

10 years from graduation were in attendance. In more recent years, the event has extended invitations to pastors and wives celebrating 3 years, 25 years and 35 years since graduation. With continued success, Grow is Grace is excited to extend the invitation to pastors and wives who are celebrating one of these key ministry milestones next year. The 2020 retreats are set to take place in San Antonio from April 15–17, 2020. 

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WELS has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/welslutherans

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twitter.com/welstweets

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Moving forward with the Vietnam opportunity

WELS members have responded overwhelmingly to the opportunity that God has given our synod in Vietnam. Gifts have been received from hundreds of congregations and individuals, totaling half of what is needed to support the building project and ministry training costs for a two-year period.

The Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam (HFC), a church body with approximately 100,000 members, has asked WELS to provide theological training for its pastors. Their leaders and several dozen pastors have been receiving instruction from WELS pastors for about three years. They have concluded that we are teaching biblical truth and have embraced the teachings of the Lutheran church. They want to be a Lutheran church body. With the permission—and even encouragement—of the Vietnamese government, the HFC has invited WELS to establish a theological training school where eventually all their pastors will receive thorough instruction and pastoral training.

Due to the generous outpouring of support, the first concrete step in making this plan a reality was taken two weeks ago. I, along with Board for World Missions Administrator Rev. Larry Schlomer and Director of Missions Operations Mr. Sean Young, traveled to Vietnam to sign a memorandum of understanding with Vietnamese religious officials and with the leaders of the Hmong Fellowship Church. This agreement enables our synod to secure the use of a four-acre parcel of land on the outskirts of Hanoi and to begin construction of the planned theological training school. Details are now being worked out, and we hope that construction will begin in the near future. Gifts received so far have enabled us to secure the land and will make it possible to build the school. We pray that additional gifts will provide the means to operate the school with WELS instructors.

We do not know where this effort will eventually lead. What we do know is that we have been given an amazing opportunity that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago. As we begin down this road, we do so realizing the risks, but also with our eyes of faith focused on the grace and promises of God and the opportunity he is giving us to proclaim the saving gospel in a place where it has been rarely heard. To God be the glory!

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder

To learn more about this special opportunity in Vietnam, visit wels.net/vietnamhmongoutreach. 

2019 Book of Reports and Memorials available online

The 2019 Book of Reports and Memorials is now available online. This book summarizes the activities of each WELS area of ministry over the last year and contains the proposed ministry financial plan for the next biennium. The information in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* will help guide the 400 delegates at WELS' 65th biennial convention, which is being held at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., July 29–Aug. 1, under the theme “For the Generations to Come.”

“This theme emphasizes the privilege and responsibility that we have to hold on to God’s saving truth for ourselves and to pass it down to those who will come after us,” says WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder. “Convention worship, essays, and decisions will focus on that theme and highlight the challenges and privileges we will have as we carry out the mission that God has given to us.”

Schroeder also notes that major items for consideration at the 2019 convention include the proposed ministry financial plan (budget) for 2019–21, the recognition of full fellowship with two Lutheran church bodies, and the plans for a concerted effort to assist congregations to remain spiritually healthy.

Twenty memorials are also included in the *Book of Reports and Memorials*. A memorial is a formal

request to the synod convention for specific action.

One printed copy of the *Book of Reports and Memorials* is being mailed to each delegate, congregation, and male called worker. These printed copies should arrive before the end of May.

To view the online version of the *Book of Reports and Memorials*, visit wels.net/2019synodconvention and look under “Key convention documents.”

Taste and learn how the Word is spread

WELS Missions will be hosting its first ever “Taste of Missions” event, July 13, 2019, 12-5 p.m., at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. WELS families are invited to attend this new opportunity to fellowship with WELS missionaries and families, sample ethnic cuisine from WELS mission fields, and learn more about WELS home, world, and joint mission work.

This family-friendly event will include meet-and-greet opportunities with missionaries, presentations from home and world missions, informative displays about WELS mission fields, a question-and-answer panel discussion, and more activities for the whole family. The day will conclude with a worship service celebrating the blessings of WELS mission work at 4 p.m.

Director of Missions Operations Mr. Sean Young says, “We are excited to be able to offer this opportunity

for our members. This is the second year that missionaries and their families have had a reunion, and this year, we wanted to invite our entire family in Christ for an opportunity to learn more about the exciting mission opportunities they’re supporting.”

Several home and world missionaries and mission representatives are lined up to participate in the event, including Rev. Larry Schlomer, World Missions administrator; Rev. Timothy Flunker, Home Mission counselor; Rev. Luis Acosta, cross-cultural home mission pastor; Rev. Paul Nitz, missionary to Malawi; Rev. Rob Siirila, Asia Lutheran Seminary professor; Rev. Mike Duncan, friendly counselor to South Asia; Rev. Nathan Schulte, Latin America missionary; Rev. Nathan Seiltz, Multi-Language Publications director; and more.

Registration is now open. The cost is \$5 per person; children under five are free. Learn more, view a full itinerary, and register online at wels.net/tasteofmissions2019.

Pastors mark ministry milestones at retreat

Another successful year of retreats is complete. From April 24–26, Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., hosted more than 200 people for the eighth annual Celebration of Ministry retreats.

Held at the Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas, four retreats ran

simultaneously for pastors and their wives who were celebrating 3, 10, 25, and, new to this year, 35 years since graduating from the seminary.

These retreats build relationships with ministry peers and offer encouragement through worship, Bible studies, workshops, and presentations. Bible study topics covered Lessons at the Burning Bush, Philippians, 1 Peter, and Colossians. Separate and joint workshops were offered for pastors and wives and covered topics such as time management, caring for others and yourself, focusing on your own gifts, and financial challenges and opportunities.

Though these workshops and Bible studies are a key part of the retreats, fellowship with classmates, worship services, and a beautiful location also play a part in the experience.

Attendee Rev. Galen Riediger, who’s marking 25 years since graduating, shares, “The best parts were getting to spend time away, relax, getting to spend time in the Word, talk back and forth between husband and wife, and just think about things that busyness keeps you from thinking about.” Riediger’s wife, Susan, follows up with, “I like getting to spend time in the Word with my husband; he’s busy! We don’t get to do that together as much as we’d like. It’s been a blessing to take a step back and do that together.”

When Grow in Grace initially began the Celebration of Ministry retreats, only pastors and wives celebrating