



Arizona-California Mission Board Report
AZ/CA District Pastor's Conference
Phoenix, AZ October 16-18, 2012

Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the writer to the Hebrews encouraged the Church: "See to it that no one misses the grace of God" (Hebrews 12:15). Although Bibles are in nearly every hotel room across the country, although churches are on many a corner in just about every town, although Christians are scattered like salt throughout our communities, far too many are missing the grace of God. Pray that the Lord move us to do all that we can do in the way of gospel outreach so that no one misses the point or the benefits of God's grace in Christ!

The mission board would like to thank Pastor Daniel Wagenknecht for his years of faithful service as the District Mission Board chairman. 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 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 this summer. We also welcome our two newest members, Pastor Ron Koehler and Mr. Noel Ledermann.

Looking to the future, the mission board has identified our top ten sites for possible future mission expansion. A community profile is being conducted for each of these sites over the course of the next few months. On January 11-12th, the mission board will meet in Las Vegas for two days of mission expansion planning with review of these profiles as the only agenda item. Our goal is to have our top three to four priority sites ready for application to the Board for Home Missions in the spring.

Those sites (along with the person charged with the responsibility to lead the compiling of the community profile; in no particular order) are:

- 1) St. George, Utah - Matt Vogt
- 2) Anthem (North Phoenix) – Ron Koehler, with help from Peter Kruschel
- 3) Elk Grove (south of Sacramento, CA) – Noel Ledermann
- 4) El Dorado Hills (east of Sacramento) – Noel Ledermann
- 5) South Chandler, AZ (possible partnership with Emmanuel, Tempe) – Jonathan Bauer and Roger Prigge
- 6) Mountain House (SF Bay area) – Paul Mueller
- 7) Oxnard / Camarillo, CA – Lynn Wiedmann
- 8) CA Highway 99 corridor between Sacramento and Bakersfield (several options) – Lynn Wiedmann

We'd also like to do profile work in the Goodyear / Buckeye, AZ area (Roger Prigge). We will need to see how things get resolved for the group there with CEF before we move forward, but we'd like to understand the field better and be prepared to move forward in some way as soon as we can.

(Reno #3 is currently on hold pending Pastor John Beck's recovery. Community profile work for this site would likely become his responsibility.)

If you have any opinions, advice, former members or prospects to contribute toward any of these fields, please contact the mission board member responsible for that particular community profile. 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 most recent meeting in September of this year, 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 heard a report from the Strategic Planning Task Force. The task force is encouraging 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 thanked the President of CEF (Church Extension Fund), Jim Buelow, for his twelve plus years of service. He retires December 31st.

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.

Reports from the Mission Fields

Grace, Vail, AZ - Our district's newest mission congregation (a second site for Grace, Tucson) held its grand opening service on April 1st in Rita Ranch and is currently worshiping with 40 people on average each Sunday. Missionary Colin Rieke is starting a new BIC class with two prospects and is offering the Financial Peace University course. The congregation is planning to do some community outreach at the Vail County Fair.

St Peter Hmong, Clovis, CA – Pastor Mike Carr, Chu Hua Thao and Tong Xing Yang are conducting Every Member Visits on each of the Hmong families these next two months. Hands-on training of Hmong Council members by Anglo Council members will begin this month. Starting in January, Hmong and Anglo Bible Class will meet at the same time. Pastor Carr will be teaching all members of the Anglo congregation and those in the Hmong congregation whose English skills are better than their Hmong skills. Tong Xing and Chu Hua will be taking turns teaching the group from the Hmong congregation whose English skills are not as good. The Hmong congregation meets with 20 people for worship and 10 adults for Bible study on an average Sunday. They also conduct a weekly radio ministry. Two big unknowns concerning the future of this ministry are 1) how much funding that the Synod and other sources will be able to provide and 2) whether Chu Hua Thao will be finishing his studies to graduate from PSI with a Bachelor in Divinity in May 2013 or May 2014. There is also a desire to research and find a site for a daughter Hmong congregation in the east central portion of Fresno.

Crown of Life, Corona/Beaumont/Riverside, CA is planning to hold its first service at their third site in East Riverside on Sunday November 4th at 9:30 am at their rented space in Mission Grove Theaters. New missionary, Steve Koelpin, was ordained and installed on August 12th. "Preview" services at the new site have had 50-60 in attendance already. They will be benefitting from a "First Service Promotion" grant from the BHM. Between the two current sites, Crown of Life has nearly 400 baptized members and averages 250 people in worship on Sunday. Their "King's Kids" after school care program has on average 75 kids attending daily with over 100 kids enrolled. They recently purchased a third vehicle for picking up the kids; the program has ten staff members. They have recently conducted a number of interesting community outreach activities (and plan to do a couple more in the months ahead).

Pan de Vida/Bread of Life, Santa Ana, CA - Sadly, unbeknownst to and entirely against the will of the District Mission Board, the Executive Committee of the BHM decided to cut \$100,000 from the budget of Pan de Vida at its spring, 2012 meeting (effective July 1st, 2013). Pastors Chris Schroeder and Mike Foley and the congregation are still working out exactly how they will proceed with ministry in light of this severe reduction of subsidy. Worship attendance this summer averaged the upper 70's. Preschool filled to capacity this fall and has a waiting list of ten. There are also 18 families participating in the "Mommy-n-Me" program (for children ages 18 months to 3 years). Both programs are growing and will have to look at expansion in the next year. 75 children from the neighborhood attended VBS this summer. Three men of the congregation have recently received training to make visits on both delinquents and prospects.

Santo Tomas, Phoenix, AZ (and St. Thomas, Goodyear) recently received the official notice from CEF that they are in default on their loan. All the property of St Thomas (both Goodyear & Phoenix) was collateral for the loan. CEF will be pursuing a non-judicial foreclosure on the property. The property in Goodyear will most likely be sold to a broker in order to get rid of it quickly. The property in Phoenix will be offered to Santo Tomas. At the present timetable, St Thomas should be able to use the Goodyear property until the end of the year. A search committee will look for an alternative worship place in Goodyear. The public school teachers in the congregation have started a tutoring program as a community service/outreach project. There are about a dozen children signed up for that program, only one is a member. St. Thomas plans to request for subsidy to call a full time pastor for Goodyear. Santo Tomas continues to worship with over 125 souls on average per Sunday. They are planning an all day Reformation Celebration event to which they intend to invite the community. The male lay leaders of the congregation are conducting Every Member Visits with a stewardship emphasis. The congregation is experiencing a great deal of spiritual growth and participation in men's, women's, and youth groups as well as through their pre-seminary studies.

Shepherd of the Hills, Las Vegas - Average worship attendance for September was 80. This year's education kickoff included the addition of an active teen ministry. Currently, 16 students are enrolled in confirmation classes. The congregation is considering the potential of buying land and constructing a worship facility.

The Springs Lutheran Church, in Sparks, NV is currently pursuing several land options. Their best option is 2.62 acres of "extra land" that the county is now getting rid of. They have submitted a Letter of Interest and offered them \$6,000. After 18 months of challenges with fire, flood, finances and member losses, they have leveled off at 65 people in worship on average and have four new solid families in BIC. Pastor Hillmer currently is also serving as the vacancy pastor at Shepherd of the Mountains in Reno.

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.

Missionary Conference

Interest has been expressed and some initial thoughts have been put into a missionary conference for the spring of 2013. While intended for our missionaries and mission congregations, this conference will be open to anyone who is interested in participating. Watch for more information to be forthcoming once a few of the details are figured out. If you have any suggestions for the conference (location, dates, days of the week, agenda suggestions), please contact us.

Finally, I'd 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 I 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. Jesse Huggins, BHM representative
Mr. Noel Ledermann, financial secretary
Pastor Lynn Wiedmann, recording secretary
Pastor Paul Mueller
Mr. Roger Prigge
Pastor Ronald Koehler
Pastor Peter Kruschel, Western Region Mission Counselor