

TOGETHER



January 16, 2018

are staying at members' homes from St. John's, St. John, Antigua.

Hard-hit Puerto Rico, home of WELS' sister church body the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church, was visited by WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder; WELS liaison for the field, Rev. Tim Satorius; and World Mission representatives in January. One church there was completely destroyed, and several members' homes were damaged. Groceries were provided to families in need, and Christian Aid and Relief has been getting bids for repair projects. An immediate gift of \$5,000 through Direct Relief was made to assist those in need as well as \$5,000 to provide meals for people in the church and community.

Perhaps it was Texas' Hurricane Harvey that had the biggest impact on WELS members. Several members' homes were flooded, resulting in mold and rot issues. Christ Our Savior church and parsonage in Angleton, as well as Sienna Lutheran Academy in Missouri City, suffered considerable damage.

In the days following the hurricane, 40 WELS members from the greater Austin and Dallas/Fort Worth area traveled to the affected areas of Edna and Victoria to offer support and relief. Christian Aid and Relief provided two trailers filled with generators, chain saws, and other

supplies and equipment to use for the clean-up of at least 50 homes.

In the weeks and months following the hurricane, after full assessments had been made, Christian Aid and Relief coordinated a steady stream of volunteers to help remove, repair, and replace damaged drywall, floors, trim and molding, and roofs of members' homes.

The day after the storm, the VonDeylens called their members and found out that eight or nine homes were flooded. They started getting everyone together to help each other. "We started seeing a great outpouring of love from our members at that point," said Marc. Congregation members went from house to house to remove damaged items. They even opened their homes to their fellow Christian brothers and sisters whose homes were being repaired.

WELS members have given more than \$1.5 million for hurricane relief. "We thank our WELS brothers and sisters for their prayers, their support, and their generous gifts," says Rev. Robert Hein, chairman of WELS Christian Aid and Relief. "What a privilege to serve as God's instruments to bring his blessings to those in need!"

Visit wels.net/relief to learn more about WELS Christian Aid and Relief. 

God's people respond

WELS members have demonstrated their Christian love and concern for hurricane victims in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico with over \$1.5 million in gifts to WELS Christian Aid and Relief. We thank God for this generous response to these disasters.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief has been working with local congregations to provide funding for repairs to churches, schools, and homes, as well as for efforts to help the people of the communities in which congregations are located. An assessment visit to Puerto Rico shortly after the hurricane identified immediate needs and paved the way for quick assistance for repairs and supplies.

Since so much of the infrastructure in Puerto Rico was still not repaired at that time, another assessment visit took place during the first week of January. The visiting team included Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of World Missions; Mr. Sean Young, director of Mission Operations; Rev. Tim Satorius, WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations contact for Puerto Rico; and me. We visited all three congregations of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico and met with leaders of our sister church.

The purpose of our visit was to determine what kind of assistance would be most helpful now that power has been restored to much of the island, building supplies are more available, and travel between cities is now possible. The leaders of the Puerto Rican church were encouraged by our visit, clearly recognized that the Lord will bring blessings even through the tragedy of the hurricane, and were eager to share their optimistic plans for the future. It was heartening to see their strong faith and to hear of their confidence in God's continuing care for them and their small church body.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief will be considering recommendations from the visiting team for continuing relief efforts that will address both short- and long-term needs of our sister church.

Even though life is returning to normal in many of the areas affected by the storms, there is much work to be done. There may be additional opportunities for volunteers to help in the coming weeks and months. Your continuing prayers are encouraged.

President Mark Schroeder 



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Your gifts, God's blessings 2018

Your gifts, God's blessings: An annual report to our members is now available online. The 2018 report highlights the blessings that God has showered on WELS through the gifts of its members.

Learn more about

- Russell Scoggins, a seminary student from Texas who served in the Washington, D.C., area, during his vicar year;
- Carl Boeder, a Martin Luther College student who began studying secondary instrumental music and elementary education but transitioned to pastor studies and is now busy studying three different languages;
- Jackson, a new Lutheran living in Venezuela, who has opened his home for weekly worship;
- Santo Tomas, one of WELS' first Spanish-speaking congregations, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2017; and
- Mike Indest, a member of Crown of Life, New Orleans, La., who recently completed Martin Luther College's Chaplain Certification Program.

The report includes photos of Christian brothers and sisters around the world, stories of faith, updates on WELS' ministry, and a summary of WELS' financial picture.

To view the report online, visit wels.net/annualreport. Print versions of the report will be sent

to every WELS congregation and individuals who donated to WELS in 2017. Additional print versions are available for free from Northwestern Publishing House. Visit nph.net or call 800-662-6022.

Want to learn even more about how God is blessing your gifts to him for his work through WELS? Schedule a Christian giving counselor to present a PowerPoint presentation to your congregation that summarizes the information in the annual report. Contact the Ministry of Christian Giving at 800-827-5482 for more information. ☪

Learning to reach souls with the gospel

The 13th annual Evangelism Day brought more than 40 speakers from all over the country to Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., on Jan. 10.

Rev. Jeremy Mattek from Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis., led the opening worship service on the theme, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Then students attended a blend of required and elective workshops on a wide range of topics, including "Reaching Out to Millennials," "Ministry to the Poor," "Reaching Global Cities," and "Evangelism and Technology."

This year brought a new feature: evening sectionals open to the community. More than 30 guests joined students at these evening presentations.

"Evangelism Day is a day to marvel at Christ's abundant goodness to us," said MLC President Rev. Mark Zurling. "The Lord safely brings so many dedicated presenters to MLC. They inspire and inform our students and community members about the Great Commission foundation in all gospel labors in every congregation and classroom, in every city and neighborhood. Our students are blessed by such interactions as they see that first and foremost they are a corps of Christian witnesses to reach souls with the gospel of Christ."

Evangelism Day is a joint effort of MLC, WELS Commission on Evangelism, and WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools.

Learn more about Martin Luther College at mlc-wels.edu. ☪

Save the date for the 2018 WELS Night at Miller Park

The date for the fifth annual WELS Night at Miller Park has been determined. Mark your calendars and plan to join thousands of WELS members for the Milwaukee Brewers' game against the Colorado Rockies on Fri., Aug. 3, 2018. Game time is 7:10 p.m.

The Brewers are again offering WELS members up to 50 percent off the price of tickets. Seating will be along the third base line this year and in a block for WELS members. The pricing is Field Outfield Box sections 126 – 131 for \$21/ticket, Loge Outfield Box sections 228 – 232 for \$17/ticket, or

Terrace Reserved sections 433 – 437 for \$9/ticket.

The web link to purchase discounted tickets for WELS Night at Miller Park won't be available until March. More details will be released in the March 6, 2018, issue of *Together*. ☪

Cleaning up after the storms

By now, everyone knows about the impactful hurricane season last fall. Countless people in Texas, Florida, and the Caribbean were affected. Some of these people were WELS members and their communities. That's where WELS Christian Aid and Relief stepped in to offer assistance via immediate financial support and long-term clean-up and repairs. Christian Aid and Relief has been coordinating volunteer efforts, enabling WELS members to help their Christian brothers and sisters affected by the storms.

In Florida, volunteers used Christian Aid and Relief trailers filled with supplies as they assisted with clean-up efforts in several affected communities. Local congregation members and school children helped with the efforts as well as canvassed the neighborhoods. Financial grants were also distributed to help families refurbish and repair their homes.

Financial assistance was provided to families from Barbuda who were displaced from their homes. Some