

TOGETHER



October 18, 2022

Conference of Presidents holds its fall 2022 meeting

The Conference of Presidents (COP) met for its fall meeting October 4-7. The COP welcomed two new members, Rev. Daniel Leyrer, president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District, and Rev. Michael Seifert, president of the North Atlantic District.

As a part of its meeting, Rev. James Pope was installed as the new executive editor of *Forward in Christ*. Pope succeeds Rev. John Braun, who is retiring after 15 years in the position.

The COP approved a recommendation to shift the responsibilities of deferred giving counselor Scott Wagner from another district to the Southeastern Wisconsin District. Mr. Wagner has agreed to this change.

Currently there are 155 vacancies in pastoral positions, with 141 of those being in parishes. The remaining positions are in retirement calls (two), foreign mission positions (three), professor positions (five), and other pastorally trained positions (four).

The COP determined that a mechanism will be put in place to facilitate suggestions and questions regarding the restatement on the roles of men and women. A decision will be made at a later date as to whether the statement will be submitted to the 2023 synod convention or whether additional study is beneficial.


The COP heard an initial report from the task force studying teacher shortages. That task force will continue its work. Mr. Jim Rademan, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, also provided an update on the development of a new K-12 religion curriculum. The COP will call someone to lead this project later this year.

Home Missions provided an update on the 100 missions in 10 years effort. Planning is continuing, and the initiative will begin in 2023. World Missions also provided updates on the work our synod is doing in India, Africa, Hong Kong, Thailand, and London. World Missions continues to be the conduit for ongoing relief efforts in Ukraine.

Rev. Jon Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services, introduced a proposal to better utilize the staff members who oversee the work of the various commissions of Congregational Services. A detailed proposal will be presented to the COP at a future meeting.

The COP asked me to appoint a task force to study ways to identify alternatives to Title IV funding (federal student loans and grants) and to explore possible ways to increase financial assistance to students preparing for ministry. The recommendations are intended to be placed before the synod convention in 2023.

The COP approved the creation of a practical, viable, multi-tiered system of professional and ministry certification to support early childhood teachers currently serving in the field. Plans also call for a suite of resources that can be used by early childhood ministries and congregations to better prepare early childhood staffs for teaching in WELS schools.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

Home Missions highlights

It's been a busy fall for WELS Home Missions.

On Sept. 11, three home mission congregations in Texas—Christ Our Refuge, Waco/Hewitt; Our Savior, West San Antonio; and Amazing Grace, Amarillo—launched their first public worship services. Learn more about these services in *Forward in Christ's* November article, "Home missions launch first worship services."

On Sept. 15 and 16, the Board for Home Missions met at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis. The Board for Home Missions is made up of the district mission board chairman and one lay volunteer from each of the 14 home mission districts. This fall, board members spent time going through the requirements for any new home mission or enhancement requests the districts are preparing for the full board's spring meeting. The Board for Home Missions is anticipating requests for about 30 new mission starts and 17 enhancements in the spring.

On Oct. 2, Cross of Christ, North Nampa, Idaho, dedicated its new church building. The North Nampa location is a second-site ministry of Cross of Christ, Boise, Idaho.

On Oct. 10 and 11, the South Central

District held its annual missionaries conference. In addition to 40 missionaries and district mission board members, this year's conference was also attended by three Michigan Lutheran Seminary students who were participating in the high school's Taste of Ministry experience.

On Oct. 16, Zion, Lodi, Wis., launched its first public worship service. Zion is a second-site ministry of Leeds, Wis. Also on Oct. 16, Bethlehem, Richland Center, Wis. (pictured above), dedicated its ministry facility, which houses an intergenerational ministry center and an early childhood center.

"As WELS Home Missions prepares for the official launch of its 100 missions in 10 years initiative in 2023, it's exciting to see all the ministry that God is already blessing," says Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations. "We're committed to aggressively reaching lost souls throughout North America with the gospel—today and in the years to come."

For more information about WELS Home Missions, visit wels.net/homemissions. 

OWLS joyfully gather for its annual conference

The Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) met at the Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center in Onalaska, Wis., on Oct. 10-13 for its annual conference. The conference revolved around the theme "There Is a River," based on Psalm 46:4.

Convention goers were treated to a scenic bus tour of historic La Crosse, Wis., on Tuesday morning. Beginning on Tuesday afternoon, attendees enjoyed worship, fellowship, breakout sessions, and three keynote presentations. Rev. Timothy Redfield, whose daughter, Libby, was born blind, shared his family's personal story and the resources available through the Mission for the Visually Impaired. Rev. Curtiss Seefeldt talked about how to provide emotional and spiritual support for those affected by dementia. Rev. Jon Leach from Truth in Love Ministry spoke about reaching out in love to Mormons.

The OWLS again designated its offerings to support the WELS European Civilian chaplaincy, which serves military personnel and WELS civilians in Europe. This year, the OWLS presented Military Services with a check for \$55,000. Convention offerings and proceeds from the silent auction, which raised a record \$2,564, were directed for next year's gift to the work of the chaplaincy in Europe.

Mr. John Paulsen, OWLS executive director, talks about the appeal of the convention: "We have good

food, excellent fellowship, and great speakers," he says. "Every convention has been so well received. That's why people keep coming back." He adds, "It's like a mini-vacation from the world—and a chance to be with other people who are all trying to share the gospel." Paulsen encourages any congregation with a seniors' ministry to look into the OWLS program because it offers meaningful ways for seniors to gather and serve.

Longtime OWLS members were excited to welcome 25 first-time attendees, like Carol Kolosovsky from St. Paul's, Muskego, Wis. "It was a great joy," Kolosovsky says. "The conference reminded me of the wonderful opportunities, privileges, and blessings that seniors have in God's kingdom." Kolosovsky was also moved by the worship services and fellowship: "Whether it was reconnecting with old friends or making new friends, all of them shared their enthusiasm to share Jesus. I really look forward to meeting them all again someday."

The 2023 OWLS convention for seniors will be held Oct. 10-13 at the Holiday Inn in Stevens Point, Wis. The convention is open to all seniors in WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, regardless of OWLS membership.

Learn more about the OWLS at wels.net/owls. 



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