

WORLD MISSIONS

WELS WORLD MISSIONS UPDATE—SPRING/SUMMER 2025

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God's plan flourishes in Vietnam: Fourteen years ago, Hmong church leaders in Vietnam invited WELS to train their pastors in the gospel. Seven years ago, the Vietnamese government approved the construction of a theological education center in Hanoi. We knew that the Lord had opened a door for outreach, but we also knew that the door could close at any time. WELS World Missions worked quickly to take advantage of the time the Lord provided. And God's work moved forward in ways we could have never predicted. We were able to build the building, but government regulations have kept us from using it for now. A former partner church began demanding practices contrary to Scripture. WELS' partner church stood firm, losing government recognition in the process and delaying occupancy. Despite these challenges, ministry thrives.

More than 160,000 Hmong believers now call themselves Lutheran, 55 pastors have been trained, and 120 more are in seminary-level studies. Without the building, training continues in rented spaces and online. Though red tape persists, we see God's hand at work, growing the church beyond expectations. The delay has provided more time to strengthen faith and train leaders. We remain confident. We thought we needed that building. God knew we needed him—and him alone. Stay up to date on progress at wels.net/asiaoceania.



Exploring new partnership opportunities in Africa:

The One Africa Team is expanding its outreach and exploring potential partnerships in several new countries. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, they are working with the Evangelical Lutheran Mission to The Congo in Lubumbashi, providing pastoral training. In **Ethiopia**, they have engaged with the Gambella Evangelical Lutheran Church, a group of about 150 members from the Anuak tribe, and the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ethiopia and South Sudan, which has 28 congregations and around 14,000 Nuer members. In **Sudan**, they are in contact with the Lutheran Church of Sudan (LCS), an Arabic-speaking group with approximately 16,000 members, though visa and passport issues have delayed in-person meetings. Lastly, in Liberia, they are in the early stages of fellowship work with Lamb of God Lutheran Church in Buchanan, a small congregation that separated from a Pentecostal group in 2022. Learn more at wels.net/africa.

Graduation at Asia Lutheran Seminary:

On Oct. 27, 2024, Asia Lutheran Seminary (ALS) in Hong Kong celebrated the graduation of 13 students at a ceremony held at SALEM Grace Lutheran Church. Among the graduates, nine received certificates in Greek or Hebrew, two earned an associate of arts degree in theology, and two were awarded a diploma in Christian Studies. Academic Dean Dr. Angus Cheung delivered the sermon, encouraging the graduates as they prepare to serve their churches and communities. Nine graduates attended the ceremony in person, and many plan to continue their studies with ALS at the next level. We praise the Lord for their dedication and commitment to growing in faith and ministry! Learn more at wels.net/asiaoceania.



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World Missions expands to Australia:

WELS has launched a new world mission effort in Australia. With a large focus on the country's growing immigrant communities, two WELS missionaries and their families relocated to Brisbane, Queensland, in the summer of 2024 to plant the seeds of the gospel in a region that has been described as largely post-Christian. They are working closely with local congregations, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Brisbane and Fountain of Life in Maryborough, as a foundation for expanding ministry. With nearly 30 percent of Australia's population born overseas and more than 500,000 new immigrants arriving last year, there is an increasing need for spiritual community. The missionaries are focusing on relationship-building through neighborhood engagement, English language programs, and small gatherings

of believers meeting in homes to study God's Word and share in fellowship (similar to early Christianity).

The missionaries' goal is to train and mentor

local leaders to establish and lead

house churches. This grassroots approach is

already bearing fruit. In

Melbourne, a new life group has formed, including believers from diverse backgrounds. The mission is still in its early stages, but meaningful connections are being established, planting the seeds for lasting faith communities. Follow along at wels.net/asiaoceania.



Church planting expands rapidly in Latin America:

The One Latin America Team continues to use *Academia Cristo* to grow church planting efforts, calling 11 new church planters from Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador, Argentina, Venezuela, and Puerto Rico between October 2024 and January 2025. In total, 37 church plants have been started by *Academia Cristo* students. One example is Luis Bello in Baradero, Argentina, whose group is progressing toward membership in *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*.

To support these church planters, new courses have been introduced, covering topics such as building Christian community, maintaining a Christ-centered ministry, and sermon preparation. Missionaries and national partners also launched a system for weekly text studies, ensuring ongoing support and mentorship of these new church planters. A new counseling resource was developed to help church planters navigate pastoral care situations.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We thank God for you! World Missions is grateful for the many generous special gifts we receive throughout the year. Extraordinary things are happening all over the world every day. Your gift matters.

Please pray for the lost and consider how you can best make an impact on the millions of people who still need to hear the truth of the gospel. To give an immediate gift, go to wels.net/wmgift. Watch with us as the Holy Spirit changes earthly lives and opens the door to eternal life for our brothers and sisters around the world.

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