

TOGETHER

March 15, 2022

Momentous Purpose," which will examine how God places his people right where he needs them right when he needs them to serve.

Additional workshops address the challenges young Christians face in today's world, with topics such as "Superhero Training: Bystander Intervention Strategies," "Where's God When . . . Responding to Faith Challenges," and "Creating Mental Health Resilience: Strategies for Thriving in a Stressful World." Dobberstein says some of the workshops will be recorded so they can be used as resources for youth ministry in the future.

So far, in the first week of registration, hundreds of people have already registered for the rally. Rally organizers are anticipating about 2,000 attendees. Registration runs March 8–May 31. The cost is \$375 if groups register by April 30 and \$395 from May 1–31.

Learn more about the workshops, recreational excursions, and the rally—and register—at wels.net/youthrally.

Grants available to help more people hear the Word


WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MDHH), part of the Commission on Special Ministries, is offering \$500 grants toward the installation of a hearing loop to WELS/Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregations that apply for it. MDHH is

also able to point congregations toward additional research, contacts, and other resources around hearing loops.

MDHH reports that hearing the spoken word in a church setting continues to be a struggle for people dealing with hearing loss. They may miss a phrase that would have been the exact thing their heart needed that day. Or they may choose to stop coming to church because they are frustrated or discouraged by the amount of effort required to catch the full message.

Modern technology has solutions to alleviate this problem. One of these is to install hearing loops in churches. A hearing loop works with people's hearing aids to provide a clearer sound directly into their ears. MDHH is encouraging congregations to consider a looping project by offering a grant to help fund it. If a congregation is planning or has already begun any kind of building or renovation project, this is an especially great time to consider installing a loop.

If your congregation is interested in installing a loop in your sanctuary, contact mdhh@wels.net for more information.

Learn more about the Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at wels.net/mdhh. 

Pray for Ukraine

The situation for our brothers and sisters in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC) remains dire. We thank God that none of the pastors or members have lost their lives, but at least some members report that their homes have been destroyed. Some of the pastors and members have relocated to places that are relatively safe and removed from the heavy fighting, but others remain in areas where military activity is taking place every day. We continue to pray for their safety.

Last weekend, several ULC congregations—even some in areas controlled by foreign forces—were able to hold worship services either in person or virtually. God's Word continues to be proclaimed even in the middle of a terrible war.

Rev. V'yacheslav Horpynchuk, the bishop of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, has been in regular contact via Zoom with Rev. Roger Neumann, the WELS liaison to the ULC. I am also able to communicate with the bishop. Pastor Neumann has been providing daily updates on the situation as reported by Bishop Horpynchuk.

WELS members have already been very generous with gifts intended to support relief and humanitarian efforts both for members of the ULC and for the refugees and local citizens in need of help. We thank all those who have given gifts for Ukraine relief. Those gifts are being channeled through WELS World Missions, which remains in contact with the ULC and is still able to transfer funds. To date, \$125,000 has been sent by World Missions. You can give a gift by going to wels.net/give-ukraine.


Missionary Luke Wolfgramm and his wife, Jennifer, who were living in Novosibirsk, Russia, have safely exited the country. They are currently staying in Durres, Albania, where Luke is providing continuing education to leaders of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Albania, WELS' sister church. From there they maintain regular contact with the three national pastors in Russia, encourage the Russian Lutheran Church's leadership and 270 members, and continue online seminary training. The Wolfgramms will be returning to the United States this summer for regularly scheduled meetings and family time. Depending on how events unfold, they will most likely relocate to another location in Europe to partner with sister church bodies in their theological education and outreach efforts.

This entire tragic drama is another stark reminder of the wickedness and depravity that infects the human soul. And yet, even in these darkest of days, we remain confident that the Lord of lords is still ruling with his grace and power. We pray for an end to the war. We pray that God would preserve the lives of his believers



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in Ukraine, as well as the lives of all the citizens of Ukraine. With confidence in his promises, we commend them all to his gracious care and protection.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

New locations for cross-cultural outreach

One of the primary focuses of WELS Joint Missions is supporting people group ministries, where immigrants who have joined our fellowship in the United States and Canada are able to take the gospel back to friends and family in their country of origin. WELS currently supports 14 Hispanic ministries, 5 Hmong ministries, 4 African ministries, and single Korean, Chinese, Muslim, Vietnamese, and Hindu ministries throughout North America. Six additional mission churches are considered multicultural ministries, which means that more than two different cultures are being served. Many of these people group ministries have opened doors to new world mission work around the globe.

At a recent meeting, the Joint Mission Council approved financial support for two additional locations. Rev. Paul Prange, chairman of the Joint Mission Council, shares, "We are just grateful for the opportunities we have to support these fine people who are often working under difficult circumstances. Their optimism about the importance of the gospel is inspiring, and their willingness to work with us is humbling."

New Sudanese Mission— Phoenix, Ariz.

In 2020, Rev. Simon Duoth graduated from the Pastoral Studies Institute and was assigned to conduct Sudanese

outreach full time in the Pacific Northwest District. When unforeseen family circumstances forced the Duoth family to move to Phoenix, Ariz., conversations began between the Pacific Northwest and the Arizona-California district mission boards about the opportunity to plant a new Sudanese ministry in the area. Research shows that 4,000 Sudanese people live in the city. It was then discovered that a WELS church, Emmaus, was only four blocks away from a Sudanese cultural center. Emmaus' church leadership is willing and excited to offer its church as a worship center as Duoth begins outreach.

God is also continuing to provide for Sudanese outreach in the Pacific Northwest. A member and longtime evangelist in the current Sudanese congregation located at Divine Peace in Renton, Wash., is stepping up to serve as leader of the church. He will begin training in the Pastoral Studies Institute as he leads Sudanese ministry in the area.

Mission Enhancement— Las Vegas, Nev.

The Korean Fellowship Lutheran Church, served by Korean Pastor Rev. Taesang Kim, is self-supporting and shares a campus with Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nev. Recently, Rev. Youngha Kim and his wife, Margaret, retired to the Las Vegas area. Youngha Kim was trained at Bethany Lutheran

Seminary (Evangelical Lutheran Synod's seminary) and has previously served in Korean ministry in the U.S. and in South Korea. Funding will allow the Korean Fellowship Lutheran Church to call Youngha Kim to reconnect with the elderly and retirees after the pandemic, freeing up Taesang Kim's time to engage with Korean teenagers and young professionals.

Learn more about WELS Joint Missions at wels.net/jointmissions. 

2022 WELS International Youth Rally registration underway

Registration has opened for the 2022 WELS International Youth Rally, June 28–July 1, University of Tennessee—Knoxville. Usually held every other year, this will be the first rally since 2018, as the 2020 event was canceled due to COVID-19.

The rally is open to all WELS teens heading into their freshman year of high school through seniors graduating this spring. Youth from around North America will gather for group worship, small workshops, and recreation and fellowship.

The first ever WELS youth rally was in 1974; in nearly 50 years there has never been a four-year gap between events. "This is the longest we've ever gone without a rally," says Rev. Donn Dobberstein, director of WELS Discipleship.

Dobberstein says this rally is going to be really important for two reasons. First, it's bringing together teens to help them realize the church of God is so much larger than individual WELS congregations—where the

average weekly worship attendance is at 70. Second, it's an opportunity for the youth leaders to connect and share ideas.

Jennifer Wockenfuss will be attending as a youth leader for a group of 17 teens from Messiah in Nampa, Idaho. She says, "We are in the heart of Mormon country so most of our kids are constantly surrounded by kids of other religions and have never been around many other kids that believe the same thing. I am excited for them to grow as a youth group and grow in their faith as they worship and fellowship with so many other Lutherans their age."

The theme for the 2022 rally is "Here and Now," inspired by Esther 4:14. Dobberstein says, "Esther probably isn't the first name you think of as a biblical hero; her story isn't as well known. But when you read it, it's powerful. It's a story of how God can choose someone out of obscurity and use them for his purpose. God doesn't have a use for our youth only in the future or down the road. Like a young Esther, you don't know what God's timing is for you, but he does have a plan for you. I believe God has a plan for you here and now."

Two keynotes will be presented to the attending teens based on the theme. Rev. Aaron Robinson, English professor and cultural diversity coordinator at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., will present "Why Not Us? Royal People," focusing on how Christians should be asking "Why not us?" instead of "Why us?". Rev. Jon Bare, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., and director of the Pastoral Studies Institute, will present "Why Not Now? We Serve at a Momentous Time with