

Changes at Northwestern Publishing House

Last week Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) announced that it will be closing its Milwaukee retail store in October. While it's sad to say goodbye to this brick and mortar store that served thousands of WELS members over the years, we can be thankful that the scripturally sound books and church resources will still be available to purchase online at nph.net.

It was becoming increasingly evident that our publishing house was being affected the same way so many other Christian bookstores, and retailers in general, have been—more and more people are making their purchases online. In response to the challenging realities they face, Northwestern Publishing House had to make some difficult decisions with the objective of exercising good stewardship of its limited resources.

NPH remains committed to its mission of developing biblically sound, Christ-centered, and trustworthy resources and will continue to publish new books, music, and other materials for our pastors, teachers, and WELS members. Last year, NPH launched a newly redesigned website that makes it easier to search for and find the books and products you value. If you haven't done so lately, I'd encourage you to visit nph.net to see all it has to offer.

Synodical Council spring meeting recap

- Through March, congregational offerings are down slightly from the previous year, but the picture will become clearer in May after Lent and Easter offerings have all been received.
- Due to higher enrollment, lower expenses, and blessings on the new Congregational Partnership Grant program, Martin Luther College is projecting a surplus of \$600,000 compared with a deficit of \$600,000, which had been anticipated.
- The Synodical Council (SC) reviewed a report from Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) that outlined financial challenges resulting from lower than planned enrollment, lower gift totals, and several accounting errors that were discovered during the transition between business managers. The SC Executive Committee will be working with the new president of MLS, its governing board, and the Board for Ministerial Education to address these financial challenges. The SC deferred consideration

of several capital improvement projects planned as a part of the MLS Foundation's recent capital campaign until the financial challenges are addressed.

- Significant savings were realized due to the 2016 decision to self-insure a portion of the health care costs of synodical workers. These savings were returned to the ministerial education schools, areas of ministry, and departments.
- The SC expressed its thanks to the board and administration of Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) in the way it implemented recently announced changes to NPH operations.
- The SC agreed on how the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the synod's compensation plan will be applied. To prevent sudden decreases in compensation and levels of compensation that would fall below the salaries listed on the salary schedules, the SC determined that 1) all synodical workers will receive no less than the numbers set forth in the salary matrix approved by the synod in convention; 2) the actual salary for a called position will be based on what the calling body has established as its applicable COLA for all workers at that institution; 3) salaries will be adjusted annually only if COLA increases from the previous year; and 4) exceptions to these policies for synodical workers can be granted in unusual cases by the synod president. The Executive Committee of the SC will continue to analyze how these policies will play out in actual practice prior to implementation on July 1, 2018. Salary matrices and a web-based called worker compensation calculator tool is available at wels.net/cwcompcalc.
- Paul Holzhueter and Mr. Warren Ehke each completed 12 years of faithful service as Synodical Council lay representatives of their districts. We thank them for their service.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 


Report to the Twelve Districts available online

The 2018 *Report to the Twelve Districts* is now available online. Each WELS congregation and male called worker will receive one printed copy at the end of May. *Report to the Twelve Districts* contains current information from WELS areas of ministry and committees that help guide district convention delegates.

To streamline the printed book, the Conference of Presidents approved a plan this year to print only major reports from areas of ministry and those needed for discussion at the upcoming district conventions. Other reports, in addition to a pdf of the printed version, can be found at wels.net/rttd2018.

All of WELS' 12 districts hold a convention in even-numbered years. (The synod convention takes place in odd-numbered years.) Each male called worker, in addition to a lay delegate representing each congregation, attends his district's convention as a voting delegate. District conventions are held to carry out the business of a district, such as electing district officials, as well as to hear updates on synodical ministries and to react to synodical initiatives. Delegates also enjoy worship and fellowship during their conventions.

"District conventions offer delegates the opportunity to learn, to ask questions, to debate issues, to offer advice and guidance to those called to serve them," says WELS President Mark Schroeder. "In the end, delegates have the opportunity to see God at work, uniting WELS members in a stronger faith and in a greater commitment to carrying out his work together."

To prepare for the convention, delegates are encouraged to read *Report to the Twelve Districts* and the other reports available at wels.net/rttd2018. 

Pastors meet to grow in grace

From April 18–20, Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., hosted more than


200 people for the seventh annual Celebration of Ministry retreats.

Held at the Riverwalk in San Antonio, Tex., four retreats ran simultaneously for pastors and their wives who were celebrating 3, 10, 25, and, new to this year, 35 years since graduating from the seminary.

These retreats build relationships with ministry peers and offer encouragement through worship, Bible studies, workshops, and presentations. Bible study topics covered Lessons at the Burning Bush, Philippians, 1 Peter, and 1 John. Separate and joint workshops were offered for pastors and wives and covered topics such as time management, caring for others and yourself, focusing on your own gifts, and financial challenges and opportunities.

Though these workshops and Bible studies are a key part of the retreats, fellowship with classmates, worship services, and a beautiful location also play a part in the experience.

Prof. Paul Zell attended the year 35 retreat, known as Finish in Grace. Zell shares, "One of the best things about being at the retreat is being here with classmates and how we can be thankful for God's grace that we can still do this after 35 years; that's been really neat."

Next year's plans are already underway. All four groups for the 2019 retreats will take place in San Antonio from April 24–26 for the graduating classes of 1984, 1994, 2009, and 2016. 



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