

TOGETHER

June 14, 2010

Gurgel says WLS will gradually increase its online course offerings. The goal is to have three classes available for next year's Summer Quarter and to eventually offer online courses throughout the school year for those who aren't able to participate during the summer.

Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., offers on-campus, off-campus, and online summer courses. Its summer session began on June 14, and 511 students are participating.

Prof. Dave Bauer, director of continuing education at MLC, says, "The called workers of WELS are well prepared to serve as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. This educational foundation, however, is not intended in and of itself to support a lifetime of ministry. Continuing education is necessary to maintain and increase professional and spiritual qualifications for ministry excellence."

To learn more about these opportunities, visit www.wls.wels.net or www.mlc-wels.edu.

Leadership training to be held

Thirty-four WELS educators from around the country are headed to Milwaukee June 22-23 to be better equipped to train others in their districts in leadership skills.

These men, including district school coordinators, area Lutheran high school teachers, and professors from Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran College, will learn how to present Leadership Institute Modules, ten courses developed by the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, Calif., that are designed to help new and experienced principals and early childhood ministry directors improve their leadership skills. They cover topics such as time management, decision making, evaluation and supervision, and vision and leadership style.

"Strong leadership in our early childhood ministries and our schools is essential in this time of challenge and change," says Greg Schmill, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools. "These convenient, half-day, affordable modules help to deliver skills that our principals and educational leaders can turn around and use the next day."

After the "train the trainer" sessions in June, these men will be encouraged to set up and run modules in their districts. The Commission on Lutheran Schools will provide administrative support.

A more formal schedule of courses is being planned for 2011.

Districts discuss long-range planning

The 12 districts are all meeting in convention this month. One important item on each agenda is the Synodical Council's (SC) initial draft of the Long-Range Plan 2017. Convention delegates will be asked to discuss the plan and to forward reaction and input to the SC for consideration in a final proposal.

King David expressed complete confidence in God's care and providence when he wrote in Psalm 31, "My times are in your hands." Christians recognize that the God who knows the number of the hairs on their head is also the one who has promised to guide all things to serve their eternal good. We look to the future with confidence that God will accomplish his will among us, and that no detail of our lives will escape his gracious and watchful eye.

As we look to the future with that kind of trust, however, it does not mean that planning for the future is somehow out of place or improper. God has also called us to be stewards and caretakers of all that he has entrusted to us. Wise planning for the future is nothing more and nothing less than wise and responsible stewardship of God's blessings.

The last synod convention recognized this truth when it called on the SC to develop a long-range plan for the mission and ministry of the synod. This plan was to describe where we, as a synod, hope to be in the year 2017. It was to establish the direction, the emphases, and the priorities of our synod for the coming years—all with the clear understanding that as we make our plans, it is God alone who will determine how those plans will be blessed.

The SC began work on the plan in the fall of 2009. A subcommittee of the SC was asked to develop a draft proposal. After some refinement and with input from the Conference of Presidents, the draft is being presented to the districts this month. Once the input of the districts is received, a final proposal will be adopted and submitted to the synod convention in 2011.

The long-range plan is not intended to be a complete and detailed description of all that the synod will do in the next six years. It is rather a broad road map of what we hope and pray to accomplish, under God, as we move forward.

The long-range plan will establish general goals. It assumes, once



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those goals are adopted, that each area of ministry will be entrusted to develop the detailed plans and strategies to achieve those goals. It is assumed that this plan will be continually adjusted in keeping with changing circumstances. It is also intended that the plan will be extended every two years so that we are always planning the synod's work at least six years into the future.

You are invited to view the draft proposal with the understanding that there may be changes. The draft is online at www.wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports.

Serving in Christ,
Mark Schroeder
President

TOP NEWS STORIES

WELS Relief provides aid after storms

The WELS Committee on Relief has followed up on requests from congregations in Oklahoma and Tennessee for relief grants, allocating funds to those in these storm-ravaged areas.

Twenty-nine tornadoes touched down in Oklahoma on May 10. Although all WELS members escaped safely, some members of Holy Cross, Oklahoma City, Okla.,

did sustain considerable property damage. On May 24 the Committee on Relief met with the church council to work on a damage assessment and relief response plan. The Committee on Relief allocated a total of \$25,000, which is being distributed among 12 members.

Scott Peters, council president at Holy Cross, says, "My congregation and I would like to thank Pastor Harmon Lewis and Mark Vance with the Committee on Relief for taking the time to travel to our location and help with our relief effort. We know that they are working with congregations in Tennessee, and we'd like to extend our prayers to those folks also."

On May 1 and 2, rivers flooded after 13.5 inches of rain fell in Tennessee. The homes of WELS members in four congregations throughout the state suffered extensive water damage. Rev. Bill Werth, pastor at Abiding Faith, Smyrna, Tenn., reports one family in the congregation had 13 inches of water on their main floor and five feet in their garage.

In addition to Abiding Faith, members from these WELS congregations were affected—Beautiful Savior, Clarksville; Christ our Savior, Columbia; and Rock of Ages, Madison, all in Tennessee. The Committee on Relief granted all requests for a total response of \$12,500.

To learn more or to donate, go to www.wels.net/relief.

FIC continues series on homosexuality

Forward in Christ, the official magazine of WELS, is continuing its coverage of the topic of homosexuality with a profile of Suzie Neas, a WELS woman who left the gay lifestyle with the help of the Holy Spirit.

"I shared my story hoping that some can relate and those wanting lasting peace and relief from the heavy burden of same-sex attractions will find it by humbly confessing before God," says Neas, a member at Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wis. "The Holy Spirit works to change the heart of anyone who is penitent."

Neas left the homosexual lifestyle behind seven years ago. "I denied, rationalized, and justified my behavior for too long," she says. "Through hearing God's Word, the Holy Spirit worked in my hardened heart, softening it so that I could see the error of my ways."

Now she is talking to Bible study groups, high school students, and others about her journey. She says, "I encourage anyone who has a loved one who embraces this lifestyle to love them always, but you do not have to love or accept their behavior."

This is the second article in a series on leaving the gay lifestyle. The first article shared the story of Scott Barefoot, a member at Grace, Falls Church, Va., who left the gay life-

style seven years ago after discovering he had HIV/AIDS.

Read Suzie's and Scott's stories online: www.wels.net/homosexuality.

WLS and MLC offer summer classes

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) and Martin Luther College (MLC) are kicking off their summer sessions. Both schools are offering courses to help pastors, teachers, and staff ministers grow spiritually and professionally.

"It's important for a called worker to move from being the feeder of the flock to the one being fed," says Rev. Richard Gurgel, director of continuing education for WLS.

One hundred eighteen students are enrolled in WLS's Summer Quarter. Most of those students will come to the seminary's Mequon, Wis., campus, June 21 through July 9. This year, though, for the first time, the seminary is also offering an online course during Summer Quarter. The course, taught by seminary professor Rev. E. Allen Sorum, has 28 students enrolled. It began on June 14 and focuses on the apostle Paul and leadership.

Sorum explains that the students he's heard from are excited to be able to work on a course on their own schedule. "At least for this summer, this is the only way they can participate in the Summer Quarter Program," he says.