A year ago, in anticipation of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, initial plans were made for a large celebration in Milwaukee that would include conferences for all WELS called workers and a large festival worship service for called workers and WELS members in the 15,000-seat Bradley Center. After determining the huge cost of such an event, the decision was made not to hold the event as hoped but to encourage districts and regions to plan for local celebrations that would be less costly and enable more people to participate.

That decision was blessed by God. During the last two weekends, more than 20 districts and regions held special Reformation 500 worship services. The events were very well attended and provided many more people the opportunity to join in this celebration than would have been possible with one centralized event. In each case, worshipers had the opportunity to thank and praise God for the blessings of the Lutheran Reformation. Worshipers were reminded that “grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone” is not just a slogan or motto, but the heart and center of what connects us to “Christ alone.”

Below is a slideshow of some of the special worship services and events held in our synod—both in the United States and around the world. To view more photos or contribute your own, check out the WELS Facebook page at fb.com/welslutherans. Watch for more photos and information about Reformation 500 celebrations in the January 2018 edition of Forward in Christ magazine.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder

MLP continues to work in South Asia

The bag weighed almost as much he did.

But that didn’t stop a pastor from South Asia from hoisting the almost 100-pound bag of Multi-Language Publication booklets onto his back and walking for hours back to his hometown. What’s even more amazing is that in the past his church had been destroyed and he had...
been beaten and imprisoned for
worshiping his Savior and sharing his
faith with others.

“It’s really a privilege and a great
honor to help [people like this],”
says Rev. Nathan Seiltz, director of
WELS Multi-Language Publications
(MLP). “Printed publications are a
wonderful tool for them to reach out
and do some discipleship among the
people there.”

Seiltz conducted his first field visit
of the area in September. While
there, he was able to help conduct
a leadership workshop in which
75 men and women learned more
about the prison epistles Philippians
and Colossians, discussed the
Lutheran Reformation, and went
home with self-study booklets
explaining Lutheran doctrine to
distribute in their communities.

This field in South Asia wouldn’t
exist if not for these MLP
publications. “Multi-Language
Publications is the parent of these
fields. It was a seed-sowing ministry
and they planted so many seeds
the church grew,” says WELS’ field
coordinator for South Asia. “It’s
a tremendous tool for our church
in outreach and in discipleship
training.” The church body in this
area currently has 42 congregations
and 14 seminary students.

Seiltz and the field coordinator also
visited several local congregations
and met with our national contact
to discuss future plans. One idea
is to develop a radio station that
would include programming to teach
people about Jesus. MLP also will
continue to provide printed materials
like these self-study booklets and
The Promise, a 16-page brochure
that presents the basic biblical
message from the fall into sin to life
in heaven. “These are the tools that
people are using to share their faith
with other people,” says Seiltz. “That
was really encouraging to hear.”

Seiltz visited South Asia after
catastrophic flooding hit the region
in August and September. While
he didn’t visit any of the areas
affected by the flooding, he says the
leadership workshop was moved and
delayed a day because the flooding
delayed many of the workshop
attendees who had to travel. WELS
Christian Aid and Relief has granted
almost $20,500 to provide flood
relief in South Asia. Funds will
be used to purchase and deliver
supplies like mattresses, blankets,
and mosquito netting to people in
the affected areas. Our contact
says providing this help gives the
opportunity to show Christ’s love in
action to the different communities.

Learn more about Multi-Language
Publications, which has printed
more than 2.9 million items in 47
languages, at wels.net/mlp. Learn
more about WELS Missions at wels.
net/missions.

Blessings from Choral
Festival are lifelong

“Joyful. Exciting. Amazing. A
taste of heaven.” These are
just some of the words used to
describe the WELS National Choral
Festival, which celebrates its 50th
anniversary Nov. 10-12. More than
475 students from 22 area Lutheran
high schools and preparatory
schools will gather to sing their
praises to the Lord in La Crosse,
Wis.—the place where it all began.

Dave Adickes, a teacher at Luther
High School, Onalaska, Wis., invited
eight WELS prep and high schools
to sing in the first festival in 1967.
Nearly 100 students gathered to
“celebrate God’s gift of music”
and get a “sneak peek of heaven”
as well as gain exposure to a wide
variety of directors and techniques,
according to Adickes. From the
beginning, Friday night’s concert was
a secular concert performed by the
individual choirs. Saturday was a day
of rehearsal and fun, culminating
with Sunday’s mass sacred concert.
The location of Choral Festival
changed as various WELS high
schools hosted the event.

As Choral Festival celebrates its 50th
anniversary, Luther High School
will again serve as host, this time
under the direction of Dave Adickes’
son, Paul, a former Choral Festival
attendee, director, and clinician.

This year’s festival will include
music from the past five decades,
an almost 300-voice alumni
choir, a 52-piece orchestra, and
commissioned works by WELS
teachers Sarah Siegler and Dale
Witte—including the final piece, an
arrangement of “God’s Word Is Our
Great Heritage,” which also serves
as this year’s theme. The image of
the Mississippi River Bridge—an
iconic feature in La Crosse—adorns
the poster, symbolizing how “Choral
Festival 2017 will bridge the music
of the past, present, and future with
the timeless heritage and hope that
we have in the living and enduring
Word of God,” says Paul.

Paul continues, “Choral Festival has
endured for so many reasons beyond
its musical value. . . . The friendships
that are created, the bonds of faith
that are reinforced, and the words of
faith proclaimed in song resonate in
the hearts of our students long after
the concerts. Choral Festival gives
them an experience that is a lifelong
blessing.”

Choral Festival events will be
streamed live. The pops concert is at
7 p.m., Nov. 10. The sacred concert is
at 2 p.m., Nov. 12. Go to welsfinearts.
org for more information. Check
out more interviews with past and
present Choral Festival directors and
participants in a Forward in Christ
extra.

Chaplain Certification
Program courses offered

From police officers to those
who are incarcerated, the
Chaplain Certification Program is
about helping people in special
circumstances with special ministry
needs. Training is open to all WELS
members, both lay members and
called workers, with a heart for
meeting the spiritual needs of
people in circumstances that require
particular spiritual care. Specific
areas of ministry include those in
prison, hospitals, nursing homes,
the military and their families,
and public servants such as police
officers and firemen and women.