

Eight new home missions approved

The Board for Home Missions authorized eight new mission starts, three ministry enhancements, and one relocation during a meeting on April 15.

“Planting eight new churches is a tremendous blessing,” says Rev. Keith Free, administrator of the Board for Home Missions. “These are eight new locations where the gospel will be proclaimed.”

The new ministries that will now be supported include new starts in Lehi, Utah; Coeur d’Alene, Idaho; Rockwall, Texas; Fredericksburg, Va.; Atlanta, Ga.; Victoria, Texas; Meridian, Idaho; and Stevens Point, Wis. Five of these ministries will be second sites for established congregations.

Home Missions will also support ministry enhancement at three congregations—Centennial, Milwaukee, Wis.; Abiding Grace, Henry-Newton County, Ga.; and Risen Savior, Lakewood Ranch, Fla. These existing congregations will receive funds from Home Missions to support projects that will allow the congregations to reach more people with the gospel.

In addition, Home Missions will help Peace, Holiday, Fla., with some transition costs as it moves to Trinity, Fla. This established congregation is already seeing God’s blessing on the new location. Twenty-five adults have been confirmed at Peace during the past 18 months.

We thank God for the opportunities to expand our work in Home Missions and for providing the resources to carry it out.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 

Latin American Lutherans meet for first conference

Twenty-three men from eight different countries attended the first Latin America regional conference of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) in Medellín, Colombia, April 3–7.

While at the conference, attendees were able to grow together through a series of essays on “The church under the cross.” They also learned about mission work in Spanish-speaking countries and in other areas

around the world and encouraged each other in that gospel ministry.

The conference highlighted academiacristo.com, an online teaching and training tool for Spanish speakers developed by WELS in 2015. Rev. Mike Hartman, field coordinator for Latin America, talked about what is available now as well as discussed future video-based leadership courses. Attendees then were asked to provide feedback on upcoming potential courses.

“We want to get input on how it is going, how we can use this better, and how we can use this to reach more people and plant more churches in Latin America,” says Rev. Nate Seiltz, director of Multi-Language Publications and conference attendee. “It has to be driven by the nationals.”

Attendees—as well as members from Most Holy Trinity, the local congregation sponsoring the conference—also practiced singing new culturally relevant Spanish songs and parts of liturgy that are being developed to add as resources through Iglesialuteranacristo.com, a live-streamed, Christ-centered worship site.

While attendees were mostly leaders of missions and national church bodies in Latin America that are in fellowship with WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, two attendees—one from Argentina and one from Colombia—were contacts made through Academia Cristo and online worship.

“What was really encouraging to me was [the attendees’] excitement

to work together using Academia Cristo to share the gospel wherever they are,” says Seiltz, “and to see them talking with each other about challenges. It’s hard to get that any place else than at a conference like this. And then their realization: ‘We’re not alone. We have other people whom we can connect with, and we can encourage each other.’ ”

The CELC—composed of 29 member churches worldwide—provides a forum for confessional Lutherans who are in fellowship with one another. The next triennial international conference will be held in 2017 in Germany. Learn more about the CELC and our sister church bodies at www.celc.info. 

Changes to WELS Investment Funds

WELS Investment Funds (WIF), which provides investment portfolios for WELS and affiliated organizations, has retained Vanguard Institutional Advisory Services to replace Marquette Associates as its primary investment advisor effective July 1, 2016.

The change is expected to benefit all investors through a significant reduction in both direct and indirect expenses. Ministries will continue to have access to a fixed-income portfolio, an equity portfolio, and a balanced portfolio.

WIF Executive Director Mr. Jim Holm says, “Under the direction of the WELS Investment Funds’ board of directors, Vanguard Institutional Advisory Services will provide

professional oversight for our WELS Funds and access to lower-cost, institutionally priced investment portfolios on an easy-to-use platform, which will allow us to reduce our overall operating expenses.”

Holm, who has served as executive director of WELS Foundation since 2008 and has previously served as executive director of WIF, is now helming both entities. WELS CFO Mr. Todd Poppe says of former WIF executive director Mr. Mark Arnold, “We thank Mark for his many years of faithful service and ask for God’s blessings as he looks for new opportunities to serve.”

The mission of WIF is to strengthen and enhance the ministry of WELS and WELS-affiliated organizations by providing professionally managed portfolios. WIF provides investment vehicles so that funds can be pooled and invested to achieve the desires of the organizations and their donors. WELS Investment Funds are designed primarily for the investment needs of endowment funds, scholarship funds, and charitable trust funds that strengthen and enhance ministries through long-term investing.

Holm says, “Since 1997, WELS Investment Funds has strengthened and enhanced the ministries of WELS and WELS-affiliated organizations by providing cost-effective, professionally managed investment portfolios. Today more than 200 ministries including our synod,

congregations, and many area Lutheran high schools are investing their endowments and scholarship funds with WELS Investment Funds.”

To learn more about WELS Investment Funds, call 877-888-8953, e-mail welsfunds@wels.net, or visit wels.net/wif. 

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