationships that lead to opportunities to share the good news of our Savior. In addition, Christian Aid and Relief works with WELS congregations to assist members who are experiencing a severe medical or financial crisis.

The theme passage that guides the ministry of Christian Aid and Relief is Galatians 6:20: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Because of the great compassion God has shown to us in his Son, we are eager to reflect that compassion to those who are hurting. We strive to personalize our efforts by distributing funds through our churches and missions. We partner with them to encourage local relief efforts for their members and neighbors. We bring in trained volunteers to assist with relief efforts when appropriate.

Our current situation

This past biennium brought a change of leadership to WELS Christian Aid and Relief. After 12 years, Pastor Robert Hein completed his term of service as the chairman of the WELS Christian Aid and Relief Commission. We thank him for his faithful service. Pastor Thomas Spiegelberg was appointed as the new chairman and began a four-year term of service on July 1, 2022.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is not funded through the synodical budget. To carry out its vital ministry of compassion, Christian Aid and Relief relies on the special over-and-above gifts of God's people in WELS. We are always astounded by your generosity and thank you for your gifts of love that allow us to show mercy and love to those who are suffering.

Our expenditures are divided into three main categories: disaster relief, humanitarian aid, and personal financial grants. From July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022, \$426,880 were utilized for disaster relief, \$421,967 for humanitarian aid, and \$210,000 for personal financial grants. From July 1, 2022, to Feb. 28, 2023, \$349,546 were utilized for disaster relief, \$383,246 for humanitarian aid, and \$330,197 for personal financial grants.

As is almost always the case in this broken world, WELS Christian Aid and Relief has had numerous opportunities to help those impacted by disaster during the past biennium.

- On Aug. 14, 2021, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck the island of Haiti, causing widespread death and destruction in one of the world's poorest nations. WELS Christian Aid and Relief responded by providing a \$10,000 grant through Direct Relief, an organization that specializes in providing medical assistance in disaster situations. We also provided a \$45,000 grant to Branch Lutheran Schools to enable 30 school families whose homes were destroyed to rebuild.
- Hurricane Ida made landfall on the Gulf Coast of the United States on Aug. 29, 2021, as a category 4 storm. WELS Christian Aid and Relief worked with three of our congregations in Louisiana, providing grants for repairs and other assistance to both members and neighbors. Volunteer teams traveled to New Orleans to assist several members of Crown of Life with repairs and roof replacements.
- On Nov. 21, 2021, six people were killed and dozens were injured when a man drove his SUV through the annual Christmas parade in Waukesha, Wis. WELS Christian Aid and Relief responded to this tragedy by partnering with Christian Family Solutions, a WELS-affiliated counseling service, to provide many hours of crisis counseling to those who witnessed this terrible event.
- On Dec. 10, 2021, a series of terrible tornadoes struck the South Central part of the United States, killing dozens and causing billions of dollars in damage. Thankfully, no WELS congregations or members were directly impacted. The

lack of a WELS congregation in the impacted zone also limited our ability to launch an onsite disaster relief project. Instead, WELS Christian Aid and Relief gave grants totaling \$40,000 through Direct Relief to bring medical aid to those in need.

- On Feb. 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, launching a war that has lasted more than a year with seemingly no end in sight. This terrible war has caused great destruction, suffering, and loss of life on both sides. God's people in WELS have responded generously with more than \$1 million in gifts. Thanks to their generosity, WELS Christian Aid and Relief in partnership with WELS World Missions has channeled thousands of dollars in aid through our partners in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. The Ukrainian Lutheran Church is doing all it can to help both members and non-members whose lives have been disrupted by this dangerous conflict.
- Hurricane Ian, a destructive category 4 storm, made landfall on the southwest coast of Florida on Sept. 29, 2022. This powerful storm caused more than \$120 billion in damage. Sadly, more than 140 people lost their lives. Thankfully, none of our WELS members were killed but many had extensive damage to their homes and property. Five of our congregations were also seriously damaged, requiring thousands of dollars in repairs. WELS Christian Aid and Relief deployed volunteers to assist with cleanup and repairs. This deployment was conducted in partnership with Kingdom Workers' Builders for Christ, using Prince of Peace in Englewood, Fla., as home base. Much work was accomplished, and much gospel comfort was brought to those who were hurting. WELS members generously supported this effort with more than \$300,000 in special gifts of love.
- On Feb. 6, 2023, a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Syria and Turkey. To date, in addition to billions of dollars in damage, more than 100,000 have been confirmed dead. Since it is not possible for WELS Christian Aid and Relief to deploy disaster relief operations in that part of the world, we turned to our longtime partner, Direct Relief. The generosity of God's people in WELS enabled us to channel \$20,000 in gifts through Direct Relief to bring vital medical aid to many who are suffering because of this terrible disaster.

As part of Christian Aid and Relief's continuing efforts to improve our disaster relief capabilities, on Nov. 18, 2022, we launched **welsdisasterrelief.net**. This website employs powerful software to help us better manage volunteer information, communicate with our volunteers, and connect volunteers to opportunities to serve in Jesus' name.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is privileged to partner with WELS Home and World Missions to provide basic needs in the mission fields we serve through our Humanitarian Aid program. In fiscal year 2021–22, \$470,882 was approved to fund humanitarian aid requests. For fiscal year 2022–23, the amount approved was \$628,480, a new record. These grants fund projects such as food distribution for the poor, free health clinics, lunch packs for breastfeeding mothers, sewing classes, winter fuel for refugees and orphans, smokeless stoves, backpacks and school supplies for underprivileged children, support for legal immigrants, food for the hungry, clean water for the thirsty, and many other examples. This work is happening all over the world in places like Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria, Indonesia, Albania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Mexico, Canada, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and right here in the United States. These projects offer our home and world missionaries a chance to connect with the people in our mission fields by showing them the love and compassion of Christ. This, in turn, leads to many opportunities to share the good news of salvation in Jesus' name.

To assist WELS congregations in carrying out compassion ministry in their local communities, in March 2022 WELS Christian Aid and Relief launched a new program, the Community Care and Compassion Matching Grants program. This program provides annual matching grants of up to \$2,500 to self-supporting WELS congregations who are reaching out to their communities with the compassion of Christ by assisting those in need. As of this writing, 29 congregations have received grants through this program for compassion ministry efforts such as food pantries, community gardens, pregnancy counseling, holiday meals, support for medical workers, blankets for the homeless, school supplies for underprivileged children, and many others. Congregations who are interested in receiving a grant should contact Pastor Dan Sims, director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief, at daniel.sims@wels.net or 414-256-3204.

A look ahead

We continue work on improving and expanding our disaster relief capabilities. To that end, a Disaster Relief Task Force was formed in October 2021 and continues to research best practices for carrying out disaster relief. The task force is currently working on putting together a disaster management system and training process that will help us to provide well-trained leaders and volunteers for safe and effective disaster relief deployments. Our goal is to roll out this program to the entire synod by the end of 2026.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is always looking for ways to improve communication to the members of our synod. Videos are regularly produced to educate people in WELS about our work and to let those who support this ministry

see firsthand how their gifts are being used. Updates are shared regularly on our Facebook page. More information can be found at wels.net/relief. In addition, our webpage provides a convenient way to make an online donation toward Christian Aid and Relief projects. Committee members also make presentations to various church and school groups to “tell our stories,” letting WELS members know about the needs and opportunities to help people through Christian Aid and Relief. Contact us to learn more.

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

We thank outgoing members Pastors Bruce Marggraf and Richard Warnecke for their faithful service on the WELS Christian Aid and Relief Commission.

Rev. Daniel Sims, reporter

Rev. Thomas Spiegelberg, chairman

Rev. Bruce Marggraf, secretary

Mr. Dennis Palmberg

Teacher Steve Vasold

Rev. Richard Warnecke

Advisory:

Mrs. Elizabeth Zambo, administrative assistant

Support Services Floor Committee #14

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

Technology Floor Committee #14

Our calling

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

WELS Technology divides its work into 10 service areas:

1. Information Technology administration;
2. workstations, mobile, and peripherals;
3. project management;
4. security and disaster recovery;

5. servers and storage;
6. documentation and training;
7. end-user support;
8. network and telephony;
9. application and web development; and
10. application and web maintenance.

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

Our primary calling is connecting gospel-sharers with the available technologies that can better assist in the spread of that gospel. Time and resources are set aside to help make technologies available to those who want to share the good news by “any means possible.” Our calling is to find those intersections between technology and ministry.

Our current situation

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

Web Services

The Web Services team meets the needs of all areas of ministry that desire to communicate using web technologies. An outside consulting firm reviewed web infrastructure, staffing, and process. The hope was that Web Services could meet the ever-growing needs of the synod. Recommendations included adding staff, reviewing project management processes, centralizing digital publication, increasing performance, improving search engine optimization (SEO), and migrating e-commerce to the WordPress platform. The review was helpful to the team by allowing them to step back and examine priorities while being confident in making meaningful changes to meet growing needs.

Four new sites were launched last year:

- 1) the WELS Historical Institute, welshistoricalinstitute.org;
- 2) a Spanish language version of wels.net, espanol.wels.net;
- 3) 100 missions in 10 years, wels100in10.net; and
- 4) the synod convention website, welsconvention.net.

An interactive feature for favorite Christmas hymns was also created for *Forward in Christ* at forwardinchrist.net/favorite-christmas-hymns.

The most-visited websites in 2022 were wels.net, WhatAboutJesus.com, forwardinchrist.net, and welscongregationalservices.net. Here are some basic statistics about visitors to those sites:

wels.net

- 918,002 visitors, 4.5 million page views, 61 percent mobile, 54 percent male, average age 35-44
- Search: organic search, 1.1 million; direct, 800,000; social, 200,000; e-mail, 150,000; referral, 144,000
- Most popular pages: devotions, 526,000 (Daily Devotions, 378,000); home page, 516,000; call reports, 229,000; Bible, 53,000; Search, 37,000; WELS Yearbook, 33,000

WhatAboutJesus.com

- 153,864 visitors, 52 percent female, average age 35-44, 63 percent mobile

forwardinchrist.net

- 98,237 visitors, 57 percent female, 35-44 average age, 60 percent mobile
- Most popular pages: home page, 15,000; Table of contents, 5,000; *Please explain: Why did God cruelly command Abraham to sacrifice his son?*, 3,000; *Bible study: Different types of sin*, 2,600; Videos, 2,400; Favorite Christmas hymns, 2,300

welscongregationalservices.net

- 91,220 visitors, average age 35-44, 66 percent desktop, *The Foundation's* Christmas and Easter resources received most downloads

Software Services

The Software Services team builds applications for areas of ministry to collect, analyze, maintain, and report on synod data. This includes information on called workers, churches, and schools necessary to maintain an accurate Yearbook, create call lists, manage benefits, and inform resource allocation decisions. The team added a new member, Ms. Tammy Meyer, who replaced longtime employee Mrs. Debbie Kamin, who retired. We thank Debbie for her faithful service to the synod and welcome Tammy on board.

Key projects completed this past year include:

- The accurate capture of church and school statistics. The school statistics initiative included enhancements that provided more data that is used to forecast future teaching needs for schools.
- Completed the Benefit Plans migration from the Pension Plan to the Defined Contribution plan approved at the 2021 synod convention.
- System migration and upgrades to the “soul” application, which maintains called worker data. Accurate data about our called workers allows smooth benefit distributions, improved call lists, and accurate Yearbook information.

Information Services

The Information Services team is responsible for providing a secure and reliable technical infrastructure. Team members manage servers and systems and craft policies that allow for areas of ministry to use technology resources in an efficient and effective way.

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

WELS' Center for Mission and Ministry and synod schools regularly undergo a thorough Security and Privacy Risk Analysis. This process analyzes, documents, and plans for issues that may arise in the areas of PCI, GDPR/Privacy, and HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act). The addition of a security analyst position allows for regular analysis and assistance in remediation and policy development that support a secure environment. Aaron Hopefl, our former systems administrator, was promoted to this position. He has already begun actively working with the synod schools to evaluate policy and infrastructure using the CIS Security suite of products. He plans to share his time evenly among the four synod schools and the Center for Mission and Ministry. Replacing him in the systems administrator position is our newest employee, Shawn Olwig. He comes with a wealth of experience, and we anticipate him to be a great resource as the team continues to improve our systems and services.

Recent security improvements include:

- In-house network penetration testing
- Full database encryption
- Multifactor authentication
- Security camera installation
- Self-service password reset availability
- The use of KnowBe4 for employee security training and “phish” testing

Project Services

The Project Services team focuses on projects that don't fit squarely in one service area. Efforts over the past two years were made to improve several public-facing tools, including

- the WELS Yearbook, **yearbook.wels.net**, which provides lookup services for called workers, churches, schools, and other WELS-affiliated ministries;
- the Called Worker Compensation Calculator, **cwcompcalc.wels.net**, which allows organizations to create compensation profiles for called workers based on position, years of service, responsibilities, etc.;
- the WELS App, **wels.app**, which draws content from wels.net and WhatAboutJesus.com into a mobile-friendly web app that provides devotions, Bible readings, and news.

Several presentations are available for churches/schools, circuits, conferences, or districts wishing to provide workshops.

- **Enhancing Ministry with Technology: Personal Knowledge Management**—This half-day workshop helps called workers to use technology to build a knowledge management system. These systems help organize information/knowledge and promote better retrieval for future creative work.
- **Enhancing Ministry with Technology: Project Management**—This half- or full-day workshop helps called workers understand the basic building blocks of managing ministry projects successfully. It addresses communication, volunteers, tracking, task management, and getting projects “unstuck.”
- **Enhancing Ministry with Technology: Personal Productivity**—This full-day workshop helps called workers build a productivity system that includes e-mail, document, task, communication, and calendar management.
- **Working Genius Assessments**—This assessment created by Patrick Lencioni allows ministry teams to identify their “geniuses” (or gifts) to maximize productivity, build effective teams, lead better meetings, and create better working environments.

A look ahead

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

The Software Services team is also forecasting work in the coming year for the Lutheran Schools office, Prison Ministry, and Campus Ministry.

Web projects that are scheduled for the coming year include: 1) Lutheran Schools e-commerce site rebuild, 2) WELS youth rally event site, 3) Women’s Ministry Conference site, and 4) Gender and human sexuality resource site. The team also hopes to hire an additional resource as team members begin to retool websites, optimize poorly performing sites, and add an easier and more secure sign-in process. The WELS website will also be reviewed in anticipation of a re-architecture and redesign.

Work with the synod schools on increasing security and privacy best practices will continue to be a focus in the coming year. Each will conduct regular audits using the CIS Security suite toolset and develop roadmaps to address any issues found or recommendations made. An Information Security Team was recently formed and will begin to meet regularly to examine security policies and procedures and make recommendations.

The Information Services team also hopes to find two new vendors to address needs better. The first is a new software licensing vendor. Many of the tools the synod uses are license-based. A good partner to find the right kind of license for our needs is essential to good stewardship. The second is a new password management solution. Recent breaches in the industry have highlighted the need for a solution that provides more granular control of our password vault.

For a complete list of all past and current projects, visit cloud.wels.net/techprojects.

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

Mr. Martin Spriggs, reporter

Financial Services

Floor Committee #14

Our calling

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

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

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

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

Our current situation

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

- Completed the request for proposal (RFP) project related to the review of the synod's banking services, ultimately remaining with Wells Fargo through a multi-year extension built upon service enhancements and pricing concessions.
- Successfully completed the transition to a newly updated credit card expense management module with Wells Fargo.
- Reviewed cash management policies and procedures at both the district and district mission board levels to ensure cash is handled in compliance with key legal, tax, accounting, and governance requirements and implemented new policies governing district and district mission boards' cash and investments.
- Completed all audits within four months of fiscal year end (consistent with historical precedent), with all entities receiving an unmodified opinion (the best possible) on the financial statements.
- Implemented new accounting standards issued by the Financial Accounting Standards Board, which did not have a significant impact on the consolidated financial statements of WELS, including presentation and disclosure changes related to contributed nonfinancial assets and retirement benefits.

- Monitored the support forecast and ministry financial plan for fiscal year 2023 in challenging economic times.
- Developed planning assumptions, support forecast, and synod support allocations for the fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025 biennium ministry financial plan.

A look ahead

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

- Researching possible alternatives to the current general ledger system that could improve efficiency and effectiveness across all entities.
- Analyzing improvements to the synod's process of developing the ministry financial plan as well as the handling of plan modifications.
- Investigating a new approach related to developing and financing major capital projects at the four ministerial education schools.
- Completing research on the implementation of new accounting standards related to leases during fiscal year 2023 and credit losses during fiscal year 2024.
- Cross-training employees to ensure service continuity during vacations, vacancies, and extended absences.

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

Mr. Kyle Egan, reporter

Human Resources

Floor Committee #14

Our calling

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

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

Our current situation

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

- Staffed the following key lay worker positions over the last year: systems administrator, Technology; Missions communications specialist; personal banker, Church Extension Fund; software product analyst, Technology; loan origination officer, Church Extension Fund; Missions liaison; administrative assistant/writer, *Forward in Christ*/WELS Communication Services; and security analyst, Technology.
- Called worker compensation: Education and training of congregational leadership in application of WELS Called Worker Compensation Guidelines and use of electronic Called Worker Compensation Calculator continues. Popularity and use of the Called Worker Compensation Calculator is evident through a majority of positive feedback provided. Adjustments and improvements continue to be made to the Called Worker Compensation Calculator, including through feedback received from congregation leadership.

- Human Resources continues to collaborate with congregations and WELS district presidents related to risk and personnel matters, as well as general compensation, benefit, and policy issues.
- Synod board/committee nominee vetting: Human Resources assists in the process of filling board/committee openings for positions appointed by the Synodical Council for WELS Voluntary Employee Benefits Association, WELS Retirement Commission, WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds, Accounting Oversight Committee, and WELS Church Extension Fund. This assistance takes place mainly through vetting of nominees to establish willingness to serve, procuring resume and/or bio forms, and creation of a central database to maintain all nominee data and vacancy records.
- Affordable Care Act reporting and compliance: Per Affordable Care Act (ACA) compliance requirements, large employers must file annual reports and monitor measurement periods to comply with the ACA's employer mandate. Human Resources oversees this annual reporting process for the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry and WELS' four ministerial education schools.
- Vendor review process completed with new vendor Paycom selected to replace ADP for Payroll & HR Services. Timekeeping conversion completed February 2022, first payroll processing took place March 2022.
- Religious Worker Visas (R1): HR facilitates the process of securing Religious Worker Visas to assist WELS calling bodies with placement of Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary international student graduates in teaching or pastoral positions within the United States.

A look ahead

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

- Update and maintain **welsrc.net/human-resources** and **cloud.wels.net/hr** to ensure information and details provided assist members from both an information as well as practical aspect.
- Improve utilization of the new Paycom HR software modules and support for the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry and the ministerial education schools.
- Work with the Synodical Council's designated committee(s) in reviewing and evaluating the policies and procedures of Human Resources and the compensation programs at our synod-operated organizations.
- Work with areas of ministry and synodical schools in coordinating timely information and support for our workers.
- Facilitate learning and development programs for the management and staff of the synod entities.
- Provide continued training with synod leaders to continue to reinforce and develop the supervisory skills required.
- Continue providing support to WELS organizations in areas related to our synod human resources.

For synodical salary ranges, WELS compensation guidelines, and other called worker compensation information, see pp. 93-95.

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

Mr. Dennis Maurer, reporter

Facility Services

Floor Committee #14

Our calling

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

Our current situation

The Center for Mission and Ministry is located in Waukesha, Wis., along I-94 on Stone Ridge Drive and has approximately 49,000 square feet of space on three floors. WELS and all areas of ministry operate out of the Center for Mission and

Ministry, along with WELS support service subsidiaries including WELS Church Extension Fund, WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds, Northwestern Publishing House, and WELS Benefit Plans. In addition, the Center for Mission and Ministry includes the WELS Visitors Center, a chapel, and archival space designed to preserve and organize historical WELS documents, books, and artifacts. Many of the routine services, such as cleaning, landscaping, snow removal, window washing, and HVAC controls and maintenance have been outsourced. Overall, the Center for Mission and Ministry building, grounds, and fixed equipment are in good to excellent condition.

As part of the Center for Mission and Ministry's preventative maintenance program, a roofing project was completed in April 2022 whereby the entire rubber membrane roof was removed and disposed, the internal gutter system was inspected, and a new polyvinyl chloride (PVC) membrane with a 30- to 40-year life was mechanically fastened to the roof. The overall cost of the project was \$78,500 and was covered through the WELS Building Fund.

The Synodical Council created the WELS Building Fund to ensure that an adequate funding source exists for maintenance and improvement of the Center for Mission and Ministry. The policy directs a portion of rents paid by WELS subsidiaries and its affiliate (WELS Church Extension Fund, WELS Foundation, WELS Investment Funds, Northwestern Publishing House, WELS Benefit Plans) to the Building Fund. As of Dec. 31, 2022, the balance of the WELS Building Fund was nearly \$350,000.

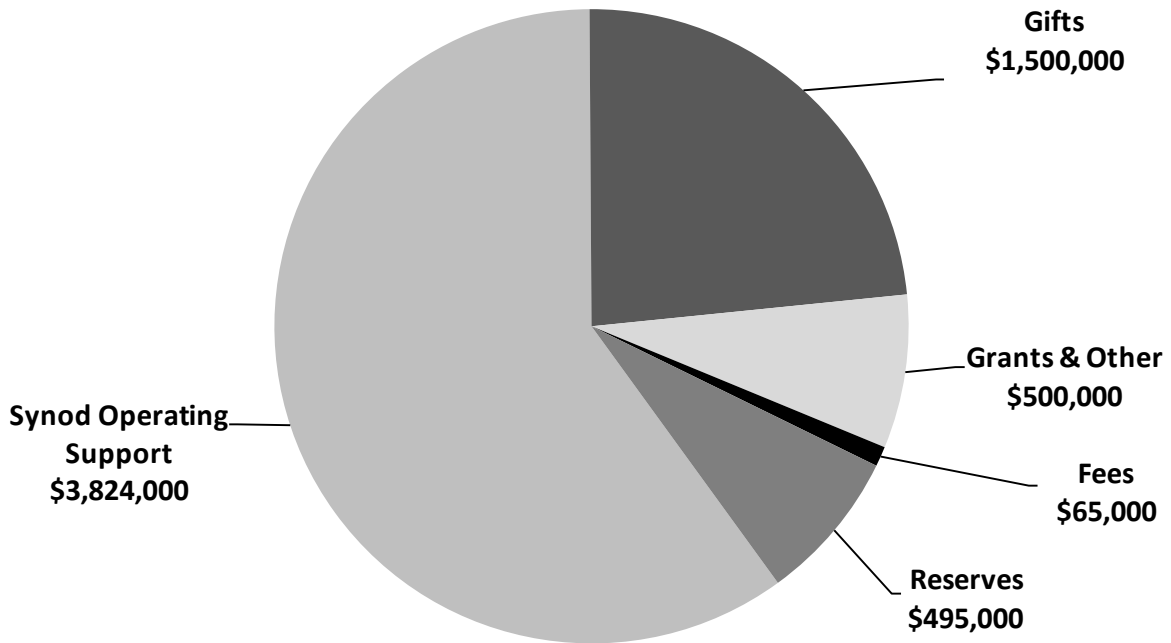
A look ahead

The Center for Mission and Ministry building is fairly new in many respects. However, the parking lot and some building systems (like the HVAC system) are starting to show their age and may need to be replaced in the next three to five years. Many of the Center for Mission and Ministry's facility charges have become somewhat predictable but can be significantly impacted by factors outside of management's control (such as weather, inflation, the employment market, energy costs, and the property insurance market). Significant items included within the proposed ministry financial plan for FY24 and FY25 related to Facility Services include:

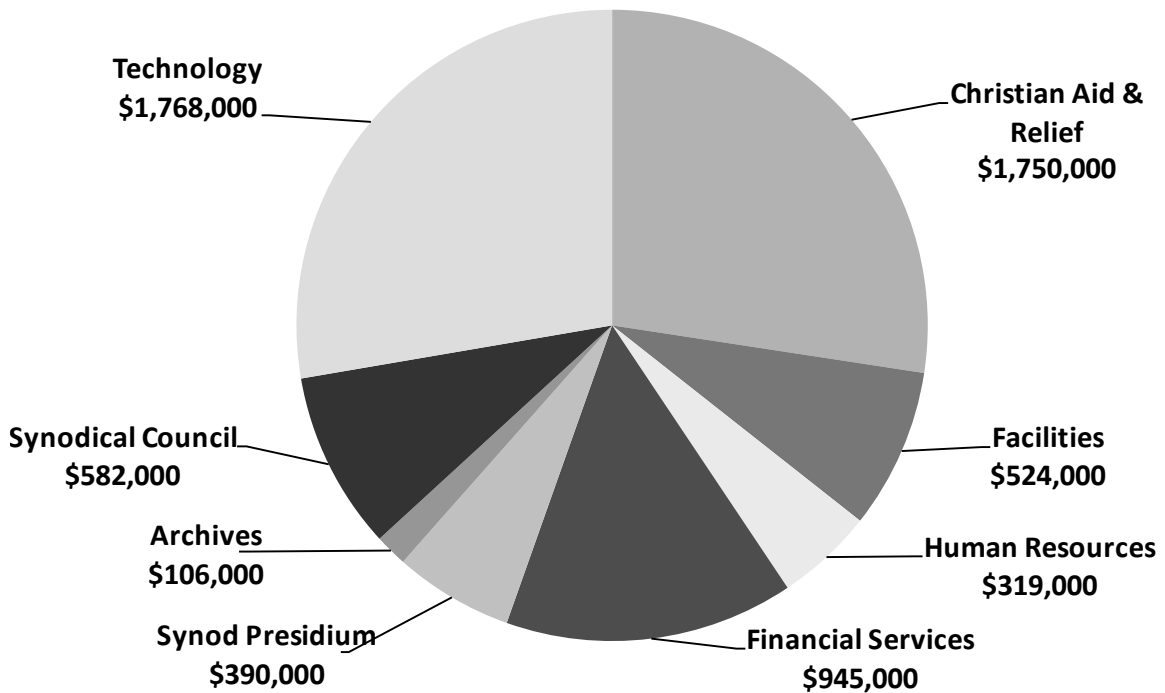
- The hiring of a part-time facility coordinator to help manage day-to-day maintenance requests, monitor the grounds (both inside and out), and help manage relationships with the Center for Mission and Ministry's various facility vendors.
- The maintenance of the Center for Mission and Ministry's parking lot through sealcoating.
- The removal and replacement of pavers at the front entrance and rear patio of the Center for Mission and Ministry.

Mr. Kyle Egan, reporter

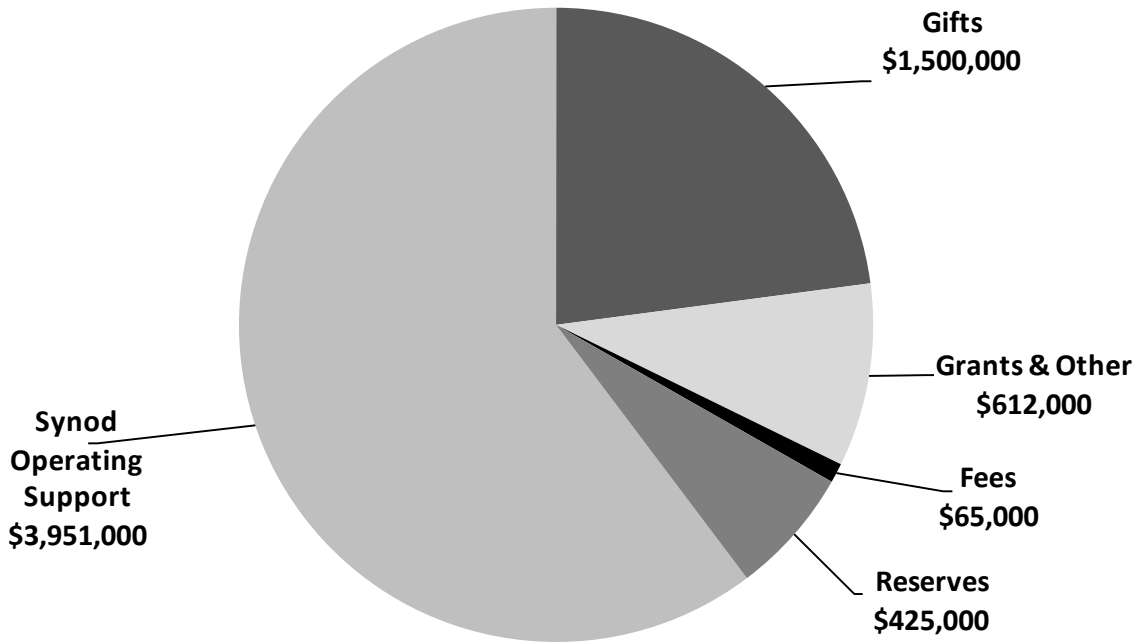
**FY 2023-24 Support
Ministry Support
\$6,384,000**



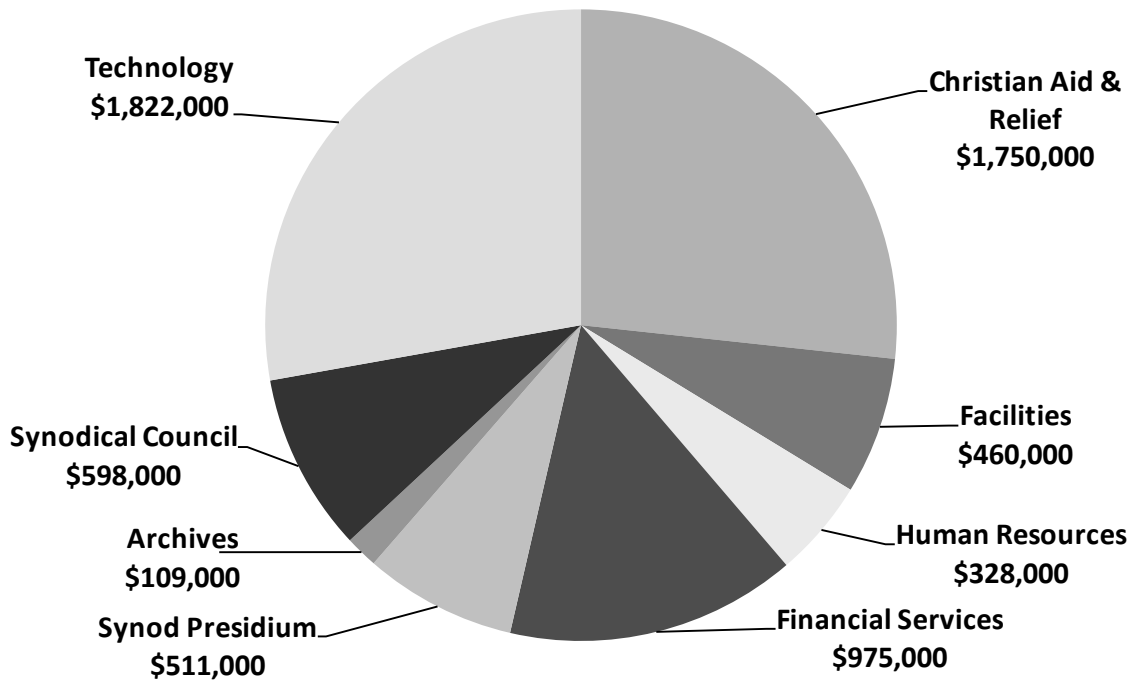
**FY 2023-24 Expenses
Ministry Support
\$6,384,000**



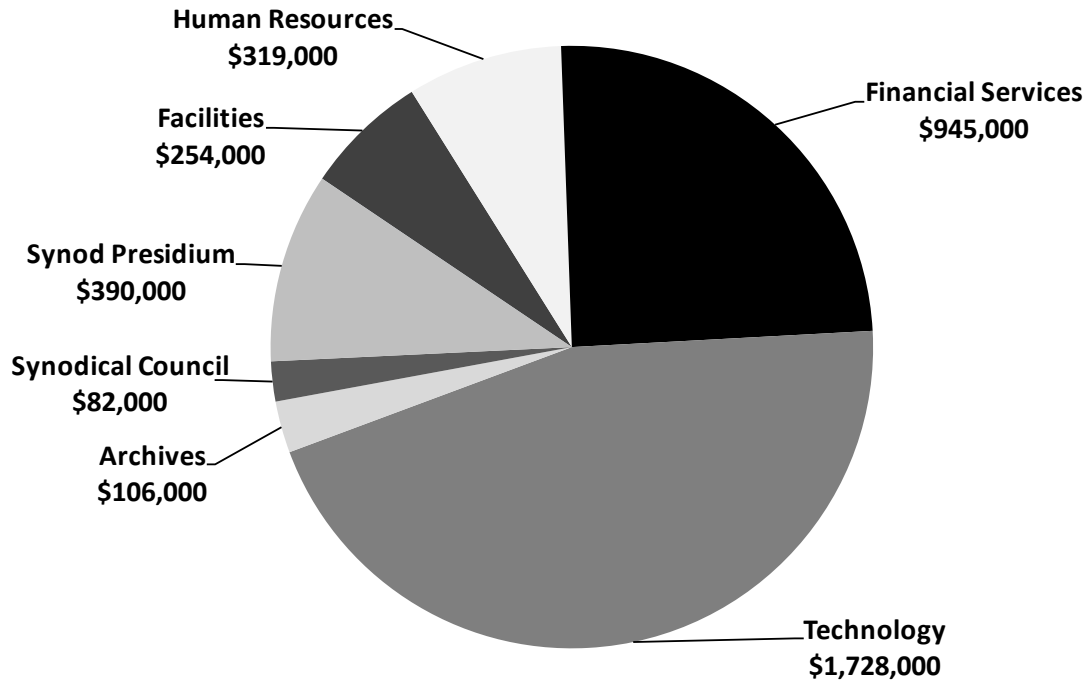
**FY 2024-25 Support
Ministry Support
\$6,553,000**



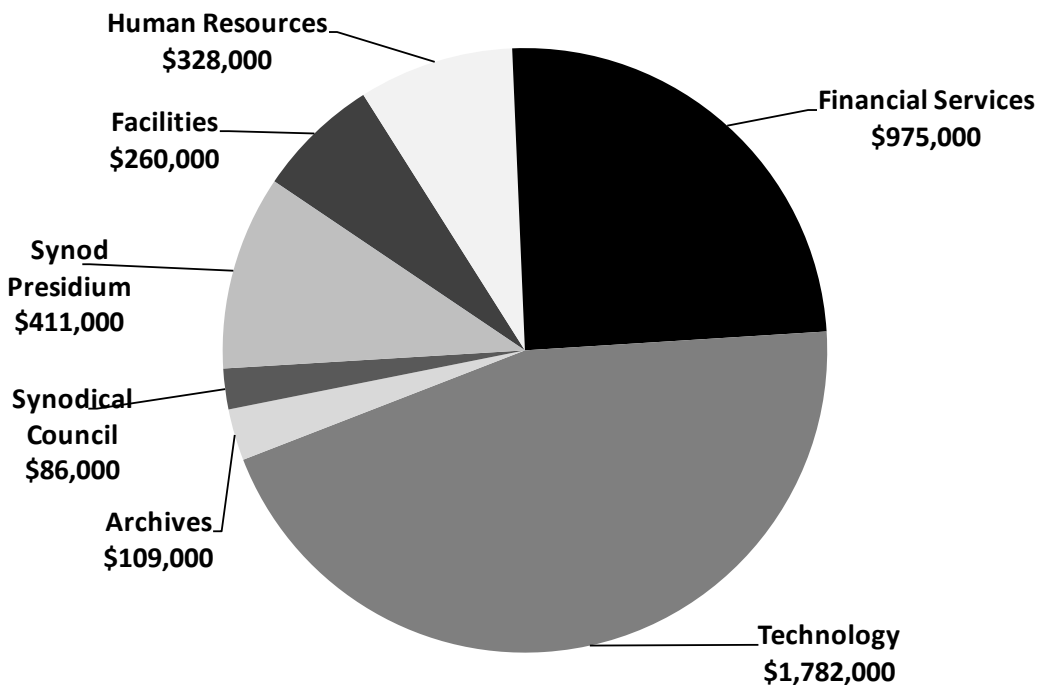
**FY 2024-25 Expenses
Ministry Support
\$6,553,000**



**FY 2023-24 Synod Operating Support Allocation
Ministry Support
\$3,824,000**



**FY 2024-25 Synod Operating Support Allocation
Ministry Support
\$3,951,000**



Financial results and ministry financial plan

Floor Committee #7

Overview

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

WELS manages and reports the financial position of the synod based on a fiscal year (FY) that runs from July 1 to June 30. WELS areas of ministry, ministerial education schools, and support service subsidiaries are fully incorporated into the ministry financial plan (budget) to ensure all sources and uses of funds entrusted to WELS are reported and considered by the synod in convention.

Synod operating support is the amount of unrestricted support allocated for total ministry plan expenses for WELS areas of ministry (excluding the ministerial education schools and support service subsidiaries) covered by unrestricted support sources with approximately 70 percent annually coming from Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) and approximately 30 percent annually coming from other unrestricted support consisting primarily of gifts, grants, bequests, and investment income. The Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) was created to manage all unrestricted support (other than CMO) to ensure that ministry plans did not need to be adjusted in the middle of a year if these difficult-to-predict unrestricted funding sources turned out to be less than planned. The synod does not hold onto funds within the Financial Stabilization Fund for long-term spending purposes. Rather, funds are used on a continual basis to support the overall operating expenses of the synod. Separately, gifts provided by donors to WELS for a specific ministry are maintained within WELS special funds for general use by that area of ministry. Planning for and use of these gifts is initiated by areas of ministry with guidance from Financial Services and approval from the Synodical Council.

Fiscal Year 2021–22 (FY22)

WELS

WELS is financially strong. WELS areas of ministry (excluding the ministerial education schools and support service subsidiaries) received total unrestricted support in FY22 of \$50.3 million consisting of CMO of \$23.1 million, unrestricted special fund support of \$17.0 million, and other general unrestricted support of \$10.2 million. Synod operating and special fund expenses totaled \$44.3 million, leading to an overall increase in reserves without donor restrictions of \$6.0 million (an increase in unrestricted special fund reserves of \$7.7 million, partially offset by a decrease in the Financial Stabilization Fund balance of \$1.7 million).

- **Congregation Mission Offerings**—Reported CMO for FY22 was \$23.1 million, an increase of \$500,000 (or 2.2 percent) over the prior year and \$1.5 million (or 6.7 percent) better than the original plan. The Lord continues to bless WELS through consistent offerings from its congregations, which helps with the overall process of developing the ministry financial plan.
- **Unrestricted special fund support**—Unrestricted special fund support for FY22 was \$17.0 million, an increase of \$838,000 (or 5.2 percent) over the prior year and \$532,000 (or 3.2 percent) better than the original plan, driven by increased satisfactions of restrictions.
- **Other unrestricted support**—Other unrestricted support consisting primarily of unrestricted gifts, grants, bequests, and investment income for FY22 was \$10.2 million, an increase of \$308,000 (or 3.1 percent) over the prior year and \$3.0 million (or 42.4 percent) better than the original plan. The improvement over the prior year was driven by the full forgiveness of WELS' Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan plus accrued interest totaling \$2.7 million, partially offset by \$1.1 million of lower grants and \$1.5 million of lower bequests. The improvement over the original plan was driven by the full forgiveness of WELS' PPP loan plus accrued interest totaling \$2.7 million and \$385,000 of better-than-planned gifts.

- **Synod operating and special fund expenses**—Synod operating and special fund expenses for FY22 were \$44.3 million, an increase in expenses of \$4.8 million (or 12.1 percent) over the prior year and \$2.9 million (or 6.1 percent) lower than the original plan. The increase in expenses over the prior year was driven by increased costs within Congregation and District Ministry for the Hymnal Project and youth rally, increased spending within World Missions for Ukraine relief and for missions in England and Asia, and general increased travel costs across all areas of ministry. The savings to the original plan was driven by lower than planned spending for Home Missions within multi-cultural ministries, World Missions within Africa and East Asia, and general underspending compared to the plan within Congregation and District Ministry.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY22 decreased \$1.6 million (or 13.9 percent) to \$9.7 million. Total support without donor restrictions of \$5.7 million was \$3.9 million (or 40.7 percent) lower than the prior year driven by unfavorable investment returns from market volatility and the one-time gain from the full forgiveness of its PPP loan recorded in FY21. Total expenses without donor restrictions of \$7.3 million were \$1.3 million (or 20.9 percent) higher than the prior year driven by costs associated with a larger vicar class, cost associated with the construction of a new faculty home, higher overall travel costs, and general inflationary increases on operational and professional services costs.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY22 increased \$1.1 million (or 7.2 percent) to \$16.7 million. Total support without donor restrictions of \$29.8 million was \$3.8 million (or 14.7 percent) better than the prior year driven by satisfactions of restrictions associated with the completion of the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse, partially offset by the one-time gain from the full forgiveness of its PPP loan recorded in FY21. Total expenses without donor restrictions of \$28.7 million were \$6.1 million (or 26.8 percent) higher than the prior year driven by costs associated with the completion of the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse and general inflationary increases on operational and professional services costs.

Luther Preparatory School

Luther Preparatory School is financially stable. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY22 increased \$480,000 (or 11.4 percent) to \$4.7 million. Total support without donor restrictions of \$9.2 million was \$225,000 (or 2.4 percent) lower than the prior year driven by the one-time gain from full forgiveness of its PPP loan recorded in FY21 and unfavorable investment returns, partially offset by higher tuition revenue from increased enrollment as well as increased gifts and grants. Total expenses without donor restrictions of \$8.7 million were \$853,000 (or 10.9 percent) higher than the prior year driven by higher facilities expenses related to projects completed with Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) funds, higher overall travel costs, and general inflationary increases on operational and professional services costs.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Michigan Lutheran Seminary is financially stable. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY22 increased \$200,000 (or 19.8 percent) to \$1.2 million. Total support without donor restrictions of \$4.2 million was \$435,000 (or 9.4 percent) lower than the prior year driven by the one-time gain on debt extinguishment from the full forgiveness of its PPP loan recorded in FY21. Total expenses without donor restrictions of \$4.0 million were \$32,000 (or 0.8 percent) lower than the prior year.

WELS Church Extension Fund

WELS Church Extension Fund is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY22 increased \$3.9 million (or 4.8 percent) to \$85.1 million. Total support without donor restrictions of \$10.2 million was \$630,000 (or 6.5 percent) better than the prior year driven by a gain on sale of a property held for resale and higher gifts and bequests. Total expenses without donor restrictions of \$6.3 million were \$68,000 (or 1.1 percent) lower than the prior year due to a lower adjustment to the provision for loan losses and lower interest expense on the certificate portfolio, partially offset by higher grant expense.

WELS Foundation

WELS Foundation is financially strong. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY22 increased \$2.9 million (or 20.2 percent) to \$17.3 million. Total support without donor restrictions of \$9.8 million was \$185,000 (or 1.9 percent) better than the prior year driven by a significant increase in gifts partially offset by lower levels of bequests and

investment losses. Total expenses without donor restrictions of \$6.9 million were flat to the prior year. WELS Foundation has a policy governing the management of excess reserves and transferred \$200,000 of its reserves to WELS as operating support in FY22.

WELS Investment Funds

WELS Investment Funds continues to be financially blessed, despite recent market volatility in both the equity and fixed income markets. WELS Investment Funds does not have reserves because it invests and administers funds for others. Assets under management in FY22 decreased by \$38.5 million (or 12.5 percent) to \$269.7 million driven by realized and unrealized market losses. However, when comparing to the last fiscal year prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (FY19), assets under management are actually up \$46.8 million (or 21.0 percent).

Northwestern Publishing House

Northwestern Publishing House is financially stable. Reserves without donor restrictions in FY22 increased \$2.5 million (or 26.1 percent) to \$12.3 million. Total revenue without donor restrictions of \$8.6 million was \$2.2 million (or 33.8 percent) better than the prior year driven by sales of the new hymnal suite of products, partially offset by the one-time gain on the sale of NPH's former site of operations recorded in FY21, unfavorable investment returns, and the one-time gain from the full forgiveness of its PPP loan recorded in FY21. Total expenses without donor restrictions of \$6.1 million were \$1.9 million (or 46.5 percent) higher than the prior year due to increased costs associated with the new hymnal suite of products and general inflationary increases on operational and professional services costs.

Fiscal Year 2022–23 (FY23)

WELS

Support and expense projections point to continued financial strength for WELS in FY23.

- **Congregation Mission Offerings**—Through December 2022 (six months), CMO was \$12.6 million, an increase of \$246,000 (or 2.0 percent) over the prior year. CMO is projected to be \$22.9 million in FY23, approximately \$1.3 million (or 5.8 percent) more than planned. This increase in CMO is being driven by strong calendar year 2022 receipts and the recently completed subscription process for calendar year 2023.
- **Unrestricted special fund support**—Through December 2022 (six months), unrestricted special fund support was \$7.2 million and is trending slightly better than the planned pace for the fiscal year.
- **Other unrestricted support**—Through December 2022 (six months), other unrestricted support was \$4.5 million and is trending better than the planned pace for the fiscal year. This is being driven by increased levels of gifts and bequests, higher than planned investment income due to the increasing interest rate environment, and a group insurance dividend received from Church Mutual.
- **Synod operating and special fund expenses**—Through December 2022 (six months), total synod operating and special fund expenses were \$22.9 million and are trending right on planned pace for the fiscal year. We have seen recent expense increases within World Missions that will continue to be monitored as we progress through the remainder of the fiscal year.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary remains financially strong. Through December 2022 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$729,000 on support of \$3.9 million and expenses of \$3.2 million. Support without donor restrictions has been trending higher than planned levels due to increased grants, while expenses without donor restrictions have been trending in line with planned levels.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College remains financially strong due to healthy reserve levels; however, the long-term financial impact of recent enrollment trends is concerning. The original plan for average full-time enrollment for FY23 was 690 students and was reduced to 600 students through a recent plan modification. Through December 2022 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$850,000 on support of \$12.5 million and expenses of \$11.7 million. Support without donor restrictions has been trending higher than modified planned levels due to increased satisfactions for financial aid, while expenses without donor restrictions have been trending lower than planned levels due to savings from position vacancies and the timing of maintenance projects.

Luther Preparatory School

Luther Preparatory School remains financially stable. Through December 2022 (six months), reserves without

donor restrictions increased \$530,000 on support of \$4.5 million and expenses of \$4.0 million. Support without donor restrictions has been trending higher than planned levels due to increased enrollment and increased gifts, while expenses without donor restrictions have been trending slightly lower than planned levels due to the timing of equipment purchases and lower travel costs.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Michigan Lutheran Seminary remains financially stable. Through December 2022 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions decreased \$42,000 on support of \$2.2 million and expenses of \$2.2 million. Support without donor restrictions has been trending higher than planned levels due to increased gifts. Expenses without donor restrictions have also been trending higher than planned levels due to the one-time expenses for new gym bleachers, technology upgrades, and equipment for the dining hall.

WELS Church Extension Fund

WELS Church Extension Fund remains financially strong. Through December 2022 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$3.0 million on support of \$5.8 million and expenses of \$2.8 million. Support without donor restriction has been trending higher than planned levels due to increased investment returns and increased gifts, while expenses without donor restrictions have been trending lower than planned levels due to lower grant expense and lower interest expenses on the certificate portfolio from lower average interest rates.

WELS Foundation

WELS Foundation remains financially strong. Through December 2022 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$89,000 on support of \$3.6 million and expenses of \$3.5 million. The value of deferred giving instruments has remained flat to the end of FY22 at \$169.7 million as there have continued to be a steady increase in new deferred giving instruments being offset by continued investment return volatility.

WELS Investment Funds

WELS Investment Funds continues to be financially blessed, despite continued market volatility. Through December 2022 (six months), assets under management have increased \$363,000 (or 0.1 percent) to \$270.1 million. Volatility remains in both the equity and fixed income markets due in part to historically elevated levels of inflation leading to a rising interest rate environment, continued supply chain pressures, continued labor shortages, wage pressures, and increased levels of geopolitical risks.

Northwestern Publishing House

Northwestern Publishing House remains financially stable. Through December 2022 (six months), reserves without donor restrictions increased \$934,000 on revenue of \$3.3 million, other income of \$130,000, and expenses of \$2.5 million. The better-than-planned adoption rate of the new hymnal in FY22 has caused year-to-date revenues for FY23 to fall slightly behind the planned pace for the fiscal year; however, sales of all other major product categories have remained above planned levels and NPH is managing overall expenses under planned levels due to savings from position vacancies and tight cost controls.

Synod Support for Operating Expenses								
	Actual FY22	Plan FY22	Change		Feb '23 Fctst FY23	Plan FY23	Change	
			Increase/(Decrease) Amount	Percent			Increase/(Decrease) Amount	Percent
Synod Support								
Gifts from Congregations	\$ 23,086,540	\$ 21,639,000	\$ 1,447,540	6.7%	\$ 22,932,000	\$ 21,682,000	\$ 1,250,000	5.8%
Financial Stabilization Fund	6,724,438	9,151,000	(2,426,562)	-26.5%	8,380,000	9,940,000	(1,560,000)	-15.7%
Total Synod Support	29,810,978	30,790,000	(979,022)	-3.2%	31,312,000	31,622,000	(310,000)	-1.0%
Operating Expenses								
Home Missions	5,794,000	5,794,000	-	0.0%	5,938,000	5,938,000	-	0.0%
World Missions	6,962,000	6,962,000	-	0.0%	7,149,000	7,149,000	-	0.0%
Ministerial Education	8,118,872	8,280,000	(161,128)	-1.9%	8,424,000	8,449,000	(25,000)	-0.3%
Congregation & District Ministry	5,764,343	6,411,000	(646,657)	-10.1%	6,397,000	6,497,000	(100,000)	-1.5%
Ministry Support	3,171,763	3,343,000	(171,237)	-5.1%	3,404,000	3,589,000	(185,000)	-5.2%
Total Operating Expenses	29,810,978	30,790,000	(979,022)	-3.2%	31,312,000	31,622,000	(310,000)	-1.0%
Surplus (Deficit)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-

Synod Support
 Gifts from Congregations
 Financial Stabilization Fund
Total Synod Support
Operating Expenses
 Home Missions
 World Missions
 Ministerial Education
 Congregation & District Ministry
 Ministry Support
Total Operating Expenses
Surplus (Deficit)

Financial Stabilization Fund								
	Actual FY22	Plan FY22	Change		Feb '23 Fctst FY23	Plan FY23	Change	
			Increase/(Decrease) Amount	Percent			Increase/(Decrease) Amount	Percent
Beginning Balance	\$ 19,457,953	\$ 16,679,345	\$ 2,778,608	16.7%	\$ 17,774,733	\$ 14,721,345	\$ 3,053,388	20.7%
Receipts:								
Schwan Grants	1,842,400	1,802,500	39,900	2.2%	1,885,000	1,800,000	85,000	4.7%
WELS FDN Net Asset Grant	200,000	400,000	(200,000)	-50.0%	200,000	400,000	(200,000)	-50.0%
Other Grants	541,005	532,000	9,005	1.7%	540,000	540,000	-	0.0%
Debt Extinguishment (PPP forgiven)	2,664,472	-	2,664,472	0.0%	-	-	-	100.0%
Gifts from Individuals	1,573,303	1,187,500	385,803	32.5%	1,307,000	1,187,500	119,500	10.1%
Unrestricted Bequests	1,716,086	1,600,000	116,086	7.3%	1,800,000	1,600,000	200,000	12.5%
Investment Income	1,348,300	1,300,000	48,300	3.7%	2,000,000	1,300,000	700,000	53.8%
Endowment Distribution	119,499	116,000	3,499	3.0%	128,000	122,000	6,000	4.9%
Other Revenue	236,153	255,000	(18,847)	-7.4%	482,000	265,000	217,000	81.9%
Total Receipts	10,241,218	7,193,000	2,662,415	37.0%	8,342,000	7,214,500	1,127,500	13.5%
Redesignations	(5,200,000)	-	(5,200,000)	0.0%	-	-	-	0.0%
Synod Support Transfer	(6,724,438)	(9,151,000)	2,426,562	-26.5%	(8,380,000)	(9,940,000)	1,560,000	-18.6%
Surplus (Deficit)	(1,683,220)	(1,958,000)	274,780		(38,000)	(2,725,500)	2,687,500	
Ending Balance	\$ 17,774,733	\$ 14,721,345	\$ 2,667,585	18.1%	\$ 17,736,733	\$ 11,995,845	\$ 5,740,888	32.4%

Beginning Balance
 Receipts:
 Schwan Grants
 WELS FDN Net Asset Grant
 Other Grants
 Debt Extinguishment (PPP forgiven)
 Gifts from Individuals
 Unrestricted Bequests
 Investment Income
 Endowment Distribution
 Other Revenue
 Total Receipts
 Redesignations
 Synod Support Transfer
Surplus (Deficit)
Ending Balance

Proposed ministry financial plan for 2023–24 and 2024–25 biennium (FY24/FY25 Biennium)

Development of ministry financial plan

Planning for the FY24/FY25 Biennium was initiated in February 2022 or about 16 months before the start of the biennium. At that time, the Synodical Council approved initial planning assumptions that would increase synod operating support levels by 3.0 percent annually, including overall wage increases of 2.5 percent annually, healthcare costs increasing at 7.0 percent annually, and retirement plan expenses remaining flat each year. The Synodical Council asked the WELS president to work with the areas of ministry to draft an initial ministry financial plan using this level of synod support for its review at its fall 2022 meeting. With this general direction by the Synodical Council, the areas of ministry, schools, and support service subsidiaries, working with their boards and commissions, proceeded to develop their ministry plans.

In late summer/early fall 2022, initial planning meetings were held with the areas of ministry, ministerial education schools, and support service subsidiaries to walk through their plans. Each individual plan was then consolidated into an overall synod ministry financial plan for review by the Synodical Council in November 2022. In April 2023, the WELS president submitted a slightly modified ministry financial plan to the Synodical Council, updated for the carryforward impact of current FY23 financial results and slightly modified CMO projections for FY24 and FY25 based on 2023 subscriptions. After review of the proposed plan, the Synodical Council approved the FY24/FY25 Biennium plan as presented.

Congregation Mission Offerings

Prior to 2020, Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) had historically been flat to slightly declining since 2008. However, in each of the last three calendar years there has been an increase in CMO. Calendar year reported CMO for 2022 was \$23.3 million, an increase of \$654,000 (or 2.9 percent) over the prior year and \$883,000 (or 3.9 percent) better than 2022 subscriptions. However, when adjusting for inflation, calendar year real CMO for 2022 was \$810,000 (or 3.4 percent) lower than 2021 indicating that the impact CMO can have on ministry has been negatively impacted by the current inflationary environment. Calendar year 2023 subscriptions serve as the baseline for CMO projections in the FY24/FY25 Biennium. CMO subscriptions for 2023 are \$22.9 million, down 1.6 percent compared to actual 2022 CMO receipts but the highest level of subscriptions on record. CMO projections included in the ministry financial plan assume a 0.5 percent increase for both calendar year 2024 and 2025 as we attempt to balance recent CMO trends with the current economic and inflationary environment.

Summary of ministry financial plan for FY24 and FY25

The proposed ministry financial plan for FY24 includes synod support for operating expenses of \$32.8 million, other expenses in areas of ministry and at the schools of \$55.9 million, and \$13.1 million of expense at the subsidiaries for a total ministry financial plan of \$101.8 million. The \$32.8 million of synod support is proposed to be allocated to the areas of ministry as follows:

- Home Missions—\$6.1 million (or 18.6 percent of total synod support)
- World Missions—\$7.4 million (or 22.5 percent of total synod support)
- Ministerial Education—\$8.7 million (or 26.5 percent of total synod support)
- Congregation & District Ministry—\$6.8 million (or 20.8 percent of total synod support)
- Ministry Support—\$3.8 million (or 11.6 percent of total synod support)

The FY25 proposed plan includes synod support for operating expenses of \$33.7 million, other expenses in areas of ministry and at the schools of \$57.2 million, and \$13.7 million of expense at the subsidiaries for a total ministry financial plan of \$104.6 million. The \$33.7 million of synod support is proposed to be allocated to the areas of ministry as follows:

- Home Missions—\$6.3 million (or 18.7 percent of total synod support)
- World Missions—\$7.6 million (or 22.6 percent of total synod support)
- Ministerial Education—\$8.9 million (or 26.5 percent of total synod support)
- Congregation & District Ministry—\$6.9 million (or 20.5 percent of total synod support)
- Ministry Support—\$4.0 million (or 11.7 percent of total synod support)

The proposed financial plan relies heavily on the drawdown of the Financial Stabilization Fund—approximately \$4.0 million over the FY24/FY25 Biennium—and on areas of ministry and schools using \$11.5 million of reserves in addition to other funding sources or one-time funds to sustain ongoing ministry.

The following is a brief summary of the ministry financial plan for FY24 and FY25 for the four ministerial education schools and support service subsidiaries.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

The financial position of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is anticipated to remain strong as they project a combined surplus without donor restrictions of \$48,000 over the biennium.

- Total support without donor restrictions for FY24 is forecast to be \$7.1 million driven by anticipated average on-campus enrollment of 108 students plus a class of 30 vicars. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY24 are forecast to be \$7.1 million, leading to a surplus of \$18,000.
- Total support without donor restrictions for FY25 is forecast to be \$8.0 million driven by anticipated average on-campus enrollment of 101 students plus a class of 44 vicars. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY25 are forecast to be \$8.0 million, leading to a surplus of \$30,000.
- Ending FY25 reserves without donor restrictions are anticipated to be \$10.3 million.

Martin Luther College

The financial position of Martin Luther College is projected to weaken over the next biennium due to continued enrollment challenges. MLC is projecting a combined deficit without donor restrictions of \$2.7 million over the biennium.

- Total support without donor restrictions for FY24 is forecast to be \$23.9 million driven by anticipated average enrollment of 610 students. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY24 are forecast to be \$25.3 million, leading to a deficit of \$1.4 million.
- Total support without donor restrictions for FY25 is forecast to be \$24.3 million driven by anticipated average enrollment of 610 students. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY25 are forecast to be \$25.6 million, leading to a deficit of \$1.3 million.
- Ending FY25 reserves without donor restrictions are anticipated to be \$12.5 million.

Luther Preparatory School

While in a stable financial position, LPS is projecting a combined deficit without donor restrictions of \$295,000 over the biennium.

- Total support without donor restrictions for FY24 is forecast to be \$8.8 million driven by anticipated average enrollment of 410 students. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY24 are forecast to be \$9.0 million, leading to a deficit of \$150,000.
- Total support without donor restrictions for FY25 is forecast to be \$9.0 million driven by anticipated average enrollment of 410 students. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY25 are forecast to be \$9.1 million, leading to a deficit of \$145,000.
- Ending FY25 reserves without donor restrictions are anticipated to be \$4.1 million.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

While in a stable financial position, Michigan Lutheran Seminary is projecting to improve its financial situation through a combined surplus without donor restrictions of \$45,000 over the biennium.

- Total support without donor restrictions for FY24 is forecast to be \$4.3 million driven by anticipated average enrollment of 190 students. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY24 are forecast to be \$4.3 million, leading to a surplus of \$2,000.
- Total support without donor restrictions for FY25 is forecast to be \$4.4 million driven by anticipated average enrollment of 190 students. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY25 are forecast to be \$4.4 million, leading to a surplus of \$43,000.
- Ending FY25 reserves without donor restrictions are anticipated to be \$1.7 million.

WELS Church Extension Fund

The financial position of WELS Church Extension Fund is anticipated to remain strong as it projects a combined surplus without donor restrictions of \$6.3 million over the biennium.

- Total support without donor restrictions for FY24 is forecast to be \$9.6 million. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY24 are forecast to be \$6.4 million, leading to a surplus of \$3.2 million.

- Total support without donor restrictions for FY25 is forecast to be \$10.1 million. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY25 are forecast to be \$7.0 million, leading to a surplus of \$3.1 million.
- Ending FY25 reserves without donor restrictions are anticipated to be \$95.9 million.

WELS Foundation

The financial position of WELS Foundation is anticipated to remain strong. WELS Foundation will continue to work with the Ministry of Christian Giving to encourage new gift instruments and is privileged to continue to administer and distribute donor-directed gifts to various WELS ministries. WELS Foundation is also expected to continue to distribute planned grants to WELS for general operations of \$400,000 for both FY24 and FY25.

WELS Investment Funds

WELS Investment Funds does not have reserves because it invests and administers funds for others. The low-cost operating structure is managed through an administrative fee currently set at 17 basis points. The administrative fee may fluctuate from plan levels based on actual market conditions and the size of the overall WELS Investment Funds portfolio.

Northwestern Publishing House

While in a stable financial position, Northwestern Publishing House is projecting to improve its financial situation through a combined surplus without donor restrictions of \$940,000 over the biennium.

- Total support without donor restrictions for FY24 is forecast to be \$5.5 million. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY24 are forecast to be \$5.0 million, leading to a surplus of \$0.5 million.
- Total support without donor restrictions for FY25 is forecast to be \$5.5 million. Total expenses without donor restrictions for FY25 are forecast to be \$5.0 million, leading to a surplus of \$0.5 million.
- Ending FY25 reserves without donor restrictions are anticipated to be \$15.0 million.

Please refer to the area of ministry, ministerial education school, and support service subsidiary reports contained elsewhere within this book for more details of the ministry financial plans for each area.

Other unrestricted support

The following assumptions have been used related to unrestricted support (other than CMO) managed within the Financial Stabilization Fund.

- **Grants** (\$2,845,000 in FY24 and \$2,860,000 in FY25)—The majority of the grants come from the Schwan Foundation and are projected to be approximately \$1.9 million per year for FY24 and FY25. WELS Foundation's unrestricted net asset policy facilitates the transfer of undesignated net assets to support WELS general ministries with projected grants of approximately \$400,000 per year for FY24 and FY25. Other grants include distributions of approximately \$400,000 per year from various sources.
- **Gifts from individuals** (\$1,350,000 in both FY24 and FY25)—The vast majority of these unrestricted gifts come from individuals and congregations and are projected to be approximately \$1.1 million per year for FY24 and FY25. In addition, gifts are forecasted from various special appeals for WELS Mission & Ministry. Gifts to these programs are projected to be approximately \$250,000 per year for FY24 and FY25.
- **Unrestricted bequests** (\$1,800,000 in both FY24 and FY25)—Unrestricted bequests represent estate gifts to WELS without donor restrictions and are projected to be approximately \$1.8 million per year for FY24 and FY25. These estimates are based on recent trends. However, due to the unpredictable timing of the distribution of an estate gift, they are difficult to project.
- **Investment income** (\$1,900,000 in FY24 and \$1,850,000 in FY25)—Investment income represents returns on non-endowed funds, the continued investment returns from existing annuity contracts, and other investable reserves. Current annuity contracts will terminate upon the death of each annuitant. Given current annuity contract returns of between 3.0 percent and 4.0 percent and current increasing interest rate environment, investment income is projected to be approximately \$1.9 million per year for FY24 and FY25.
- **Endowment distributions & other** (\$335,000 in FY24 and \$357,000 in FY25)—Includes distributions from WELS operating endowment funds and other miscellaneous income sources including but not limited to subsidiary rental payments as defined by the Synodical Council's Building Fund policy, the synod's workers compensation and group insurance dividend programs, which fluctuate based on WELS' overall annual loss ratio and proceeds from the corporate credit card rebate program. Slight increases during the biennium were assumed.

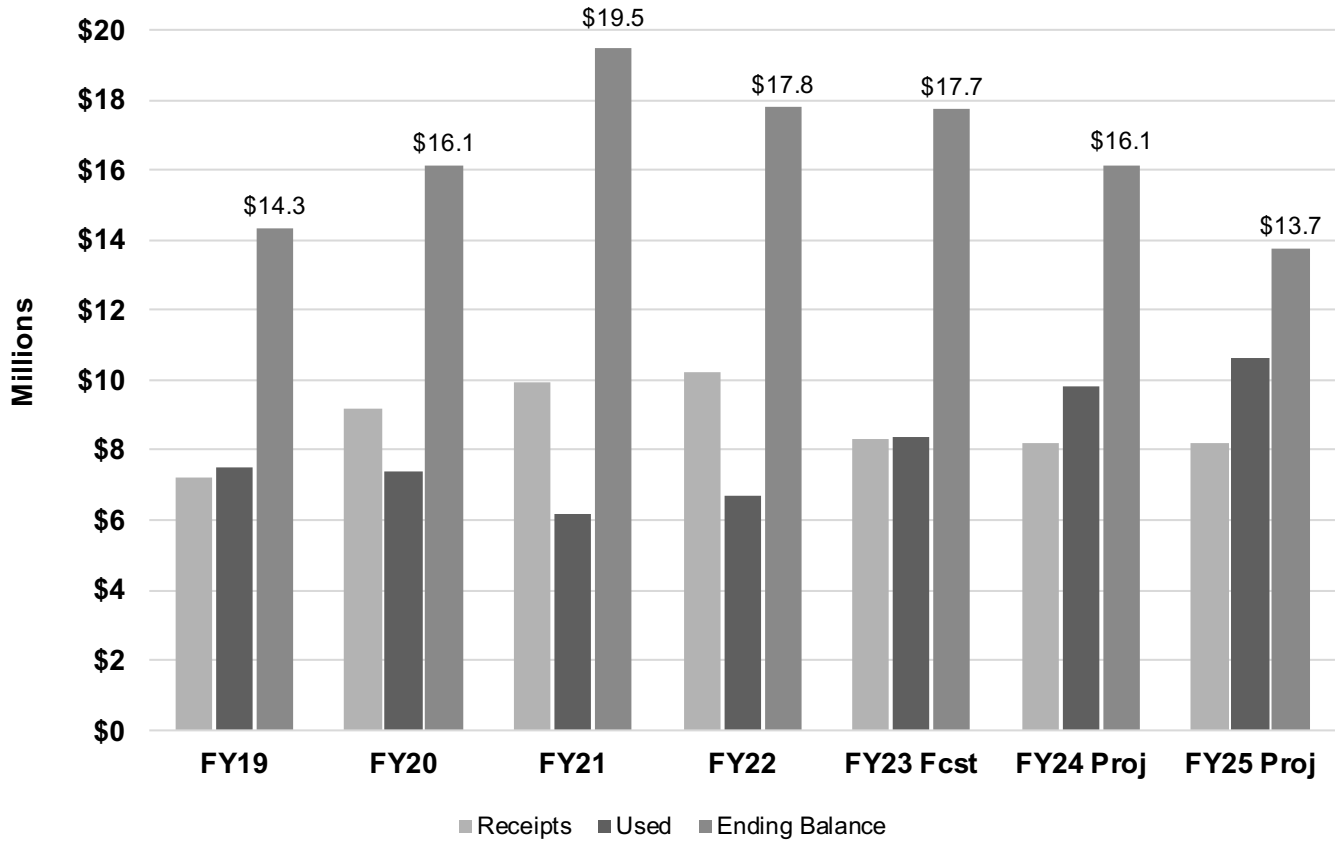
The cumulative total of these sources of support into the Financial Stabilization Fund are projected to be approximately \$8.2 million per year for FY24 and FY25. With planned FY24 synod support of \$32.8 million and CMO projections of \$23.0 million, transfers out of the Financial Stabilization Fund during FY24 are planned to be approximately \$9.8 million, resulting in a forecasted decrease in the Financial Stabilization Fund of approximately \$1.6 million to end FY24 with a Financial Stabilization Fund balance of approximately \$16.1 million. In FY23, synod support levels are forecasted to reach approximately \$33.7 million with CMO projections of \$23.1 million leading to an increased level of transfers out of the Financial Stabilization Fund at \$10.6 million. This results in a forecasted decrease in the Financial Stabilization Fund of approximately \$2.4 million to end FY25 with a Financial Stabilization Fund balance of approximately \$13.7 million.

Two primary factors (other than the noted levels of non-CMO unrestricted support above) that could impact the balance of the Financial Stabilization Fund in the upcoming biennium include how each area of ministry performs as compared to their operating budgets funded from synod support as well as the level of CMO received as compared to projections. If savings are seen within area of ministry operating budgets and/or congregations exceed the projected annual 0.5 percent increase in CMO, less will need to be transferred from the Financial Stabilization Fund to cover WELS' operating expenses. However, if CMO receipts fall short of the projected annual 0.5 percent increase, additional transfers out of the Financial Stabilization Fund may be needed (which would draw the balance of the Financial Stabilization Fund lower) or spending reductions may be deemed necessary.

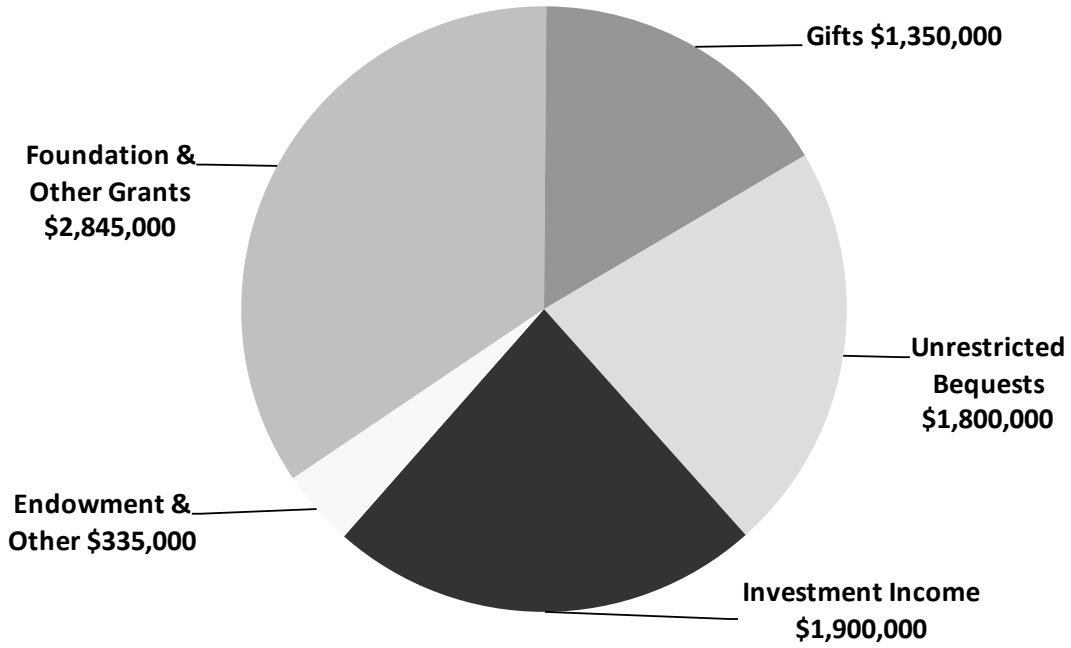
We are thankful to be able to present this ministry financial plan for FY24 and FY25 trusting in God's gracious care for us in our Lord Jesus. At the same time, we also recognize that such trust does not diminish the responsibility God himself entrusts to us to be wise stewards of the finances for the overall synod and its areas of ministry, ministerial education schools, and support service subsidiaries. We ask for God to provide us with the wisdom and leadership to carry out these plans for the next biennium.

Mr. Kyle Egan, reporter

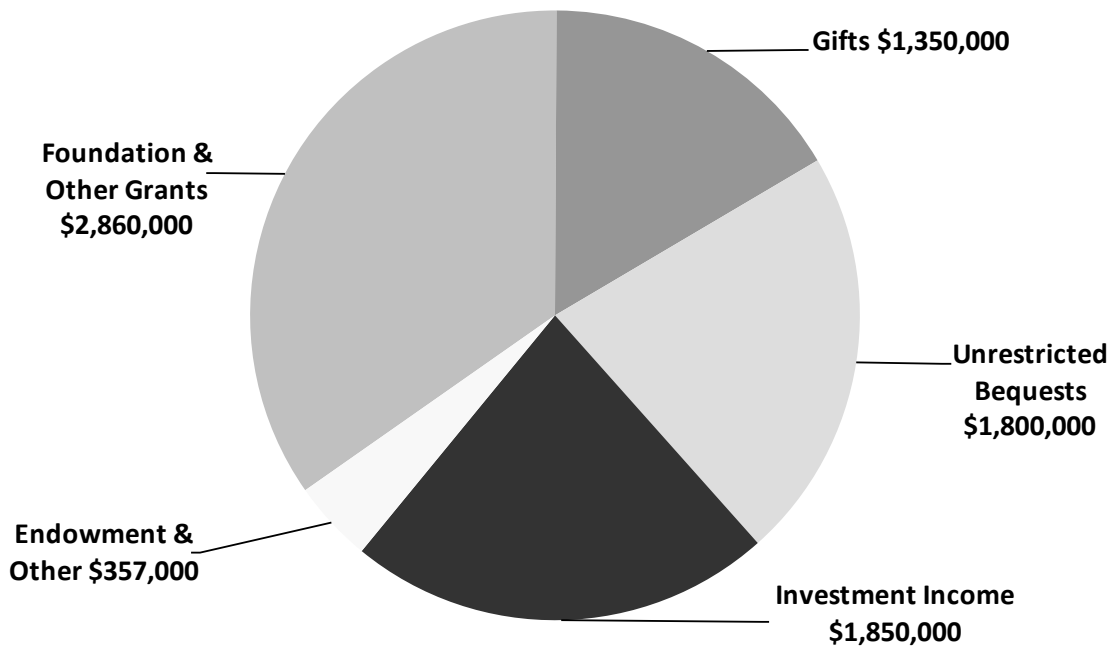
Financial Stabilization Fund



**FY 2023-24 Support
Financial Stabilization Fund
\$8,230,000**



**FY 2024-25 Support
Financial Stabilization Fund
\$8,217,000**



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

	FY22 Actual			FY23 Plan			FY24 Plan			FY25 Plan						
	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expenses	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expenses	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expenses	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expenses	FTE
SUMMARY																
Home Missions	5,794,000	3,981,295	9,775,295	13.25	5,938,000	4,960,000	10,898,000	13.75	6,120,000	4,965,000	11,085,000	13.75	6,314,000	5,367,000	11,681,000	13.75
World Missions	6,962,000	3,799,263	10,761,263	59.45	7,149,000	5,627,000	12,776,000	66.95	7,369,000	7,224,000	14,593,000	68.45	7,597,000	7,193,000	14,790,000	68.45
Ministerial Education	8,118,872	41,734,205	49,853,077	334.85	8,449,000	37,298,000	45,747,000	336.45	8,688,000	38,516,000	47,204,000	348.25	8,947,000	39,756,000	48,703,000	344.45
Congregation & District Ministry	5,764,343	2,766,234	8,530,577	43.45	6,497,000	1,961,000	8,458,000	44.80	6,840,000	2,677,000	9,517,000	47.10	6,993,000	2,236,000	9,169,000	47.60
Ministry Support	3,171,763	2,400,899	5,572,662	26.85	3,589,000	2,450,000	6,039,000	29.00	3,824,000	2,560,000	6,384,000	30.00	3,951,000	2,602,000	6,553,000	30.00
TOTAL	29,810,978	54,681,896	84,492,873	477.85	31,622,000	52,296,000	83,918,000	490.95	32,841,000	55,942,000	88,783,000	507.55	33,742,000	57,154,000	90,896,000	504.25

	FY22	% of total	% change	FY23	% of total	% change	FY24	% of total	% change	FY25	% of total	% change
Synod Support	5,794,000	19.4%	2.0%	5,938,000	18.8%	2.5%	6,120,000	18.6%	3.1%	6,314,000	18.7%	3.2%
Home Missions	6,962,000	23.4%	4.5%	7,149,000	22.6%	2.7%	7,369,000	22.4%	3.1%	7,597,000	22.5%	3.1%
World Missions	8,118,872	27.2%	0.8%	8,449,000	26.7%	4.1%	8,688,000	26.5%	2.8%	8,947,000	26.5%	3.0%
Ministerial Education	5,764,343	19.3%	8.3%	6,497,000	20.5%	12.7%	6,840,000	20.8%	5.3%	6,993,000	20.5%	1.4%
Congregation & District Ministry	3,171,763	10.6%	3.2%	3,589,000	11.3%	13.2%	3,824,000	11.6%	6.5%	3,951,000	11.7%	3.3%
Ministry Support	29,810,978	100.0%	3.5%	31,622,000	100.0%	6.1%	32,841,000	100.0%	3.9%	33,742,000	100.0%	2.7%

	FY22	% of total	% change	FY23	% of total	% change	FY24	% of total	% change	FY25	% of total	% change
Total Expenses	9,775,295	11.6%	6.9%	10,898,000	13.0%	11.5%	11,085,000	12.5%	1.7%	11,681,000	12.9%	5.4%
Home Missions	10,761,263	12.7%	14.3%	12,776,000	15.2%	18.7%	14,593,000	16.4%	14.2%	14,790,000	16.3%	1.3%
World Missions	49,853,077	59.0%	19.2%	45,747,000	54.5%	-8.2%	47,204,000	53.2%	3.2%	48,703,000	53.6%	3.2%
Ministerial Education	8,530,577	10.1%	27.8%	8,458,000	10.1%	-0.9%	9,517,000	10.7%	12.5%	9,169,000	10.1%	-3.7%
Congregation & District Ministry	5,572,662	6.6%	7.1%	6,039,000	7.2%	8.4%	6,384,000	7.2%	5.7%	6,553,000	7.2%	2.6%
Ministry Support	84,492,873	100.0%	17.0%	83,918,000	100.0%	-0.7%	88,783,000	100.0%	5.8%	90,896,000	100.0%	2.4%

	FY22 Actual			FY23 Plan			FY24 Plan			FY25 Plan						
	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expenses	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expenses	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expenses	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Expenses	FTE
Support Services Subsidiaries																
WELS Church Extension Fund	-	6,347,779	6,347,779	6.85	-	8,147,000	8,147,000	6.85	-	6,403,000	6,403,000	5.85	-	7,025,000	7,025,000	5.85
WELS Foundation	-	835,375	835,375	3.70	-	1,033,000	1,033,000	3.20	-	1,145,000	1,145,000	4.50	-	1,157,000	1,157,000	4.50
WELS Investment Funds	-	409,582	409,582	2.30	-	472,000	472,000	2.00	-	497,000	497,000	2.25	-	535,000	535,000	2.25
Northwestern Publishing House	-	6,050,036	6,050,036	24.50	-	5,271,000	5,271,000	24.00	-	5,043,000	5,043,000	27.00	-	5,017,000	5,017,000	27.00
TOTAL	-	13,642,772	13,642,772	37.35	-	14,923,000	14,923,000	36.05	-	13,088,000	13,088,000	39.60	-	13,734,000	13,734,000	39.60

TOTAL WELS & SUBSIDIARIES	29,810,978	68,324,668	98,135,645	515.20	31,622,000	67,219,000	98,841,000	527.00	32,841,000	69,030,000	101,871,000	547.15	33,742,000	70,888,000	104,630,000	543.85
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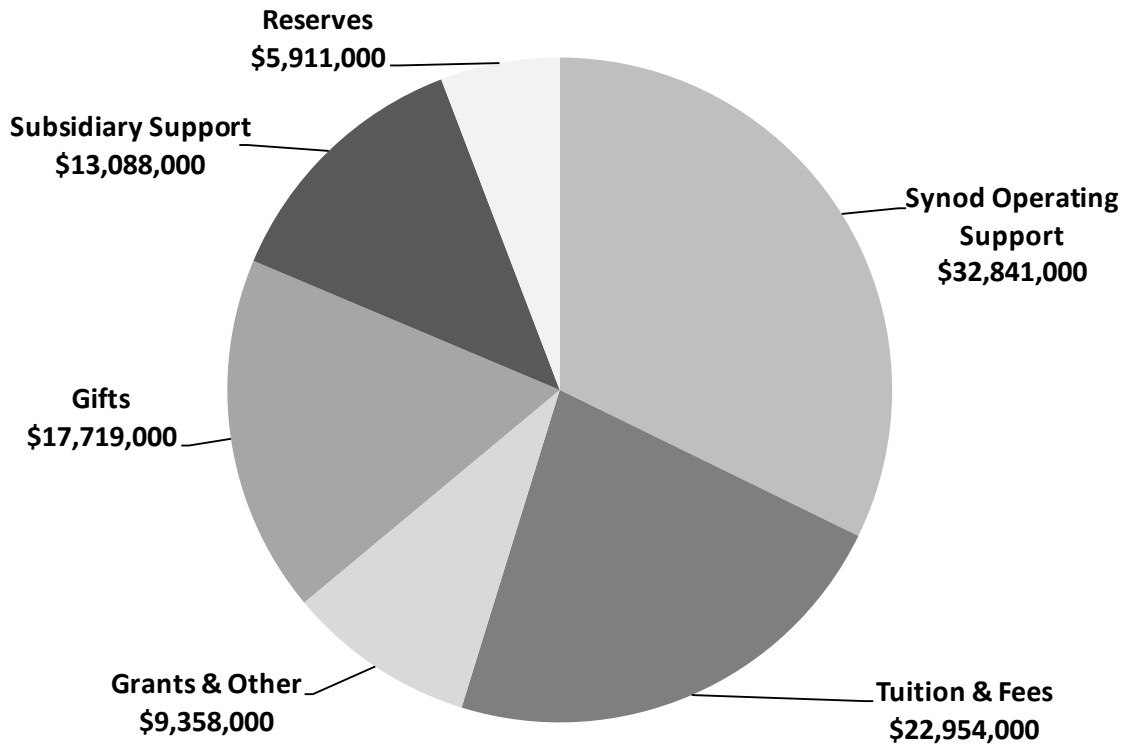
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Home Missions															
Board and Administration	715,412	151,444	866,856	739,344	180,600	919,944	5.75	763,000	75,000	838,000	5.25	785,000	86,000	871,000	5.25
Vicars in Missions	114,025	439,996	554,021	190,000	150,000	340,000	0.00	196,000	280,000	476,000	0.00	227,000	450,000	677,000	0.00
Campus Ministry	397,251	112,132	509,383	407,880	65,500	473,380	1.50	444,000	70,000	514,000	1.50	446,000	70,000	516,000	1.50
Multi-cultural Ministry	991,404	663,276	1,654,680	984,000	749,250	1,733,250	1.00	1,013,000	765,000	1,778,000	1.00	1,044,000	550,000	1,594,000	1.00
Outreach Ministry	3,575,802	2,092,445	5,668,247	3,616,776	3,001,050	6,617,826	3.00	3,704,000	2,968,000	6,672,000	3.00	3,812,000	3,401,000	7,213,000	3.00
Joint Mission Council Ministry	105	522,002	522,107	-	813,600	813,600	2.50	-	807,000	807,000	3.00	-	810,000	810,000	3.00
TOTAL	5,794,000	3,981,295	9,775,295	5,938,000	4,960,000	10,898,000	13.75	6,120,000	4,965,000	11,085,000	13.75	6,314,000	5,367,000	11,681,000	13.75

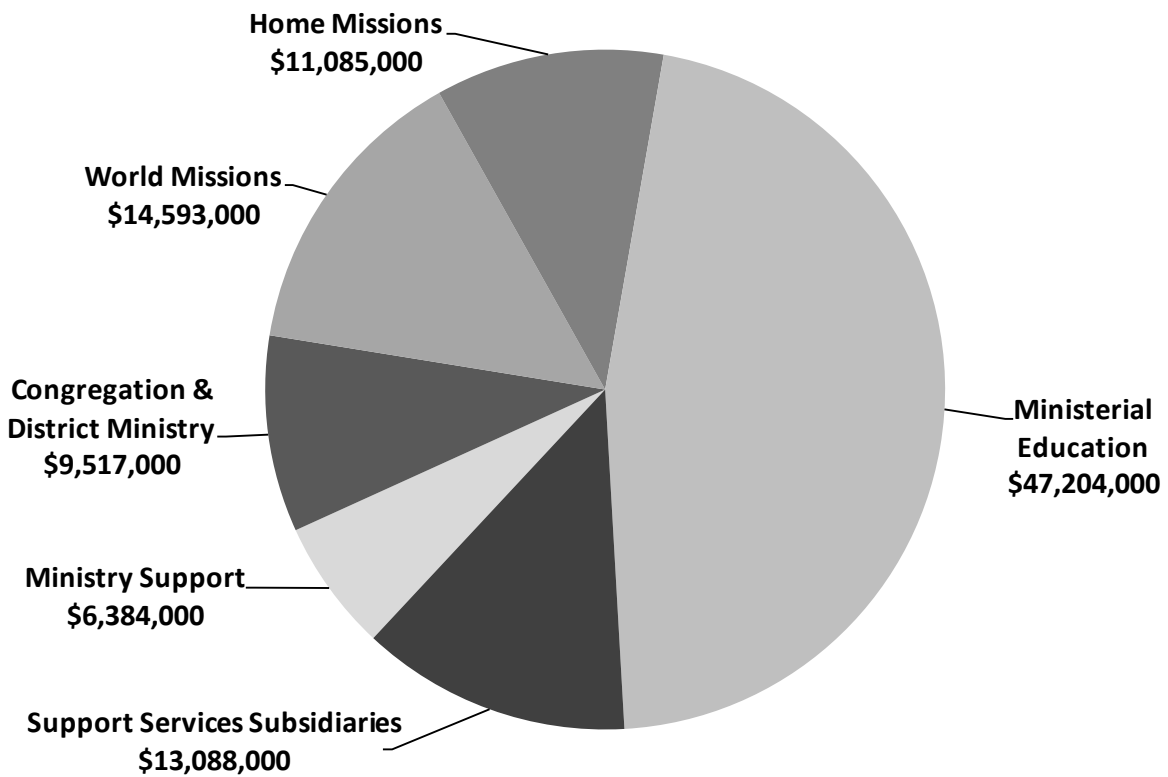
World Missions															
Board and Administration	657,438	119,278	776,716	623,041	111,600	734,641	6.25	442,605	104,000	546,605	5.25	455,456	104,000	559,456	5.25
Africa	1,239,931	644,933	1,884,864	1,399,646	703,075	2,102,721	11.20	1,430,559	917,160	2,347,719	11.20	1,428,813	942,600	2,371,413	11.20
Europe	572,959	366,025	938,984	508,800	399,700	908,500	2.00	817,654	318,900	1,136,554	3.50	853,469	320,200	1,173,669	3.50
Latin America	915,761	177,570	1,093,331	1,119,836	168,200	1,288,036	11.00	1,344,146	151,200	1,495,346	11.00	1,406,006	153,300	1,559,306	11.00
Native America	342,493	255,369	597,862	432,620	193,700	626,320	3.50	488,323	316,255	804,578	4.50	493,457	331,684	825,141	4.50
Asia	2,190,504	1,402,367	3,592,871	2,605,093	1,848,132	4,453,225	18.50	1,536,416	3,077,080	4,613,496	19.50	1,570,441	3,077,135	4,647,576	19.50
New Initiatives	-	-	-	-	280,000	280,000	2.00	-	250,000	250,000	0.00	-	250,000	250,000	0.00
Multi-Language Publications	853,270	706,559	1,559,829	185,917	1,297,134	1,483,051	9.50	947,647	1,065,000	2,012,647	9.50	1,019,308	1,070,000	2,089,308	9.50
Joint Mission Council	-	368,109	368,109	-	518,459	518,459	3.00	-	551,584	551,584	3.00	-	556,806	556,806	3.00
Missionary Support	189,644	(240,947)	(51,303)	274,047	107,000	381,047	0.00	361,650	472,821	834,471	1.00	370,050	387,275	757,325	1.00
TOTAL	6,962,000	3,799,263	10,761,263	7,149,000	5,627,000	12,776,000	66.95	7,369,000	7,224,000	14,593,000	68.45	7,597,000	7,193,000	14,790,000	68.45

Ministerial Education															
Board and Administration	152,823	1,024,845	1,177,668	215,000	1,180,000	1,395,000	1.00	257,000	1,180,000	1,437,000	1.00	265,000	1,270,000	1,535,000	1.00
Retiree Health Care	(71,951)	-	(71,951)	36,000	-	36,000	0.00	25,000	-	25,000	0.00	25,000	-	25,000	0.00
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary	867,000	6,445,278	7,312,278	884,000	5,702,000	6,586,000	36.50	867,000	6,236,000	7,103,000	38.50	893,000	7,070,000	7,963,000	38.50
Martin Luther College	3,672,000	25,066,581	28,738,581	3,744,000	20,354,000	24,098,000	191.70	3,864,000	21,498,000	25,362,000	198.50	3,980,000	21,699,000	25,679,000	194.70
Luther Preparatory School	2,371,000	6,312,349	8,683,349	2,418,000	6,713,000	9,131,000	65.00	2,488,000	6,468,000	8,956,000	67.50	2,562,000	6,568,000	9,130,000	67.50
Michigan Lutheran Seminary	1,128,000	2,885,152	4,013,152	1,152,000	3,349,000	4,501,000	42.25	1,187,000	3,134,000	4,321,000	42.75	1,222,000	3,149,000	4,371,000	42.75
TOTAL	8,118,872	41,734,205	49,853,077	8,449,000	37,298,000	45,747,000	336.45	8,688,000	38,516,000	47,204,000	348.25	8,947,000	39,756,000	48,703,000	344.45

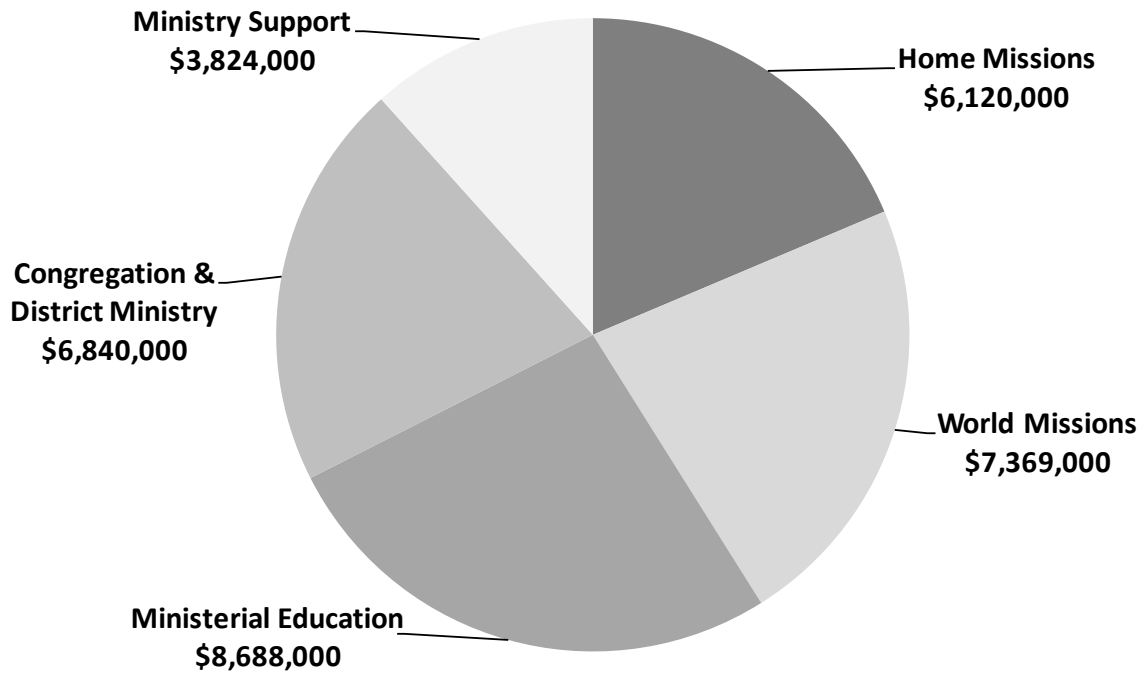
**FY 2023-24 Total Ministry Plan Support
\$101,871,000**



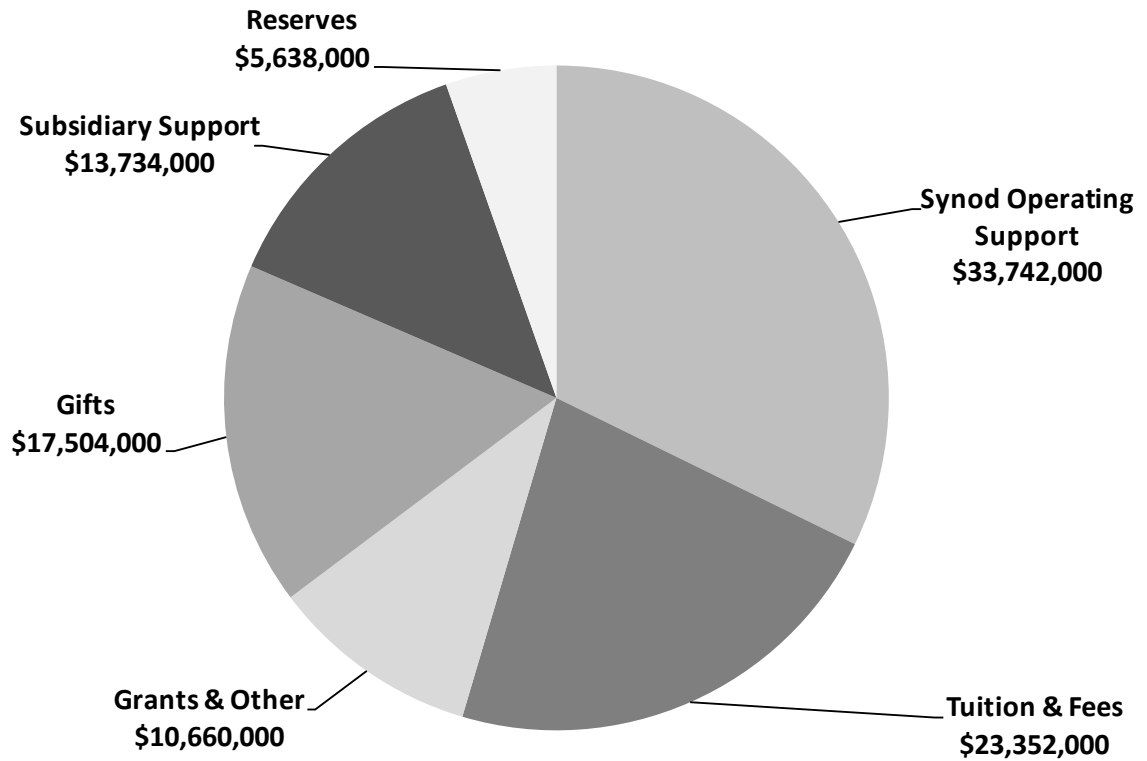
**FY 2023-24 Total Ministry Plan Expenses
\$101,871,000**



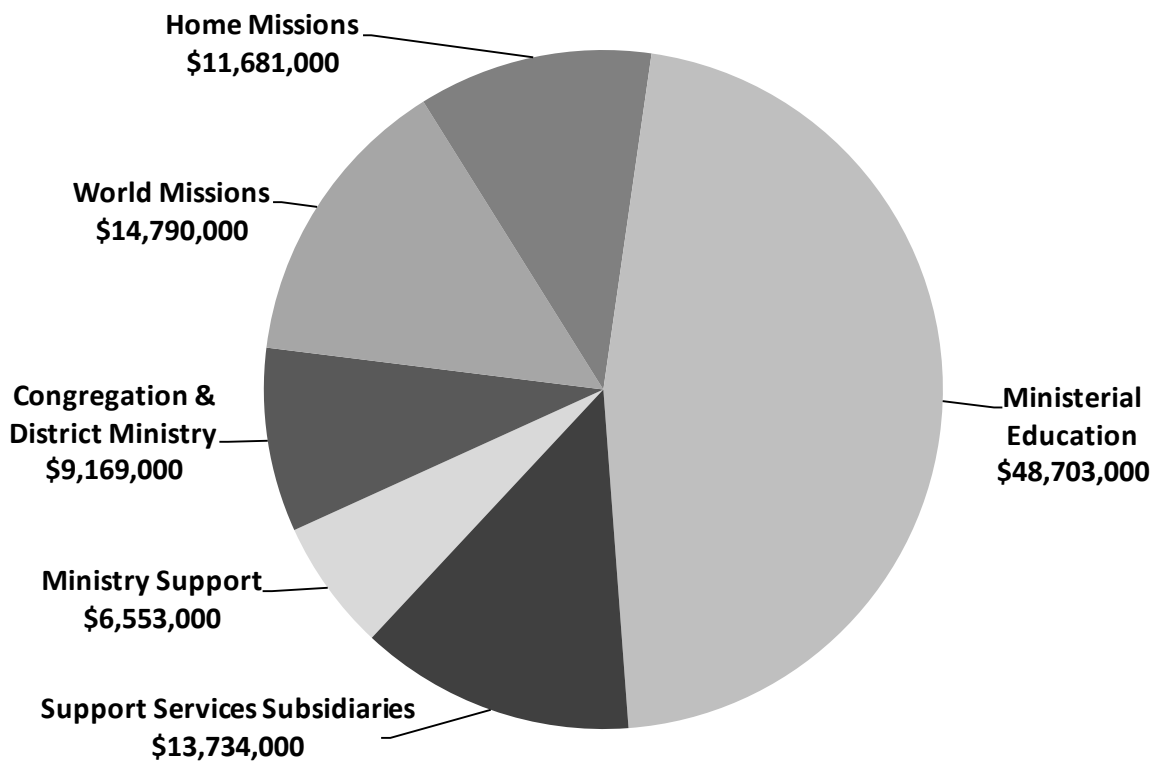
**FY 2023-24 Synod Operating Support Allocation
\$32,841,000**



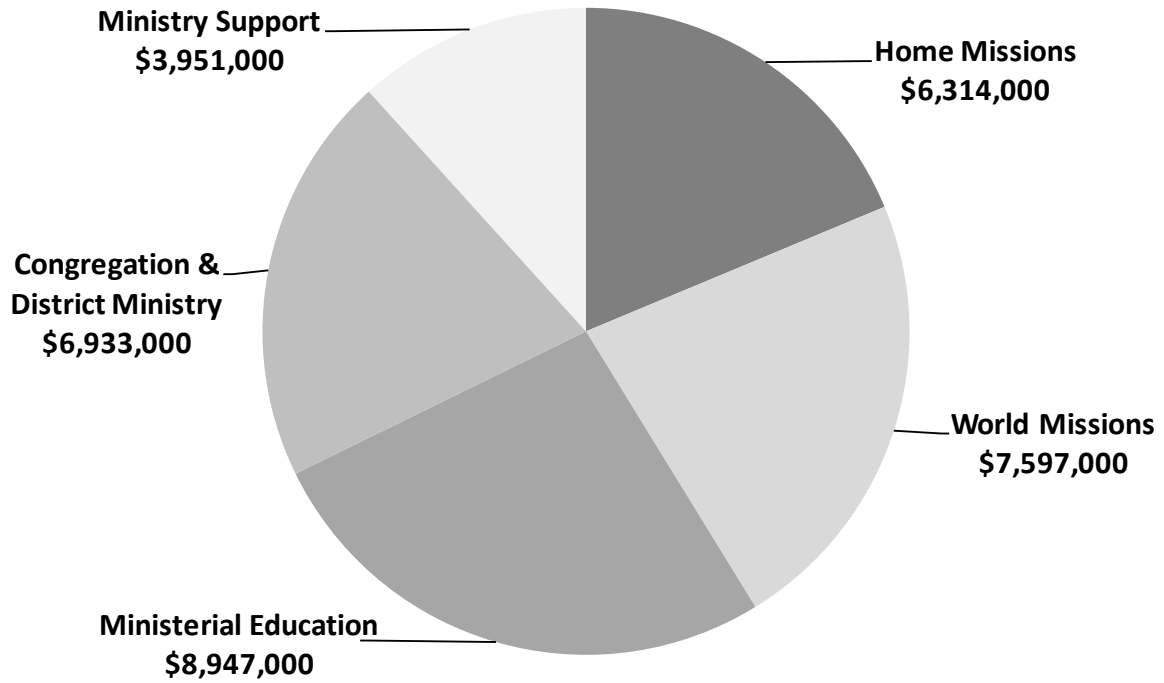
**FY 2024-25 Total Ministry Plan Support
\$104,630,000**



**FY 2024-25 Total Ministry Plan Expenses
\$104,630,000**



**FY 2024-25 Synod Operating Support Allocation
\$33,742,000**



WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position
As of June 30, 2022

ASSETS

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
ASSETS												
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 56,991,224	\$ 5,910,800	\$ 2,170,378	\$ 1,562,781	\$ 11,674,116	\$ 15,667,557	\$ 3,822,605	\$ -	\$ 12,524	\$ 3,840,764	\$ (2,726,699)	\$ 98,926,050
Restricted cash	4,865,424	-	-	-	-	-	986,079	-	-	-	-	5,851,503
Investments	-	10,570,745	1,750,000	220,221	-	28,919,577	167,554,510	269,718,381	-	4,892,932	(213,634,666)	269,991,700
Accounts receivable, net	2,776,817	38,512	16,595	49,213	1,079	-	2,314	-	-	688,078	(36,289)	3,516,319
Gifts and bequests receivable, net	1,141,246	14,450	348,676	18,624	328,656	267,000	27,953	-	-	-	-	2,146,605
Accrued interest receivable	-	-	-	-	-	522,444	-	-	-	-	-	522,444
Inventories, net	-	172,702	142,757	33,190	21,497	-	-	-	-	2,313,692	-	2,683,838
Loans to students, net	-	419,792	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	419,792
Property and real estate held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,413,000	-	-	-	-	1,413,000
Loans receivable from congregations, net	-	-	-	-	-	175,058,037	-	-	-	-	-	175,058,037
Cash surrender value of life insurance policies	-	75,057	41,253	14,064	-	-	1,044,679	-	-	-	-	1,175,053
Assets held in trust outside WELS	1,820	1,154,209	-	129,254	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,285,283
Other assets	282,292	228,552	109,570	1,386	98,147	79,299	1,188	-	105	54,720	-	855,259
Interest in net assets of WELS Foundation	17,178,712	1,860,706	1,416,747	2,169,279	377,977	482,693	-	-	-	-	(23,486,114)	-
Beneficial interest in net assets of WELS Foundation	19,089,739	3,534,056	2,583,307	272,045	606,091	-	-	-	-	-	(26,085,238)	-
Property, plant, and equipment, net	4,602,005	28,992,776	5,044,191	5,420,018	7,898,009	-	-	-	-	697,953	-	52,654,952
Interest in assets of WELS Foundation	27,247,868	17,336,990	19,635,615	1,455,480	2,783,987	-	-	-	-	-	(68,459,940)	-
Due from related party	(138,278)	5,144,773	1,849,064	-	-	-	-	456,904	24,086	833,541	(8,170,090)	-
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 134,038,869	\$ 75,454,120	\$ 35,108,153	\$ 11,345,555	\$ 23,789,559	\$ 220,996,607	\$ 174,852,328	\$ 270,175,285	\$ 36,715	\$ 13,301,680	\$ (342,599,036)	\$ 616,499,835

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position (continued)
As of June 30, 2022

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
LIABILITIES												
Accounts payable	\$ 1,379,803	\$ 912,057	\$ 186,410	\$ 6,446	\$ 188,275	\$ -	\$ 70,070	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 169,639	\$ (969)	\$ 2,911,731
Accrued expenses and other liabilities	3,094,562	380,679	86,506	45,726	304,810	1,864,133	-	298,853	11,980	210,282	(324,188)	5,973,343
Deferred revenue	42,455	445,135	316,191	37,370	71,600	-	-	-	445	570,456	-	1,483,652
Retiree health benefits payable	759,574	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	759,574
Certificates payable	-	-	-	-	-	104,094,843	-	-	-	-	(15,529,457)	88,565,386
Deposits held in custody	4,780,214	399,591	10,848	2,901	24,770	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,218,324
Liabilities to other beneficiaries	-	1,351,185	-	-	-	-	17,223,073	-	-	-	-	18,574,258
Liabilities to outside agencies and organizations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	69,365,084	69,365,084
Gift annuities payable, at fair value	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,401,980	-	-	-	-	9,401,980
Trusts payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,326,997	-	-	-	-	12,326,997
U.S. government grants refundable	-	353,172	-	-	-	-	68,454,748	-	-	-	(68,454,748)	353,172
Due to WELS and Schools	542,114	-	-	145,838	6,895,013	558,485	64,925	-	-	-	(8,206,375)	-
Due to related party	10,588,722	3,841,819	599,955	238,281	7,484,468	106,517,461	107,541,793	298,853	12,425	950,377	(23,150,853)	214,933,501
NET ASSETS												
Without donor restrictions	54,628,867	16,667,213	9,697,247	1,211,834	4,683,213	85,076,888	17,343,163	269,876,432	12,843	12,272,087	(225,691,515)	245,779,272
With donor restrictions	68,811,280	54,945,088	24,810,951	9,895,440	11,621,878	29,402,258	49,987,372	-	11,447	79,216	(93,756,868)	155,788,062
Total Net Assets	123,440,147	71,612,301	34,508,198	11,107,274	16,305,091	114,479,146	67,310,535	269,876,432	24,290	12,351,303	(319,448,383)	401,566,334
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 134,038,869	\$ 75,454,120	\$ 35,108,153	\$ 11,345,555	\$ 23,789,559	\$ 220,996,607	\$ 174,852,328	\$ 270,175,285	\$ 36,715	\$ 13,301,680	\$ (342,599,036)	\$ 616,499,835

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Activities
As of and For the Year Ended June 30, 2022

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS												
MEMBER SUPPORT, REVENUE AND RECLASSIFICATIONS												
Member Support:												
Offerings from congregations	\$ 23,086,540	\$ 2,578,595	\$ 1,488,427	\$ 308,464	\$ 573,946	\$ 280,597	\$ 7,009,872	\$ -	\$ 4,332	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 23,086,540
Gifts and grants	3,662,663	581,715	43,148	-	-	297,915	48,648	-	-	-	(1,497,649)	14,407,247
Bequests	1,354,491	3,160,310	1,529,575	308,464	573,946	578,512	7,058,520	-	4,332	-	(1,497,649)	2,325,917
Total Member Support	28,103,694	6,320,520	3,061,150	1,185,892	1,147,892	1,157,024	14,124,960	-	8,664	-	-	39,819,704
Revenues:												
Tuition and student fees, net	-	12,216,219	725,625	1,608,123	4,654,149	-	-	-	-	-	-	19,204,116
Activity fees and retail sales	2,686,668	1,110,151	75,621	126,641	136,710	-	-	27,221,703	7,390	8,669,040	(28,096,342)	11,937,582
Investment returns, net	525,939	(137,905)	(1,583,204)	2,126	(83,687)	7,969,459	(1,897,852)	(60,723,869)	4	(418,649)	51,060,405	4,712,767
Net gain (loss) on sale of property and real estate held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	516,773	(2,302)	-	-	-	-	514,471
Change in value of trust agreements	2,664,472	11,670	-	154	-	-	-	-	-	-	11,554	23,378
Gain on extinguishment of loan payable	1,692,206	87,443	137,765	46,133	91,312	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,664,472
Other	935,253	4,374,653	2,701,965	1,367,440	2,867,653	-	750,869	-	-	4,489	(280,217)	2,530,000
Transfer from other funds	8,504,538	17,662,231	2,057,772	3,150,617	7,666,137	8,486,232	(1,149,285)	(23,502,166)	34,480	8,254,880	(12,281,444)	-
Total Revenues	-	-	5,735,763	4,213,271	9,164,292	10,254,393	9,812,057	(23,502,166)	63,888	8,596,733	4,857,980	109,488,892
Reclassifications:												
Donor redesignation	-	-	-	(35,454)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(35,454)
Net assets released from restrictions	13,823,880	9,038,028	2,148,416	789,644	924,209	1,189,649	3,902,822	-	17,682	341,853	(4,058,327)	28,117,856
Total Reclassifications	13,823,880	9,038,028	2,148,416	754,190	924,209	1,189,649	3,902,822	-	17,682	341,853	(4,058,327)	28,082,402
Total Member Support, Revenues and Reclassifications	50,432,112	29,860,569	5,735,763	4,213,271	9,164,292	10,254,393	9,812,057	(23,502,166)	81,570	9,938,486	8,915,908	109,488,892
EXPENSES												
Program Services:												
Ministerial education	9,358,608	24,821,530	6,242,322	3,208,622	7,481,788	-	-	-	-	-	(17,666,320)	33,446,550
World missions	10,736,498	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30,439	10,766,937
Home missions	9,750,531	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(716,866)	9,033,665
Congregational and district ministry	7,821,741	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(249,806)	7,571,935
Northwestern Publishing House	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,910,211	(89,761)	4,820,450
Total Program Services	37,667,378	24,821,530	6,242,322	3,208,622	7,481,788	-	-	-	-	4,910,211	(18,662,314)	65,669,537
Support Services:												
Ministry support subsidiaries	-	-	-	-	-	5,942,145	2,938,587	-	60,456	-	(1,696,791)	7,244,397
General and administrative	4,619,474	3,253,829	789,033	774,749	1,111,535	405,634	375,903	517,719	1,586	1,144,314	(1,249,840)	11,743,936
Mission advancement	2,136,878	663,221	280,923	29,781	90,026	-	-	-	-	-	22,638	3,225,467
Transfer to other funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Services	6,756,352	3,917,050	1,069,956	804,530	1,201,561	6,347,779	3,583,961	14,675,734	747	1,144,314	(18,260,442)	22,213,800
Total Expenses	44,423,730	28,738,580	7,312,278	4,013,152	8,683,349	6,347,779	6,898,451	15,193,453	62,789	6,054,525	(39,846,749)	87,883,337
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS												
NET ASSETS - Beginning of Year	48,622,485	15,545,224	11,273,762	1,011,715	4,202,270	81,170,274	14,429,557	308,572,051	11,744	9,729,879	(270,396,244)	224,172,717
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 54,628,867	\$ 16,662,213	\$ 9,697,247	\$ 1,211,834	\$ 4,683,213	\$ 85,076,888	\$ 17,343,163	\$ 269,876,432	\$ 12,843	\$ 42,272,087	\$ (225,691,515)	\$ 245,778,272

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Consolidating Statement of Activities (continued)
As of and For the Year Ended June 30, 2022

	WELS	MLC	WLS	MLS	LPS	WELS CEF	WELS Foundation	WIF	WHI	NPH	Eliminations	Consolidated
MEMBER SUPPORT, REVENUE AND RECLASSIFICATIONS												
Member Support:												
Gifts and grants	\$ 10,166,941	\$ 5,893,630	\$ 1,870,408	\$ 527,417	\$ 836,993	\$ -	\$ 2,426,453	\$ -	\$ 13,280	\$ 320,519	\$ (2,949)	\$ 22,052,692
Bequests	1,245,319	638,859	1,003,847	-	-	-	1,139,742	-	-	-	(148)	4,027,599
Total Member Support	11,412,260	6,532,469	2,874,255	527,417	836,993	-	3,566,195	-	13,280	320,519	(3,097)	26,080,291
Revenues:												
Investment returns, net	(4,571,758)	(3,504,303)	(2,198,391)	(282,851)	(391,093)	(5,668,783)	(14,198,711)	-	-	-	-	(30,835,890)
Net gain (loss) on sale of property and real estate held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	(23,282)	-	-	-	-	(23,282)
Change in value of trust agreements	(6,061,340)	(1,231,130)	(849,952)	(436,437)	(150,590)	(3,284)	3,888,208	-	-	-	8,520,631	3,676,106
Contributed nonfinancial assets	-	6,523,295	817,058	18,505	507,749	-	-	-	-	-	(7,868,607)	-
Other	60,641	-	95,593	-	3,091	-	(29,959)	-	-	-	(20,891)	108,475
Transfer from other funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenues	(10,572,457)	1,787,862	(2,135,692)	(700,783)	(30,843)	(5,692,067)	(10,363,744)	-	-	-	633,133	(27,074,591)
Reclassifications:												
Donor redesignation	-	-	-	35,454	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35,454
Net assets released from restrictions	(13,823,880)	(9,038,028)	(2,148,416)	(789,644)	(924,209)	(1,189,649)	(3,902,822)	-	(17,682)	(341,853)	4,058,327	(28,117,856)
Total Reclassifications	(13,823,880)	(9,038,028)	(2,148,416)	(754,190)	(924,209)	(1,189,649)	(3,902,822)	-	(17,682)	(341,853)	4,058,327	(28,082,402)
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(12,984,077)	(717,697)	(1,409,853)	(927,556)	(118,059)	(6,881,716)	(10,700,371)	-	(4,402)	(21,334)	4,688,363	(29,076,702)
NET ASSETS - Beginning of Year	81,795,357	55,662,785	26,220,804	10,822,996	11,739,937	36,283,974	60,667,743	-	15,849	100,550	(98,445,231)	184,864,764
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 68,811,280	\$ 54,945,088	\$ 24,810,951	\$ 9,895,440	\$ 11,621,878	\$ 29,402,258	\$ 49,967,372	\$ -	\$ 11,447	\$ 79,216	\$ (93,758,868)	\$ 155,788,062

Synodical salary range assignments

Salary matrix is available on p. 95.

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

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

NOTES:

1. The online Called Worker Compensation Calculator at cwcompcalc.wels.net helps a calling body consider the impact of additional responsibilities and education in determining where in the suggested salary range the worker ought to be placed.
2. Columns C-J increase in 5 percent increments over column C. (For example, Rate Range E is 10 percent greater than Rate Range C, Rate Range F is 15 percent greater, etc.)
3. Each called worker's actual salary is determined by finding the applicable experience row and determining the appropriate rate range. (For example, for FY 2023–24 a teacher with 10 years' experience should receive a salary between \$36,152 and \$41,574. Salaries greater than \$36,152 would recognize additional education credentials and responsibility levels.)
4. The basis for the housing equity allowance is the entry level base salary (matrix column "C," 0 years of service).
5. The cost of living adjustment (COLA) is applied to the worker's salary.
6. SECA tax reimbursement, cash housing allowances, and/or housing equity are provided in addition to the salary amount.

Above base compensation components for called workers

1. Cost of living adjustment using Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) or similar COLA index. Should simply be \$0 if resulting COLA is negative.
2. Cash housing allowance if not provided housing (using HUD Fair Market Rental Values established upon hire date + adjusted annually based on the percent change for the salary matrix. For 2023–24 this adjustment would be 1.22 percent).
3. Social Security (SECA) allowance (7.65 percent of salary, cost of living, and housing value/cash housing/fair market rental of parsonage-teacherage).
4. Housing equity of 2 percent of entry-level base (Column C, 0 years of service) for workers in provided housing (parsonage/teacherage). Amount is \$620 for 2023–24.
5. VEBA health insurance.
6. WELS Retirement Program.
7. Reimbursement for business-related expenses such as travel and conferences.

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

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

Compensation for synod president and congregational support for vice presidents

The synod president is compensated with a salary based on column “J.” In addition to the base salary and the other components of compensation listed with the compensation guidelines, in FY 2023–24 the president will receive above base compensation in the amount of \$71,875, as established by the Synodical Council. This amount shall be reviewed annually for possible adjustment by the Synodical Council.

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

WELS Compensation Plan Worksheet

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

1.22% Inflation Rate Adjustment
(multiply established Cash Housing
Allowances by 1.0122 for new FY)

WELS COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

Salary Matrix

2023-24

Range Spread	12,395	13,170	15,494	16,268	17,043	17,818	18,592	19,367	20,142	20,916
<i>Service Increments</i>	413	439	516	542	568	594	620	646	671	697
Ranges	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Experience</i>										
0	24,790	26,339	30,987	32,536	34,086	35,635	37,184	38,734	40,283	41,832
1	25,203	26,778	31,503	33,078	34,654	36,229	37,804	39,380	40,954	42,529
2	25,616	27,217	32,020	33,621	35,222	36,823	38,423	40,025	41,626	43,226
3	26,030	27,656	32,536	34,163	35,790	37,417	39,043	40,671	42,297	43,924
4	26,443	28,095	33,053	34,705	36,358	38,011	39,663	41,316	42,969	44,621
5	26,856	28,534	33,569	35,247	36,927	38,605	40,283	41,962	43,640	45,318
6	27,269	28,973	34,086	35,790	37,495	39,199	40,902	42,607	44,311	46,015
7	27,682	29,412	34,602	36,332	38,063	39,792	41,522	43,253	44,983	46,712
8	28,095	29,851	35,119	36,874	38,631	40,386	42,142	43,899	45,654	47,410
9	28,509	30,290	35,635	37,416	39,199	40,980	42,762	44,544	46,325	48,107
10	28,922	30,729	36,152	37,959	39,767	41,574	43,381	45,190	46,997	48,804
11	29,335	31,168	36,668	38,501	40,335	42,168	44,001	45,835	47,668	49,501
12	29,748	31,607	37,184	39,043	40,903	42,762	44,621	46,481	48,340	50,198
13	30,161	32,046	37,701	39,585	41,471	43,356	45,241	47,126	49,011	50,896
14	30,574	32,485	38,217	40,128	42,039	43,950	45,860	47,772	49,682	51,593
15	30,988	32,924	38,734	40,670	42,608	44,544	46,480	48,418	50,354	52,290
16	31,401	33,363	39,250	41,212	43,176	45,138	47,100	49,063	51,025	52,987
17	31,814	33,802	39,767	41,755	43,744	45,732	47,719	49,709	51,697	53,684
18	32,227	34,241	40,283	42,297	44,312	46,326	48,339	50,354	52,368	54,382
19	32,640	34,680	40,800	42,839	44,880	46,919	48,959	51,000	53,039	55,079
20	33,053	35,119	41,316	43,381	45,448	47,513	49,579	51,645	53,711	55,776
21	33,467	35,558	41,832	43,924	46,016	48,107	50,198	52,291	54,382	56,473
22	33,880	35,997	42,349	44,466	46,584	48,701	50,818	52,936	55,053	57,170
23	34,293	36,436	42,865	45,008	47,152	49,295	51,438	53,582	55,725	57,868
24	34,706	36,875	43,382	45,550	47,720	49,889	52,058	54,228	56,396	58,565
25	35,119	37,314	43,898	46,093	48,289	50,483	52,677	54,873	57,068	59,262
26	35,532	37,753	44,415	46,635	48,857	51,077	53,297	55,519	57,739	59,959
27	35,946	38,192	44,931	47,177	49,425	51,671	53,917	56,164	58,410	60,656
28	36,359	38,631	45,448	47,719	49,993	52,265	54,537	56,810	59,082	61,354
29	36,772	39,070	45,964	48,262	50,561	52,859	55,156	57,455	59,753	62,051
30	37,185	39,508	46,480	48,804	51,129	53,452	55,776	58,101	60,424	62,748
31	37,598	39,947	46,997	49,346	51,697	54,046	56,396	58,747	61,096	63,445
32	38,011	40,386	47,513	49,889	52,265	54,640	57,015	59,392	61,767	64,142

See pp. 93 and 94 for current synodical salary range assignments and above base compensation for called workers.

Missions

Board for Home Missions Floor Committee #8

Our calling

Before Jesus' ascent into heaven, he gave his people a mission: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." By God's grace and power, we know that "good news." We know the good news of sins forgiven, peace with God, hope in his promises, joy in serving him, and eternal life in heaven that awaits us all. In a world that is growing increasingly dark and hopeless, we have hope because Jesus, the light of the world, has overcome the darkness of sin and despair.

Christ's love and the hope it gives us compel us to spread the light of Jesus' love to as many others as we can. This is the role of WELS Home Missions. We are blessed to plant churches and assist mission-minded congregations in the United States, Canada, and English-speaking West Indies so that more people may hear about Christ's love. Home Missions currently supports 144 congregations with financial subsidy or district mission board/mission counselor assistance, with 28 of those being cross-cultural mission congregations. Home Missions also provides more than 30 campus ministries with financial support, while assisting hundreds of other congregations that serve college students around the United States and Canada.

WELS has 14 Home Missions districts, each with its own district mission board. These district mission boards, comprised of pastor and lay volunteers, work to start new missions and support existing missions in their districts. Two representatives from each district serve on the Board for Home Missions. This Board for Home Missions votes on the new starts and enhancement ministries for the next year and sets overall direction for WELS Home Missions. District mission boards and home mission churches are supported by three home mission counselors, a Hispanic outreach consultant, an Asian ministry coordinator, and a Campus Ministry mission counselor. These mission counselors work with district mission boards to develop new home missions and provide counseling and assistance to home mission congregations and the home missionaries who serve them.

Our current situation

100 missions in 10 years

At the 2021 synod convention, delegates enthusiastically approved a WELS Home Missions initiative to plant 100 home mission churches in 10 years beginning in 2023. During the same time, we want to support 75 enhancement grants to help existing congregations reach more souls, often in other cultures. This is a big goal.

Why start 100 new home missions? Why not? Why not, when our Savior directs us to "Go"? We trust that the One who commissioned us has all authority in heaven and on earth and has also equipped us with the powerful tools of the Word and sacraments. He has promised to be with us every step of the way.

What if we don't reach our goal? Is that a failure? We look at it this way: Let's fail trying rather than failing to try. Let's demonstrate our trust by setting aggressive goals knowing that the success of our efforts depends entirely on God's grace and power. Let's demonstrate our trust that shows that God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20). Let's give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to work in the hearts of people through the gospel. As we do, we will give him praise whatever the results might be. We will give him thanks for being able to work together to aggressively gather God's elect into his kingdom.

Even as we do all this, we recognize the importance of being good stewards of the resources God has given us by evaluating how we do our work and identifying practical challenges we will face. For these reasons WELS Board

for Home Missions formed a task force with ten subcommittees to carefully and thoroughly address questions and concerns regarding manpower, money, and more. Their findings can be summarized into three main categories: missionaries, money, and internal operations and resources.

Missionaries

One of the biggest challenges is finding the workers to send into the harvest fields. While we pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers, we also know he answers our prayers through the faithful work of his people. Pre-seminary student enrollment at Martin Luther College and class sizes at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary are some of the largest we've seen in a while. We pray that the excitement of starting new home mission churches will assist with recruitment efforts. Home Missions and mission counselors are also working closely with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professors and leadership to provide hands-on learning experiences and ensure course curriculum provides specific training for church planting. You can read more about one of these experiences at forwardinchrist.net/church-planting.

And conversely, WELS Congregational Services is currently working with around 40 different churches who are considering closing their doors for a variety of reasons. In the past decade, WELS lost congregations in eight out of the ten years. As churches close, vacancies will also decline. Let us pray that the Lord provides more future leaders, called workers, and home missionaries as he continues to grow his church!

Money

At the rate Home Missions opens missions right now (approximately six new missions/three ministry enhancements per year), projected expenses over the next 10 years would be \$90 million. Current forecasts are based on an average of \$1 million in subsidy for every new start over 12 years and an average of \$150,000 in subsidy for a mission enhancement over 4 years. By increasing that number to 10 new missions and 7.5 enhancements per year, we'd be looking at an additional \$40 million in expenses over 10 years. Total expenses would be \$130 million. Additional funds would come from increased Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) allocation, synod reserves (when available), proceeds from closing WELS churches, and generous gifts from WELS members. WELS leadership has already committed \$3 million in synod reserves to a Ministry Opportunity Fund that will disperse \$750,000 per year for the next four years in support of this initiative.

Internal operations and resources

Some recommendations included continued support and training to district mission boards, ensuring district mission boards have a pipeline for new mission starts, allowing district mission boards to expand their board when needed and encouraging them to have succession plans, and encouraging home mission congregations to partner with affiliated ministries to support ministry. It was determined that Home Missions administration, mission counselors, and Missions staff were in place to support growth.

Read more about the task force's recommendations and other frequently asked questions at wels100in10.net/faq.

2022 new starts and enhancements

As the task force did its work, district mission boards continued to look for new opportunities to plant new missions and enhance existing ministries. In March 2022, the Board for Home Missions (BHM) and the BHM Executive Committee met and prioritized requests for new home mission starts and ministry enhancements. They approved 12 new home mission starts and enhancements.

New starts were approved in Windsor, Colo.; Wichita, Kan.; Canton, Ga.; Conroe, Texas; and Lodi, Wis. (unsubsidized). Enhancements were approved at St. John, St. Paul, Minn.; Cross of Glory, Baton Rouge, La.; Divine Savior, Delray Beach, Fla.; Abiding Savior, Killeen, Texas; Our Savior, Burlington, Iowa (restart); Mt. Calvary, Redding/Anderson, Calif. (unsubsidized); and Living Faith, Midlothian, Texas (unsubsidized).

2023 new starts and enhancements

The Board for Home Missions and the BHM Executive Committee met again in March 2023 and approved 15 new home mission starts and enhancements. These are the first new mission starts and enhancements approved toward our synod's goal of starting 100 missions and enhancing 75 ministries in the next 10 years.

Nine new starts

Bentonville, Ark.: Bentonville, the headquarters of Walmart, is anticipated to see 35 percent population growth in the next three years. The 12-person core group looks forward to planting a new church in an area with no current WELS presence.

Boston, Mass.: Boston, a city with 4.3 million souls, is known as “America’s College Town” with 53 colleges and universities. This unique urban mission would be modeled after church plants in Atlanta and New York City and could have potential for college and cross-cultural ministry.

Cincinnati, Ohio: Beautiful Savior in Cincinnati, Ohio, is starting a second site in the Oakley and Hyde Park neighborhoods, just northeast of downtown. This new location would put Beautiful Savior closer to three colleges in the area, opening opportunities for campus ministry growth.

Idaho Falls, Idaho: The Mormon church has a strong historical presence in this growing area, and the 11-person core group has been working with Truth in Love Ministries to understand how to best reach out into this demographic.

Kalispell, Mont.: Kalispell, Mont., is considered the fastest-growing micropolitan city (10,000-50,000 population) 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.

Kronenwetter, Wis.: Five WELS churches in the greater Wausau, Wis., area are on board to support a new mission in Kronenwetter. This growing community south of Wausau is home to Northland Lutheran High School, which will house this new church and provide mission-minded staff and students to support the outreach effort.

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.

North Collin County, Texas: A core group of 15 members from Atonement in Plano, Texas, are starting a new church in North Collin County, a northern suburb of Dallas. Divine Savior Ministries 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.

Panama City Beach, Fla.: Amazing Grace in Panama City is looking to expand west and start a second site in the greater Panama City Beach area.

Six enhancements

These six ministry enhancements were approved in March 2023: Beautiful Savior, West Des Moines, Iowa (restart); Christ the King, Port Charlotte, Fla.; Divine Savior, Sienna, Texas; Fairview, Milwaukee, Wis.; Good Shepherd, Midland, Texas (unsubsidized); and Our Redeemer, Ladysmith, Wis. (unsubsidized).

Read more about these new starts and enhancements at wels100in10.net.

Vicar in a Mission Setting

The Vicar in a Mission Setting program has existed since 1988. Home Missions has partnered with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to assign vicars to mission congregations as well as mission-minded congregations. This program has been valuable to Home Missions as it helps prepare future pastors to serve in a mission congregation. Home Missions gives thanks for this blessed partnership with the seminary.

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.

WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF) is a valuable partner of WELS Home Missions and the churches it supports. WELS CEF provides home mission churches a 4-to-1 matching grant for initial land purchase based on a 10 percent down payment. It also provides a 2-to-1 matching grant on a home mission congregation’s 10 percent down payment for a facility construction project.

In fiscal year 2021–22, CEF provided \$24.1 million in loans and \$2.4 million in matching grants to home mission churches. It approved 19 new projects and provided a \$1.6 million grant to WELS Home Missions. In fiscal year 2022–23 (as of this writing), CEF has provided more than \$7 million in loans and more than \$1.9 million in matching grants to home mission churches as well as more than \$1 million in grants to WELS Home Missions.

Administrator vacancy

In January 2022, Pastor Keith Free accepted a call to serve as pastor at St. John, Mukwonago, Wis. He faithfully served Home Missions for nearly 11 years. We are indebted to him for his years of service and the many ways the Lord blessed our work through him.

Since February 2022 we have been calling for a new administrator. As of this writing, the position is still vacant. During that time Mr. Sean Young, senior director of Missions Operations, has been serving as vacancy administrator.

We are grateful for the team of people we have in the Joint Missions Office, along with our district mission boards, mission counselors, and those working at the Center for Mission and Ministry. With the work of many, the work of Home Missions continues. At the same time, the vacancy has demonstrated the need for a full-time administrator, a position we pray is filled soon.

Campus ministry

WELS Campus Ministry, a ministry of WELS Home Missions, provides resources, support, and encouragement to WELS congregations that serve college students around the United States and Canada. These congregations are vital in connecting college students with fellow Christians, strengthening their faith with the gospel message, and encouraging them to share that faith with other college students. The WELS Campus Ministry Committee currently provides more than 30 campus ministries with financial support and assists hundreds of other congregations in their campus ministry outreach.

Campus Ministry financially supports 11 campus ministries with what is called “significant” funding (anywhere from \$5,000 to \$65,000) and provides funding for another 28 campus ministries with funding usually under \$1,000.

Joint Mission Council

Home Missions works closely with the Board for World Missions and the Board for Ministerial Education through the Joint Mission Council. The Joint Mission Council provides opportunities to coordinate ministry efforts that overlap Home and World Missions. See p. 109 for a full report on the Joint Mission Council.

WELS Mission Journeys

WELS Mission Journeys, the official WELS program for short-term mission trips, provides an opportunity for all WELS members to walk together in the Great Commission. Church- or school-based volunteer trips to WELS mission fields at home and abroad will prayerfully inspire a lifelong journey of service and outreach for all who volunteer. These Mission Journeys teams have the opportunity to be an active outreach partner as WELS looks to start 100 missions in 10 years. These new home mission pastors and core group members will need additional support from volunteers as they reach out to their communities. There is also potential for longer-term volunteer opportunities, placing mission-oriented individuals in strategic locations to assist in forming and developing quality core groups. Learn more about both short- and long-term opportunities and get in touch with Mr. Shannon Bohme, Mission Journeys coordinator, at wels.net/missionjourneys.

Space Together

In late 2022, the Board for Home Missions entered into an agreement with a service called Space Together in an attempt to help mission churches that are in their middle to later years of receiving synod support. Through this partnership, the BHM is looking to assist those congregations with third-source income from “leasing” out some of their space when it is not in use with the hope that those congregations can reduce or end their synod subsidy.

Through a national database, online instructional tools, and proven guidelines/contracts, Space Together enables both mission and self-supporting congregations to

- lease offices, classrooms, larger meeting areas, auditoriums, gyms, etc. to groups who are looking for space;
- find appropriate space for their own gatherings (often a challenge for a new mission church);
- generate “foot traffic,” relationships, and community goodwill;
- create another income stream to cover the ever-increasing expense of owning and operating facilities; and
- operate in compliance with statutes covering taxation, safety, and insurance.

This service is available to all WELS congregations and is a safe, legal way to lease out space while still protecting our right to choose who we allow into our physical locations. If you’re interested in learning more, contact jmo@wels.net for more information.

A look ahead

The direction WELS has given Home Missions is simple—keep planting churches so more souls can be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ so that more may know the hope we have in Jesus. The 100 missions in 10 years initiative will continue to serve as a guide and roadmap in that endeavor.

District mission boards and mission counselors will continue working with exploratory missions to develop a core group of members and begin Bible study and initial outreach before coming to the Board for Home Missions for

official home mission status. A healthy list of mission sites in this pipeline will continue to be extremely important as we work toward our goal of starting 100 missions and enhancing 75 ministries in the next 10 years. You can view details on some of these exploratory missions in the interactive Google map found at wels100in10.net. Note that these missions are not currently approved but are preparing the groundwork needed for their formal ministry request to the Board for Home Missions.

In closing, as you think back to when Jesus first spoke the words of the Great Commission to his disciples, that had to be a daunting task for them. They didn't have the technology and transportation we have today. Yet, look at how Christ has blessed his church through the centuries. We trust that he'll do the same as we do our part to carry out the 100 missions initiative. We look forward to working with all WELS areas of ministry and WELS members and trust that God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20). To him be the glory!

Rev. Mark Gabb, reporter

Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman

Rev. Frederic Berger, Nebraska Mission District

Mr. Dallas Christ, Nebraska Mission District

Mr. John Deschane, Northern Wisconsin Mission District

Mr. Matthew Dettmann, Colorado Mission District

Rev. Benjamin Enstad, Northern Wisconsin Mission District

Rev. Jeffrey Grundmeier, Michigan Mission District

Mr. Paul Hahm, North Atlantic Mission District

Mr. Mark Hartman, South Central Mission District

Rev. Mark Henrich, WELS-Canada Mission District

Mr. Mel Kam, Pacific Northwest Mission District

Rev. Jonathan Kolander, Arizona-California Mission District

Rev. Brett Krause, Colorado Mission District

Mr. Scott Krause, Western Wisconsin Mission District

Mr. Noel Ledermann, Arizona-California Mission District

Mr. Werner Lomker, WELS-Canada Mission District

Rev. Jeffrey Mahnke, Western Wisconsin Mission District

Mr. Thomas Metzger, Michigan Mission District

Rev. Joel Naumann, Campus Ministry Committee

Senior Master Sergeant Gerald Pepke, Dakota-Montana Mission District

Dr. Douglas Rall, South Atlantic Mission District

Mr. Daryl Schultz, Minnesota Mission District

Rev. Kevin Schultz, Pacific Northwest Mission District

Rev. Mark Schutz, Dakota-Montana Mission District

Rev. Nathan Sutton, South Central Mission District

Mr. Scott Stratil, Campus Ministry Committee

Rev. Steven Waldschmidt, Minnesota Mission District

Rev. Craig Wasser, Pacific Northwest Mission District

Rev. Kevin Wattles, North Atlantic Mission District

Mr. Steven Wolf, Southeastern Wisconsin Mission District

Rev. Benjamin Zahn, South Atlantic Mission District

Rev. Michael Zarling, Southeastern Wisconsin Mission District

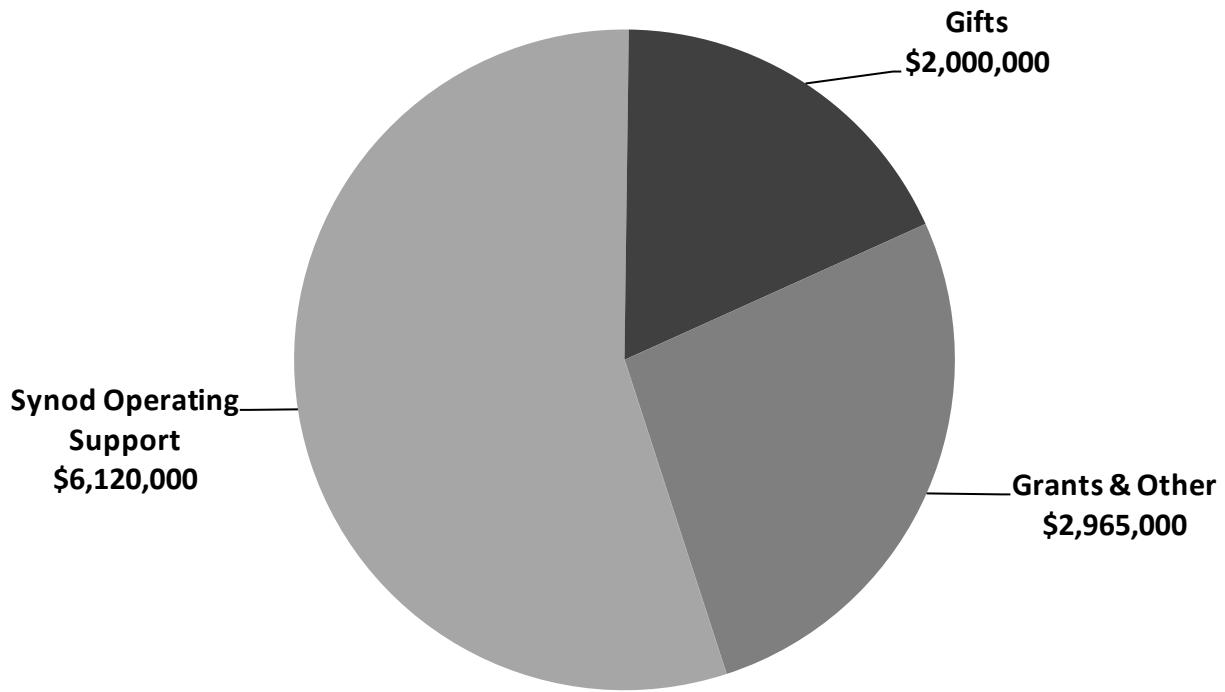
Advisory:

Vacant, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions

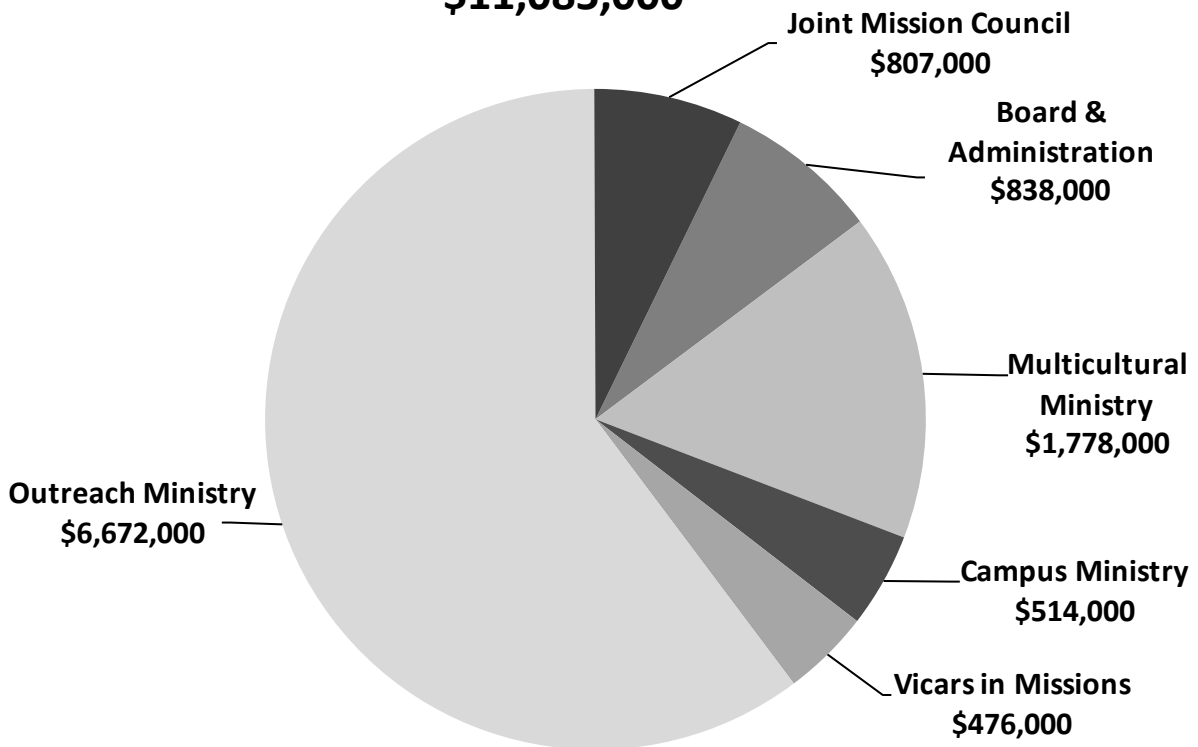
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations

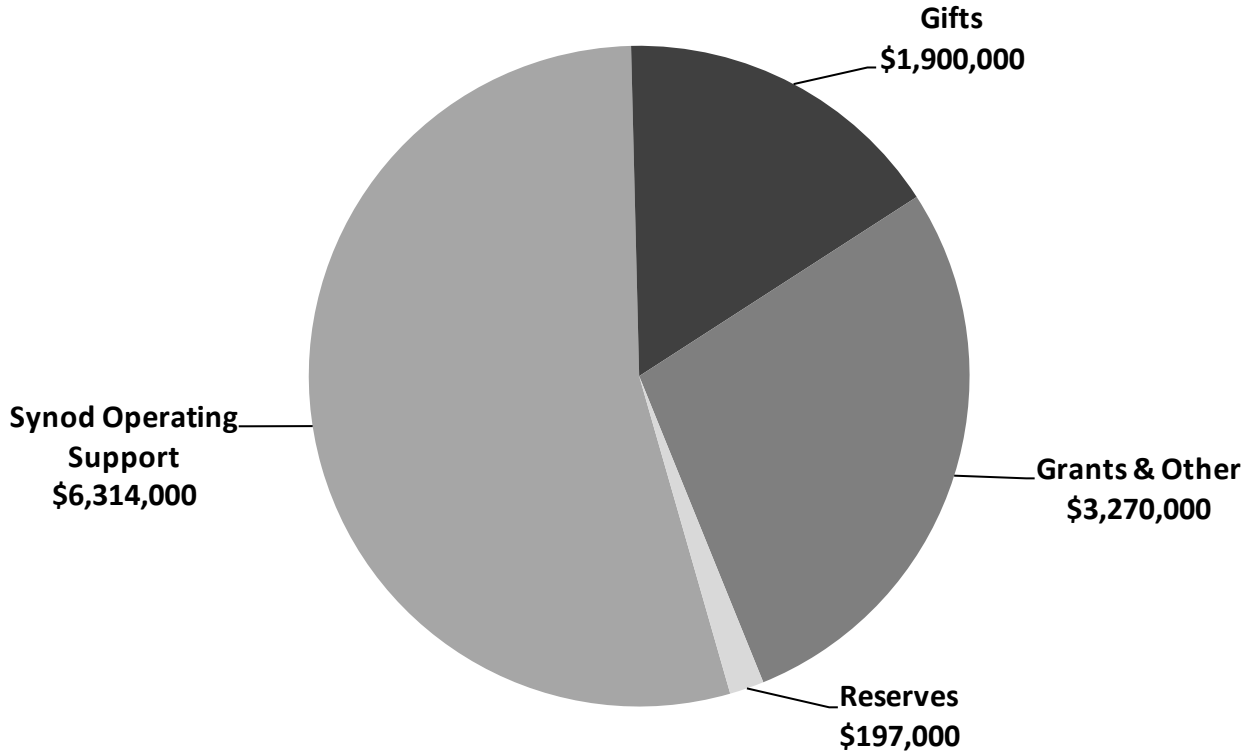
**FY 2023-24 Support
Home Missions
\$11,085,000**



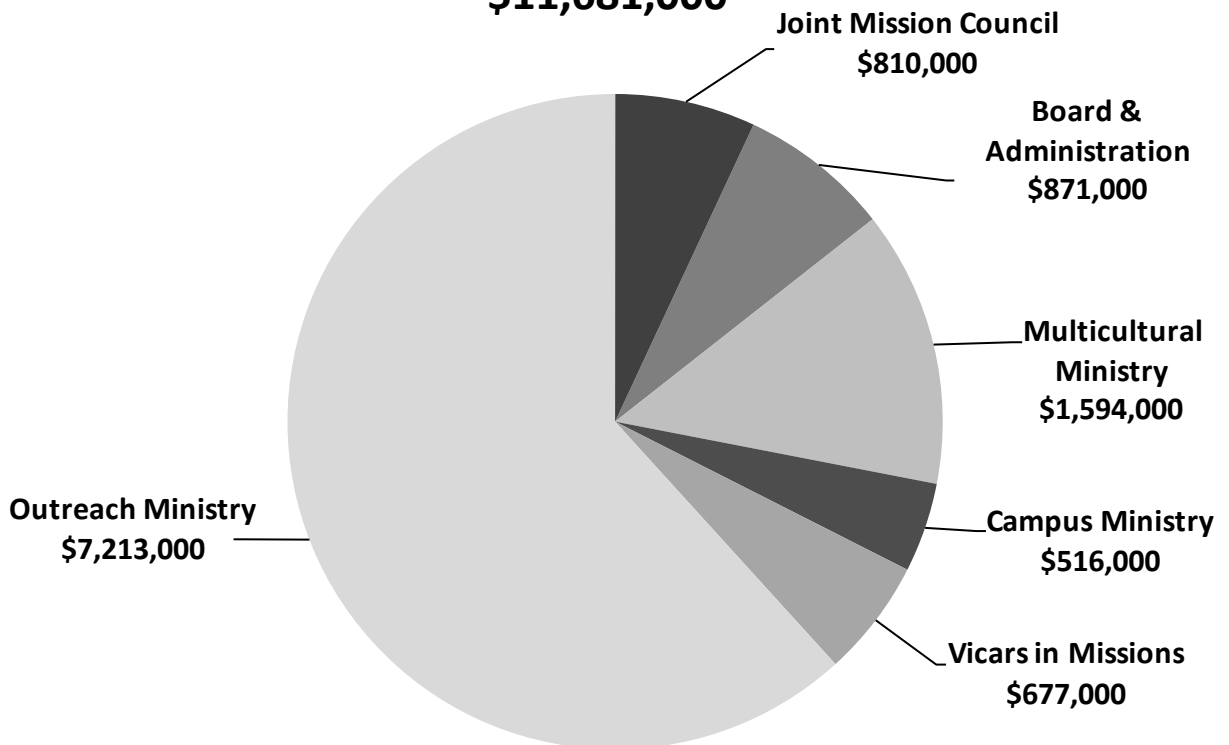
**FY 2023-24 Expenses
Home Missions
\$11,085,000**



**FY 2024-25 Support
Home Missions
\$11,681,000**



**FY 2024-25 Expenses
Home Missions
\$11,681,000**



Board for World Missions

Floor Committee #9

Our calling

Christ's love for the world was on full display as Jesus walked from his tomb on Easter morning. It is staggering to consider the centuries and even millennia of purpose, prophecy, and love for humans that was completed in that moment. Jesus' plan, while complete in every way, now included one last push for his Church on earth. As he told the women near his tomb, his disciples in an upper room and on the mountaintop, "Go and tell!" That is the calling our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has entrusted to WELS Board for World Missions. On your behalf we head into the world to preach the Good News and, as the Lord blesses us, plant confessional Lutheran churches.

Our current situation

World Missions supports gospel outreach in 45 countries around the world and is currently exploring work in 19 prospective new mission fields. This gives you an idea of the many places this work is being carried out: **missions.welsrc.net/download-missions/promotions-toolkit**.

WELS World Missions' work continues to expand and grow with the new opportunities and challenges the Lord lays before us. There are four major components to the work that WELS does around the world.

Digital outreach

It is not news to anyone that the worldwide Internet, the number of cell phones in global people's pockets, and the increasing reach of satellite networks has changed our world. It is also a huge opportunity to reach the world with the gospel. In Latin America our work with *Academia Cristo* (**academiacristo.com**) is fulfilling the vision with which it was launched. Broad outreach through social media raises curiosity about the Bible and what Jesus has to offer. Self-guided digital studies help introduce key concepts. If interest continues, the student is invited to study in a live online class. As students progress through the levels they are encouraged to share what they are learning with those near them on the ground. The goal is that churches will be planted so that every Spanish speaker in the world can be within a reasonable commute to a church that teaches God's Word in truth and purity. This year the first church to make it all the way through the four-year program was added to our Latin American fellowship in Cochabamba, Bolivia (**wels.net/new-academia-cristo-church-plant-in-bolivia**). Currently 51 additional church planters have already started 21 planter groups in Latin America that will soon lead to many more churches in Central and South America. Visit **wels.net/latinamerica** for more information.

Multi-Language Productions is the arm of World Missions that helps coordinate and produce the digital means for this outreach to take place. It is leading a project called the TELL Network, which has developed from what we have learned in Latin America (**wels.net/tell**). The broadest reach is in the English language for non-native speakers, the most spoken language in the world. More than 36 TELL students are being mentored by our mission team to begin to plant churches in the areas where they live around the globe. Projects in Tagalog, a language of the Philippines; Mandarin; and Arabic for reaching into the Muslim world are underway. There is also a project in the United States to encourage WELS members to invite Spanish speakers to download the *Academia Cristo* app to begin studying in their native language and join our WELS churches in Hispanic outreach and planting Latino groups.

Theological training

Over the decades of WELS World Missions' efforts, many church bodies have grown from infancy to mature brothers and sisters in Christ. A major component of that growth is the ongoing training of workers for those churches.

The theological education center in Hanoi, Vietnam, is completed and will soon be hosting an additional cohort of 60 men. Those 60 new seminarians will join 57 recent graduates as we support the work of the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam, a church body of more than 140,000 members. Learn more at **wels.net/vietnamhmongoutreach**.

Asia Lutheran Seminary continues to operate in Hong Kong, emphasizing training in Mandarin for those in East Asia. A transition to expand Asia Lutheran Seminary to Chiang Mai, Thailand, is underway to support training programs in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia, and other needs as they arise in Asia.

Seminary work in Malawi, Zambia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Cameroon, and Nigeria make up a good part of the work of our One Africa Mission Team.

Our mission team in Europe is relocating to be close to the training program in Leipzig, Germany, to partner with our sister church there to offer training for many in Europe.

The Apache Christian Training School looks to help raise up Native Christians to lead work among Native Americans.

A new seminary program to support the emerging churches in Latin America is being designed in partnership with the Pastoral Studies Institute (wels.net/psi).

Church relations

World Missions' partnership with WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations has been a great blessing. Members of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations have been appointed to participate with our mission teams as they work at exploring contacts, encouraging emerging churches, and maintaining relationships with our long-time partners. Having our missionaries assist in this work provides connections with WELS workers who reside nearby and can provide cultural insight as the Commission on Inter-Church Relations engages in study and discussion with our partners. For a larger glimpse into this work, the report of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations is found on p. 19.

At this synod convention, a church body in Uganda, the Obadiah Lutheran Synod, and an international synod in Latin America, *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*, will be welcomed into fellowship with WELS.

Old-fashioned outreach

World Missions continues to send in missionaries to start gospel outreach from scratch in places where the news about Jesus is desperately needed. The long work of establishing friendships, learning the language and culture, and sharing the gospel is how most imagine world mission work. This work has not gone away even as World Missions has grown in the ministries it provides around the world. New missionaries have landed in London (wels.net/london) and Thailand (wels.net/thailand). In London, a core group of believers from WELS; South Asia Lutheran Evangelical Mission, our sister church in Hong Kong; and a sprinkling of members from others in our Lutheran fellowship are training and organizing to plant groups around the United Kingdom. In Thailand, relationships with an existing Thai Lutheran church have been strengthened and are leading to the exploration of additional churches. After a longer-than-expected COVID pause, this year exploratory work in Senegal will begin and a new missionary has been approved to begin work with Apache partners to reach the Navajo tribes in New Mexico.

A look ahead

Over the next few years it would not be surprising to see our worldwide fellowship grow to be larger than our church body in North America. The Hmong church in Vietnam numbers more than 140,000 members, and contact is being explored with a church in Tanzania that numbers close to 100,000 members. Dozens of new churches are being planted this year, and that number could grow exponentially in the next several years. All of this is in the Lord's hands and as he determines when and where his Church will grow, WELS World Missions is working to assist our growing number of partners in the world. Solid worker training programs, flexible outreach approaches, and deep relationships will be a priority. We have set aside funds to add two new exploratory missionaries each year of the next biennium. We will continue discussions with sister churches that wish for assistance as they reach out to their neighbors near and far. Two recent examples of that are the Lutheran Church of Portugal's work in Brazil (wels.net/new-gospel-outpost-in-brazil) and the South Asia Lutheran Evangelical Mission of Hong Kong's work to plant a new church in New Zealand.

World Missions is privileged to serve you as we go and tell the world about Christ's unexpected love.

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, reporter

Rev. Jonathan Schroeder, chairman

Mr. Matt Doering, secretary

Mr. Arlin Bornschlegl

Rev. Michael Ewart

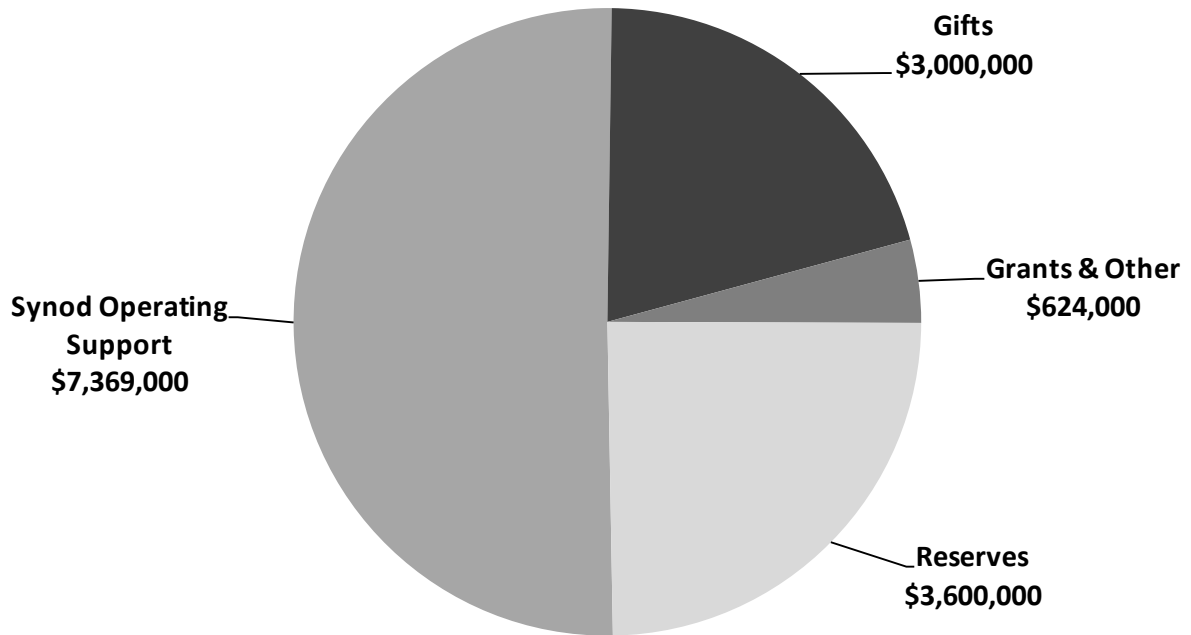
Mr. Mark Schulz

Advisory:

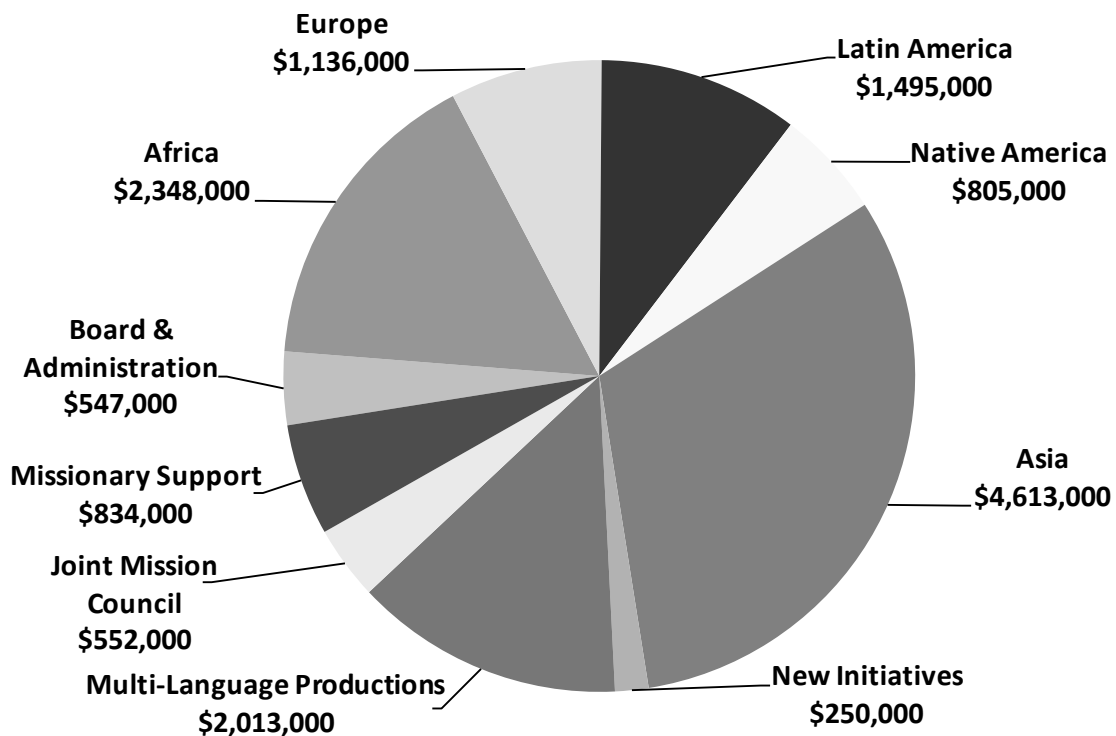
Mr. Stefan Felgenhauer, director of WELS World Missions Operations

Rev. Paul Nitz, World Missions One Teams counselor
Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations

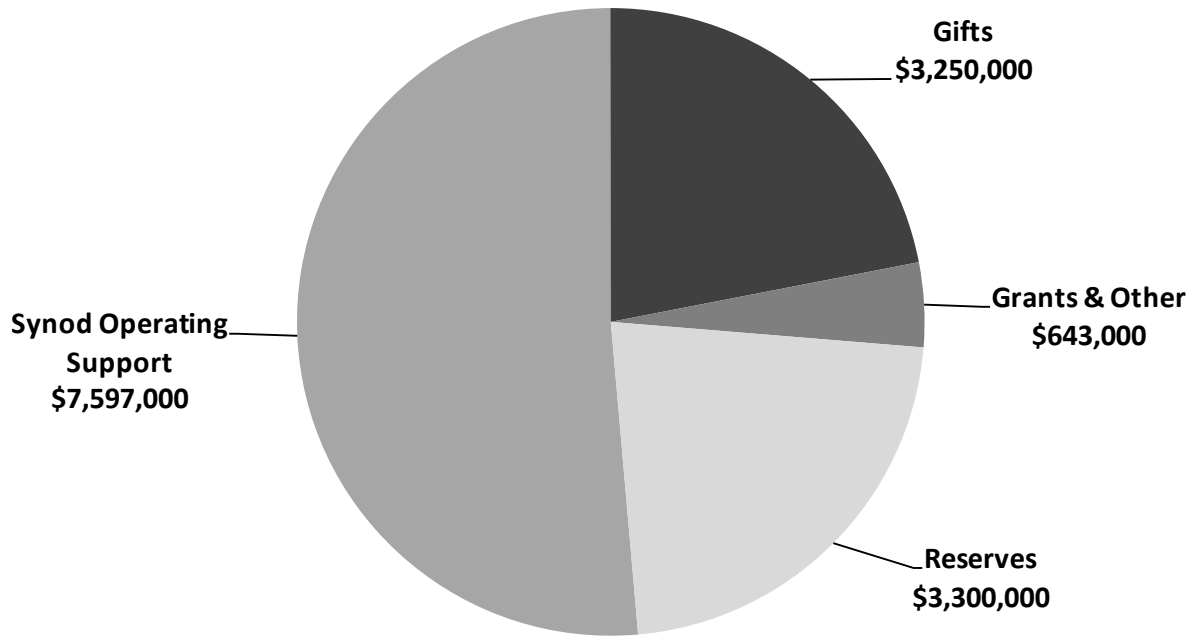
**FY 2023-24 Support
World Missions
\$14,593,000**



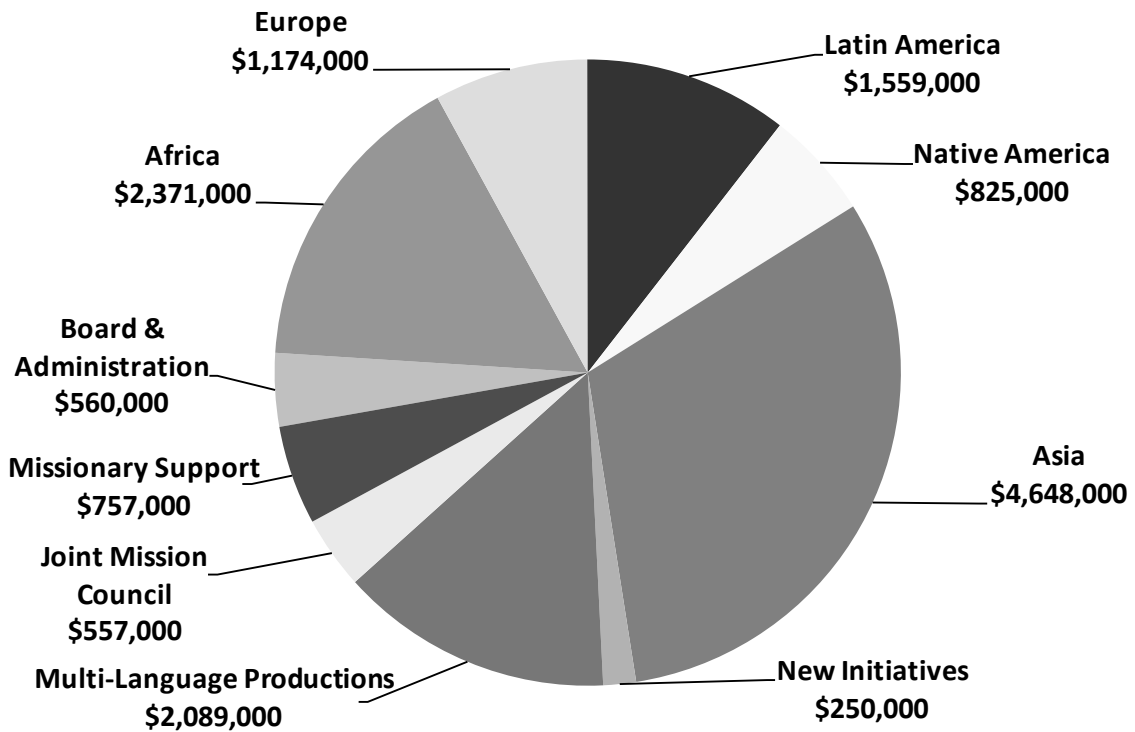
**FY 2023-24 Expenses
World Missions
\$14,593,000**



**FY 2024-25 Support
World Missions
\$14,790,000**



**FY 2024-25 Expenses
World Missions
\$14,790,000**



Joint Mission Council

Floor Committee #9

Our calling

WELS Joint Missions supports mission opportunities that are the responsibility of Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education. Much of this work centers around people group ministries, where immigrants who have joined our fellowship in the United States and Canada are able to take the gospel back to friends, family, and even existing church bodies in their countries of origin. This type of work is often called diaspora ministry, and the Joint Mission Council has begun appointing diaspora ministry facilitators to help wherever they are able. The Joint Mission Council has asked our North American Asian mission counselor, Pastor Neil Birkholz, to take oversight of the diaspora ministry facilitator work. The Joint Mission Council administers the work of the Pastoral Studies Institute, assists in other cross-cultural outreach efforts, and supervises programs like WELS Mission Journeys.

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

Our current situation

Pastoral Studies Institute

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary facilitates much of the work of the Joint Mission Council. Prof. Harland “Skip” Goetzinger (director), Prof. David Bivens, and Prof. E. Allen Sorum make up the Pastoral Studies Institute Team. They are called jointly by the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board and the Joint Mission Council. During the past year, Prof. Jon Bare finished his work on the Pastoral Studies Institute Team and became president of Asia Lutheran Seminary. We thank him for his faithful service.

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

In Asia, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is similarly integrated into the Asia One Team to provide strategic coordination of the team’s theological education function. Some specific areas of this work include development of curriculum, organizing course schedules, coordination of visiting instructors, and continuing education workshops. An example of this would be an annual continuing education seminar for the pastors of the church body of our fellowship in Indonesia. The Pastoral Studies Institute Team is also helping to develop the curriculum, organize the course schedule, and arrange the visiting teachers for pastors of the Hmong Fellowship Church who have been chosen to study at the new training center in Hanoi, Vietnam. A second cohort of the Hmong Fellowship Church recently began the program, and the new building for their work is set to be dedicated this summer.

In Latin America, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is consulting with the World Missions One Latin America Team members to determine the partners, the structure, and the program for an online seminary for all of Latin America. The Joint Mission Council is also partnering with the One Latin America Team to determine the scope and direction of further Spanish-speaking outreach in North America under the direction of Pastor Carl Leyrer. Leyrer has appointed a number of pastors to serve as “lieutenants” in his pilot program and contact congregations near them.

In Europe, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team is integrated into the One Europe Team. Team members assist with continuing education plans for pastors from sister churches across the continent. In Bulgaria, the PSI Team works with Gypsy (Roma) outreach sites.

In North America, the Pastoral Studies Institute Team continues to train immigrants to the United States for service to their local people group. Twenty-four such men are currently enrolled and are committed to completing the Pastoral

Studies Institute training program. An Urban Advisory Board is coordinating efforts under the Pastoral Studies Institute to train urban Black men for local urban Black ministry. This new program is the Joshua Urban Ministry Program, and a first cohort has been formed. The Pastoral Studies Institute Team also assists the Native American Committee as requested.

Mission Journeys

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

Campus ministry for international students

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

Individual efforts

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

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

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

Rev. Paul Prange, reporter

Rev. Paul Prange, chairman

Rev. John Bortulin, secretary

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

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

Mr. Thomas Metzger, representative of WELS Home Missions

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

Rev. Jonathan Schroeder, chairman of WELS Board for World Missions

Rev. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Vacant, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions

Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations

Board for Ministerial Education Floor Committee #10

Our calling

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

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

Our current situation

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis., offers a theological training program for men who intend to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS. It serves both first-career and second-career students. It began the year with 148 enrolled. The graduating class in May 2023 was 37, compared to 25 in 2022. We were pleased to see 46 students finish their first year of studies at WLS. Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, offers opportunities for the theological and professional growth of called workers already serving in the ministry of our confessional fellowship. The Pastoral Studies Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary guides the preparation of men who would like to serve only their own people groups as evangelists or pastors. For the sake of reviewing its domestic programs, and to offer support for our sister schools overseas, WLS is in the process of accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools. WLS is also in the middle of a strategic planning process that will guide them in determining ministry priorities and potential campus improvements like expanded classroom facilities. More information is available on p. 113 and at wisluthsem.org.

Martin Luther College

Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., is the WELS College of Ministry. It trains men and women to meet the public ministry needs of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. Efforts to address the current shortage of teacher candidates are detailed in the Teacher Shortage Task Force appendix from the Commission on Lutheran Schools on p. 37. MLC began the second semester of the 2022–23 school year with 608 undergraduates, 157 in the preseminary track and 451 in the education track, with 16 of them also preparing for staff ministry. MLC is doing everything it can to recruit additional students for teaching, but it may be a few years before the graduating classes are back to prepandemic levels. There were more than 1,000 students enrolled in continuing education and graduate studies programs. Nine students are already enrolled in classes that will prepare them to enter into the new Competency-Based Education program, specially designed for non-traditional students. More information is available on p. 118 and at mlc-wels.edu.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) is a boarding high school in Saginaw, Mich., with the single purpose of preparing high school students for the public ministry of the gospel and encouraging them to enroll at Martin Luther College. Michigan Lutheran Seminary receives grants from the MLS Foundation, including financial assistance and sponsorship of capital improvements. Michigan Lutheran Seminary began the year with 194 students. More information is available on p. 134 and at mlsem.org.

Luther Preparatory School

Luther Preparatory School (LPS) is a boarding high school in Watertown, Wis., with the single purpose of encouraging and preparing young people for a lifetime of service in the public ministry of WELS. LPS participates in the Racine, Milwaukee, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs, allowing some Wisconsin families to use vouchers from the state to pay for the cost of education. Luther Preparatory School began the year with 408 students. More information is available on p. 137 and at lps.wels.net.

Finances

The Board for Ministerial Education distributes synod support to the ministerial education schools from a block grant supplied by the Synodical Council. The model has resulted in stable reserves and normal annual tuition increases at all of the schools. MLC has seen blessings on its efforts to address the educational debt of its graduates, with decreases in the average debt owed by its graduates for three straight years, and the average debt of last year's graduates under 50 percent of their first-year salaries. The college has established programs to train students in good stewardship and to increase funds available for student assistance. The Congregational Partner Grant Program has increased its matching funds for tuition assistance provided by congregations to students who attend MLC. The college has an attainable goal of enough resources available that no freshman should have to take a loan for education purposes.

Vacancy rates

Parish pastor vacancies in WELS remain a concern. Projected retirement rates indicate that the shortage will be with us for a while. One helpful note is that the average size of the graduating classes at WLS increased this year and should be larger for the foreseeable future. MLC is giving attention to increased support for non-traditional preseminary students. MLC and LPS are seeing increasing numbers of their graduates entering the preseminary course at MLC. Vacancies in principal and early childhood director positions remain difficult to fill. The trends that cause those vacancy rates are being addressed. The 21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative, approved by the 2017 synod convention, is a process to recruit and fully train experienced teachers to serve as principals and should help with the principal vacancy rate. A similar program is being considered for early childhood directors. The new MLC initiative to recruit and certify non-traditional students as classroom teachers using competency-based educational models should also be helpful. See more details in the Teacher Shortage Task Force appendix from the Commission on Lutheran Schools on p. 37.

Capital projects

Capital campaigns for buildings at the schools are reviewed and adopted by both the Synodical Council and the Conference of Presidents as a regular part of WELS' ministry planning process and then are conducted in coordination with WELS Ministry of Christian Giving. Various funding models are being considered. WLS built an additional faculty home and is investigating improvements in both classroom facilities and gathering space. MLC dedicated its new Betty Kohn Fieldhouse and is continuing to explore options for improved student housing. MLC improved its athletic facilities with new outdoor bleachers, restrooms, and a press box with funding provided by the MLC Foundation. LPS is investigating a new music auditorium. The Lord gives us our daily bread, and we are grateful that the campuses are well maintained, with very few continuing maintenance projects unfunded in the ministry plan for the current biennium.

Partnerships

With the blessing and encouragement of Home and World Missions, the ministerial education schools have established good partnerships with the world mission fields and self-supporting overseas churches in our fellowship in order to help develop their particular ministerial education programs. In the past few years, we have seen a dramatic increase in requests to the Pastoral Studies Institute for help in training existing pastors and evangelists of various people groups to become confessional Lutherans. The reports of the Joint Mission Council (p. 109) and the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (p. 19) detail some of those efforts. Our domestic ministerial education schools have seen some success in their plan to increase the numbers of underrepresented minorities on their campuses and in their programs.

A look ahead

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

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

What can you do to help? Pray! Ask the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into his harvest fields. Encourage people you know to prepare for service in the ministry of the gospel.

Rev. Paul Prange, reporter

Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman

Rev. John Bortulin, secretary

Rev. Gregory Gibbons

Mr. Paul Hahm

Teacher James Henrickson Jr.

Teacher Daniel Markgraf

Rev. Aaron Mueller

Rev. Jonathan Scharf

Mr. Brian Scheele

Rev. Timothy Spaude

Mr. Dean Waldschmidt

Mr. Adam Zastrow

Teacher Gerald Zeamer

Advisory:

Rev. Matthew Crass, Luther Preparatory School president

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Rev. Richard Gurgel, Martin Luther College president

Rev. Mark Luetzow, Michigan Lutheran Seminary president

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

Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

Rev. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Floor Committee #10

Our calling

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) equips pastors for the worldwide mission of WELS, including churches and cultural groups within its confessional fellowship. In partnership with sister seminaries and theological training programs of its fellowship, WLS accomplishes that singular purpose with two distinct emphases. Primarily, the seminary prepares men to begin pastoral ministry by providing the spiritual, theological, and professional training needed to enter that ministry. The seminary also partners with pastors in their ministry-long pursuit of spiritual, theological, and professional growth in their God-given callings.

Our current situation

Enrollment

The 2022–23 school year began with an enrollment of 148 students, an increase of 14 over the 134 that were enrolled at the beginning of each of the previous two years. The opening enrollment was the highest in 12 years. At the time of this writing there are 142 students preparing for service as pastors: 37 seniors, 29 vicars, 30 middlers (second-year students), and 47 juniors (first-year students). Nearly half are married. Lord willing, 37 candidates for the holy ministry

will receive calls through the synod's Assignment Committee in May, and 30 will be assigned to a year of invaluable service as vicars.

People regularly ask about the seminary's enrollment when the number of pastoral vacancies is on the rise. It is painfully obvious, as one sees the number of congregations calling for a pastor, that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. The Lord Jesus invites us, when we see a need like we do in our church body, to pray for more workers. Truth be told, the harvest is always plentiful, and the workers are always few, whether there is a high number of pastoral vacancies or not. We have reason to thank God for the pastors he provides and to pray for more workers. The increased enrollment at the seminary is one of God's gracious answers to the prayers of his people.

The 2023–24 school year will likely begin with an enrollment like this past year, with incoming students matching the number of men being assigned to serve as pastors. The Lord has done more than just provide numbers. He has raised up talented men, with gifts to serve in many different vocations, who are willing to consider serving him and his people in pastoral ministry.

Faculty

Prof. Paul Wendland, who has served on the seminary faculty since 2001, retires from full-time service on June 30, 2023. He served as the twelfth president of the seminary, beginning in that role in 2004 and stepping down in 2019. His last four years on the faculty were spent doing what always gave him the greatest joy—teaching future pastors. With his extraordinary intellect, passion for the Scriptures, and zeal for missions, he has been a great blessing to both the seminary and the synod. He simply cannot be replaced and will be greatly missed. We thank God for working in him and through him for the benefit of many.

Prof. Jon Bare, initially called to serve as international recruitment director for the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) before transitioning into a role as director of the PSI team, accepted the Lord's call to serve as president of Asia Lutheran Seminary and completed his work at the seminary on Dec. 31, 2022. Pastor Harland (Skip) Goetzinger accepted the call to serve as director of the PSI team and took up that work on Jan. 1, 2023. His plan is to work remotely until the end of June and then move to the seminary campus in July, Lord willing.

Prof. Noah Headrick, who is presently serving God's people at St. John, Burlington, Wis., decided to accept the call to serve as professor of Old Testament and homiletics. He will take up his duties in July. He will audit Old Testament classes during his first year in preparation for teaching them the following year.

In the last six years, ten new professors have joined the seminary faculty. To say that another way, more than half of the seminary faculty has six years of experience or fewer. Almost all the professors called in the last six years are pursuing additional coursework to help them be even better equipped for the work the Lord has entrusted to them. The governing board is committed to supporting every faculty member who desires to pursue an advanced degree, both with funding for the program and with a reduced teaching load to accommodate the additional study required of them.

This past year Prof. Aaron Christie, who joined the faculty in 2020, celebrated his 25th anniversary in the public ministry. Prof. E. Allen Sorum celebrated his 40th anniversary in the public ministry, with 19 of those years on the seminary faculty.

Field services

Vicars

The vicar year remains a critical portion of every student's training for pastoral ministry. While extremely beneficial, the program does carry a significant cost, in the range of \$44,000 for each vicar. That amount doesn't all go directly to the vicar. It provides health insurance for all the vicars and their families, subsidizes rental costs for all, and provides a modest stipend for the vicar, so that he can give his full time to ministry and not seek other employment to cover his costs. On average, between 10 to 12 congregations that apply for a vicar have the resources to cover the full cost for the year. That means approximately two-thirds of each vicar class will be assigned to congregations that are only able to cover a portion of the cost. The seminary has worked in partnership with the Board for Home Missions and its Vicar in a Mission Setting program to identify places where a vicar could receive excellent training in gospel outreach in a mission-minded congregation. Home Missions and WLS cooperate financially in the program. The seminary commits between \$200,000 and \$250,000 on an annual basis to that program. The seminary has also partnered with the Board for World Missions to support a vicar in Colombia, working with a pastor in our sister church body. The need for gifts to support the vicar year is critical, particularly as we pray that the Lord will send more students to be prepared for pastoral ministry.

Every summer, the seminary provides a seminar to equip the supervising pastors for their important work of overseeing vicars. Faculty members explain the training the vicars have received and outline the experiences they hope the students will have in their vicar congregation. Each new supervising pastor is expected to attend; experienced supervising pastors are asked to participate in a training seminar at least once every five years. We thank the Lord of the Church for providing faithful pastors (and supportive congregations) who are willing to invest in the training of a future gospel servant.

Early field training

The Early Field Training program has been in place for two decades. In it, first- and second-year students are assigned to a Milwaukee-area congregation. They attend services each week and get involved in different activities to gain perspective on congregational life, with the goal of preparing them for their vicar year. The program is primarily Sunday-focused, in recognition of the students' busy schedules during the week. Four of the congregations participating in the program offer seminarians with Spanish abilities the opportunity to use them in ministry.

Student ministry program

Nearly all the students at the seminary work part-time jobs during the school year to cover their living costs. Most work in secular jobs and take advantage of opportunities to witness as they work alongside others. Some of the students work in ministry positions. During the 2022–23 school year 20 seniors are serving in a ministry position, with responsibilities in preaching, teaching, and visitation. Some receive housing as part of their compensation. Nine underclassmen are serving in ministry positions with duties that fit the training they have received.

Education costs

The total cost of education is approximately \$35,000 per student per year. Thankfully, no student has to cover that entire cost out of his own pocket. Tuition and fees for the 2022–23 school year were about \$12,500. The students who live in the dormitory pay approximately \$9,200 for room and board, with most married students, who are on their own to secure housing, paying more for housing and food. The difference in cost is addressed through the portion of the WELS Congregation Mission Offerings designated for the seminary and through the many generous gifts God's people offer directly to the seminary. The gifts offered in the last three years have been nothing short of extraordinary.

In the 2022–23 school year, thanks to the generosity of the many people who give regularly to support the seminary's scholarship fund, every student who applied for financial assistance received aid to help defray the costs of attending. All told, the seminary disbursed approximately \$850,000 from its general scholarship fund to assist students. Most of that came in the form of grants based on the student's declared financial need. There were also campus service awards, which acknowledge students who carry out tasks for the well-being of the seminary family, and academic achievement awards, which honor classroom performance as reflected in the student's grades. Donors have also provided additional gifts for students that are not reflected in the number above. On average, students at the seminary received assistance that exceeded the tuition costs for the year. Many also received assistance to defray their costs for room and board (or housing and food for the married students).

Student indebtedness remains a concern, given the increasing costs of education. The seminary has no interest in seeing students enter full-time service in the church with a crippling debt, because it will have a negative impact on their ability to serve in ministry. The excellent work being done at MLC in financial planning has made a positive impact on student indebtedness. The seminary offers annual financial presentations, as well as private guidance as needed, to build on what was begun at MLC. The seminary's financial aid officer, Prof. Steve Geiger, keeps careful tabs on student debt. Generally, students do not leave the seminary with more debt than that with which they entered, though they may acquire additional debt through marriage.

Accreditation

The seminary is pursuing accreditation through the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools. The Association of Theological Schools is a membership organization of more than 270 graduate schools that conduct postbaccalaureate professional and academic degree programs. Currently an associate member of the Association of Theological Schools, the seminary began to work in earnest on a self-study this year, with the goal of being accredited in 2024. Prof. Kenneth Cherney, Jr., is serving as the chairman of the self-study steering committee and is guiding the process. Three faculty subcommittees have been assessing the work the seminary is doing based on ten accreditation standards. Those standards are principles-based rather than best-practices-based. In other words, the Association of Theological Schools is not insisting that a school desiring accreditation must have certain practices or policies in place to become an accredited school. Representatives from the Association of Theological Schools

have repeatedly said that they will not ask the seminary to act contrary to its doctrinal position or at cross purposes with the mission given by the synod. The steering committee's tentative plan is to submit a self-study report to the Association of Theological Schools by December 2023 at the latest, with a proposed spring 2024 accreditation team site visit.

The Association of Theological Schools understands that WLS is a professional seminary, focused on preparing men for service as pastors and missionaries in WELS. They expect that a school which sees its work as "pastors forming pastors" will have a faculty whose members have significant experience as pastors and missionaries. The stated desire of the Association of Theological Schools is to help schools become even better versions of themselves by encouraging them to engage in ongoing assessment of their program.

The seminary is seeking accreditation for several reasons. Both the governing board and faculty take seriously the responsibility to prepare men who have the character, knowledge, and skills required to serve as pastors in WELS. The self-study central to the accreditation process has led the faculty and governing board to ask for feedback from synodical stakeholders and on that basis discuss the important questions of how best to form faithful Lutheran pastors for service in the contemporary world. Those critical conversations are the first step on the road to strengthening and expanding the work being done to prepare men for service as pastors. Having objective outside eyes review the self-study report and offer suggestions regarding areas to be a better version of WLS will also be helpful. Additionally, becoming an accredited institution promises to be beneficial for the work the seminary does in assisting sister church bodies around the world in providing training and degrees for their pastors.

Governing board

At last summer's district conventions, three men were elected to serve as new members of the seminary's governing board. The Minnesota District elected Mr. Clayton Raasch, a layman. The Northern Wisconsin District elected Teacher Philip Stern. The Michigan District elected Pastor Glenn Rosenbaum. These new members received orientation at the end of summer 2022.

Pastoral Studies Institute

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of WLS, in collaboration with WELS Joint Mission Council, continues to oversee pastoral training for men from various ethnic groups—Vietnamese, Hmong, and Sudanese, to name a few—in places across North America. The PSI Team consists of Prof. Harland (Skip) Goetzinger, who serves as the new director; Prof. E. Allen Sorum; Prof. David Bivens; and part-time administrative assistant Nola Zemlicka. Prof. Bivens has a reduced teaching load in both semesters to allow him to travel and to teach both semesters. Prof. Sorum has a full schedule of teaching at WLS in the second semester but not the first, freeing him up to travel and teach. Members of the PSI Team provide some of the instruction to the 19 men in the United States currently enrolled in the training program and then work with local pastors who teach other courses in the program's four levels. The prayer is that the men being prepared for ministry will not only be able to pastor a flock of their people group but will also be able to assist in bringing the gospel to their country of origin, as the Lord provides opportunities.

The members of the PSI Team, who are called jointly by the seminary's governing board and WELS Joint Mission Council, work with each "One Team" of World Missions. Their duties and responsibilities vary by field, from vetting mission opportunities to providing instruction to developing curriculum to offering counsel on various aspects of mission and ministry. (See the report from the Joint Mission Council on p. 109 for additional information.) The PSI Team collaborates with the One Team leader and the group that WELS is seeking to reach to determine the best way for WELS to facilitate distinctively Lutheran ministries led by solidly Lutheran native leaders.

Grow in Grace

Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, partners with pastors for lifelong growth in their callings. Grow in Grace offers courses and events, retreats and mentoring, study packages, and informal resources, all intended to encourage and equip pastors to serve where the Lord has placed them. God's people always benefit when their pastors stretch themselves with additional study, even if the study doesn't seem immediately connected to daily ministry duties.

Prof. Bradley Wordell began serving as the director of Grow in Grace in January 2022 and has been leading a revision of the master of sacred theology (STM) program. The self-study that is part of the accreditation process has resulted in changes to the credit structure. The number of credits required for the degree has been reduced, from 32 to 24, while the number of hours required per credit has increased. Each credit represents 45 hours of work.

Summer Quarter courses were held on campus and online in summer 2022, with 45 students taking courses on campus and 14 in the online course. In odd-numbered years, Summer Quarter goes on the road, into many districts. Satellite courses are being held in 8 districts in 2023, primarily in June but also in April and October. The Grow in Grace portion of the seminary website has details. Visit wisluthsem.org/grow-in-grace.

Grow in Grace continues to work toward the goal of offering two online courses each semester of the school year. The faculty turnover and the number of professors who are pursuing coursework of their own have made that challenging in the short term.

Each spring Grow in Grace arranges ministry celebration retreats for pastors and their wives celebrating 3-, 10-, 25-, and 35-year ministry anniversaries. The pandemic caused the cancellation of the retreats scheduled for 2020 and 2021. That meant having a total of 12 classes participating in retreats in April 2022. In 2023 it was back to 4 classes. There has been ongoing discussion about the retreats and their fit with Grow in Grace's mission. It may be that Grow in Grace oversees the 3- and 10-year ministry retreats, with another entity working on the others.

A look ahead

Building plans

The seminary's strategic plan, adopted in 2020, called for the development of a plan to update or add classrooms, large- and small-group educational and gathering space, and accessible faculty and staff offices. The current classroom space is functional, but some of the rooms are rather small and do not allow for different configurations. Many of the rooms have limited outside light. There is a need for places for students and faculty to gather informally. Faculty members all have offices in their on-campus homes, but they do not have space in the main classroom building to facilitate private meetings with individual students during the school day.

An ad hoc committee worked with HGA, a Milwaukee architectural firm that had done the chapel renovation in 2005, to develop a master site plan that addresses the items mentioned in the seminary's strategic plan. The site plan includes a proposed education center with six new classrooms, a gathering hall connected to the current auditorium/gymnasium, a link between the current library and the new education center, and the conversion of current classrooms into office space and small group meeting areas. Conversations about funding the project and determining the phases of the project have begun. It would be nice to have the new education center built in advance of the hundredth anniversary of the Mequon campus in 2029.

Rev. Earle Treptow, reporter

Rev. Jonathan Scharf, chairman
Rev. Glenn Rosenbaum, vice chairman
Teacher Philip Stern, secretary
Mr. Gregory Green
Mr. Thomas Kissinger
Mr. Clayton Raasch
Rev. Nathan Wagenknecht
Rev. Karl Walther

Advisory:

Rev. Jonathan Balge, adjunct member
Rev. Daniel Leyrer, Southeastern Wisconsin District president
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Rev. Earle Treptow, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president

Martin Luther College

Floor Committee #10

Our calling

One of the greatest blessings God has given to Martin Luther College (MLC) is the common faith shared by all on campus and the common mission and purpose of training for public ministry. At our October 2022 MLC Governing Board meeting, there was a slight revision to the language of MLC's mission and objectives so as to correspond more closely with the language used in the current MLC strategic plan that will be described later in this report. Here is the updated wording of our mission and objectives:

The mission of Martin Luther College is to train men and women to meet the public ministry needs of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord.

To fulfill this mission, Martin Luther College carries out all instruction and programs of student life according to the gospel as revealed in the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the college desires

- To deepen the student in faith in the forgiving grace of Jesus Christ;
- To strengthen the student in a consecrated spirit of love for God and his Word;
- To foster in the student a servant's heart for Christ-like service in the church, community, and world;
- To educate the student for faithful, capable, and intelligent citizenship in today's world;
- To assist the student in acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for service in the church and for lifelong learning;
- To help the student to develop the spiritual, emotional, and physical resiliency that will assist them to persevere in service under the cross; and
- To encourage with the gospel the financial support needed to provide an affordable college experience on a beautiful and attractive campus.

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

- Prepares men for pastoral training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary;
- Prepares men and women for service as teachers and staff ministers in the synod's churches, schools, and other institutions;
- Prepares men and women for other public ministry in the church, 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 professional and continuing education that meet the ministerial needs of WELS.

With MLC's mission and objectives clearly in focus, this report lays before the reader the current situation and future plans of your college of ministry.

Our current situation

God's current, gracious gifts to MLC are richly evident. Here is specific evidence of those gifts from God in the various areas of MLC's ministry.

God's gifts to MLC: Our undergraduate students

The opening enrollment for fall 2022 was 629. The enrollment at the beginning of the second semester was 609. We are grateful to God for each candidate who was led to enroll at MLC to prepare for the public ministry. While we have seen our fourth consecutive year of decreasing enrollment, we have begun to see hopeful signs that this trend will be ending soon.

We have increased our level of intentional recruitment not only within our area Lutheran high schools and prep schools. We have also worked to develop more intentional outreach into our congregations, elementary schools,

and Sunday schools with the help of our synod's pastors and teachers. To fulfill this, we have intentionally attended numerous district gatherings to encourage synod pastors and teachers in their important role as encouragers to their young members. We have also ramped up our on-campus events including redesigning our Focus on Ministry events for high school students considering MLC as well as beginning new summer camps to expose even more students to the MLC campus and the idea of studying for the gospel ministry.

Semester enrollment statistics by year

		2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
FIRST SEMESTER	Opening enrollment	712	724	697	708	714	727	723	742	756	764	731	714	663	629
	Part time	10	19	18	12	12	19	18	26	16	17	27	14	12	18
	Boarding	676	671	643	659	668	674	671	667	682	747	657	659	613	565
	December grads**	13	15	22	7	19	21	22	13	14	18	15	19	7	13
	Withdrawals	37	39	38	32	34	26	34	40	42	38	45	43	43	29
	Ending enrollment	662	670	637	669	661	680	667	689	700	708	671	652	613	587
SECOND SEMESTER	January admissions	22	29	28	24	33	29	18	21	29	22	26	16	20	19
	Opening enrollment	684	699	665	693	694	709	685	710	729	730	697	668	633	606
	Part time	19	19	16	14	13	18	18	24	22	24	24	11	16	26
	Boarding	640	643	616	646	654	658	640	643	658	664	633	617	583	545
	Withdrawals	5	4	13	8	6	3	10	5	10	6	11	9	3	
	Ending enrollment	679	695	652	685	688	706	675	705	*720	724	686	659	630	

*student was readmitted in March

**on campus

Here is the breakdown by program of study as of the beginning of our second semester:

On-campus enrollment by program			
	M	F	Subtotals
Education	132	289	421
Pre-Seminary	156	1	157
Staff Ministry*	12	1	13
Undeclared	1		1
Other	9	7	16
Grand totals	310	298	608
*Single major. Four additional staff ministry students are double majors.			

Freshman class, grouped by track 2022-23 school year						
	Pastor track	Teacher track			TOTAL	
		Male	Female	Total		
Preparatory school						
Luther Preparatory School	22	9	15	24	46	
Michigan Lutheran Seminary	2	4	5	9	11	
Category subtotal	24	13	20	33	57	
Area Lutheran high school						
Arizona Lutheran Academy	1		2	2	3	
California Lutheran High School	1		4	4	5	
Evergreen Lutheran High School	1	1	2	3	4	
Fox Valley Lutheran High School	2		9	9	11	
Great Plains Lutheran High School		4	1	5	5	
Huron Valley Lutheran High School			1	1	1	
Illinois Lutheran High School			1	1	1	
Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School			2	2	2	
Lakeside Lutheran High School	1	2		2	3	
Luther High School		3	3	6	6	
Manitowoc Lutheran High School	1	1	1	2	3	
Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School		5	10	15	15	
Nebraska Lutheran High School			1	1	1	
Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School	1		1	1	2	
Saint Croix Lutheran Academy	2			0	2	
Shoreland Lutheran High School		2	1	3	3	
Winnebago Lutheran Academy			1	1	1	
Wisconsin Lutheran High School		2		2	2	
Category subtotal	10	20	40	60	70	
Other						
INDEPENDENT, RELIGIOUS	1			0	1	
PUBLIC	11	5	9	14	25	
WELS - OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS	1	2		2	3	
Category subtotal	13	7	9	16	29	
Grand total	47	40	69	109	156	

God's gifts to MLC: Graduate and continuing education students and New Teacher Induction

Graduate studies

Martin Luther College offers master's degrees for WELS teachers in Education, Educational Administration, Special Education, and Theology. These degrees include specialized training for classroom teachers, principals, early childhood directors, technology directors, special education teachers, high school religion teachers, and staff ministers. At the time of this writing, 227 master's degrees had been awarded and 136 teachers were working toward one.

WELS Principal Credential cohorts

Beginning in 2017, the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) and MLC partnered to encourage experienced teachers to fully prepare for the Lutheran school principal position before being called to that position. The program had a strong start, and 15 participants are now serving as school leaders. After a short break due to COVID, the cohorts are resuming this summer with 7 candidates. Candidates receive 50 percent scholarships to earn their master's degrees in educational administration.

Continuing education

Martin Luther College provides a variety of continuing education formats and topics for teachers and staff ministers. These include webinars, online conferences, micro-credentials, face-to-face courses in satellite locations, and online coursework. Some courses are part of certificate programs, but many are used as stand-alone growth opportunities. In the previous academic year, 897 people participated in some form of formal professional growth through MLC. An additional 260 people participated in a free, two-day online conference called OpenLearning@MLC.

Early childhood

In 2022 an early childhood task force identified a need for flexible levels of support for currently serving early childhood teachers, most of whom are hired and have little early childhood or ministry training. With generous support from the Commission on Lutheran Schools and an Antioch II grant, we are developing an online, tiered support, with various entry points for currently serving early childhood teachers. Types of support include the following:

- Tier One: Materials for local on-boarding in early childhood and ministry
- Tier Two: Childhood Development Associate Credential preparation
- Tier Three: Early Childhood Teacher ministry certification
- Tier Four: Associate's degree in Early Childhood

Teaching ministry certification

Teaching ministry certification provides the required training in theology for Lutheran school teachers who graduate from colleges other than MLC. The proportion of non-ministry-certified teachers in WELS schools has grown from 7 percent to 13 percent since 2013. MLC is adding additional online theology courses and sections to meet the increased demand. Other interesting data include the following:

- 383 called teachers in Lutheran schools (K-16) are not ministry certified.
- 50 percent of the 383 are actively pursuing WELS teaching ministry certification.
- 170 teachers have completed and been awarded ministry certification since 2019.

God's gifts to MLC: Staff and faculty personnel

Anniversary recognitions

Due to the pandemic, the acknowledgement of professor ministry milestones during the 2019–20 and the 2020–21 school years were postponed. The celebration returned to the normal schedule in April 2022 and included the 2021–22 anniversaries. The celebrants are listed below.

2019–20

- Peter Baganz, 25 years in ministry
- Paul Bases, 40 years in ministry
- William Pekrul, 40 years in ministry
- Mark Zarling, 40 years in ministry

2020–21

- Gregory Diersen, 25 years in ministry
- Joel Fredrich, 40 years in ministry
- Jennifer Krause, 25 years in ministry
- Cheryl Loomis, 40 years in ministry
- James Pope, 40 years in ministry
- Mark Tacke, 40 years in ministry

2021–22

- Robert Klindworth, 40 years in ministry

- Theodore Klug, 25 years in ministry
- Douglas Lange, 40 years in ministry
- Thomas Nass, 40 years in ministry
- James Unke, 40 years in ministry
- Lori Unke, 25 years in ministry

2022–23

- Lawrence Olson, 40 years in ministry

Faculty retirements/conclusions of service

2021–22

- Paul Bases, professor of Spanish, retirement
- David Bauer, professor of music, retirement
- Daryl Hanneman, professor of special education, retirement
- Cheryl Loomis, professor of early childhood education, retirement
- Steven Thiesfeldt, vice president for administration, professor of science, retirement
- Orie Thomford, dormitory supervisor and instructor, concluded service
- Jordan Uhlhorn, dormitory supervisor and instructor, concluded service
- James Unke, director of athletics/professor of physical education, called to heaven

2022–23

- Halie Flores, admissions counselor, concluding service
- Douglas Lange, professor of physical education and theology/coach, retirement
- Ronald Ohm, professor of education/student teaching supervisor, retirement
- Tingting Schwartz, professor of history-social science/international coordinator, concluding service
- Philip Schroeder, dormitory supervisor and instructor, concluding service

Faculty additions

2021–22

- Aaron Robinson, professor of English and cultural diversity coordinator
- Philip Schroeder, dormitory supervisor and instructor
- Orie Thomford, dormitory supervisor and instructor
- Luke Thompson, professor of theology and history-social science
- Daniel Waldschmidt, professor of Greek

2022–23

- Jacob Behnken, professor of music and dean of chapel
- Melissa Berg, director, early childhood learning center
- Isaiah Degner, professor of Spanish
- Heath Dobberpuhl, professor of science
- Rebecca Doering, professor of physical education and coach
- Halie Flores, admissions counselor (one-year call)
- Kathryn Gut, professor of early childhood education
- Paul Huebner, football coach and athletics recruiter
- Adam Pavelchik, professor of education and director of field experiences
- Mya Peshon, lead teacher, early childhood learning center toddler room (one-year call)
- Nathaniel Savage, dormitory supervisor and instructor
- Hannah Scharf, admissions counselor (one-year call)
- Rachel Youngblom, professor of special education

Other staff changes (2022–23):

- David Biedenbender moved from admissions counselor to the interim director of athletics. He has since been named the permanent director.
- Samuel Hunter was hired as the strength coach, assistant track coach, and an adjunct instructor in physical education.
- Theodore Klug added the role of vice president for enrollment management to the director of admissions role.

- Mark Maurice was hired as the vice president for mission advancement. He replaced Michael Otterstatter who accepted a call back into parish ministry.
- Hannah Scharf accepted a permanent call to serve as an admissions counselor after David Biedenbender moved to athletic director.

2022–23 call updates

- Aaron Dolan has accepted the call to serve as professor of theology and coach.
- Martin LaGrow has accepted the call to serve as professor of education and instructional designer for the non-traditional education program.
- Nichole LaGrow accepted the call to serve as professor of education and the director of the non-traditional education program.
- Mya Peshon has accepted a permanent call to serve as lead teacher in the toddler room in the early childhood learning center.
- Duane Vance accepted the call to serve as professor of education and student teaching supervisor.
- A one-year call will be extended to a 2023 MLC graduate to serve as an admissions counselor to fill the vacancy created by Halie Flores completing her service to MLC.

Early childhood learning center lead teachers

- Melissa Berg, director
- Natalie Borgwardt, lead teacher, pre-primary classroom 1
- Elizabeth Klugherz, lead teacher, infant classroom
- Mya Peshon, lead teacher, toddler classroom
- Catherine St. John, lead teacher, pre-primary classroom 2

God's gifts to MLC: Academic programming

MLC's accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission

MLC's most recent accreditation review (October 2022) with the Higher Learning Commission was fully approved, resulting in MLC's accreditation status remaining fully intact. All criteria for the October 2022 review were deemed to be "fully met." MLC maintains the ability to choose its own accreditation pathway with the Higher Learning Commission. MLC's next step in its 10-year accreditation cycle (2022–23 was year 4) is to choose its next Quality Initiative effort. The Quality Initiative is a self-directed goal chosen by an institution. A proposal is to be written for approval before the end of year 7 in the cycle (2026–27). MLC's last Quality Initiative concerned the recruitment and retention of non-traditional student groups. It resulted in many great efforts on our campus, including the Cultural Engagement Center and the staffing in that new space.

Program review at MLC

Since the development of a template for review in 2016–17, MLC continues the sound practice of reviewing its academic programs on a 7-year cycle.

The pre-seminary program was reviewed in the 2017–18 academic year, resulting in the following recommendations that have since taken root:

- Pre-seminary: professors/advisers in this major will pilot a new Early Ministry Experience program for our future pastors, a newly required part of their training.
- The program continues to gain feedback from graduates on the importance of revamping the seminary certification program. A committee has been appointed to review and make recommendations for program updates.
- MLC faculty in this program will continue to meet annually with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary faculty. Recent agenda items included clearly defining the program's liberal arts curriculum, program retention efforts, and an expanded minors option for pre-seminary program members.

The middle/secondary education programs were reviewed in the 2018–19 academic year, and the following work has been ongoing as a result:

- J-term planning and program plan adjustment;
- new methods courses meant to increase candidate value to the WELS constituency at all levels (not just one specific content area); and
- a proposal to streamline the number of students enrolled in single middle/secondary majors to better serve the WELS constituency.

The elementary education program was reviewed in the 2019–20 academic year and the following work has been ongoing as a result:

- efforts for international students;
- library service expansion;
- assessment of student learning;
- a new organizational department structure among all education programs;
- J-term plans that involve more; and
- new/updated coursework to enhance the major for added candidate value to the WELS constituency.

The early childhood education program was reviewed in the 2020–21 academic year and the following work has been ongoing as a result:

- establishing program goals to recruit and retain students in the major;
- growing the connection between the main MLC campus and our Early Childhood Learning Center lab school;
- adjustment of course placement in the program; and
- J-term planning.

The staff ministry program underwent review in the 2021–22 academic year, resulting in the following recommendations:

- Increased enrollment in both on-campus program and in off-campus certification programs by working with MLC Admissions to implement process improvements to enroll both traditional and non-traditional students to the programs.
- Use of data-informed and data-supported course and program improvement process in reviewing requirements for the major.
- Create a broader awareness synodwide of staff ministry as an equally valid form of public ministry by developing consistent messaging across all platforms and venues where ministry options are mentioned.

Graduate programs (MA and MS) will have concluded their review at the end of the 2022–23 academic year.

The general education curriculum will be reviewed in the 2023–24 academic year.

God's gifts to MLC: Caring for our students

The Student Life Department at MLC assists students in their lives outside the classroom with the goal of preparing ministry candidates who understand wellness, cherish personal and public worship, participate in broadening experiences, and enjoy meaningful social interaction.

In addition to focusing on providing a safe and engaging campus environment, the key focus for our Student Life Department is taking care of people. In response to the growing challenge of mental health issues facing the rising generation, this past year the student resident assistant (RA) staff was trained to take special care of first-year students. Each RA was assigned eight to ten new students and carried out a program of mentoring those new students by visiting with them, listening to them, and providing advice and encouragement when asked. That mentoring work also included sharing six lessons on personal resilience from a gospel-focused perspective. Those lessons were developed by Christian Family Solutions and taught to the RAs during their orientation. This provided our student RA staff almost the identical resilience training received by MLC's staff and faculty.

In its second year of operation on the MLC campus, the Cultural Engagement Center also strives to take care of our campus family by providing cultural information, sponsoring education events, and offering competency training. The goal of this activity is two-fold. The Cultural Engagement Center's efforts seek to make it abundantly clear to students of color and international students that they are equally valued members of the MLC on-campus family. The Cultural Engagement Center also seeks to help our majority culture students become even more comfortable in interacting with those whose cultural experience is different from their own.

God's gifts to MLC: Financial

The following pages detail some of the many financial blessings for which MLC continues to be grateful to the Lord. Directly as a result of declining enrollments for the past four years, you will also see areas where the college continues to be financially challenged.

	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>	<u>FY 2023</u>
Opening enrollment	764	731	714	663	629
Tuition, room & board	\$21,490	\$22,130	\$22,900	\$23,590	\$24,300
WELS operating support	\$3,300,238	\$3,469,000	\$3,469,000	\$3,672,000	\$3,744,000
Gifts and bequests	\$2,182,235	\$5,146,797	\$6,609,432	\$8,239,991	\$2,725,937*

*As of 1/2023

Financial aid—student cost and indebtedness

MLC continues to focus on increasing student tuition assistance while limiting increases to tuition and room and board. Beginning with the 2024–25 biennium, MLC plans for a 10 percent annual budgetary increase to tuition assistance. MLC has a five-year commitment to increase the Congregational Partner Grant Program match by 10 percent annually. The Congregational Partner Grant Program match is currently \$1,200 per student but will increase to \$1,925 per student by FY 2028. MLC has implemented two additional financial aid awards in an effort to increase enrollment. Each student that participates in an individual on-campus visit and enrolls at MLC will receive a \$500 scholarship. MLC will also award \$500 as an early deposit incentive to any student who pays their enrollment deposit by March 1 and subsequently attends the college. MLC’s commitment to tuition assistance is evidenced by the following chart:

	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>
Tuition assistance—funded	\$1,722,517	\$1,845,837	\$1,916,099	\$2,618,957
Tuition assistance—unfunded	\$1,756,179	\$1,473,595	\$1,783,949	\$1,140,647
Total tuition assistance	\$3,478,696	\$3,319,432	\$3,700,048	\$3,759,604

It is also important to note that during the above referenced years, the opening enrollment dropped from 764 in FY 2019 to 663 in FY 2022. MLC anticipates expending \$3.6 million for tuition assistance by the end of FY 2023 and has budgeted \$4.5 million and \$4.9 million for tuition assistance in FY 2024 and FY 2025, respectively.

Net assets restricted for tuition assistance have also increased in recent years:

	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>
Purpose restrictions	\$3,949,369	\$4,183,468	\$7,872,118	\$4,416,752
Perpetual restrictions	\$7,141,984	\$7,939,454	\$9,688,748	\$10,604,307
Restricted for tuition assistance	\$11,091,353	\$12,122,922	\$17,560,866	\$15,021,059

It is important to note that market fluctuations have a significant impact on endowments established for tuition assistance, which is primarily the reason for the decrease in assets between FY 2021 and FY 2022.

Even with efforts in place, increases to tuition and room and board have outpaced increases to tuition assistance and WELS operating support.

	<u>Increase to full-time tuition, room and board</u>	<u>MLC tuition assistance</u>	<u>Average per student receiving aid</u>	<u>WELS operating support per student</u>
2017-18	\$980 – 5%	\$3,081,835	\$4,348	\$4,365
2018-19	\$1,020 – 5%	\$3,478,696	\$4,746	\$4,320
2019-20	\$640 – 3%	\$3,319,432	\$4,576	\$4,746
2020-21	\$770 – 3.5%	\$3,700,048	\$5,073	\$4,859
2021-22	\$690 – 3%	\$3,759,604	\$5,450	\$5,538
2022-23	\$710 – 3%	\$3,575,926*	\$5,667*	\$5,952

*As of 1/2023—additional distributions were scheduled after the date of this report.

MLC remains concerned about student debt but is seeing proof of progress being made in this area for MLC graduates. The following chart indicates the challenge in educational debt for college graduates both at MLC and elsewhere in our country, noting improvement being made on the MLC side for four consecutive years.

	<u>% MLC graduates with debt</u>	<u>Average amount of debt per MLC graduate</u>	<u>National debt average per graduate</u>
2016-17	77%	\$24,153	\$28,650
2017-18	75%	\$27,926	\$29,200
2018-19	78%	\$27,196	\$28,950
2019-20	75%	\$26,194	\$29,927
2020-21	76%	\$26,028	\$29,719
2021-22	69%	\$24,680	not available

We are thankful that the average educational debt for MLC graduates remains below the national average, and we are thankful for the reduction in the average debt over the last four graduating classes of MLC. We believe additional gifts for student assistance, growth of the Congregational Partner Grant Program, and the MLC financial literacy program have contributed to this reduction and we pray that improvement continues into the future.

We also thank God for his Spirit’s work in the hearts of our students’ parents who have taught biblical stewardship to their children. MLC graduates honor their Savior with an outstanding debt repayment rate. The latest Department of Education report (received in September 2022) shows that 185 MLC students entered Federal Student Loan debt repayment in 2019. Of students that entered repayment in 2019, only one MLC student defaulted between 2019, 2020, and 2021, which equates to a 0.5 percent cohort default rate. The national average default rate for FY 2019 is 2.3 percent (down from 7.3 percent in the previous cycle).

Keeping bottom line costs down

While we still have much work to do, MLC’s efforts have been blessed to keep bottom line costs as affordable as possible for our students. The chart below summarizes the average amount paid per full-time, resident student, once all grant aid has been accounted for.

	<u>Full-time tuition, room & board</u>	<u>Average paid per full-time resident student</u>	<u>Percentage paid per full-time student</u>
2016-17	\$19,490	\$12,400	64%
2017-18	\$20,470	\$12,800	63%
2018-19	\$21,490	\$12,700	59%
2019-20*	\$22,130	\$12,800	58%
2020-21*	\$22,900	\$13,600	59%
2021-22	\$23,590	\$13,600	58%

*Excludes room and board refunds due to pandemic

Use of MLC net assets without donor restrictions

As of June 30, 2022, net assets without donor restrictions at MLC totaled \$16,667,213. The MLC Governing Board has designated these net assets in this way:

Fund	Amount	Description
Assets invested in library books and equipment	\$2,354,025	MLC owns library books and equipment outright. These assets are included in net assets without donor restrictions.
Economic Sustainability Fund (ESF)	\$8,239,816	The MLC Governing Board has designated these funds for unforeseen or emergency needs. Having such reserve funds meets the best practice directives from the Higher Learning Commission, who oversees MLC's continuing accreditation. The board has set a minimum balance for the ESF of 10 percent of annual operating expenses (about \$2.4 million) and a maximum of 50 percent of the annual operating budget (approximately \$12 million).
Scholarship Fund	\$3,342,694	The amount set aside equals two years of MLC's internal funding for scholarships, plus enrollment incentives and the FY 2023 Congregational Partner Grant Program increase. Should government regulations make it impossible for MLC to continue to participate in the federal financial aid programs, these funds could provide MLC time to react without immediately reducing student assistance.
Program maintenance	\$2,022,000	In an effort to update the aging campus at MLC, the board has designated \$267,000 to fund remodeling of the social space in the Luther Student Center in FY 2023. The board has also designated \$1,755,000 towards a new residence hall.
Operating support	\$708,678	This funding represents net assets that have been designated for any unforeseen operating needs.

Current enrollment and MLC’s financial situation

Like many other colleges, MLC is experiencing lower enrollment, some of which can be attributed to the pandemic. The question remains as to how higher education and MLC will rebound as we move beyond the pandemic. Between FY 2019 and FY 2023, MLC’s undergraduate enrollment has decreased by about 135 undergraduate students or 17.7 percent. Reduced revenue, due to lower enrollment than planned, exceeded \$2.2 million in FY 2023 alone. MLC has renewed efforts in recruitment with the hopes of enrollment increasing in the years to come.

Although the college is struggling with lower enrollments than has been seen in recent years, the college has been blessed with unexpected financial resources that include \$1.7 million of institutional Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) and \$2.4 million from the Paycheck Protection Program. Both programs were part of the federal pandemic relief acts.

God’s people continue to support the college with generous gifts. The chart below indicates the donations received by MLC in the last six fiscal years. The “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign covered FY 2020 through FY 2022 and accounted for much of the increase in donations during those years. To God be the glory for these generous blessings!

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>	<u>FY 2023*</u>
Gifts	\$1,978,002	\$1,976,249	\$3,658,519	\$6,039,511	\$7,019,437	\$2,350,108
Bequests	<u>\$284,852</u>	<u>\$205,986</u>	<u>\$1,488,278</u>	<u>\$569,921</u>	<u>\$1,220,554</u>	<u>\$375,829</u>
Total donations	\$2,262,854	\$2,182,235	\$5,146,797	\$6,609,432	\$8,239,991	\$2,725,937

*Through January 2023

Strong donations coupled with healthy market performance has allowed endowments at MLC to grow. Below are the endowment balances for the last five fiscal years:

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>
Purpose	\$3,249,998	\$3,527,106	\$3,913,832	\$7,452,634	\$3,991,076
Perpetual	<u>\$7,249,592</u>	<u>\$7,814,826</u>	<u>\$8,663,045</u>	<u>\$10,464,240</u>	<u>\$11,431,148</u>
Total endowments	\$10,499,590	\$11,341,932	\$12,576,877	\$17,916,874	\$15,422,224

The financial blessings detailed above have resulted in stronger net asset balances of the college as detailed in the following chart:

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>
Unrestricted	\$9,969,108	\$10,191,622	\$12,184,274	\$15,545,224	\$16,667,213
Restricted	<u>\$40,632,777</u>	<u>\$41,360,366</u>	<u>\$43,551,725</u>	<u>\$55,662,785</u>	<u>\$54,945,088</u>
Total net assets	\$50,601,885	\$51,551,988	\$55,735,999	\$71,208,009	\$71,612,301

The 2024–25 biennium will challenge MLC with lower enrollments accompanied by significant inflation. We thank God for the blessings he has poured upon us and pray he continues to guide us as we navigate through these challenging times. To God be the glory!

God's gifts to MLC: Campus buildings, improvements, and maintenance

Improving and expanding indoor social space

Students and consultants have long pointed out that MLC's campus was not designed with student social space in mind. That means that such gathering space is in short supply on campus. During the past two years, two large patio gathering spaces have been added in outdoor locations, but winter limits their use. MLC is well aware that a campus in the upper Midwest needs more indoor student social space. Two such efforts are currently underway.

The first is a complete renovation of the Luther Student Center Student Union that began after graduation this May and will be completed before the new school year. The Luther Student Center is located near the heart of our campus, adjacent to the Chapel of the Christ and Wittenberg Collegiate Center. Every student, every day, uses the Luther Student Center. This summer the main floor social area of the Luther Student Center, the Student Union, will be renovated. There will be a completely different design for that whole area including new furniture, lighting, and flooring. The renovation raises half of the existing lounge to the main floor level to create a significantly more open floor space. This will promote more impromptu gatherings and easy connection to the Cultural Engagement Center. The lower half will have game tables and room for other socializing activities. A variety of moveable furniture will allow students to study and socialize where they feel comfortable and allow customization of the space to suit ever-changing activities. The design will be dynamic but also support relaxation and conversations.

The second area of improvement to indoor social space is located in the lower level of Centennial Hall. The completion of the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse, with its new batting/pitching cages on its mezzanine level, means that the Centennial basement is no longer needed by our baseball and softball teams. Renovations in that area—originally a small gymnasium—have already begun to turn this space into a place for late-night gatherings. When the work is completed, the area will include space for making and enjoying pizzas and other snacks, for watching sports or movies, and even a rock-climbing wall.

Preventative maintenance

Fire panel/device upgrades are being completed in phases in all buildings across campus. Concord Hall and Augustana Hall are scheduled for upgrades this summer.

Funds are routinely budgeted to address the most immediate masonry maintenance and repair needs. The Wittenberg Collegiate Center and Wittenberg Collegiate Center Link building recently received brick repair—the next phase of tuckpointing/sealants is scheduled for Centennial Hall.

Annual LED lighting upgrades continue to be made in MLC's buildings. When these LED upgrades are installed, the results include lowered operational costs, significantly less ongoing maintenance of lamp-based systems, and improved learning and working environments for students and staff.

God's gifts to MLC: Training students in financial literacy

The financial wellness program on campus, called MLC Direction, provides opportunities for our students to develop healthy financial skills and knowledge in order to become faithful stewards of God's blessings. This program is designed to support and encourage the financial health of all MLC students through various means.

Each year students are asked to complete two financial topics through the non-profit organization CashCourse. Students that complete these assigned topics are eligible for various prizes throughout the year. Juniors have an opportunity to review the topic of credit during a required flex period in the fall semester. Graduating students are the central focus of the program and these students have the opportunity to complete an individual meeting that includes a review of loan details, a primer on minister of the gospel tax implications, and an example zero-based budget for future living expenses. Each spring we partner with AmericaSaves for America Saves Week to help students understand the importance of saving funds for emergencies and major future goals.

The financial wellness program and academics have partnered to create a new mathematics course titled Organizational and Personal Finance. The students in this course cover financial topics in more depth with additional hands-on learning opportunities. Throughout all of the initiatives on campus, we strive to make financial education impactful and fun.

God's gifts to MLC: Gifts through our Mission Advancement office

The Office of Mission Advancement is responsible for overall development, public and community relations, alumni relations, and advancement efforts at MLC.

Although it is difficult to quantify all of the blessings that MLC receives through the efforts of the Mission Advancement Office, as of Feb. 28, 2023, we have received \$2,947,052 in gifts, which represents 104 percent of our FY 2022–23 goal of \$2,828,500. These gifts were received from 2,046 donors. We have conducted 64 face-to-face visits in 7 different states. This gift total includes Congregational Partner Grant Program gifts (CPGP). The CPGP gifts are also shown in the “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign table below.

We are also pleased to report that these year-to-date totals in FY 2023 supported nearly 16 percent of MLC’s operating costs. Subsidy from WELS provided an additional 16 percent of operating support. We offer our sincere thanks to those who have given so generously to make this happen.

Scholarships—annual and endowed

Another significant factor in helping to ease the financial burden on students can be seen in the number of endowed and annual scholarships established at MLC. For the 2022–23 school year, more than 70 endowed and annual funds provided monies for MLC institutional awards. In the last year alone, nine endowed and two annual scholarships have been established with more in the initial steps of the process. We are very thankful to God’s people everywhere who support our future staff ministers, pastors, and teachers, with financial gifts for these vital scholarships!

Congregational Partner Grant Program

Through the Congregational Partner Grant Program, MLC matches dollar for dollar, up to \$1,200, the gift a congregation gathers to apply to the tuition of their student(s) at MLC. As a renewable effort, the Congregational Partner Grant Program can provide four or five years of financial aid support—up to \$12,000 to each student—in addition to the other financial aid the student receives. For the 2022–23 school year, more than 500 students from more than 225 congregations received congregational grants that were matched by MLC. This resulted in more than \$1 million in financial aid to our students! Because of the success of the program and the need for continued financial aid, beginning in academic year 2023–24, the Congregational Partner Grant Program will match up to \$1,320 per year.

“Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign

We concluded our three-year capital campaign on June 30, 2022, but our efforts regarding tuition assistance and facilities will continue on. The “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign accomplished two significant goals: 1) to provide even more financial aid to our students, especially through our Congregational Partner Grant Program; and 2) to upgrade facilities that provide our current students with a wonderful campus experience during their college years as well as become an even more inviting home to prospective students.

MLC staff and the representatives from our WELS Ministry of Christian Giving made more than 1,700 “Equipping Christian Witnesses” visits to God’s people throughout the country. These encouragements to individuals and families, along with encouragements to our congregations, were positively received. Here are the gifts from God’s people through this campaign, as of June 30, 2022:

Campaign totals	Received	Pledge balance	Total
General campaign:	\$2,329,825	\$6,150	\$2,335,975
Facilities:	\$3,789,646	\$0	\$3,789,646
Residence hall facilities:	\$1,930,378	\$8,000	\$1,938,378
Congregational Partner Grant Program:	<u>\$1,540,240</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$1,540,240</u>
Total “Equipping Christian Witnesses” gifts & pledges:	\$9,590,089	\$14,150	\$9,604,239

God’s gifts to MLC: Admissions and student retention

With pastoral and teaching vacancies in our synod remaining high, our admissions department has worked hard to increase the visibility of MLC’s ministry in our synod. Our admissions team has taken a different approach to staffing the department by calling admissions counselors with years of experience in the classroom and pulpit. This approach has allowed our counselors to leverage their real-life ministry experience as they work with students considering public ministry. That experience of our recruiters also leverages relationships established through years of ministry

in our WELS churches and schools. We have also added a co-curricular admissions counselor who reaches out to high school students with special gifts in co-curricular activities such as sports and music.

A look ahead

When the “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign ended on June 30, 2022, MLC wanted to make sure that both our campus and our entire synod remembered that raising up a new generation of faithful gospel messengers was not merely a capital campaign. That is a key task for every generation of Christians until Christ returns.

In order not to lose any momentum God had allowed to develop during the “Equipping Christian Witnesses” campaign, MLC launched a new strategic plan on July 1, 2023. That strategic plan, entitled *Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross*, was the result of more than a year of listening to several hundred voices in our synod both on and off campus.

The strategic plan was intentionally kept very short since the details of the plan are being written not by MLC administration but every day as each student, staff, and faculty member pursues excellence by God’s grace in their unique calling on the MLC campus. More than 40 Vision/Traction Organizers have been written by staff departments and faculty divisions, as well as by student groups such as our MLC Student Senate. These Vision/Traction Organizers help everyone at MLC to stay focused on their concrete plans for pursuing excellence under the cross in their area of MLC’s ministry. Here is the one-page summary of our new strategic plan:

Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross

As family in Christ, MLC pursues excellence under the cross in equipping called workers for our synod and its mission fields around the world.

Foundational beliefs of MLC’s pursuit of excellence under the cross:

- **God loves us.** We *pursue excellence under **CHRIST’S** cross* as God’s fully loved children who know our heavenly Father is already perfectly pleased with us in Christ.
- **God gifts us.** We *pursue **EXCELLENCE** under the cross* by using the unique talents God has given each of us to offer him the best his grace can inspire in us.
- **God emboldens us.** We *pursue excellence under **OUR OWN** cross* as we die to mediocrity and apathy and rise in Christ with the courage to take risks for the gospel.

Key initiatives of MLC’s pursuit of excellence under the cross:

- **Initiative #1: We *embrace* our family’s identity.**
We pursue excellence under the cross as we delight without apology in being a confessional Lutheran faith family whose defining mission is to equip and support the current and future generations of faithful pastors, educators, and staff ministers.
- **Initiative #2: We *empower* our family’s formation.**
We pursue excellence under the cross as we encourage spiritual and intellectual growth for our entire family; support the physical and emotional health of each family member; and engage gracefully in difficult conversations to move our mission forward.
- **Initiative #3: We *expand* our family’s reach.**
We pursue excellence under the cross as we strive to reflect the “every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Revelation 7:9) reality of God’s people by working to become a more welcoming home for students of all ages and backgrounds who have gifts for ministry.
- **Initiative #4: We *endow* our family’s home.**
We pursue excellence under the cross as we make MLC significantly more affordable without sacrificing an excellent college experience on a beautiful, well-equipped campus.

Below is a brief sampling of various ways MLC is seeking to pursue excellence in the years ahead:

Looking ahead in pursuing excellence under the cross in academics

We are also aware that continuing to strengthen academic excellence for our undergraduates—and our graduate and continuing education students—is vital to MLC’s mission. Here are some initiatives at MLC that are seeking, under God’s blessing, to strengthen our academic program.

A new MLC program: Competency-Based Education

Competency-based education is an approach to teaching and learning that allows students to advance based on their ability to demonstrate the mastery of a skill or competency at their own pace regardless of environment.

Doctors Martin and Nichole LaGrow are our new director (Nichole) and Instructional Designer (Martin) in this program for non-traditional students seeking to major in elementary education and eligibility for a teaching license. Nichole's work began on Jan. 1, 2023. Nichole has already been meeting regularly with administrators and faculty. She is making herself aware of the requirements necessary to license this new MLC program both in Minnesota and to have it approved with our accrediting agency. Both of the LaGrows attended the Higher Learning Commission's annual conference in March to gain a better understanding of MLC's pathway to accreditation for this new program.

A new January term (J-term)

MLC's academic calendar for 2023–24 was finalized to include a January term (J-term), incorporating an extra 2.5 weeks in early January for field/ministry experiences. Student teaching schedules are not affected by this term. J-term will be utilized by students conducting early field or clinical experiences in education/staff ministry programs or early ministry experiences in the pre-seminary program. While the first semester's calendar remains unchanged, the second semester now incorporates this new session, a one-week spring break (previously two), and a graduation date one week later than previously scheduled.

Completing the cycle of program review at MLC

As noted earlier, since the development of a template for review in 2016–17, MLC continues the practice of reviewing its academic programs on a seven-year cycle. During the 2023–24 school year, the general education curriculum will be reviewed. Once that review is completed, the seven-year cycle of program reviews will simply begin again. This ongoing pattern of review helps to ensure that we are continuing to pursue excellence in all our academic programs.

Looking ahead in pursuing excellence under the cross in undergraduate enrollment

We are prayerful and hopeful that in the coming decade, MLC's undergraduate enrollment will rebound back toward 700 undergraduates. We know that God is the one who motivates these future church leaders into service. We also know that God uses his people across the world in our synod's churches and schools to encourage others to consider a career in the public ministry. We are working closely with our WELS high schools that recently saw a decreasing percentage of their graduates continue on to MLC to study for the ministry. We are looking for ways to partner even better with those high schools so that we can see that percentage of their graduates who go on to study at MLC return to or even exceed historical averages. In the same way, we are working with our high schools that have been blessed with strong percentages of graduates attending MLC to learn methods and procedures that could be shared with other schools. Because of the significant influence that parents have on their graduating high school students, we are looking for ways strengthen how we partner with parents in the recruitment process.

We are also employing new ways to reach out to the thousands of confirmands of WELS congregations who don't attend WELS high schools. Through all these efforts we keep working so that, with God's help and guidance, we can reach an ever-increasing number of students who might consider studying for the public ministry.

Looking ahead in pursuing excellence in mission advancement

In keeping with our new strategic plan and campus master plan, we are focused on raising financial support for more campus renovations. We have already secured funding for the Luther Student Center renovation that will occur in summer 2023.

We are currently seeking additional gifts to renovate the Chapel of the Christ lower level. Due to the growth of our music programs and students involved, we have the opportunity to provide a dedicated music rehearsal and recital space. For example, in the 2022 graduating class, 95 percent of the 135 graduates participated in our various music programs! Phase 1 of this project will provide the necessary infrastructure.

Our new academic program for second-career teachers, Competency-Based Education, continues to gain support. The first two years of this program will be funded with charitable gifts. The third year will be supported with a mix of charitable gifts and tuition revenue. Subsequent years will be funded with tuition revenue. God has blessed this program with the necessary funding to move forward already in FY 2022–23.

MLC's Office of Mission Advancement also remains focused on achieving the goal of increasing all financial aid for our students by 10 percent each year for five years (end date of June 30, 2027). Through this effort, under God's blessing, we hope to see the continued reduction in the educational debt of MLC graduates. We have already seen that average

educational debt of our graduating seniors decline for four straight years. We continue to pray and work so that this trend continues for at least the next four years.

Looking ahead in pursuit of excellence in facilities

The Chapel of the Christ's lower level

The Chapel of the Christ was built 12 years ago. Unfortunately, the lower level was never completed due to cost. This space was designated for rehearsals, recitals, and instruction. Those original ideas for the lower level were revisited, refined, and implemented into the new design of the music space in the Chapel's lower level. The new plans include a rehearsal space for handbells, a guitar studio, a computer lab for composition and theory students, and storage for robes and instruments. The centerpiece is a large recital and rehearsal room.

This project is out of budget but included in the Pursuing Excellence donor casebook. Phase 1 of the project is constructing and installing the necessary infrastructure at an estimated \$250,000. This includes HVAC and sprinkling modifications, new lighting, and new power. WELS promoted Phase 1 in its February synodwide appeal.

Residence hall updates

Centennial Hall continues to receive some much-needed attention. Conceptual drawings of work planned for the dormitory include bathroom remodeling, creating an engaging new student social space in the former dorm gymnasium, and adding elevator/lift equipment in the dorm. Work will continue as cost estimates are gathered.

We also are optimistic, as synodical leadership considers various funding models, that we will move ahead on the long-awaited construction of a new residence hall on MLC's campus. The current newest residence hall on MLC's campus was built in 1971. Needless to say, much has changed in residence hall design on college campuses in the 52 years since that building was constructed. The new residence hall, currently called Luther Heights, would house about 170 students with significant improvements in living and fellowship space compared to our current residence halls. Many generous gifts from God's people have already laid a foundation for Luther Heights. It is our prayer that the next *Book of Reports and Memorials* will be able to report that Luther Heights is under construction or perhaps even nearing completion.

Infrastructure upgrades

Campus technology infrastructure, including the physical connections between campus buildings, network switches, and access points, will require substantial investment in the short-to-medium term. These improvements will allow faculty, staff, and students to leverage the improved Internet connectivity brought onto campus in March 2022 and provide a suitable foundation for the campus' current and future technology needs.

A closing request

Please keep your college of ministry in your prayers as we partner with you in raising up the next generation of well-trained and faithful gospel messengers. Pursuing excellence under the cross is far more than a strategic plan slogan. Pursuing excellence under the cross speaks to our commitment to raise up an ever-growing number of young (and not-so-young) women and men whom the gospel has taught to say, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).

Rev. Richard Gurgel, reporter

Rev. Aaron Mueller, chairman

Teacher Joe Archer

Teacher Paul Kelm

Mr. Thomas Klaudt

Mr. Dale Krause

Teacher Joel Lauber

Rev. Daniel Leyrer

Rev. Michael Lindemann

Mr. Timothy Luetzow

Rev. Peter Prange

Teacher David Uhlhorn

Mr. Michael Valleau

Mr. Andrew Van Weele

Mr. Steve Wasser

Advisory:

Rev. Richard Gurgel, Martin Luther College president

Rev. Dennis Klatt, Minnesota District president

Mr. Michael Krueger

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

Mr. Thomas Walters

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Floor Committee #10

Our calling

Initially a pastoral seminary for the old Michigan Synod, Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) has served as a ministry preparatory high school of WELS since its re-opening on Sept. 13, 1910. Over the past 113 years, more than 5,000 graduates have been given a Christian education that is focused on encouraging and equipping students for the public ministry of the gospel. MLS is very proud and grateful that our synod has given us the special purpose to prepare high school students for the public ministry of the gospel, encouraging them to enroll in the WELS College of Ministry, Martin Luther College.

As a preparatory high school of WELS, MLS is owned and operated by the people of WELS. Because of WELS' commitment to ministerial education at all three levels (prep, college, seminary), those who study at MLS are supported and encouraged by our entire fellowship to become pastors, teachers, and staff ministers.

Our calling as a preparatory high school of WELS is recognized in the thousands of alumni who have been called and served faithfully as ministers of the gospel. Since our inception as a prep school, approximately 45 percent of all MLS graduates enroll at Martin Luther College (MLC), providing a steady stream of students preparing for service in the church. A special blessing on our campus are the international students who enroll at MLS, providing enhanced cultural awareness for our students and potential called workers with different ethnicities to reach the world with the gospel. More than any other high school, international alumni of MLS are called into the public ministry, providing a much-needed diversity for our WELS ministerium.

MLS also fulfills its calling by operating a fiscally responsible high school that remains affordable for parents who desire that for their children. In order to provide a quality ministerial education, MLS has three sources of funding: annual subsidy from WELS Board for Ministerial Education (BME), gifts from God's people in WELS, and tuition and room and board payments. MLS receives no annual support from government-sponsored school choice vouchers or tax incentive programs. Even so, we have made the commitment that no student will be turned away from an MLS education for financial reasons. By God's grace and through gifts from God's people, we intend to keep that commitment. Annual distribution of tuition assistance exceeds \$300,000.

Our current situation

Enrollment

MLS opened the 2022–23 school year with an enrollment of 194, representing an increase of 10 percent from the previous year's end. The freshman class is the largest on campus, beginning a hopeful trend of increased enrollment in future years. We are grateful that MLS has been able to enroll a larger percentage of students (32 percent) from the Michigan District grade schools than when MLS was at its highest enrollment (27 percent). It is not surprising that the healthier WELS grade school enrollments create greater potential for increased enrollment at MLS.

The MLS student body comprises students from seven different states and four districts of WELS. We have 10 international students from four foreign countries. More than 80 percent of MLS students come from lay worker families, providing a wider pool of potential first-generation called workers. Approximately 60 percent of MLS students live in the dormitory.

Recruitment for ministry

As a ministry preparatory high school of WELS, recruitment for ministry is at the core of our school curriculum and culture. Events such as Cardinal for a Day; children's theater; lock-in; summer sports and fine arts camps; basketball tournaments; science and fine arts fairs; and a Junior Cardinals flag football and poms program all are focused on exposing children to the MLS family and its ministry. This year we took our children's theater production of *Camelot and Camelittle* on the road to give grade school students and families from southern Michigan an opportunity to experience the fine arts opportunities of MLS. Prospective students are invited to shadow a current Cardinal to experience classes and a night in the dormitory. These programs bring nearly 3,000 grade school students to our campus each year to expose them to the MLS family and our ministry. A travel fund has been established to provide financial assistance to families who come from a distance to visit MLS and experience the MLS family environment firsthand.

Once they become MLS Cardinals, students are given hands-on ministry experiences in every year of their education. Freshmen participate in Ministry Day when called workers come to campus to share their experiences. Sophomore Night connects current MLS students to MLS alumni as well as Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary recruiters for an evening of fellowship and ministry encouragement. Juniors travel to various WELS locations (the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Luther Preparatory School, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) on their way to MLC for Junior Tour. For many MLS juniors, this is the first time that they have been able to experience the MLC campus in person, which has proven to be a pivotal moment in their college decision planning. Seniors participate in Taste of Ministry, during which they travel to schools and churches to shadow an experienced pastor or teacher to better understand the ministry behind the scenes. Several times a year senior boys take a trip to WLS to connect their education with the ministry of WLS and pastoral studies on our seminary's campus. Senior boys also are given the opportunity to lead the evening chapel by writing and delivering their own devotion for their classmates as well as presiding over the liturgy for morning chapel on Tuesdays.

The entire student body participates in Cardinal for a Day, on which approximately 300 grade school students attend classes and chapel to experience MLS. Our students are given the opportunity to prepare lessons for these grade schoolers and lead them through the course of the day. January's Mission Seminar sets aside a day in which we invite a WELS home or world missionary to speak with the entire student body about the work being done in WELS missions. Approximately 25 percent of MLS students are chosen annually to participate in Project Titus, a program that connects MLS students with mission-minded congregations to assist with outreach and ministry activities. These experiences also are instrumental for many students in making the decision for entering the public ministry of the gospel. Finally, MLC admissions counselors come to MLS several times each year to talk with students about college options and how MLC trains a core of Christian witnesses.

This year a special emphasis was placed on ministry recruitment with WELS Home Missions. In connection with the WELS initiative to establish 100 new missions in 10 years, MLS partnered with the WELS Board for Home Missions to place all senior boys who desired a pastor track taste of ministry experience in mission settings across the country. Ten MLS seniors flew to WELS Home Mission settings from Huntersville, N.C., to Boise, Idaho, to gain firsthand knowledge of the life of a mission pastor. We plan to continue that partnership in the current fiscal year.

Needless to say, recruitment for ministry is a robust and continual effort on the MLS campus.

Curricular and extracurricular activities

MLS offers the highest quality, Christ-centered curriculum that prepares high school students for entrance into the college of their choosing. MLS graduates exceed the standards established by the State of Michigan and Martin Luther College in most subjects. The average class size of 22 and student to teacher ratio of 7:1 ensures that students receive individual attention, academic support, and ministry encouragement. While standards are high, MLS students averaged a 3.54 GPA in 2022.

A special emphasis is placed on languages and music in preparation for future service in the church. All students take Latin in their first year and at least three consecutive years of a foreign language. One hundred percent of MLS students participate in some type of music course and nearly 90 percent participate in piano or organ. The addition of a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) program expands the MLS science curriculum and better equips future WELS teachers for their own classrooms.

Extracurriculars are an added opportunity to teach life lessons that prepare students for future service. Because of the smaller size of our campus, students have more opportunity to participate in interscholastic competition

with more than 95 percent of MLS students participating in one or more extracurriculars. MLS regularly achieves postseason athletic awards in most major sports. So far this year our athletic teams won MHSAA District titles in football and boys and girls basketball, a regional championship in boys cross country, and an individual state wrestling championship. It really is a small school advantage with big school opportunities.

Scholarships supporting students

MLS already provides more scholarship assistance to its alumni attending MLC than any other high school, but a goal was set this past fiscal year to nearly double the number of endowed scholarships offered to seniors moving on to MLC. The purpose of this initiative was twofold: first, to help reduce student debt for MLS alumni at MLC thus reducing one roadblock from entering the public ministry, and second, to make a commitment to current MLS students and families that their alma mater will support them as they continue on the path to ministry. By God's grace and the generosity of God's people, that goal was met and 21 scholarships are now fully endowed. Additionally, several other scholarships for current MLS students were established to assist with the financial costs at the high school level. We thank God for these gifts and ask for him to bless this continuing effort.

Campus improvements

The major campus improvement this biennium was the replacement of the original bleachers in the 1985 gymnasium addition. New motorized and handicap compliant bleachers give students and visitors a much safer and more comfortable viewing experience. With the help of Builders for Christ, all of the MLS tutor apartments were given an extensive makeover, providing a modern residence for our hard-working dorm staff.

End of service

At the end of the 2021–22 school year, Prof. Marcus Bode retired from public ministry after 35 years of service at MLS. The synod in convention will elect a new MLS Governing Board chairman as Pastor Greg Gibbons has announced that he will not stand for reelection due to lingering health issues after a successful kidney transplant. We are grateful to the Lord for both of these faithful servants and their collective impact on MLS and its ministry.

A look ahead

Strategic planning underway

With MLS in a much stronger financial position, our attention has turned to planning for the future. Prof. Steve Thiesfeldt has begun a strategic planning process that will help strengthen the MLS ministry for years to come. We anticipate several initiatives to be developed in key areas providing both a roadmap for our efforts and an enhanced educational experience for our students.

Mission advancement

MLS is now the only ministerial education school without its own director of mission advancement and dedicated mission advancement office. Following the Board for Ministerial Education recommendation in October 2022 that each ministerial education school establish its own mission advancement office, MLS contracted with the Bentz, Whaley, Flessner (BWF) consulting firm to provide professional opinions about the coordination among the MLS mission advancement efforts, MLS Foundation, and WELS Ministry of Christian Giving. We expect a report in spring 2023 that will both clarify our collaborative efforts in that area and enhance our ability to reach those who love this school and desire to support the ministry of MLS.

Expanding our reach

MLS continues to explore possibilities to enroll students from districts outside of Michigan. The Encouragement Grant initiative has been expanded to provide even more grants for first-generation MLS students, first from a congregation's MLS students, and students that excel in leadership or the arts. Pastors and principals are invited to nominate their students to receive one of those Encouragement Grants.

In a time of growing concern for the pastor and teacher vacancies in our synod, we ask that our synod listen to Jesus' encouragement to "ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest fields." MLS stands ready to encourage and equip high school students for the humbling privilege of serving the Lord in the full-time ministry of the gospel, encouraging them to enroll in Martin Luther College, our WELS college of ministry.

Please visit mlsem.org for more information about your WELS preparatory high school in Saginaw, Mich.

Rev. Mark Luetzow, reporter

Rev. Greg Gibbons, chairman
Rev. Adam Bode, vice chairman, Northern Wisconsin District
Rev. Craig Engel, Minnesota District
Mr. Mark Eubank, Michigan District
Teacher Josh Glowicki, Nebraska District
Mr. Kevin Keller, Southeastern Wisconsin District
Teacher John Melso, Western Wisconsin District
Rev. Andrew Schroeder, Arizona-California District

Advisory:

Rev. Mark Luetzow, Michigan Lutheran Seminary president
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president
Rev. Snowden Sims, Michigan District president

Luther Preparatory School Floor Committee #10

Our calling

Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., has a single mission given to it by the synod when the prep department was first established on the Watertown campus in 1865: To encourage and prepare high school students for service in the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. That mission is central to everything we do—in the classroom, in co-curricular activities, in our worship services, and in the personal guidance given to every student.

LPS is owned and operated by WELS. The synod has given LPS the privilege and responsibility to carry out this important work. The LPS Governing Board, faculty, and staff are grateful to our church body, which supports the work of LPS with its prayers, gifts, and gospel-laced encouraging words.

That LPS fulfills its purpose is seen by the fact that since its beginning as a stand-alone prep school in 1995, 55 percent of all Luther Prep graduates have enrolled at Martin Luther College (MLC). Historically LPS graduates have comprised almost 40 percent of traditional Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) graduates. Twenty-three percent of the students enrolled at MLC this past year were Luther Prep graduates. Just shy of 50 percent of the MLC freshmen pastor track are LPS graduates. More than 50 percent of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's first-year class are LPS graduates, and that is the seminary's largest junior class in more than 15 years.

God graciously blesses the work done at LPS, which in turn benefits our synod and our calling in Christ's Church.

Luther Prep depends on three sources of funding to carry out its calling: 1) synod support; 2) payments for tuition and room and board; and 3) special gifts from congregations, groups, and individuals. We are grateful for the gospel's work of prompting such generosity and thankful hearts in God's people.

Our current situation

Enrollment

Enrollment has remained fairly stable over the past ten years. LPS opened school year 2022–23 with an enrollment of 408. Our students come from 26 states, 3 foreign countries, 171 congregations, and all 12 WELS districts. More than two-thirds of our students come from lay families. Ninety percent of LPS students reside in the dormitories. Fourteen percent are minorities.

Recruitment to LPS, with an eye on future full-time gospel ministry, remains a top priority. We always invite and welcome all WELS upper grade students to visit our campus, "shadow" a Prep student, and spend a night in one of

the dormitories to get a feel for Prep life. We host annual recruitment events such as WELS area and national co-ed basketball tournaments, Phoenix for a Day, the fall play, children's theater, and the musical, as well as numerous summer athletic camps. Each year these events bring 4,500 WELS grade school students from across the country to our campus.

Members of WELS are aware of the pastor/teacher shortage and its effects on gospel ministry. We join in prayer that MLC's enrollment would increase by 15 percent, yes, even more, to its pre-pandemic enrollment in order to fill future ministry needs. The LPS Governing Board desires all WELS members to know that incoming students to Luther Prep do not need to know that they will be pastors, teachers, or staff ministers. What 13-year-olds truly know how they vocationally want to serve Jesus with the rest of their lives? Prep schools are for all WELS students receiving a recommendation from their pastor and, if applicable, their WELS principal, and are willing to be encouraged toward the goal of ministry. God's past blessings have shown that if Luther Prep's enrollment increased by 100 students, MLC's enrollment will increase by 50.

The LPS Governing Board is also intent on having all WELS families know that LPS does not want finances to be a major obstacle that prohibits families from sending their children to Luther Prep for a Christ-centered education that will prepare them well for public ministry or for any other vocation. LPS President Mark Crass is willing to talk through financial challenges with any parent considering LPS with a stated desire to make enrollment workable.

We also like to say: "You are not sending your child away, but rather to something. . . . Something that will serve your child well for all of time and into eternity." Parent after parent after parent has eagerly and joyously expressed that they are closer to their children because they have sent them to LPS where the gospel predominates.

Preparing for the mission

The Word is central in all we do. Chapel services—the heartbeat of Prep's daily living—are held twice daily. All classes are taught from a scriptural perspective, and students are encouraged in their personal devotional lives. The Holy Spirit works through the means of grace to encourage and prepare our young people for lives of gospel ministry and service.

The LPS curriculum is designed to prepare students to meet or exceed the requirements of MLC. LPS recognizes the need and desire for future musicians in our Lutheran congregations and classrooms. More than 95 percent of our students take piano lessons. The LPS organ program produces the most organ students for MLC. All students participate in chorus their first year, with more than 90 percent continuing thereafter. Well over one hundred students are involved in the concert band, jazz band, brass choir, and string and guitar ensembles. Our select Prep Singer group sings at worship services in area congregations throughout the year and tours outside of Wisconsin every year during our spring break. All students take at least one year of Latin and three consecutive years of a foreign language in order to thoroughly prepare them for future language studies, especially those in the biblical languages. As a side benefit, data has shown a correlation that students who take Latin and music have increased ACT/SAT scores and increased grade point averages.

Because our purpose is to prepare future pastors, teachers, and staff ministers, LPS offers age-appropriate ministry experiences to its students. All of our seniors take part in our Taste of Ministry program, in which prospective pastor students spend two days with an area WELS pastor, and our prospective teacher students spend two days in a classroom with an area elementary school teacher. Project Timothy is a program designed to provide mission, ministry, and cross-cultural experiences to LPS students. Approximately 60 students each year assist with outreach and education programs of U.S. mission congregations in Florida, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, North Carolina, and Alaska. With travel restrictions being lifted, some also go on Project Timothy trips to Germany, St. Lucia, Puerto Rico, and the Czech Republic. Also, senior boys are given the opportunity to prepare and speak an evening devotion to the student body. It is a common practice for their classmates to speak words of encouragement to these young men after the devotion is given.

Each year the entire junior class visits Martin Luther College. By the time our students graduate, each one will have met at least four times with an MLC recruiter. An array of missionaries, professors, teachers, pastors, and MLC and WLS students present topical ministry workshops at our annual Ministry Day. The entire student body takes part in Ministry Day. Sophomores also take an annual trip to the seminary, and seniors in the LPS pastor track visit the seminary each fall for worship, class visitation, and a tour.

Eight years ago LPS began to fully integrate a 1:1 initiative to create a technology-rich environment for both teaching and learning. Every LPS student is equipped with a Chromebook for use in class and in the dormitory using

the wireless secure student network. This has allowed LPS faculty to have additional options for presentation of information in classes along with access to current information in the classroom. Our students learn to use these tools, which they in turn will utilize in their future classrooms and congregations.

The State of Wisconsin offers three parental choice programs for Wisconsin residents: Milwaukee, Racine, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs. In these programs parents, who fall under a designated family-size-based income threshold, receive a voucher from the State of Wisconsin that pays the tuition costs of education for their children at participating private and religious schools.

The governing board approved Prep's entry into these programs in 2017. Each year the governing board reviews these programs to ensure that they are consistent with the mission of LPS. Approximately 150 students participate in these parental choice programs. These programs have proven to be financially beneficial to our parents who are offering their sons and daughters for ministry. They have also afforded LPS the opportunity to award additional financial aid to many other families who are not able to participate in the programs.

LPS has welcomed a director of mission advancement. Ms. Nicole Bessert started her work at Prep this past January. She is a 2002 graduate of Luther Prep and comes to LPS having 15 years of experience in mission advancement work.

LPS also welcomed Ms. Dominique Wrobel as its public relations director. Her efforts are seen on Instagram, Facebook, and the LPS website. Wrobel serves in several other areas, including that of coordinating Luther Prep's annual gala.

After 49 years of service in ministry, Prof. Carl Hochmuth has announced his retirement at the conclusion of the 2023–24 school year. We thank God for his faithful labors in the Lord.

Capital projects/improvements

Though the capital projects and improvements have not been glitzy over the past biennium, they have been necessary to maintaining the synod's beautiful 35-acre campus and its buildings. We invite anyone who is in the Watertown area to visit this well-maintained synodical campus at almost any time. We would gladly give you a tour as well.

A look ahead

Music is an integral component of our heritage, the Church, and Lutheran worship. The Lord has blessed LPS with an excellent music program and numerous musically gifted students, all preparing for service in the Church. The LPS music auditorium, built during the President William Howard Taft administration, is 111 years old. The Luther Prep Governing Board has addressed the construction of a new music center. When a new music center is built, the present auditorium would be repurposed to its original use and serve as a secondary gymnasium to accommodate our freshmen teams, wrestling team, dance team, and plethora of intramural teams, as well as functioning in other capacities. LPS also plans to add additional parking.

Since the last synod convention, LPS has received a conceptual design for a music center. We have also undertaken a financial feasibility study done by the consulting group Generis. LPS will work in harmony with synod leadership and WELS Ministry of Christian Giving as it moves forward. At the time of this writing, WELS' Synodical Council awaits its meeting, where approval for Luther Prep's next steps could be given. More information will likely be shared at the 2023 synod convention.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Luke 10:2). The saints have been praying that prayer for the past two millennia. With the large number of vacancies in WELS pastoral and teaching ministries, and with our synod's gospel-driven plan of opening 100 missions in the next 10 years, the Lord's invitation to prayer becomes even more compelling. We pray fervently that the Lord will move the hearts of parents to offer their sons and daughters for gospel ministry, and that young people will consider the high calling of gospel ministry.

We'll say it again. LPS welcomes all WELS/ELS students to apply for enrollment. They will be encouraged and prepared for full-time ministry in their years at Prep. Should they choose a different direction after graduating, we know that they will be firmly grounded in faith and will serve the Lord Jesus and his Church in some other vocation.

Much more information can be found at lps.wels.net or by calling LPS at 920-261-4352.

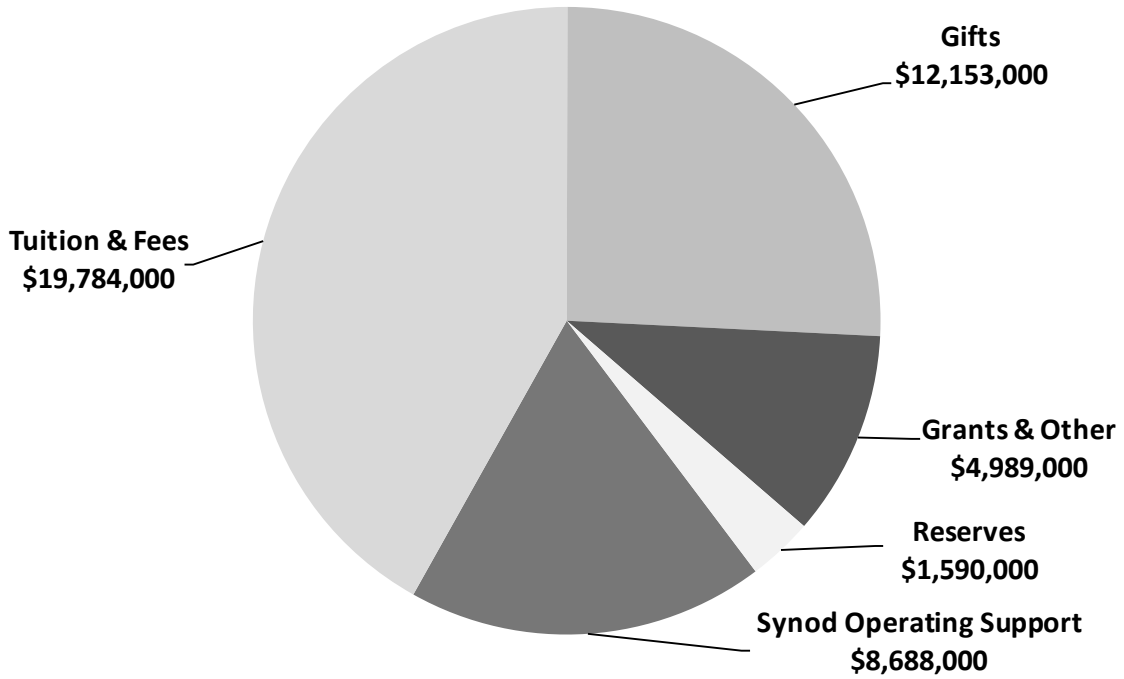
Rev. Matthew Crass, reporter

Rev. Timothy Spaude, chairman
Rev. Daniel Schmidt, vice chairman
Mr. Stephen Balza, secretary
Teacher Seth Fitzsimmons
Teacher Peter Gumm
Rev. Jesse Johnston
Mr. Jack May
Rev. Thomas Moldenhauer

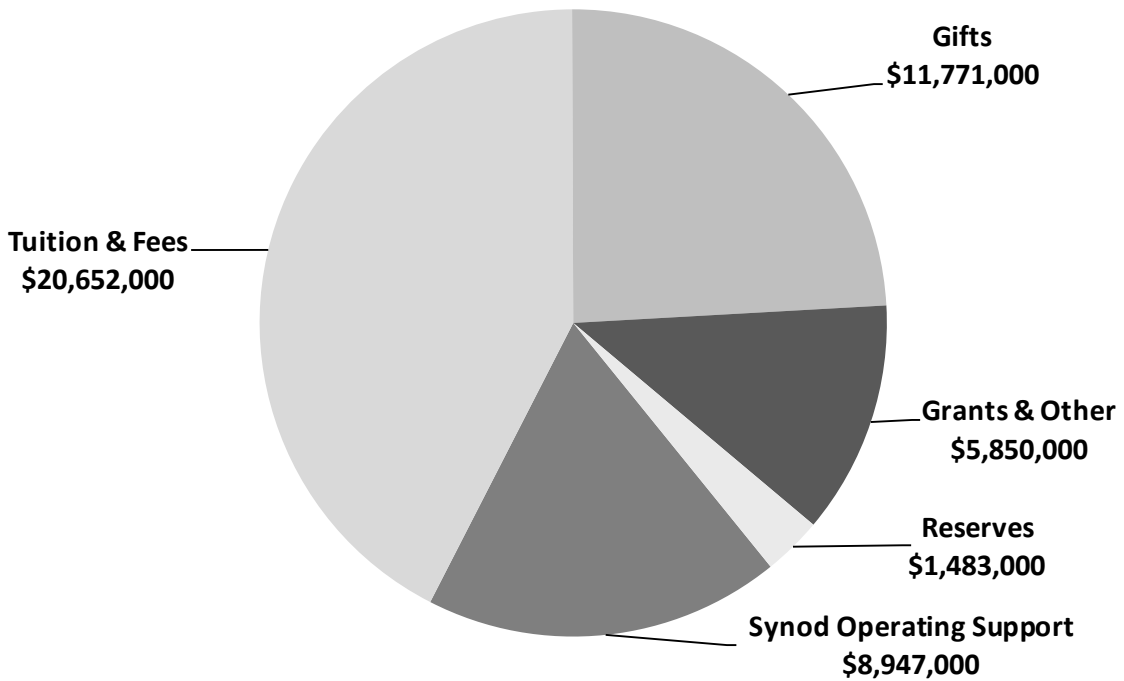
Advisory:

Rev. Matthew Crass, Luther Preparatory School president
Rev. Michael Jensen, Western Wisconsin District president
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Duane Rodewald, chairman of WELS Board for Ministerial Education
Rev. Mark Schroeder, WELS president

**FY 2023-24 Support
Ministerial Education
\$47,204,000**

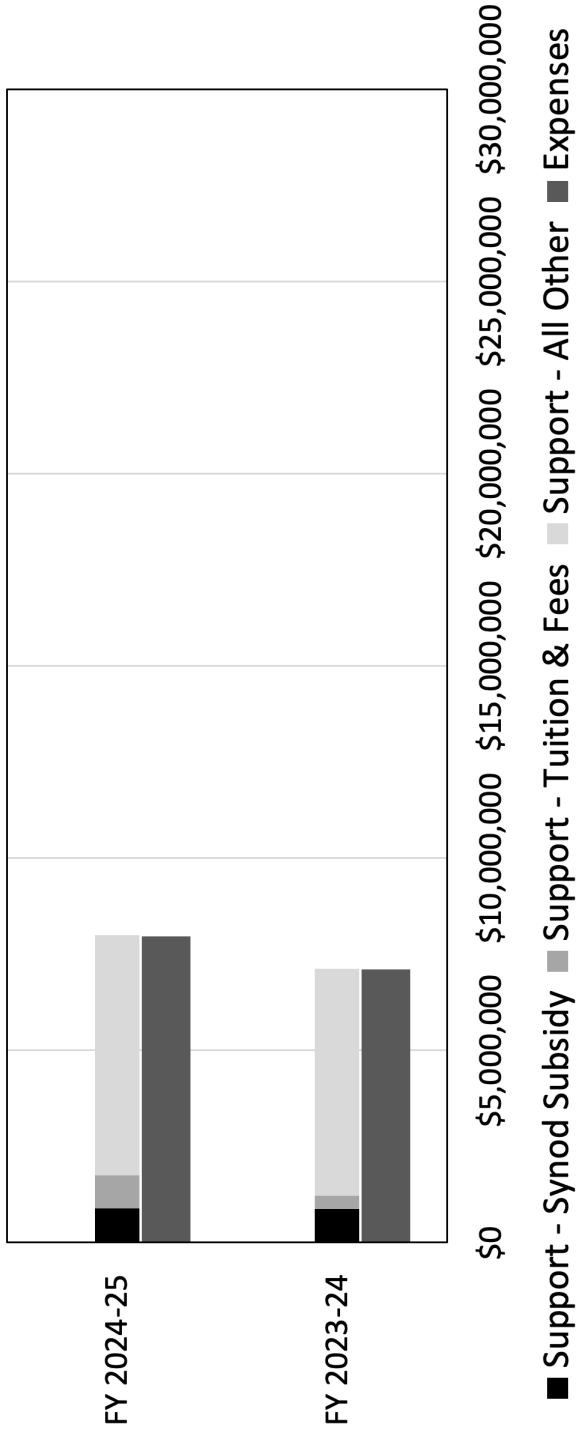


**FY 2024-25 Support
Ministerial Education
\$48,703,000**



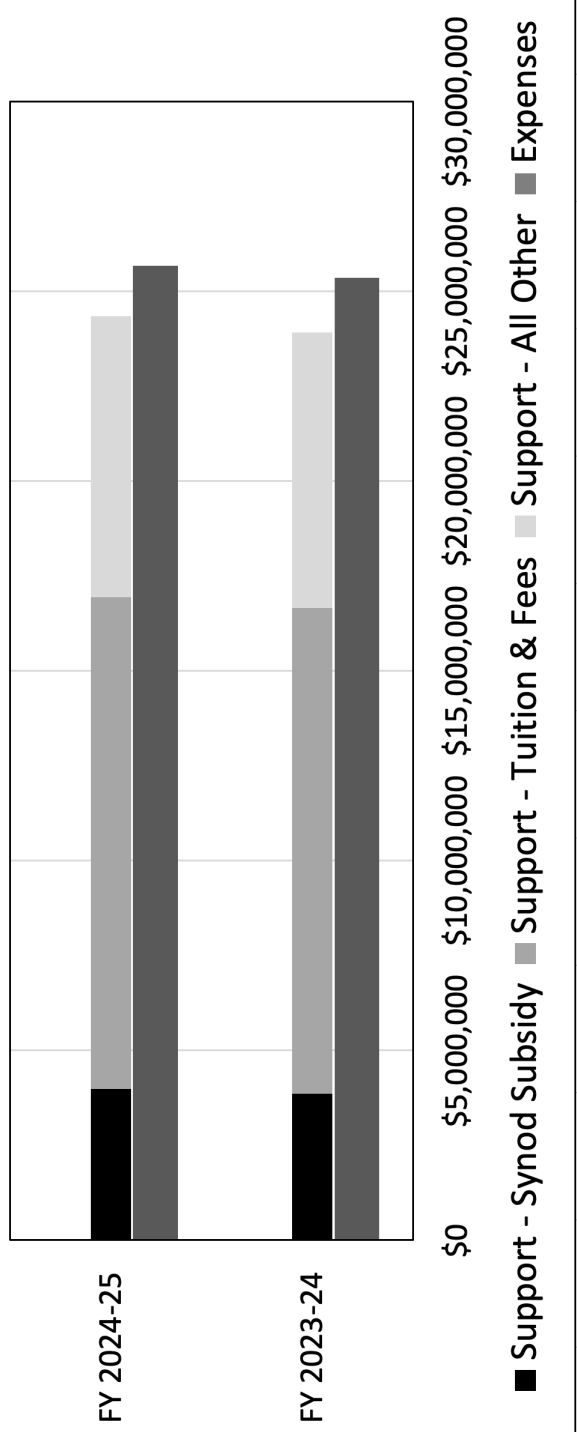
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

FY2023-24 and FY2024-25 Support and Expenses

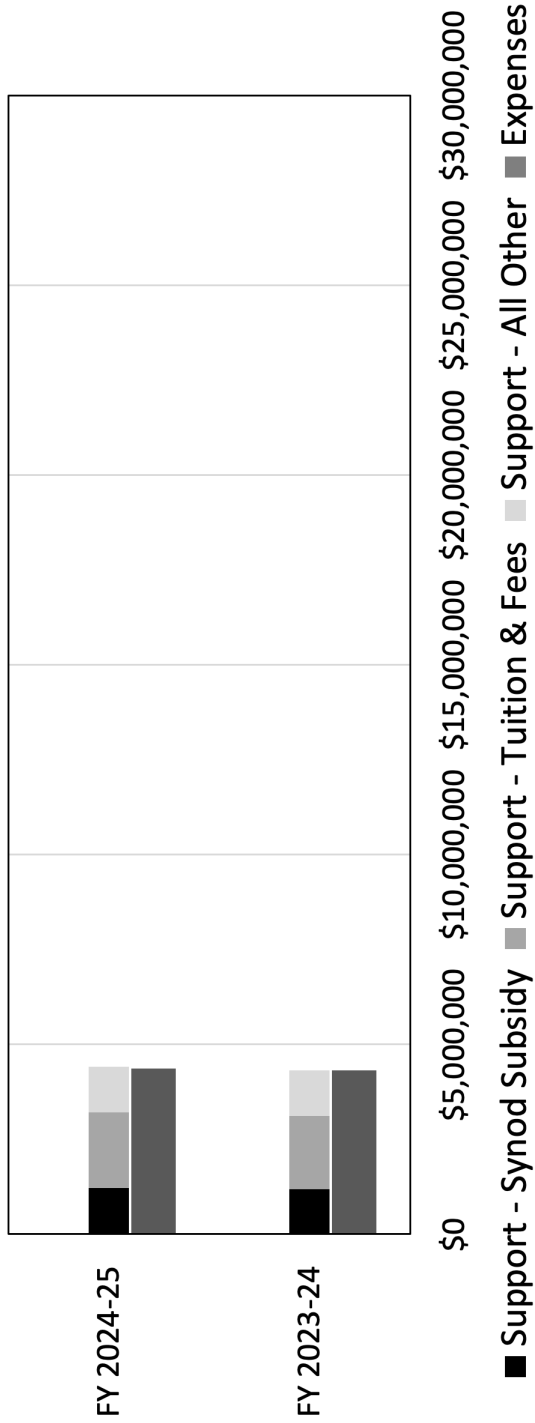


Martin Luther College

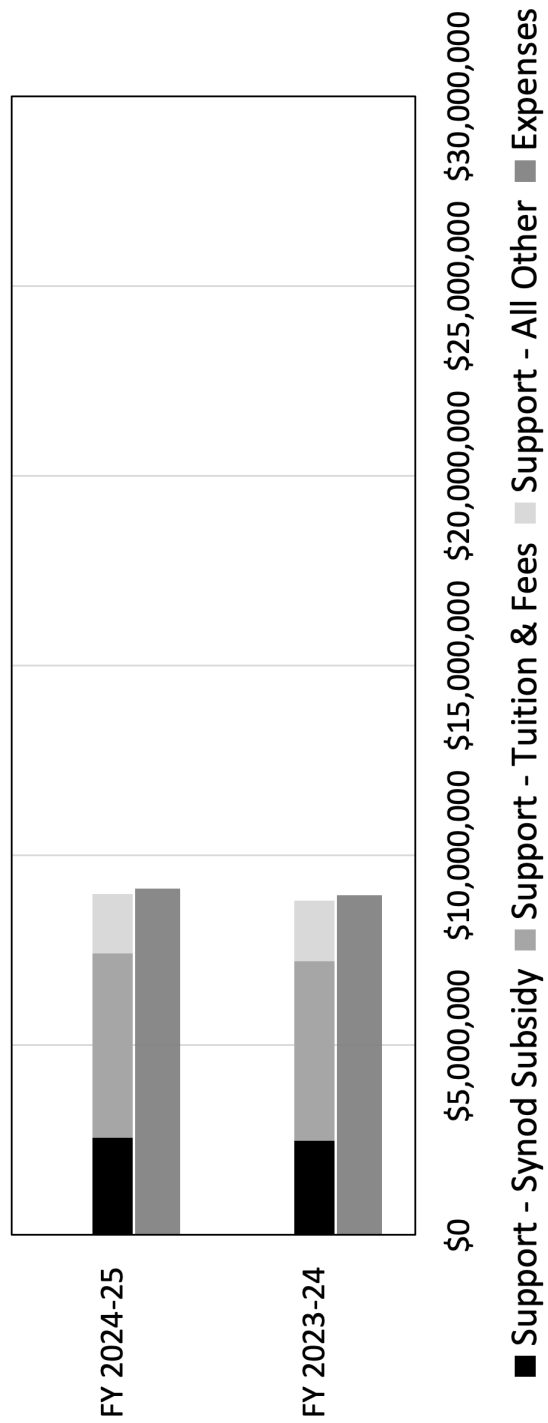
FY2023-24 and FY2024-25 Support and Expenses



**Michigan Lutheran Seminary
FY2023-24 and FY2024-25 Support and Expenses**



**Luther Preparatory School
FY2023-24 and FY2024-25 Support and Expenses**



Subsidiaries and Benefit Plans

A number of subsidiary groups and one affiliate serve the synod. These entities do not receive support from the synod's operating budget. Each is governed by a board that is accountable to the synod via the Synodical Council.

WELS Historical Institute Floor Committee #15

Our calling

WELS Historical Institute has the privilege and opportunity to serve the synod in preserving, researching, and communicating the history of Christ's love to and through our church body. The institute has the following purposes:

1. To promote interest in the history of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (hereinafter referred to as the synod) and Lutheranism in general;
2. To assist WELS' archivist in the collection and preservation of articles and artifacts of historical value;
3. To stimulate historical research and to publish its results in journals, newsletters, and other such publications;
4. To maintain Salem Landmark Church, birthplace of the Wisconsin Synod, and the WELS Museum.

Through the work of Mrs. Susan Willems, the WELS archivist (see report on p. 56); through the publication of historical research in *WELS Historical Institute Journal*; through presentations about events, people, and developments in WELS history; and through ongoing restoration and maintenance work on the WELS Museum and Salem Landmark Church, the institute endeavors to carry out these purposes.

The institute is thankful for the opportunities to serve WELS through researching and promoting the study of our synod's history. History, in general, is vitally important. Our salvation is founded on real historical events. The continuing study of church history is the study of God's work in the world, through his church and through the proclamation of his Word by his church, to gather his believers into his church. As we study WELS history, we grow in our gratitude for God's work through and for our beloved synod.

Our current situation

This has been a busy biennium for WELS Historical Institute. Important anniversaries were celebrated. Presentations and events were held. Projects were completed. We are thankful for the many individuals who gave of their time, energy, and gifts to accomplish so much.

WELS Historical Institute's website, welshistoricalinstitute.org, is a project that was planned, designed, and launched in summer 2022. Thank you to Pastor Peter Prange, Pastor Ben Schaefer, Mrs. Susan Willems, and Mrs. Julie Duran of WELS Technology for their work on this project. Short biographical vignettes of important people in the history of WELS, as well as numerous videos of presentations and historical photos, can be found on the website. It is also linked from the WELS website, wels.net.

WELS Historical Institute is typically focused on observing important anniversaries of WELS congregations, missions, events, and other moments from our past. The past biennium brought an anniversary celebration of our own, the 40th anniversary of the founding of the institute. A celebration was held on Sept. 25, 2021, at Salem Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, the birthplace of the Wisconsin Synod. The day began with a devotion led by WELS President Mark Schroeder. A panel discussion was then held with three former presidents of the institute: Prof. Roland Cap Ehlke,

Prof. Mark Braun, and Prof. Joel Pless. Prof. em. John Brenner provided an overview of the *WELS Historical Institute Journal* over the years. Braun provided a presentation on the history of the founding of the institute. Tours of the WELS Museum and West Granville Cemetery were provided, and the day ended with a hymn-sing led by Mr. Carl Nolte. Recordings of the presentations can be found on the WELS Historical Institute website.

Another major anniversary was celebrated during summer 2022: the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Synodical Conference. On July 10, 1872, C. F. W. Walther, the president of the Missouri Synod, declared to the gathered delegates at St. John, a Wisconsin Synod congregation in downtown Milwaukee, that it was a “blessed, happy day” because six Lutheran church bodies were in agreement in doctrine and desiring to work together. On July 10, 2022, about one hundred people gathered to mark and celebrate the 150th anniversary of this event at St. John’s on the Hillside, the historic church in downtown Milwaukee. Braun preached the sermon for a special worship service and Pastor Peter Prange gave a presentation on the founding of the Synodical Conference. Videos of both the service and the presentation can be found on the WELS Historical Institute website.

Several other presentations and events were held in this past biennium: a bus tour to historic churches in Jefferson County, Wis.; a hymn-sing held in the Salem Landmark Church; tours of the West Granville Cemetery across the street from Salem in Milwaukee; and several presentations on various historical topics. The most significant presentation was given by Pastor Paul Prange on the history of Michigan Lutheran Seminary under the title “Michigan Lutheran Seminary: Making the Difference.” This presentation kicked off the lecture series “Our Great Heritage: Ministerial Education Schools.” A video of Prange’s presentation is available on the WELS Historical Institute website.

Work has been continuing on the WELS Museum and Salem Landmark Church. Needed waterproofing in the basement was completed during 2022. Volunteers have been cleaning up some of the classrooms in the basement with the hope of refurbishing them as meeting and storage spaces. Stenciling and painting have continued in the sanctuary with the goal of restoring the sanctuary to its approximate condition in the 1880s. The 40th anniversary project was the purchase and installment of a new HVAC system to replace the failing boiler system and provide air conditioning. Thanks to a grant from the synod and \$6,000 raised from institute members, this project was also completed in summer 2022. This new system provides climate control for storing museum artifacts and allows for a more comfortable environment for worship and historical presentations.

The institute is thankful for the faithful service of Dr. Joel Pless, who served on the board for 17 years and as chairman for 4 years. He stepped down in fall 2021. We thank God for the gifts he has given to Pless, which he has used in service to the institute and the research and promotion of WELS history. Pless will continue to organize bus tours. The new chairman is Prof. Joel Otto, who serves as a professor of church history at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Thank you also to Pastor Dave Dolan and Mrs. Naomi Plocher, who completed service on the board in the last biennium.

A look ahead

WELS Historical Institute continues to look for ways to increase membership in the institute and interest in WELS history. WELS Historical Institute and the Synod Archives regularly have a presence at such events as the WELS synod convention and some district conventions, the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership, the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society National Convention, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary’s Mission and Ministry. Personal recruitment, social media, ongoing additions to the website, and possible synodwide communications promoting the work of the institute and encouragement to consider joining are also ongoing initiatives. Anyone interested in joining WELS Historical Institute can do so at welshistoricalinstitute.org/membership. Annual membership for individuals is \$40 with discounts for multiple years. Members receive a subscription to the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, newsletters promoting presentations and other information about the institute’s work, and discounts on bus tours.

Numerous presentations are planned for the upcoming biennium. Pastor James Huebner is slated to give a presentation on the 175th anniversary of Grace Lutheran Church in downtown Milwaukee. The series of lectures on WELS ministerial education schools will continue with a presentation on the history of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary by Prof. em. John Brenner in fall 2023.

The institute will continue its work of improving the WELS Museum and refurbishing the Salem Landmark Church as time and funds allow. The most critical project in the planning stage is replacement of the flat roof over the education wing of the building. Funding will come from WELS and the institute. Work on the steeple, windows, and flooring is on the agenda for the next several years.

In 2025, WELS will celebrate the 175th anniversary of its founding. A WELS 175th Anniversary Planning Committee has been meeting since January 2023 to discuss and carry out plans to help WELS celebrate this milestone of God’s

grace. The committee is made up of people representing various ministries of the synod. The anniversary celebration will coordinate and complement the ten-year plan scheduled to be presented at the 2025 synod convention under the theme, "Christ through us." Two major projects are being planned: a new pictorial history of WELS and an accompanying video. All members of WELS are invited to submit historical photos of people, buildings, events, and ministry activities for consideration in these projects. Submissions can be made at wels.net/175-photos. In addition, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, a history of WELS written by Prof. Edward Fredrich in the early 1990s, will be edited and expanded by Prof. em. John Brenner. Other social media and online resources are also being discussed. Watch for more information in the coming year at welshistoricalinstitute.org.

Prof. Joel Otto, reporter

Prof. Joel Otto, chairman

Mr. Daniel Nommensen, vice chairman

Rev. William Schaefer, secretary

Mr. Ryan Haines, treasurer

Rev. Justin Dauck

Rev. David Dolan

Mr. Kyle Egan, *ex officio*

Mr. Steve Miller

Mr. Carl Nolte

Rev. Peter Prange

Ms. Mary Rindfleisch

Rev. Benjamin Schaefer

Rev. Paul Schleis

Rev. Robert Weiss

Advisory:

Prof. em John Brenner, editor, *WELS Historical Institute Journal*

Mrs. Amanda Raabe, curator

Mrs. Susan Willems, WELS archivist

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc. Floor Committee #15

Our calling

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc. (CEF), is a self-supporting, not-for-profit, wholly-owned subsidiary corporation of WELS. Its primary purpose is to provide loans and grants for mission congregations whose parsonage, land, and facility projects are under the direction of WELS Board for Home Missions and loans to mission-minded self-supporting congregations for facility expansion and renovation as tools for gospel outreach.

Our current situation

Funding to carry out our calling comes primarily from three sources: member investments, operating revenue, and gifts and bequests. Individual members, congregations, and affiliates of WELS may invest in CEF certificates and savings accounts and as of March 2023, 2,828 investors have entrusted CEF with more than \$99 million. WELS member investments in CEF provide the principal funding for the loan program and net revenues from operations, investments, and gifts and bequests made to CEF provide funding for the congregational Grant Program and special grants to Home Missions. CEF's investment offering strategy during the current economic climate has been to provide reasonable investment alternatives for our investors and to maintain stable and affordable lending interest rates for borrowing mission and self-supporting congregations.

Loan program

The CEF loan portfolio continues to grow and is now at 195 loans with dollars outstanding of \$173 million, which is a 3.6 percent decrease in our loan portfolio dollars outstanding from 12 months ago. Currently we have 15 congregations in the construction process with \$34.7 million outstanding to complete those projects inclusive of \$1.5 million of grant dollars. New loan applications for the 2022–23 fiscal year trail prior years in the number of applicants. However, project sizes have increased. The CEF Board has been able to keep lending rates in check over this past year based on our pricing formula and cost of funds. With commercial lending interest rates at or above 6 percent, CEF is now lending at 4.32 percent.

Grant program

CEF provides matching grants to eligible mission congregations after they have provided a minimum 10 percent down payment for their initial land purchases, existing facility purchase, or new facility construction projects. A congregation's down payment dollars combined with a CEF matching grant allows the mission congregation to move forward with a more manageable loan payment. CEF has provided matching grants to mission congregations of \$2.7 million, \$1.0 million, and \$3.0 million during the fiscal years ended June 30, 2022, 2021, and 2020, respectively. In addition, matching grants totaling nearly \$1.5 million have been approved through March of FY2023.

Special grants to Home Missions

In addition to the matching grant program to borrowing mission status congregations, CEF provides special grants to WELS Board for Home Missions for assisting mission congregations with operations, land, and facility projects. These grants have totaled \$1.6 million, \$1.7 million, and \$1.1 million during the fiscal years ended June 30, 2022, 2021, and 2020, respectively.

A look ahead

We pray by God's grace that WELS CEF will continue to benefit from positive operational results, ensuring the safety and soundness required of financial institutions, and be able to continue to provide loans and grants over and above our present lending operations and matching, endowment, and unrestricted net asset grant programs to assist more congregations and Home Missions.

We anticipate that the loan portfolio will increase during the remaining months of 2023 and continue to increase in the first half of 2024 to \$185 million based on annual repayment of loans and existing approved commitments to lend. We are hopeful that Home Missions' "100 in 10" church-planting initiative will help continue to build the loan portfolio and provide CEF with lending opportunities into the new fiscal year and beyond. Maintaining a healthy and disciplined approach regarding operations and a fair and competitive interest rate environment for investors and borrowers is critical for CEF's financial health.

We continue to encourage individual WELS members, congregations, and affiliated organizations to consider investing in CEF loan, savings, and retirement/IRA certificates and to consider gifts and bequests to CEF to help support our calling and partnership with Home Missions.

Contact WELS CEF at 1-866-511-7793 or cef@wels.net. Visit our website at wels.net/cef.

Mr. Scott Page, reporter

Mr. Seth Hansen, chairman

Mr. Timothy Boerneke, vice chairman

Mr. Ron Kerr, secretary

Mr. James Bodendorfer

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Rev. Timothy Gauger

Mr. Timothy Gensmer

Mr. Mark Hartman

Mr. David Hirons

Mr. Joel Kock

Advisory:

Vacant, administrator of WELS Board for Home Missions

Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations

WELS Foundation, Inc.

Floor Committee #15

Our calling

Established in 1965, WELS Foundation, Inc., serves the Synodical Council by organizing exclusively to provide, direct, channel, and manage funds for religious, charitable, and educational purposes consistent with the principles of the synod.

Our current situation

WELS Foundation exists to help God's people support gospel ministry through WELS. It provides planned giving services and administrative support for gifts benefiting WELS congregations and ministries. WELS Foundation strives to be the foundation of choice for members, entities, and affiliates of WELS. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, WELS Foundation had the privilege to administer and distribute \$15.0 million in donor-directed planned gifts to various ministries throughout the synod. During the six-month period ending Dec. 31, 2022, an additional \$6.8 million was distributed.

WELS Foundation provides various planned giving opportunities, including charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, donor-advised funds, and endowment funds. It currently administers 1,250 charitable gifts on behalf of WELS members for the benefit of WELS ministries.

As of Dec. 31, 2022, the total assets were \$175.4 million with net assets of \$67.8 million. The net assets held by WELS Foundation are managed for the benefit of WELS ministries as designated by the donor. These ministries include WELS Missions and Ministerial Education schools (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary), congregations, and numerous affiliated ministries such as area Lutheran high schools. Assets held with a long-term time horizon are invested through WELS Investment Funds.

Endowment funds

Endowment funds are permanently restricted funds established to receive and administer all gifts that are designated by the donor(s) for an endowment from sources such as cash, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, bequests, life insurance, charitable gift annuities, insurance policies, trusts, real estate, personal property, or any other gift, whether current or deferred.

Lord willing, expenditures from endowments further the work of the church by providing ongoing financial support for ministry until the Lord returns.

Donor-designated endowments can be established through WELS Foundation for the benefit of WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, or other WELS-affiliated ministries. WELS Foundation also administers synodical endowment funds for WELS, WELS Home and World Missions, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Martin Luther College, Luther Preparatory School, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary.

As of Dec. 31, 2022, WELS Foundation administered 392 endowment funds with a total market value of \$111.4 million.

Charitable gift annuities

A charitable gift annuity is a contract between a WELS member and WELS Foundation, by which the member makes a gift of cash or securities in exchange for fixed quarterly annuity payments for life. After the Lord calls the member home, the remainder of the gift annuity will be distributed to the congregation or ministry as designated. Income payments from a charitable gift annuity may begin immediately, may be deferred until a specific date in the future, or may be deferred until an unspecified date in the future.

As of Dec. 31, 2022, WELS Foundation administered 648 charitable gift annuities with a total market value of \$11.8 million.

Charitable remainder trusts

A charitable remainder trust is created when a donor transfers cash, securities, or real estate into a charitable trust but keeps a specified income interest—usually for life. When the trust ends per the donor's designation, the assets in the trust pass to the designated beneficiaries such as the church and/or synod.

As of Dec. 31, 2022, WELS Foundation served as trustee for 124 charitable remainder trusts with a combined market value of \$26.3 million.

Donor-advised funds

A donor-advised fund is a charitable giving vehicle wherein an individual, family, or corporation makes an irrevocable, tax-deductible contribution of cash, securities, or other property to WELS Foundation and at any time thereafter can recommend grant distributions to qualified WELS ministries. The fund can be established with current gifts, deferred gifts (i.e., charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts), and testamentary gifts (i.e., wills, living trusts, beneficiary designations of life insurance policies, or retirement accounts).

The WELS Foundation donor-advised fund program provides an alternative to a private family foundation. WELS members can accomplish many of the same goals but with far less administrative work and expense.

As of Dec. 31, 2022, WELS Foundation administered 83 donor-advised funds with a total market value of \$10.4 million.

Pass-through gifts processed

Not all WELS ministries have the capacity to process complex gifts. At the request of donors, during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, WELS Foundation distributed \$2.6 million to WELS ministries from 641 pass-through gifts. These gifts included assets such as appreciated securities, qualified charitable distributions from IRAs, real estate, life insurance contracts, and agricultural crops. Proceeds from these gifts are distributed to the WELS ministries designated by the donor.

Other gift administration services

WELS Foundation also provides gift administration for letters of instruction, gifts of securities, qualified charitable distributions from IRAs, real estate gifts, life insurance contracts, agricultural crops, and other donor-designated gifts.

Educational webinars

In 2020, WELS Foundation hosted a series of 12 educational webinars. The monthly webinars were timely presentations on various planned giving topics and made available by WELS Foundation at no cost to WELS Christian giving counselors, mission advancement officers, and congregational planned giving committee leaders.

A look ahead

WELS Foundation continues to produce videos that focus on the blessings and benefits of planned gifts. View the WELS Foundation videos at vimeo.com/showcase/9415316. Other marketing efforts include quarterly reports to WELS conferences and conventions and a newsletter for our WELS Foundation partners with resources to help them serve their donors. WELS Foundation also sponsored the mission advancement sectionals at the WELS Association of Lutheran High Schools conference in March 2023 and will continue to have a sponsorship and display presence at local and national WELS events. In conjunction with WELS Ministry of Christian Giving, WELS Foundation will continue to produce *Grace of Giving*, a biannual newsletter to WELS donors and pastors that highlights planned gifts and how they can benefit gospel work. WELS Foundation, in partnership with WELS Church Extension Fund, also provides marketing materials and promotional items to all Lutheran Women's Missionary Society rallies and other WELS gatherings.

To carry out its mission, WELS Foundation will continue to identify the most cost-effective means to:

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

Mr. James Holm, reporter

Mr. Mark Maurice, chairman

Mr. Timothy Boerneke, vice chairman

Mr. Michael Krueger, secretary

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Rev. Jonathan Kolander

Mr. Scott Neitzel

Mr. John Pahmeier
Mr. Mark Schulz
Mr. David Wendland

Advisory:

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving
Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Board for Ministerial Education

WELS Investment Funds, Inc. Floor Committee #15

Our calling

WELS Investment Funds, Inc., was established in 1997 to serve under the Synodical Council by providing investment portfolios for the benefit of WELS and its schools, congregations, and other affiliated organizations.

Our current situation

WELS Investment Funds provides cost-effective, professionally-managed investment portfolios. WELS Investment Funds currently manages approximately \$280 million of investments for WELS ministries, including more than 250 congregations and WELS-affiliated ministries. WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, and other affiliated ministries are encouraged to utilize WELS Investment Funds for their long-term investment needs, such as endowment and scholarship funds. By pooling our God-given talents and resources with other congregations, we can take advantage of lower-cost, institutionally-priced investment opportunities that would not otherwise be available. As more congregations and organizations invest in WELS Investment Funds, the cost-reduction benefits also increase. It's another way we can help support each other.

The WELS Investment Funds Board of Directors is responsible for the overall operations of WELS Investment Funds. The directors are members of WELS congregations, nominated from throughout the synod, vetted by WELS Human Resources, and appointed by the Synodical Council. Currently there are eight qualified directors serving on the board. The day-to-day operations are carried out by WELS employees leased to WELS Investment Funds.

The board has retained Vanguard Institutional Advisory Services as the investment consultant for WELS Investment Funds. As a co-fiduciary, Vanguard is responsible for making investment recommendations to the board. Once the recommendation is approved by the board, the investment consultant has the discretion to implement and oversee the investment recommendations.

WELS Investment Funds offers four investment portfolios, collectively known as the WELS Funds.

The WELS Balanced Fund seeks long-term capital growth and a low to moderate level of current income. It has a target asset allocation comprised of 60 percent equity and 40 percent fixed income and has a mid- to long-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Endowment Fund seeks long-term capital growth with some current income and is designed primarily for endowment funds. It has a target asset allocation comprised of 75 percent equity and 25 percent fixed income and has a long-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Equity Fund seeks long-term capital growth by investing in a portfolio of equity securities that is diversified by industry and company size. It is composed of 100 percent equities and has a long-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Income Fund seeks to provide income by investing primarily in investment-quality debt securities. It is composed of 100 percent fixed income securities and has a short- to mid-range investment time horizon.

The WELS Balanced Fund and WELS Endowment Fund invest in differing ratios of the same underlying mutual funds as the WELS Equity and WELS Income Funds. The WELS Equity Fund and WELS Income Fund are for ministries that desire an asset allocation other than the WELS Balanced Fund and WELS Endowment Fund.

Investment returns during the year ended Dec. 31, 2022, were volatile in both the equity and fixed income markets. This was due in part to historically elevated levels of inflation, a rising interest rate environment, continued supply chain pressures, continued labor shortages, wage pressures, and increased levels of geopolitical risks due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Market volatility continued through the start of 2023 as several major banks struggled and the most forecasted recession in history had not yet happened. The future is uncertain, to say the least. However, we do know this: Markets will continue to occasionally go down, sometimes dramatically, but over the long-term, investors are generally well-served by a long-term outlook, perspective, and discipline.

Additional information, including director biographical information, the investment policy statement, audited financial statements, and the 2022 annual report to WELS ministries, is available at wels.net/welsfunds.

A look ahead

Marketing and communication efforts include the distribution of quarterly WELS Fund Fact sheets and live quarterly update webinars for investors that include a quarterly market recap, an investment performance review for the WELS Funds, and Vanguard's market and economic outlook. Each quarter, WELS members are tuning in to these updates to learn how their congregation or organization's investments are making an impact on ministry. Ongoing marketing efforts include the production of WELS Investment Funds videos, brief Q&A videos regarding topics impacting our investors, quarterly reports to WELS conferences and conventions, and an in-person display presence at nationwide WELS events.

WELS Investment Funds is committed to continuing to serve WELS congregations, area Lutheran high schools, and other affiliated ministries. Those responsible for overseeing the long-term investments for their organization are encouraged to review their investment objectives, asset allocation, investment costs, and time horizons.

WELS Investment Funds is hoping to continue to grow the investment portfolios and is willing to work with ministries to review their investment needs. To schedule a free review, either in person or via conference call or video, contact us at 414-256-3206 or jim.holm@wels.net.

Mr. James Holm, reporter

Mr. Dennis Walters, chairman

Mr. Joel Luehmann, vice chairman

Mr. John Wenker, secretary

Rev. em. Charles Degner

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Mr. Seth Hansen

Mr. Ronald Schmitz

Mr. Max Wenck

Advisory:

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving

WELS Benefit Plans

Floor Committee #15

Our calling

The WELS Benefit Plans Office (the “Benefit Plans”) serves synodical workers and organizations through the administration of the WELS Voluntary Employees’ Beneficiary Association (VEBA), the WELS Pension Plan, and the WELS Shepherd Plan. Oversight of the VEBA Plan is the responsibility of the WELS VEBA Commission, and oversight of the Pension and Shepherd Plans is the responsibility of the WELS Retirement Program Commission. The commission members are appointed by WELS Synodical Council. Each commission is composed of a pastor and a male teacher from the called worker roster, four laymen, and the ex-officio member. Contributions toward the cost of plan benefits and operations are held in separate trusts, each invested in diversified accounts with outside money managers overseen by an independent investment advisory firm. The plans employ outside professionals that provide benefit design, actuarial, consulting, banking, legal, and auditing services.

Our current situation

The 2021 synod convention passed resolutions that endorsed the transition to provide future retirement benefits to called workers through defined contributions rather than through the Pension Plan. The Synodical Council subsequently approved the Pension Plan freeze as of Dec. 31, 2021, and the creation of defined contributions through the Shepherd Plan as of Jan. 1, 2022. Much of the efforts of the Retirement Program Commission and Benefit Plans since the 2021 convention has been dedicated to implementing these decisions and ensuring a smooth transition.

An important initiative during the transition has been to communicate with workers and organizations. To that end, since the 2021 synod convention, WELS produced five videos that summarized the new defined contribution program and highlighted important actions for workers and organizations to take during the transition. In addition, in March 2022 WELS published a new website that allows Pension Plan participants to view estimates of their future Pension Plan benefits to assist with their financial planning, and to verify their WELS service records to ensure accurate benefit calculations. Furthermore, Benefit Plans and the Shepherd Plan advisors at the Hahn Financial Group coordinated the Shepherd Plan enrollments of approximately 400 organizations and assisted organizations to create Shepherd Plan participant accounts for their workers, to ensure that all eligible workers timely received the first defined contributions. A total of \$11.2 million in defined contributions was made to workers’ Shepherd Plan accounts for the 2022 plan year.

In addition to these public efforts, much work has been done internally to prepare for the transition. Benefit Plans has worked with service providers in the areas of legal, actuarial, investments, banking, and software development to ensure the successful Pension Plan freeze and defined contribution program creation. Many thanks are due to our brothers and sisters in WELS Communication Services, WELS Technology, WELS Financial Services, and the Hahn Financial Group for their assistance in these efforts.

Beyond the retirement program transition, the commissions and Benefit Plans have continued to support workers and organizations by maintaining rate stability within the plans, which is vitally important for the workers and calling bodies that we serve. Growing participation levels and enhanced cost control opportunities have contributed to the rate stability efforts.

- VEBA Plan rates did not increase for the 2021 and 2022 plan years, and the VEBA Commission provided a one-month premium holiday for VEBA Plan medical benefits in August 2020. However, cost inflation and a return to care utilization following the COVID-19 public health emergency required a rate increase of 9.5 percent for 2023.
- More than 80 percent of all WELS calling bodies continue to participate in the VEBA Plan, and VEBA Plan membership has increased by more than 7 percent since 2021.
- Pension Plan rates have remained unchanged since the 2020 plan year. In addition, the Retirement Program Commission provided a one-quarter premium holiday for Pension Plan benefit contributions in October 2020.
- The ongoing administration fee paid by Shepherd Plan participants was reduced by 12 percent effective July 1, 2021,

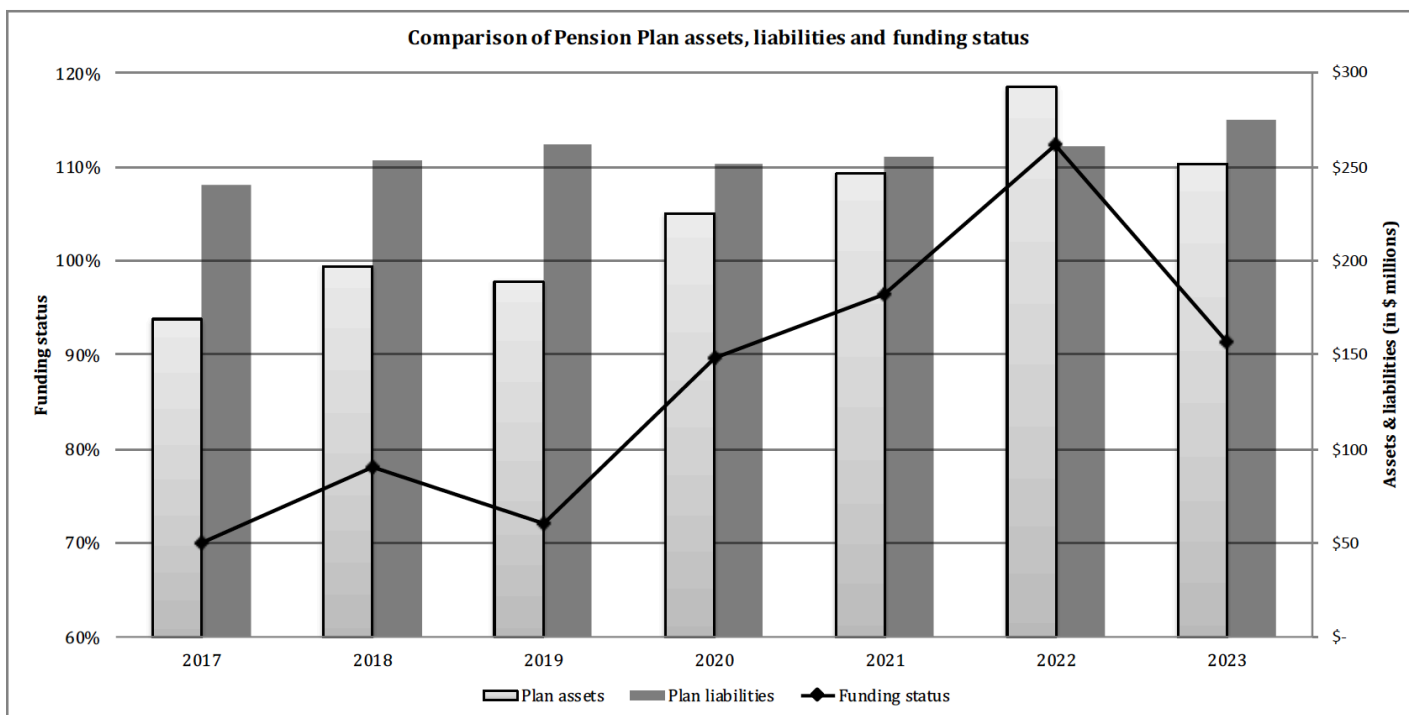
preserving assets in participants' accounts for their future needs. The number of Shepherd Plan participant accounts increased by nearly 90 percent in 2022, mainly because of the transition to the defined contribution program.

The VEBA Commission amended the VEBA Plan to provide enhanced benefits, greater access to health care, and increased flexibility for participants all while remaining compliant with applicable laws and regulations. These amendments included covering eligible costs at 100 percent to diagnose COVID-19 (including at-home diagnostic COVID-19 tests), covering eligible costs for telehealth consultations with health care providers, protecting members from "surprise" balance billing for care obtained at certain out-of-network providers, and extending certain timeframes for requesting special enrollment and filing claims. The commissions are grateful that the Lord has blessed the plans with the financial flexibility to provide these benefit enhancements to participants.

The Pension Plan achieved a funded status (which compares the Plan's assets with the present value of benefits earned by participants) of 91 percent as of Jan. 1, 2023, based on the Retirement Program Commission's actuarial assumptions. This marks a decrease of 21 percent compared to the 112 percent funded status as of Jan. 1, 2022, but a 19 percent improvement from the pre-pandemic funded status of 72 percent as of Jan. 1, 2019. Approximately 16 percent of the calendar year 2022 decrease is attributable to the Pension Plan trust's investment performance in 2022. The remaining 5 percent calendar year 2022 decrease is attributable to a reduction in the trust's assumed rate of future returns, which reflects the Retirement Program Commission's intent to gradually de-risk the trust's investment portfolio over time with the Pension Plan now frozen.

The Pension and VEBA trusts experienced investment losses of 11.4 percent and 7.6 percent, respectively, in 2022, while the trusts achieved investment gains of 16.1 percent and 10.1 percent, respectively, in 2021. Unaudited results from the 2022 plan year show net assets available for benefits in the Pension and VEBA trusts as \$251.2 million and \$36.5 million, respectively. In comparison, final audited results from the 2021 plan year show net assets available for benefits in the Pension and VEBA trusts as \$294.4 million and \$40.6 million, respectively. Both Commissions continue to evaluate investment allocation and diversification strategies that are expected to achieve target returns with reduced risk.

The Shepherd Plan experienced substantial growth in 2022, gaining nearly 2,900 new participants. With the new defined contribution program effective Jan. 1, 2022, all calling bodies have joined the Plan, and all called workers serving at least half-time have Plan accounts. The total market value of Shepherd Plan assets was \$223.7 million as of Dec. 31, 2022, compared to \$225.7 million as of Dec. 31, 2021 (-0.9 percent).



WELS Pension Plan funding status history
2017–23

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Funding status	70%	78%	72%	90%	96%	112%	91%
Plan assets	\$ 169.00	\$ 197.10	\$ 188.89	\$ 225.15	\$ 246.34	\$ 292.50	\$ 251.30
Plan liabilities	\$ 240.36	\$ 253.40	\$ 261.91	\$ 251.29	\$ 255.55	\$ 260.50	\$ 275.22

A look ahead

Benefit Plans will continue its emphasis on maintaining long-term stability for the VEBA, Pension, and Shepherd Plans while considering new ways to engage participants and calling bodies through improved communications.

Benefit Plans will focus more efforts on communications to workers and organizations regarding the new defined contribution program. The Shepherd Plan provides a diversified set of investment options and helpful financial planning resources for workers to manage the contributions that are being made to their accounts. Increasing awareness of these opportunities will help workers to meet their financial goals for retirement. In addition, because retirement benefit contributions will be made to workers' accounts each quarter, it is more important than ever for organizations to timely report call status changes to WELS so that workers receive the correct contributions.

The Retirement Program Commission will continue to balance the need to preserve the security of Pension Plan benefits earned by workers with the desire to enhance the defined contribution plan, while minimizing the cost to calling bodies. The commission closely monitors the retirement benefit contribution rate charged to calling bodies and its impact on the Pension Plan's funded status. Although the Pension Plan's funded status decreased in 2022, the commission will continue to evaluate future opportunities to either increase benefits for workers, decrease the contribution rate, or both.

The VEBA Commission and its advisors will carefully monitor the higher inflation environment and uncertainties with financial markets and the long-term impacts of the pandemic and their impacts on the VEBA Plan. It is likely that VEBA Plan rates will increase more significantly than in recent years to offset cost inflation and maintain adequate reserves. In addition, the VEBA Commission and Benefit Plans will be more closely observing worker participation in the VEBA Plan and health care arrangements at participating calling bodies to protect the Plan's long-term sustainability in the rapidly changing health care environment. Providing an affordable health plan with consistent nationwide benefits is essential to supporting synodwide mission and ministry activities.

Benefit Plans, as well as the VEBA and Retirement Program Commissions, are acutely aware of the need to keep benefit plan costs as low as possible to allow calling bodies to preserve valuable assets to fund ministry efforts. The primary goal for the benefit plans going forward is to strike the best balance between acceptable costs to calling bodies and meaningful benefits to participants.

Mr. Joshua Peterman, reporter

WELS VEBA Commission:

Mr. Kyle Koltz, chairman

Mr. Todd Poppe, vice chairman

Mr. Robert Bullens, secretary

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Mr. James Gabriel

Teacher Daniel Markgraf

Rev. Joel Sauer

Advisory:

Ms. Christine Hitter, membership manager

Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of WELS Benefit Plans

Ms. Lori Schrank, claims manager

WELS Retirement Program Commission:

Mr. Thomas Medema, chairman

Mr. Lee Miller, vice chairman

Mr. James Brenn, secretary

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Teacher James Hahm

Mr. Samuel Kruschel

Rev. James Turriff

Advisory:

Ms. Christine Hitter, membership manager

Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of WELS Benefit Plans

Northwestern Publishing House Floor Committee #16

Our calling

The WELS constitution states, “The object and purpose of the synod shall be to extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.” As outlined in the constitution, Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) fulfills this object and purpose “by printing, publishing, purchasing, selling, and disseminating literature that maintains Lutheran doctrine and practice” and “by furnishing appropriate literature for parish schools, Sunday schools, missions, institutions, and churches.” NPH is governed by a board of directors responsible for fulfilling this purpose through establishing employee duties and adopting policies for the operation of NPH.

The mission of Northwestern Publishing House is to deliver biblically sound, Christ-centered resources within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and beyond. For 132 years, NPH has prepared materials that are consistent with this mission and aligned with Lutheran doctrine and practice. The proceeds NPH receives from sales of materials to individuals, congregations, and schools are used to develop and publish new and relevant resources and materials. Our calling, then, is to continue to proclaim God’s love in Christ through the careful use of the resources God grants to us through purchases of the resources and materials we make available.

Our current situation

During the past two years God has blessed Northwestern Publishing House. Although Mr. Bill Ziche (president) and Pastor Curtis Jahn (vice president of publishing) both retired, our Savior provided their respective replacements in Mr. Jeremy Angle (president) and Pastor Chris Cordes (vice president of publishing). Both took up their roles in the first half of 2022 and were grateful their predecessors so willingly mentored them into their positions.

Our Savior’s love for our synod showed in the release of the massive suite of resources connected with our new hymnal, *Christian Worship*, and its release in 2021. Over the past biennium, we were also blessed to release more than 60 new books, devotionals, Bible studies, professional volumes, and musical publications, as well as periodicals. Many of these became available in digital form: PDF downloadables, e-books, and audiobooks.

Our calling to provide biblically accurate, spiritually uplifting tools was supported by our Lord through the voices not only of called workers but also many of his servants not called to public ministry. Gifted to write and compose, they communicated to their fellow Christians the love of Christ. Talented women, for example, wrote several Bible studies and devotional books especially for women.

Print publishing program

NPH continues to publish new books, music, and other materials for our pastors, teachers, and WELS members. These new materials along with previously published NPH books, Bible studies, curriculum, church supplies, and a selection of books and materials from other publishers are available through NPH’s website, **nph.net**, and by phone at 800-662-6022.

NPH continues to publish *Forward in Christ*, *Meditations Daily Devotional*, and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* periodicals. Visit the NPH website regularly to discover resources and materials that support ministry and strengthen the faith of all WELS members.

Digital publishing program

NPH continues to expand content in ways that are relevant today with 233 books in e-book format, distribution of 151 titles through Logos, 646 downloadable products, digital *Forward in Christ*, five audiobooks, and the *Meditations Daily Devotional* app for both iOS and Android platforms.

Music and worship

NPH was blessed to release the new *Christian Worship* suite in fall 2021. To date, 17 print volumes have been released as well as *Christian Worship: Service Builder*. More than 520 congregations are using this valuable resource to save time in worship planning and bulletin creation.

In June 2022 *Christian Worship: Musician's Resource* launched, with more than 1,000 resources available to date. *Musician's Resource* materials can be found in a downloadable format via the NPH website.

While a rate of adoption like that of 1993's *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* was not anticipated, adoption rates of the new *Christian Worship* have exceeded initial expectations. To date, approximately 70 percent of WELS congregations are now using *Christian Worship*.

A special note of blessing to highlight is that even though this suite is several times larger than the 1993 suite, its entire release will occur in about one-third of the time (*Christian Worship: Hymnal* spanning 2021–2024, whereas *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* spanned 1993–2004). *Soli Deo Gloria* for the results of a decade's worth of effort by Hymnal Project Director Michael Schultz, WELS Commission on Worship, more than one hundred volunteers, and the tireless production and copyright permissions efforts of the NPH team.

Years B and C of *Hymns for Life* have been released, completing the production of this hymnology curriculum co-produced by WELS Commission on Worship and NPH. Additionally, a 7-volume series of easy accompaniments for the curriculum's 90 hymns has been released. These accompaniments enable developing players to accompany hymns in the classroom or to supplement their keyboard studies.

Regular resource development has continued on keyboard collections (piano and organ), music for choirs (adult and children), annual Children's Christmas Service Kits and Lent Kits, and the weekly worship folder cover subscription program. Content comes from multiple sources, including submissions, commissions, and within NPH. Special attention has been given to creating resources that support new hymnody in *Christian Worship*. Several commissions have been possible through partnership with WELS Commission on Worship. NPH also continues to curate a selection of resources from approximately a dozen other sacred music publishers, vetting these for doctrinal accuracy, musical excellence, accessibility, variety, and appropriateness for confessional Lutheran liturgical worship.

Collaborative efforts

NPH continues to collaborate with WELS commissions, committees, and WELS-affiliated organizations.

In collaboration with WELS Communication Services and WELS Conference of Presidents, NPH is the publisher and distributor of *Forward in Christ*, which is available in both print and digital format.

A current collaborative project with WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools is for the development of a new Lutheran elementary school curriculum currently called Curriculum 22:6.

Close collaboration continues between NPH and Multi-Language Productions, with NPH providing content that is translated by Multi-Language Productions for use throughout the world. Additionally, NPH has assumed responsibility from Multi-Language Productions for the printing, subscription services, and mailing in North America of a German devotional periodical, *Gott ist für Uns*, which is published by our sister church, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church—Germany. Additionally, NPH provides customer service, marketing, sales, and distribution services for Multi-Language Productions' materials and resources to support its ministry.

A look ahead

As our world continues its downward moral spiral, our church body, blessed with the purest gospel message of Christ's love, is being called to provide that gospel message not only to the members of our church body but also to

those in other denominations and those who don't even know him. Our church body is graced to share grace as clearly and deeply as possible with everyone. NPH is committed to doing so and helping you do so.

Numerous books, Bible studies, devotionals, and other resources currently in production will be released in print and/or digital formats in the next biennium. A few are highlighted below.

Christian Worship

Work continues on the remaining print volumes in the hymnal suite as well as *Playlist* (the *Service Builder* add-on that will replace *HymnSoft*) and population of *Musician's Resource*.

Meditations Daily Devotional app for both iOS and Android

Efforts are underway to enhance the content distribution (i.e., audio and video) of the daily devotions, along with enhanced marketing efforts to increase the number of downloads and regular daily use.

Prepared to Answer series

An area of increased focus within our synod is apologetics. To this end, NPH is beginning work on a new series based on the popular *Prepared to Answer* and *More Prepared to Answer* books by Prof. Mark Paustian. With the pressures and faith challenges, which were at one time only faced by Christian adults, now impacting young children, teens, and college students, each book/e-book in the series will be written in a way that is relevant and audience specific. The series will include:

- *Prepared to Answer for Parents of Young Children*
- *Prepared to Answer for Middle Schoolers*
- *Prepared to Answer for Teens*
- *Prepared to Answer for College Students*

People's Bible Devotions

Currently under development is a new series of books/e-books related to The People's Bible commentaries. *People's Bible Devotions* will address relevant issues facing WELS members today and encourage a deeper study of God's Word through The People's Bible commentaries.

The 12 books in the series will be introduced over time and will roughly align with the order of the books of the Bible. The planned organization of the series is as follows:

- *From the Beginning—God's Salvation Plan* (The Pentateuch)
- *Being People of the Promise* (Joshua–2 Samuel)
- *Faithful God—Flawed Followers* (1 Kings–Esther)
- *Wisdom and Folly* (poetical books)
- *Hope in Dark Times* (the major prophets)
- *God Has a Word for You* (the minor prophets)
- *Who Do You Say Jesus Is?* (Matthew and Mark)
- *The Gospel Knows No Boundaries* (Luke and Acts)
- *I Want to Know Christ* (Paul's great epistles)
- *Until Christ Comes—Passing On the Gospel* (Paul's mission and pastoral epistles)
- *You Are God's Special Possession* (the universal epistles)
- *We Have Seen His Glory* (books of John)

Our thanks

Throughout the past year and more, we have all experienced levels of uncertainty. As a result, our churches and schools, pastors, and teachers have made changes in the way they carry out their God-given ministry of preaching and teaching the gospel. The same has been true for Northwestern Publishing House. Through it all, we recognize that the Lord has always been in control, that he has blessed us and makes all things work for the good of his people. We humbly and gratefully give thanks to our gracious God who has sustained us and has allowed us to continue serving him in his kingdom work of spreading the gospel.

We also thank our pastors, teachers, and other called workers who continue to recognize and value the partnership NPH has with them in supplying Christ-centered, biblical resources to help them carry out their work in the Lord. We also thank the many wonderful WELS members who look to NPH to strengthen and enrich their lives in Christ.

We also praise God that he provided wise counsel through our board members.

Finally, we glorify our Father in heaven for richly blessing the ministry of NPH, the NPH staff, and the lives of all WELS members.

“You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Psalm 118:28,29).

Mr. Jeremy Angle, reporter

Rev. Luke Werre, chairman

Rev. Nathaniel Biebert, vice chairman

Mr. Dwight Luedtke, treasurer

Prof. Brian Hennig, secretary

Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS chief financial officer and treasurer

Mr. Matthew Groth

Mr. Jeremy Korell

Prof. Steven Pagels

Mr. John Pratt

Mr. Joel Raasch

Administrative officers:

Mr. Jeremy Angle, president

Rev. Chris Cordes, vice president, publishing

Mr. Eric Krueger, vice president, finance and accounting

Committee on Constitutional Matters Floor Committee #18

Our calling

The Committee on Constitutional Matters serves under the Conference of Presidents to interpret the constitution and bylaws for the synod and its constituency. It is responsible for maintaining and distributing accurate updates of these documents as changes are made by the synod in convention. The current WELS Constitution and Bylaws and Constitution for the Districts are available at wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports. If you are unable to access the documents on the website, you may contact the President's Office to request a printed copy.

Our current situation

In addition to revising the document to incorporate the amendments approved by the 2021 convention, the committee has been asked to address ten inquiries regarding constitutional matters since the convention to the date of this report.

The delegates to the 2023 convention will have several proposed amendments to the bylaws to consider. Two have been submitted by the Conference of Presidents. One has been submitted by the Board for Ministerial Education. These proposed amendments will be assigned to the Floor Committee on Constitutional Matters, Floor Committee #18. The convention may also consider any other proposed amendments to the constitution or bylaws that have been sent to all voting and advisory delegates at least 60 days prior to the convention.

A look ahead

Following the convention, our committee will see to it that the Constitution and Bylaws is updated by adding any amendments or changes approved by the delegates. Then we will publish the revised Constitution and Bylaws and Constitution for the Districts. Notice will be given when the document is complete. It will be available, as it is now, at wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports, or by contacting the President's Office for a printed copy.

Rev. Eric Steinbrenner, reporter

Rev. Eric Steinbrenner, chairman
Mr. Kenneth Gosch
Rev. Richard Waldschmidt

Proposed bylaw revisions

The following bylaw changes have been recommended. Background rationale is provided for each recommended change and is italicized. Only those areas of the bylaws recommended for change are included here; those not being amended are not printed here but can be found in the WELS Constitution and Bylaws and the Constitution for the Districts. Note: Strikethrough indicates deletion and underlining indicates an addition.

Recommendation #1

Background: The ministerial education schools suggest the change. Conventions that begin on the last Monday in July sometimes continue into August, when there are routine activities beginning the school year on the three campuses that normally host conventions. Scheduling the synod convention a week earlier in those cases would be helpful.

Synod Bylaws

CONVENTIONS

Section 3.00

Conventions: Time and Place

(a) Regular conventions of the synod as described in the constitution shall be held in odd-numbered years.

Conventions shall be scheduled from Monday through Friday, if necessary, starting the last Monday during the last full week in July.

Recommendation #2

Background: The Publication Coordinating Commission has not functioned for some time. The work of coordinating and prioritizing synodical publications has been done by other entities such as the Commission on Congregational Services and Northwestern Publishing House. Removing this commission will not hinder the work of coordinating and prioritizing synodical publications, with the result that the commission no longer needs to be included in the bylaws and required to be a part of the synod's structure.

Synod Bylaws

PUBLISHING

Section 6:88

Publication Coordinating Commission

~~(a) There shall be a Publication Coordinating Commission that shall coordinate and prioritize the publishing (pre-press, production, marketing, distribution, analysis, and inventory control) and media production of the synod's boards, commissions, and Northwestern Publishing House.~~

~~(b) The commission shall evaluate the needs for Christian literature and media tools in congregations, schools, and homes, and recommend to appropriate synod agencies the development of such resources.~~

~~(c) The Publication Coordinating Commission fund supports the commission's work. The commission shall administer the fund. All major expenditures from the fund shall be approved in advance by the executive committee of the Synodical Council.~~

~~(d) The commission shall be chaired by a member appointed by the synod president. The synod president, in consultation with the appropriate board, shall appoint the following members to the commission: one member from Northwestern Publishing House, one member from each area of ministry, and three at-large members. Appointments shall be for a term of four years, with no limit on the number of terms served.~~

~~(e) The director of communications shall be an advisory member of the commission. Additional advisory members may be appointed by the chairman as necessary. The commission shall report to the Synodical Council through the president or his designee.~~

Recommendation #3

Background: While the sum and substance of the proposed bylaws is the same as our current bylaws, the following changes have been made:

1) In many cases, we are proposing that notification time periods be shortened from 60 days to 30 days. In an age of instant communication, it seems unnecessary to allow the possibility of two months to go by before conveying information that deeply impacts people and organizations. We have also attempted to set and define a reasonable period of time for notifying individuals and groups of a discipline action that has been carried out—7 days, and for forwarding appeals requests to the proper appeals board—5 days.

2) In the proposed bylaws, the words "suspend" and "suspension" have been replaced with "remove" and "removal." In our current culture, the idea of a suspension would seem to imply a temporary punitive action. When a student is suspended from school, it is for a set period of time with the expectation that the student will be returning to school when the suspension period has been "served." In the discipline actions described in our church body's bylaws, the disciplinary action, generally speaking, is for cause. It could be misleading to speak of a suspension if the word itself conveys a temporary situation. We believe that using the words "remove" and "removal" conveys a definitive and permanent action. At the same time, the use of these words does not negate the possibility of an appeal by the party under discipline.

3) Our current bylaws make no specific mention of how discipline is to be carried out as it pertains to WELS-affiliated ministries and those serving in them. (For examples of such ministries and organizations, please see the "Affiliate ministries" section of the most recent WELS Yearbook.) While it may be assumed that the same guidelines that govern all other cases of discipline would be applied to these affiliate ministries, good order would seem to dictate that we make specific mention of them in the bylaws as we do other groups such as boards and missionaries.

4) We have spelled out in more detail the authority granted to the district and synod Boards of Appeals. The current bylaws say that the boards may "require such testimony that in its judgment is relevant." We have sought to clarify this

by saying that each board has the right to "... conduct interviews and to request additional information from anyone it deems to be connected to the matter."

5) All other changes are rather minor in nature. There are places where wording is dropped or placed in another subsection (or article) of these bylaws.

Synod Bylaws

DISCIPLINE AND APPEALS

Section 8.00

Jurisdiction and Procedure in Removal of Synod Elected and Appointed Officers; Board, Commission, and Committee Members; Ministries; and Church-Affiliated Organizations

(a) In the case of the synod president, the first and second vice presidents with the concurrence of the Conference of Presidents and the Synodical Council may ~~suspend~~ remove the president from his office ~~with pay~~. The president shall have ~~60~~ 30 days thereafter to appeal this ~~suspension~~ removal. ~~If there is no appeal within the appeal period, the action shall be final, and the president is removed from office. If he appeals, the appeal will be heard by the Synod Board of Appeals. If he appeals, the appeal is initially submitted to the acting synod president, who shall, within five days of receipt, forward the appeal to the Synod Board of Appeals.~~

(b) In the case of the synod first and second vice presidents and the recording secretary, the president with the concurrence of the other two elected officers, the Conference of Presidents, and the Synodical Council may ~~suspend~~ remove another officer from his office ~~with pay~~. The officer shall have ~~60~~ 30 days thereafter to appeal this ~~suspension~~ removal. ~~If there is no appeal within the appeal period, the action shall be final, and the officer is removed from office. If he appeals, the appeal will be heard by the Synod Board of Appeals. If he appeals, the appeal is initially submitted to the synod president, who shall, within five days of receipt, forward the appeal to the Synod Board of Appeals.~~

(c) In the case of removal from office of synod board, commission, or committee member: the board commission or committee may suspend a member from his position, ~~and he shall be notified in writing of this action within 30 days. The member shall have 30 days thereafter to appeal this removal. If there is no appeal within 60 days thereafter, the action shall be final, and the member is removed from office. If he appeals, the appeal will be heard by the Synod Board of Appeals. The decision of the Synod Board of Appeals shall be the final disposition of the matter. If he appeals, the appeal is initially submitted to the synod president, who shall, within five days of receipt, forward the appeal to the Synod Board of Appeals.~~

~~(d) In the case of ministries and affiliated ministries whose ministries cross district lines or which serve the broader synod, oversight of doctrine and practice is the initial responsibility of the praesidium of the district in which the headquarters of the organization is located, and, ultimately, with the Conference of Presidents.~~

~~(e) In all cases of removal, the responsible entity shall provide written confirmation to the individual or group removed within seven days of removal. Any removal requires the cessation of all duties and responsibilities while the appeal process, if any, is being carried out. The responsible entity shall report the removal to the synod via the call report and other appropriate means of communication.~~

~~(d) (f) The conduct of the review shall rest solely with the discretion of the Synod Board of Appeals. The board shall have the right and power to examine all documentary evidence and correspondence and to require such testimony that in its judgment is relevant. The decision of the Synod Board of Appeals shall be the final disposition of the appeal.~~

Section 8.10

Synod Board of Appeals

(a) The Synod Board of Appeals shall be composed of 10 members: a chairman, three pastors, three teachers, and three laymen. The Synod Board of Appeals shall be elected by the synod in convention from a slate of candidates submitted by the synod's Nominating Committee. The chairman shall be a pastor. Members' terms shall be for four years and they may succeed themselves twice. Terms shall be staggered. Members of the Synod Board of Appeals may hold other elective or appointive offices.

(b) A five-person Board of Appeals panel shall be formed to decide each appeal. The chairman or his designee plus four board members selected by the chairman shall make up a Board of Appeals panel. Each panel must include at least one pastor, one teacher, and one lay member.

(c) The panel is to act independently as it considers the appeal. It has the right and responsibility to review all

documentary evidence. It has the right to conduct interviews and to request additional information from anyone it deems to be connected to the matter. It has the responsibility to rule whether the disciplinary action was justified in its substance and whether the process followed was in keeping with biblical principles and with any applicable bylaws.

(e) (d) All correspondence and documentary evidence relative to a disciplinary action together with a summary report shall be filed in the office of the president within ~~60~~ 30 days after the appeal has been concluded with a copy forwarded to the removing entity and the appellant. The decision of a Board of Appeals panel shall be the final disposition of an appeal.

Section 8.20

Jurisdiction and Procedure in Disciplinary Actions and Removal from Office at the District Level

(a) In cases of discipline among pastors, teachers, and congregations of both self-supporting and mission status, the district in which such pastors, teachers, and congregations hold membership and/or serves shall exercise original jurisdiction. The Synod Board of Appeals shall exercise appellate jurisdiction.

(b) In cases of discipline among the faculties of the synodical schools or the area Lutheran high schools and administrators of synodical boards and commissions, the respective board or commission shall exercise original jurisdiction. The district in which the appellant is a member and/or serves and the Synod Board of Appeals shall exercise appellate jurisdiction successively.

(c) The two district vice presidents with the concurrence of the district circuit pastors may ~~suspend~~ remove the district president from his office. The president shall have ~~60~~ 30 days thereafter to appeal this ~~suspension~~ removal. ~~If there is no appeal within 60 days, the action shall be final, and the officer is removed from office.~~ If he ~~the president~~ appeals, the appeal will be heard by the District Board of Appeals. ~~The Synod Board of Appeals shall exercise~~ appellate jurisdiction.

(d) In the case of district vice presidents and secretary, the ~~district~~ president with the concurrence of the circuit pastors may ~~suspend~~ remove another officer. The district officer shall have ~~60~~ 30 days thereafter to appeal this ~~suspension~~ removal. ~~If there is no appeal within 60 days, the action shall be final and the officer if removed from office.~~ If he appeals, the appeal will be heard by the District Board of Appeals. ~~The Synod Board of Appeals shall~~ exercise appellate jurisdiction.

~~(e) In the case of a congregation, ministry, or affiliated ministry operating within one district, it may become necessary for the district through its praesidium, after consultation with the Conference of Presidents, to remove the congregation, ministry or affiliated ministry from membership in or affiliation with the synod for cause. The group shall have 30 days to appeal this removal. If the group appeals, the appeal shall be heard by the district Board of Appeals. The decision of the District Board of Appeals may be appealed to the Synod Board of Appeals.~~

~~(e) (f) The conduct of review shall rest with the District Board of Appeals. The board shall have the right and power to examine all documentary evidence and correspondence and to require such testimony that in its judgment is relevant. The decision of the District Board of Appeals may be appealed to the Synod Board of Appeals. Upon the appeal, the Synod Board of Appeals may review the action of the District Board of Appeals.~~

~~(f) (g) In the case of removal from office of district board, commission or committee members, the board, commission, or committee may ~~suspend~~ remove a member from his position. He shall be notified in writing of this action within 30 days. The member shall have ~~60~~ 30 days to appeal the ~~suspension~~ removal. If there is no appeal within 60 days, the action shall be final, and the member is removed from office. If he appeals, the appeal will be heard by the District Board of Appeals. The decision of the District Board of Appeals may be appealed to the Synod Board of Appeals. Upon appeal, the Synod Board of Appeals may review the action of the District Board of Appeals.~~

~~(g) (h) In cases of discipline among missionaries under the jurisdiction of the Board for World Missions, the respective administrative committee shall exercise original jurisdiction. The Board for World Missions, the District Board of Appeals and the Synod Board of Appeals shall exercise appellate jurisdiction successively.~~

~~(i) With the exception of appeals by laymen who are disciplined by their congregations, all appeals shall be submitted to the synod president who shall forward them to the appropriate Board of Appeals.~~

~~(j) In all cases of removal, the responsible entity shall provide written confirmation to the individual or group removed within seven days. Any removal requires the cessation of all duties and responsibilities while the appeal~~

process, if any, is being carried out. The responsible entity shall report the removal to the synod via the call report and other appropriate means of communication.

Section 8.30

District Board of Appeals

(a) The District Board of Appeals shall be composed of 10 members: a chairman, three pastors, three teachers, and three laymen. It shall be elected by the district in convention from a slate of candidates submitted by the district's nominating committee. The chairman shall be a pastor. Their terms shall be for four years and they may succeed themselves twice. Terms shall be staggered. Members of the District Board of Appeals may hold other elective or appointive offices.

(b) A five-person Board of Appeals panel shall be formed to decide each appeal. The chairman or his designee plus four board members selected by the chairman shall make up a Board of Appeals panel. Each panel must include at least one pastor, one teacher, and one lay member.

(c) The panel is to act independently as it considers the appeal. It has the right and responsibility to review all documentary evidence. It has the right to conduct interviews and to request additional information from anyone it deems to be connected to the matter. It has the responsibility to rule whether the disciplinary action was justified in its substance and whether the process followed was in keeping with biblical principles and with any applicable bylaws.

~~(e)~~ (d) All correspondence and documentary evidence relative to a disciplinary action together with a summary report shall be filed in the office of the district president within ~~60~~ 30 days after such action has been concluded with a copy forwarded to the removing entity and the appellant. The decision of a Board of Appeals panel shall be the final disposition of an appeal unless, when possible, an appeal is made to the Synod Board of Appeals. The decision of the District Board of Appeals shall be respected by all the members of the Synod, even while an appeal may be made to the Synod Board of Appeals.

Section 8.40

Rights of the Disciplined Party

(a) Any person or congregation that has been disciplined under Section 8.20 shall be notified in writing by the district president of the right of appeal under ~~Section 8.40~~ Sections 8.20 and 8.30 of the bylaws within 30 days of completion of the disciplinary action. A copy of these sections shall be included in the letter.

~~(b) They shall have 60~~ The disciplined party shall have 30 days to appeal the action. To exercise the right of appeal the disciplined party shall file notice of appeal ~~with the Board of Appeals within 60~~ with the synod president within 30 days of the notification of the right of appeal. The synod president shall forward the appeal to the appropriate Board of Appeals.

Section 8.50

Appeals by Laypersons

(a) A layperson who has been subject to a disciplinary action by a congregation shall have the right to appeal the action. The layperson shall be notified in writing by the congregation of the right of appeal to the District Board of Appeals. Such notification shall occur within 30 days of the completion of the disciplinary action. Such appeal must be filed with the district president in writing, with a copy to the congregation, within ~~60~~ 30 days of the notice of disciplinary action.

(b) Upon receipt of the appellant's request, the district president shall notify the District Board of Appeals.

(c) The constitution for the districts affirms that "in intracongregational matters the district shall have purely advisory authority" (Article IX, Section 2). The review shall be conducted, therefore, to determine whether the process leading to the disciplinary action and the doctrinal basis of the disciplinary action were scriptural.

(d) The conduct of the review shall rest solely with the District Board of Appeals. The board shall have the right and power to examine all documentary evidence and to require such testimony that, in its judgment, is relevant.

(e) The District Board of Appeals shall submit its decision in writing to the appellant with a copy to the disciplining body, circuit pastor, and district president. The decision of the District Board of Appeals shall be the final disposition of the appeal.

(f) Within 30 days of the board's decision, the complete records of the board shall be filed with the district president, who shall act, if necessary, in accordance with his responsibility for the district's doctrine and practice.

Section 8.60

Appeals after Removal from Office

(a) A pastor or teacher who has been removed from office because of "established inability to perform the duties of his/her office" (*Model Constitution and Bylaws for Congregations of the WELS*, 1997, Article IX, Section 2) shall have the right to have the action reviewed by the District and Synod Board of Appeals successively. The request for review must be filed in writing within ~~60~~ 30 days of the notice of removal from office. The request for review is to be addressed to the president of the synod who shall notify the appropriate Board of Appeals.

(b) The conduct of the review shall rest solely with the District Board of Appeals. ~~The board shall have~~ It has the right and ~~power~~ responsibility to ~~examine~~ review all documentary evidence ~~and to require such testimony that, in its judgment, is relevant to the case. It has the right to conduct interviews and to request additional information from anyone it deems to be connected to the matter. It has the responsibility to rule whether the disciplinary action was justified in its substance and whether the process followed was in keeping with biblical principles and with any applicable bylaws.~~

(c) If the board rules in favor of the pastor or teacher who has been removed, the pastor or teacher shall be restored to the official list of pastors and teachers and declared eligible for a call into the ministry.

(d) If the board rules against the pastor or teacher who has been removed, the pastor or teacher shall have the right to appeal to the Synod Board of Appeals through the synod president within ~~60~~ 30 days of notification of ~~the~~ action by the District Board.

(e) Upon appeal of either party, the Synod Board of Appeals may review the action of the District Board of Appeals. The records of the district board's proceedings shall be used as a basis for any review. It has the right and responsibility to review all documentary evidence. It has the right to conduct interviews and to request additional information from anyone it deems to be connected to the matter. It has the responsibility to rule whether the disciplinary action was justified in its substance and whether the process followed was in keeping with biblical principles and with any applicable bylaws.

(f) The decision of the Synod Board of Appeals shall be the final disposition of the case.

District Bylaws

ARTICLE XXI

Jurisdiction and Procedure in Disciplinary Actions and Removal from Office at the District Level

Section 1. In cases of discipline among pastors, teachers, and congregations of both self-supporting and mission status, the district in which such pastors, teachers, and congregations hold membership and/or serve shall exercise original jurisdiction. The Synod Board of Appeals shall exercise appellate jurisdiction.

Section 2. In cases of discipline among the faculties of the synodical schools or the area Lutheran high schools and administrators of synodical boards and commissions, the respective board or commission shall exercise original jurisdiction. The district in which the appellant is a member and/or serves and the Synod Board of Appeals shall exercise appellate jurisdiction successively.

Section 3. The two district vice presidents with the concurrence of the district circuit pastors may ~~suspend~~ remove the district president from his office. The president shall have ~~60~~ 30 days thereafter to appeal this ~~suspension~~ removal. ~~If there is no appeal within 60 days, the action shall be final, and the president is removed from office.~~ If the president appeals, the appeal will be heard by the District Board of Appeals. The Synod Board of Appeals shall exercise appellate jurisdiction.

Section 4. In the case of district vice presidents and secretary, the president with the concurrence of the circuit pastors may ~~suspend~~ remove another officer. The district officer shall have ~~60~~ 30 days thereafter to appeal this ~~suspension~~ removal. ~~If there is no appeal within 60 days, the action shall be final, and the officer is removed from office.~~ If he appeals, the appeal will be heard by the District Board of Appeals. The Synod Board of Appeals shall exercise appellate jurisdiction.

Section 5. In the case of a congregation, ministry, or affiliated ministry operating within one district, it may become necessary for the district through its praesidium, after consultation with the Conference of Presidents, to remove the congregation, ministry, or affiliated ministry from membership in or affiliation with the synod for cause. The group shall have 30 days to appeal this removal. If the group appeals, the appeal shall be heard by the District Board of Appeals. The decision of the District Board of Appeals may be appealed to the Synod Board of Appeals.

Section 5: Section 6. The conduct of review shall rest with the District Board of Appeals. The board shall have the right and power to examine all documentary evidence and correspondence and to require such testimony that in its judgment is relevant. The decision of the District Board of Appeals may be appealed to the Synod Board of Appeals. The decision of the District Board of Appeals may be appealed to the Synod Board of Appeals. Upon appeal, the Synod Board of Appeals may review the action of the District Board of Appeals.

Section 6: Section 7. In the case of removal from office of district board, commission or committee members, the board, commission, or committee may suspend remove a member from his position. He shall be notified in writing of this action within 30 days. The member shall have 60 30 days to appeal the suspension removal. If there is no appeal within 60 days, the action shall be final, and the member is removed from office. If he appeals, the appeal will be heard by the District Board of Appeals. The decision of the District Board of Appeals may be appealed to the Synod Board of Appeals. Upon appeal, the Synod Board of Appeals may review the action of the District Board of Appeals.

Section 7: Section 8. In cases of discipline among missionaries under the jurisdiction of the Board for World Missions, the respective administrative committee shall exercise original jurisdiction. The Board for World Missions, the District Board of Appeals, and the Synod Board of Appeals shall exercise appellate jurisdiction successively.

Section 9. With the exception of appeals by laymen who are disciplined by their congregations, all appeals shall be submitted to the synod president who shall forward them to the appropriate Board of Appeals.

Section 10. In all cases of removal, the responsible entity shall provide written confirmation to the individual or group removed within seven days. Any removal requires the cessation of all duties and responsibilities while the appeal process, if any, is being carried out. The responsible entity shall report the removal to the synod via the call report and other appropriate means of communication.

ARTICLE XXII

District Board of Appeals

Section 1. The District Board of Appeals shall be composed of 10 members: a chairman, three pastors, three teachers, and three laymen. It shall be elected by the district in convention from a slate of candidates submitted by the district nominating committee. The chairman shall be a pastor. Their terms shall be for four years and they may succeed themselves twice. Terms shall be staggered. Members of the District Board of Appeals may hold other elective or appointive offices.

Section 2. A five-person Board of Appeals panel shall be formed to decide each appeal. The chairman or his designee plus four board members selected by the chairman shall make up a Board of Appeals panel. Each panel must include at least one pastor, one teacher, and one lay member.

Section 3. The panel is to act independently as it considers the appeal. It has the right and responsibility to review all documentary evidence. It has the right to conduct interviews and to request additional information from anyone it deems to be connected to the matter. It has the responsibility to rule whether the disciplinary action was justified in its substance and whether the process followed was in keeping with biblical principles and with any applicable bylaws.

Section 3: Section 4. All correspondence and documentary evidence relative to a disciplinary action together with a summary report shall be filed in the office of the district president within 60 30 days after such action has been concluded with a copy forwarded to the removing party and the appellant. The decision of a Board of Appeals panel shall be the final disposition of an appeal unless, when possible, an appeal is made to the Synod Board of Appeals. The decision of the District Board of Appeals shall be respected by all members of the Synod, even while an appeal may be made to the Synod Board of Appeals.

ARTICLE XXIII

Rights of the Disciplined Party

Section 1. Any person or congregation that has been disciplined under Article XXI shall be notified in writing by the

district president of the right of appeal under Article XXII of the district constitution within 30 days of completion of the disciplinary action. A copy of these articles shall be included in the letter.

Section 2. ~~They~~ The disciplined party shall have ~~60~~ 30 days to appeal the action. To exercise the right of appeal the disciplined party shall file notice of appeal with the ~~Board of Appeals~~ synod president within ~~60~~ 30 days of the notification of the right of appeal. ~~The synod president shall forward the appeal to the appropriate Board of Appeals.~~

ARTICLE XXIV

Appeals by Laypersons

Section 1. A layperson who has been subject to a disciplinary action by a congregation shall have the right to appeal the action. The layperson shall be notified in writing by the congregation of the right of appeal. Such notification shall occur within 30 days of the completion of the disciplinary action. Such appeal must be filed with the district president in writing, with a copy to the congregation, within ~~60~~ 30 days of the disciplinary action.

Section 2. Upon receipt of the appellant's request, the district president shall notify the District Board of Appeals.

Section 3. The constitution for the districts affirms that "in intracongregational matters the district shall have purely advisory authority" (Article IX, Section 2). The review shall be conducted, therefore, to determine whether the process leading to the disciplinary action and the doctrinal basis of the disciplinary action were scriptural.

Section 4. The conduct of the review shall rest solely with the District Board of Appeals. The board shall have the right and power to examine all documentary evidence and to require such testimony that, in its judgment, is relevant.

Section 5. The district Board of Appeals shall submit its decision in writing to the appellant with a copy to the disciplining body, circuit pastor, and district president. The decision of the District Board of Appeals shall be the final disposition of the appeal.

Section 6. Within 30 days of the board's decision, the complete records of the board shall be filed with the district president, who shall act, if necessary, in accordance with his responsibility for the district's doctrine and practice.

ARTICLE XXV

Appeals after Removal from Office

Section 1. A pastor or teacher who has been removed from office because of "established inability to perform the duties of his/her office" (*Model Constitution and Bylaws for Congregations of the WELS, 1997, Article IX, Section 2*) shall have the right to have the action reviewed by the District and Synod Board of Appeals successively. The request for review must be filed in writing within ~~60~~ 30 days of the removal from office. The request for review is to be addressed to the president of the synod who shall notify the appropriate Board of Appeals.

Section 2. The conduct of the review shall rest solely with the District Board of Appeals. ~~The board shall have the right and power to examine all documentary evidence and to require such testimony that, in its judgment, is relevant to the case. It has the right and responsibility to review all documentary evidence. It has the right to conduct interviews and to request additional information from anyone it deems to be connected to the matter. It has the responsibility to rule whether the disciplinary action was justified in its substance and whether the process followed was in keeping with biblical principles and with any applicable bylaws.~~

Section 3. If the board rules in favor of the pastor or teacher who has been removed, the pastor or teacher shall be restored to the official list of pastors and teachers and declared "eligible for a call into the ministry."

Section 4. If the board rules against the pastor or teacher who has been removed, the pastor or teacher shall have the right to appeal to the Synod Board of Appeals through the synod president within ~~60~~ 30 days of notification of action by the district board.

Section 5. Upon appeal of either party, the Synod Board of Appeals may review the action of the District Board of Appeals. The records of the district board's proceedings shall be used as a basis for any review. It has the right and responsibility to review all documentary evidence. It has the right to conduct interviews and to request additional information from anyone it deems to be connected to the matter. It has the responsibility to rule whether the disciplinary action was justified in its substance and whether the process followed was in keeping with biblical principles and with any applicable bylaws.

Section 6. The decision of the Synod Board of Appeals shall be the final disposition of the case.

Memorials

Memorial (2023-01)

Subject: *Statement on Critical Theory and Social Justice*

Floor Committee #2

- WHEREAS 1) Critical Theory (applied for example in “Critical Race Theory” or “Critical Queer Theory”), Social Justice, and related concepts (the dialectics “racism” and “anti-racism,” “bias” and “anti-bias”; the triad diversity, equity, and inclusion; institutionalized racism; intersectionality; microaggressions; etc.) have permeated our world; and
- WHEREAS 2) Critical Theory and Social Justice have intellectual and theological underpinnings in Marxist and atheist worldviews; and
- WHEREAS 3) the laity are encountering Critical Theory; Social Justice; and diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, in entertainment, in education, and in the media; and
- WHEREAS 4) there is a danger that individuals and entities within our synod may be influenced by these philosophies and adopt their terminology and concepts; therefore be it
- Resolved. that the WELS Conference of Presidents prepare a pastoral brief on the topics of Critical Theory and Social Justice.

Dr. Philip V. Hahn, Madison, Ala.

Memorial (2023-02)

Subject: *Reevaluation of the call process*

Floor Committee #2

- WHEREAS 1) WELS rightly views the calling process as a divine call from the Holy Spirit; and
- WHEREAS 2) the workers remain few, but the harvest is plentiful (Matthew 9:37); and
- WHEREAS 3) we do not wish to constrain the Holy Spirit and the will of the Lord, but having pastors hold three calls (the one which they currently hold plus two additional) can cause difficulties and stress for pastors and for congregations; and
- WHEREAS 4) in 2022 there were 35 times a pastor received multiple calls at one time; and
- WHEREAS 5) through March 13, 2023, there have been 15 pastors who received multiple calls at one time this year; and
- WHEREAS 6) many technological advances (such as Google Sheets) have been made to help reduce this number; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the synod in convention direct the Conference of Presidents to study ways to use technology and widely available functions to prevent pastors from having more than two calls at a time; and be it finally
- Resolved. b) that the Conference of Presidents make its findings and changes suggested available to the district conventions in the *Report to the Twelve Districts* in time for conventions in 2024.

Mr. Paul Taylor, Baltimore, Md.

Memorial (2023-03)

Subject: *Informal doctrinal discussions with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod*

Floor Committee #3

- WHEREAS 1) the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) recognizes that both Matthew 18:15-18, Romans 16:17, and Titus 3:10 teach that after all admonition to a persistent errorist has been exhausted and the errorist remains committed to his error and refuses to turn from it, we are to withdraw the hand of fellowship; and
- WHEREAS 2) after almost 30 years of doctrinal disagreement that arose in connection to the doctrines of Fellowship and the Scriptures, WELS suspended fellowship with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS); and
- WHEREAS 3) since the suspension of fellowship, other doctrinal matters have arisen to further separate our church bodies, specifically in the doctrines of Church and Ministry and Woman Suffrage; and
- WHEREAS 4) many former pastors, members, and even congregations have left the LCMS and found fellowship in WELS for confessional reasons due to the practices and doctrines that led to our separation; and
- WHEREAS 5) the current doctrinal position of the LCMS and the practice of the LCMS is clearly found in her publications, doctrinal statements, publicized media, and church reporting; and
- WHEREAS 6) after over a decade of informal meetings to clarify positions with the LCMS, the LCMS has made no formal, public effort to address the doctrinal difference that continues to divide WELS from the LCMS; and
- WHEREAS 7) inviting the LCMS president to address the WELS synod convention from the podium gives the impression of a movement toward the restoration of doctrinal unity, despite public and private statements to the contrary, both written and oral, both on the part of the LCMS and WELS officials; and
- WHEREAS 8) no other Lutheran church leader, outside of our fellowship or outside of active, public, formal doctrinal discussion with WELS, is accorded the privilege of addressing our convention from the podium; and
- WHEREAS 9) that the continued informal meetings and invitations to speak at the synodical level may lead to additional confusion in our fellowship practices on the parish level; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that the members of our synod be reminded of the scriptural teaching that correct doctrine is never to be without evangelical practice and expression (Galatians 2:11-21; James 1:22-25; Matthew 7:21); and be it further
- Resolved, b) that the members of our synod be mindful of the strong confessional stand made by current members, pastors, and congregations of WELS who left the LCMS for the sake of the gospel and their own conscience; and be it further
- Resolved, c) that the LCMS president not be given the podium to address our convention until such time public, formal discussions are held to deal with the doctrinal differences that divide our respective church bodies; and be it further
- Resolved, d) that the informal meetings with the LCMS be replaced with the method that is currently being used in our dealings with the CLC, namely that of formal, public, doctrinal discussions to see if true unity exists and historic divisions have been resolved by the Lord of the Church through the Holy Scriptures; if this is not found to be feasible, then be it further
- Resolved, e) that our synod returns to the practice of dealing with the LCMS previously employed by our Committee on Inter-Church Relations, that is, monitor the activities of the LCMS by objectively reviewing their public doctrine and practice as a whole, rather than the subjective discussions with a few select members; and be it finally

Resolved.

f) that as a matter of fairness, no church body outside our fellowship with whom there is no formal discussion of fellowship, even one with whom we had former fraternal relationships, be given special treatment as opposed to other Lutheran bodies whose activities and doctrine we also watch with interest (ELCA, LCMC, NALC, CLC, etc.), and continue to pray that obstacles may be removed by the Lord of the Church to establish true, Christian fellowship as defined in the Scripture and currently practiced and enjoyed domestically with the WELS-ELS fellowship and internationally within the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.

Pastor Paul Meitner, Winthrop, Minn.

WELS acronyms

ALHS Area Lutheran high school—a high school operated and funded by area congregations with general, ministerial education, and specialized course offerings

AOC Accounting Oversight Committee—serves the Synodical Council by retaining external auditors and by assisting in ensuring that appropriate accounting policies and internal controls are established and financial systems are efficient and effective; that financial personnel have the requisite skills; and that financial reports are prepared timely, accurately, and in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles

BHM Board for Home Missions—board that oversees mission opportunities in the United States, Canada, and the English-speaking Caribbean; made up of a pastor and layman from 13 district mission boards; coordinates work of various mission districts and allocates available personnel and money

BME Board for Ministerial Education—oversees all areas of educating future WELS called workers; schools include a seminary, a college, and two preparatory high schools

BORAM *Book of Reports and Memorials*—published in odd years; reports the work of the synod to synod convention delegates and also includes recommendations known as memorials for the convention delegates to consider

BPO Benefit Plans Office—administers the synod’s self-administered, self-insured insurance program for all called workers and lay workers employed at the Center for Mission and Ministry and in congregations and schools

BWM Board for World Missions—conducts gospel outreach in 40 foreign countries and is exploring outreach opportunities in many additional countries

CAMM Central Africa Medical Mission—a WELS-affiliated ministry that provides health care to people in Africa through clinics in Malawi and Zambia; works closely with WELS World Missions and the Lutheran Church of Central Africa in Malawi and Zambia

CAR WELS Christian Aid and Relief—the synod’s ministry of compassion, bringing physical relief to people suffering from natural disasters and severe medical and financial emergencies as well as distributing humanitarian aid through WELS home and world missions

CCC Commission on Congregational Counseling—a commission of Congregational Services that assists WELS congregations to assess and evaluate ministry, review biblical teachings and principles that impact ministry, develop plans to adjust and expand ministry in appropriate ways, and carry out their plans

CCCW Care Committee for Called Workers—a subcommittee of WELS Special Ministries that assists WELS calling bodies in the spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional care of their called workers

CCM Committee on Constitutional Matters—reviews questions about and proposed amendments to the WELS Constitution and Bylaws and submits recommendations to the convention

CECW Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee—assists called workers in continuing to grow in all their God-given callings for all their years in service in the public ministry; reports to the Conference of Presidents; includes representatives from the Board for Ministerial Education, Martin Luther College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as well as representatives from WELS Congregational Services

CEF WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.—primary purpose is to make loans to newly established congregations under the direction of the Board for Home Missions (BHM) and the Board for World Missions (BWM); loans are used to acquire parsonages, land sites, and ministry facilities as tools for gospel outreach

CELC Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference—organization of worldwide church bodies in fellowship, of which WELS is a member

CFO Chief Financial Officer

CFS Christian Family Solutions–Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service—a WELS-affiliated organization that offers Christian counseling, member assistance programs, in-home care programs, and an assisted living facility

CGC Christian giving counselor—a member of the Ministry of Christian Giving’s team; serves as an information source on planned and deferred giving for congregations and members in all 12 WELS districts

CICR Commission on Inter-Church Relations—meets with potential and current sister church bodies; monitors actions of church bodies outside of our fellowship

CLS Commission on Lutheran Schools—a commission of Congregational Services that oversees coordination of early childhood ministries, Lutheran elementary schools, and area Lutheran high schools

CMC Campus Ministry Committee—helps congregations see the opportunities they have for outreach at area college campuses and provides counsel and aid in such outreach, a ministry of WELS Home Missions

CMM WELS Center for Mission and Ministry—synod headquarters located at N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive in Waukesha, Wis.

CMO Congregation Mission Offerings—offerings submitted by local churches for the work of preaching the gospel, training called workers, and administering the synod

COE Commission on Evangelism—a commission of Congregational Services that assists congregations in seizing every opportunity the Lord provides to evangelize lost souls, making use of media communications, structured programs, and every-member witness

COLA Cost of Living Adjustment—a component of called worker compensation to reflect the variance in the cost of living from region to region

COP Conference of Presidents—a group of 15 men—synod president, two synod vice presidents, and 12 district presidents—who maintain the synod’s doctrine and practice and are responsible for funding the synod’s budget

CRC Compensation Review Committee—a standing committee that reports to the Synodical Council through its Administration Committee

CS Congregational Services—provides services and resources to congregations, schools, and individuals in the areas of Lutheran schools, special ministries, worship, evangelism, discipleship, and congregational counseling

CSB Christian Standard Bible—a translation of the Bible published by Holman Bible Publishers

CSC Communication Services Commission—assists the Conference of Presidents in communicating WELS’ mission to the members of the synod

CSM Commission on Special Ministries—a commission of Congregational Services that provides for spiritual needs of those who are often not served through regular parish programs

CTO Chief Technology Officer

CW *Christian Worship*—the WELS hymnal, published in 1993 and then revised and published under the same name in 2021

C/W Commission on Worship—a commission of Congregational Services that assists parishes with worship that glorifies God and strengthens his people

DMB District mission board—oversees home missions within its own district; evaluates mission work in the district, counsels missionaries and missions, and decides the steps to be followed next in a mission effort and also recommends to the Board for Home Missions where missions should be started

DP District president—oversees activity of a district and is a member of the Conference of Presidents

ECE/ECM Early childhood education/Early childhood ministry—ministry to young children through preschool and childcare programs

EFL/ESL English as a foreign language/English as a second language—English as a foreign language is taught to those who live in a country where English is not the primary language spoken; English as a second language is taught to those who live in a country where English is the primary language spoken but the student’s primary language is not English; many home and world mission fields use these classes to build relationships so they can share Jesus with their students

EHV Evangelical Heritage Version—a translation of the Bible published by Northwestern Publishing House

ELFK Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany—sister church body in fellowship with WELS

ELS Evangelical Lutheran Synod—sister church body in fellowship with WELS

ESV English Standard Version—a translation of the Bible published by Crossway

FIC *Forward in Christ*—WELS’ official monthly magazine

FTE Full-time equivalent—a way to express employee work hours (for example, an FTE of 1.0 means that the person is equivalent to a full-time worker, while an FTE of .05 means that the worker is half-time)

FY Fiscal year—WELS’ fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30

IDDM Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry—this organization, which operates under WELS Special Ministries, strives to share the gospel with those who have special education needs or developmental disabilities and to provide a supportive Christian network for them

IMO Individual mission offerings—offerings given by individual members, not through their congregations

JMC Joint Mission Council—oversees the mission opportunities that are the operational responsibilities of both the Board for World Missions and the Board for Home Missions; members of the JMC are the elected chairmen and administrators of both boards, the senior director of Missions Operations, and a representative designated by each board

KW Kingdom Workers—a WELS-affiliated organization that supports WELS missions through the use of volunteers; also supports ministries in fellowship with WELS

LCMS Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod—not currently a sister church body but engaging in informal doctrinal discussions with WELS

LES Lutheran elementary school—a school operated by a local congregation

LMSG Lutheran Military Support Group—a WELS-affiliated organization dedicated to strengthening ministry to WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod military members and their families, as well as to veterans

LPS Luther Preparatory School—synodically supported preparatory school in Watertown, Wis.

LWMS Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society—a WELS-affiliated organization of women whose purpose is to support WELS home and world missions

MCG Ministry of Christian Giving—assists the Conference of Presidents by developing programs for funding the synod’s budget and for establishing lines of communication between the synod’s leaders and local congregations

MDHH Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing—this organization, which operates under WELS Special Ministries, seeks to help congregations share the gospel with members of WELS and others who are deaf or hard of hearing

MLC Martin Luther College—prepares teachers and staff ministers for WELS congregations and pastoral candidates for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary; also offers professional growth opportunities to those already serving in ministry; located in New Ulm, Minn.

MLP Multi-Language Productions—a program of the Board for World Missions that facilitates the production, publishing, warehousing, and distribution of a wide variety of religious materials

MLS Michigan Lutheran Seminary—synodically supported preparatory school in Saginaw, Mich.

MVI Mission for the Visually Impaired—this organization, which operates under WELS Special Ministries, helps people who are unable to read normal print by providing items in Braille, large print, and on cassette tape

NASB New American Standard Bible—a translation of the Bible published by the Lockman Foundation

NIV New International Version—a translation of the Bible published by Biblica

NPH Northwestern Publishing House—the official publishing arm of the synod for printing, publication, and distribution of books, periodicals, and literature considered beneficial to the Lutheran faith

OWLS Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors—this organization, which operates under WELS Special Ministries, encourages involvement, fellowship, mutual support, life enrichment activities, and service to others for those 50 years or older

PAC President’s Advisory Council—a group of synod administrators that meets regularly with the synod president to discuss opportunities and challenges facing the synod. Membership includes the administrators of the Boards for Ministerial Education, Home Missions, and World Missions; senior director of Missions Operations; director of Congregational Services; director of the Ministry of Christian Giving; WELS chief financial officer; WELS chief technology officer; WELS director of communications; and the president of Northwestern Publishing House

PSI Pastoral Studies Institute—a partnership between the Joint Mission Council and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary; prepares spiritual leaders from diverse ethnic, cultural, and national backgrounds

RTTD *Report to the Twelve Districts*—publication put out in even years that reports the work of the synod to the districts in their conventions

SC Synodical Council—the governing body of WELS, with all responsibilities not given to the Conference of Presidents or the synod in convention

SMO Synod mission offerings—congregation mission offerings plus individual mission offerings

TELL Think, Evaluate, Learn, Lead—an English-language online Bible-based training platform developed to bring the gospel to English-speakers outside the United States; comprises a Facebook page with more than 1 million followers, self-led Bible study courses, and deeper studies with a live online instructor, all with the goal of students leading their own small group in Bible study or worship; two full-time TELL missionaries focus on furthering relationships with national pastors, lay workers, and volunteers as well as developing relationships with online students

TLC Translation Liaison Committee—established in November 2013 by the Conference of Presidents to carry out a resolution of the 2013 synod convention; its purpose is “to evaluate major Bible translations; to communicate with their editors and publishers; to offer, when appropriate, suggestions to improve such translations; and to share its findings with the synod at large” (2013 *Proceedings*, p. 68)

VEBA Voluntary Employees’ Beneficiary Association—WELS employee health-care insurance that gives benefits to called workers

WELSSA WELS Schools Accreditation—an accreditation process for WELS schools coordinated by WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools that involves thorough self-study based upon ten accreditation standards, site visitation by a team of outside individuals, and accountability for annual school improvement

WIF WELS Investment Funds, Inc.—manages investment funds for WELS and its congregations

WLC Wisconsin Lutheran College—private WELS-affiliated liberal arts college located in Milwaukee, Wis.

WLS Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary—offers theological training that prepares men to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS or a church body within its fellowship; also offers theological and professional growth opportunities to those already serving as pastors; located in Mequon, Wis.