


The next WELS International Youth Rally—the 50th—will be held in 2024 at Colorado State University. 

LWMS again gathers in person for 59th annual convention

After making the difficult decision in 2021 to hold the 58th annual Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) convention as a virtual event, LWMS was thrilled to again meet in person in Rochester, N.Y., on June 23-26. More than 500 attendees from WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregations joyfully gathered under the theme "Set Free in Christ," based on John 8:32.

"What a joy it was to talk, laugh, sing, and worship together again. We even did some dancing! Our Freedom Circuit hosted an amazing convention, offering our members a time to rejoice in the blessings we have through Christ!" says Ms. Patsy Kramer, LWMS president.

The Rochester gathering contained all of the elements that make the convention such a moving experience, like the annual flag presentation. This year's presentation included a flag from WELS' newest world mission field—the United Kingdom. In addition, attendees were able to speak with missionaries face to face to provide encouragement, fellowship, and prayer.

During presentations, attendees learned about the expanding outreach by WELS' One Latin America mission team using the *Academia Cristo* app and about the continuing growth of

WELS' mission field in East Asia. In addition, home missionaries shared their experiences with outreach in New York and Pennsylvania. There were also two virtual presentations with missionaries from Texas and Germany.

Convention goers were treated to the unique, worshipful sounds of Hope Sacred Steel Orchestra from Hope, Toronto, Canada, which provided entertainment for Saturday evening's banquet in addition to the music for Sunday morning's closing worship service.

Each year, the individual LWMS circuits gather offerings for Home and World Mission projects. This year, more than \$110,000 was collected for WELS Campus Ministry Support and Native American Special Projects. In addition, just over \$50,000 was collected through this year's LWMS kids c.a.r.e. project, supporting gospel outreach to Roma children in Europe.

"The gifts, prayers, and support of LWMS for our mission efforts is tremendous," says Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions. "Beyond the joy and fellowship shared at the convention, our mission families have this very real example of how much members of WELS care for them and the work the Lord is doing through them. That is always a welcome shot in the arm for the important work we have asked them to do."

Next year's convention, the milestone 60th, will be in La Crosse, Wis., June 22-25, 2023. The theme will be "Peace Like a River."

Learn more about LWMS at lwms.org. 

TOGETHER



July 19, 2022

Humanitarian aid grants announced

Rev. Dan Sims, administrator for WELS Christian Aid and Relief, announced its annual grants for humanitarian aid. In contrast to disaster relief, which is given in response to various kinds of disasters when they occur, WELS Christian Aid and Relief also invites Home and World Missions to submit grant requests for various types of humanitarian aid projects as one way to show Christian love and compassion in a variety of ways. Here is his report:

At their May 17, 2022, meeting, members of WELS Christian Aid and Relief approved humanitarian aid grants totaling \$628,480 for FY 22-23. This is the highest amount ever approved. These grants support projects developed by WELS home and world missionaries to reflect Christ's love to the people of their communities. These acts of mercy and compassion regularly lead to opportunities to share the gospel.


Some examples of the compassion ministry being carried out in home and world mission settings include support for legal immigrants; Bibles for foster children and support for their families; books, backpacks, and other school supplies for underprivileged students; horseback riding for disadvantaged and differently abled children; food and personal items for struggling individuals and families; medical clinics; access to clean drinking water; mosquito netting; support for persecuted Christians; education for refugee children; vocational, technological, and agricultural training; scholarships for poor students; smokeless stoves for safer heating and cooking; and warm clothing for widows and orphans.

These Home Missions congregations received grants:

- African Chapel of Improvement, Las Vegas, Nev.
- Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- Christ the Rock, Farmington, N.M.
- Christ, Denver, Colo.
- Carbon Valley, Firestone, Colo.
- Risen Savior, Lakewood Ranch, Fla.
- Amazing Grace, Amarillo, Texas
- Hope, Houston, Texas
- Christ the Rock, Hutto, Texas
- Abiding Savior, Killeen, Texas
- Living Faith, Midlothian Texas
- Our Savior, West San Antonio, Texas

These World Missions fields received grants this year:

- Africa—Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria, and the Central African Medical Mission
- Asia—India, Indonesia, and Thailand
- Europe—Albania and Bulgaria

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 



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

Aid distribution in Ukraine

As Russia continues to wage war against Ukraine, the effort to support WELS' brothers and sisters in Ukraine has been blessed by our Lord Jesus. WELS has received more than \$1.4 million from individuals and groups to support the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC), WELS' sister church body in the Ukraine, and its efforts to help members and others affected by the conflict.

WELS has sent more than \$300,000 in aid to Ukraine. Approximately \$200,000 has been sent to the ULC (as it has requested it) for clothing, food, medicine, and other supplies. About \$100,000 has been sent to Direct Relief, an organization equipped to provide emergency medical supplies to those remaining in Ukraine or who are refugees in Poland. As the conflict continues, and as needs arise, additional funding will be sent. WELS also is anticipating significant rebuilding costs when, Lord willing, the war ends.


Rev. Roger Neumann serves the Board for World Missions as the WELS liaison to Ukraine. He maintains regular contact with ULC leaders and provides updates about how the aid is being used and how doors are opening to share the gospel, even in trying circumstances. These are just a few examples of the many ways people are hearing about the love of Jesus through your gifts.

- ULC Pastor Taras Kokovsky and his wife were asked to visit Latvia by Latvian Lutheran pastors to reach out to Ukrainian refugees who settled there. The goal of the trip is to determine how to best serve them and their spiritual needs, invite them to worship, and tell them about the

ULC, so when they return they might find a church to attend.

- A member of Resurrection Lutheran in Kiev was able to get an additional package of food for a 72-year-old neighbor who is struggling to buy food.
- Liudmyla, a retired member of the ULC church in Kyiv, was having a difficult time getting her medications, and the church was able to supply them for her.
- Food and medical supplies are regularly being distributed to people in need in the communities around ULC congregations.
- After an outpatient hospital in the small town of Bereznehuva was destroyed, a ULC church member who is a dentist there was provided with funds to purchase tools and medicine so that she can help those who need it.
- Bishop Horpynchuk, the head of the ULC, delivered soap, shampoo, toothpaste, detergents, etc., to members and visitors in Kyiv.
- Iryna from Bachmut and Valentyna from Brianka heard about the ULC church and attended worship. They told their stories of how they left home with only a few things and found shelter in Kyiv. Horpynchuk and his congregation shared with them food and drink, detergents and soap, and Christian love.

We thank our heavenly Father for the generous gifts that we've received, for Rev. Neumann's faithful contacts, and for WELS World Missions' partnership with the ULC.

To learn more or to support the relief efforts in Ukraine, visit wels.net/ukraine. 

Teens learn, grow, worship, and serve at latest youth rally

More than 2,200 teens and youth leaders traveled to Knoxville, Tenn., for the 2022 WELS International Youth Rally June 28–July 1 at the University of Tennessee.

The theme for the rally was "Here and Now," inspired by Esther 4:14. Rev. Aaron Robinson, English professor and cultural diversity coordinator at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., and Rev. Jon Bare, who recently accepted a call to be president of Asia Lutheran Seminary, presented the two keynote addresses, which highlighted "Why not us?" and "Why not now?" Additional workshops addressed the challenges young Christians face in today's world.

Worship was a highlight of the rally, with full opening and closing services and daily devotions. "There are no words to describe the feeling you get listening to over two thousand teens sing their praises to Jesus," says Anna Gilgenbach, who served as a rally youth leader for the teens at St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis., a group that included her daughter, Natalie. "I attended the WELS International Youth Rally when I was younger, and I wanted Natalie to experience this as well," she says.

The sheer number of people at the rally taught the teens an important lesson—that they are not alone. "It's very encouraging to see so many other people who believe in Jesus and are part of your synod all together and just celebrating the love of Christ," says Lydia Smith, teen rally attendee.

"It was a perfect experience to learn about God and create really great memories with your friends," says Jordan Shepler, who came with the teen

group from Holy Word, Austin, Texas.

Teens also appreciated the opportunity to serve. WELS Christian Aid and Relief offered a way for teens to get involved right at the rally by putting together care packages for kids in need, first responders, and the homebound.

"I'm amazed at the response from our youth. Don't sell the next generation short of what it can do now," says Rev. Donn Dobberstein, director of WELS Discipleship. "We need to tap into the teens' energy and faith and give them greater permission to act upon the faith that God has given them."

He continues, "There is real concern about the increasing disinterest in church among youth, but then all of a sudden you get this light-bulb moment where God gives you hope. How can you look at an arena filled with 14- to 17-year-olds and not be hopeful? When God says my Word will endure and the gates of hell will not prevail against it, he's talking about teens and the faith that he already has instilled in the hearts and minds of the next generation."

WELS Discipleship plans to take more than half a dozen of the rally's workshops and turn them into resources youth leaders can use at the local congregational level. Sign up to receive updates.

WELS Discipleship introduced a new teen ministry program—WELS Youth Night, a series of youth-focused events for high school students and youth leaders from local WELS congregations. Resources include a keynote address video presentation, small group discussion guides, training for youth leaders, a planning timeline and guide, a promotional media kit, as well as ideas for music and games. Learn more at welscongregationalservices.net/wels-youth-night.