

**TOGETHER**

May 3, 2016

glory, nearly \$2 million has been generously presented to Jesus for "One in Christ" from July 1, 2015, through May 2, 2016! In addition, our church body is making monthly principal and interest payments this fiscal year that will total \$1.6 million. That leaves our remaining debt at approximately \$1.2 million, which we hope will be eliminated by additional offerings. We thank all those who have participated in "One in Christ" so far!

**Q: How does eliminating this debt affect our synod's future?**

**A:** Eliminating our debt this year enables us to deploy the resources we receive from God through his people on our present and future kingdom endeavors. As we gratefully reflect on how the Lord allowed us to fully fund our past capital projects and internal borrowing to maintain ministry, we can humbly and confidently move forward in the blessed work of sharing Christ's good news of eternal life with a growing number of people in North America and around the world.

**Q: What if we don't meet our goal?**

**A:** We'll gratefully rejoice in the blessings we received this fiscal year from God through his people, and we'll apply to the debt any "One in Christ" gifts received after July 1, 2016! At its April meeting, the Synodical Council determined that if the offering itself does not

completely retire the debt, regular payments will continue to be made from the synod's budget. Of course, having to make these payments would prevent these funds from being used for other ministry. The entire debt is expected to be eliminated by the 2017 synod convention.

**Q: Is there still time for congregations and individuals to make a gift?**

**A:** Absolutely! It's our hope that every WELS member and congregation will prayerfully consider generously participating in this opportunity to move forward in ministry through the "One in Christ" debt elimination emphasis by June 30, 2016, or as soon as possible thereafter. Since the outcome of this endeavor, as with all we do, is in our Savior's gracious hands, we believe that he will enable us to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine to the praise of his name and the salvation of blood-bought souls!

Learn more about how you can help at [wels.net/oneinchrist](http://wels.net/oneinchrist). 

## Synodical Council April meeting

### Developing the Ministry Financial Plan (budget) for 2017-2019

At its April 2016 meeting, the Synodical Council (SC) approved the support forecast. Based on the best available information, the support forecast indicates that the areas of ministry will need to plan for no increase in financial support from the synod's operating budget. Support from Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) is conservatively projected to increase by 0.5 percent in each year of the biennium, with support from other sources projected to be flat. With the assumption of no increase in support from the synod's operating budget, areas of ministry will either need to identify other funding sources or reduce spending. If actual CMO receipts exceed projections or if other support is greater than projected, the SC has the ability to make adjustments to synod support throughout the financial plan development process.

### Hymnal project funding

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) agreed to produce a new hymnal using funds that it had on hand. Those funds are adequate to produce both the hymnal and other accompanying resources that a hymnal requires. The WELS Hymnal Committee and NPH have since identified other worship tools (primarily digital) that would be highly desirable and would result in a more widespread use of the new hymnal. The SC allocated \$400,000 of undesignated funds to the Commission on Worship to be set aside for use for these projects if funding is needed. Actual expenditure of the funds will require the approval of the SC Executive Committee.

### Director for Commission on Youth and Family Ministry and Commission on Adult Discipleship

The 2015 convention approved a resolution that placed the calling of a director for Youth and Family Ministry high on the unfunded priority list in our continuing effort to strengthen congregations and their ministries. Since that time, both the Ministry Committee of the SC and the Conference of Presidents have expressed strong support for calling a director who would serve both the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry as well as the Commission on Adult Discipleship. Because of the many areas in which these two commissions have common tasks, there has been some discussion about combining the two commissions into a single entity.



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At its April meeting, the Synodical Council discussed a request to approve this position immediately, using dollars from the commissions' special funds and from the Financial Stabilization Fund to provide funding for the position for the rest of the current biennium. Given the current uncertainties in the financial situation, the SC decided not to approve the position immediately, but rather to reconsider the proposal in November. Regardless of what decision is made in November, the new position will be given high priority in the planning process as the Ministry Financial Plan for the next biennium is developed.

### **“One in Christ” debt retirement**

The “One in Christ” debt retirement effort continues to be blessed. As of the end of April, the gifts toward debt retirement nearly reached the \$2 million mark. Some congregations are still in the process of gathering the offering, and the Ministry of Christian Giving, along with the Conference of Presidents, will continue to communicate the importance of the offering until it comes to a close at the end of June 2016. It is assumed that some congregations and individuals will continue to bring offerings for the effort even after the end of June. At its April meeting, the SC determined that if the offering itself does not completely retire the debt, regular payments will continue to be made from the synod's budget, with the entire debt expected to be eliminated by the 2017 synod convention. Individuals and congregations that have not yet participated are encouraged to do so in the coming weeks and months. Additional envelopes and other resources can be ordered and downloaded at [wels.net/oneinchrist](http://wels.net/oneinchrist).

### **Synod archives**

At its April 2016 meeting, the SC authorized \$300,000 to be transferred from undesignated unrestricted reserves to the Synod Building Fund. The SC also authorized a modification to the Ministry Financial Plan that would enable these funds to be spent to prepare space for the synod archives and visitor center on the lower level of the Center for Mission and Ministry. The project is expected to be completed this summer, with the actual move of the archives materials scheduled to take place in the Fall.

### **Compensation Review Committee**

The SC reviewed the Compensation Review Committee's report of its progress in reviewing the synod's compensation guidelines. This report includes several ideas for consideration and will be presented to the district conventions this summer for input and reaction. After receiving input from the districts, the committee will submit its final report and recommendations to the SC for consideration. The SC will then forward its recommendations to the synod convention in 2017.

Serving in Christ,  
President Mark Schroeder 

## **Preserving WELS history**

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**P**lans are underway to begin construction for a new WELS archives and visitor center in the lower level of the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM), Waukesha, Wis. For the first time, historical WELS documents, books, and artifacts will be stored in purpose-built space, designed to preserve and organize the synod's history. The visitor center will feature artifacts and information about WELS history. The archives currently reside at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis., but the collection has outgrown the space and the facility does not have the proper climate controls for preservation.

To set up, organize, and manage the archives in its new home, WELS has hired a full-time archivist. Susan Willems will start mid-June—first sorting and moving material from WLS and then organizing and maintaining the materials at the CMM. Willems will join the CMM from the University of Denver, where she currently manages archives processing. She graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran College in 2006 and received her Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Denver in 2013.

WLS Professor John P. Hartwig, who currently works with the archives, says, “We thank God for this long-awaited progress in providing a suitable space and staffing for our archives, and we ask for his blessings as we move forward.”

Willems says, “To be the first [full-time] archivist for the synod is a huge honor. It's going to be a challenge, but it's going to be a lot of fun to learn about our synod's history.”

She says one of her initial goals is “raising awareness about the archives in the synod and reaching out to the different districts and individual churches to make sure that they know that the archives exist and what type of material we would like them to save that we would be collecting.”

Willems, her husband, infant daughter, and dog will be moving to the Milwaukee area in June. 

## **One in Christ campaign Q&A**

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**T**he 2015 synod convention launched the “One in Christ” debt elimination offering through June 2016 to eliminate the remaining \$4.7 million synod debt. As the offering reaches its final months, Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, WELS director of Christian Giving, shares how “One in Christ” participation has been so far.

### **Q: How have congregations and individuals responded to the debt elimination offering?**

**A:** The Lord has moved his people to generously participate so far! More than two thousand families have sent “One in Christ” offerings directly to WELS—some of them have given offerings multiple times. Many other individuals have given “One in Christ” offerings through the 431 congregations that have remitted gifts. To God's