

TOGETHER



May 17, 2022


Assignment Day at Martin Luther College

Assignment Day at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., is one of the highlights of the year. Last Saturday, May 14, 2022, in a special service, candidates for the teaching ministry learned where they will be serving. All 74 teacher candidates who could go anywhere—57 from the graduating class and 17 previous graduates—were assigned. In addition, 51 teacher candidates who were limited geographically received assignments. Total assignments this year were fewer than in the two previous years; 116 requests to the Assignment Committee for teachers could not be filled.

There are still 140 teaching vacancies in the synod. District presidents will be working with calling bodies and with MLC to address this significant need.

It should be noted that 48 men graduated from the pre-seminary program at MLC, a significant increase over previous years. This will be a real blessing at a time when pastoral vacancies have also increased.

Jesus encouraged us to pray for workers in his harvest field. God's people have prayed, and God has answered those prayers with young people saying, "Here am I; send me!"

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

Reaching communities with compassion

Through its new Community Care & Compassion Matching Grants Program, WELS Christian Aid and Relief is offering matching grants to congregations that want to reach out in their community through a compassion ministry. Grants are available up to \$2,500.

Grants can support any compassion ministry in a community, such as a Christmas toy drive or a Thanksgiving meal at your church. It can also support those who need


encouragement, like seniors, veterans, or victims of domestic violence. WELS Christian Aid and Relief Director Rev. Daniel Sims recommends that a good place to start is to determine the particular needs in your community. If there is a local charity working to serve those needs, find ways to assist them.

"When we act with compassion and love, it gains us opportunities to talk about our Savior," says Sims. "I encourage congregations to find

we should be doing now to protect our endowment investments?

- How will the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the related economic sanctions affect the global economy and the investment markets?
- Will the WELS Balanced Fund and WELS Endowment Fund be able to keep up with inflation long term?

As of March 31, 2022, WELS Investment Funds' net assets totaled approximately \$300 million. WELS Investment Funds currently provides investment portfolios for 245 WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod ministries, and each quarter more and more WELS members are tuning in to these updates to learn how their congregations' or organizations' investments are making an impact on ministry.

Visit wels.net/wif to watch the webinar and to learn more. 

Did you know...
WELS has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/welslutherans

WELS has Instagram?
instagram.com/welslutherans

Forward in Christ magazine has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/forwardinchristmagazine

Forward in Christ magazine has Instagram?
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To sign up for the e-mail version, visit wels.net/together.

the people who are hurting in your community, formulate a plan to help them, and get in touch with us. Let us help you reach out to them in love.” To learn more and apply for a grant, visit wels.net/relief.

One example of a congregation taking advantage of this new grant program is Bethlehem, Richland Center, Wis. In 2020, this exploratory mission was looking for a ministry space to call home. God provided a perfect fit: a former elementary school that had just come on the market.

The building was more than just a former school. It was also home to a county-run program that provides hot meals each week to senior adults. “We didn’t just purchase a facility,” says Rev. Daniel Lewig, pastor at Bethlehem. “We got a ministry right along with it—and an open door to see where God leads.”

Supported by offerings and a pandemic relief grant from WELS Christian Aid and Relief, Bethlehem members upgraded the former classroom in which the meals are served to make it more welcoming and encourage conversation and connections.

The revitalized dining area also serves as Bethlehem’s fellowship hall, and seniors from the community are invited to all church activities. In addition, Lewig visits with guests each week and leads them in prayer. Bethlehem members help serve the meals or simply spend time getting to know their neighbors.

Once the seniors are in the building, it’s a natural progression to introduce them to the worship space in the gym. Through God’s blessing, several of the seniors have attended worship, and

some have taken Bible information classes and become members.

Bethlehem plans to apply for a new Community Care & Compassion Matching Grant through WELS Christian Aid and Relief to offer even more fellowship opportunities for local seniors, like dinners and movie nights.

“It’s not the food that brings them together,” Lewig says. “It’s the connection. Our members help with that connection and connect it to a higher purpose. We created an environment where you’re not just eating a meal for a day but a meal for eternity.” 

Military contact pastors meet for conference

WELS Military Services assists WELS congregations serving military members when they are stationed nearby. Civilian ministry to the military is a cornerstone of WELS Military Services’ work by equipping churches for local gospel and fellowship ministry to military personnel and their families.

Across the nation, 125 WELS churches near military installations and their pastors (called military contact pastors) are appointed to reach out to the men and women who serve in the United States Armed Forces.

April 26-28, 2022, the WELS Military Services Committee held its annual Military Contact Pastors Workshop at Risen Savior, Pooler, Ga., near Army Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield. Members of the Military Services Committee and a group of WELS military contact pastors met to discuss ministry to the military with Fort Stewart chaplains and military personnel. WELS

members Lt. Col. Michael Hefti and his wife, Katie, shared the stresses of military life and the importance of their WELS pastors and church family in supporting them spiritually.

Fort Stewart held a meeting attended by more than a dozen of the post’s military chaplains. The chaplains explained their work and the retreat attendees spoke to them about the unique needs of WELS military personnel for religious accommodation. Fort Stewart representatives explained family resources available to military members. The official program ended with a demonstration of how a worship service in the field would be set up and a visit to a museum on the post.


The annual workshop is sponsored through a grant from the Lutheran Military Support Group, a national organization of WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) veterans. The Lutheran Military Support Group also sponsors free professional Christian counseling for military members served by WELS Military Services and WELS and ELS veterans.

Rev. Jim Behringer, director of WELS Special Ministries, said, “Of all the military contact pastors workshops, this year’s meeting was superior. Fort Stewart’s chaplains went the extra mile to create mutual understanding. They were impressed by WELS’ desire to serve military personnel, and they made every effort to help us in that regard. Our attendees are always highly motivated by the speakers, but we had some outstanding presentations that I hope will improve our ability to serve military members with the gospel while helping them carry their burdens.”

Rev. Paul Horn, chairman of the WELS Military Services Committee, notes

that the key to serving more WELS members in the military is through referrals from their loved ones made at wels.net/refer. “When we know who our WELS military members are and where they are stationed, we can better serve them with Word and sacraments,” says Horn. “When our congregations are aware that military families are in their church, the best thing they can do is to assimilate them into the mission and ministry of the congregation as quickly as possible. Military families move often. Making your church their church home will provide much needed encouragement and support.”

To learn more about WELS Military Services, visit wels.net/military.

For more information about the Lutheran Military Support Group, visit lutheranmilitary.org. 

Watch the WELS Investment Funds quarterly update webinar

If you missed it live you can still catch the latest WELS Investment Funds quarterly update. The 30-minute webinar featured Bill Burns, CFA, senior investment consultant for Vanguard, as he delivered a quarterly market recap, an investment performance review for the WELS Funds, and Vanguard’s market and economic outlook.

The webinar also included an informative Q&A featuring current issues impacting the markets. Here is a sample of the questions that were addressed:

- With rising inflation and daily market volatility, is there anything