


coming weeks. Pastors and interested laypeople should sign up now to receive updates, which will include notices when new materials are posted online as well as planning tips and timelines to carry out the program successfully. 

WELS Prison Ministry turns 25

This year, WELS Prison Ministry celebrates its 25th anniversary. This ministry provides Christian materials and education to jail and prison inmates. Since its start, WELS Prison Ministry has served more than 80,000 people in 1,300 different facilities by mail and in person.

Helmed by the volunteer efforts of the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) and WELS Special Ministries, this area of institutional ministry formally began in 1993. Its work originally targeted incarcerated WELS members, but it began to reach non-WELS inmates over time as well. By 1999, the program had expanded so rapidly that a full-time administrator was called. The ministry is currently headquartered in New Ulm, Minn., and much of its work is still completed by volunteers.

In August 2018, WELS welcomed the newest Prison Ministry administrator, Mr. David Hochmuth. A former civil engineer, Hochmuth served as a staff minister of spiritual growth at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis., for 11 years before accepting the call.

“It is such a fruitful field for evangelism,” Hochmuth says. “Many people in prison understand that they face problems and that they are in need of help. The Spirit moves them to be honest about their situation. It is a great avenue for learning about the truth of Jesus.”

Prison Ministry has evolved significantly over the past 25 years.

“It has developed into more than sending Bible study booklets to inmates,” explains Mr. Leon Brands, former WELS Prison Ministry Committee chairman. “There’s been increased interest and concentrated efforts to involve more WELS members in face-to-face ministry.”

Hochmuth adds that technological improvements have also allowed ministries to share God’s Word via digital Bible studies and other courses.

Brands is optimistic about the future of Prison Ministry. “The prayer of the Prison Ministry Committee is that the new administrator, Dave Hochmuth—with the help of others—is able to expand and develop better training for individuals who want to go into facilities, and also develop some aftercare and mentoring programs for both released inmates and their families.”

To learn more about WELS Prison Ministry, contact David Hochmuth at dave.hochmuth@wels.net. 

TOGETHER



September 4, 2018

WELS Mission and Ministry Sunday approaching


Annual mission celebrations and festivals have been a part of our synod for nearly its entire history. While our mission to work together to proclaim the gospel to the world is always front and center of what we do as Christians, as congregations, and as a synod, setting aside a special day to focus on mission work is a great way to renew our focus on this important work.

The Conference of Presidents has designated Oct. 21 as the date for a synodwide Mission and Ministry Sunday in 2018. Congregations are encouraged to plan a special day in which worship will focus on the mission work that we do together as a synod. This year congregations have the opportunity to highlight the newest evangelism movie. *To the Ends of the Earth* is the fourth in a series of films that have illustrated how the message of Christ’s saving work was proclaimed by his first followers and now continues to be proclaimed by believers in keeping with Jesus’ command to take the gospel “to the ends of the earth.”

Materials and worship resources, including a sermon study and a newly commissioned mission hymn, can be found online at wels.net/missionandministrysunday.

A children’s song is also available for purchase from Northwestern Publishing House.

It’s our prayer that congregations will also gather a special mission offering on that day (or on another day it chooses) to support the synod’s ongoing and future mission efforts.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

Disasters provide opportunity to show Christian love

Storm damage in Wisconsin has given WELS members the opportunity to show Christ’s love in their communities.

On Aug. 20-21, more than 11 inches of rain fell in a 24-hour time period in

Dane County. In some areas, residents were evacuated to higher ground. Homes and vehicles were flooded.

St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis., worked with WELS Christian Aid and Relief to provide help to their neighbors. On



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit wels.net/together.

Aug. 25, more than 200 volunteers coordinated by St. Andrew helped their community members clean up following the storm.

“As Christians, all our earthly possessions may be swept away in 35 minutes or less,” says Elizabeth Zambo of Christian Aid and Relief, “but our faith, that is anchored to the Rock, will remain secure. These people that have experienced flooding are now being emotionally, physically, and spiritually challenged. I am always amazed when I see the people soon after the disaster strikes and then witness the changes that occur in their faith and attitude over the days, weeks, and months after the disaster. Not only do the people suffering from the flooding grow in their faith, but those who are assisting those in need realize they too are growing in their faith.”

In a report to his members following the clean-up effort, Rev. Kelly Huet, a pastor at St. Andrew, noted, “Lives and communities were impacted today because of your love for Jesus.” St. Andrew is continuing to offer help as homes are now being rebuilt.

On Aug. 28, 17 tornadoes touched down in Wisconsin, including one F2 tornado outside of Brownsville in Dodge County. The church property and parsonage of St. Paul, Brownsville, sustained damage from the high winds and downed trees, but no one was injured.

On Sept. 1, the congregation coordinated an effort with Christian Aid and Relief to offer aid to its neighbors who suffered damage from the storm and to help clear its property. The effort brought together

85 WELS members, including many from surrounding areas. Community members also joined in, as well as a group from Stillwater, Minn., who brought one of Christian Aid and Relief’s trailers. These trailers are stocked with items such as chainsaws, generators, rakes, brooms, ropes, buckets, helmets, and gloves.

The Brownsville community was grateful for the volunteers’ help. Many were overwhelmed by the number of trees that needed to be cleared from their property.

To learn more about WELS Christian Aid and Relief and to support their work, visit wels.net/relief. To see more photos and videos from these relief efforts, visit [facebook.com/WELSChristianAidAndRelief](https://www.facebook.com/WELSChristianAidAndRelief). 

Reaching one million souls with the gospel

According to Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services, Christmas Eve is the #1 worship service that unchurched and dechurched people are willing to attend. A new synodwide outreach campaign called C18 is now available from WELS Congregational Services to help congregations and individuals with this huge outreach opportunity.

The campaign’s theme, “A Light in the darkness,” is based on Isaiah 9:2: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.” The overarching goal of the program? To reach one million people with the gospel message during the Christmas season.

In order to reach one million people, Hein says congregations and their members need to work together synodwide. “Our job is to simply share the gospel as zealously as we can. We leave the results up to the Holy Spirit,” he says. “However, if together we would achieve the goal of reaching one million souls, and if the Holy Spirit would bless that effort at a similar rate he has for past programs, it would mean about 1,500 people and their families would join a WELS congregation as a result of the C18 program.”

Every commission from Congregational Services is providing royalty-free resources to help congregations and members with this effort:

- The Commission on Evangelism is developing promotional materials such as postcards, banners, and Facebook posts. Congregations can order customizable postcards with the C18 theme from Echt Printing. WELS Congregational Services is offering an outreach grant of up to \$150 off the postcard order to the first 200 congregations that participate. The deadline to order is Oct. 21.

The Commission on Evangelism is also providing a Bible study related to the new outreach movie *To the Ends of the Earth*. The study, which will discuss how to witness and share your faith, can help prepare members to invite their unchurched friends, relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors to Christmas Eve services.

- The Commission on Worship is providing worship resources, including worship plans, several liturgy options, sermon helps, service folders, and newly commissioned music. The commission is not just providing materials for Christmas Eve; it also has produced a series for Advent called *He Comes, Bearing Gifts*.
- The Commission on Discipleship is producing family Advent devotions, with a special emphasis on training and encouraging families to reach out to the unchurched during the holiday season.
- The Commission on Lutheran Schools is providing WELS schools with evangelism training materials for children and teens.
- The Commission on Special Ministries is developing supplementary materials for the Christmas for Kids program developed by Northwestern Publishing House to allow congregations to offer a service for children with special needs.
- The Commission on Congregational Counseling is providing materials to help congregations coordinate this outreach effort as well as helps for following up on contacts after the holiday season.

Almost all of the materials will be offered as free downloads from the WELS Congregational Services website, welscongregationalservices.net/c18. Some materials are available now; others will be provided in the