

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

### **Subject: The work of the CICR**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 18-20

Report No. 01

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. Members and representatives of the CICR assist individuals and churches around the world who are seeking to take a confessional Lutheran stance. Finally, commission members stay informed on the happenings in other Lutheran church bodies around the world through periodical reading and with visits to church conventions, conferences, and symposia.

### **Our current situation**

Floor committee #3 has reviewed the report submitted by WELS CICR. We commend the decision to have the CICR work more closely with the Board for World Missions and are excited about the good work that is being done through this partnership. The One Team concept seems like a wise strategy to help carry out this important work.

We are further encouraged by all the gospel ministry work that is taking place around the world. We are thankful for the opportunities the Lord continues to present in our mission fields and the dedication of the workers in spite of a pandemic and political challenges in the world.

- Africa—In response to increased inquiries from churches in Africa, a toolkit was developed to lend step-by-step guidance toward visible church fellowship with WELS. The toolkit is currently being used to establish ties with the Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda.
- Asia—Work with churches, mission stations, and seminary training continues with positive results, much of it taking place online.
- Europe—Pastor Holger Weiß is the new seminary president of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church. He received his Master of Sacred Theology degree from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. With this position in place, it is hoped that pastoral training continues at the ELFK seminary to help support churches in Europe.
- Latin America—We are excited about the fruit coming from the online educational program *Academia Cristo* and the possibility of establishing a Latin American church body *WELS Internacional*.

### *Evangelical Lutheran Synod*

We recognize the passing of synod president Pastor John Molstad and his many faithful years of service. We are praying that the Lord will bless the leadership of their new president Pastor Glenn Obenberger.

### *Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference*

Practicing church fellowship is often thought of from the viewpoint of the people, groups, and organizations we can't join in spiritual activities with at this time. We are grateful that the CICR continues to represent WELS in the positive work of strengthening ties with church bodies that WELS already enjoys visible church fellowship with as part of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) and by having discussions with people, groups, and organizations in an effort to explore the possibility of enjoying visible church fellowship with each other. What a joy it would be to have more Lutheran church bodies become a part of the CELC, uniting around all the truths of Scripture.

*Church of the Lutheran Confession and Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod*

Such visible unity doesn't exist presently with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). While we are disappointed that recent efforts to re-establish visible church fellowship have been declined by the CLC, we are thankful that discussions will continue that might still lead to re-establishing visible church fellowship. And while visible church fellowship unity doesn't exist presently with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), and no active discussions are taking place with the intent of re-establishing visible church fellowship, we are pleased to hear that informal dialogue is taking place to help avoid misunderstanding and mischaracterization of each other's doctrine and practice. We encourage the CICR to keep WELS informed and up to date on these discussions.

**Looking ahead**

Thank you to Pastor Steven Lange for his years of service with the CICR.

The One Teams, in cooperation with the Board for World Missions and CICR, have brought doctrinal clarity, advice, and encouragement to individuals and church bodies who are reaching out to WELS. We pray for God's continued guidance and direction as we view open doors, ripened fields, and increased opportunities throughout the world, ready for the Holy Spirit and his people to continue the work of the Lord for generations to come.

Pastor Kurt Schaser, chairman  
Teacher Tim Schubkegel, secretary