



The LORD prophesied concerning the gospel ministry of the Messiah: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you . . . Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy” (Isaiah 60:1-5).

It brings great joy to me to be able to share just a sampling of the evidence of the fulfillment of the LORD’s words in our corner of his Kingdom these past two years. Nations have come to the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it shines brightly through the mission efforts of our district. As you read on, I pray your heart, too, throbs and swells with joy!

The mission board would like to thank Pastor Daniel Wagenknecht, who stepped down from his position as District Mission Board chairman in the fall of 2012, for his years of faithful service. His service to the Kingdom in this capacity was blessed with a number of exciting new mission openings around the district, and this in spite of the lean economic times throughout most of his tenure. On behalf of the district, we express our gratitude for his leadership and his efforts for the cause of gospel outreach and mission expansion. We pray that the Lord of the Church continue to richly bless his future ministry endeavors!

The same prayers of thanks and blessing go out on behalf of Pastor Scott Martz, who completed his service to the board that same year. That fall we welcomed two new members, Pastor Ron Koehler and Mr. Noel Ledermann, who have been serving faithfully and energetically since.

#### **New Mission Openings in 2013-14**

In the spring of 2013 the BHM approved the opening of ten new ministries (or support for the first time ministries which had already gotten a head start on their own). Two of these mission efforts are in our district: a new mission start in South Gilbert, AZ and a Korean cross-cultural ministry in Las Vegas, NV. (At its fall, 2013 meeting the BHM approved two new openings nationwide.)

Also at this same meeting, the BHM prioritized six missions to receive portions of a \$1 million grant from WELS Church Extension Fund for land and facilities purchases. Two of those six missions are within our district: Shepherd of the Hills in Las Vegas, NV (\$200,000) and The Springs in Sparks, NV (\$250,000). In September, 2013 the CEF approved those grants.

In the fall of 2013 the Joint Mission Council approved funding for a new African cross-cultural ministry opportunity in Las Vegas, NV.

In the spring of 2014 the BHM approved the opening of six new ministries. A mission restart in Goodyear, AZ (River of Life) was the synod’s top priority. Pastor Lincoln Albrecht accepted the call to serve this ministry and will arrive in Phoenix the first week of July. His installation is set for July 27<sup>th</sup>.

Home Missions has additional missions prioritized, but won’t consider authorizing them until sometime in July. Since the Conference of Presidents, working through circuit pastors, is asking congregations to consider raising their congregational mission offerings and results won’t be known until late June/early July, Home Missions needs to wait. If the CMO does increase, Home Missions will authorize 1-3 additional missions in July (one of which lies within our district).

#### **Special Grants in 2013-14**

In addition to the large mission grants reported above, a number of other special grants were approved. Cross of Christ in Las Cruces, NM received a \$3,000 grant to help promote their first public worship service. Both Hmong congregations in Clovis/Fresno, CA received \$1,000 grants to purchase new Hmong hymnals and Bibles. Water of Life/Korean Fellowship in Las Vegas, NV received an \$8,000 grant to

assist with the promotion of their new preschool ministry. River of Life, Goodyear, AZ received a grant of \$2,500 to assist in the purchase of signage for their new storefront ministry center. Crown of Life, Corona/Riverside, CA received a \$3,000 VBS grant.

### **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 include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Redeemer, North Tucson, AZ
- 2) Anthem (North Phoenix, AZ)
- 3) Palm Springs, CA
- 4) Resurrection, Phoenix, AZ – cross-cultural ministry

Other locations on our radar include: Oxnard / Camarillo, CA; CA Highway 99 corridor between Sacramento and Bakersfield (several options); and Reno, NV (site #3).

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.

Please understand that this is not intended to be busy-work. We need to be proactive in determining where we (under God's grace) can open missions and advance the Kingdom. Even work on fields that don't ever work their way to the top of the list is time well spent as a part of this determination process.

### **Highlights from the WELS Board for Home Missions**

In the fall of 2010 the BHM determined to try a regional approach for the operation of Home Missions. At its September, 2012 meeting, the BHM decided to return to the district operational approach. This also means that the Executive Committee returned to four members elected by the Mission Board. Those members are: Dr. Keith Eldred, Pastor Jon Hein, Mr. John Isleb, Pastor Wayne Uhlhorn.

The BHM has adopted a thorough Strategic Plan, which outlines in great detail the direction and efforts of the BHM and DMB's for the next five years. The plan encourages each district to open one mission a year. Another goal is, as missions start, they do so with the mindset of becoming self-supporting in eight years. By receiving synod financial support for only eight years, this will allow Home Missions to open more mission congregations.

The BHM has recently initiated a new level of financial accountability for all mission congregations receiving synod subsidy. Each congregation will undergo a thorough financial review annually. The deadline for these reviews is October 31<sup>st</sup>.

The BHM thanked the President of CEF (Church Extension Fund), Jim Buelow, for his twelve plus years of service. He retired December 31, 2012. Mr. Ron Hillman has since been serving in that capacity.

Home Missions is making a concentrated effort to let the members of WELS know how God is blessing mission work in North America. To learn about mission work in North America as well as around the world go to: [www.wels.net/mission](http://www.wels.net/mission)

### **Vicar in Mission Program**

The Vicar in Mission program continues to receive strong support from both the Board for Home Missions (BHM) and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). WLS provides \$250,000 toward the cost of placing vicars into missions or mission minded congregations and the BHM provides \$315,000. At this

spring's BHM meeting, the requests of 32 congregations were prioritized. 22 of the prioritized locations were presented to the Conference of Presidents to be assigned a VIM (one of which is Water of Life, Las Vegas, NV).

### **Joint Mission Council**

Through the past years the Mission Administrators and Chairmen, plus a layman from the World and Home Boards along with the Director of Mission Operations have comprised the Joint Mission Council (JMC). The JMC's role is to work together where missions in Home and World overlap.

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 JMC 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 cultural settings, the JMC called Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) for one year to study this issue and devise a ministry plan. With the blessing of the BME, Pastor Prange accepted the Call on April 1<sup>st</sup>. As a plan develops, Pastor Prange will run those plans past both the World and Home Mission Boards. We pray the Lord's blessings on this huge undertaking.

### **Kingdom Workers**

This ministry supports both Home and World missions through the coordination and support of lay volunteers.

Builders for Christ (BFC) uses members skilled in construction to build houses of worship, schools, or other ministry structures for existing and new congregations of believers. After many years of service as the director for BFC, Mr. Dale Mueller retired the end of December, 2013. In February, 2014 Mr. John Lautz was installed as the next Builders for Christ director. He intends to assist mission congregations in overall project management from the point of securing land through its construction, serving as a liaison to WELS Church Extension Fund.

The Lutheran Health Alliance works with members to serve and care for families and people through community health ministry and long-term development support, developing leadership and outreach opportunities.

On January 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, Kingdom Workers along with other ministries is sponsoring a "2015 Global Leadership Summit – Tools for Tomorrow's Mission" in Scottsdale AZ. To learn more, go to the Kingdom Worker website: [www.kingdomworkers.com](http://www.kingdomworkers.com)

### **Reports from the Mission Fields**

**Peace, South Gilbert, AZ** - Missionary Greg Hein and the core group have spent the last 10 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 and had 130-150 people in attendance at its first two services. Worship attendance since has been holding steady in the mid-sixties.

**African Cross-Cultural Ministry, Las Vegas, NV** – Pastors-in-training, Isaac David and Bryan Harvey, continue their studies with a number of instructors locally through the Pastoral Studies Institute, overseen

by Professor Allen Sorum of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. These two men, along with a number of lay leaders, serve 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. A request has been submitted to the WELS Christian Aid and Relief Fund to provide funding for the welcome gifts and other financial assistance to the new immigrants. Most recently, discussions with Mr. Jason Paltzer of WELS Kingdom Workers Health Alliance have led to plans for him and a small team to help run health clinics and seminars hosted by the church and to organize and train the leaders and members of the congregation to effectively carry out their role as "first friends." Mission Counselor Peter Kruschel has provided training for lay members for ministry to the youth in the form of a Sunday School/VBS hybrid and other leadership training within the congregation.

**Korean Fellowship Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV** – Pastor Taesang (John) Kim entered the WELS ministerium through the colloquy process of our district and synod. His official welcome occurred in a bilingual service in May at Water of Life Lutheran Church. Korean worship averages over 120 on Sundays, with another 25-30 youth worshipping in English. Six other devotion and prayer services are held throughout the week. Pastor Taesang Kim and the congregation are working closely with the council of Water of Life to strengthen its lay leadership and organize its ministry planning. The congregation is applying for membership in the district at this district convention. The Korean congregation is also currently involved in a building project with Water of Life. In addition to housing a joint preschool ministry effort, a second story will allow the congregation to do on site much of the ministry currently being conducted in a house across the street from church. The congregation intends to call a Korean graduate from Martin Luther College as a staff minister working in both Korean and English next spring.

**Grace, Vail, AZ** - Grace, Vail is a second site for Grace ("University"), Tucson worshipping in a school in Rita Ranch. Missionary Colin Rieke and his wife had their second daughter last September and the congregation subsequently had its first baptism. Grace is currently worshipping with 40 people on average each Sunday. The mission is finalizing its search for a 1000 sq. ft. office space outside of the missionary's home. This space would 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 their worship location to a more visible and accessible school this summer and plan to have a grand re-opening in the fall.

**Hmong missions, Clovis and Fresno, CA** – Our Hmong mission efforts in California took a couple huge leaps last summer. Both Pastors Chu Hua Thao and Tong Xing Yang graduated from the Pastoral Studies Institute program of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and were assigned to their respective fields of ministry in May, 2013. Chu Hua Thao is serving as the pastor of the previously existing congregation worshipping at St. Peter in Clovis. Tong Xing Yang was assigned to start a new mission effort in Fresno (they've chosen the name Family Lutheran Church). This new effort is still in its infancy stages, with Pastor Yang aggressively sharing Christ with Hmong families at the park, area stores, hospitals, funerals, weddings, and other gatherings. In addition to also evangelizing in these same ways, Pastor Thao reaches out via the airwaves with a weekly radio ministry. Between the two congregations about 40 Hmong are currently actively being served. Both pastors participated in the Hmong, Asian Conference hosted by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary last fall.

**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. Recently a woman joined the congregation who had completed the membership class at least four times (taking the class multiple times is very common for them working in

the Hispanic community). The congregation continues to use the facility provided through loans from the WELS Church Extension Fund 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. A number of interesting opportunities to share the gospel with large extended families have arisen recently.

**Crown of Life, Corona/Beaumont/Riverside, CA** held its first service at their third site in East Riverside in November of 2012 in Mission Grove Theaters. Pastors Steve Koelpin and Rick Johnson share responsibilities for four Sunday morning services at three separate locations. 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 often has over 90 kids attending with over 100 kids enrolled. They received approval this past fall to increase capacity to 101 and purchased a fourth vehicle for transporting children from local schools to King's Kids. 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.

**Santo Tomas, Phoenix, AZ** – Last summer Santo Tomas was excited to be able to purchase their property in downtown Phoenix and secure a loan with a workable amortization schedule. This was a huge step for the congregation, and was closely coordinated with the CEF, who holds the mortgage. A service of Thanksgiving and Celebration was held on May 26<sup>th</sup>, with 176 in attendance. Subsequently the congregation has repaired the roof of the church. Pastors Tom Zimdars and Frank Cassio continue to work aggressively in both the areas of outreach and leadership training. Evangelism calls average about 90 per month. Quinceaneras continue to provide numerous outreach opportunities.

**Shepherd of the Hills, Las Vegas** - Congregational membership has remained steady at around 130 members in spite of a good amount of membership changes. The summer VBS programs average over 60 kids. Toddler Time (birth - 5 yr old & parent program for one hour a week) has over 30 children enrolled with more on a waiting list. Last year they became the beneficiary of the CEF's generous \$200,000 special grant for enabling them to move quickly on the purchase of a piece of property and the building of a worship/ministry center. Recently they signed documentation to purchase the piece of property across the parking lot from their current rental space (which includes a community park). The council and congregation have dedicated themselves to not being distracted by this phase of their ministry, but instead intend to remain focused on growing in the Word and sharing the Word with their community.

**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. They held two Saturday "Discipleship Training Seminars" (BIC 2) this past fall, with the intent of raising up mission-focused and driven lay leadership. The Springs also benefitted from the recent CEF special grant (a \$250,000 grant). They have 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. The property was dedicated on February 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year.

#### **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.

Lamb of God (Phoenix, AZ), Risen Savior (Chula Vista, CA), Shepherd of the Valley (Surprise, AZ) and Peace (Sahuarita, AZ), having reached what the mission board considers a non-subsidized loan percentage, have officially been released from the oversight of the AZ/CA District Mission Board, with the prayer that the LORD continue to bless their future ministries as he has to the present.

### **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.

### **WELS Kingdom Workers – Faith in Action Requests**

The mission board was pleased to see well over a dozen of the district's congregations put in requests for Faith in Action teams for 2014. The deadline for Spring, 2015 requests is in early September.

### **Mission Promotions – Presentations**

To ask for information you could use for mission presentations on either Home or World missions, email: [missionspromotions@wels.net](mailto: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](http://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