

**TOGETHER**

August 4, 2020

Mr. Sean Young, director of WELS Missions operations, was also thrilled with the number of Taste and See website visitors, totaling over 9,300. He says, "I thought we'd get a few thousand views. But from the opening service to the final day, God again demonstrated that we can't pray audaciously enough! He continues to be glorified in the work his church on earth is able to do."

Even during a pandemic, God advances his kingdom. Through Taste and See, God moved the hearts of his people to contribute the largest service offering to date for an LWMS convention: \$72,925.

"I am blown away at the generosity of my fellow believers and their love for spreading the good news about Jesus," says Natsis. She and the LWMS board extend their gratitude to all who participated to support WELS mission work: "Thank you for making this time of uncertainty about the virus a time of rejoicing instead. God is good!"

Visit [welstasteandsee.com](http://welstasteandsee.com) to view more than 80 videos and additional resources from the event. The website also includes a handy checklist of available videos, which will remain online for at least a year. 

## Supporting WELS mission work through endowments


Thanks to the generosity of God's people, WELS Foundation has been blessed to distribute \$3.1 million from more than 350 endowments through its endowment program this

year. Areas that benefited from the distributions include WELS missions, ministerial education schools, congregations, and other WELS-affiliated ministries.

One of those WELS-affiliated ministries that was blessed through endowment distributions was the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS).

Since 2015, WELS Foundation has distributed over \$26,000 to LWMS through two endowment funds. The annual distributions support WELS mission opportunities as selected by the LWMS board of directors. The monies are distributed above and beyond the annual mission collections of members and increase the impact of LWMS giving.

The endowment distributions also allow LWMS to address any immediate needs of WELS missions. For example, a July 2020 endowment fund distribution of \$7,976 was donated to support WELS Campus Ministry, in conjunction with its 100th anniversary.

To learn more about adding to an existing endowment or setting up an endowment for a ministry close to your heart, contact your local WELS Christian giving counselor at [wels.net/giving-counselors](http://wels.net/giving-counselors). To learn more about WELS Foundation, visit [wels.net/foundation](http://wels.net/foundation).her WELS-affiliated ministries. 

## WELS Center for Mission and Ministry deals with COVID-19


Congregations throughout the synod have been making many adjustments to their worship and ministry ever since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Even though many of us expected things to have returned to normal by now, that is not the case. Government mandates and advisories continue to have a varying impact on WELS congregations and schools. But, true to their mission, they continue to proclaim the saving gospel, and God's people continue to worship in spite of the obstacles.

Similar challenges have affected the work of the synod. In synodical and district activities, as well at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM), our synod's headquarters in Waukesha, changes have had to be made.

Throughout the synod, all large gatherings, including district conventions, were cancelled this summer. In-person meetings were replaced with virtual online meetings whenever possible. The workers at the CMM were initially given the option of working at home if the nature of their work permitted it. When the lockdown was declared, all employees were required to work remotely. When the lockdown ended, employees returned to the office in two phases, first with 50 percent returning and then two weeks later with all back to in-person work.

Now things have changed again. Here in Wisconsin, the governor recently issued a statewide mask mandate. Workers at the CMM are complying with this mandate, wearing masks in all public areas. We continue the policy of no meetings or gatherings in the building; individual visitors are allowed in the CMM only by personal appointment.

The policies governing meetings and other activities at the CMM are under constant review, with the next re-evaluation scheduled for Aug. 12. At that time, we will be determining whether meetings scheduled for this fall at the CMM can take place. We pray for a time when things can return completely to normal—for our synod and for our entire country. In the meantime, we continue to place our trust in God's protecting and gracious care.

Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder 



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit [wels.net/together](http://wels.net/together).

## New school year brings difficult decisions

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**W**ELS schools around the country were faced with the difficult job this summer of determining what school is going to look like in the fall, after the 2019–20 school year ended with online classes because of shutdowns due to the pandemic.

With 436 WELS schools serving over 42,000 students in 33 states—some with minimal numbers of COVID-19 cases and some considered “hot spots”—plans will differ across the country. But one thing is sure: “Sept. 1, 2020, is going to look different than Sept. 1, 2019, in every single one of our schools,” says Mr. James Rademan, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS).

While each plan will look different—with schools talking about in-person vs. virtual learning (or a combination of the two), face coverings, size of classes, social distancing, extracurriculars, disinfecting stations, and additional cleaning—Rademan says that the mindset he has seen from WELS schools as they determine how to proceed is remarkably similar: “Each one of the schools is really concerned about the safety of their students and their staff while trying to balance what is going to be best overall for the development of the children.”

Most WELS schools—including Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School (KML), Jackson, Wis. and Arizona Lutheran Academy (ALA), Phoenix, Ariz.—are planning to start the year meeting face-to-face at school. “Christian education is way more than just teaching in the classrooms,” says Mr. Jamie Luehring, principal at Kettle Moraine. “It’s the interactions the teachers have with the students, the mentorships, the

friendships, the support. You cannot do that as well virtually no matter how hard you try.”

That decision to start with in-person classes was not made in a vacuum. For both schools, it meant sending out a survey to parents and meeting with teachers during the summer to get opinions on the best options moving forward. “We believe parents need to be in the driver’s seat,” says Luehring. “We want to work with them to come up with the best solutions for their kids.”

But the collaboration went even further. Mr. Kurt Rosenbaum, principal at ALA, said that when their school’s task force began meeting in June, they looked closely at recommendations for reopening sent out by the Arizona Department of Education. He is in constant contact with the local health department to keep up with the latest health regulations. Representatives from all 26 WELS area Lutheran high schools and the two synod prep schools also met virtually multiple times this summer to offer ideas, support, encouragement, and prayers for one another as they determined the best plans for their schools.

For both ALA and KML, the majority of the parents supported in-person classes, “but we knew that there would be some families who would want to start slowly,” says Rosenbaum. To support those students and families, both schools are offering online classes as well. “We’re trying to be all things for all people,” says Luehring. “We understand everyone is in a different situation and we don’t want to lose those kids for the sake of the gospel.” Online classes will also offer an option for international students who may not be able to get back to campuses for the start of the school year.

“There are so many people with differing opinions; there needs to be a loving response to one another,” says Luehring. “As a loving Christian family, we are going to try to work through this together.”

In the end, “flexibility” may be the key word. “Most schools are developing two or three plans and are recognizing the need to be able to pivot based on the circumstances,” says Rademan. The Commission on Lutheran Schools is offering support, encouragement, and direction to WELS schools, while not prescribing any one direction. “We are encouraging them to follow CDC and local health department guidelines and to work with the resources in their community and the schools that are in close proximity to them,” says Rademan.

Some schools in “hot spot” locations—such as southern California—may have no choice but to start virtually. “You can plan and plan and plan, but you don’t know what will happen three days before school starts,” says Rademan. “It’s a time to use the gifts the Lord has given us and trust in the Lord. The path is going to be the path he’s seeking for us to take at this time.”

Available resources from CLS can be found at [cls.welsrc.net](https://cls.welsrc.net). 

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## 57th annual LWMS convention goes virtual

**S**ince 1964, the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society (LWMS) has faithfully hosted annual conventions, gathering to joyfully praise God and support WELS mission work. The year 2020 was to be no exception. Plans were well underway for the 57th annual convention in Athens, Ga., in June. The theme, “2020 Vision for

Missions,” was chosen, and hours of planning were already complete.

Then the coronavirus pandemic swept the globe, and for the first time in 57 years, LWMS made the difficult but necessary decision to cancel its in-person convention.

“The decision to cancel was agonizing,” recalls LWMS president Mrs. Cynthia Natsis. “But by the end of April, it became obvious that travel and staying in hotels would be dangerous to our members.”

Despite its deep disappointment, the LWMS team adapted to the situation. If people couldn’t come to the convention, LWMS would bring the convention to them—by way of technology.

Through a partnership with WELS Missions, the LWMS convention was combined with WELS Taste of Missions—another in-person event that was cancelled due to the pandemic. “Taste and See,” the combined virtual event, was born. LWMS and WELS Missions staff brainstormed how to offer key elements of both events in an engaging and interactive online format.

On June 27, the Taste and See virtual event launched. For two weeks, thousands of WELS members worldwide tuned in to view the opening and closing worship services, “Moments with Missionaries” videos, recipe tutorials from around the globe, the commissioning of new missionaries, and the inspiring LWMS flag presentation. Viewers even hosted “watch parties” for the opening and closing services.

Natsis is simply in awe of how God blessed the event. “Due to the new format, we were able to reach so many more people than if we had held it in person,” she says.