



The 33rd biennial convention of the Arizona-California District, under the theme: “Our Great Heritage,” began with an opening communion service at Grace Lutheran Church in Glendale, Arizona. Pastor Kirk Massey, Jr. served as the presiding minister and Pastor Adam Horneber served as the preacher. Pastor Horneber’s sermon, based on Ephesians 1:3-14, was themed, “Let Us Praise the Triune God for His Glorious Grace!” The offering totaled \$2,215.63 and was later designated by the delegates to support Gospel ministry on the Apache reservation.

An emphasis of the convention was the 125th anniversary of WELS world mission work. The Arizona-California District is unique in that it is privileged to have the Apache world mission field within the borders of our district. As such, this milestone anniversary was celebrated and highlighted in a number of ways, including opening service participants and devotion leaders who serve on the Apache world mission field. Music from around the world, sung in a variety of languages, was also incorporated into convention worship and devotions to highlight the world missions anniversary.

The convention was held at The Embassy Suites in Scottsdale, Arizona. The delegates reelected Pastor Jon Buchholz (Emmanuel, Tempe, Arizona) as district president; Pastor David Clark (Grace, Glendale, Arizona) as first vice president; Pastor Aaron Boehm (Shepherd of the Hills, La Mesa, California) as second vice president; and Pastor Steven Gabb (Gethsemane, Los Angeles, California) as district secretary. Other district officers and circuit pastors were also elected by the delegates throughout the course of the convention.

President Buchholz delivered a report in which he reminded the delegates of “*Our Great Heritage. This is the legacy of Word and Sacrament, faithful administration of the means of grace, solid commitment to preserving the truth of Holy Scripture, a heritage of Christian love that has been handed down to us from previous generations. We’re not here to invent something new. We’re here simply to use faithfully every tool at our disposal to preserve, protect, and proclaim Jesus’ love, forgiveness, and his gift of eternal life to our decaying culture and our dying world, so that by all possible means we might save some.*” President Buchholz provided a number of updates, including called workers activities and vacancies, along with financial figures of our synod. He recognized the 125th Anniversary of WELS world mission work, while also thanking those who serve in a variety of ways throughout our district. Finally, President Buchholz informed the delegates of the resources available to support congregations in their efforts to carry out the *Great Commission*.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Mark Paustian (professor, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota). In his keynote address entitled, “Communicating Christ in the 21st Century,” Dr. Paustian discussed healthy communication within the Christian family and the church, while also examining the crucial conversations that Christians have with unbelievers. The goal for the Christian is not necessarily to win arguments, but to shake the confidence of unbelievers, so that the Word of God and the story of Christ might gain entrance for the Holy Spirit to do what only He can do.

WELS first vice president Pastor James Huebner addressed the convention and thanked the delegates for their support of the Synod’s work. Various speakers highlighted work being done in the areas of missions, ministerial education, and congregational services in both the synod and our district.

One congregation was welcomed into the district: Living Water, Yuba City, California.

A variety of resolutions were passed, highlighted by a focus on called worker ministry. One such resolution urges Synod-wide encouragement of young men to consider the pastoral ministry in order to meet the needs and stated outreach goals of our synod. The delegates also passed a resolution that encourages more widely publicizing the staff ministry program among local congregations and schools, both to encourage people to consider a career in staff ministry and also to encourage congregations to consider filling vacancies with staff ministers, when and where the position allows.

Delegates enjoyed growth in the Word, work for the church, and social time with fellow Christians.