

Volunteers begin cleanup after Hurricane Michael

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is now coordinating volunteers to help with cleanup and rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Michael. Efforts are primarily focused on Amazing Grace, Panama City, Fla., which was hit directly by the storm.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief quickly mobilized two of its relief trailers after Hurricane Michael struck the Panama City area and began coordinating volunteers to help with the cleanup project, including a group of 10 students from Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn.

“These students had so much energy and enthusiasm,” says Elizabeth Zambo of Christian Aid and Relief. “They gutted the church and parsonage that had been flooded, ripping out drywall and insulation. It was messy work, but they never complained.”

“It was an eye-opening experience,” says Hailey Stade, a sophomore at MLC and a member of Immanuel, Farmington, Wis. “I had no idea what to expect until we crossed the bridge to Panama City. Buildings were flattened. Every tree you saw was on the ground or bent in half. Power lines were all over the sides of streets and sidewalks. Large boats were tipped to their side in the water, and a building was considered

lucky if it even had some of its roof intact.”

“This experience was definitely life changing,” notes Becky Pruss, a junior at MLC and a member at Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wis. “When people who have lost so much still greet you with a smile and genuine conversation, it puts everything in perspective. Our God is definitely greater than the storms that may come our way in life. It really showed me that every day is an opportunity to live your faith.”

Amazing Grace is currently worshiping at a nearby Christian camp facility, and its vacancy pastor, Rev. Jerome Enderle, and his wife are living in rented housing provided by Christian Aid and Relief.

Christian Aid and Relief has provided \$108,000 toward this relief effort to this point, and more grant requests are expected. Monies distributed have been allocated for items such as supplies, building materials, gift cards, and volunteer expenses.

Christian Aid and Relief is partnering with Kingdom Workers’ Builders for Christ as the rebuilding process begins. Builders for Christ provides volunteers with building skills to serve alongside Christian Aid and Relief volunteers. To apply to serve as a volunteer to help with cleanup and relief work through WELS Christian Aid and Relief, visit wels.net/relief and fill out the volunteer form. 

TOGETHER



November 6, 2018

Synodical Council holds fall 2018 meeting

The Synodical Council (SC) held its fall meeting on Friday and Saturday of last week. Here are some of the highlights:

- Larry Schlomer, administrator of the Board for World Missions, provided an overview of the work currently being done in our mission fields around the world, with an emphasis on new opportunities that are presenting themselves. A new opportunity to provide theological training to pastors of the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam will be given high priority.
- A special committee reviewing the WELS Pension Plan presented its recommendations to the SC. The SC asked the committee to study additional options and hopes a pension plan design will be prepared for consideration by the 2020 district conventions and ready for action at the 2021 synod convention.
- Scott Neitzel was appointed to the WELS Foundation Board of Directors.
- The Church Extension Fund (CEF) reported healthy net asset, liquidity, and cash flow numbers. Overall loan volume has been lighter than normal this year, but it is picking up in recent months. Total investments in the CEF have increased. Because of healthy net asset levels, the CEF was able to provide a special grant of \$1 million to Home Missions. The WELS Foundation also reported strong financial results, enabling a transfer of its unrestricted net assets to support WELS ministries.
- Communications Services and Northwestern Publishing House are studying how to boost readership of *Forward in Christ* magazine as well as increase the number of subscriptions.
- The Ministry of Christian Giving, with the approval of the Conference of Presidents and in coordination with WELS World Missions, is conducting a special offering from December through June to build and operate a theological training center for Hmong outreach in Vietnam. Rev. Kurt Lueneburg also outlined the joint plans of Martin Luther College, the Conference of Presidents, and Ministry of Christian Giving to increase recruitment of future called workers, to provide additional financial assistance to those training for ministry at MLC, and to build a new dormitory at the college. This “Equipping Christian Witnesses” effort will be launched at the 2019 synod convention.



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- Operating fund expenses for the fiscal year that ended June 30 were \$700,000 less than planned due to unfilled positions and lower than planned expenses in the president's areas, technology, facilities, and finance, as well as lower health care costs.
- Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) totaled \$21.2 million for the last fiscal year, which was \$102,000 less than planned. Increased CMO for the coming year will be vital to ensure that ministries can be maintained at their current levels.
- The Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF) ended the year with a balance of \$14.6 million. In view of that balance, the SC had previously approved the expenditure of \$400,000 toward items on the unfunded priority list adopted by the 2017 convention. Spending projections for the current year and the next biennium drop the balance more than \$2 million below the \$10 million minimum target for the FSF. In February, the SC will consider changes to spending levels to ensure that the balance in the FSF is maintained at a healthy level.
- A preliminary Ministry Financial Plan (budget) was reviewed by the SC; a final plan will be adopted in February or April and brought as a recommendation to the 2019 synod convention.
- All four synodical schools experienced increases in their net assets due to increased enrollments, increased gifts, correction of accounting errors, and lower than expected expenses. A budgetary shortfall at Michigan Lutheran Seminary (due primarily to lower than planned enrollment and lower than planned gifts from the Tomorrow's Ministry Begins Here campaign) was addressed by reallocating funds within the special funds and the operating budget of the Board of Ministerial Education. The SC also approved the replacement of bleachers at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, to be funded by the MLS Foundation; authorized Luther Preparatory School to do preliminary planning for a possible music auditorium; and a multi-year project for the replacement of HVAC controllers at MLC.
- WELS' independent auditors issued an unmodified or clean opinion, the best possible, on WELS Consolidated Financial Statements for the 2017-18 fiscal year.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 

Hundreds gather to celebrate 125 years of Apache mission work

Over 1,200 attended the Apache 125th anniversary celebration at Peridot Lutheran church and school, Peridot, Ariz., Oct. 26–28.

The event commemorated the 125th anniversary of WELS World Missions work in the Apache reservations of Arizona.

Since its humble beginnings in 1893, the Apache ministry has grown, now serving over 3,600 people in a variety of ways. Five missionaries, two Apache pastors, and one Apache evangelist serve the nine congregations on the reservations. The Apache Christian Training School (ACTS) provides education and resources to prepare leaders for sharing God's Word on the reservations and beyond. Two schools serve over 275 students, giving them a foundational Christian education. These are just a few of the services for which attendees gave thanks at the celebration last month.

To begin the celebration, visitors spent Fri., Oct. 26, touring the San Carlos and White Mountain Apache reservations, admiring the nine WELS churches. This included Peridot Lutheran church and school, where the first missionaries, John Plocher and George Adascheck, began to share the gospel message of Jesus Christ among the Apache people.

Plocher's great-grandson, Andrew, principal and teacher at Emmaus, Phoenix, Ariz., attended the anniversary and expressed thanks for all the people who came to the reservation to celebrate. When Plocher was asked what he thinks his great-grandfather would say about the celebration, he said, "He would just praise God."

On Saturday, Rev. Gary Lupe, Gethsemane, Cibecue, Ariz., hosted visitors in Peridot as they enjoyed traditional Apache food and crafts. Rev. Dr. William Kessel and Rev. Eric Hartzell gave two historical presentations. Photos and artifacts

from across the mission's 125-year history were displayed along with information about future outreach plans for Native Christians.

A special worship service followed that evening at San Carlos High School. Choirs from the reservations' churches led the visitors in worship. WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder gave the service's closing lesson.

"Humanly speaking, the initial efforts to reach the Apache nation with the gospel seemed to be an impossible task," says Schroeder, reflecting after the event. "Now, 125 years later, the Apache people are still hearing the good news, are still having their faith nourished, and are still thankful for those who brought the gospel to them."

On Sunday, all of the reservations' congregations joined together to hold seven "Rally Day" worship services.

"The most encouraging thing about the work among the Apache people is that they are recognizing that the work of missions and ministry belongs to them," says Schroeder. "While we are still there to help and assist, it is gratifying that the Apache people are embracing the idea of training members of their tribe to serve as pastors and teachers, looking ahead to the day when all called workers on the reservation will be Apache."

Learn more about the Apache mission and its work at nativechristians.org.

Learn more about WELS Missions at wels.net/missions. 