



**Arizona-California Mission Board Report
AZ/CA District Pastor's Conference
Citrus Heights, CA October 21-23, 2014**

These are exciting times in which we live! We don't have to go far to do mission work . . . even world mission work anymore. We are living in the days of which Jeremiah prophesied: "O LORD, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in time of distress, to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth" (Jeremiah 16:19). The LORD is bringing people from all nations to our neighborhoods, and prayerfully – if we are faithful with his gospel – through us these people from all the ends of the earth are coming to the LORD.

Doug Saunders, author of the New York Times bestseller "Arrival City," wrote: "What will be remembered about the 21st century . . . is the great, and final, shift of human populations out of rural, agricultural life and into cities. We will end this century as a wholly urban species. This movement engages an unprecedented number of people – two or three billion humans, perhaps a third of the world's population – and will affect almost everyone in tangible ways." (*Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping Our World*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2010, pg. 1) In his senior thesis, seminary graduate and now pastor Lucas Bitter, wrote: "We are already experiencing . . . the effects of one of the greatest migrations in human history. . . . This migration transcends rivers, oceans, and national borders. The entire world is being connected as never before. All you have to do is look around you and you will see that the very faces of our nation are changing. . . . This cultural diversity is coming from the incredible waves of foreign immigrants who are crashing onto the shores of North America. We are becoming as diverse and immigrant-driven as we've ever been." After listing a number of interesting statistics and facts about this trend of urbanization and globalization, Bitter writes: "All these factors are filling the world's cities with more and more immigrants from various countries, and as a result we see a level of racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity in our biggest cities that is above and beyond anything our world has ever experienced."

I hope you understand my excitement for us – as a district within which lie many of our country's biggest global cities. Nations from the ends of the earth are coming to the LORD! Within our district of the WELS we already have entire congregations of believers made up of Koreans, Hispanics, Hmong and African immigrants. Many of our churches are already filled with people born and raised in dozens of foreign countries. And Lord-willing, we are just beginning to see the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

These are exciting times! We are in a strong position to teach the name of the LORD and help see to it that people from all these many nations know the LORD! My prayer for you today is that the LORD himself will strengthen and motivate you to be all the more excited about and committed to reaching the nations in our own communities with the amazing news of God's saving love for them in Christ.

New Mission Enhancement – Summer, 2014

In response to the synod's appeal for congregations to review their CMO commitments, additional funds were generously committed to the operating budget of WELS. As a result, the Board for Home Missions was able to grant two more mission grant subsidy requests. One of those granted was to help support an outreach pastor for Redeemer, Tucson, AZ for three years. (The rest of the funding came from local Tucson sources.) Redeemer is currently in the calling process to fill that position.

Special Grants in Summer, 2014

Special grants awarded this summer included a \$3,600 grant to Santo Tomas for audio/visual equipment to support the addition of English services and a \$9,000 grant for Crown of Life, Yucaipa, CA to purchase sound equipment for their newly refurbished sanctuary.

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 our top two to three priority sites ready for application to the Board for Home Missions in the spring of 2015. Those sites currently include, but are not limited to, Anthem (North Phoenix, AZ) and Palm Springs, CA (Crown of Life site #4).

On their own initiative, a number of congregations in our district have taken aggressive action for the advancement of the gospel. These mission efforts are not currently receiving funding from BHM, but are keeping relations with our DMB - reporting their activity, seeking advice and asking for prayer. Such efforts include: Grace-Sahuarita, AZ (Grace, Tucson); The Way Lutheran Church (Rancho San Diego, CA); gospel activity in Merced, CA (St. Peter's, Modesto, CA); and aggressive new outreach efforts to their immediate community by St. Andrew Lutheran Church (Sacramento, CA).

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.

Cross Cultural Ministry Coordination

Over the past years, Home Missions has been serving more cultures. Approximately 30% of its budget goes to support ministry to the Koreans, Sudanese, Hmong, Hispanic, Vietnamese, Navajo, Chinese and other cultures. Also more international students from around the world come to the USA for education. Some students come during their grade school years and more are coming to high schools and staying through college. After their education, the majority return home. While we want to continue to serve them with the gospel and want them to be ambassadors for the gospel, as a church body, there aren't formal plans to continue to serve them or equip them to share the gospel.

Since the summer of 2013 the Joint Mission Council has been studying how it could best serve the church body and all the contacts we have with those from so many cultures. More and more in this mobile and moving world, souls we serve in our country return to their country and souls we serve in world mission settings relocate to the USA. We see some real opportunities to not only continue to support these travelling brothers and sisters in Christ, but also the opportunity to use them as they travel to tell others about Jesus Christ.

To assist WELS in its endeavors to reach more souls in cross cultural settings, this past April the Joint Mission Council called Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) for one year to study this issue and devise a ministry plan. As a part of his research, our DMB spent two days discussing cross-cultural matters with Prange in August. As his research has brought him to some findings and a plan has begun to develop, Pastor Prange has run those plans past both the World and Home Mission Boards. This is still a work in progress. We pray the Lord's blessings on this huge undertaking.

Reports from the Mission Fields

River of Life, Goodyear, AZ – Early in the summer Pastor Lincoln Albrecht accepted the call to serve as the first full time pastor of newly-named River of Life. He was installed the last Sunday of July and has quickly gotten to work, both in getting to know the members and the current ministry, as well as doing outreach in the community. The congregation has put together aggressive ministry goals for the next one, three and 6-12 month time frames. The congregation currently has just over 50 members and worships with nearly 40 on average.

Peace, South Gilbert, AZ - Missionary Greg Hein and the core group have spent the last 14 months aggressively reaching out into their community. They have developed a concrete ministry philosophy and plan. They held their public grand opening service on Palm Sunday, 2014. Two separate growth groups met throughout the summer and a new series began in September. Currently the mission's membership stands right at 50 souls, but about 75 souls would be considered regular attenders.

African Cross-Cultural Ministry, Las Vegas, NV – Pastor-in-training, Isaac David, continues his studies with a number of instructors locally through the Pastoral Studies Institute, overseen by Professor Allen Sorum of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Isaac David serves a mixed group consisting largely of over 90 African refugees from over a dozen nations. Almost all ministry is conducted in English. The church has taken the first steps to assist and minister to the African refugees coming into Las Vegas by serving as a “First Friend” to the immigrants (the only church of any kind in the Las Vegas community to be working with the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC) as a “first friend”). The main intent of the church is to assist the refugee immigrants as they transition to life in America using this opportunity to proclaim to them the gospel of Jesus. WELS Christian Aid and Relief awarded the congregation a \$13,000 grant to provide funding for the welcome gifts and other financial assistance to the new immigrants. Already this summer nearly 50 immigrant families were personally welcomed by the congregation, deeply appreciative of their gift and their friendship. A dozen people have been attending worship since as a direct result of this welcome. In August Mr. Jason Paltzer of WELS Kingdom Workers Health Alliance led a discovery team to determine how they might run health clinics and seminars hosted by the church, as yet another bridge for the gospel into the immigrant community. In addition to supporting the mission with special offerings and donations of food, household items and clothing, local Vegas WELS churches are recruiting volunteers to assist the mission by serving as “first friends.” The mission was recently highlighted by two separate local TV news channels for a special service they held in prayer and support of those suffering from Ebola in Africa.

Korean Fellowship Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV – The Korean congregation just recently completed a joint building project with Water of Life. The second story has allowed the congregation to much more effectively do on site much of the ministry previously conducted in a house across the street from church. It has also allowed them to start an after school tutoring program three days a week, begin a Toddler Time program, and expand their Saturday cultural school to over 80 students. In September two young Korean men began Pastoral Studies Institute training with the goal of becoming WELS pastors. In August the Korean congregation held a musical benefit concert in support of the African ministry in Las Vegas.

Grace, Vail, AZ - Grace, Vail is a second site for Grace (“University”), Tucson. In July the congregation moved to a new school for Sunday worship, giving them much better visibility and accessibility. A re-Grand Opening is scheduled for the last weekend of October. Attendance has inched up a bit already as a result, averaging in the mid to upper 40's each Sunday. The mission has finalized its search for office space outside of the Rieke's home. This space will give them a regular presence in the community and would also allow for hosting Bible classes, meetings and small fellowship gatherings. They intend to move into this space sometime early in the new year.

Family Lutheran Church (Hmong mission), Fresno, CA – Pastor Tong Xing Yang leads this relatively newly formed group of Christians. In August three souls were baptized. Membership is currently 20 souls, with weekly worship attendance averaging nearly 40. A lot of work has gone into Bible study and Sunday school efforts. English classes are also being taught at times in conjunction with the Bible studies. Pastor Yang continues to aggressively share Christ with Hmong families at the park, area stores, hospitals, funerals, weddings, graduations, family reunions and other gatherings, scattering the seeds of the gospel far and wide. Many thanks to Apostles Lutheran, San Jose, CA for a series of special gifts in support of both our Hmong ministry efforts (Fresno and Clovis) totaling \$24,000. Another large special gift was received from Star of Bethlehem in Santa Maria, CA. Such gifts from brothers and sisters in the faith within the district are very encouraging.

St. Peter Hmong Lutheran Church, Clovis, CA – In addition to also evangelizing in many of the same ways as Pastor Yang, Pastor Daniel Thao reaches out via the airwaves with a weekly radio ministry. Membership at St. Peter Hmong is at 34 souls, with weekly worship averaging right around 20. In addition to weekly worship, the congregation holds monthly Men, Women and Youth gatherings.

Pan de Vida/Bread of Life, Santa Ana, CA - In spite of the challenge trying to organize all the administration and ministry under one man (Pastor Mike Foley) after seven years of almost seamlessly sharing the load (with Pastor Chris Schroeder), the ministry at Pan de Vida continues to move faithfully forward. It is a great blessing to have Chris Schroeder still volunteering his preaching and teaching services on a regular basis. The congregation continues to offer a cooperative preschool and English as a Second Language classes. These create opportunities to welcome people of the community to their facility and to make gospel contacts with families in their ministry area. 4 baptisms were performed at Pan de Vida this summer. Thanks to the gifts of God's people and the generous "match" of CEF, the mortgage on their facility now belongs in Pan de Vida's name, reducing their payments by almost \$50,000 a year. The pastors and leaders of Pan de Vida intend to conduct an updated community profile in the coming months.

Crown of Life, Corona/Beaumont/Riverside, CA - Pastors Steve Koelpin and Rick Johnson share responsibilities for four Sunday morning services at three separate locations. The third site is in the process of transitioning from a community center in Beaumont to a newly renovated church in Yucaipa. Grand opening is planned for November 2nd. Among the three sites, Crown of Life has over 350 baptized members and averages about 270 people in worship on Sunday. Their "King's Kids" after school care program has reached their enrollment cap of 102 students. Crown of Life continues to develop and implement many creative outreach efforts into the community. Crown of Life is looking into the possibility of expanding to a fourth location in Palm Springs, perhaps holding Bible studies in the area as early as January. Plans are also well in place to open a part time preschool in summer of 2015. A much needed new digital sign has been finally permitted for the Corona campus and will be installed in early November. Steve and Katie Koelpin were blessed this summer with a healthy baby boy, Jack, who was welcomed into God's family on July 28th.

Santo Tomas, Phoenix, AZ – Pastors Tom Zimdars and Frank Cassio continue to work aggressively in both the areas of outreach and leadership training. Among the fruits of their labors have been 13 baptisms since May. Average worship attendance this fall is around 125 per weekend. 20 students are currently taking ESL classes. Evangelism calls average about 80-100 per month. Quinceaneras continue to provide numerous outreach opportunities. Repairs to the church roof were completed over the summer.

Shepherd of the Hills, Las Vegas - Congregational membership has grown to around 150 members, with average worship attendance in the 80's. A Wednesday evening midweek worship service was begun in May, averaging around 15 in attendance. The congregation is still negotiating on the purchase of a piece of property on which they intend to build a worship/ministry center and preschool. The site sits across the parking lot from their current rental space (which includes a community park). Toddler Time began in September with 11 children enrolled and a new teacher (as Abbie Strong is now serving as a preschool teacher at Water of Life).

The Springs Lutheran Church, in Sparks, NV – After two rather challenging years (parsonage fire, ministry center flood, member losses and Pastor Hillmer serving as vacancy pastor in Reno), the congregation gives thanks to God for the stabilization of and growth in ministry this past year. Membership, worship attendance and Bible class attendance is steadily rising. Worship attendance averages 90 souls. Membership is right at 150. Benefitting from the recent CEF special grant (a \$250,000 grant), the congregation has purchased a 2.62 acre site with frontage on the valley's only major arterial for a very generous price, leaving them with the majority of the grant for building their first worship / ministry center. They are currently in the design phase, having signed on with both an architect and general contractor. They hope to use the services of Builders for Christ, perhaps as soon as May, 2015.

Unsubsidized missions

Unsubsidized missions (missions not receiving subsidy, but maintaining a working relationship with the DMB and BHM, which makes them eligible for certain grant and CEF loan opportunities) of the district include: Crosswalk, Laveen, AZ; St. Andrew, Sacramento, CA; and most recently, Dove Mountain, Tucson, AZ.

Interest subsidized missions

Interest subsidized missions currently include: Beautiful Savior, Las Vegas, NV; Water of Life, Las Vegas, NV; Cross of Glory, Peoria, AZ; Christ the Vine, Temecula, CA; and Redeemer, (Dove Mountain), Tucson, AZ.

Summer Student Assistants (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary)

The Board for Home Missions is willing to assist mission congregations in the financial support of a summer student assistant. To encourage seminary students to serve in this way, the BHM will provide a tuition grant to all students participating in this program. Requests for funding assistance must be made through the DMB. The request must include the congregation's general plan for using the summer student assistant and the amount of funding that the congregation is requesting from the BHM. The deadline for submitting requests for a summer assistant through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is November 15.

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 Lynn Wiedmann, recording secretary
Pastor Paul Mueller
Mr. Roger Prigge
Pastor Ronald Koehler
Pastor Peter Kruschel, Western Region Mission Counselor