

eyes on Jesus—and the only way to keep eyes on him is to stay with the Scriptures that reveal him. Make time daily to prayerfully read the Spirit's inspired words that you may build up your faith. As Jude tells us, 'But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life (20-21).' "

Mark and his wife, Colette, are moving to Manitowoc, Wis., this summer and are planning road trips to the East and West Coasts to see children and grandchildren.

Taste and see Christ's love around the globe

The WELS Missions office is partnering with the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) to host an online event called Taste and See from June 27–July 11. This first-of-its-kind event will combine the very best of Taste of Missions and the LWMS convention to provide all WELS members an opportunity to be an important part of gospel outreach occurring in the synod.

WELS Missions and LWMS have launched a new website, welstasteandsee.com, that will host all of the videos and activities for the two-week event. Visit the website today to register to participate and subscribe for e-mail updates regarding the online festivities. Anyone who registers will be entered to win a gift certificate for the 2021 LWMS convention in Cincinnati, Ohio (a \$195 value). The certificate can

also be gifted to someone if the winner is not able to attend.

Save the dates for the following livestreamed events, which provide opportunities for WELS members to come together and encourage one another. Join on the WELS Missions or LWMS Facebook pages or on the Taste and See website at the following times:

Saturday, June 27, 11 a.m. CDT:

Opening worship service immediately followed by the LWMS flag presentation

Wednesday, July 1, 7 p.m. CDT:

Home Missions Q&A panel


Wednesday, July 8, 7 p.m. CDT:

World Missions Q&A panel

Saturday, July 11, 6 p.m. CDT:

Closing worship service featuring the commissioning of three world missionaries and one home missionary, immediately followed by a Q&A panel with the newly commissioned missionaries

The LWMS Awareness Committee has put together ideas and resources that people can use to host a Taste and See watch parties at their congregations, LWMS circuit gatherings, or even in their homes.

Visit the Taste and See website to get a flavor of what kinds of missions presentations, devotions, cooking tutorials, and other activities you can expect to see June 27–July 11. WELS Missions and LWMS are excited to join with you and other brothers and sisters around the world as we together say, "Taste and see that the Lord is good!" 

TOGETHER



June 2, 2020

Moving beyond COVID-19

In April, due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, our synod reluctantly canceled the district conventions that had been scheduled to take place during the first weeks of June. As it turns out, that was the correct and necessary decision, since even in those states that are beginning to reopen, there are still restrictions on the size of gatherings. Those restrictions would have prevented most, if not all, of our conventions from being held.

One important item of business at a district convention is the election of district officers. Those elections are still being held through remote digital balloting. Once the district president and vice presidents are elected, they will follow the district bylaws in making appointments to other vacant offices in the district. In general, incumbents will be reappointed if they are willing and able to serve another term; in cases where there is no incumbent, the district officers will appoint replacements with the input of the district nominating committees.

All of the information normally provided to district conventions for discussion and consideration will still be available in the *Report to the Twelve Districts*. That report will not be printed in hard copy this year but is available online at wels.net/rttd2020.

Even though the district conventions are not being held, the work of the synod and its congregations continues. Many congregations made adjustments to enable worship to continue online; in most places, in-person worship (with some limitations) has begun to resume. Various boards and commissions on the district and synod level continue to carry out their work, meeting via videoconference or teleconference. WELS Christian Aid and Relief has continued to provide assistance to congregations and individuals affected by the virus or other events. The Conference of Presidents has continued to carry out its work of assigning graduates from Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, assisting congregations with the call process, and addressing matters of doctrine and practice.


The COVID-19 interruption of in-person worship services has had a varying impact on congregational finances. Anecdotally, some congregations have been challenged by reduced offerings, while others have actually seen offerings increase during the time where services were held online. The same holds true for Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) provided for the work of the synod. Some congregations have struggled to send what they had planned, while others have actually increased their CMO. This is a good time for congregations to review biblical stewardship principles and provide gospel encouragement to their members to continue faithfully in the grace of giving. The synod is doing



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what it can to provide some relief to congregations; last month the synod announced that there would be premium holidays for WELS VEBA and for the synod pension plan later in the year.

God's grace has continued to be with us during this difficult time. The challenges we faced served to increase our love for worshiping together, our appreciation for the Lord's Supper, and our recognition that the mission of the church continues no matter what the obstacle.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary candidates assigned

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis., held its combined Graduation and Call Day service on Thursday, May 21, 2020. The online service incorporated elements from the traditional graduation and assignment services, with the graduation portion first. The livestream began with a view of the traditional walk the seminarians take from the chapel, under the tower, and over to the auditorium.

WLS President Rev. Earle Treptow's sermon, "Wait for the Lord!" reminded the graduates that waiting will always be part of their service as pastors. The message was based on the class passage, "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:30-31). Treptow encouraged them "to wait for the Lord, because the Lord never tires of empowering his servants to do what they could never do on their own."

Usually after the service professors directly speak words of blessing and encouragement to the students. Because that wasn't possible this year, Treptow read messages from professors as he announced the graduates. Then, during the singing of the class hymn "Lord Take My Hand and Lead Me," a slideshow of the graduates was played.


Rev. Jonathan Scharf, chairman of the seminary's board, sent a video sharing a message of gratitude for the three seminary faculty members who are concluding their ministries at the seminary. Professor Rev. Richard Gurgel will be moving to New Ulm, Minn., to serve as president of Martin Luther College. Professor Rev. John Hartwig, who had been planning to retire, instead accepted a call to serve as a chaplain in Europe. He and his wife will be moving to Germany. Professor Rev. James Tiefel is retiring after serving WLS since 1985.

WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder then announced where students would be assigned. First, 28 members of the middler class (those in their second year) learned where they will be sent to serve as vicars (interns) for the 2020-2021 school year.

After that, 28 men were assigned to serve as pastors. Of those, 23 were

seniors receiving their first call, three were from the class of 2018, and two were students from the Pastoral Studies Institute. In addition, four were reassigned to one-year calls.

Over 2,000 computers were logged onto Livestream, and there were over 2,000 views on Facebook. In the comments section, people checked in from all over the U.S. In addition, people checked in from Canada and India.

Assignment lists are available on the seminary's website. Watch the archived footage at our Livestream page. 

MLC President Mark Zarling retiring

Rev. Mark Zarling, president of Martin Luther College (MLC) from 2007 to 2020, is retiring this summer.

During Zarling's tenure, God has blessed the college in countless ways.

The campus saw the construction of beautiful new facilities funded by God's people: Chapel of the Christ, the Early Childhood Learning Center, a baseball field, and a soccer pitch.

The academic catalog expanded to include majors in early childhood education and special education, many four-year secondary education majors, and minors in urban ministry and Chinese. The graduate program added two new degrees: Master of Science in Educational Administration and Master of Arts in Theological Studies. And continuing education offerings expanded tremendously, including New Teacher Induction, new certifications, and a full catalog of on-campus, online, and on-location professional development options.

Zarling's keen sense of vision led the campus family through two strategic plans, two accreditations, a Master Site Plan, and a Master Staffing Plan. He put the spotlight on lowering student debt, broadening international services, expanding experiential learning, and recruiting new students not merely to fill current vacancies but to prepare for new ministries still in development. He also traveled extensively, serving as a warm and sincere ambassador all over the synod.

Through all these changes, he kept the campus focused on the mission statement: "To train a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of WELS and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord."

Faculty, staff, and synod leaders have called Zarling a man of faith, a pastor-administrator, a humble visionary, a Christlike leader, and MLC's spiritual compass. He spoke God's promises in the hallways, prayed with colleagues in their offices, and uplifted the college family with his "Letters from Home" chapel messages.

"President Zarling has left an impression on Martin Luther College," said WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder. "He has worked tirelessly to ensure that our WELS College of Ministry faithfully carries out its purpose. He has personally guided and shaped hundreds, if not thousands, of students. And through his leadership he has instilled in our synod's members a love for and a confidence in Martin Luther College."

To MLC students past, present, and future, President Emeritus Zarling offers this encouragement: "The apostle tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Live daily with