

TOGETHER



May 15, 2018

2018 assignments at Martin Luther College

The synod's Assignment Committee met at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., last week to assign candidates for the teaching and staff ministry. In total, 136 men and women were called by assignment to their various places of service. In addition, one staff minister candidate was assigned.

All candidates able to be assigned anywhere were assigned. In addition, several candidates who were limited to a geographical location (usually because of marriage) were also assigned. Since many vacancies remain, many, if not most, of those who were not assigned on Call Day will be assigned in the coming weeks and months.

We are deeply grateful to the Lord of the church for providing these workers for his harvest field. We pray that God will be with them as they carry out the ministries to which God has called them.

The Assignment Committee will meet next week at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to make assignments for vicars and candidates for the pastoral ministry. Pastor and vicar assignments will be announced on Thurs., May 24, at 10:00 a.m. Tune into the live stream of the service.

Two members of the Assignment Committee will be completing their service as district presidents in June. Rev. John Seifert, Michigan District president, and Rev. Charles Degner, Minnesota District president, have worked faithfully to carry out their important responsibilities as district presidents and as members of the Assignment Committee. We thank them for their service and ask God to bless them and their wives as they look forward to new opportunities to continue their service to God and his church.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 

Staff ministers “Continue in Christ” at 2018 conference


From April 26–28, Cross of Christ, Boise, Idaho, hosted the 2018 Staff Ministers Conference.

Each year staff ministers travel from churches, schools, and parasynodicals around the country for a weekend of learning and fellowship. This year’s conference featured the theme “Continue in Christ,” based on the words of Colossians 2:6, “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him.” This message was chosen to encourage staff ministers as they commemorate the 25th anniversary of the staff ministry training program at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., this year.

In addition to the daily devotions and a worship service, four special sessions were held at the conference. Staff Minister Chad White of Holy Word, Austin, Tex., spoke on personal spiritual growth. Rev. Mark Cares of Truth in Love Ministry in Nampa, Idaho, presented on the principles of witnessing. Pastors and staff of Cross of Christ came together to discuss the challenges and joys of team ministry. Lastly, Staff Minister David Hochmuth of St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis., led a Bible study based on the conference theme “Continue in Christ,” where attendees considered how to approach spiritual hardships unique to different stages of life. The conference also hosted

forums for four main areas of staff ministry—youth and family ministry, adult discipleship and leadership, evangelism and outreach, and worship and music.

Staff Minister Kristen Koepsell, coordinator of music and elementary education and fellowship at Cross of Christ, believes the time staff ministers spend together at the conference is critical: “Year after year attendees tell the board that the best part of the conference is the encouragement and support they receive from interacting with their fellow called workers. We benefit most simply by listening and talking to each other and sharing the truth of God’s grace.”

To learn more about Martin Luther College’s staff ministry training program, visit mlc-wels.edu. Also, watch the March 27, 2018, “Together” video update for an interview with Levi Nagel, staff minister of music and worship at St. John, Milwaukee, Wis. 

A PTSD retreat

“My veteran buddy and I meet once a week. Each time we walk away with the same assignments: *I am responsible for seeing to it that he stays alive for a week; and he is to make sure I am still among the living seven days from now.*”

The words don’t seem so strange when considering the report that the average suicide rate among American military veterans is one

per hour—every day of the year.

On the first weekend of May, the Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG) sponsored a retreat at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis., for veterans facing post-traumatic stress.

The opening devotion carried the words of Jesus, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31). Twelve former sailors, soldiers, Marines, and one comfort dog stepped away from the rest of the world to receive mutual support and encouragement. It was a time to refresh body, mind, and soul.

Rev. Jason Hacker, LMSG director at large and pastor at Grace, Waukesha, Wis., arranged the event. Retired Colonel Erik Opsahl, who also faces PTSD, led the group to take a closer look at how the stress disorder invades lives and minds. Painful stories were relayed. Loving comfort was offered. The saying “pain shared is pain divided” was put into practice.

Former strangers, some coming from as far away as Florida, soon found common ground based upon common values, common experiences, and a common faith.

One attendee commented, “Surviving the war is just the beginning. Now we must survive the peace.” Heads nodded in agreement.

Representatives of WELS Military Services and of the Board of Control of the Lutheran Military Support


Group shared care and concern from both the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and WELS. The message was, “You have not been forgotten!” One discussion focused upon how congregations and the two church bodies might support military personnel and their families.

Attendees also discussed the difference between the civilian and the military worlds. Regret was expressed over the fact that civilians often do not recognize the needs of active duty and veteran military personnel. But it was also recognized that military people are reluctant to admit their needs to their civilian brothers and sisters.

A review of Bible passages underscored the certain source of spiritual resiliency—something much needed and desired. Closing worship services invited the participants to approach the throne of grace for forgiveness, renewal, and blessing.

The hope is that more such retreats—perhaps in different parts of the country—might be offered. The group is also exploring inviting non-WELS and non-Christian veterans as an outreach opportunity.

Learn more about WELS Military Services at wels.net/military or the LMSG at lutheranmilitary.org.

By Rev. Paul Ziemer, WELS national civilian chaplain to the military and WELS liaison to U.S. Armed Forces 



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