

# TOGETHER



July 21, 2020

role. "One of the passions I have is developing professional learning communities and tapping into the strengths our educators already have and using those strengths to maximize the benefit to the school. I'm looking forward to working with schools that are interested in improvement and leveraging the resources of so many smart people in our synod to make those connections," says Patterson.

Patterson and his wife, Lara, have four children, two in high school and two in college.

In his free time he likes to hunt and has been teaching snowboarding since 2008 as a nationally certified snowboard instructor.

Mr. Jim Rademan, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, says, "Paul brings a vision for excellence in education and a passion for meeting the needs of both children and families being served through our schools."

As CFO, Egan will be responsible for overseeing the synod's finances. He is a member at Bethlehem, Germantown, Wis., with his wife Janet and three young children.

Egan has more than 15 years of finance experience, most recently as the assistant treasurer and director of investor relations for Quad/Graphics in Sussex, Wis. He is looking forward to using his professional expertise to further the ministry work of WELS.

"I've had a pulling at my heart over the last several years that had me searching for an opportunity to use

my abilities in a way that would help forward a mission or ministry, to do something that would align my faith closer to my professional background and the skill set that God has given me," says Egan. "There has been so much good work done at WELS, and I want to make sure I carry that forward in a good way."

When he's not working, Egan likes to visit the zoo with his family and attend Packer games with his wife—in pre-pandemic times.

"We feel blessed Kyle has made the prayerful decision to join the leadership team at the WELS CMM and look forward to working with him," says WELS President Mark Schroeder. 

## Did you know...

**WELS has a Facebook page?**  
[facebook.com/welslutherans](https://facebook.com/welslutherans)

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**T**he 2021 premium rates for the WELS VEBA Group Health Care Plan will not change compared to the current 2020 rates. In other words, the 2020 rates for all WELS VEBA health and dental plan options will remain in effect for 2021. The WELS VEBA health plan has experienced better-than-expected claims costs and investment returns over the past 18 months, which has allowed the WELS VEBA Commission to keep 2021 rates the same as they were in 2020. No significant changes to cost-sharing amounts (deductibles) or covered services are expected for the 2021 plan year.

In contrast to rising costs of healthcare nationwide, WELS VEBA rates will have increased by only four percent over the three-year period from 2019-21. This does not include the approximately \$4.2 million in savings passed on to participating sponsoring organizations during the previously announced August 2020 WELS VEBA premium holiday.

Mr. Joshua Peterman, director of Benefit Plans, says, "The Lord continues to bless WELS VEBA to provide the commission with the financial flexibility to hold the rates flat for 2021 while maintaining adequate plan reserves. The commission is pleased to provide this rate stability to help support WELS ministry efforts."

In addition, the WELS VEBA Commission has approved a limited open enrollment that will run from Nov. 2, 2020, through Nov. 30, 2020, for coverage effective Jan. 1, 2021. Eligible workers serving at sponsoring organizations with at least one active worker enrolled in the WELS VEBA health plan will have the opportunity to enroll for new coverage or make changes to their existing WELS VEBA coverage. Open enrollment materials will be mailed to eligible workers in late October.

Another piece of good news is that Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) for June totaled \$1,795,803, an increase of 28.9 percent over June 2019. Year-to-date CMO is now \$9,480,520, 2 percent above prior year-to-date receipts and 1.9 percent above year-to-date subscriptions. We are thankful that the Lord has enabled our congregations and members to continue their generous support for the work we do together as a synod even in these challenging times.

Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder 



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit  
[wels.net/together](https://wels.net/together).

## WELS Christian Aid and Relief makes humanitarian aid grants

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**W**ELS Christian Aid and Relief announced it has granted \$455,919 to humanitarian aid projects in WELS mission fields around the world for fiscal year 2020-21.

Projects are developed by WELS home and world missionaries to reflect Christ's love to the people of their community and open doors to share the gospel. Major items include support for health clinics, borehole drilling to provide clean water, home-based care for the chronically ill and dying, food assistance, adult literacy classes, food and nutrition to orphans and refugees, and medical equipment.

While many projects are ongoing and renewed annually, Rev. Robert Hein, chairman of Christian Aid and Relief, says, "This year we approved more grants from our home missions, especially as they minister to people in cross-cultural situations, such as providing backpacks to needy children for school."

"Many of the people we serve are lacking in essentials like clean water, food, basic health care, and other supplies. God meets their physical needs through our efforts and they also have the opportunity to learn about their Savior, who met our greatest need," Hein explains, "All humanitarian aid projects start with our missionaries in the field. They develop projects to meet community needs and build relationships to share the gospel with the people they serve. All requests are reviewed by our mission leaders and then brought to our commission for funding."

He continues, "Meeting community needs is a great way to put Christ's love into action. As we address physical needs, our missionaries also have opportunities to share the good news about Jesus with the people of their community. We are always looking for ways to make a positive impact on our communities."

WELS members can support the work of WELS Christian Aid and Relief through prayers and offerings. In addition to humanitarian aid grants, the organization also provides disaster relief and medical financial emergency grants to people in need.

View a complete list of humanitarian aid projects supported by WELS Christian Aid and Relief through your offerings at [wels.net/car](https://wels.net/car). 

## MLC releases return-to-school plans

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**M**artin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., the WELS college of ministry, released its "Knights Return to Campus Plan" on July 17, after months of planning. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, MLC had to conclude its 2019–20 school year via alternative/distance learning.

The plan calls for students to return to the school's campus in New Ulm for the fall semester, with classes starting on Aug. 24. Most of the courses will be delivered in person, with less than 10 percent being a blend of online and in-person instruction. The campus will host only essential on-campus events and provide virtual alternatives for other events where possible. Only students, faculty, and staff will be able to participate in the on-campus events at this time.

In a letter of introduction to the plan, Rev. Richard Gurgel, MLC president, shares that the fall planning team spent "hours listening to government officials, health professionals, collegiate organizations, new and returning students and their families, our faculty and staff, and many others in our synod" before putting together the document.


"Our top priority is providing the highest level of safety and confidence in our campus learning environment, while adhering to the spiritual and educational standards WELS expects from its college of ministry," he says.

Students and administration will participate in daily screenings, including a temperature check. Isolation and quarantine procedures are in place for those who have symptoms for COVID-19, test positive, or have been in close contact with someone exhibiting symptoms or testing positive.

Campus officials say the plan may change as circumstances change. "We offer this plan trusting in God's gracious care for us in our Lord Jesus," says Gurgel. "At the same time, we also recognize that such trust does not diminish the responsibility God himself entrusts to us to be wise stewards of our health for the sake of our whole campus family as well as for the entire community of New Ulm."

The other ministerial education schools—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.; Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.; and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.—are finalizing their return-to-school documents. As of right now all three schools are planning to have face-to-face, in-

person instruction on their campuses for the start of the 2020–21 school year, with classes starting the week of Aug. 24. All four schools concluded the 2019–20 school year via alternative/distance learning due to COVID-19.

"The faculty and staff at Martin Luther College have done a remarkable job pulling together the many plans and decisions that have to be made to open safely this fall," says Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education. "We ask God's blessings on the faithful work of everyone at MLC and the other ministerial education schools, and we keep them in our prayers." 

## New faces at WELS CMM

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**T**he WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM), Waukesha, Wis., welcomes Mr. Paul Patterson and Mr. Kyle Egan. Patterson joined the CMM on July 1 as the associate director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, replacing Mr. Tom Plitzuweit who took a call to serve at a school. Egan started as chief financial officer (CFO) on July 6, following the retirement of former WELS CFO, Mr. Todd Poppe.

Patterson will be responsible for overseeing the WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA) program. He came to the CMM from Wisconsin Lutheran School, Racine, Wis., where he served as principal for eight years. Prior to serving at Wisconsin Lutheran School, he served as a principal and teacher at Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis., and Christ, Zumbrota, Minn.

While he says he's going to miss being around kids, he's looking forward to the opportunity to serve in a new