

Lord's plan is for them, and each of them has a strong desire to serve among Christ's people."

The training program will be specifically designed to meet the needs for pastoring churches in the Philippines. "Our goal is to provide the training that these men need in their own culture and context," says Bare. "This visit allowed us to work with Pastor De Guzman to design the best program for this growing church in the Philippines."

The courses will be offered in a variety of methods. De Guzman will teach some courses on the ground. Others will be conducted online or through intensive courses offered on short-term visits.

WELS first got involved with De Guzman in 2014, when De Guzman contacted WELS World Missions looking for help after he discovered WELS online. In early 2015, WELS determined that De Guzman was in doctrinal fellowship. His congregation is using videos and printed materials from Multi-Language Publications to reach out to the unchurched in its community.

Learn more about WELS Missions at wels.net/missions. 

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TOGETHER



March 6, 2018

Highlights of the Synodical Council winter meeting

At its winter meeting on Feb. 23-24, the Synodical Council (SC) reviewed the encouraging financial results for calendar year 2017. Congregation Mission Offerings for 2017 were \$21,358,000—an increase of \$298,000 (1.4%) over 2016. Gifts from congregations were \$138,000 more than subscriptions.

As a result, the SC voted to fund the top three items on the unfunded priority list as adopted by the 2017 synod convention. An additional \$150,000 was allocated to Martin Luther College (MLC) for financial aid and for efforts to reduce student debt. Home and World Missions received an additional \$200,000 for new mission starts and programs. The Publication Coordinating Commission of Northwestern Publishing House was given \$50,000 to assist in the publication of theological works and resource material for congregations.

The SC adopted the proposed Support Forecast, which will guide areas of ministry in their planning for the next biennium. The planning assumptions include proposed salary increases of three percent in each year. These assumptions may change as additional financial information is gathered later in 2018.

One item was added to the unfunded priority list—a possible opportunity to establish a theological training facility in Northern Vietnam. The SC will be working with the Conference of Presidents to secure funding for this new opportunity.

The SC received an update from WELS Christian Aid and Relief on the hurricane relief efforts in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico. WELS Christian Aid and Relief has provided funding for a coordinator to help with major efforts in Puerto Rico now that communication has been restored and most infrastructure has been repaired.

The SC approved the plans of Martin Luther College to undertake a major capital campaign beginning in 2019. The campaign will seek funding for student housing improvements and for student financial assistance.

The SC received an update from the special committee considering options to improve the synod's retirement program for called workers.



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The recently passed federal tax reform law no longer allows workers to deduct moving expenses. To prevent workers from being adversely affected by this change, the SC passed a resolution that calls for 20 percent additional reimbursement of moving costs for minister of the gospel and 13 percent for non-ministers of the gospel (both as those terms are defined by the IRS) to help offset the additional tax liability.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 

Registration opens for 2018 youth rally

Registration is now open for the 2018 WELS International Youth Rally, June 26-29, in Bowling Green, Ohio. WELS teens from around the country and the world will meet under the theme “Never Alone,” based on Matthew 28:20, to learn about how God’s Word applies to their lives and to meet fellow Christian youth.

Rev. Donn Dobberstein, WELS director of discipleship, says, “Our church body can never over-invest the time spent with the youth of our congregations. In a day and age that makes it increasingly easy to ‘drift away’ from faith or the church, a youth rally experience gathers WELS teens together to see undisputable proof—they are not alone in their faith! It’s an event that personally encourages WELS teens to confront their doubts in faith and understand better how they truly are a highly-valued part of Christ’s church.”

If congregations haven’t already, it’s time to get a group together to attend. To register, each group needs a contact youth leader who will be the main point of

communication prior to and during the rally. The contact youth leader registers first, and once the university processes their registration, the rest of the group can register individually. New this year, every youth leader must submit information for a background check. Also, the cost went down this year. The registration fee is \$345 until April 30 and then \$370 until May 31 when registration closes.


The theme, “Never Alone,” seems an important message now more than ever. Mrs. Kris Snyder, the youth rally planner, says, “From social media to politics, random violence to racial tensions, we are constantly on edge. We are surrounded by a tornado of information and activity, yet we can feel isolated. What a comfort to know that God remains in control. He sent Jesus to make us God’s children. And Jesus promises, ‘I am with you always, to the very end of the age’ (Matthew 28:20).”

Attendees will participate in worship services with 2,000 of their peers as well as choose from

a range of workshops with topics relevant to their lives, including “Can I be a ninja when I grow up?”, “#notawkward: dating and relationships,” “Got self esteem?”, “Discover your mission,” and more. In addition to the spiritual workshops for teens, recreational workshops will also be offered as well as workshops for the youth leaders.

Snyder says, “Bowling Green State University (BGSU) is an excellent campus for the 2018 WELS International Youth Rally. It’s self-contained and compact, no more than a ten-minute walk from one end to the other, and no major streets to cross. BGSU has a wide variety of recreational buildings including an ice rink and indoor facility with artificial turf in addition to the rock climbing wall, large pool, and several basketball courts. They also have a great deal of green space to fill with inflatables, bands, and fun!”

Dobberstein says, “My hopeful prayer is that on the return trip home, our youth are challenged to see themselves as called and equipped by Christ for meaningful works of service in their churches. The way the gospel is unleashed is through THEM as they carry Christ’s light into their homes, their schools, their places of work, and their neighborhoods. WELS teens are vital to the mission of our churches. Let them participate actively in it!”

Learn more and register at wels.net/2018youthrally. 

Growing opportunities in the Philippines

In February, Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) team members, World Mission Seminary Professor Rev. Bradley Wordell and International Recruitment Director Rev. Jon Bare, joined Rev. Robb Raasch, the chairman of the Asia Pacific Rim Administrative Committee, on a trip to the Philippines. The purpose of the trip was to work with Rev. Alvien De Guzman of Law and Gospel Lutheran Church in Manilla on a plan for a pastoral training program.

A year ago, De Guzman didn’t see the potential of needing a pastoral training program for the near future. But just in the past few months, three men, who like De Guzman had left another church body for doctrinal reasons, contacted De Guzman, wondering if they might join his congregation. He discovered that all three had begun pastoral training in their original church but left when they became convinced by Scripture that they were not receiving the truth of God’s Word. Each of the men has a group in front of them ready to be led, but the men need pastoral training to be prepared to serve them.

That began a conversation with World Missions and the PSI team, leading to this visit. “It was a privilege to meet these three men and to hear their stories,” says Wordell. “Their patience and determination are inspiring. They have been waiting to see what the