

Committee No. 9
MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

Report No. 1

Reference: RTD, pp. 87-95

The continuing purpose of the WELS Board for Ministerial Education (BME) is “the preparation of ministers of the gospel to proclaim Christ’s love” (RTD p. 87) to churches, schools, and mission fields of our fellowship. The BME report provides an overview of the work at the Synod ministerial education schools – Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Martin Luther College (MLC), Luther Preparatory School (LPS), and Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS).

The report that follows is a synopsis of the information provided by the Report to the Twelve Districts (RTD). It highlights the major points of emphasis, notes with thanks blessings received, points out areas of concern, and proposes several resolutions.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

- The committee endorses the continuing active recruitment and continuing education efforts (p. 88) which recognize that “the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few” (ESV, Matthew 9:37).
- In light of the growing opportunities the Lord of the Church is providing in China, the committee notes and supports efforts to provide future pastors with experiences and training that will broaden their knowledge of the Chinese culture and language (p. 87).
- The committee notes with thanks that WLS enrollment has stabilized and that the projections of graduates in the years to come (p. 89) align with the WELS Long Range Plan goal of graduating 30 pastor candidates per year (p. 89).
- The committee notes with joy the generous gifts and grants which provide tuition assistance (p. 90). Many students enter WLS with debts from MLC; therefore, financial aid is needed.
- We give thanks for the Pastoral Studies institute (PSI) program, which meets the needs of those that cannot take the traditional path to the pastoral ministry. We support PSI program review so that the PSI program may serve more ministry candidates (p. 91).
- We note and support the mission of “Grow in Grace” to provide continuing education resources and its efforts to connect pastors with partners who will encourage spiritual and professional growth (p. 91).
- The committee notes with concern that “the revenue model the seminary has been operating with is not sustainable” and “by the next biennium WLS will either have to find other major sources of revenue or makes substantial cuts in spending” (p. 94).
- We look forward to the coming 150th anniversary of WLS and the opportunity to thank the Lord for the blessings our Synod has received through the seminary (p. 95).

Resolution No. 1

Reference: RTD, p. 92

Subject: Thanksgiving for Ministry Service

WHEREAS 1) Professor Richard Gurgel has served 25 years in the ministry; and

WHEREAS 2) Professors Forest Bivens and John Brug have served 40 years in the ministry; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that we thank these faithful servants for using their gifts to serve the Lord these many years.

Report No. 2

Reference: RTD, pp. 95-102

Martin Luther College

- The committee notes with appreciation MLC's plans to construct a new Early Childhood Center to meet the increasing need for early childhood teachers. This facility will not be funded with Synod budget funds; rather, MLC is gathering offerings through a silent campaign. Construction has been delayed until spring 2013 to allow time for funds to be raised. The independent construction of an assisted-living facility for seniors on adjacent property will allow intergenerational ministry opportunities in the future (pp. 97-98).
- Financial concerns remain at MLC. The report states, "Pressing needs ... remain: increased financial aid to reduce student indebtedness, programmed maintenance needs already identified and prioritized at \$2.9 million, an expansion or new construction of an early childhood learning center, and restoration of faculty strength in line with Higher Learning Commission guidelines – these are the key concerns" (p. 98).
- The MLC report states that 70% of graduates carry an average debt of \$22,555. Graduates that enroll at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary must begin debt repayment while enrolled at WLS. These facts demonstrate the importance of congregation-based programs of financial assistance to reduce student debt loads (p. 100).
- MLC has a goal of establishing and maintaining a \$4 million reserve fund (equivalent to 25% of its annual operating budget). Presently, the reserve fund holds less than half of this amount. Additionally, it should be noted that MLC has only \$750,000 designated to meet maintenance needs (previously mentioned) of \$2.9 million (p. 99).
- The committee notes with gratitude that the graduates of MLC are well-trained and prepared for their careers in the ministry. We praise God for the administration and faculty of MLC and their vigilant efforts to fulfill the ministry goals of our Synod.

Resolution No. 2

Reference: RTD, p. 97

Subject: Thanksgiving for Ministry Service

WHEREAS 1) Professor Richard Ash, having served 44 years in the public ministry (13 years at MLC), is retiring at the end of June 2012, and

WHEREAS 2) Professor Ronald Shilling, having served 49 years in the public ministry (47 years at MLC), is retiring at the end of June 2012, and

WHEREAS 3) Professors John Meyer and Jeffrey Schone have completed 25 years in the public ministry, and Professor Wayne Wagner has completed 40 years of service in the public ministry, and

WHEREAS 4) Pastor Roy Beyer has completed two six-year terms on the MLC Governing Board; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we thank the lord of the Church for these servants who faithfully used their gifts to serve God's kingdom these many years.

Report No. 3

Reference: RTD, pp. 102-106

Luther Preparatory School and Michigan Lutheran Seminary

- The committee notes with thanks the pattern of increasing enrollment at both LPS and MLS and the success of innovative recruitment efforts at both schools (pp. 102,104).
- The committee notes that the Synod preparatory schools may need to explore the development of online courses for students interested in ministry who are not able to attend MLS or LPS.
- The committee notes the need for congregational stewardship efforts to increase support for all Synod schools.
- We commend the faculties and staffs of MLS and LPS for maintaining quality programs while experiencing reductions in budgets and personnel.
- We commend LPS for achieving accreditation status from both WELSSA and AdvanceED-NCA (p.103).
- We note with concern the continued use of one time monies to supplement the operating budgets of MLS and LPS (p.103).
- We rejoice that the Lord moved Pastor Joel Petermann to accept the call to serve as president of MLS (p.105).

Teacher Greg Thiesfeldt, Chairman
Teacher Ryan Hulse, Secretary

Pastor Jon Bitter
Professor James Danell
Pastor David Fleischmann
Pastor Matthew Grunewald
Pastor Curtis Holub
Professor Paul Koelpin
Professor Lyle Lange
Pastor Daniel Lindner
Pastor Michael Otterstatter
Professor John Schmidt

Pastor Richard Schwerin
Pastor Daniel Voigt
Teacher Justin Hansen
Teacher Donald Koch
Teacher Kurt Maciejczak
Teacher Paul Pappenfuss
Staff Minister Ronald Schmidt
Teacher Mark Stein
Teacher Seth Zimmermann
Hope, Andover
St. Peter, Balaton
Trinity, Belle Plaine
St. Mark, Bemidji
Faith, Excelsior
Emanuel, Fairfax
St. Peter, Goodhue
St. John, Hastings
Grace, Hutchinson
Zion, New Ulm
St. Paul, North Mankato
Resurrection, Rochester
Salem, Stillwater