



Arizona-California District—WELS Report of the District President

October 2014

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We live in an age where grossly sinful behavior is perfectly accepted as normal by society, and deviant behavior is celebrated. Same-sex "marriage" is now the law of the land—and Americans are proud of their tolerance and equality. Clergymen and women across the country are trotting out their willingness to perform same-sex ceremonies. Christians in business are forced to become complicit in sinful behavior or face stiff fines for their "bigotry."

Jesus said that it would be this way. The apostles said that it would be this way. We shouldn't be surprised that it is this way!

Perhaps we Christians have taken our faith too long for granted. Perhaps we pastors have taken our ability to preach the truth from our pulpits too long for granted. When the climate is comfortable, it's easy for clergy and congregation alike to become complacent. Perhaps a time of reflection, repentance, and a return to the core message of Christianity is in order. Instead of worrying about stats and numbers, programs and budgets, and the latest new trick to jump-start our ministries, perhaps a renewed emphasis on front-line battlefield engagement is in order.

The only solution to the tribulation of these last days is the timeless message of Christ: "Repent and believe the good news!" It's a costly message, calling us away from our computers and out of our cocoons and out into the world, where sinners need to be convicted and healed. It has nothing to do with how cute or fun or cool or liturgical or contemporary you can make your church, and it has everything to do with tearing open the hearts of the smug and arrogant with the double-edged sword of God's Word and then healing that wound and comforting terrified sinners with the soothing balm of forgiveness in Jesus.

Don't despair: Time is short; eternity is long. This world's tribulations will soon be past and behind us. Eternity will bring retribution for those who remain God's enemies and eternal rejoicing for those whom he has called friends.

Meanwhile, armed with powerful truth to engage a culture living on borrowed time, fight the good fight, soldier on, and lift your head high, as you courageously share a loving call to repentance and a loving invitation to forgiveness.

Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen.

2015 Christian Leadership Experience. A number of para-synodical organizations are sponsoring a Christian Leadership Experience (CLE) in Scottsdale, Arizona, to be held January 9-11, 2015. I was asked to do the opening worship service for the conference, and initially I agreed to do so. When the web site was published, however, and some of the initial promotional material for the conference was brought to my attention by pastors in our district, I asked the conference organizers to be permitted to withdraw from participation. My concerns stemmed primarily from the teaching roles that women were being placed into, in which it appeared that they would be teaching scriptural truths to men; the use of outside, non-WELS speakers to address the assembled church on leadership; and some egregious language from the church growth movement. Since withdrawing from participation in the conference, I have met with representatives of the conference organizers both by phone and face-to-face to discuss these concerns, and two conference representatives met with the entire COP. Several of the promotional abstracts on the conference website have been rewritten. I am completely confident that the conference organizers have good intentions and want to make the CLE a positive experience to help with leadership development in the WELS. I was asked by a member of my own congregation if there were any barriers to promoting the event in the congregations of the Phoenix Valley, and I am aware of none. More information about the event is available at ChristLead.org.

WELS VEBA rates posted. New WELS VEBA rates for 2015 are posted at the WELS Benefit Plans Office website. Premium rates reflect an increase of between 8.8% and 13.5% year-over-year, depending upon the plan selected. WELS VEBA is deeply concerned about the impact that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will have on WELS VEBA participation. Younger called workers might find more favorable rates through a state or federally-sponsored exchange, but older called workers' rates will be significantly higher. If a significant number of younger called workers choose to leave WELS VEBA for cheaper exchange plans, the WELS VEBA program will very quickly become unviable. About 85% of WELS congregations currently offer a WELS VEBA plan for medical insurance.

If your congregation is not currently using WELS VEBA or is considering switching away from WELS VEBA, please make sure that you understand exactly what you will be getting. Most inexpensive exchange plans do not offer the same coverage that WELS VEBA does. Your exchange plan will not be transferable from state to state, if you take a call. Open enrollment periods for WELS VEBA are becoming much less frequent, which means that re-entry into the program may be very difficult. You can anticipate much higher premiums and reduced coverage from an exchange plan, as you age.

During November 2014, WELS VEBA will hold a limited open enrollment period. During this limited open enrollment, if an organization has at least one worker enrolled in the WELS VEBA health plan as of 10/1/2014, all of the eligible workers at that organization will have a full open enrollment opportunity for 2015 coverage. At those locations, enrolled WELS VEBA members will be able to add eligible dependents and change deductible options. In addition, eligible workers who are not currently enrolled will be able to enroll themselves and eligible dependents under WELS VEBA. Coverage changes made during this period will be effective January 1, 2015.

If an organization has no workers enrolled in WELS VEBA as of 10/1/2014, the workers at that organization will not have an open enrollment opportunity for WELS VEBA coverage for the 2015 plan year.

The changing healthcare landscape underscores the blessings we have enjoyed through WELS VEBA. Please emphasize these blessings to your congregation's leaders, if there is interest in changing medical insurance providers.

Funding for the synod's mission and ministry. Online reporting of CMO subscriptions and statistical reporting has been the norm for a couple of years now, and you should have received instructions for reporting in 2015. As you lead your congregation through the process for setting your CMO subscription, please remind your leaders that CMO is the primary support mechanism for our synod's ministry at home and around the world. Please encourage a generous increase in your CMO subscription!

CMO subscriptions for 2014 fell short of the 4% increase needed to sustain current levels of forward-looking ministry. The synod-wide CMO revisit bore tremendous fruit, as congregations were reminded of the precious work we do together as a synod and evangelically encouraged to consider a CMO increase. The CMO revisit resulted in several hundred thousand additional dollars made available for the synod's ministry, enabling some expansion to continue. The Synodical Council will be meeting soon to finalize new ministry prioritizations based on the reduced CMO number.

Ministerial candidates. Next May the seminary is projecting that 30 seminary seniors will present themselves for assignment, along with 30 middlers for assignment as vicars. If you are interested in applying for a vicar this year (either as a self-funded or vicar-in-missions placement), please make your request known to President Wendland as soon as possible.

Pre-call meetings. It is common practice for the district president to conduct a pre-call meeting with congregations initiating the process of calling a pastor. The Commission for Lutheran Schools is now strongly urging all district presidents to adopt the practice of conducting a pre-call meeting before a congregation calls for a principal. If your congregation is looking at filling a principal vacancy in its elementary school, please take this into consideration and contact me early in the process, so that we can plan accordingly.

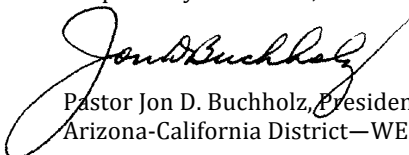
Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Light of God's Word. This publication is in the process of review and revision to factor in new challenges to morality and marital fidelity presented by today's technology.

Military Services Committee. The COP is in the process of commissioning a study concerning participation in military chaplaincy by WELS clergy. The study committee will evaluate whether under current military policy and practice it is both (a) theologically permissible to participate and (b) wise from a practical standpoint.

Conference. I consider it a privilege to be with you here at this conference, brothers. I find the conference papers instructional and edifying and the fellowship encouraging. We need these opportunities to grow together and be encouraged by one another. I share my personal thank-you to the agenda committee, the presenters, the worship leaders, and to all who contributed to making this time together an opportunity for celebration of our unity in Christ and growth in his Word.

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. —1 Peter 3:15, 16

Respectfully submitted,



Pastor Jon D. Buchholz, President
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District Activity — June 2014 to October 2014

Pastor vacancies

- The vacancy at St. John, Victorville, Calif., is being served by Pastor H. Curtis Lyon. In the future, the congregation may continue to be served as a vacancy or as a preaching station.
- Green Valley, Henderson, Nevada, is meeting on October 26 to extend another call for associate pastor.
- Grace, Tucson, Arizona, has expanded to become a four-site congregation, serving the University District of Tucson, Vail, Benson, and Sahuarita. David Barkow recently declined the call, and Grace plans to call again on October 28.
- Grace, Glendale, Arizona, called Mark Jacobson on October 19 to serve as associate pastor.
- Redeemer, Tucson, Arizona, called Benjamin Schaefer on October 19 to serve as associate pastor.
- The Administrative Committee for Native American Missions (ACNAM) plans to call shortly for a field coordinator for the Apache Mission Field.
- The ACNAM is scheduling a date of installation for Rev. Paul Schossow to serve as ACTS Director.
- Rev. James Werner will be installed at Reformation, San Diego, California, on October 26, 2014.

Pastor call activity

- Mark Mammel's call to Prince of Peace, Yucaipa, California, was concluded on June 30, 2014.
- Rev. Aaron Boehm declined a call to Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin, on July 26, 2014.
- Rev. Caleb Bassett declined a call to St. Mark, Lincoln, Nebraska, on September 13, 2014.
- Rev. Joel Sutton declined a call to Gloria Dei, Memphis, Tennessee, on September 15, 2014.
- Rev. Steven Gabb declined a call to Gloria Dei, Memphis, Tennessee, on October 10, 2014.
- Rev. Nathan Kassulke declined a call to St. Mark, Lincoln, Nebraska, on October 17, 2014.
- Rev. Ross Else declined a call to St. Paul, Grand Junction, Colorado, on October 18, 2014.
- Rev. Ryan Cortright received a call to Bethel, Menasha, Wisconsin, on October 6, 2014.
- Rev. Mark Jacobson received a call to Holy Scripture, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on October 6, 2014.
- Rev. Mark Jacobson received a call to Grace, Glendale, Arizona, on October 19, 2014.
- Rev. Aaron Strong received a call to Living Hope, Peoria, Illinois, on October 19, 2014.

Installations – Pastors

• Rev. Justin Gran*	Emmanuel, Tempe, Arizona	July 6, 2014
• Rev. Seth Georgson	Immanuel, Taylor, and Immanuel, Springerville, Ariz.	July 13, 2014
• Rev. Joon Ho "Paul" Chung	Apostles', San Jose, California	July 13, 2014
• Rev. Derek Bartelt*	Christ the Vine, Temecula, California	July 20, 2014
• Rev. Timothy Learman	Ascension, Escondido, California	July 27, 2014
• Rev. Lincoln Albrecht	River of Life, Goodyear, Arizona	July 27, 2014
• Rev. Nathan Buch*	Summerlin, Summerlin, Nevada	August 3, 2014
• Rev. Paul T. Schulz	Risen Savior, Chula Vista, California	Sept. 28, 2014
• Rev. Bart Brauer	Emmanuel, Tempe, Arizona	October 5, 2014
• Rev. Korey VanKampen	Mt. Calvary, Flagstaff, Arizona	October 12, 2014
• Rev. James Werner	Reformation, San Diego, California	October 26, 2014
• Rev. Wayne Mueller	Redeemer, Tucson, Arizona (part-time)	November 2, 2014
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*Indicates ordination into the pastoral ministry.

Transfers in – Pastors, male teachers, and staff minister

• Rev. Lincoln Albrecht	Northern Wisconsin District	July 2014
• Rev. Seth Georgson	Dakota-Montana District	July 2014
• Rev. Tim Learman	Minnesota District	July 2014
• Jonathan Plocher	South Atlantic District	July 2014
• J. Howard Schroeder	Minnesota District	July 2014
• Rev. Bart Brauer	Michigan District	September 2014
• Rev. Paul T. Schulz	Southeastern Wisconsin District	September 2014
• Rev. Korey VanKampen	Pacific Northwest District	September 2014
• Rev. Paul Schossow	Northern Wisconsin District	October 2014
• Rev. James Werner	South Atlantic District	October 2014

Transfers out – Pastors and male teachers

- None

Pastor candidate assignments

• Justin Gran	Emmanuel, Tempe, Arizona	May 22, 2014
• Seth Georgson	Immanuel, Taylor, and Immanuel, Springerville, Ariz.	May 22, 2014
• Derek Bartelt	Christ the Vine, Temecula, California	May 22, 2014
• Nathan Buch	Summerlin, Summerlin, Nevada	May 22, 2014

Vicar assignments

- Jason Free Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nevada May 20, 2014
- Andrew Stuebs Grace, Glendale, Arizona May 20, 2014

Vacancies in district offices

- None

Teacher call activity

- Alyssa Wascher accepted a call to Zion, Toledo, Ohio, in June 2014.
- Janeen Plocher's call to Ascension, Escondido, California, was concluded on June 30, 2014.
- Mikaela Raddatz accepted a call to Bethany/King of Kings, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, on June 27, 2014.
- Angela Dude accepted a call to Peridot-Our' Savior's, Peridot, Arizona, in July 2014.
- Sarah Homan accepted a call to Reformation, San Diego, California, in July 2014.

Installations – Teachers and Staff Ministers

- Rebecca Balge* St. Stephen, Fallbrook, California July 6, 2014
- Keri Patterson Cross of Glory, Peoria, Arizona July 6, 2014
- Jarrod Pfarr* Hope, Penryn, California July 6, 2014
- Jonathan Plocher King of Kings, Garden Grove, California July 20, 2014
- J. Howard Schroeder St. Peter, Modesto, California July 20, 2014
- Youngsin Choi* Apostles', San Jose, California August 3, 2014
- Laurie Easley Emmaus, Phoenix, Arizona August 3, 2014
- Jana Kogler Emmanuel, Tempe, Arizona August 3, 2014
- Ruth Luehring* East Fork, Whiteriver, Arizona August 10, 2014
- Angela Dude* Peridot-Our Savior's, Peridot, Arizona August 10, 2014
- Kevin Lorge* Peridot-Our Savior's, Peridot, Arizona August 10, 2014
- Brian Gephart* California Lutheran H. S., Wildomar, California August 17, 2014
- Bethany Schultz* California Lutheran H. S., Wildomar, California August 17, 2014
- Abbie Strong Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nevada August 24, 2014
- Sue Heinitz Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nevada August 24, 2014
- Sheri Redmond Green Valley, Henderson, Nevada August 24, 2014
- Sarah Homan Reformation, San Diego, California August 24, 2014

*Indicates commissioning into the teaching ministry.

Teacher candidate assignments

- Jarrod Pfarr Hope, Penryn, California May 17, 2014
- Rebecca Balge St. Stephen, Fallbrook, California May 17, 2014
- Brian Gephart California Lutheran H.S., Wildomar, California May 17, 2014
- Bethany Schultz California Lutheran H.S., Wildomar, California May 17, 2014
- Ruth Luehring East Fork, Whiteriver, Arizona May 17, 2014
- Youngsin Choi Apostles', San Jose, California May 17, 2014
- Kevin Lorge Peridot-Our Savior's, Peridot, Arizona May 17, 2014

Retirements

- Brenda Ginnow Beautiful Savior, Henderson, Nevada June 30, 2014
- Rev. Jerome McWaters Summerlin, Summerlin, Nevada Sept. 30, 2014

With the Lord

- Rev. Em. Paul Borchardt was called home to heaven on August 10, 2014.

Please bring to my attention any corrections to the above report.