

WELS CONNECTION CLOSE-UP

February 2019



Experienced pastors and the new pastors whom they are mentoring develop mutual trust and form tight bonds as they meet to talk through issues and provide support and accountability.

Mentoring new pastors



It didn't seem like much in May 2010. One experienced pastor mentored three Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) graduates for the first three years of their pastoral ministries.

Now, only eight years later, 69 trained pastors are mentoring 78 recent graduates through the Pastor Partners Mentoring initiative. In a time when pastoral resignations are a national concern, WELS is retaining a higher percentage of new pastors in numbers we haven't seen since the 1980s. Of the over-200 new pastors served by the mentoring initiative, only one new pastor has resigned during the time he was actively being mentored.

"Only God knows what has all contributed to higher retention levels," says Professor Richard Gurgel, the seminary's director of continuing education. "But this much is certain: God blesses when we invest in gospel ministry. Investing not only in training future pastors, but also in our current called workers, is a concrete way of acknowledging that every public minister is a gift to the church from the Lord Jesus."

Grow in Grace, the seminary's institute for pastoral growth, oversees the mentoring initiative where congregations who are assigned a seminary graduate contribute \$1,000 each year for the three years of mentoring. That cost includes a retreat in San Antonio for pastors and their wives at the end of their third year in pastoral ministry. "There they celebrate a good beginning in the critical early years of ministry. They also discuss how, under God's grace, they can continue to build on that strong foundation so as to thrive under the cross for decades of gospel ministry," says Gurgel. "We can only imagine the eternal return on that investment for our pastors and those they serve!"

WHAT CAN I DO?

Learn more about Pastor Partners at wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace. Pray for seminary graduates and their mentors.