

**The Office of the President of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) Papers
An Inventory**



Archives of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Mequon, Wisconsin

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The Office of the President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) Papers

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Collection Level Description

Title: The Office of the President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) Papers

Dates: 1955-2003

Extent: 1.88 meters of textual records

Biographical sketch: The history of the Office of the President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) can be traced back to the founding of the synod on 26 May 1850 and the selection of the first president, Pastor Johannes Muehlhaeuser. Since that time, eleven different presidents have served the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, called by the synod at-large to serve in that capacity. These men who served as president also served as parish pastors until 1959, when the WELS made the Office of the President a full-time position. At the celebration of its sesquicentennial, the WELS produced a brief history of the synod entitled, *Together in Christ*. Countless other histories, articles, essays and church history projects have examined and analyzed the lives and presidencies of those who have served as synod president. These writings can be found at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library, Mequon, Wisconsin. For further detail on the lives and service of two who have served – Pastor John W.O. Brenner and Oscar J. Naumann – you can find the archival collections of their papers in the Archives of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Mequon, Wisconsin. Below is a complete listing of those who served in the Office of the President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the years that they served:

1850 – 1860	Johannes Muehlhaeuser
1860 – 1864	John Bading
1864 – 1865	Gottlieb Reim
1865 – 1867	William Streissguth
1867 – 1887	John Bading
1887 – 1908	Phillip von Rohr
1908 – 1933	G.E. Bergemann
1933 – 1953	John W.O. Brenner
1953 – 1979	Oscar J. Naumann
1979 – 1993	Carl Mischke
1993 – Present	Karl R. Gurgel

Custodial history:

The collection of the Office of the President was originally held in that office in the old Wisconsin Synod building (3512 W. North Ave., Milwaukee). With the move of Synod administration from North Ave. to 2929 Mayfair Rd. in Milwaukee in 1983-84, the collection transitioned with the office. The correspondence of this collection came from the papers of Presidents Oscar J. Naumann, Carl Mischke and Karl R. Gurgel. The Synodical Council materials came from Doug Wellumson. All materials in this collection were donated to the Archives of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Mequon, Wisconsin between September 2004 and April 2005.

Scope and Content:

The collection is made up of materials created by, received by or collected by the members of the Office of the President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS).

The collection reflects the work of those who have served the WELS over the years in their capacity as shepherd of this small, conservative Lutheran church body. It reflects the major transitions the synod underwent from the boom years of the early 1970s to the lean years of the 1980s to the second boom in the 1990s to the lean years of the early 21st Century. The collection, above all reflects, that the synod nor those who have led her over the years wavered from the firm conviction that the Bible is the pure Word of God and therefore is to not only be kept in its truth and purity, but also proclaimed to all people. Finally, it reflects that all that took place over the course of the synod's history was guided by God's grace.

The collection consists of the following series:

Series 1: Case Files of Called Workers, Congregations, Laypeople and Synodical Schools

Series 2: Documents regarding Fiscal Matters

Series 3: General Correspondence

Series 4: Documents regarding Inter-Church Relations

Subseries 1: Alternative for Lutherans in Canada – 1971-1974

Subseries 2: Bethesda Lutheran Home – 1967-1971

Subseries 3: Cameroon – 1971-1978

Subseries 4: Christmas Card Lists – 2003

Subseries 5: Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum – 1978-1980

Subseries 6: Evangelical Lutheran Synod – 1968-1978

Subseries 7: Liberia – 1966-1977

Subseries 8: Study of Lutherans Project – 1979-1982

Series 5: Letters of Clergy Certification

Series 6: Documents regarding the Synodical Council

Subseries 1: Agendas and Rosters – 1998-2003

Subseries 2: Budget – 1997-2003

Subseries 3: Core Values Statement & Financial Reports – 1997

Subseries 4: Executive Committee – 1998-2003

Subseries 5: Human Resources – 1998-2003

Subseries 6: Informational and Council Updates – 1997-2000

Subseries 7: Minutes and Reports – 1997-2003

Subseries 8: Organization and Structure – 1997

Subseries 9: Schwan Foundation – 1997

Subseries 10: Special Presentations and Bible Studies – 1997-2003

Subseries 11: Steering Committee – 1998-2001

Subseries 12: Strategic Planning and Coordination – 1998-2003

Subseries 13: Support Services – 1998-2003

Source of supplied title: Title based on the provenance of the records.

Arrangement: See appendix A for arrangement of the folders in the boxes.

Restrictions: None.

Accruals: The possibility of additions exists since the Office of the President continues to exist.

Series level description

The Office of the President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) Papers

Series 1: Case Files of Called Workers, Congregations, Laypeople and Synodical Schools

Dates: 1962-2002

Extent: 7 folders, 10.1 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of correspondence from seven cases or major issues that came to the attention of the WELS Office of the President. Included are: the WELS Synodical School Amalgamation (1993); the Brazil Mission/Luis Rauter Case (1972-1979); the Theodore J. Hartwig Case (1980-1982); the Kokomo, Indiana Case (1982-1999); the Nebraska Teacher Certification Case (1962); the David Neumann Case (1990); the Doris Schumann Case (1998-2002).

Series 2: Documents regarding Fiscal Matters

Dates: 1955-1990

Extent: 4 folders, 4 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of correspondence, reports and other documents pertaining to fiscal matters in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, particularly dealing with the Committee on Grants, the Jubilate Offering, Lutheran Brotherhood & correspondence pertaining to grants from Lutheran Brotherhood, and correspondence regarding male ministers of the Gospel and the Equal Pay Act.

Series 3: General Correspondence

Dates: 1974-2003

Extent: 33 folders, 58.8 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of correspondence sent to and from a large number of correspondents on a variety of topics to those serving in the WELS Office of the President. This series was found organized by first letter of the last name. Some correspondents included are: James J. Blado, Arthur Callies, Al Campbell, Gerhardt Cares, Cora Carolfi, Robert A. Cole, Raymond G. Cox, Susan I. Damrow, Robert Diener, Paul Durnez, Arthur A. Eggert, David M. Ehlers, Edward & Eleanor Ericson, Earl Fager, Howard Festerling, Daniel Fleischer, Myron Fluegge, Werner H. Franzmann, Gerald E. Free, Keith Free, Kenneth L. Frey, Roger R. Frey, Herman F. Gertz, Edgar Hoenecke, David Haag, Iver Johnson, David & Betty Kloha, Philip Merten, Carl Monson, Jon Nieman, Irene Peters, Reinhart J. Pope, Guy Purdue, Arthur J. Schulz, David Schultz, James W. Sherod, Sola Fide Ev. Lutheran Church – Lawrenceville, GA, Steven Vogt, Robert J. Voss, Rolfe Westendorf, and Bernhard L. Wiesenmaier, as well as many other correspondents.

Series 4: Documents regarding Inter-Church Relations

Dates: 1966-2003

Extent: 9 folders, 9.5 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of documents pertaining to the dealings of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod with bodies within or without its fellowship. This series includes documents pertaining to African world missions, Bethesda Lutheran Home, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod & Bethany Lutheran College, the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum and other bodies outside of WELS.

- Subseries 1: Alternative for Lutherans in Canada – 1971-1974
- Subseries 2: Bethesda Lutheran Home – 1967-1971
- Subseries 3: Cameroon – 1971-1978
- Subseries 4: Christmas Card Lists – 2003
- Subseries 5: Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum – 1978-1980
- Subseries 6: Evangelical Lutheran Synod – 1968-1978
- Subseries 7: Liberia – 1966-1977
- Subseries 8: Study of Lutherans Project – 1979-1982

Series 5: Letters of Clergy Certification

Dates: 1992-1999

Extent: 25 folders, 28.1 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of correspondence, letters of certification, reports and other documents required of the clergy of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod for the purpose of protection against sexual harassment or sexual abuse in the congregations of the synod. Such certification became a necessity for clergy of all faiths in the early 1990s when widespread reports of sexual abuse by clergy began to be uncovered all over the world. The files were found to be organized by last name of each called worker.

Series 6: Documents regarding the Synodical Council

Dates: 1997-2003

Extent: 58 folders, 77.7 cm of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of agendas, reports, minutes, and other documents pertaining to the work of the Synodical Council of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the body charged with overseeing the mission and ministry of the WELS. This series offers great insights into the working of the WELS during the mid-1990s to early Twenty-First Century.

- Subseries 1: Agendas and Rosters – 1998-2003
- Subseries 2: Budget – 1997-2003
- Subseries 3: Core Values Statement & Financial Reports – 1997
- Subseries 4: Executive Committee – 1998-2003
- Subseries 5: Human Resources – 1998-2003
- Subseries 6: Informational and Council Updates – 1997-2000
- Subseries 7: Minutes and Reports – 1997-2003
- Subseries 8: Organization and Structure – 1997
- Subseries 9: Schwan Foundation – 1997
- Subseries 10: Special Presentations and Bible Studies – 1997-2003
- Subseries 11: Steering Committee – 1998-2001
- Subseries 12: Strategic Planning and Coordination – 1998-2003
- Subseries 13: Support Services – 1998-2003

Appendix A

**The Office of the President of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) Papers**
Arrangement

Box 1: Folders 1-26

Box 2: Folders 27-51

Box 3: Folders 52-87

Box 4: Folders 88-124

Box 5: Folders 125-137

Series 1: Case Files of Called Workers, Congregations, Laypeople and Synodical Schools
Folders 1-7

Series 2: Documents regarding Fiscal Matters
Folders 8-11

Series 3: General Correspondence
Folders 12-44

Series 4:

Subseries 1: Alternative for Lutherans in Canada – 1971-1974
Folder 45

Subseries 2: Bethesda Lutheran Home – 1967-1971
Folder 46

Subseries 3: Cameroon – 1971-1978
Folder 47

Subseries 4: Christmas Card Lists – 2003
Folder 48

Subseries 5: Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum – 1978-1980
Folder 49

Subseries 6: Evangelical Lutheran Synod – 1968-1978
Folders 50-51

Subseries 7: Liberia – 1966-1977
Folder 52

Subseries 8: Study of Lutherans Project – 1979-1982
Folder 53

Series 5: Letters of Clergy Certification
Folders 54-79

Series 6: Documents regarding the Synodical Council

Subseries 1: Agendas and Rosters – 1998-2003
Folders 80-84

Subseries 2: Budget – 1997-2003
Folders 85-89

Subseries 3: Core Values Statement & Financial Reports – 1997

Folder 90
Subseries 4: Executive Committee – 1998-2003
Folders 91-94
Subseries 5: Human Resources – 1998-2003
Folders 95-99
Subseries 6: Informational and Council Updates – 1997-2000
Folders 100-106
Subseries 7: Minutes and Reports – 1997-2003
Folders 107-112
Subseries 8: Organization and Structure – 1997
Folder 113
Subseries 9: Schwan Foundation – 1997
Folder 114
Subseries 10: Special Presentations and Bible Studies – 1997-2003
Folders 115-120
Subseries 11: Steering Committee – 1998-2001
Folders 121-124
Subseries 12: Strategic Planning and Coordination – 1998-2003
Folders 125-129
Subseries 13: Support Services – 1998-2003
Folders 130-137