

TOGETHER



February 19, 2019

CMO totals for 2018 and CMO subscriptions for 2019

Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) received in 2018 totaled \$21,111,878. We are grateful for this generous support our synod's mission and ministry. The total, however, was \$246,000 (1.2%) below the offerings received in 2017 and \$148,000 (0.7%) less than what congregations had indicated in their CMO subscriptions for the year. More than a decade of flat, and now even decreasing, CMO has made it increasingly challenging to maintain our current level of ministry, not to mention to seize some of the many gospel opportunities that God is graciously placing before us.

Adding to that challenge is the fact that subscriptions for 2019 are \$20,913,700, nearly 1% less than 2018 receipts. Since our planning forecasted that subscriptions would be met in 2018 and that subscriptions for 2019 would increase by 0.5%, the task to maintain and expand ministry has become even more difficult. The results for 2018 and subscriptions for 2019 are \$350,000 less than the forecast and compound to reductions from what was used for planning the next biennium of \$454,000 and \$456,000 for Fiscal Year 20 and Fiscal Year 21, respectively.

One bit of good news is that offerings for January 2019 were 6.4% higher than the January offerings in 2018.

At its meeting later this week, the Synodical Council will be looking to adopt a Ministry Financial Plan that recognizes these financial realities. All areas of ministry have been asked to look for ways to economize and to plan for less spending than what had been anticipated. Once a plan for the next two years is adopted by the Synodical Council, it will be forwarded to the synod convention this summer for approval.

As the economy improves, we pray that God will enable congregations to meet—and even exceed—their CMO subscriptions in 2019.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 

Church dedication in Puerto Rico

On Sept. 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria swept over the island of Puerto Rico causing great devastation and destruction.

WELS members responded generously with gifts to WELS Christian Aid and Relief. But the devastation caused by the storm made communication with fellow Christians in Puerto Rico difficult. It was hard to know what needed to be done to help and how that help could be delivered.

Early last summer WELS Christian Aid and Relief sent retired missionary Rev. Larry Schlomer Sr. to the island. He was asked to stay for up to a year to help the church leaders determine what needed to be done and then to help organize relief and rebuilding efforts.

God has graciously taken care of the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico and restored their church in Humacao. On Feb. 10, 2019, this church celebrated the completion of the rebuilt church with a dedication service. Many of the national pastors were in attendance along with Rev. Larry Schlomer Sr., WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder, and Rev. Tim Satorius. ☪

Mission and Ministry held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

From Feb. 5–7, students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., participated in Mission & Ministry, an annual three-day event

organized by the students.

Under the theme “Work for the Harvest,” this event highlighted the worldwide work of WELS.

Each day featured a worship service, keynote address, and an update from WELS administration. In addition, to give these future pastors a cross-section of experiences they may face in ministry, 24 breakout sessions were offered in specific topics. These sessions included discussions on personal evangelism; cultivating a caring congregation; urban ministry; planting churches in rural areas; 125 years of ministry to the Apaches; and mission opportunities in Africa, Latin America, and Vietnam.

Also, to highlight synodical resources that are available to congregations, WELS organizations set up displays to share information about their work in God’s kingdom.

“Mission and Ministry refocuses us. It takes us away from our daily routine and reminds us why we study every day. The stories presenters share give us a glimpse of what it will be like to work together with them in God’s harvest field,” says senior Andrew Nemmers, one of the event organizers. “Especially in the middle of a long winter, it’s always helpful to have that reminder that there is a light at the end of the long tunnel of training for pastoral ministry.” ☪

Big steps for the WELS Hymnal Project in 2019

The development of the new WELS hymnal and its

supplementary products is making significant progress this year in anticipation of the final release scheduled for Advent 2021. A preview of the new hymnal will be available in 2020.

“It’s really wrapping up,” said Hymnal Project Director Rev. Michael Schultz. “Almost every aspect of the main content is going to be finished at the end of the calendar year.”

The Executive Committee of the Hymnal Project reviews and finalizes all content. Several specialized subcommittees lead the design of certain elements or worship resources that serve the specific needs of churchgoers, musicians, and pastors.

For example, the Hymnody Committee evaluates which hymns to include in the new hymnal. Similarly, the Psalmody Committee is completing the text of the Psalter, a resource containing the full text of all 150 psalms with multiple musical settings for each. Other subcommittees focus on rites and Scripture as well as the technology for and communication of the project.

The pew edition of the new hymnal will be designed to make the text and music on the page clear and intuitive for all worshipers. Separate accompaniment editions for liturgy, psalms, psalter, and hymns will provide a robust resource for organists and pianists. Three settings of the main communion service will be included in the hymnal

pew edition, each following similar worship structures while varying the musical style. Several additional musical settings are in development and will be made available digitally.

In addition to performance guidelines like tempo markings, the “Accompaniment for the Hymns” edition will include additional musical options for many hymns. A team within the Hymnal Project called the Musicians’ Resource Group is gathering even more arrangements for other instruments not included in the accompaniment edition, such as brass, flute, and guitar.

After four years of development, the updated lectionary for the new hymnal was recently completed. Each Sunday, the three Scripture readings, Prayer of the Day, Psalm of the Day, and Verse of the Day will now fall under one theme. The new Commentary on the Propers will help leaders plan their worship around these integrated service themes.

Each of these elements contributes to the Hymnal Project’s overall mission, which reads, “We begin our task so that worshipers now and long into the future can both hear for themselves and proclaim to God and the people around them the saving work of Jesus Christ.”

If you would like to learn more about the Hymnal Project and stay up to date on its continued progress, visit weshymnal.com and subscribe to the e-mail newsletter. ☪



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