

TOGETHER

January 10, 2023

Conference of Presidents' January 2023 meeting

The Conference of Presidents (COP) held its winter meeting Jan. 3-6, 2023, with all members present. Items addressed include the following:

- The COP has begun planning for the 2023 synod convention. The convention will be held July 31-Aug. 3 at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Mich. The convention theme will be "Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown." The essayist for the convention will be Rev. Phil Hirsch. Rev. James Huebner will preach for the opening service. The convention will discuss and adopt the synod's two-year ministry financial plan (budget), declare and recognize fellowship with the Obadiah Lutheran Synod from Uganda and the Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional from Latin America. Several bylaw changes will be considered, and reports will be presented by all areas of ministry and synod entities.
- A committee will soon be appointed to plan for the 2025 celebration of the 175th anniversary of the synod's founding in 1850.
- The COP was informed by Christian Family Solutions of the growing need for Christian counselors. Further discussion will take place on how this might be accomplished.
- The COP discussed the best way to move forward with the study and discussion of the restatement of the synod's doctrinal statement on the roles of men and women. Further discussion will take place at the COP's March meeting.
- A special task force has been exploring practical ways for congregations to provide support and encouragement for early childhood teachers and directors. These suggestions will be promoted by district presidents in the months ahead as they have the opportunity.
- The COP discussed the potential impact of new federal executive regulations regarding transgender "affirming" issues on our synod, congregations, and schools. We are thankful that the U.S. Supreme Court has dealt with similar issues by upholding the principles of religious liberty, but we need to be prepared to respond if the government attempts to force us to act against the scriptural principles on which we stand.
- The COP will recommend to the synod convention that the Publication Coordinating Commission be disbanded, since the work it did is now being carried out by other entities.
- A special task force appointed by the COP studied ways to improve the ability of called workers to express how their gifts for ministry might be used. The task force maintained that it is important for the church and

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- her called workers to encourage and instill an attitude of “Here am I; send me!” At the same time, called workers at times may wish to express their concerns about how their talents can best be used in the kingdom. The task force believes that we have existing structures in place (district presidents, circuit pastors, congregational leaders, etc.) for workers to express those concerns in a way that continues both to honor the divinity of the call and acknowledge sanctified human judgment to make best use of the talents and gifts of called workers.
- The COP reviewed the number of vacancies for pastor-trained positions. That number continues to grow, reminding us of the need not only for increased recruitment of young men but also of the need for men serving in other careers to consider the pastoral ministry as a second career.
- The COP called Mr. Sean Young to serve as a Christian giving counselor for the Northern Wisconsin District and Mr. Terry Helton to serve as a Christian giving counselor for the Michigan and North Atlantic Districts.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

Lutheran leadership focus in 2023

In 2023, *Forward in Christ* (FIC) will include a special focus on Lutheran leadership. Each issue will contain features, editorials, or news stories that share insights and ideas to help and encourage readers as they strive to be Lutheran leaders in their congregations, homes, and communities.

Attendees of the 2023 WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership, being held Jan. 16–18 in Chicago, may recognize some topics and authors.


“Our goal is to build on the information presented at the conference, allowing those who attended an opportunity to continue to grow and offering those who couldn’t make it a chance to access expert knowledge on multiple topics involving Lutheran leadership,” says Rev. James Pope, FIC’s executive editor.

January’s FIC highlights Lutheran Leadership conference presenters’ views on what Lutheran leadership means to them.

Upcoming topics include:


- February: How to strengthen ministry teams.
- March: Congregational health: What matters and what doesn’t.
- April: How to be an effective Christian leader in your vocation.

Look for the Lutheran leadership icon to identify related articles.

Find articles and related materials online at forwardinchrist.net/lutheran-leadership. 

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