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TOGETHER



March 1, 2016

Highlights from the Synodical Council meeting

At its regular winter meeting last week, the Synodical Council (SC) received detailed reports from the Church Extension Fund, the Ministry of Christian Giving, Technology, Communications, Human Resources, and the Benefit Plans office.

The SC began work on a new long-range plan that will be shared with the district conventions this summer. A final recommendation for the plan will be submitted to the synod convention in 2017.

The SC received a progress report from the Compensation Review Committee in its effort to undertake a thorough review of the synod's compensation guidelines. The committee will report its findings to the district conventions this summer.

The SC reviewed and prioritized the Unfunded Priority List. With the recommendation of the Conference of Presidents, the position of a director to serve both the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry and the Commission on Adult Discipleship was moved up to second in priority, with the encouragement that the two commissions also consider merging into a single commission serving both adults and youth. The SC also adopted a policy outlining how and when unfunded programs can receive funding.

Financial results through December were encouraging, with Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) exceeding subscriptions by about \$600,000 (2.9%). This is the fourth consecutive year that actual offerings exceeded subscriptions. CMO subscriptions for 2016 are 1.8% lower than what was actually received in 2015, but this is offset by the positive 2015 performance.

The SC also approved several spending plan adjustments. Approved items will be funded through the use of special funds, not from the synod's operating support. One adjustment enabled Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to provide \$200,000 for the archives relocation project. A second adjustment provided funding for a person to work in our world mission fields to coordinate the theological training of the increasing number of people desiring to serve as confessional Lutheran pastors in their home countries.

Two new members were welcomed to the SC: Rev. Joel Zank (replacing Rev. Earle Treptow as one of the three Conference of Presidents representatives) and Dr. Timothy Kriewall (replacing Mr. Mark Bannan as the lay representative from the Michigan District). The SC appointed Teacher



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Douglas Dast as a member of the VEBA Commission, Mr. Mark Maurice to the WELS Foundation Board, and Mr. Ronald Schmitz and Mr. Max Wenck to the WIF board.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 

New worker training program starting in Cameroon

The Lutheran Church of Cameroon is taking a big step toward becoming an independent church body by calling its first full-time Cameroonian teacher and dean of students for its worker training program in Kumba, Cameroon. Rev. Mesue Israel, the church's only second-generation pastor, has accepted the call. Plans are to start the program in September.

"[Having] a Cameroonian man on campus will help to make this a truly Cameroonian worker training program," says Rev. Daniel Kroll, missionary in Cameroon. "That means that much application will be made to ministry in Cameroon that we from WELS might not be able to understand or explain."

Israel has been a pastor in the Lutheran Church of Cameroon since his graduation in 1999. A bone disease he contracted in 2008 makes it difficult for him to move freely, which, Kroll says, allows him to study more. "He has been outspoken and is not afraid to tackle hard issues; he is straight-forward and fair," says Kroll. "Pastor Israel gives credit to God for teaching him perseverance through the difficulties of his disease and his ministry."

Israel will be responsible for teaching several of the courses as well as for enforcing rules for campus life. The campus has modest dormitories where students will live from September through mid-May, with two weeks off at the end of each quarter to go home to see their families and tend their crops. After the two-year Bible institute, students will immediately begin three years of seminary studies and then be eligible for a call.

Currently 10 pastors serve 32 congregations in Cameroon. Thirteen men have been selected from among 31 certified assistants to start classes this fall. These certified assistants have had limited training but help their supervising pastor with keeping records, teaching Sunday school, and occasional preaching.

Having a Cameroonian man involved in the training of church workers is important for the future of the Lutheran Church of Cameroon. "Funding, health issues, government regulations, and a host of other matters can create problems for us keeping a missionary here," says Kroll. This is actually the first active called worker training program in Cameroon

since 1999 because of turnover in missionaries and other issues.

He continues, "But even if there is a lack of a missionary (or inconsistency thereof), we hope to create a program that will have some consistency for many years to come."

Learn more about the Lutheran Church of Cameroon at wels.net/missions and in the March issue of *Forward in Christ*. 

Registration opening for summer conferences

Registration is open for three synodwide conferences this summer.

The WELS International Youth Rally will take place June 28 – July 1 at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colo. Starting today, March 1, registration is open for the contact youth leaders. Event organizer, Mrs. Kris Snyder, says, "The contact youth leaders can fully register and pay for themselves, then simply enter the total number of people in their group. Starting March 28, additional youth leaders and youth can register and pay. In order to identify with their group they will need to choose their contact youth leader from a list."

WELS teens are encouraged to attend the rally for three days of spiritual encouragement and fellowship with other WELS teens around the country. Snyder says, "Sit alongside 2,000 others and hear what God spoke 2,000 years ago that is still true today: "Resist the devil and he will flee" (James 4:7).

Still true! "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). Still true! Our God Reigns! Forever true!"

Learn more at wels.net/event/wiyr-2016.

Also this summer, WELS Women's Ministry, part of the Commission on Adult Discipleship, is holding a conference July 21–23 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Registration is now open.

The theme for the conference is "Mentors," based on 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

Early bird registration rates and student rates are available through May 30. Several presentations and breakout sessions are available to choose from, focusing on having and being a Christian mentor. Visit wels.net/wmconference for more information.

The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) is holding its annual convention June 23–26 at Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, Ill. The LWMS 2016 convention theme is "Christ Alone, our Cornerstone." The event will highlight WELS missionaries from around the world sharing how the Holy Spirit is working in countries near and far. Watch a video about the upcoming convention. Visit lwms.org to learn more and register.

Watch the upcoming Together video updates to learn more about all these events.

View the events page for even more WELS events. 