

addition to the health coverage enrollment options, eligible workers will be able to enroll in the WELS VEBA voluntary dental plan.

Also, WELS VEBA will be holding a special open enrollment for voluntary life insurance—eligible workers will be able to elect life insurance with coverage amounts up to \$150,000/employee, \$25,000/spouse, and \$5,000/child without providing evidence of insurability. Elections for coverage up to these amounts will not be denied due to health conditions; this is guaranteed issue coverage through Reliance Standard Life Insurance Company, the new life insurance carrier for WELS VEBA.

“The November 2016 open enrollment is a special opportunity for eligible workers to elect this guaranteed issue life insurance coverage, which may not be offered again for some time,” says Mr. Josh Peterman, BPO director.

Eligible workers can enroll through the WELS Benefits Service Center online at www.wels.bswift.com or by calling customer service at 1-800-487-8322. Individual workers must make their own benefit elections; representatives at the calling body cannot make benefit elections on behalf of the workers. Eligible workers should have received a packet with additional information and enrollment instructions.

Peterman says, “Through WELS VEBA, we can walk together as

a synod to take good care of our workers and their families by sharing their health care costs. WELS VEBA provides comprehensive benefits that are accessible across the country, allowing workers and calling bodies to focus time and efforts on ministry rather than health insurance management.”

To learn more about WELS BPO, visit welsbpo.net. 

Did you know...

WELS has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/welslutherans

WELS has Twitter?
twitter.com/welstweets

WELS has Instagram?
instagram.com/welslutherans

WELS has an app?
WELS offers a mobile application for the iOS and Android cell phone platforms. Get the WELS Mobile app at iTunes and Google Play.

TOGETHER



November 1, 2016

Synod convention to celebrate Reformation 500 anniversary

Planning has begun for the 64th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to be held at Luther Preparatory School (LPS) in Watertown, Wis., July 31-Aug. 3, 2017. More than 400 delegates and 50 advisory members will be meeting under the theme “Our Great Heritage,” reflecting the blessings we remember in the 500th anniversary year of the Lutheran Reformation. As a part of the Reformation theme, our convention will welcome a representative from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany, our sister synod located in the area where Martin Luther lived and worked.

The convention is a time for us to review the blessings that God has worked in us and through us. It’s a time to see the opportunities God is placing in front of us. It’s a time when, as a synod, our representatives will make important and prayerful decisions regarding the work we do together.

During the convention called workers and lay members will hear presentations, discuss issues, and make decisions related to the synod’s work, including setting a ministry plan (budget) for the next biennium. Two offices to be filled by election are the synod first president and secretary, positions currently held by Rev. James Huebner and Rev. Robert Pasbrig, respectively. Both are eligible for re-election to another four-year term. We will elect others to serve on various boards and commissions. Voting members of WELS are encouraged to nominate qualified individuals to serve on these boards and commissions. A list of positions and descriptions is available online.

The primary source of the convention’s business is the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM), which contains various departmental reports as well as formal petitions to the synod convention called “memorials.” A memorial outlines a particular item of business for consideration by the delegates. The deadline for submitting memorials to be printed in BORAM is Jan. 15, 2017. Memorials submitted after Jan. 15 will not be printed but will be posted at the discretion of the synod presidium on the convention website if they are received by June 1, 2017.

Other business to be considered by delegates includes the Compensation Review Committee’s review of the synod’s compensation guidelines. The committee will present recommendations and proposals to the Synodical Council next spring. The Synodical Council will then forward the final



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit
wels.net/together.

recommendations to the 2017 synod convention. During the convention we will also celebrate and thank God for the expected completion of the special synodwide “One in Christ” debt elimination campaign.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 

New youth ministry resource available

Transformed: Equipping Youth Leaders, a new downloadable resource for church leaders to help them develop youth ministry programs is now available for purchase from Northwestern Publishing House to download.

“About two-thirds of the young people who are confirmed in WELS churches are still attending church as often as once a month by the time they are 19 years old.” That is one of the findings of a study WELS conducted in the early 2000s about youth membership in our churches. It was also estimated that less than 20 percent of WELS young people are retained in the church from the time of their baptism until age 30.

More recent studies by independent research groups have shown similar trends with youth in other denominations. For example, a 2013 Barna Group survey found that nearly 60 percent of Millennials with a Christian background have, at some point, dropped out of going to church after having gone regularly.

“Research shows that youth are falling away from big mega churches, just as much as our churches,” says Rev. Jon Enter, pastor at Hope, West Palm Beach, Fla., and youth coordinator for the

South Atlantic District. “We need to do something about this, but many congregations don’t know where to start.”


That was the impetus for creating the new eight-part video series that includes presentations by youth workers from around the synod and shares ideas and resources to help congregations transform their youth ministries.

“It all boils down to the spiritual aspect of our kids,” says Enter, who is leading this effort. “If they continue to grow in their faith and they have ownership in our churches, then they stay engaged.” That’s why the videos — which include topics like Christian mentoring, games and activities, youth-driven Bible studies and faith experiences — focus on helping youth create meaningful relationships with each other, with their churches, and with God’s Word.

“We have done a great job of training our kids in school and in confirmation class,” says Enter. “They have a very informed faith. But they struggle with sharing it and using it. So instead of just a cerebral thing, we want this to be a heart and soul thing. We want to completely connect kids into the DNA of their local church and get them to actively

serve. We want them to feel like this is ‘my’ church.”


Along with the downloadable videos, which focus on the importance of the different aspects of youth ministry, congregations can also access a collection of Bible studies, recommended reading, and “how-to” resources for their youth ministries. To purchase Transformed: Equipping Youth Leaders, visit nph.net. Within one business day of purchase, you’ll receive an e-mail with access information and a password to view the videos and download the resources.

For more information about the program, watch Enter’s presentation at the 2016 Youth Rally at <https://vimeo.com/174532181>. 

Ticket deadline for WELS Day with the Bucks next week

There is still time to join hundreds of WELS members for the inaugural WELS Day with the Milwaukee Bucks. Organize your group and plan to join us for the Milwaukee Bucks’ game against the Brooklyn Nets on Sat., Dec. 3. Game time is 4 p.m. at the BMO Harris Bradley Center in downtown Milwaukee. The WELS group is invited to arrive early and watch the NBA stars during pregame warm-ups from some of the best seats in the house. Then following the game, all kids will have an opportunity to shoot a free throw on the Bucks court. Mr. Brian Davison, member of Koiné, will be

singing the National Anthem. The deadline to purchase tickets is Fri., Nov. 11.

The Bucks are offering WELS members up to 45 percent off the price of tickets. All WELS members will be seated together in three seating levels. The pricing is Lower Level Corner for \$50/ticket, Upper Level Side Court for \$35/ticket, or Upper Level Corner/Baseline for \$20/ticket. All surcharges and ticket service fees will be waived for WELS members entering the promo code “WELS” in the access and offer box when purchasing your tickets online at www.bucks.com/buckspass. For more information and to purchase tickets in groups of 10 or more, contact WELS member Josh Schedler at 414-227-2775 or jschedler@bucks.com. 

WELS Benefit Plans open enrollment begins today

The WELS Benefits Plans Office (BPO) is announcing open enrollment, which begins today, Nov. 1, and runs through the end of the month. Elections made during this period will be effective Jan. 1, 2017.

During the open enrollment period, eligible workers who are not currently enrolled in the WELS VEBA health plan can enroll for new health coverage, and workers who are currently enrolled in the WELS VEBA health plan can make changes to their existing health coverage (e.g. change deductible options, add/remove family members). In