



**Arizona-California Mission Board Report
AZ/CA District Pastors' Conference
Henderson, NV October 20-22, 2015**

In some of his last inspired words, the apostle Paul defined the gospel ministry for us in these words: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word. . . . Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1-2,5).

There's much that can be learned from these inspired words. First, that we keep in mind that the Lord is present with each of us as we conduct our ministries. He is ever present to provide strength and energy, direction and encouragement to his gospel servants and power to his Word and Sacraments.

Second, that we are to conduct our ministries each and every day in light of the endless day of eternity. Our use of every moment is to maximize the opportunity we are given to do that which is of eternal consequence. What about how we go about using that day will matter to the Lord and the souls we serve 100+ years from now? The question we must constantly be seeking the Lord's answer to is: What is the best gospel use of our limited time and resources?

Third, that with the Lord's help we conscientiously "discharge all the duties of ministry." Perhaps we tend to pit nurture against outreach, ministering to the gathered flock against "doing the work of an evangelist." These are not opposing perspectives on ministry. We are not to choose one over the other. One is not for "missionaries" and the other for "established church" pastors. Each and every one of us is to conduct a well-rounded ministry. Each of us is to "discharge all the duties of your ministry," which includes both "preach[ing] the Word" and "do[ing] the work of an evangelist."

May the Lord lead each of us to see ourselves as missionaries and our congregations to recognize themselves as mission congregations, and may he work in us an aggressive mission-mindedness.

New Missions in 2015

The Lord blessed our district again this year with a number of new mission openings. At its spring meeting, the Joint Mission Council granted a generous subsidy support package to the African Refugee/Immigrant ministry in Las Vegas, NV. In June the Board for Home Missions authorized the funding for a second site (located in Vistancia, AZ) and a missionary for Cross of Glory, Peoria, AZ. In its fall meeting, the Board for Home Missions granted Unsubsidized Mission Status to two district mission efforts: a new mission in Cornville, AZ (Our Shepherd Lutheran) and Grace, Sahuarita, AZ (a multi-site effort of Grace, Tucson).

Special Grants in 2015

Special grants awarded so far this year included: \$8,999 - Vans for Missions (Las Vegas African); \$2,500 – Tools for Outreach (Peace, Gilbert); \$500 – Children's Ministry (Peace, Gilbert); \$1,665 – Tools for Outreach (River of Life, Goodyear); \$4,000 – Tools for Outreach (Las Vegas African); \$2,000 – Children's Ministry (Cross of Glory, Vistancia); \$3,500 – ESL Outreach (Water of Life, Las Vegas); \$3,000 – First Service (Crown of Life, Yucaipa).

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 2016. Those sites currently include, but are not limited to, a third site in the Reno, NV area (Cold Springs) and The Way Lutheran Church, Rancho San Diego, CA.

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: 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).

Areas that the mission board (and local mission partners) have their eye on for mission efforts a bit further down the road include: Palm Springs, CA (Crown of Life, Corona), New River/Cave Creek, AZ, Las Vegas #7 (or 9), Carefree (N. Scottsdale, AZ), and East 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. If you are aware of or interested in any other mission fields, please contact us.

New Mission Categorizations: Subsidized and Unsubsidized Missions

At its fall meeting the BHM authorized the simplification of mission categorizations. From this point on there are only two categories: subsidized missions and unsubsidized missions. This eliminates all previous classifications, including interest subsidized missions.

Regarding unsubsidized missions: this category is for situations in which local congregations and pastors have begun worship at second sites with the hopes of starting another church, a new church, a separate church. BHM's intent is to insure that these missions, while not receiving subsidy from Home Missions, would still be eligible for grants from CEF. Home Missions has set down criteria relating to this as to what the unsubsidized mission would need to do to be considered a mission which would be eligible for grants from CEF (4 to 1 and 2 to 1 grant for land and facility). How does a mission church receive "Unsubsidized Mission Development Phase" status? Simply put: over the course of a twelve month period the congregation will have acted like a mission church, working with and reporting to the District Mission Board. At that point status may be requested and granted. Please contact us if you want more information.

"Saving Sacred Spaces" and Multi-Site Mission efforts

Over the past years a number of mission efforts within our district have been serving as a bit of a training grounds for a couple different pilot projects, which are now being endorsed and encouraged by the Board for Home Missions. "Saving Sacred Spaces" is the term used to describe the efforts of a mission-focused missionary and ministry to assume the facilities of an established and dying congregation and breathe new life and apply aggressive outreach minded ministry to that mission field. This is particularly valuable in areas of our district/synod where the cost of purchasing land and building facilities is cost-prohibitive. "Multi-site" is the term used to describe the efforts of an established congregation to reach out into a new mission field with a second site for ministry (often under the same name and same administration). The multi-site model comes in many shapes and sizes, but efforts are currently being made for these varied models to share ideas and resources with one another. If you are interested in learning more about either of these mission models, please contact us. Mission Counselor Peter Kruschel is happy to meet with leaders, members or pastors to talk about partnering opportunities and possibilities at any time.

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.

Reports from the Mission Fields

River of Life, Goodyear, AZ – River of Life (served by Pastor Lincoln Albrecht) has been blessed with the challenge of “flirting with worshipping at capacity,” particularly during the “harsh” winter months in Arizona. They currently hold weekly services in a converted store front suite that has 73 seats. Exploration of other worship space options continues, hastened now somewhat by flooding of their worship suite by a burst water pipe next door in early August. Damages have since been repaired, but the search for a better worship space continues. Steady growth in the City of Goodyear continues, albeit at a much slower pace than anticipated. New home construction is increasing, after a slow-down last year. The congregation enjoyed the help of six Faith In Action high school students in March as 4,000 Easter flyers were distributed and nearly 200 face to face conversations were held, resulting in 59 prospects being added. Seventy Easter worshippers “pleasantly packed” the worship suite in April, with half staying for Easter breakfast. Pastor Albrecht and wife Jenni were gifted with the birth of their son, Ezekiel Albrecht, baptized on May 31st. The congregation currently has just over 58 members and worships with 45 on average.

Peace, South Gilbert, AZ - Two years into full-time ministry in south Gilbert, God has blessed Peace congregation (served by Pastor Greg Hein) with a growing membership and a healthy prospect list. Door to door outreach efforts were enhanced in March as a Faith In Action team from MLC helped the congregation advertise its Easter service and also assisted in the completion of many canvass surveys. Easter service attendance was one short of 120, with the boost in numbers coming almost entirely from neighborhood prospects. Pastor Hein and Julie welcomed their son, Leo, into the world on April 13th. A monthly Family Growth Group has been well received by the congregation. It is held in addition to two other weekly Growth Groups. Currently the mission’s membership stands right at 90 souls (65 communicants) and averages about 75-80 in worship. The congregation remains strongly committed to personal spiritual growth and to outreach to the unchurched.

African Cross-Cultural Ministry, Las Vegas, NV – Pastor Isaac David continues his faithful and aggressive PSI training with the goal of completing his studies sometime in 2016. Monthly men’s and women’s Bible studies are being held. Great strides are being made in raising up and training lay leaders and providing recognized structure to the ministry. Youth ministry will be the next area of focus. Connections with Rev. Terry Schultz will hopefully soon bring some real quality African-flavored Lutheran hymnody to their worship. ESL classes run by Water of Life members are offered weekly. The “Joseph Project” (a “first friends” welcoming of new immigrants – many thanks to the support of a generous WELS Christian Aid and Relief grant) has been wildly successful. To date the number of adult confirmands as a direct result of the first year of the “Joseph Project” is over 20 souls. Small group Bible studies are being organized on the west side of town where most of the recent immigrants are being situated. This will make the planned transition to a new location on the west side in 2016 more fluid. Plans for a new WELS world mission field in Liberia are well along the way, with regular ongoing contact by Pastor Isaac with previously made contacts in Liberia. A trip to formalize mission efforts in Liberia and offer Biblical training to leaders is planned for spring, 2016.

Korean Fellowship Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV – Korean Fellowship Lutheran, served by Pastor Taesang (John) Kim, has been blessed with a very active group of lay leaders (especially young leaders) and a series of aggressive largely education-oriented outreach ministries to the Korean community of Las Vegas. A Saturday cultural school is maxed out at around 90 students. Summer school was offered for 5 full days each week of the summer and after school tutoring is held throughout the school year. Two ESL classes are offered each week (taught by members of Water of Life). An active teen youth group and a separate college/young 20’s group are led by Korean youth leaders. A youth service is led by Korean youth worship leaders, with the vicar at Water of Life leading the message and writing the after-service study (which divides into 3 different levels for study). A wide variety of remarkable musical talent is nurtured (from youth on up) and featured in the worship services weekly in the adult Korean service. An after worship fellowship meal is held for over 100 every Sunday. One young Korean man, Pat Ki, is receiving Pastoral Studies Institute training with the goal of becoming a WELS pastor.

Grace, Vail, AZ - Grace, Vail (served by Pastor Colin Rieke) is one of four sites for Grace (Tucson area). Palm Sunday marked the third full year of weekly services at this site. They have tried a few different things this year in their efforts to reach out to the community. This spring they ordered A-frame signs that are placed each weekend at key intersections around the school. They have heard frequently from visitors how they have been a reason they worshiped with them the first time. They are also experimenting with Facebook advertising. Their Easter ad was seen on 11,000 screens and it directed 200 people to click ahead to their website. While it is exciting to plan for different ways to reach people with the gospel, nothing beats actually meeting with that person who is excited to hear more about God's Word. A few prospects recently completed the Grow in Grace adult BIC class. One family just moved from India (not Indiana), and another gentleman, who had been worshiping with them for all three years, also finally decided he wanted to join the church. These individuals were confirmed on July 23. Grace, Vail averages low 40s in worship each week and offers a Pre-Reader Sunday school class. Pastor Rieke also serves the fourth site of Grace in Benson, AZ.

Family Lutheran Church (Hmong mission), Fresno, CA – Pastor Tong Xing Yang leads this relatively newly formed group of Christians. Membership is currently 41 souls, with weekly worship attendance averaging nearly 50. 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. Recently the congregation has had their sign vandalized a number of times, but the congregation faithfully repairs the sign and patiently reaches out with the gospel to their community. 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. Membership at St. Peter Hmong is at 35 souls, with weekly worship averaging right around 20. Pastor Thao is leading his Bible class through the "Congregational Assistant" training program. He is teaching worship, teaching music, teaching outreach, teaching the care of souls. He and his wife welcomed their new son, Aaron, on June 29th, and welcomed him into the family of God on July 26th.

Pan de Vida/Bread of Life, Santa Ana, CA - The city of Santa Ana breaks all kinds of rules! It is in a huge metropolitan area, but the city is committed to cleaning things up. You can spend your whole life in Santa Ana and never say a word of English. You can live in the same apartment for twenty years. And just in case you wanted to communicate better with your neighbors, learn Vietnamese! In this environment the congregation is using any number of different means to connect to their community. The congregation has a "Big Back Yard" preschool with daily lessons for the parents and children alike. The preschool, led by Mrs. Kara Schroeder, reaches across the city boundaries into the "Bread of Life" communities of Orange, Anaheim and Tustin. The Mommy and Me program recently started up again with seven new families. English as a Second Language classes reach those who until recently could never drive a car in the United States. Classes continue for weeks and months. Graduates sign up again and again. At each class a Bible study is offered, most students stay and learn. This leads to Bible Information Classes, often attended three or four times before someone is ready to join. The congregation currently has 77 members and worships near 60 on average. Pan de Vida/Bread of Life, Santa Ana, is served full-time by Pastor Mike Foley and part-time by Pastor Chris Schroeder.

Crown of Life, Corona/Beaumont/Riverside, CA - Crown of Life, a multi-site ministry served by Pastors Steve Koelpin and Rick Johnson, is now offering 4 Sunday services at three locations. They serve just under 400 members (318 communicants) and average 267 for worship attendance and 100 for Bible class attendance (in a number of "growth groups"). Their current situation is that they have a landed campus in Corona with two services and a childcare center; a landed campus in Yucaipa plus parsonage with one service; and a rented campus (storefront) in Riverside with one service (having recently moved from their original movie theatre location). They are currently in active discussions with St Paul Riverside about their merging into and become a COL campus, and that involves them as well in active discussions with the DMB, BHM and CEF. They are looking toward beginning growth groups in the Coachella Valley in

winter 2015-16. After the loss of key people, they again have a strong COL Board and the campus ministry teams are made up of faithful, creative and energetic leaders, especially a good cadre of exceptional younger leaders. Tim Johnson has done a fine job of building up their group of musicians after so many moves in one year.

Santo Tomas, Phoenix, AZ – Infant baptisms continue to be a blessing at Santo Tomas in 2015, with seven children having been baptized already through June. In April, eleven youth were examined and confirmed in church at the completion of their studies. Focus on the congregation's youth has also included the remodeling of the large Sunday School room into two smaller rooms, with the labor being provided by the members. In February the annual marriage enrichment evening was enjoyed by the sixteen couples who participated. The Easter celebration service saw 180+ worshippers, with many staying for the Spanish potluck that followed, complete with music and kids' activities. Pastors Zimdars and Cossio have also made quarterly trips to Sasabe, Mexico, to attend one-day conferences with their Mexican brothers/counterparts.

Shepherd of the Hills, Las Vegas – Shepherd of the Hills is currently in a vacancy, as Pastor Aaron Strong accepted a call to serve at Grace Lutheran, Milwaukee, WI in August. While it was hard to say goodbye to their first pastor, the members of Shepherd of the Hills see this as an opportunity for the congregation to grow up and step up in ownership and support of the ministry. The congregation currently has 157 members (114 communicants), a full ministry, and strong lay support. Pastor Matt Vogt of Water of Life is currently serving the vacancy. Pastor Brett Ehlike (currently in Stevensville, MI) is holding the call. The congregation signed a Letter of Intent for a 3.13 acre parcel of land with frontage on the I-215 beltway right at the Durango off ramp. The Building Committee is in the design phase of their building project, working with a design/build general contractor. The majority of ministry as outlined in the congregation's ministry plans continues under the vacancy, including lay led Toddler Time, Youth Group, Men's and Women's Bible studies, and a number of fall fellowship and outreach opportunities.

The Springs Lutheran Church, in Sparks, NV – This year has brought steady growth for The Springs Lutheran Church (served by Pastor Steve Hillmer). They have increased to 162 members and 120 communicants, with a number of additional families currently in BIC. The Springs shared a Summer Vicar with Shepherd of the Mountains who helped them reach out and explore two communities where they would like to reach into: Cold Springs and Carson City. Cold Springs seems to be the most fruitful with 2 families attending regularly and 5 others expressing interest. Their Building Program took a setback because the cost of the project exceeded the limit of a member/general contractor. Benefitting from a 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.

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