

TOGETHER

March 2, 2021

Synodical Council winter 2021 meeting

The Synodical Council (SC) held its winter meeting last week via video conference.

The SC reviewed the financial results of the last fiscal year as well as the end-of-calendar year results for Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO). Across the board, both in terms of the synod's ministry financial plan and regarding the financial position of the synod's departments, schools, and subsidiaries, the financial situation of the synod is much healthier than was expected. The SC acknowledged thanks for God's blessings on our synod and its congregations.

In view of the healthy financial situation, the SC approved an expenditure of \$400,000 to be used to fund some of the items on the "unfunded priority list." The SC Ministry Committee, with input from the President's Advisory Council, will determine in April which ministries will receive this funding.

The SC gave its final approval to the ministry financial plan (budget) for the next biennium that will be recommended to the synod convention in July. The plan, adopted unanimously and with the support of the Conference of Presidents, calls for a 2 percent increase in expenditures in each of the next two years.

The SC also resolved to move ahead with its recommendation to change the synod pension plan from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan. A defined contribution plan would work more like a 401(k), giving called workers their own retirement accounts. The details of the plan were shared last year and will be shared again this spring before being considered by the synod in convention in July.

The SC made the following appointments:

- To the Board of Directors of the WELS Church Extension Fund: Mr. Seth Hanson, Mr. Tim Gensmer, and Mr. Ron Kerr were re-appointed for another term.
- To the Board of Directors of the WELS Investment Fund: Mr. Joel Luehmann, Mr. John Wenker, and Mr. Seth Hanson were re-appointed for another term.
- To the Retirement Program Commission: Mr. Lee Miller was re-appointed for another term; Rev. James Turriff was newly appointed.
- To the VEBA Commission: Mr. James Gabriel was newly appointed.
- To the Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors: Mr. Joel Raasch, Mr. Matthew Groth, Rev. Steven Pagels were re-appointed for another term.

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Communications Director Mr. Lee Hitter reported that during 2020 wels.net had more than two million visits to the website, with users in the U.S. and throughout the world making use of the digital content.

Technology Director Mr. Martin Spriggs reported that a third-party security firm was engaged to do a thorough assessment of hardware, software, security policies and procedures, as well as employee training. A preliminary report has been received and will be reviewed for appropriate recommendations to technology systems and practice. He also reported that hundreds of hours have been devoted to updating the CMM phone system to Microsoft Teams Telephony.


Director of the Ministry of Christian Giving Rev. Kurt Lueneburg reported that from 2010-2019 total congregational offerings have increased from \$295 million to just over \$345 million. Over that same period, the percent of congregations' dollars given to CMO has decreased from 7.1% to 6.2%. He also reported that over the past 15 years \$102 million has been given or committed to ministerial education and missions through the WELS endowments, managed by WELS Foundation. It is expected that distributions from these eight endowments will exceed \$1 million in 2021 for the first time.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

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