



**Arizona-California Mission Board Report
AZ/CA District Pastors' Conference
Tempe, AZ October 18-20, 2016**

Your District Mission Board has been charged with the awesome privilege of overseeing the carrying out of a charge with thousands of years of history. In fact, already at the time the Apostle Paul was engaged in his evangelistic activity, the charge to proclaim the gospel was already millennia old. In making the case for the need to share the gospel far and wide, the Apostle Paul quoted numerous times from centuries' old Scriptures: "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' . . . ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. . . . 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.'"

Although the message and the charge to share it are thousands of years old, our missionaries proclaim it with fresh zeal and enthusiasm to 21st century sinners in desperate need of a Savior. Pray the Lord continue to work within them and within each of us an urgent, aggressive mission-mindedness.

Mission Board Member Update

Your AZ/CA District Mission Board is happy to welcome back to itself Pastor Dan Wagenknecht. Pastor Wagenknecht was elected at this summer's District Convention to replace retiring Pastor Lynn Wiedmann. Pastor Wagenknecht will also assume Wiedmann's responsibilities as the Mission Board recording secretary. Also worth noting is that DMB Chairman Matt Vogt was elected this past spring to serve on the Board for Home Mission's Executive Committee. The Board for Home Missions is pleased to announce that Pastor Wayne Uhlhorn, now a member of the district serving Beautiful Savior Lutheran in Carlsbad, CA, has accepted the position of BHM Chairman, replacing Pastor Chuck Westra.

New Missionaries Welcomed to the District since Convention

The Lord has blessed our district with three new missionaries since we met in convention this past June, filling all our missions' vacancies. Pastor Tom Unke is serving Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV; Pastor Ben Foxen is serving Cross of Glory, Peoria/Vistancia, AZ; and Pastor Ryan Heiman is serving Grace, Sahuarita, AZ.

New Gospel Mission Outpost

At its end of summer meeting the AZCA DMB formally approved the formation of Living Water Lutheran Church in Yuba City, CA as a preaching station in partnership with Faith Lutheran Church in Anderson, CA. Living Water is being served by Pastor Ken Bartelt and currently consists of six members.

In the Works – New Mission Start Opportunities

Looking to the future, the mission board is working with a number of congregations on sites for possible future mission expansion. A community profile has been or is being conducted for each of these sites over the course of the next few months. Annually the mission board meets for two days of mission expansion planning with review of these profiles as the only agenda item. Our goal is to have at least our top two priority sites ready for application to the Board for Home Missions in the spring of 2017.

Those sites currently include, but are not limited to: Korean/Asian cross-cultural mission work (partnering with Peace, Santa Clara, CA); Ontario Ranch, CA and/or Palm Springs, CA (partnering with Crown of Life, Corona/Yucaipa/Riverside); downtown Phoenix (partnering with CrossWalk, Phoenix, AZ); and Elk Grove, CA.

Areas that the mission board (and local mission partners) have their eye on for mission efforts a bit further down the road include: Queen Creek and San Tan Valley, AZ; Oxnard / Camarillo, CA; CA Highway 99 corridor between Sacramento and Bakersfield (several options); Reno, NV (site #3); Wickenburg, AZ; Merced, CA; S/SW Las Vegas, NV (site #9); Buckeye, AZ.

If you have any opinions, advice, former members or prospects to contribute toward any of these fields, please contact the mission board. Any insights or help you might have to offer would be greatly appreciated. If you are aware of or interested in any other mission fields, please contact us.

WELS Multi-Site Conference

What follows is information about a WELS National Multi-Site Conference for WELS churches taking place November 14-16, 2016, at Grace Lutheran Church in Tucson AZ.

What is it all about?

The multi-site movement is all about reaching more people, and bringing mission work to many more congregations, by helping to start new churches in new locations. The potential for this relatively new strategy among WELS congregations is tremendous. While multi-site churches may have many practical benefits such as shared resources, efficient organization, cost-effective programs, and more; the greatest blessing possible is that God would use it to reach more people with the gospel.

Why should you join us for this conference?

Some congregations are already multi-site churches. Others could benefit from considering multi-site ministry, or learning from those who have multi-site church experience. For these reasons, the national Multi-site conference for WELS churches has been organized and attendance is open to everyone. There will be beneficial information for churches that are already doing multi-site ministry as well as churches that are considering multi-site ministry as a way to reach more people with the gospel.

Our district currently has four active multi-site ministries: Crown of Life, Corona/Yucaipa/Riverside, CA; Grace, Tucson/Vail/Benson/Sahuarita, AZ; Shepherd of the Hills, La Mesa and The Way, Rancho San Diego, CA; and Cross of Glory, Peoria/Vistancia, AZ.

Praise and Proclaim Ministries

Having participated in two separate Praise and Proclaim Ministries outreach campaigns as a mission board (on behalf of our new mission effort in Vistancia, AZ and the new mission in Coeur d'Alene, ID), we are happy to endorse and encourage the use of Praise and Proclaim Ministries, a WELS gospel outreach campaign ministry.

Praise and Proclaim Ministries can help a congregation in its outreach efforts in the following ways: 1) Help congregations train and equip members on how to conquer fears and share the gospel by providing a well-organized, meaningful, and transforming experience going door-to-door. 2) Help congregations who may be having a difficult time gaining traction in their outreach efforts by providing a campaign that can help spur outreach momentum. 3) Help pastors by taking over all the nitty-gritty, but necessary elements associated with outreach activities so they can focus on what they do best – teach and preach. To learn more about Praise and Proclaim Ministries, go to: www.praiseandproclaim.com.

Global Hmong Committee

At the direction of the Joint Mission Council a Global Hmong Committee was recently established. Members of the GHC are Pastor Bounkeo Lor, Pastor Pheng Moua, Pastor Robb Raasch and Pastor Keith Free who serves as chairman. Both the Board for World Missions and the Board for Home Missions approved the GHC to be a permanent committee. The GHC works with Hmong ministry in the US as well as Asia. Having two Hmong pastors on the GHC is a wonderful blessing. (To learn more about Hmong ministry and the GHC, see the special *Forward in Christ Missions* edition, pages #18-#20.)

The main reason for the formation of the GHC was the opportunities our church body has for expanding Hmong ministry primarily in Asia, specifically North Vietnam, but also in China and Thailand. Since 2008 Pastor Bounkeo Lor has been making trips to North Vietnam to share the gospel. Contacts number around 63,000 souls. Now the question has come up, how do we proceed? How do we go forward? How do we balance all WELS Hmong ministry? The GHC is working at that as well as working at other facets of Hmong ministry.

Pastoral Studies Institute Team

A recent development in WELS cross cultural ministry is the growing Pastoral Study Institute team. In the spring of 2016 Pastor Jon Bare accepted a Call to serve as the International Recruitment Director (had been serving in China as a world missionary). Now there are three men on the PSI Team. Pastor Bare joins Professor Allen Sorum and Professor Brad Wordell. The purpose of the PSI team is to work around the world (including the US) in vetting men who express a desire to serve as confessional Lutheran pastors. After the vetting process, if approved to be in the PSI program, the PSI team will put together a study plan, develop a teaching team and oversee the process. Over the past twelve months over 300 men have expressed a desire to have pastoral training. (To learn more about the PSI team and its ministry, see the special *Forward in Christ Missions* edition, pages #6-#9.) At this time in the US we have these people groups in the Pastor Study Institute program: 2-Chinese (1 who lives in China, but has come to the US for PSI training); 3-Hmong; 1 Laotian; 1 Liberian; 4 Sudanese; 1 Vietnamese; and 1 Hispanic.

Individual Missions Campaign to Benefit Missions

In partnership with the Ministry of Christian Giving, Missions (Home and World) has started an "Individual Missions Campaign." (To be clear, an "Individual" Campaign means that while individuals will be approached, promotional materials and encouraging materials won't be sent to each WELS congregation to participate in this special offering). Individual campaigns are how the recent special offerings for MLC, WLS and LPS took place. The campaign is currently under way and will run during FY 16-17. The campaign is titled: "Every Neighbor, Every Nation – WELS Missions and You." A key component of the campaign is a special *Forward in Christ* edition. If you have not yet seen a copy, make sure you do. As referenced earlier in this report, there are so many great articles in this special edition explaining mission work in the WELS. To get the message of missions out, Mission personnel (Administrators, Missionaries and Home and World Board members) are joining Christian Giving Counselors on visits to donors. Gifts to Missions will be used by Home, World and ministries supported by the Joint Mission Council for new mission initiatives.

Church Extension Fund (CEF) Personnel Changes

In the fall of 2015, Mr. Scott Page was hired as the Executive Director. In January Mr. Brian Roser came on board. In June, 2016 Mr. Jared Justman indicated he was going to be taking a new job and would end his service at CEF come the end of July. We thank Jared for his 14 years of service. (During that time CEF net assets grew by \$38M and the loan portfolio grew by \$54M). In early August Mr. Rory Virks began working at CEF, replacing Jared. Also, some months back, Mrs. Greta Wagner replaced Susan Hopkins who had retired. We thank everyone who has and who continues to faithfully serve at CEF.

Reports from the Mission Fields

River of Life, Goodyear, AZ – Served by Pastor Lincoln Albrecht, ROL's current 3-year store front lease expires this month, and the congregation is preparing to move to a 3,000+ sf (former) retail location two miles north of its current site. In addition to increased worship space (up from 1,200sf), the new corner location has excellent visibility and is only 2 miles south of I-10. Move in should occur in November or December of this year. The congregation will celebrate 3 confirmations on November 6th, and will host a Praise and Proclaim outreach event in February 2017. The PNW and AZ/CA DMBs will participate with the congregation in that neighborhood canvassing activity (and in the celebration dinner that follows).

Peace, South Gilbert, AZ - Peace Lutheran Church (served by Pastor Greg Hein) continues to gather, grow, and go with the Gospel of Christ as a united family under Christ. They intend to gather for public worship for the foreseeable future at the current school they partner with, but they're currently exploring other possible worship locations as well as rental office space. Three well-received Growth Groups have restarted in September for in-home Bible studies. The summer BIC class is anticipated to bring several baptisms and 6+ confirmations/professions of faith this fall. The congregation's outreach efforts are focusing on its New Movers program, a Facebook advertising campaign for the fall family sermon series, and beginning a new relationship with the Gilbert Chamber of Commerce. Membership has grown by a dozen more souls to 123.

Cross of Glory, Peoria/Vistancia, AZ – The Lord finally answered our prayers and sent COG a great addition to their ministry, Pastor Benjamin Foxen. The congregation has divided up the pastoral duties and are already in the process of passing the torch of many of the duties at the Jomax Campus so Pastor Ehlers can devote a majority of his time in Vistancia. They have met with Peter Kruschel and have put together some goals. The main one being an ambitious first service goal for the Vistancia site of Easter 2017. Core Group and Launch teams are being identified. Pastor Ehlers has begun building relationships with the community leaders. Community events will be attended and the ministry will be promoted at each of them. At the Jomax campus they are continuing outreach efforts and have stepped up their efforts to market the school. Their social media presence is picking up, too. God has blessed them with a young but strong principal and two new hardworking teachers. The area growth is still continuing at a strong pace.

The Way, Rancho San Diego, CA – Pastor Aaron Boehm reports that for the last month, attendance at the Way has been consistently over 30, which until then had been up and down. The Way is an extension of the ministry of Shepherd of the Hills, La Mesa, meeting at a library that is about fifteen minutes away. More people are coming to recognize themselves as part of the core group at the Way, instead of just "borrowed" from Shepherd of the Hills. There are prospects in BIC at both locations, and soon Pastor Boehm anticipates two confirmations of people who identify the Way as their congregation. The Way will be coordinating and hosting a fundraiser at the library for the library's programs. This will prayerfully lead to better relations with the library as well as increasing the mission's community visibility. Challenges include getting more people doing friendship evangelism, and getting more people involved in the physical picking up, transporting, setting up, and taking down equipment for worship services. Two men have been working hard to make this happen every week and they need some relief. Shepherd of the Hills will be deciding whether to call a Vicar in Mission Setting for the next year. With SOTH's school and active multi-site ministry, it seems like it would be a great place for a vicar to learn.

Santo Tomas, Phoenix, AZ – The congregation is busy planning for its second annual Thanksgiving community effort. Members donate turkeys and the trimmings, prepare the food at church, and then deliver the prepackaged meals to people in need. Plans are also in the works for celebrating Santo Tomas' 20th anniversary next year. A \$40,000 capital fund drive is underway to resurface the church parking lot. The congregation has already celebrated 17 baptisms and 5 adult confirmations this year, with 11 youth to be confirmed next Spring.

African Cross-Cultural Ministry, Las Vegas, NV – This unique cross-cultural ministry currently serves about 110 members, consisting of people from 10 or more different African nations. WELS Kingdom Workers is working on a proposal to send a lay person/couple to help recruit for and coordinate the “First Friends” mission project. Because most of the members do not drive (the church has only one van that is working), the same van is used to collect donations from sister WELS churches and to bring members to church. As a result any time the van has an issue, members are not able to come to church. Since the inception of the “Joseph Project” (a ministry which provides a welcome gift of practical household items to each new immigrant family – serving as a bridge to the church and the gospel; funded by WELS Christian Aid and Relief), the Lord has blessed the church with more contacts and added some new members to the congregation. Every month they give donations to 20 to 30 families. The opportunity for the ministry to reach the African refugees and immigrants with the Gospel of Christ Jesus is awesome, because every month new families arrive in Las Vegas. Within the next 10 years there will be about 40,000 African refugees in Las Vegas. DMB chairman Matt Vogt has been able to do leadership training with leaders and members of the church and has been helping with their worship service. Finally, we are excited to report that by the grace of God after 3 ½ years of aggressive studying, Pastor Isaac David was recently able to complete his PSI training. After a certain amount of practical theology training and experience, Pastor David hopes to officially graduate from the PSI program sometime early next year. Related to this ministry (as Pastor Isaac David is the lead), a new WELS world mission field in Liberia is well along its way. A WELS delegation, consisting of Professor Allen Sorum (WLS) and Rob Wendland (President of the seminary in Blantyre, Malawi), is heading to Liberia to complete the establishment of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Liberia and bring it under WELS BWM, followed by two weeks of practical ministry and Biblical training by Pastor Matt Vogt.

Redeemer, Marana, AZ – Served by Pastors Adam Mueller and Matt Langbartels, God continues to provide more souls for Redeemer to serve than they seem to be able to handle. K-8 enrollment is a tick below 100, with 11 prospect families. The preschool has 90 children, nearly half of which come from prospect families. Redeemer has invested considerable time in the past 6-9 months developing harvest strategies for the preschool. LES and preschool prospects do not typically walk-in to worship, so they've become much more aggressive with Sunday morning children's involvement. Many other efforts are now being implemented, and we pray for God's blessing on their efforts. 40 visitors a Sunday seems to be about their average, even as they fold in about 5-10 per BIC session. Their first time visitors have trailed off some, but that is probably seasonal (summer/hot). Considerable effort has been given to train men of the congregation to be friendly and welcoming. First time visitors almost always return several more times unless they're from out of state. Two lay callers are now trained in level 2 follow up. They devoted September to mission month, and are following up with a Friendship Sunday in October. Due to their partnership with the BHM/DMB, which enabled more pastoral staffing, they in turn have been able to more than double their CMO. This mission "enhancement" has really been a tremendous blessing for both the local congregation and Synod.

Pan de Vida/Bread of Life, Santa Ana, CA - Pastor Mike Foley reports that membership stands at 69 with 90 baptized. Many others are regular attenders but not counted as members yet. With the new school year, the preschool has thirty new families. ESL classes still draw good numbers of students. One of the new junior confirmands has been trained and is now ready to do the worship slides and run the video for live streaming. Much of Pastor Foley's time recently has been spent helping a woman who has been spiritually harmed by neo-evangelical legalism understand the true gospel of free forgiveness. Pastor Chris Schroeder continues to preach every other week. After a long struggle to straighten out the church's tax-exempt standing, the tax exempt status is officially granted and all appropriate paperwork has been filed, saving WELS thousands of dollars annually. The congregation has also received a generous grant to replace fluorescent lighting with LED, which should result in better and more economic use of electricity.

Grace, Sahuarita, AZ - Grace-Sahuarita is having a "First service" on November 6th. While the congregation has been around for a number of years (previously Peace Lutheran) and they have their own 5-acre property with facilities, along with a good core of members, they've had very little community presence as Grace Lutheran. Two years ago they joined the multi-site congregation, Grace Lutheran, but have been vacant the entire time. In an effort to re-introduce themselves to the community and now with a full-time pastor (Pastor Ryan Heiman) serving this site, they are hosting a First Service Event for their community. God has blessed Grace Lutheran – Sahuarita during the vacancy with growth, and we pray with full-time efforts in the community, God will continue to grant success to their efforts.

Grace, Vail, AZ - Grace, Vail (served by Pastor Colin Rieke) is one of four sites for Grace (Tucson area). Grace-Vail recently hosted an exciting event . . . on August 27, they held an indoor kid's carnival at their worship location which included inflatables, carnival games, balloons and face-painting. Estimated turnout of the event was 300 people, many of whom were from nearby neighborhoods. From the event, there were several families who were interested in the church, and two of those families have already joined them for worship. Grace-Vail is also making good use of their new permanent ministry center. Three different weekly Bible classes have been held at the ministry center since the beginning of July. The space has opened a door to a completely new community, and allows Pastor Rieke to meet the various small businesses in the immediate area. The ministry center also serves as an office space for Pastor Rieke, and provides a home for the commercial printer, which formerly resided in his bedroom. There is a strong possibility of moving to a larger suite in the near future.

Family Lutheran Church (Hmong mission), Fresno, CA – Pastor Xing Yang has not been able to attend conference or do much travelling due to severe pain in his neck and shoulders. This is a result of injuries he suffered in Viet Nam. Pastor Yang has been calling many members on the phone, and some of the members visit them. He has been able to share the gospel with more and more people, in spite of physical limitations. His wife is gaining more confidence, too, and shares the gospel at many events to which they are invited. As his health permits, Pastor Yang continues to aggressively share Christ with Hmong families from home to home, at the park, area stores, hospitals, funerals, weddings, graduations, family reunions and other gatherings, scattering the seeds of the gospel far and wide.

St. Peter Hmong Lutheran Church, Clovis, CA – In addition to also evangelizing in many of the same ways as Pastor Yang, Pastor Chu Hua (Daniel) Thao reaches out via the airwaves with a weekly radio ministry. Every Tuesday from 6-7 PM, he delivers a sermon and Bible study on air, after which he takes questions from callers. Pastor Thao conducts a number of Bible studies for various age groups (including Congregational Assistance Program materials) and trains his members in witnessing and even counseling. They are passing out Pastor Bounkeo Lor's book "Christ of the Gospel", the "Road to Emmaus" video, and business cards, in order to help and equip the members of the church to evangelize their neighbors.

Crown of Life, Corona/Yucaipa/Riverside, CA - Crown of Life, a multi-site ministry served by Pastors Steve Koelpin and Rick Johnson, purchased the former St. Paul Riverside property in May as part of "saving sacred spaces" in its mission statement. In July most of the members of St. Paul transferred to Crown of Life and Pastor Wenzel accepted a part time call to Crown of Life. Crown of Life is now moving forward with renovating the property, which has not been without its challenges. The multisite mission has completed a few all-campus activities including a men's conference in June with about 50 men present and a church campout in September with over 60 people camping at Yucaipa Regional Park, and then joining the Yucaipa campus for Sunday morning worship and Sunday School. Crown of Life is beginning to look at new campus starts in the Coachella Valley and in Ontario.

Shepherd of the Hills, Las Vegas – Shepherd of the Hills has begun a new chapter in the very short history of this mission congregation. Pastor Tom Unke was installed on June 19. We're thankful that the vacancy has come to an end and that they can now restructure how they do ministry and reach out to the growing community around them. Since Labor Day they have enjoyed having an average of 74 people in worship and are very excited that their Bible Class attendance has averaged nearly 25 adults a Sunday. The Sunday School is growing, too. They have as many as 25 kids, with an average of 18 each week. Much of their energy recently has been put toward qualifying for a construction loan from WELS CEF. Building plans are complete and, if they are blessed to receive funding, they could begin construction on their new facility in the beginning of 2017.

The Springs Lutheran Church, in Sparks, NV – Starting August 1st, with money finally flowing from WELS CEF, the builders were able to restart on the mission's first building project. The final dirt work was prepared, stem walls dug, rebar in place. On September 6, the concrete started flowing and a week later the exterior walls went up. Interior walls and roof trusses are now in place as the electricians prepare to pull wires. It should be weather tight by the end of October. Subcommittees are working full speed on many items: pews selected, flooring stain, interior colors, coordinating with Nathan Pope on the MLC altar, ambo and font; all the liturgical items are selected: paraments, altarware, etc. Ministry-wise the congregation (served by Pastor Steve Hillmer) is now over 175 members and 135 communicants. A mass mailing in October for their Fall Open house gained a lot of interest from the community, and even several now attending worship. They are taking a look at their bylaws to structure themselves better for their growing ministry and, for the first time, property to take care of.

Our Shepherd, Cornville, AZ - The Lord continues to bless the ministry of Our Shepherd Lutheran in Cornville, AZ. They continue to worship in a classroom at the Oak Creek Elementary school. In spite of the fact that they had to move around a bit this summer due to remodeling of the school, attendance continues to be in the 60's with visitors almost every week. While spreading the message of Jesus to the Verde Valley is rewarding, the congregation is also very excited for another reason. Work has now begun on the remodeling of the buildings (home with a connected large garage) on the land site that was purchased by the congregation last year. No date as to when the work will be completed, but we pray it will be later this year. Cornville is very close to two of the most visited areas in Arizona, namely Sedona and Jerome. Let the members of your congregations know that if their travels take them away to these spots on a weekend, they would find a warm and friendly congregation waiting for them on a Sunday morning.

Mission Promotions – Presentations

To ask for information you could use for mission presentations on either Home or World missions, email: missionspromotions@wels.net For schools which are focusing on a specific mission field, this can be a good source for resources to help explain the field to children.

To arrange for a speaker for a Mission Festival, church service, Bible study, LWMS rally or other event as well as learn more about WELS missions, go to: www.wels.net/missions

Finally, I and other members of the DMB would like to offer to preach and/or give mission presentations at your congregation or other church sponsored organizations. We are very excited about the gospel outreach opportunities within our district and we hope to share that excitement with the Lord's people who are supporting that work with their prayers and with their offerings. Let's keep on keeping on in Jesus!

Privileged to serve,

Pastor Matt Vogt, chairman

Mr. Noel Ledermann, BHM representative and financial secretary

Pastor Dan Wagenknecht, recording secretary

Pastor Paul Mueller

Mr. Roger Prigge

Pastor Ronald Koehler

Pastor Peter Kruschel, Western Region Mission Counselor