

2021 graduating class members and thank MLC graduates from the past 25 years for their kingdom work. WELS members also can offer prayers and monetary support for MLC's ministry. All gifts go toward the Congregational Partner Grant Matching Fund, which directly matches gifts up to \$1,000 from churches for their students. Learn more at [mlcday.com](http://mlcday.com). 

**TOGETHER**



April 20, 2021

## Conference of Presidents meets

**T**he Conference of Presidents (COP) met for its spring meeting April 7-9. It was the first face-to-face meeting of the COP since last September.

The COP spent a good deal of time discussing the 136 pastoral vacancies and approximately 140 teacher/staff minister vacancies. The number of vacancies has grown since last year at this time. For the benefit of both congregations and workers, the COP limits the number of calls a called worker can receive in one year and also requires a time period between calls. With so many congregations requesting call lists, and with the limited number of workers eligible to receive a call, the district presidents have faced growing challenges in providing call lists to congregations. Much of the COP discussion regarding this issue centered around steps that can be taken to alleviate this problem and the importance of continued recruitment and training of called workers.


The COP discussed the Equality Act, a bill before Congress that could potentially place serious restrictions on our ability to preach and teach the Word of God faithfully. A letter was e-mailed to all called workers and to lay members on the synod's e-mail list alerting them to this potential threat and encouraging WELS members to exercise their rights as Christian citizens to contact their representatives. The COP will be monitoring this law and responding to government action when necessary.

With the assignment of graduates at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary approaching, the COP began discussing plans and procedures for assignment meetings. Assignments of teachers and staff ministers will be announced at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 15; assignment of pastors and vicars will take place the following week at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

The COP continues to work on a restatement of the synod's doctrinal statement on the biblical roles of man and woman. A draft of this statement was distributed in 2020 and has undergone continuing work to bring it into a final form. There is no timetable for the completion of this work, since the COP desires to "do it right" rather than "do it quickly."

The COP plans to develop a pastoral brief addressing Christian freedom and pastoral practices.

The COP extended divine calls to the following: Rev. John Hering was called to serve as a congregational counselor as part of the effort of the Commission on Congregational Counseling to help congregations evaluate and improve their ministries; Rev. Robert Krueger and Rev. Jonathan Kehren were called to serve as Ministry of Christian Giving counselors.

Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

### Did you know...

**WELS has a Facebook page?**  
[facebook.com/welslutherans](https://facebook.com/welslutherans)

**WELS has Instagram?**  
[instagram.com/welslutherans](https://instagram.com/welslutherans)

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[twitter.com/welstweets](https://twitter.com/welstweets)

***Forward in Christ* magazine has a Facebook page?**  
[facebook.com/forwardinchristmagazine](https://facebook.com/forwardinchristmagazine)

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To sign up for the e-mail version, visit  
[wels.net/together](http://wels.net/together).

## Seven home missions to receive funding

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At its meeting last week, the Board for Home Missions approved funding for seven locations, including funding for four new home mission starts and three existing mission congregations.

New home mission plants include:

- **Waco, Texas:** The Heart of Texas mission core group has been meeting regularly since March 2020. They are active in the community and participate in family-friendly activities around town while representing their new church plant. This mission is being supported by Trinity in nearby Temple, Texas.
- **Durham, N.C.:** Gethsemane, the WELS congregation in Raleigh, N.C., is launching a second site in nearby Durham. The three universities in Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill are creating jobs and drawing a diverse group of young professionals and families to the area. The gospel is especially needed in this area, as studies show that 75 percent of people in the area do not know their Savior.
- **Parrish, Fla.:** Risen Savior in Lakewood Ranch, Fla., a previous home mission church that recently became self-supporting, as well as Ascension, Sarasota, Fla., are starting and supporting this new mission plant. Parrish is located in a growing area; 20,000 to 30,000 homes are expected to be built there in the next 10 years. This new mission will be reaching out with the

gospel to a community that is 85 percent unchurched.

- **Dickinson, N.D.:** A committed core group has been meeting regularly for livestreamed worship and monthly gatherings since 2012, served by pastors from WELS churches in Mandan and Bismarck, N.D. Those two congregations, as well as Salem, Circle, Mont., will be supporting this new mission start named Amazing Grace. Dickinson, the hub of the area, has seen recent economic growth alongside the oil industry, which is drawing new young families to the community.

Home Missions is also providing financial support to three existing ministries:

- **Willoughby, Ohio:** King of Kings in the suburbs of Cleveland is one of only two WELS churches in northeast Ohio, where 2.8 million people reside. It will be calling a new pastor to reach out to young professionals and families who have moved from downtown Cleveland to the suburbs.
- **Hutto, Texas:** Located north of Austin, Christ the Rock has been an unsubsidized mission since 2016. It recently started worshiping in a new facility and is aggressively serving its community. Financial support will assist with ministry expenses.
- **Summerlin, Nev.:** Summerlin Lutheran Church owns a large facility in a growing master-planned community on the west side of Las Vegas. Three years of Home Missions financial support will allow the congregation to call a pastor and partner in outreach

with nearby home mission congregation Shepherd of the Hills, whose pastor has been serving as Summerlin's vacancy pastor.

"What a blessing district mission boards and mission counselors are. Their service allows Home Missions to plant missions so missionaries can proclaim the gospel," says Rev. Keith Free, administrator of the Board for Home Missions. "As these new missions are planted, we pray more souls will hear how Jesus Christ is their Savior from sin, their Lord in life, and has secured their future home in heaven."

Home Missions also approved unsubsidized mission status for Redeemer, Fallbrook, Calif., and St. John's Hillside, Milwaukee, Wis. Home Missions provides assistance to unsubsidized mission congregations through its district missions boards, mission counselors, synodical support staff, and special project funds, but does not provide direct financial support.

Learn more about Home Missions at [wels.net/missions](https://wels.net/missions). 

## MLC breaks ground for new athletic facility

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Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., broke ground on a new athletic facility, the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse, in April.

MLC administration, coaches, and students participated in the event, one which Rev. Richard Gurgel, MLC president, calls a milestone. "For many months God was moving the hearts of our brothers and sisters around the synod—with their gifts and their prayers and their encouragement to others—to build

a foundation, a financial one and a spiritual one, for this day," he says.

Hundreds of gifts, including one transformational donation, allowed construction to begin.

The 36,000-square-foot indoor turf facility, which features large practice areas, baseball/softball batting cages, golf simulators, and locker rooms, will support a year-round physical education curriculum, enable spring sports to practice regularly, allow for additional intramural offerings, and create community connections. Plans are for students to be able to use the new athletic center by the beginning of 2022.

Jordyn Heckendorf, a first-year physical education major at MLC, took part in the groundbreaking event. "The new Betty Kohn Fieldhouse is a dream come true!" she says. "As an athlete and child of God, I am always looking for ways to let my light shine through the skills God has blessed me with, and this fieldhouse gives me the opportunity to do just that. To all the people who generously donated to make this possible, I want you to know that we will not take this for granted."

The building is part of the facility improvement pillar of the "Equipping Christian Witnesses" campaign, which has the goal to help train a corps of Christian witnesses to meet WELS ministry needs in the future. Learn more about the campaign at [mlc-wels.edu/mlc-campaign](https://mlc-wels.edu/mlc-campaign).

WELS members can continue to support, encourage, and thank MLC graduates—from this year and from the past—by participating in MLC Day on May 5. Send messages, photos, and videos to congratulate