

Funding approved for new and enhanced ministries

In late March 2017, the Board for Home Missions approved funding for four new Home Mission starts and three ministry enhancements for existing congregations.

Every winter, the board reviews proposals for funding and, based on how much money is available, determines where these gifts to ministry can best serve the Lord's church. The \$554,000 of new project funding for fiscal year 2017–18 is possible through a portion of Congregation Mission Offerings, an endowment payout from the WELS Church Extension Fund, and gifts to the "Every Neighbor, Every Nation" mission campaign.

Shepherd of the Valley, Westminster, Colo., received funding to call a second pastor to start a second campus in the new growing community of Candelas. The multi-site concept, a growing model for congregations around the synod, allows a church to expand its ministry footprint but keep both sites under one financial budget and one leadership team.

Rev. Phil Kieselhorst, pastor at Shepherd of the Valley, says, "The second site campus pastor will focus on organizing and leading consistent outreach efforts, training and coordinating the core group, following up on prospects, teaching and preaching, and providing pastoral assistance to new members." Current Shepherd of the Valley members already have been canvassing and reaching out to new residents for two years. The congregation is positioned to be one of the first neighborhood churches in this growing area.

At Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis., new funding will help with calling a second pastor, allowing Rev. Aaron Bublitz, the congregation's current pastor, to focus on the pastoral needs of Mt. Lebanon's elementary school students and their families. The school is part of Milwaukee's School Choice program, and many of the students come from unchurched families in the neighborhood. Since 2011, 128 people have been baptized through the school, including students and their family members.

"Up until now we have been trying to serve a congregation of 400 souls and a school of 220 (many of whom are unchurched) and, at the same time, aggressively reaching out to our neighborhood with one pastor and one part-time staff minister. The Lord has blessed us with a vibrant ministry and a ripe mission field, but it has been difficult to take advantage of all the opportunities God has placed before us because of resources," says Bublitz. "This support from

the Board for Home Missions will allow us to double our pastoral staff to share the means of grace and equip our congregation to serve, allowing us to reach more people with the life-saving and changing gospel.”

Three additional new mission starts will be funded in Hendersonville, N.C.; Huntersville, N.C.; and Chattanooga, Tenn. In multicultural ministry, Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill., will receive funds to assist with a growing Hispanic ministry. King of Kings, Little Rock, Ark., also received funding to call a full-time pastor.

“Home Missions is about reaching as many of our neighbors as possible with the gospel,” says Rev. Keith Free, administrator for Home Missions. “This can be through starting new churches, expanding multicultural outreach, or reaching more families through enhancing existing ministries. This year, Home Missions has been blessed to be able to support different types of ministry work that all have the same goal—sharing God’s Word with our neighbors.”

To learn more about WELS mission work, visit wels.net/missions.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 

Catching up with the WELS Hymnal Project

Various subcommittees of the WELS Hymnal Project continue to make progress on the development of the synod’s next hymnal. The current hope is that the hymnal and accompanying resources would be available for purchase during the second half of 2021.

Congregational testing

As part of the hymnal’s development, WELS Hymnal Project subcommittees have been giving congregations an opportunity to use and review samples of the materials developed so far. These testing efforts include:

- 25 pastors using and reviewing each of the three years of the new proposed church year calendar and lectionary.

- 20 congregations sampling various typefaces for use in print and digital resources.
- 125+ congregations receiving a variety of psalm settings for use during the festival half of the current church year.
- 125+ congregations receiving an array of musical resources for six current *Christian Worship* hymns as well as six new hymns not currently found in WELS’ published resources.

By the time these testing efforts conclude, every congregation in the synod will have had the opportunity to participate in one way or another.

Hymn feedback

Starting this July, *Forward in Christ* magazine will run a series of nine

articles that focus on the use of hymnody. Along with those articles, the WELS Hymnal Project will be publishing online the current list of *Christian Worship* and *Christian Worship: Supplement* hymns, indicating which hymns have been selected for inclusion in the next hymnal and which ones have not. All members of the synod will have the opportunity to offer feedback on this preliminary list. Watch for these articles and the list this summer.


National Worship Conference

The hymnal project will have a significant presence at this summer’s National Worship Conference in June.

- Project Director Rev. Michael Schultz will be giving the keynote address, “A Reformation Perspective on Worship” as well as sharing an update on the WELS Hymnal Project’s work in one of the breakout sessions.
- Prof. James Tiefel will be presenting on the WELS Hymnal Project’s liturgical philosophy.
- Rev. Daniel Witte and Mrs. Grace Hennig will be presenting on psalmody.
- Rev. Caleb Bassett will be presenting on the use of screens in worship.

This summer’s worship conference will also mark the deadline for submitting original or third-party content for inclusion in the new

hymnal. Anyone is invited to submit content through the hymnal project website’s public submission form through June 30, 2017.

Learn more about the hymnal project at wels hymnal.com. 

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