

TOGETHER *Synod convention edition*



July 31–August 3, 2023

Delegates re-elect Rev. Mark Schroeder as synod president


Delegates at the WELS 67th Biennial Synod Convention re-elected Rev. Mark Schroeder as synod president Tuesday morning. The convention was held July 31–Aug. 3 at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Schroeder was first elected as synod president in 2007. “It’s been a joy and a privilege to serve you and our Lord in this position,” he said. “Through the years I can say that you as God’s people have been nothing but encouraging and supportive and faithful in doing the work God has given you to do.”

Schroeder accepted the call to serve in this role for his fifth four-year term. “I humbly accept your call as synod president, and I do so with the prayer that God will continue to work in you as members of our synod through his powerful Word, working a stronger faith and continuing to work in you the zeal to carry the message of the gospel around the world.”

He continued, “I want to thank you for this undeserved privilege, and I want to ask God that he continue to keep us strong. . . . I am only a clay jar. Thankfully it’s God who does the work.”

Rev. Joel Voss, pastor at Resurrection, Centerville, Ohio, was also re-elected as the synod’s second vice president. He already has served in this position for three-and-a-half terms, elected first in 2009.

View full election results for other various WELS boards and commissions at welsconvention.net. 

Delegates gather for opening worship


“It’s all about Jesus, and that’s a message to celebrate and communicate.” WELS First Vice President Rev. James Huebner used those words in the opening service of the 67th biennial convention to encourage delegates in their convention work and their everyday lives.

With the convention taking place at Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) in Saginaw, Mich., St. Paul, Saginaw, hosted the opening service on Monday evening with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder served as the presiding minister, and the MLS Concert Choir provided special music.

The sermon from the opening service, based on Revelation 1:4-8, paved the way for five convention devotions and closing worship that treated other sections of the book of Revelation. The sermon and devotions provided the spiritual backdrop for the theme of the convention: “Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown.”

Mr. Justin Slominsky from Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis., had a front row seat for the opening worship service. While sitting in the front pew, he says, “I thought the Communion distribution would never end! To me, that was like a glimpse of heaven—people coming and coming and coming into God’s heavenly kingdom to praise the Lord.”

Mr. Peter Yee from Apostles, San Jose, Calif., was attending his second opening service at a WELS convention. “It was a beautiful service. The singing and sermon were uplifting,” he says. “When you’re all one in faith and worshiping together, it’s very powerful. The service energized me.”

When the service participants recessed with the cross of Christ held high by the crucifer, the full-throated strains of praise continued in the sanctuary: “Yea, amen, let all adore thee high on thine eternal throne; Savior, take the pow’r and glory, claim the kingdom as thine own. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Thou shalt reign, and thou alone!” (*Christian Worship* 487:4). Even as the echoes of the hymn faded away, it was still all about Jesus. You can watch the opening service at welsconvention.net/livestream. 

President’s Report offers a hope-filled message

WELS President Mark Schroeder addressed delegates with his report on Tuesday morning.

He began by summarizing the synod’s blessings and challenges. Of the blessings, he noted, “By his grace, God has helped us to remain focused on our mission to share the gospel with more and more people. Our world mission efforts have focused not only on strengthening the confessional stance of our partner churches and mission churches around the world. We have also been committed to looking for new opportunities to expand the reach of the gospel in places where we have not been. . . . By his grace, in our own country, we have embarked on an effort to plant 100 new

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home missions in ten years. . . . And, on a congregational level, we see a renewed commitment to finding ways to connect with communities and with people, all in an effort to share the gospel on a person-to-person basis with as many people as possible.”

He concluded his summary of challenges by highlighting the synod’s shortage of called workers and asking, “Could now be the time for us to commit ourselves to a concerted and wide-ranging synodwide effort to encourage more people to serve in the public ministry and to provide as much assistance as possible to make that choice more affordable? . . . Should we fervently ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest field and then do all we can to be his instruments in bringing that about? I believe that the answer to those questions is, ‘Yes, now is the time.’ ”

In keeping with the convention theme “Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown,” Schroeder used the seven churches described in Revelation to draw parallels for us today. “Embracing the cross and anticipating the crown, we do well to remember again the message of the book of Revelation: Yes, the world we live in has been terribly damaged by sin. Yes, Christians living in this sin-damaged world will experience the effects of sin in their own lives and in the culture around them. Yes, Christians will be persecuted and suffer for their faith. Yes, as long as this world stands, Satan will be attacking God’s people and God’s church. Yes, at times it will look to us like Satan and his forces are winning that war and that the church is losing it. But then comes the beautiful truth and the message of incredible comfort: Yes, all of that may be true now, but don’t be afraid, don’t be discouraged, don’t despair, don’t give up. Because Jesus is coming. And in the end, he wins. And so do we.”

Read the full report at welsconvention.net/convention-resources. 

For all, to all, by all

“The Word for all, to all, by all.”

Presentations and new fellowship opportunities highlighted this WELS World Missions’ mantra during the 2023 synod convention.

To kick off the convention, the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society’s flag presentation provided an overview of WELS’ mission partners from 45 countries and prospective mission fields in 18 countries.

On Tuesday evening, three world missionaries shared more about gospel opportunities in Latin America, Europe, and Asia.

- Missionary Matthew Behmer, who lives in Quito, Ecuador, reported on the work being done in Latin America through *Academia Cristo*. This multi-faceted program works to share the message of God’s grace with as many people as possible, to identify and train potential leaders, and to encourage these leaders to make more disciples who plant churches. Currently 25 church planter groups and 50 student-leaders are working through the program, which concludes with a confessional process to become


a church that joins in fellowship with *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*, WELS’ sister synod in Latin America with which WELS reaffirmed fellowship at this convention.

- Missionary Luke Wolfgramm, who lives in Leipzig, Germany, highlighted ministry in Europe. Wolfgramm shared that in a place that declares “anything but Jesus,” new opportunities are emerging. Immigrants are pouring into London, one of the newest WELS mission fields where two missionaries work with a dedicated core group. As WELS Europe Team leader, Wolfgramm offers support and encouragement to a dozen sister church bodies as well as works closely with the seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Germany to offer courses for students and continuing education for experienced pastors.
- Missionary Guy Marquardt related the amazing opportunities to share the love of Jesus in a continent that contains 4.6 billion people, 60 percent of the world’s population. Work is concentrated on exploring new outreach opportunities, training future workers, and supporting partner churches.

On Wednesday morning, WELS expanded its family of believers by declaring fellowship with Obadiah Lutheran Synod of Uganda. Obadiah Lutheran Synod first came into contact with WELS in late 2017, with ensuing visits from missionaries and Malawian national pastors for training and fellowship discussions. It currently has 28 congregations, 9 preaching stations, and 1 mission field of South Sudanese refugees. Seven pastors, 6 evangelists, and 24 lay leaders serve more than 5,000 baptized members. Rev. Makisimu Musa, leader of that synod, joined the convention via Zoom to extend thanks and greetings to the convention delegates. “The Obadiah Lutheran Synod is grateful to God for the generous support from the WELS in both manpower and finance. This support has uplifted and strengthened the preaching of the gospel in Obadiah Lutheran Synod and the communities around,” he says. “To all of you, I express thanks on behalf of my church body. May the Lord of the Church Jesus Christ graciously bless this new fellowship to be fruitful for church ministry in Uganda and the world over.”

Convention delegates also affirmed fellowship with *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*, a new synod that was formed in 2021 through the partnership of WELS sister churches across five countries throughout Latin America. Rev. Tonny Quintero, pastor at Most Holy Trinity in Medellín, Colombia, was at the convention representing *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*. He became Lutheran more than 40 years ago after meeting a WELS missionary. “The Word they brought has grown,” says Quintero about the work of WELS missionaries in Latin and South America. “We thank them and all of you who sent them.”

Finally, delegates heard from Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions, about how WELS helps, supports, and trains 500-plus national pastors who serve more than 1,000 churches and preaching stations around the world. He reported that with growing opportunities in Kenya, Vietnam, and Tanzania as well as the *Academia Cristo*/TELL online ministry, by 2035 WELS’ worldwide fellowship could number more than 750,000 people.

“The Word for all, to all, by all.” 

Reaching one soul at a time

On Wednesday morning, Rev. Mark Gabb, chairman of the WELS Board for Home Missions, gave an update on the 100 missions in 10 years initiative, which was passed at the 2021 synod convention. The initiative, which began this year, involves planting 100 home mission churches and enhancing 75 ministries over the next 10 years.

In March 2023, the Board for Home Missions approved the first set of 15 new home mission starts and enhancements. Gabb shared updates about each during his presentation.

Gabb also addressed a common question about the initiative. “One of the biggest questions I’ve heard is, ‘How can we do this with so many [pastoral] vacancies?’ That’s a fair question,” he said. He then spoke about the Great Commission that Christ has given us to go and make disciples, while faithfully and wisely using the resources he has given us for both outreach and nurture. “It comes down to reaching the lost,” Gabb continued. “It’s still about one Savior, one mission, one synod, one soul at a time.”

Gabb pointed delegates to wels100in10.net for updates and encouraged them to pray, get involved, and continue to support the work with their offerings. He concluded, “Trust God’s promises. . . . God will bless us immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine.”


In its report, the Home Missions floor committee noted: “Our committee would like to underscore our support of the 100 missions in 10 years initiative adopted at the last convention in pursuit of the Great Commission. . . . This initiative gives us the opportunity to establish more footholds of gospel proclamation where the harvest is increasingly plentiful.”

On Wednesday evening, delegates heard ministry updates from three WELS home missionaries.

- Paul Biedenbender is pastor at Christ, a bilingual congregation reaching out to its culturally diverse neighborhood in the middle of Denver, Colo. Christ serves and meets people from all over the world. Biedenbender showed a photo of a hallway at Christ, which displays the flags of the 12 nations represented in its congregation. In cooperation with local nonprofits providing for the community’s physical needs, the church has established itself in the neighborhood as a place people can go for their spiritual needs. Biedenbender shared multiple stories of God’s hand at work at Christ as entire families have come to be baptized into God’s family.
- David Koelpin, Foundation, Folsom, Calif., shared photos of Foundation’s unique approach to worship. Because Foundation began worshipping during the pandemic in 2019, members worshiped outdoors at community parks due to necessity. They soon found that their flexible, creative, and welcoming approach has made them known in the community as “the church that worships in the park.” They have continued to worship outside, providing a natural community awareness. Foundation members are also challenged to make new friends so they can invite those new friends to church—tapping into the strength of one-on-one evangelism.

- Timothy Spiegelberg, pastor at Carbon Valley, Firestone, Colo., reported that the congregation is in an area of extreme population growth. Since members knew that they wanted to be proactively in the path of that growth, they purchased and repurposed an existing building into a versatile ministry center that could serve the community, with the goal of having people in their building at all times. Carbon Valley’s motto of “Connecting Christ . . . Connecting Community” places a heavy emphasis on building personal relationships as a way to reach out with the gospel.

Mr. Joseph Purcell, a lay delegate from St. Paul’s, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, was inspired by the success stories being shared by WELS home missionaries in new locations.

“Consistently all of them are considering what their community needs and asking how they can best serve them,” he said. “I think if we can keep following that model, doing 100 mission congregations in 10 years is realistic.” 

Now is the time

Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services, offered convention delegates a picture of the current state of WELS and opportunities for the future. The basis for his presentation was the 2022 WELS Statistical Summary and Analysis.

Each year, WELS collects data from all congregations and schools. That data is compiled in a statistical report. WELS Congregational Services then publishes an annual Statistical Summary and Analysis to help congregations and the synod plan how to best steward the resources God provides. Hein shared the 2022 findings and analysis with delegates.

In his presentation, Hein used graphs and charts to address some common concerns heard from WELS members:

- “Our congregations are aging.”
- “We have record pastoral vacancies.”
- “We don’t have the people to open new churches.”

Although some statistics are sobering, Hein feels confident in the future of WELS. He notes, “This is not a time for us to cower or shake over the number of losses. It’s a time to stand up and ask God to give us courage and strength and to love our community rather than lambast our community for becoming post-Christian. Let’s love our community and bring Christ to them. Now is the time for us to do it.”

Read the full WELS 2022 Statistical Summary and Analysis at welscongregationalservices.net/stat-summary-2022. 

Hirsch presents convention essay

Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown. This is the theme of the WELS 67th Biennial Synod Convention and the topic Rev. Philip Hirsch explored in the convention essay. Hirsch is the Nebraska District president, a role he’s held since 2015, and a pastor at Hope, Manhattan, Kan., where he has

served since 1998. He and his wife, Kristi, have seven children and three grandchildren (with two on the way).

In his essay, Hirsch says, "In the faithful church, we need to ground 'cross' speech—with all of its notions of suffering and even dying—cleanly and clearly and faithfully. Or it will quickly go the way of curved-in-on-ourselves theology and make the cross all about us and our suffering. And then we will arrive at 'crown' speech—with all of its notions of ruling and reigning, especially eschatologically—faithfully and clearly and cleanly. We need to put cross and crown terminology together faithfully for the good of any who will be listening."


When approached to write this year's convention essay, Hirsch said the first thing he thought about was how the idea of "cross and crown" is so easy to get confused. "It seemed wise to not confuse cross and crown in a false way that can turn the gospel into a hard piece of work for the 'pious' Christian to struggle through. And, if he struggles through it well enough, he wins the crown."

Hirsch explains, "So much of what calls itself Christendom mixes cross and crown into a brew that means the human has to keep working at getting saved; it's kind of like the confusion of law and gospel that can sound so, so close to truth and yet is so, so devilish where the rubber meets the road, particularly in a human heart that is tempted to be pulled away from what's preached in Christ crucified and risen."

In the essay, Hirsch walked all the way back to when God hid his glory from Moses, emphasizing and illustrating the idea of "God hidden." "In short, it means that we live by faith in the promises of God and NOT by sight—not by the way we want God to look or operate. Gospel in Word and sacrament? That looks foolish, wimpy, and worthless. But it saves. The promise of God says."

He hopes listeners walked away liberated, knowing that the wonderful message of Christ crucified is the only thing that frees a sinful human from any "silly" ideas about God or gods.

"In the freedom of the gospel, we are NOT to let ourselves be burdened by a yoke of slavery again, but should embrace the cross of Christ and embrace whatever comes our way from the hand of our heavenly Father, confident that we have an eternal crown because of Christ and sure that, even now, all things serve us for good," concludes Hirsch. "My prayer is this: that listeners and readers of the essay go forth liberated from their false theologies of glory, which each of us is so liable to invent, and to sing the 'Te Deum Laudamus' with all the saints with a gusto that a child of God knows, because all the work is Christ's and we get to be his people."

Download and read the entire "Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown" essay at welsconvention.net/convention-resources. 

Training future church workers

"Pray for more workers." That was a repeated request during the WELS Ministerial Education report in Tuesday morning's session.

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education, spoke of the rare blessing WELS has in its four


ministerial education schools: preparatory high schools Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich., and Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis.; college of ministry Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn.; and seminary Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis.

Rev. Mark Luetzow, MLS president, described how students receive a taste of ministry experience to help them see better how they might serve the Lord with their lives. For students who enroll at Martin Luther College, endowment scholarships are available. MLS is working on a new strategic plan titled "Chosen people, special purpose" (1 Peter 2:9). The plan addresses communication and facilities, among other items.

Rev. Matthew Crass, LPS president, reminded delegates that when parents from a distance enroll their children at LPS, they do not send their children away from home, but they are sending their children to something—a place that is all about the Lord's kingdom work.

Rev. Richard Gurgel, MLC president, shared a video that encouraged prayer for more workers in the public ministry. Mr. Ted Klug, vice president of enrollment management at MLC, joined Gurgel in encouraging prayers for more workers in the harvest field: "Mold us and move us to be good examples for our youth" (from "Prayer of the Church" in *Christian Worship*, p. 198).

Rev. Earle Treptow, WLS president, reported a record amount of scholarship assistance available to students this past year. The seminary is pursuing accreditation through the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools. The process to accreditation will benefit the seminary by means of a self-study, and achieving accreditation will benefit WELS' sister synods throughout the world who utilize WLS in the training of their pastors. Accreditation will not impact the mission of the seminary. Treptow also noted the seminary's tentative building plans of adding an education center and renovating several existing classrooms into faculty offices.

Prange concluded the report with another request for prayers for more workers in the Lord's harvest field. 

Equipping congregations for ministry

On Wednesday afternoon, Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator, WELS Congregational Services, shared with the convention the vast and varied work of WELS Congregational Services. Congregational Services comprises several areas all focused on encouraging and equipping congregations for faithful and fruitful gospel ministry.

These areas include the Commissions on Congregational Counseling, Lutheran Schools, Evangelism, Worship, Discipleship, and Special Ministries. Hein provided an overview of the many resources created by these areas of ministry to support congregations including evangelism training, elder training, child abuse awareness training, prison ministry programs, Bible studies and ministry programs for teens and millennials, worship planning, stewardship programs, resources for women's ministries, and marriage resources. Resources, Bible studies, and

programs are on the Congregational Services website, welscongregationalervices.net.

The Foundation provides churches with weekly worship plans, a preacher podcast for each week, thematic graphics, school devotions, and promotional text. In its first year, *The Foundation* had 83,000 engagements on its web pages.


New from the Commission on Discipleship is the launch of the Stewardship Legacy series, which will focus on five *Ts* of stewardship: time, talent, treasure, temple, and truth. Four weeks of worship, sermons, and Bibles studies are available on welscongregationalervices.net for the first installment on “time”—“A time to prioritize,” “A time for perspective,” “A time to plan,” and “A time to pause.” In the coming biennium, resources will be developed for talent, treasure, temple, and truth.

Hein introduced two upcoming evangelism programs—Come & See, to encourage and equip Christians for invitation evangelism, and Local, designed to help regional churches establish a local presence.

Following Hein’s overview of the many congregational resources, Mr. Jim Rademan, director of the Commission of Lutheran Schools (CLS), provided an overview of the resources and programs provided by CLS as well as enrollment trends of WELS schools around the country. Rademan reported that 156 WELS educational ministries, including all of the WELS area Lutheran high schools, are currently accredited, either through the WELS School Accreditation program or another accreditation agency.

Rademan also noted an uptick in WELS schools’ enrollment post-COVID. Notably, schools are seeing an increase in non-WELS families enrolling. These non-WELS families are bringing the mission field to schools. Telling the Next Generation is CLS’ program to help WELS schools and early childhood ministries maximize the opportunities to share God’s Word with all children and families they serve.

Rev. Joel Gaertner, director of WELS Commission on Special Ministries, shared a snapshot of the different areas that Special Ministries serves, including Prison Ministry, Military Services, Ministry to the Visually Impaired, and Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Gaertner was commissioned as the director in June, following the retirement of Rev. Jim Behringer, who had served in the role for 11 years. Learn more about Special Ministries at wels.net/special-ministries.

To see the presentation, watch the archived livestream at welsconvention.net/livestream. 

Wednesday afternoon presentation overview

Delegates at the WELS 67th Biennial Synod Convention had the opportunity to learn about multiple ministries Wednesday afternoon. Mr. Jeremy Angle, president of Northwestern Publishing House (NPH), spoke about the mission and vision of the synod’s official publisher.

Angle said, “The vision of Northwestern Publishing House is to be the first choice people go to for digital and printed resources that share Christ’s truths worldwide.” He explained that by saying “people,” he doesn’t mean just WELS people, but *anyone* looking for biblically and doctrinally sound books and resources with a pure gospel message.

Speaking to delegates, Angle said, “Today more than ever, those both weak and strong in your care need your guiding hand, as they’re surrounded by a sea of false doctrine washing against them as Christian truths. So, whether you’re a pastor, a teacher, a staff minister, or a lay leader, you may very well be the only person in the life of a church member, a friend, a neighbor, whom they can trust to guide them to Christian resources that strengthen their faith—or bring them to faith. You get to shepherd them toward truth-filled, Christ-centered, doctrinally sound books and materials, and NPH is here to support you with a broad variety of resources for every generation to encourage them to seek God’s will, lead God-pleasing lives, and learn more about God’s love for us.”

Check out the 22 new titles NPH published in the last biennium and its entire catalog of Bible-focused books and resources at nph.net. You can see Angle’s entire presentation on the Wednesday afternoon livestream archive (welsconvention.net/livestream).

Next at the podium was Rev. Dan Sims, director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief. He began his presentation with a video highlighting the work of Christian Aid and Relief across its three main areas of focus—disaster relief, humanitarian aid, and personal relief grants.

In fiscal year 2022–23, Christian Aid and Relief utilized more than \$600,000 for disaster relief, including assistance in Haiti after the earthquake; clean-up following Hurricanes Ida and Ian; and relief to people in Ukraine by way of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church providing basic necessities like food, clothing, and medicine to members and the community. Sims directed delegates to welsdisasterrelief.org, where members can sign up to volunteer for disaster relief efforts.


Christian Aid and Relief works with Home Missions and World Missions to implement humanitarian aid. In fiscal year 2022–23, Christian Aid and Relief granted nearly \$400,000 for aid projects, ranging from boreholes for fresh water, assistance for medical care, and vocational training. In addition, more than \$400,000 was utilized for personal relief grants, to assist individual members in times of personal crisis.

“We do a lot of charitable work, but WELS Christian Aid and Relief is not just a charity,” says Sims. “We look at it as a means of grace ministry. In all that we do, we strive to let the light of Christ shine, connect people with God’s Word, and share the good news of his saving love with people who are in crisis.”

Learn more at wels.net/relief. You can see Sims’ entire presentation on the Wednesday afternoon livestream archive (welsconvention.net/livestream).

Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of the Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG), provided an update on the generous gifts of God’s people to WELS ministry. Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO), the main source of support for WELS ministry, were \$23.33 million for 2022, 2.9 percent more

than 2021 CMO and 3.9 percent higher than projected. This is the third consecutive year in which WELS congregations offered a record total of CMO and the first year in which CMO has surpassed \$23 million. So far, 2023 CMO receipts are exceeding projections as well.

See the entire MCG presentation and learn the different ways MCG can help members and congregations make gifts for the Lord's work on the Wednesday afternoon livestream archive (welsconvention.net/livestream). 

Celebrating WELS' rich history


As delegates discussed what WELS ministry will look like in the next biennium and beyond, Rev. Joel Otto, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., reminded delegates on Tuesday morning about the importance of remembering the past.

As chairman of the WELS 175th Anniversary Planning Committee, Otto highlighted the plans being made to celebrate WELS' 175th anniversary in 2025 under the theme "Christ Through Us"—a theme that dovetails with the upcoming synodical ten-year plan. Anniversary celebration plans include printed and digital publications as well as resources to help congregations not only commemorate WELS' upcoming anniversary but also celebrate their own churches' rich histories.

Planned resources include:

- A pictorial history of the Wisconsin Synod (1850–2025) along with accompanying documentary-styled videos.
- An update of *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, a book recording the history of the Wisconsin Synod.
- An online interactive timeline of the synod's history.
- Worship resources for anniversary services.
- Multiple articles in synod publications like *Forward in Christ*, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, and the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*.

Otto concluded, "May the Lord continue to bless us as he has in the past, equipping and strengthening us to carry his message to future generations."

Learn more about the synod's rich history at welshistoricalinstitute.org. 

Floor committees report to the convention

Three hundred forty-eight convention delegates met in 19 floor committees to consider the synod's work. Floor committees studied reports from the synod's ministries, met with synod administrators and board members, and then formed reports and resolutions that were presented to the delegates at large on Wednesday and Thursday.

Many floor committees' reports summarized the ministry that was assigned to them and offered encouragement for those

serving. Resolutions that called for action included the following:

Floor Committee #1, which dealt with the President's Report, called for "the synod president to appoint a pastoral ministry shortage task force to study the challenges related to the present pastoral shortage and spiritual support for pastors from all angles to provide concrete recommendations to the synod president to address this matter." Delegates approved the resolution.

Floor Committee #1 also called for "the synod president to appoint a Recruitment Task Force to study and address the challenges to recruitment for our ministerial education schools." Delegates approved the resolution.

Floor Committee #10: Ministerial Education also offered a resolution to help address called worker vacancies. The resolution asked delegates of the 2023 synod convention to "encourage WELS members with degrees in other fields to consider training for the ministry of the gospel." Delegates approved the resolution.

Floor Committee #2, which discussed the work of the Conference of Presidents, presented a resolution asking the Conference of Presidents to "prepare a pastoral brief on critical theories in light of Scripture." This resolution generated much discussion, which resulted in an amendment to "prepare a pastoral brief emphasizing the importance of justice and analyzing critical theories in light of Scripture." Delegates passed the amended motion.

Floor Committee #3: Commission on Inter-Church Relations resolved that "the synod in convention continue to support the ongoing informal conversations between WELS, the [Evangelical Lutheran Synod], and the [Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod]" and that the Conference of Presidents and the Commission on Inter-Church Relations "continue to update the members of the synod as to developments in these conversations." Delegates approved the resolution, which did note that "the [Commission on Inter-Church Relations] does not believe we are in a position to initiate 'formal doctrinal discussions,' which would mean 'there is reason to believe there may be doctrinal agreement.' "

Floor Committee #7 analyzed the proposed ministry financial plan (budget) for the 2023–25 biennium. The floor committee then resolved to adopt the proposed plan and encouraged "every WELS congregation and their members to support the gospel ministry entrusted to our synod" and to "ask the Holy Spirit to continue to inspire his people to give as they have been given, in support of our synod's task to hold before the world the good news of Jesus." Delegates approved the resolution.

To view all reports and resolutions, visit welsconvention.net. 

Delegates approve balanced ministry financial plan

On Tuesday morning, Mr. Kyle Egan, WELS' chief financial officer and treasurer, shared an overview of WELS financial results with synod convention delegates. He explained key elements of the proposed ministry financial plan for the upcoming biennium covering fiscal years 2023–24 and 2024–25.

Egan noted the continued strength of Congregation Mission Offerings, individual gifts and grants, as well as strong reserve levels. "Overall the synod is in a very strong financial position heading into the biennium," said Egan. "We have continued to see strong levels of unrestricted support through gifts, grants, and bequests, which allows for the continued expansion of mission and ministry. We ask for God to provide us with the wisdom and leadership to carry out these plans for the next biennium."

On Thursday morning, delegates approved the ministry financial plan. Rev. Matthew Brown, a delegate from the South Central District, served as chairman of the convention floor committee that dealt with the ministry financial plan. "It is with joyful thanks for the blessings of our gracious God that we note that WELS is financially strong," he said. "We ask the Holy Spirit to continue to inspire his people to give as they have been given, in support of our synod's task to hold before the world the good news of Jesus."

The ministry financial plan includes support for WELS ministerial education, home and world missions, congregation and district ministry, and general ministry. For plan details, see Egan's full presentation, which is available at welsconvention.net/convention-resources.

Did you know...

WELS has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/welslutherans

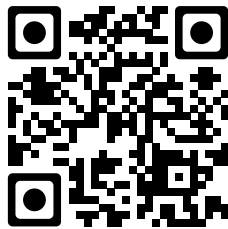
WELS has Instagram?
instagram.com/welslutherans

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

Forward in Christ magazine has Instagram?
instagram.com/forward_in_christ_magazine

Synod Convention Online Offering

The special 2023 synod convention offering will be split between the two synods with which WELS is declaring or affirming fellowship: Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda and *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional* of Latin America.



All convention documents, presentations, videos, photos, and other resources can be found at welsconvention.net.

