

Committee No. 11
MINISTRY SUPPORT

Reference: Synodical Council RTD pp. 56-63
Report No. 1

The committee notes with thanks that ...

- CMO offerings in 2015 (\$21.5 million) reached an all-time high.
- “One in Christ” debt retirement gifts have reached nearly \$2,000,000.
- Congregations served by Home Missions as well as the responses of World Missions to new opportunities have increased significantly.
- Space has been allocated at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry for the synod archives and that this project has been funded.

Reference: WELS Long-Range Plan 2011-2017 RTD pp. 63-69
Report No. 2

The committee notes with thanks and supports ...

- The formal encouragement of spiritual, personal, and professional growth of called workers.
- The successful planning and realization of many of the long range plan goals.
- The planning for and progress made toward retirement of the synod debt.

The committee notes with concern ...

- That funding has been inadequate to reach aggressive mission goals.
- That the long-range plan lacks a contingency plan to prioritize items when funding does not allow all goals to be met.

Reference: WELS Long-Range Plan 2018-2025 RTD pp. 70-73
Report No. 3

The committee requests clarification of terminology ...

- “Increased flexibility in facility acquisition” (especially in high cost areas)
- “Just in time Lutheran training at the appropriate doctrinal level” for any individual who wants to serve as a pastor, teacher, or missionary anywhere in the world.

Reference: WELS Archives RTD p. 90
Report No. 4

The committee notes with thanks that ...

- Plans are moving forward for the move of the synod archives, and that Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is providing funds to employ an archivist for two years.

Reference: WELS Christian Aid and Relief RTD pp. 90-94
Report No. 5

The committee notes with thanks that ...

- God has moved the hearts of his people to provide aid to many places throughout the world and the United States.
- Relief expenditures in 2015 totaled \$544,339.
- Efforts continue to improve communication to the synod of the needs and the successes of relief projects.

Reference: Support Services RTD pp. 94-101

Report No. 6

Technology

The committee notes with interest and thanks that ...

- WELS is abandoning the Progress database in favor of a newer platform of technology.
- That WELS Mobile, the synod mobile app, has more than 20,000 users.
- That wels.net has a fresh look, and that individuals access the site more than 1 million times per year.

Financial Services

The committee notes with thanks that even though staffing has been reduced, services have been maintained and even improved.

The committee notes with concern that more staff cuts may be necessary.

Capital Projects

The committee notes with thanks that synod support continues to keep our facilities well-maintained.

The committee notes with concern that ...

- Concern about debt may impede plans for needed improvements.
- CMO shortfalls may negatively impact our synod's ability to maintain and modernize its facilities.
- Facility improvements may necessitate significant tuition increases.

Finance and Budget

The committee notes with thanks that 2015 CMO receipts were 2.9% higher than subscriptions, and that expenses for 2016 so far have been lower than budgeted.

The committee notes with concern that ...

- Significant long-term challenges will result if CMOs do not keep pace with increasing costs.
- The synod has become dependent on investment income to support world missions.
- Withdrawals from a shrinking Financial Stabilization Fund are needed to maintain ministry.

Reference: Subsidies and Affiliates RTD pp. 146-161

Report No. 7

Northwestern Publishing House

The committee notes with thanks that ...

- NPH, a self-funded ministry of the synod, has supported our publishing needs for 125 years.

- NPH continues to develop an ever-widening variety of products for called workers and laity, including products and services that utilize advances in technology.
- WELS Pastors and teachers promote NPH's products.

The committee notes with concern that NPH's customer base is not growing, and that sales to churches are declining.

Publication Coordinating Commission

The committee notes with thanks that Funding has been approved for two new confessional works of theology.

The committee notes with concern that diminished financial resources have forced NPH to limit assistance for the hymnal and catechism projects.

WELS Historical Institute

The committee notes with thanks that the WELS Historical Institute provides a lasting witness of the works of God through its publications and events.

Church Extension Fund

The committee notes with thanks that ...

- CEF provides financing for mission congregations as directed by the Board for Home Missions.
- CEF has distributed \$3.3 million in the last seven years.
- CEF is able to provide matching grants to eligible mission congregations for land and facility purchases and improvements projects.
- Through its strong loan portfolio, CEF continues to provide mission churches with a pipeline for loan originations.

WELS Foundation

The committee notes with thanks that ...

- In 2015 the WELS Foundation distributed \$7.1 million in donor-directed gifts.
- WELS Foundation hosts educational webinars about support opportunities.

WELS Investment Funds

The committee notes with thank that ...

- Investment Funds offers investment opportunities with a good record of investment returns.
- Combining functions with the WELS Foundation has lowered operational costs.

WELS Benefit Plans

The committee notes with thanks that ...

- WELS Benefit Plans continues to monitor significant developments in health care law.
- Programs have been positioned for long-term stability as well as accessibility to called workers.
- WELS Benefit Plans provide excellent value to users.

The committee notes with concern that ...

- Health insurance costs continue to rise.
- That the WELS Pension Plan faces long-term funding challenges.

Greg Thiesfeldt, Chairman
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