

TOGETHER



October 15, 2019

COP addresses major topics at its fall meeting

The Conference of Presidents (COP) held its fall meeting last week at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis.

Two years ago a special committee was appointed by the Synodical Council to consider ways to improve the WELS pension plan for called workers. That committee has completed its work; its recommendation will be considered by the Synodical Council in November. Since the Conference of Presidents has a vital interest in the called workers of the synod, the committee shared the details of its proposal with the COP. The COP expressed its support for the recommendation and will forward its endorsement to the Synodical Council. If the Synodical Council adopts it, the detailed proposal will be made public and sent to the districts for consideration at their conventions this summer.

The COP adopted a document entitled “Human sexuality, Personhood, Identity, and the Historic Christian Faith: A Confession on Human Sexuality.” This document was written to address the current controversy and unbiblical views of the transgender issue. A shorter pastoral brief on the issue is also being prepared to help pastors as they address this issue in their ministry. These documents will be ready for publication as soon as they are placed into final form.

Another major decision of the COP was to accept the work of a committee that has produced a restatement of our synod’s doctrinal position on the God-given roles of man and women. “Male and Female in God’s Word” does not represent any change in our synod’s position; rather it is intended to clarify and expand on several aspects of the issue that are not fully addressed in the current WELS doctrinal statement. An accompanying Bible study has also been produced. These materials will be made available later this fall for study and discussion at pastor and teacher conferences and in congregations. Input and questions will be sought during the next year, and the statement will be presented to the synod convention for approval in 2021.

The COP is continuing its work on revisions to the synod’s bylaws that deal with the process of discipline for called workers and congregations.

Finally, the COP is also continuing to investigate whether the IRS provisions allowing ministers of the gospel to deduct their housing expenses applies to

female teachers. There are some questions about whether the IRS and the courts have changed in their interpretation of this law and whether female teachers qualify for the deduction. The COP will report its findings as soon as they are available.

Serving in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

OWLS mining for Jesus at annual convention

The Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) was “mining for Jesus” this year at its annual convention for seniors in Galena, Ill., Oct. 7-9. The region around Galena was known for mining of lead when the first settlers came to the area, but the OWLS came in search of spiritual treasure found only in the Savior and the life he gives.

The four main speakers presented ways to be “miners for Jesus.” Missionary Dan Sargent presented on how God helps us to accomplish his plans bit by bit, Christian Life Resources Director Rev. Bob Fleischmann shared how a lifetime of experience prepares us, Special Ministries Director Rev. Jim Behringer’s presentation was titled “Christian caring matters,” and Chaplain Ken Wenzel spoke about lessons on Christian hope connected with medical objects.

Galena is known for its historic downtown and the beautiful countryside around it. Attendees had the opportunity to visit the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in nearby Dubuque, Iowa, before the opening of

the convention. An unexpected highlight of the convention happened as a result of a last-minute necessity. The cancellation of the musical entertainment led the organizers to ask OWLS President Norman Schell to do a presentation on the American effort to put a man on the moon. Schell worked on the Apollo project and showed some never-before-seen pictures of the project.


The OWLS rejoiced at the creation of a new OWLS branch in Downers Grove, Ill. Members of the new branch were present to receive their charter and a warm welcome into the organization.

For more than a decade, the OWLS has used its offerings to support the WELS European Civilian chaplaincy, which serves military personnel and WELS civilians in Europe. This year, the OWLS presented Military Services with a check for \$50,000 for work in Europe. Two convention offerings and record proceeds from a silent auction were directed for next year’s gift to the work of the chaplain in Europe as well.

The OWLS also provides \$350 scholarships to six Martin Luther College students. This year’s recipients are Claudia Meyer, Morgan Gosch, Daniel Bilitz, Dayne

Kopfer, Clara Kammüller, and Derek Gulrud.

Professor Em. John Paulsen, OWLS executive director, says, “This convention provided a chance for everyone to grow in historical knowledge and about researching and preserving your own history. Everyone I talked with said that they had learned so much and enjoyed the convention at the Eagle Ridge Resort, all the while able to see eagles soar in the distance over the lake below.”

The 2020 OWLS convention for seniors will be held in New Ulm, Minn. With the theme “Tell the Next Generation,” the convention will have a special focus on Martin Luther College. The convention is open to all seniors in WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, regardless of OWLS membership. 

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