

TOGETHER

April 18, 2023


Moving forward in Vietnam

In 2011, leadership from the Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC), a church body in Vietnam numbering more than 140,000 members, invited Rev. Bounkeo Lor, a WELS pastor in Kansas City, to train their church leaders in the truth of the Scriptures. They desired not only to be trained in the Scriptures but also to know thoroughly Lutheran doctrine and practice. Regular theological training of dozens of HFC pastors began. In 2018, WELS was invited by the Vietnamese government and the HFC to build a theological education center near the capital city of Hanoi, an unexpected and unprecedented mission opportunity for our synod. While the COVID pandemic and other hurdles delayed initial plans, we're thankful that God has now made it possible for us to move forward. Just as God wisely and graciously guided the apostle Paul to carry out his mission efforts when and where God chose, so he has changed our plans—all for the good of his church.

The new Theological Education Center was completed and passed inspection at the end of January 2023. WELS took full ownership of the building at that time. The new center includes a chapel, classrooms, and dormitory/cafeteria space for up to 60 visiting students at a time. A formal building dedication and graduation ceremony for the first class of 57 pastors who have completed their seminary training is scheduled for July 2023.

The theological education of Hmong pastors in Vietnam, led by full-time professors Rev. Bounkeo Lor and Rev. Joel Nitz, trains those pastors to train other spiritual leaders. When COVID began, instruction shifted to online Zoom training, and a new three-year rural training program was started in order to reach more leaders and members in the rural congregations of the HFC. Until now efforts have focused on the first group of 57 students, who have completed their instruction in biblical and Lutheran doctrine. Now a second group of 60 students have begun their training. These men are taking what they learn and sharing it with nearly 1,500 local spiritual leaders of the HFC. The new education center will be a great blessing to the hundreds of rural HFC congregations as Lor and Nitz continue to equip their leaders to bring them the truth of God's Word.

Future plans are for Lor and Nitz, who so far have been making intermittent trips to Vietnam or using Zoom for training, to relocate to Hanoi to oversee the theological education program. Residency visas for Lor and Nitz and HFC government registration are still pending, but it is our prayer that paperwork will be finalized by the July trip.

Stay up to date on progress and learn more at wels.net/vietnamhmongoutreach. 

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

TOGETHER

April 18, 2023

Moving forward in Vietnam

In 2011, leadership from the Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC), a church body in Vietnam numbering more than 140,000 members, invited Rev. Bounkeo Lor, a WELS pastor in Kansas City, to train their church leaders in the truth of the Scriptures. They desired not only to be trained in the Scriptures but also to know thoroughly Lutheran doctrine and practice. Regular theological training of dozens of HFC pastors began. In 2018, WELS was invited by the Vietnamese government and the HFC to build a theological education center near the capital city of Hanoi, an unexpected and unprecedented mission opportunity for our synod. While the COVID pandemic and other hurdles delayed initial plans, we're thankful that God has now made it possible for us to move forward. Just as God wisely and graciously guided the apostle Paul to carry out his mission efforts when and where God chose, so he has changed our plans—all for the good of his church.

The new Theological Education Center was completed and passed inspection at the end of January 2023. WELS took full ownership of the building at that time. The new center includes a chapel, classrooms, and dormitory/cafeteria space for up to 60 visiting students at a time. A formal building dedication and graduation ceremony for the first class of 57 pastors who have completed their seminary training is scheduled for July 2023.

The theological education of Hmong pastors in Vietnam, led by full-time professors Rev. Bounkeo Lor and Rev. Joel Nitz, trains those pastors to train other spiritual leaders. When COVID began, instruction shifted to online Zoom training, and a new three-year rural training program was started in order to reach more leaders and members in the rural congregations of the HFC. Until now efforts have focused on the first group of 57 students, who have completed their instruction in biblical and Lutheran doctrine. Now a second group of 60 students have begun their training. These men are taking what they learn and sharing it with nearly 1,500 local spiritual leaders of the HFC. The new education center will be a great blessing to the hundreds of rural HFC congregations as Lor and Nitz continue to equip their leaders to bring them the truth of God's Word.

Future plans are for Lor and Nitz, who so far have been making intermittent trips to Vietnam or using Zoom for training, to relocate to Hanoi to oversee the theological education program. Residency visas for Lor and Nitz and HFC government registration are still pending, but it is our prayer that paperwork will be finalized by the July trip.

Stay up to date on progress and learn more at wels.net/vietnamhmongoutreach. 

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

MLC Day 2023 is coming!

MLC Day 2023 is Wed., May 3. This day is set aside for Martin Luther College (MLC) students, faculty, and staff to connect with congregations, elementary schools, high schools, friends, families, and donors. This annual celebration is an opportunity for MLC and its supporters to do three things:

1. Share the importance of ministerial education at MLC—especially since WELS has such a great need for pastors, staff ministers, and teachers.
2. Encourage elementary school students, high school students, and second-career adults to consider preparing for the public ministry at MLC.
3. Thank MLC's donors for their support and ask everyone celebrating to help MLC students financially through the college's Congregational Partner Grant Program.

Want to join in celebrating the blessings God has granted to MLC and its ministry? MLC has provided the following suggestions for prayerful consideration:

- Use the first week in May to talk about ministerial education in Sunday schools, Bible classes, sermons, Lutheran elementary schools and high schools. For elementary schools, the Project Elijah classroom activities are designed for specific grade levels.
- Share photos, videos, prayers, and messages of encouragement at mlcday.com/share.

- Consider contributing to the MLC Congregational Partner Grant Program. A generous donor is matching all donations up to \$50,000 to help reach the \$100,000 goal. Learn more at mlcday.com/give.
- Follow the Martin Luther College Facebook, Instagram, YouTube pages through the month of April to view messages from the student body and learn about classroom video competitions! 📺

Did you know...

WELS has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/welslutherans

WELS has Instagram?
instagram.com/welslutherans

Forward in Christ magazine has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/forwardinchristmagazine

Forward in Christ magazine has Instagram?
instagram.com/forward_in_christ_magazine/

MLC Day 2023 is coming!

MLC Day 2023 is Wed., May 3. This day is set aside for Martin Luther College (MLC) students, faculty, and staff to connect with congregations, elementary schools, high schools, friends, families, and donors. This annual celebration is an opportunity for MLC and its supporters to do three things:

1. Share the importance of ministerial education at MLC—especially since WELS has such a great need for pastors, staff ministers, and teachers.
2. Encourage elementary school students, high school students, and second-career adults to consider preparing for the public ministry at MLC.
3. Thank MLC's donors for their support and ask everyone celebrating to help MLC students financially through the college's Congregational Partner Grant Program.

Want to join in celebrating the blessings God has granted to MLC and its ministry? MLC has provided the following suggestions for prayerful consideration:

- Use the first week in May to talk about ministerial education in Sunday schools, Bible classes, sermons, Lutheran elementary schools and high schools. For elementary schools, the Project Elijah classroom activities are designed for specific grade levels.
- Share photos, videos, prayers, and messages of encouragement at mlcday.com/share.

- Consider contributing to the MLC Congregational Partner Grant Program. A generous donor is matching all donations up to \$50,000 to help reach the \$100,000 goal. Learn more at mlcday.com/give.
- Follow the Martin Luther College Facebook, Instagram, YouTube pages through the month of April to view messages from the student body and learn about classroom video competitions! 📺

Did you know...

WELS has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/welslutherans

WELS has Instagram?
instagram.com/welslutherans

Forward in Christ magazine has a Facebook page?
facebook.com/forwardinchristmagazine

Forward in Christ magazine has Instagram?
instagram.com/forward_in_christ_magazine/



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit wels.net/together.



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit wels.net/together.