

Thoughts on the recent synod convention

The format was different, but the purpose and results were unchanged.

The 66th Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod was held at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., on July 26-28. Last January, the potential restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic led the Conference of Presidents to alter the format and location of the convention. The location was moved from Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., to Luther Preparatory School because of the more stringent restrictions existing in Michigan at the time. The format was changed to include about 20 percent of the delegates as in-person delegates, with the remaining delegates participating virtually. Elections and floor committee work was done via videoconference prior to the convention.

All things considered, the convention itself took place without significant problems with communication or participation by the virtual delegates.

The opening worship provided an inspiring start to the convention and focused on the convention theme "Here we stand." The convention theme recalled the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's bold stance on the Scriptures at the Diet of Worms in 1521. Rev. Joel Voss, second vice president of the synod, preached the sermon.

Some significant items of business that were addressed:

- Rev. James Huebner was reelected to another four-year term as the first vice president of the synod; Rev. Robert Pasbrig was reelected as the synod's recording secretary.
- President Earle Treptow of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary delivered the convention essay reviewing the significance of Luther's confession and its importance for the church today.
- The convention approved the synod's Ministry Financial Plan, which outlines the financial support for the work of the synod for the next two years. Chief Financial Officer Mr. Kyle Egan also reported that the synod ended last year in very good financial shape in all areas.
- The proposed change in the synod's pension plan from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan was approved and will be implemented on Jan. 1, 2022.
- The convention endorsed an ambitious plan by the Board for Home Missions to open 100 new missions over ten years, beginning in 2023.
- The convention was introduced to the new WELS hymnal and formally adopted it as the synod's hymnal. The new hymnal will be available in early fall.

Many other reports outlined and celebrated the many blessings that God has graciously given to our synod during the past two years and the many opportunities he is giving us for continuing to spread the message of Christ to the world.

The next convention is scheduled to be held at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., in 2023.

Find all the convention news, archived livestream video, and photos at wels.net/2021synodconvention.

Serving with you in Christ,

WELS President Mark Schroeder 

WELS celebrates milestone in endowments program

This year WELS Ministry of Christian Giving and WELS Foundation are celebrating 16 years of God's blessings—and the generosity of God's people—through the WELS endowment funds.

In 2005, synod convention delegates prayerfully considered how WELS could help support gospel ministry in a predictable and ever-increasing manner. One answer was to establish the WELS endowments, which benefit the Lord's work in WELS Home, World, and Joint Missions and at our four ministerial education schools. Out of gratitude for God's love and a desire to help more people know Jesus as their Savior, WELS members have faithfully contributed to these endowments over the last 16 years, resulting in more than \$100 million in gifts received (\$36.7 million) and expected (\$68.9 million).

"We praise Jesus for guiding our synod's plans and prompting our members' gifts so that we're now able to distribute more than \$1 million from these endowments for greater tuition assistance for ministerial education students and the funding of mission work to people groups located both in the U.S. and in foreign fields," says Rev. Kurt

Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving.

In addition to the two synod endowments, WELS Foundation also manages endowments that are set up by individuals, congregations, and other WELS ministries. In total, WELS Foundation distributed \$3.5 million to gospel work from more than 350 endowments this year, providing ongoing financial support for gospel work throughout WELS.

One of the endowments managed by WELS Foundation was established by WELS members David and Lynette Buss, longtime supporters of Jesus' work through their local congregation and area Lutheran high school. "We read an article about Martin Luther College in a flyer from WELS," says David, "and we knew we needed to distribute [our blessings] to people in the ministry field." The Busses are helping reduce the burden of tuition costs for students so they can focus on training for the ministry.

The Busses understand that an endowment fund is an ideal way to support MLC students for years to come. "This fund will grow as long

as we are on this earth, and it will continue to grow and help hundreds of students in future years," says David.

"An endowment is a great way to create a lasting legacy of Christian faith while carrying out the Lord's work," says Mr. Jim Holm, executive director of WELS Foundation, "and there are a variety of ways to set up an endowment: cash or appreciated assets; or through a will, trust, beneficiary designation on a retirement account, or insurance proceeds."

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 or call 800-827-5482.


WELS Historical Institute celebrates 40 years

The WELS Historical Institute will be marking 40 years of preserving WELS history at an event Sept. 25, 2021, at Salem, Milwaukee, Wis. Salem Landmark Church, the synod's museum run by the WELS Historical Institute, is located on Salem Lutheran Church's property.

The event, beginning at 1 p.m., will open with a message from WELS President Mark Schroeder. In addition, the event will feature a panel discussion with former WELS Historical Institute presidents; a presentation by Prof. John Brenner, the current editor of the Institute's journal; a cemetery or

Salem Landmark Museum tour; a presentation on the history of the Institute; and a hymn sing.

"This event demonstrates our synod's commitment to appreciating the way the Lord has blessed our congregations, schools, and other organizations and used them to promote the gospel of our Lord," says Mr. Dan Nommensen, vice chairman of the WELS Historical Institute. "I pray this event will lead us to see how dedicated volunteers have overseen the process of preserving our past so we can celebrate our blessings and appreciate how the Lord continues to lead us through challenges."

Nommensen says the event is open to "anyone who desires to learn more about our history and how we have sought to preserve and present the story of God's grace in our WELS." The event will be livestreamed. Find out more at wels.net/events. 



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