

TOGETHER

October 17, 2023

Conference of Presidents' fall 2023 meeting

The Conference of Presidents (COP) held its fall meeting on October 3–5. Here is a summary of the matters discussed and decided:

- The COP has begun to carry out a resolution of the synod convention asking for a pastoral brief on the subject of critical theories and justice, issues that are confronting pastors and members in our society today. A pastoral brief is a statement that will provide information and guidance on a specific subject. It is “pastoral” not because it is intended only for pastors, but because the guidance it provides is biblical, evangelical, and pastoral.
- The COP was informed that a task force to address the called worker shortage will be appointed in the coming weeks, as directed by the synod convention. The task force will craft recommendations for a synodwide effort to increase the number of candidates for the public ministry.
- The COP approved a proposal to extend and encourage WELS teaching ministry certification for all early childhood teachers, whether called or hired. The COP also approved a proposal that makes a distinction between synodwide early childhood teacher certification (meaning that such certified teachers are able to be called anywhere) and local teacher certification, which certifies early childhood teachers for service in their own local congregation only.
- The COP is asking the Synodical Council’s Compensation Review Committee to propose an appropriate manner of compensating directors and teachers for increased time commitments and responsibilities involved in early childhood education.
- The Early Childhood Ministry Support Task Force is producing a document as a resource for early childhood education (ECE) leaders, boards, district coordinators, and district presidents to build awareness and give strategies on how to efficiently operate an ECE program while meeting the needs of ECE staff, parents, and children.
- The COP continues to look at ways to improve the guidelines and procedures dealing with the call system.
- The COP extended a call to Rev. Michael Hatzung to serve as a Christian giving counselor in a half-time retirement call. In view of the pastoral shortage, the COP also considered filling a full-time vacant Christian giving counselor position and determined that this call, if possible, should be extended to a qualified layman rather than to a pastor. A notice for nominations for this position was issued last week.
- The COP received reports from the Ministry of Christian Giving, the Commission on Congregational

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- The COP received reports from the Ministry of Christian Giving, the Commission on Congregational

Services, and Communication Services, and was updated on the processes for gathering congregational statistics and Congregation Mission Offering subscriptions.

- The COP is continuing its work on finalizing the restatement of the synod's doctrinal position on male-female roles and relationships.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

Mission work approved in Senegal

The Board for World Missions has approved a plan to send two missionaries to Senegal to learn the culture and language in preparation for sharing the gospel and gathering a congregation.

The country of Senegal has a population of almost 17 million people. The Wolof tribe makes up about 40 to 45 percent of the total population and is less than 0.01 percent Christian. Even though Senegal is an overwhelmingly Muslim country, the constitution staunchly defends freedom of religion and is a relatively peaceful and stable place.


"This would be extremely 'raw' mission work, where we'll be starting gospel outreach from scratch," says Rev. Larry Schlomer, World Missions administrator. "While we do not have an invitation to be in Senegal, we are going because we know these people do not have the gospel."

Schlomer and Mr. Stefan Felgenhauer, director of World Missions Operations,


made an exploratory trip to Dakar in September. They met people from the business community, local charitable organizations, and an international school to determine how easy it is for Americans to live and work in the country. They also connected with a well-respected, cross-cultural learning consultant agency. This agency will serve as a valuable resource moving forward as it'll be able to connect future WELS missionaries with an immersion opportunity to live with a Muslim Wolof family. This opportunity will allow the missionaries to settle into the culture and community, learn the language, meet the people, and seek opportunities to share the gospel.

"This will be a new attempt by WELS to reach into the Muslim world," says Schlomer. "The opportunity for learning, outreach, and immersion in this culture will help us grow in our understanding of Muslim influence. We pray this becomes not only a blessing to the Wolof people but also a resource for future Muslim outreach around the world."

In 2021, world missionaries were tasked with researching where WELS might have the opportunity to plant new world mission fields, with the goal of bringing the gospel to some of the 7,000+ unreached people groups around the world. The Wolof tribe in Senegal was identified as a potential mission field opportunity. Other areas identified include Bangladesh, Dubai, New Zealand, and other U.S. Native American tribes.

Learn more about these locations for future mission work at wels.net/newworldmissionfields. 

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