

in need," says Hein. "We are truly thankful for your prayers and gifts."

Learn more about WELS Christian Aid and Relief at [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net). 


## New directors at WELS CMM

**T**he WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis., welcomes two new directors. Both Rev. Nathan Seiltz, director of Multi-Language Publications (MLP), and Mr. Tom Plitzuweit, associate director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, began serving in their new calls July 1.

Plitzuweit's primary responsibility will be to continue the WELSSA accreditation process for WELS elementary and high schools. Prior to serving as CLS associate director, Plitzuweit served as principal and upper grades teacher at St. Paul, Plymouth, Neb. In addition to his duties at St. Paul, Plitzuweit was the superintendent of all WELS schools in Nebraska, acting as a liaison between the WELS schools and the Nebraska state government, and WELS district schools coordinator for the Nebraska district. Plitzuweit says he's driven to help WELS schools improve. "I really think we have the best school system in America. I'd like to see us take our leaders—our teachers, principals, congregations—and put even more focus on our schools, making them better and showcasing them," he says. "We've had some exceptional leaders in this area who started it for us. Now

we need to keep pushing forward with school and ministry developments—those are going to be key things."

Seiltz will be charged with continuing to spread the gospel in as many languages as possible. A 1994 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Seiltz previously served as principal at Evergreen Lutheran High School in Tacoma, Wash. His past service also includes time as a world missionary in the Dominican Republic. In July 2014, he became chairman of the Europe Administrative Committee of the Board for World Missions.

"One thing that drew me to MLP was the goal to reach 25 million people with the gospel in the next few years. To see how MLP works, coordinates, and collaborates with many of the World Mission fields, it's a way to reach a large amount of people," says Seiltz. "I'm excited to be part of MLP, and it's exciting to look at the possibility of using technology to reach out to the world. I'm going to work hard with Missions to do exactly that—fulfill our Savior's calling to reach out to everybody with the gospel." 

# TOGETHER



July 7, 2015

## Marriage defined by God

**B**y now it is well known that the United States Supreme Court issued a ruling that states same-sex marriage is a right guaranteed by the Constitution and that the states cannot forbid it. Whether this is now "the law of the land" that cannot be undone or whether there is any avenue for changing the decision is already being debated. Regardless, we find ourselves facing some important questions: What is the role of the church when it comes to a matter of politics and law? What is the responsibility of individual Christians whose beliefs clearly run counter to a governmental law or policy? And what ramifications will there be for congregations, schools, and individual believers?

First, our synod's teaching regarding marriage has not and, God willing, will not change. We will continue to preach and teach what God says about marriage. We will continue to emphasize that, while the nation may recognize the validity of same-sex marriage, we will uphold the standard that the Creator of marriage has established. We will certainly not give the impression that the sin of homosexuality is in some way more serious or wicked than any other sin, but at the same time we will in love continue to proclaim God's law that condemns all sins and calls all sinners to repentance.

Congregations and their pastors may find themselves being asked to facilitate same-sex weddings. Of course we will not do that. We believe that it would be wise for congregations to adopt a policy that confesses our beliefs regarding marriage and states that, because of those beliefs, our pastors will not perform nor will our church sanctuaries be used for same-sex weddings. A sample of such a statement that can be adopted by congregations is available on our synod's website. Such a statement cannot prevent lawsuits, but it may be helpful in defending a congregation's practice if a lawsuit is filed. Some have asked whether the day will come when our pastors no longer serve as agents of the state by performing marriages. That may well happen—perhaps by our choice—when the state performs the legal marriage and the church provides the marriage worship service in which people publicly restate their marriage vows before God.

WELS will continue to confess publicly what we believe marriage to be. We will stand firmly on the Word of God and obey God rather than men. But as a synod, we will not become directly involved in a purely political effort or debate. The role of the church is to proclaim God's Word faithfully and boldly and to trust in the power of that Word to change hearts.



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It's a different story when it comes to individual Christians. Christians are not only a part of the spiritual kingdom of the church but also live in the secular kingdom of society. That means that they have the right—and even the responsibility—as citizens to do all they can to encourage the government to enact laws that will benefit society and to change laws that are harmful. Christians can and should speak up—both as salt and light to benefit others and as wise and concerned citizens to help shape the laws of the government.

It is impossible to know where further assaults against God's truth will be directed. There is no way of knowing what kinds of pressure will be brought to bear on a church that continues to hold to God's Word rather than the word of man. Will there be lawsuits regarding same-sex marriage or the use of church facilities? Will there be threats to remove tax-exempt status or the loss of government-funded student loans? Will there be pressure for us to remain silent? All are possible and perhaps even likely. What is certain is that those assaults will come; the Supreme Court ruling is not the end but more likely the beginning of a long battle.

So we pray. We pray that God will enable us to hold to his teachings and not allow our attitudes to be shaped by the sinful world around us. We pray for our nation. We pray for those caught up in all kinds of sin, asking that God would lead them to repentance and to the comforting gospel found only at the foot of the cross.

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder 

## Update on humanitarian aid and relief work

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**A**t its June meeting, WELS Christian Aid and Relief approved grants for fiscal year 2015-16 totaling \$332,426 for humanitarian aid projects in both home and world missions fields.

"These projects help our missionaries reflect Christ's love to people in need and also open doors to share the gospel," says Rev. Robert Hein, chairman of WELS Christian Aid and Relief.

World mission fields receiving grants include Zambia, Nigeria, Malawi, Thailand, Indonesia, Russia, East Asia, Mexico, Haiti, Nepal, Pakistan,

and India. Grant money will be used for projects such as borehole drilling to provide clean water, English as a Second Language classes, home-based care for the chronically ill and dying, food assistance to the needy, agricultural projects, food and nutrition for orphans, midwife training classes, and medical equipment and health clinics.

Home mission fields in Las Vegas, Nev.; Chicago, Ill.; Farmington, N.M.; New Orleans, La.; and Toronto, Ontario, Canada, also are receiving grant money for projects that include welcome packages for new

immigrants, a community garden, and a camp in a financially depressed area.

Christian Aid and Relief works closely with the WELS Boards for Home and World Missions, WELS missionaries, and sister congregations in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference in determining humanitarian aid grants.

The group also provides money for disaster relief efforts and people dealing with extreme medical emergencies. Two large disaster relief efforts this year—following flooding in Malawi, Africa, and earthquakes in Nepal—are ongoing.

In January, Malawi experienced damaging floods that destroyed or damaged the homes of many families who are members of WELS' sister synod, the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Malawi (LCCA). Initial relief efforts included providing supplies so these families could construct temporary housing. But a larger upcoming need is food. The floods washed away crops and depleted the local food supplies. "These people are subsistence farmers," says Missionary Mark Panning, mission coordinator for Malawi. "They depend upon the harvest to survive. This means many families will face hunger in the coming year."

To help families get through until the next growing season, Christian Aid and Relief is working with LCCA church leaders to distribute almost 450 tons of maize (the staple food of Malawi) to an estimated 4,000 LCCA families so they will have something to eat from September through January.

"This gives us a great opportunity to let our light shine and to show our Christian love to our brothers and sisters in the LCCA. They know that this is assistance coming from donors in WELS, people are who concerned about their physical and spiritual needs and want to do something to help," says Panning. "I pass along the sincere thanks of the national church for everything that's been done."

In Nepal, more than 9,000 people have been killed by two recent earthquakes in April and May, including 39 members of our church in Nepal. The WELS mission contact in Nepal traveled to nine villages in the rural areas of the Dhading district after the first earthquake to distribute blankets, medicine, sleeping mattresses, and food. He returned in June to bring more food and blankets as well as Bibles and large tents so the people could worship during the monsoon season. Our contact also visited villages and brought aid to the Makwanpur district where there are churches that have expressed interest in WELS doctrine. "People see the love of Christ when you share the words of the gospel, the message of salvation," says the WELS friendly counselor to Nepal. "Then they see the love of Christ in these acts of kindness. It's a powerful one-two."

Nepal church leaders and Christian Aid and Relief currently are exploring the idea of offering a grief workshop in Dhading to help those struggling with their losses.

"It's really a privilege that the Lord would use us to channel his blessings to our brothers and sisters