



# Faces of FAITH

STORIES FROM WELS MISSIONS



**2023/2024**

**WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD**







# DEAR FELLOW WITNESSES,

# HOME

“Immeasurably more.” That is the kind of God we have. He is “able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20). So how does it look to live like we believe this? That is the question the Board of Home Missions considered in March 2023 as we reviewed many new start and enhancement requests. Knowing that we were officially kicking off the 100 Missions in 10 Years initiative this year, we also knew there were still questions about money and pastors.

We trust that God can do immeasurably more, and we are all living examples of that. By his grace and power, he laid claim to us. He marked us as his own, adopted us as his children, made us heirs of everlasting life, and citizens of his kingdom. What more could we ask! At the same time, we also know that God wants us to use the minds he has given us to gather and analyze information and then use sanctified common sense as we make our decisions.

**WE AIMED TO DO BOTH.** We trusted that God could do immeasurably more because the one who commissioned us has all authority in heaven and on earth. We trusted that he has equipped us with his powerful Word and Sacraments. We trusted that he promises to be with us always.

It had to be daunting for Jesus’ disciples to think that Jesus was commissioning them to “make disciples of all nations,” considering they didn’t have the technology and transportation we have today. Yet, look at how Christ has blessed this work for centuries. He’ll continue to do the same.

So, we trust that with all the new ministries approved this coming year, God will bless these efforts immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.

*Pastor Mark Gabb*

**PASTOR MARK GABB**  
Board for Home Missions chairman



**144**  
HOME MISSION  
CONGREGATIONS





# HOME Missions

**WELS Home Missions** plants new churches and assists mission-minded congregations in the United States, Canada, and English-speaking West Indies. Home Missions currently supports 144 congregations with financial subsidy or district mission board/mission counselor assistance, with 28 of those being cross-cultural mission congregations. Home Missions also provides more than 35 campus ministries with financial support, while assisting hundreds of other congregations that serve college students around the United States and Canada.

## Faces of Faith — Sonny and Lucy

I met Sonny and Lucy at the funeral of their daughter. They were obviously devastated. I asked them if I could come for a visit, and we started on a year-long study of the Bible while they tried to teach me Mandarin. Lucy grew up in the Christian church in Indonesia, but at age 12 she moved back to China and never went back to church. Her husband Sonny was a stubborn atheist, a professor of philosophy, and member of the communist party in China. But the death of their daughter had shaken them. After eight months of study, Sonny said to me one day with tears in his eyes, **“Pastor, before I met you I never thought about God. Now all I do is think about God.”** I baptized Sonny not long after that in his home, and two months later the Lord took Sonny home to heaven. Lucy joined Living Hope, but later moved to New Jersey to live with her son. Before she

left, Lucy convinced her friend Shu Ling, who had recently gone through a terrible divorce and was a Buddhist, to meet with me. Now Shu Ling and I meet once a week to study the Bible. She hasn't been to church yet, but I can see the Spirit at work in her life and her thinking.



**FROM JOSHUA STERNHAGEN**, home missionary at Living Hope in Commerce City, Colo.

HOME MISSIONS IN

# 38

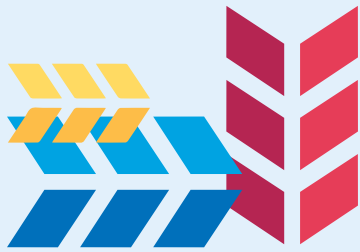
STATES, CANADA, AND  
ENGLISH-SPEAKING  
WEST INDIES

# 134

NEW MISSION STARTS/  
ENHANCEMENTS  
SINCE 2011







## 100 MISSIONS IN 10 YEARS

WELS Home Missions approved 15 new home mission starts and enhancements in March 2023. These are the first missions approved toward our synod's goal of starting 100 missions and enhancing 75 ministries in the next ten years.

## NEW HOME MISSION STARTS



**+ Bentonville, Ark.:** Bentonville, the headquarters of Walmart, is anticipated to see 35 percent population growth in the next three years. The 12-person core group looks forward to planting a new church in an area with no current WELS presence.

**+ Boston, Mass.:** Boston, a city with 4.3 million souls, is known as "America's College Town" with 53 colleges and universities. This unique urban mission would be modeled after church plants in Atlanta and New York City and could have potential for college and cross-cultural ministry.



**+ Cincinnati, Ohio:** Beautiful Savior in Cincinnati is starting a second site in the Oakley and Hyde Park neighborhoods, just northeast of downtown. This new location would put Beautiful Savior closer to three colleges in the area, opening opportunities for Campus Ministry growth.



**+ Idaho Falls, Idaho:** The Mormon church has a strong historical presence in this growing area. The 11-person core group has been working with Truth in Love Ministries to understand how to best reach out to this demographic.

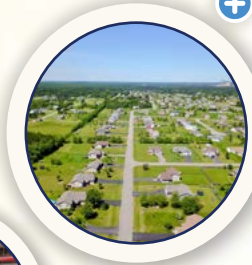


**+ Kalispell, Mont.:** Kalispell is considered the fastest growing micropolitan city (10,000-50,000 popula-

tion) in the United States and is 100 miles away from the nearest WELS church. The dedicated core group has been gathering for worship on a regular basis for years.



**+ Kronenwetter, Wis.:** Five WELS churches in the greater Wausau, Wis., area are supporting a new mission in Kronenwetter. This growing community south of Wausau is home to Northland Lutheran High School, which will house this new church and provide mission-minded staff and students to support the outreach effort.



**+ Marquette, Mich.:** Marquette serves as the hub in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and 52 percent of the people in and around Marquette do not have a home church or attend a church. It is also home to 7,000 students at Northern Michigan University, a ripe opportunity for a Campus Ministry program.



**+ North Collin County, Tex.:** A core group of 15 members are starting a new church in North Collin County, a northern suburb of Dallas. Divine Savior Ministries has committed to providing guidance and resources to the new mission and plans to build a Divine Savior Academy by year five of the mission start.



**+ Panama City Beach, Fla.:** Amazing Grace in Panama City is looking to expand west and start a second site in the greater Panama City Beach area.





**15**  
NEW MISSION STARTS/  
ENHANCEMENTS  
APPROVED IN 2023

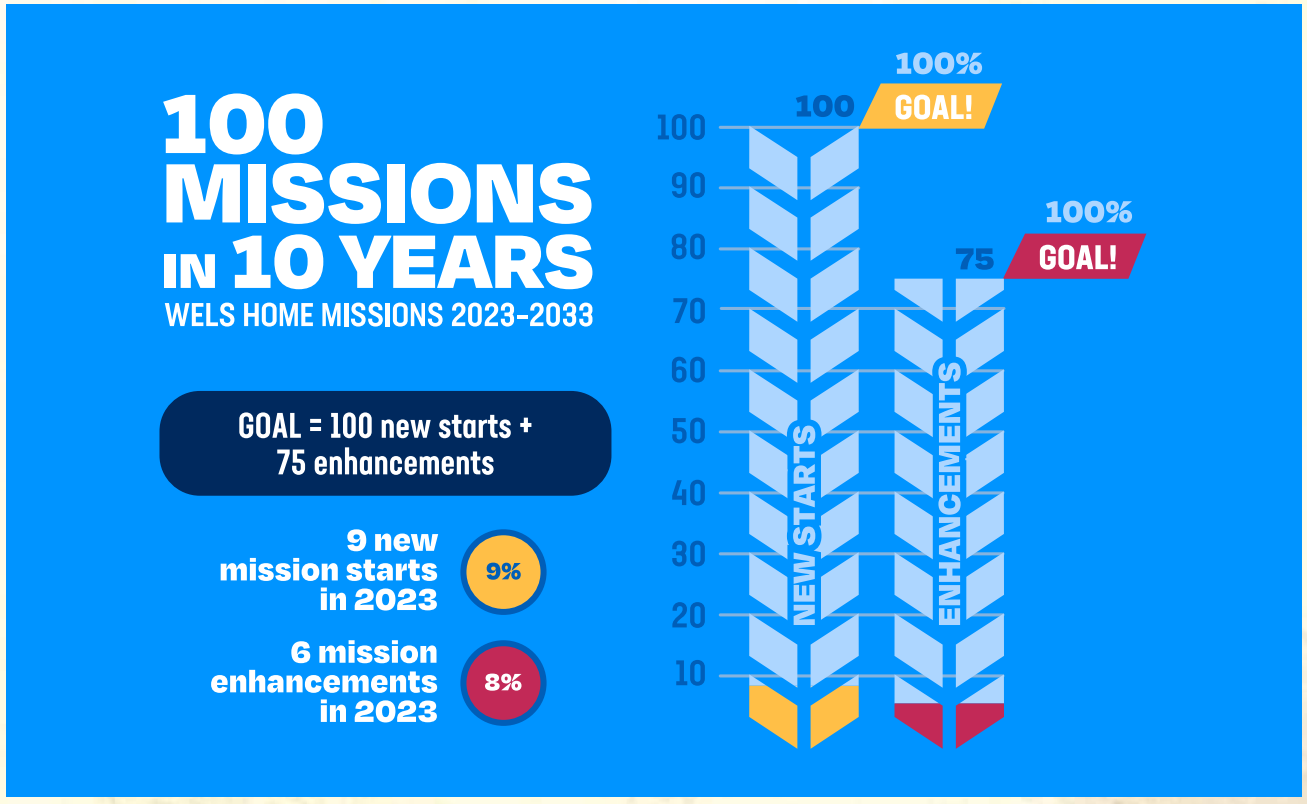
Read more about these new starts and enhancements at **WELS100IN10.NET**.



# ENHANCEMENTS

Enhancements at existing congregations could include calling an additional pastor or staff minister, starting a cross-cultural ministry, or restarting a church where members have renewed their efforts to go with the gospel into their community. Two of these enhancements are unsubsidized, which means they have access to their district mission board, mission counselor, synodical support staff, and special project funds, but do not receive direct financial support.

- ★ Beautiful Savior - West Des Moines, Iowa (Restart)
- ★ Christ the King - Port Charlotte, Fla.
- ★ Divine Savior - Sienna, Tex.
- ★ Fairview - Milwaukee, Wis.
- ★ Good Shepherd - Midland, Tex. (Unsubsidized)
- ★ Our Redeemer - Ladysmith, Wis. (Unsubsidized)





## Faces of Faith – Fredericksburg, Va.

“Let’s not go back!” That’s what Will (pictured left) and Sydney decided after their first visit. But the gospel seed was planted, and they did come back. Someone studied God’s Word with them, including what the Bible says about close communion. Will and Sydney not only came back, but they took our Foundations class and joined as members.

Then Will brought his friend, Chris (pictured right). Chris had questions about the Bible and church. Again, someone studied God’s Word with him, including what the Bible says about baptism. And so, months after Will decided “Let’s not go back!,” Will was a witness as Chris was baptized.

“I’m not going on a second date!” That’s what Chris decided after his first date with Mischa. But they did go on a second date. There were even dates to Foundations class. Now they’ll be married in their church in fall.



### “I’d like to come back and learn more.”

That’s what Chris’ roommate Matt said after his first visit. Matt grew up unchurched and had many questions (even more than Chris). And now Will and Sydney, Chris and Mischa, and an entire group are studying God’s Word with Matt.

How did this all happen? The gospel seed is planted and someone “hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown” (Matthew 13:23).

**FROM MATT ROTHE (PICTURED CENTER), home missionary at The Way in Fredericksburg, Va.**



## Faces of Faith – Chanti

Our path to understanding the immeasurable love of God and the absolute forgiveness through our Savior began shortly after our first son Colton was born. My husband Zach and I had recently moved to the area when I heard about the Mornings with Mommy program at Christ Alone in Keller, Tex. We felt so loved and cared for, we continued signing up along with Power Hour.

The interactions and relationships with the people from Christ Alone made us want to learn more. I was invited for a cup of coffee with a member, who is now a dear friend, and she shared with me about her faith in Jesus

as our Savior. After Zach and I attended worship with our boys, another member delivered a care package to our door just to thank us for attending. Shortly thereafter, Pastor Seager came to visit us at our home. **Each of our interactions personified the selfless love of Jesus. There were no expectations, no strings attached; just genuine love offered from people who kept pointing us to the cross.**

When Pastor Seager taught us about God’s Word in Faith Builders classes, Zach and I felt like we were finally beginning to understand the Bible and what it means to receive the gift of salvation through Jesus. We had no idea the wonderful plan God had for us, but I clearly see his hand in all of it when looking back.



**GIVE A GIFT** to support WELS Home Missions by scanning the QR code with your phone or visiting [wels.net/hmgift](https://wels.net/hmgift).





## DID YOU KNOW?

WELS Home Missions financially supports **35+ campus ministries** across North America.



Light of the Valleys and area churches started a **Campus Ministry** program in 2021.



## Faces of Faith – Reno, Nev.

“Vicar, we’ve been delivering new mover bags for almost three years and never had any response. I want you to come up with another way to get information to people moving into our community.”

That was the assignment in week two for our Vicar Nathan Holz (pictured second from left). He did his homework and came up with a recommendation. But before we pulled the trigger, Vicar delivered new mover bags for what we thought was the last time, one of which landed on Claudia’s doorstep.

Claudia (pictured left) had just moved to Reno from a small town in Nevada. But three years prior, she moved to the U.S. with her family from Chile. Claudia was looking for a community, so she decided to check out the church that dropped off a bag of popcorn that said, **“Just poppin’ in to welcome you.”**

She wasn’t the only one. Keith and Wendy (pictured right) were looking for the same thing. And just like Claudia, they had a new mover bag dropped on their doorstep. Within two consecutive weeks, we had three first-time guests “pop” into worship.

Fast forward six months. Having completed our Bible Information Class, Claudia, Keith, and Wendy were all confirmed and communed together. Now Keith has even delivered new mover bags himself. (We decided not to scrap the idea.)

**FROM JOEL HECKENDORF**, home missionary at Light of the Valleys in Reno, Nev.



## Faces of Faith – Jarrod and Jessica

Sometimes God plays the “long game.” I met Jarrod and Jessica Bakker when I was first canvassing in Brandon, S.D. They had recently visited our sister church, Good Shepherd. They were interested in our church plant, but we weren’t worshipping yet (we didn’t even have a name yet). We lost touch after a few months, but that wasn’t the end of the story. Two years later, we had an Amazon package delivered to the wrong house two doors

down. They came over to drop it off, and sure enough, it was the Bakkers. They began coming to worship and have since taken classes and become members. **God certainly played the long game here, and what a cool thing it was to witness!**

**FROM CRAIG WILKE, home missionary at Sure Foundation in Brandon, S.D.**



### SIGN UP

with WELS Campus Ministry at [wels.net/college](http://wels.net/college) so we can share information with a local campus pastor and send e-mail free copies of *Meditations* devotions and *Forward in Christ* magazine.

## Faces of Faith – Allison

After a painful life event, Allison moved to Houston looking to start over. Throughout the years she tried different churches, but nothing ever really felt right. When discussing church options with her neighbor, she agreed to try out a church called Hope in the Heights. Her first service was July 4, 2021, and she has come ever since. There are many things Allison has come to love about



her church, including the music selections, the sermons, and the friendly people. However, the gospel and power of Jesus’ grace is superior to all of that. When asked about her faith, Allison shared, **“I used to feel that I wasn’t worth anything, but now I know that Jesus wants to remind me of his love daily. Something I used to not feel was possible or even true! My faith is developing each day.”**

**FROM EMILEE NEMMERS, member at Hope in the Heights in Houston, Tex.**



28

CROSS-CULTURAL  
MISSIONS

## Faces of Faith - Dillon

It was one of my first Sundays as a pastor when Dillon walked into the community center. He had a Mariah Carey cap and necklace on, dried mustard in his beard, and fell asleep during the sermon. Members were a little tentative at first. He said he was surprised that he found a church meeting in the community center. It was his third service of the day and was excited to worship with us.

I found out from Dillon's mom that he suffered from schizophrenia and hadn't found a place where he had been welcomed in the community. He told me no one had

taken the time to teach him the

Bible. So, over the next year we walked through our Bible Information Class together, and Dillon came to every worship service. Members also came to love Dillon. Every time he walked into service, you would hear everyone chime in "Good Morning, Dillon!" After we got through class, I asked him if he would like to join our Good Shepherd family. He answered, **"I thought I already was?"**

Dillon was baptized and became a member in May 2022. He faithfully attends worship and has invited his mother, stepfather, and grandparents to join. You can find Dillon on Sunday morning helping set up church, enjoying the coffee, or talking with other members.

**FROM LUCAS CALLIES, home missionary at Good Shepherd in North Liberty, Iowa**

## Faces of Faith - Shawn

Shawn grew up in South Florida and attended a Baptist church for part of his early life, but never felt like he was good enough to be baptized and be a "real" Christian. As he grew, his life took some twists and turns into darker things. **While he would say he never really rejected God, he felt far from him.** He eventually moved to Michigan and fell in love with a girl from Ontario. When they got married, he moved to Ontario and they built a family together, but something was still missing.

At the suggestion of a WELS family member from the U.S., Shawn came to visit Cross of Life one Sunday. He appreciated the straightforward preaching right from the text of God's Word. When I found out he wasn't baptized, we scheduled to have him baptized at the next Sunday service in February 2023. He is currently taking Bible Information Classes to join our church family in Communion!

**FROM CALEB SCHULTZ, home missionary at Cross of Life in Mississauga, Ont., Canada**





# Where investing in your future builds churches



**Thank you, WELS Church Extension Fund, for supporting the planting of new home mission churches!**

- **\$43.1 million** in matching land and facility grants to home mission congregations since 1993
- **\$110 million** in loans to WELS ministries since 2010
- **\$13.2 million** in grants to WELS Home Missions to help fund mission operations since 2010

**Learn how you can invest with WELS Church Extension Fund and simultaneously support Home Missions at [wels.net/cef](http://wels.net/cef).**

The purchase of WELS CEF securities is subject to risks, which are described in our Offering Circular. The WELS Offering Circular can be found online at [wels.net/offering-circular](http://wels.net/offering-circular). This is not an offer to sell, nor the solicitation to buy, our securities. We will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. The offering is made solely by the Offering Circular.



# CAMPUS MINISTRY

WELS Campus Ministry, a ministry of WELS Home Missions, provides resources, support, and encouragement to WELS congregations that serve college students. These congregations are vital in connecting college students with fellow Christians, strengthening their faith with the gospel, and encouraging them to share that faith with other college students.

## Faces of Faith – Angie

Welcome Weekend at Redeemer in Ann Arbor, Mich., is our annual September outreach event for our Campus Ministry program. That weekend in 2021, I met someone new. Angie was born in China, but her family moved to America when she was young. She earned her bachelor's and master's in piano performance at the prestigious Juilliard School in New York City. Now she's earning a doctorate at the University of Michigan. One of her classmates, Allison, who was in the same program had already been attending Redeemer. After church, Angie decided to stay for lunch and then came to Starbucks to help us plan our Campus Ministry activities for the semester. She then started attending our Campus Ministry Bible studies. When she asked about being baptized, we found a spot in central campus, and I listened to Angie share more of her story. That conversation led to starting Bible 101 classes—often meeting on Zoom until 10 p.m.—after she finished classes and I put my kids to bed. In April 2022, Angie was baptized and confirmed, and many other Campus Ministry students shared that special day with us. Now as a member of Redeemer,

Angie shares her talent by playing for church.

**We're so thankful to hear her beautiful music in worship, but we're even more thankful for what God has done in her life.**

**FROM JACOB HAAG, campus pastor at the University of Michigan**



## Faces of Faith – Michaela

When I first transferred to the University of Wisconsin-Stout, the students at our WELS Campus Ministry took me in and made me feel welcome when I felt lost in a new environment. From then on, I made Campus Ministry my home and got as involved as I could.

Our Campus Ministry has faced obstacles in the time I have been here. We kept the program going through a pastor vacancy, and we're still calling a second pastor for our large congregation. We continued our Bible studies and fellowship and were recently blessed to welcome Pastor Kieta to our congregation. I feel incredibly grateful to have been able to watch our Campus Ministry grow. Through every hardship, we've still had new opportunities arise for our group in the last few years, such as taking part in the Awake and Alive conference and a Mission Journeys short-term mission trip.

Reflecting on where I was when I began college, my faith has certainly branched out and flourished since then. The experiences I've had through Campus Ministry brought me closer to God and lit a flame in my life that propelled me to take my faith seriously. **I will carry this flame wherever the Lord guides me in the future.**







# JOINT Missions

WELS Joint Missions supports mission opportunities that are the responsibility of Home Missions, World Missions, and Ministerial Education. Much of this work centers around diaspora (people-group) ministries, where immigrants who have joined our fellowship in the United States and Canada are able to take the gospel back to friends and family in their country of origin. Joint Missions administers the work of the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) and assists in other cross-cultural outreach efforts and new programs, like WELS Mission Journeys. The Joint Mission Council has identified people from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Cuba, India, Korea, Liberia, Mexico, Pakistan, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Vietnam, and other countries who have interest in training to take the gospel to their own people groups here in the United States and in their countries of origin.

## Faces of Faith – Salma

“Pastor, there’s just one thing holding me up.” My stomach dropped. It was Salma’s day to be confirmed in worship—was she going to back out?

Salma is an immigrant to Detroit from a country in Latin America. She comes from a family with Islamic roots. She and her sister are the only two converted Christians in their family. So, they began a ministry—first to reach their family with the gospel, then to reach people in their community. Before they had left their country, they’d essentially established churches for women. All sorts of

women were coming. . . from skeptics interested in the faith to the wives of local governors suffering from the stress of being in such a high position. Since moving to Detroit, she has been reaching out to Spanish-speaking immigrant women

with the gospel to teach them about Christ and plug them into the ministry of a local congregation.

And so, the one thing holding her up on that Sunday morning was this: **“Pastor, can I work within the scope of the church’s mission to reach out to women, teach them about their identity in Christ, and bring them to church?”**

My emotions flipped from that feeling of rejection to pure joy. “Salma, we can figure that out! So, yes!” May God bless her heart for Christ and those who don’t yet know him, and may she bring as many people to church as possible!

**FROM RYAN KOLANDER, home missionary at Palabra de Vida in Detroit, Mich.**



**LEARN MORE** about  
WELS Joint Missions at  
[wels.net/jointmissions](https://wels.net/jointmissions).



## Faces of Faith - Lah

“It is our choices that define us.” While this sounds like it came straight out of a movie, people like Lah might say it is true. Lah is an educational assistant at Christ-St. Peter Lutheran School in Milwaukee, Wis. She grew up in Mae Hong Son, Thailand, but her family migrated to the United States when she was ten. Lah had the opportunity to attend Christ-St. Peter starting in sixth grade; she was the only one amongst her friends to do so. It was this choice that would not only set Lah apart from her friends, but also greatly change her faith life. Growing up, Lah’s entire family had been Baptist. **To this day, Lah is one of only two Lutherans in her family.** Thanks to her time at Christ-St. Peter, Lah came to have a new perspective on her faith, and she was both confirmed and baptized in 2016. Now, Lah is a member at St. Peter, adding to the number of other worshipers in attendance who immigrated from Thailand. She says that she is constantly thankful for her faith because “there’s temptation every day,” and she would not be where she is without God.

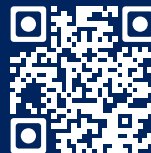


## FAST FACTS

- The new **Diaspora Ministry Facilitator program** helps facilitate connections and outreach between people groups in North America and their home country.
- **Abiding Love Chinese Church in Coquitlam, B.C., Canada**, launched public worship in November 2022 led by Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) graduate and **Chinese native Rev. Qiang Wang.**

FROM RACHEL VOLKMAN, member at St. Peter in Milwaukee, Wis.

**WELS Foundation**—  
helping God’s people  
support the ministries  
they love since 1965



Connect with us to support mission work in a way that’s ideal for you. Visit [wels.net/foundation](https://wels.net/foundation)

**We know that you are passionate about supporting the spread of the gospel both at home and throughout the world. WELS Foundation can help you maximize your gifts in the most tax-efficient way so more of your blessings support mission work.**

### We can help you . . .

- **Give** to support missions right now
- **Give** to support missions in the future or after Jesus calls you home
- **Give** to support missions on an ongoing basis
- **Give** while supporting missions and receiving a retirement income for life





# MISSION JOURNEYS

WELS Mission Journeys, the official WELS program for short-term mission trips, provides an opportunity for all WELS members to walk together in the Great Commission. Church- or school-based volunteer trips to WELS mission fields at home and abroad will prayerfully inspire a lifelong journey of service and outreach for all who volunteer.

## Faces of Faith - Michael

I was changed. That's my response when people ask me why they should consider participating in a Mission Journey trip. While I could tell many touching stories of the new friends we made, the individual activities, or the difficult decisions we were invited to help consider, none of those descriptions do justice to the overall experience and outcome.

Pastor Nathan Zastrow wrote to us on behalf of the three congregations we served in Washington state: **"Words cannot express our deep gratitude for the blessing you have been for us. . . We thank and praise God for your courage to step out in faith and serve God by serving your fellow Christians halfway across our country."**

I have come to believe that the self-sacrificing love demonstrated through mission work is among the clearest realizations of God's presence among us. I have never done anything so spiritually fulfilling, and the Mission Journeys program provides the opportunity for that same experience to many more people.



## Faces of Faith - Laura

Northcross in Lakeville, Minn., sent six members to Nong Khai, Thailand, where we visited missionary Tom Chaleunsouk and his wife, Kaysone, along with the congregation there. Facilitating a Vacation Bible School at the church was rewarding for all involved! We all worked together to make cross-cultural connections. I knew traveling to Thailand would be an enriching experience for myself, but I was amazed how the trip encouraged so many people across the globe in their faith. It was an honor as well as humbling to be sent as an ambassador to this world mission congregation.

One of the most memorable moments was standing barefoot on a Sunday morning, worshipping with Christian brothers and sisters singing a song I knew in a language I didn't. **It was a small glimpse of what's to come in heaven!**



Laura pictured second from left

Short-term mission trips through WELS Mission Journeys are open to all ages and backgrounds with a heart for mission work! Learn more and apply today at [wels.net/missionjourneys](https://wels.net/missionjourneys).

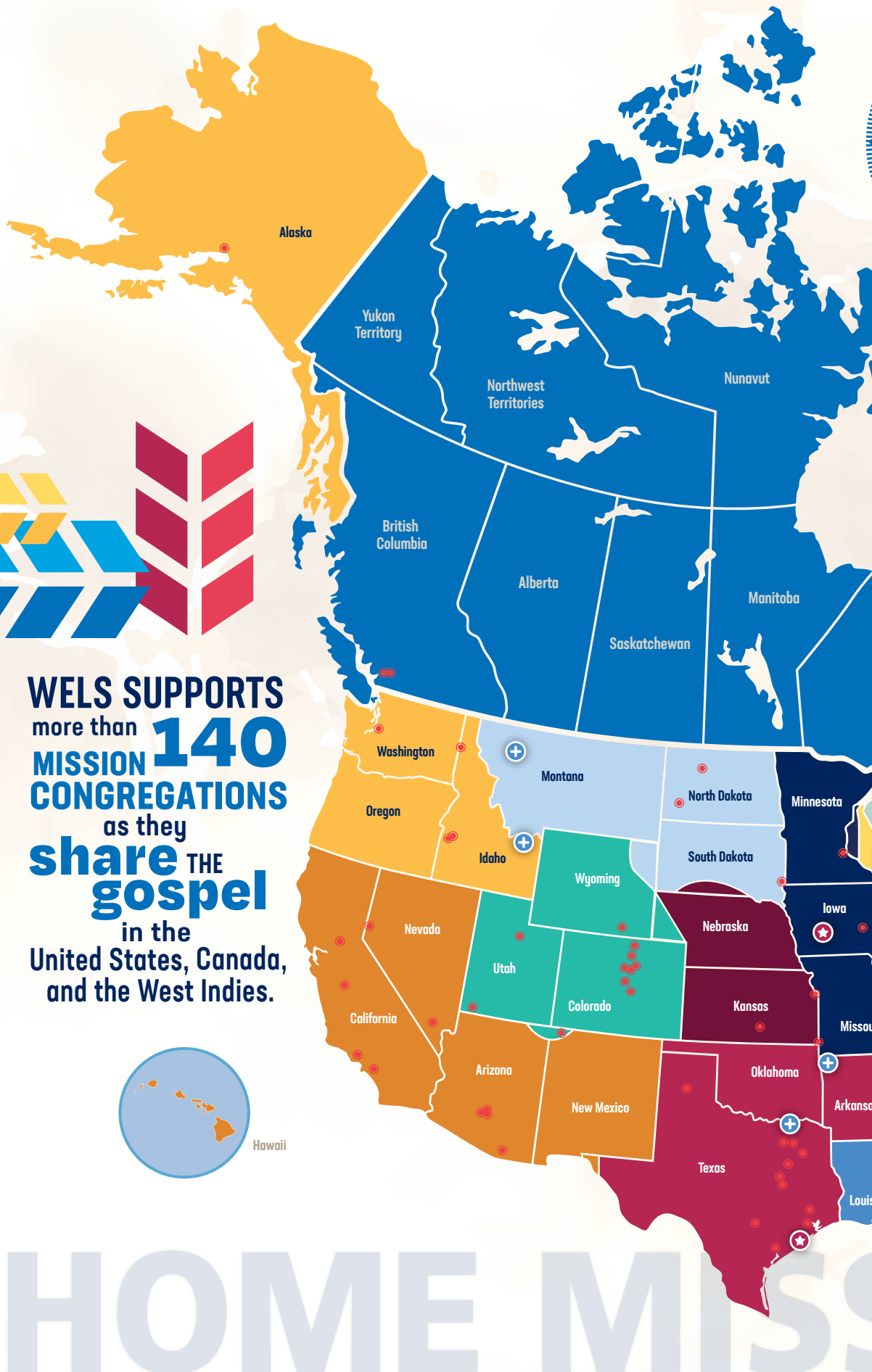


**WELS MISSIONS**  
serves more than **300,000 PEOPLE**  
worldwide WITH THE **gospel.**

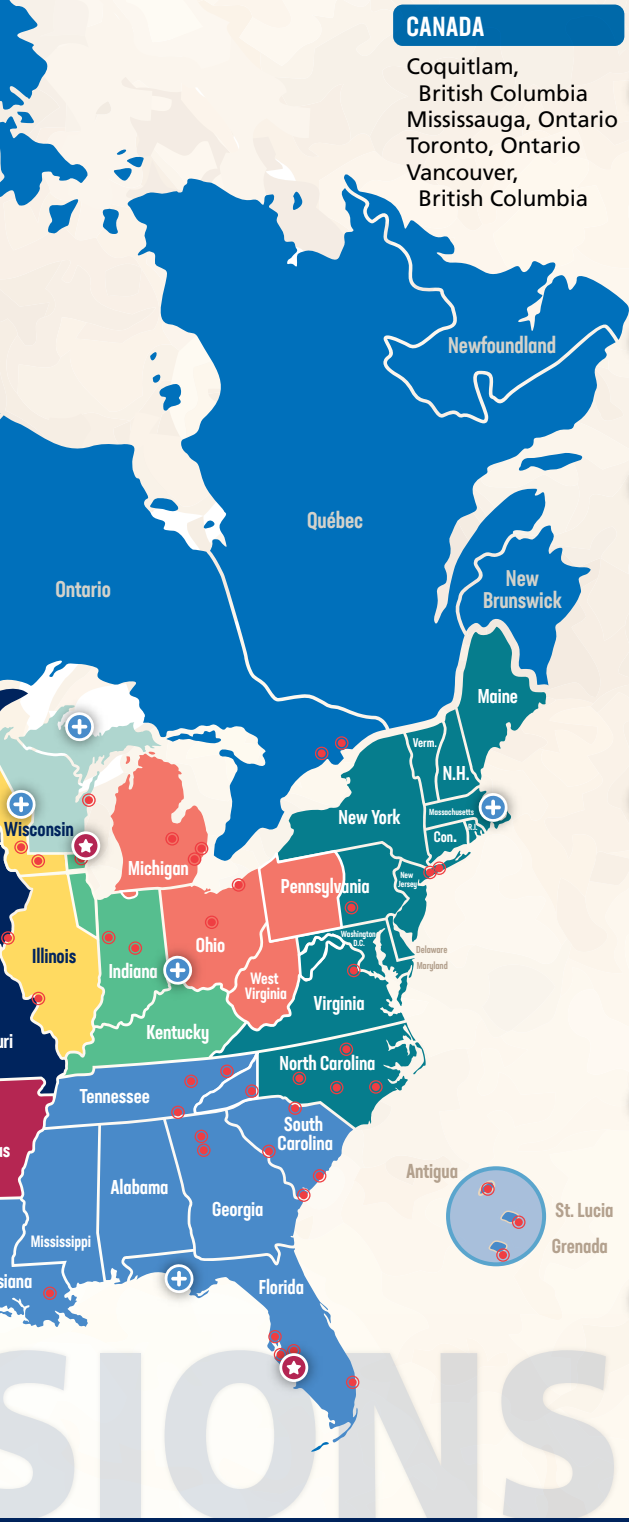
[wels.net/missions](http://wels.net/missions)







# DISTRICT MISSION BOARDS



## ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA

Gilbert, AZ  
Goodyear, AZ  
Phoenix, AZ  
Vail, AZ  
Folsom, CA  
Fresno, CA  
Garden Grove, CA  
Santa Clarita, CA  
Las Vegas, NV  
Reno, NV

## CANADA

Coquitlam, British Columbia  
Mississauga, Ontario  
Toronto, Ontario  
Vancouver, British Columbia

## COLORADO

Candelas, CO  
Carbon Valley, CO  
Castle Rock, CO  
Commerce City, CO  
Denver, CO  
Peyton, CO  
Windsor, CO  
Farmington, NM  
Lehi, UT  
Saint George, UT  
Laramie, WY

## DAKOTA-MONTANA

+ Kalispell, MT\*  
Brandon, SD  
Dickinson, ND  
Minot, ND

## MICHIGAN

+ Detroit, MI  
Fenton, MI  
Macomb, MI  
Cincinnati, OH\*  
Mansfield, OH  
Willoughby, OH

## MINNESOTA

\* Des Moines, IA\*  
North Liberty, IA  
Collinsville, IL  
Saint Paul, MN

## NEBRASKA

Kansas City, KS  
Wichita, KS  
Joplin, MO

## NORTH ATLANTIC

+ Boston, MA\*  
Dix Hills, NY  
Woodside, NY  
Durham, NC  
Fayetteville, NC  
Huntersville, NC  
Jacksonville, NC  
Harrisburg, PA  
Fredericksburg, VA

## N WISCONSIN

+ Marquette, MI\*  
Manitowoc, WI

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST

+ Anchorage, AK  
Boise, ID  
Hayden, ID  
Idaho Falls, ID\*  
North Nampa, ID  
Renton, WA

+ NEW STARTS  
\* ENHANCEMENTS

## SOUTH ATLANTIC

+ Delray Beach, FL  
Panama City Beach, FL\*  
Parrish, FL  
\* Port Charlotte, FL\*  
Trinity, FL  
Wesley Chapel, FL  
Atlanta, GA  
Canton, GA  
Baton Rouge, LA  
Hendersonville, NC  
Aiken, SC  
Bluffton, SC  
Moncks Corner, SC  
Rock Hill, SC  
Chattanooga, TN  
Crossville, TN  
Morristown, TN  
Castries, St. Lucia  
Grand Anse, Grenada  
St. John's, Antigua

## SOUTH CENTRAL

+ Bentonville, AR\*  
Amarillo, TX  
+ North Collin County, TX\*  
Conroe, TX  
Houston, TX  
Hutto, TX  
Keller, TX  
Killeen, TX  
Rockwall, TX  
Sienna, TX\*  
Tyler, TX  
Victoria, TX  
Waco, TX  
West San Antonio, TX

## SE WISCONSIN

+ Greenwood, IN  
Lafayette, IN  
\* Milwaukee, WI\*

## W WISCONSIN

+ Burlington, IA  
Kronenwetter, WI\*  
Mt. Horeb, WI  
Richland Center, WI

LEARN MORE ABOUT WELS HOME MISSION CHURCHES.







**MISSION PARTNERS**  
45 countries



**EXPLORATORY MISSION WORK**  
19 countries/new mission fields



LEARN MORE ABOUT  
WELS WORLD  
MISSION FIELDS.



**WEL**

\*Countries where missionaries reside



The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI), a partnership between WELS Joint Missions and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, provides pre-seminary and seminary training to North American students from a variety of countries and cultures. PSI also consults with regional World Missions teams and sister churches around the world on their theological education programs and coordinates advance degree programs and visiting instructors upon request.

## Faces of Faith – David and Guili

It's an enormous blessing for a congregation to have a PSI student in their midst, but two? Hope in Toronto, Ont., Canada, has been blessed with just that. In February 2021, Dr. David Shang (pictured left) was accepted as a PSI student. He has been advancing quickly through his studies and gaining a large following through his monthly YouTube lectures. He currently has over 3,000 viewers in five countries, which has led to approximately 19 baptisms (with 18 more on the way) in three countries.



In January 2023, Guili and Dujie Chi were received into membership at Hope. Guili (pictured right) also wants to reach more of his fellow Chinese with the gospel of Jesus. With some encouragement, Guili became the second PSI student at Hope.

David and Guili's dream is to create a Chinese church within Hope's congregation in Toronto. It's beginning with David's online lectures and carrying over to in-person Bible studies in Guili and Dujie's home every Sunday night where they regularly have 10-15 in attendance. Guili

recently shared, **"Many Chinese immigrants come to Canada for a better life or better future for their children. It's a country that God has blessed. People should come to know the true God, to know that only through Christ we can live in peace and preserve the future of our children. Live in his grace, share the gospel, live a godly life, keep the faith, and blessings from generation to generation will come."**

FROM HARLAND GOETZINGER, Pastoral Studies Institute director

## FAST FACTS

- **Rev. Harland Goetzinger** joined the PSI team as its director in November 2022.
- Two Vietnamese men from Boise, Idaho, graduated from PSI in 2023. Additional opportunities for **Vietnamese ministries** are being explored with these graduates in mind.
- **Our Savior in San Antonio, Tex.**, is working with a current PSI student originally from **India** to share the gospel with other Indians in the San Antonio community.

## DID YOU KNOW?

PSI is currently training 25 students from **nine different people groups in 17 locations** throughout North America.



# WORLD



## DEAR FRIENDS OF MISSIONS,

Jesus knew there was no time to lose. He had come to save the world, and the world did not know it. That's why the first ministry task Mark mentions after Jesus' baptism is this: "Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God." (1:14) This is still the same good news that the world needs to hear. How do we help a world that is hurting? There are many ways we should help, but the most important is the task that Jesus had as his priority: Proclaim the good news! This world is not the end. There is an eternal home. It is yours because Jesus came to save you. This is news that all need to know.

WELS World Missions partners with believers around the world. We send missionaries to learn languages, cultures, and navigate local challenges for the sake of this gospel. We help plant churches, train others to share the news, and support sister churches around the world as we reflect the love of Jesus. The goal has not changed.

**A LOST WORLD NEEDS TO HEAR THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS.**

As you add your prayers for the brothers and sisters featured in this magazine, continue to pray that the Lord will help us reach many more. We could not do all we are doing without you. God has knit us together in our various places and roles with this common purpose. What amazing grace we share that we are part of Jesus' Kingdom. What unexpected honor is ours that Jesus has asked us to carry on the work he started. It is still true. The time has come. Proclaim the good news!

Your fellow servant in Christ,

**PASTOR LARRY SCHLOMER**  
World Missions administrator

GOSPEL  
OUTREACH IN

**45**

FOREIGN  
COUNTRIES

**19**

PROSPECTIVE  
NEW MISSION  
FIELDS





# WORLD Missions

## WORLD MISSIONS SUPPORTS MISSION WORK:

- on **Native American reservations**, where the gospel is being shared on the Apache reservations in Arizona and exploratory mission work is beginning on other reservations throughout North America;
- in **Africa**, where missionaries are partnering with national church bodies in seven countries and are exploring outreach in at least six more countries throughout the continent;
- in **Asia**, where 16 missionaries have joined together to equip, encourage, and empower others to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to 1.8 billion unreached souls;
- in **Latin America**, where hundreds of thousands of people are being reached through *Academia Cristo* online courses and more than 20 individuals are actively leading a group in worship and study;
- in **Europe**, where missionaries partner with national churches to train the next generation of church leaders and bring the true gospel to countries without a strong Lutheran presence;
- and through **Multi-Language Productions**, which has produced materials in more than 56 languages and reaches tens of thousands of English-speakers in more than 30 different countries through the TELL online training platform.

**46**  
WORLD  
MISSIONARIES

CONFESSIONAL  
CHRISTIAN CONTENT  
CREATED IN

**56**  
LANGUAGES

PARTNERING WITH  
ALMOST

**500**

NATIONAL PASTORS TO  
CONDUCT OUTREACH



### GIVE A GIFT

to support  
WELS World  
Missions by  
scanning the QR  
code with your  
phone or visiting  
[wels.net/wmgift](https://wels.net/wmgift).





# EUROPE

The Europe mission team partners to share Christ's grace in Albania, Bulgaria, London and the U.K., Portugal, Russia, and Ukraine while supporting sister church bodies in seven additional European countries. Currently there are three WELS missionaries residing in Europe.

## Faces of Faith - Perry

God has taken Perry Wong on an interesting journey to our church in London. Perry was born in Hong Kong. She was not raised Christian, but she attended Christian primary school. It wasn't until she started lecturing at universities in Hong Kong that she realized there was something missing in her life. She insists, "It was the Holy Spirit's work. I am a very stubborn person." At the encouragement of her brother, Perry got involved with a Christian reformed church. She was later convinced by a friend to study at Asia Lutheran Seminary. There, Perry learned that **"it is not about what we should do for God, but what he has done for us."**



In November 2021, Perry moved away from Hong Kong. She needed a break from teaching fashion at the university level. The school board had begun to discourage conversations about cultural and historical topics. She felt she could not do her position justice under the new restrictions, and she worried about how her students might be affected. Perry chose to come to London because it was a familiar place that she knew from her own college education.



Upon her arrival, one of Perry's professors from Asia Lutheran Seminary connected her with the new Lutheran group meeting in London. The church immediately welcomed Perry like one of the family. Perry is excited to see what work God will do through her and others in London and the U.K.!

**FROM CONIFER BERG,**  
missionary in London & the U.K.

## FAST FACTS

- In March 2023, representatives from **Sweden, Finland, Germany, Albania,** and WELS gathered in Dunavtsi, Bulgaria, to dedicate a new church. Pastor Iliyan Itsov serves that congregation and five other preaching stations scattered throughout central **Bulgaria.**
- In April 2023, WELS' sister church in **Germany** sent its brass choir to Porto, **Portugal,** where our sister church welcomed seven youth confirmands from five families into fellowship.
- Over 140,000 people from Hong Kong have moved to the **U.K.** in the past two years following increased Chinese government activity in Hong Kong, providing many new opportunities for ministry.



OUTREACH IN

**13**

EUROPEAN  
COUNTRIES



Pakistan

## ASIA

The Asia One Team comprises 16 missionaries serving 17 different countries throughout Asia. The team, largely based in Thailand and Hong Kong, partners with God's people in Asia to equip, encourage, and empower others to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to 1.8 billion unreached souls throughout Asia. Asia Lutheran Seminary continues to provide theological education across the continent.

### *Faces of Faith - New Zealand*

Over three years ago, Pastor Titus Tse, president of the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) in Hong Kong, began meeting online with some SALEM members who had immigrated to New Zealand. They also happened to be former students of Asia Lutheran Seminary. Over time, the original members invited their friends—some Christian, some non-Christian—to join the group. This group has now decided to start a Cantonese-speaking church in Auckland. They began monthly worship in January 2023 and continue to meet weekly online.

Another mission group started by another SALEM member has sprung up in Queenstown as well. In early 2023, the Auckland group leaders met several local pastors from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other locations to learn how to reach out and form a legal church in New Zealand.

**Please pray for this exciting work among our Chinese-speaking brothers and sisters who, like the scattered believers in the early church, are carrying the gospel with them wherever they go!**

FROM MATT DOEBLER, Asia One Team missionary

## FAST FACTS

- Asia Lutheran Seminary has 68 students in regular classes across all levels of instruction.
- The first class of 57 Hmong pastors in Vietnam have completed their seminary level classes and a second group of 60 students has begun their training.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The new **theological education center** just outside of Hanoi, Vietnam, was completed in January 2023.



## Faces of Faith – Lucy

I was blessed to spend some time at a safe house in India where severely wounded refugees from war-torn Myanmar came to recover. I noticed six-year-old Lucy hiding in her bunk near her mom. Lucy, her family, and community are Christians. A bomb dropped into her school courtyard as school was letting out. The blast killed three classmates and paralyzed Lucy. My heart broke.

I told Lucy the story of Jesus welcoming the little children. We talked about how much Jesus loves Lucy,

how she's safe in Jesus' arms no matter what, and how her classmates who died are also in Jesus' arms. Somewhere during the story, she started smiling, radiating the light of Christ. She was cheering everyone else up too. Then I heard a Buddhist woman say, **"That's it! That's what I'm talking about.**

**That's the light we see coming from the Christians here."** She was talking about the peace, joy, and hope coming from Lucy. **"Now we know this is from Jesus."**

This Buddhist woman and her husband then learned of six men from their village who were tortured and killed. "We need to be with the families. We need to help them," said the husband. "And we need to tell them about Jesus; this will really help them," said the wife. They were now on a mission to bring the light of Jesus to their people – two lights brightened by the light of Christ shining through a paralyzed six-year-old named Lucy.

FROM AN ASIA ONE TEAM MISSIONARY



## Faces of Faith – Kanon

Kanon Haga is a currently a college student and the son of Pastor Haga in Mito, Japan. For the past year, Kanon has been designing and running his own children's events and Vacation Bible School programs for Megumi ("Grace") Lutheran Church, WELS' sister church. While on break from school, he wondered what he could do to serve the Lord. Around that time, a childhood friend reached out to him to ask if he could come to church. Though his friend didn't identify as a Christian, he mentioned that when he was little, church was always very welcoming and warm for him. That same feeling is what inspired Kanon to start creating children's programs.

**"I wanted to recreate that same feeling for the kids, so they see church as a fun and welcoming place."** After these events, parents often tell Kanon that while they previously felt nervous or scared of church, these events led them to trust Christians and churches.

And at these children's events, they get to hear the word of God. Kanon's work shows love to the community and gives a positive image of Christianity to the city, while also sharing the message of the Savior with young hearts.

FROM PETER JANKE, Asia One Team missionary



## FAST FACTS

- A group of 22 men and women from Pakistan gathered in Dubai in early 2023 for a **Bible Institute Seminar** led by WELS missionaries and the South Asian ministry coordinator. It was the first time WELS representatives were able to meet these brothers and sisters in Pakistan in person for close to 10 years.
- **Gereja Lutheran Indonesia (GLI)**, WELS' sister church, has 1,650 members in 29 congregations served by 30 pastors and 5 vicars. Their seminary program currently teaches 27 students.
- The first seminary class of eight men graduated in **Nepal** in February 2023. The next group of 12 men have already started their seminary studies.

# NATIVE AMERICAN MISSION

The Native American mission serves eight churches, one preaching station, and two Lutheran elementary schools on the Fort Apache Reservation and the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona. The mission is currently served by four missionaries, two national pastors, and one national evangelist.

## Faces of Faith - Sally

“We’re sending her to a Christian school. That’s how we’re raising her, and that’s what we want for her life.” It was a big moment in life for Sally. Despite attending elementary school at Peridot-Our Savior’s Lutheran School, some family members wanted Sally to participate in a traditional Apache religious ceremony. Her father was standing firm in opposition to it. He wanted her to be about the Lord and his Word and walk a Christian path throughout life.



These words stuck with Sally, even through the spiritual detours of life. They stayed with her when she moved to the big city and away from God. They supported her when addiction took her husband out of her life. **“Seek the Lord”** was the constant advice given to her during tough times, and had she not been in the Word, she’s convinced she would not have made it through the especially difficult time when she lost her oldest son.

Today, Sally is still on the Christian path to heaven. She walks with more experience, more scars, and more thankfulness. She’s thankful to walk with Malcolm, a Christian husband who encourages her to grow in her relationship with Jesus. She’s thankful for a deeper understanding and empathy for the obstacles that people face all around her and thankful for opportunities to serve the Lord. Her eyes are truly open to see people around her, to pray for those who have gone through what she has, and to pray for everyone to know Jesus and walk the path to heaven.

**FROM DAN RAUTENBERG**, Native American mission field coordinator

## FAST FACTS

- Growing schools on the Apache Reservations of Arizona give more than **250 children** the chance to learn about Jesus each year.
- Four men from the **Apache Christian Training School (ACTS)** are reading sermons in local Apache congregations.
- Up to **98 percent of all Native Americans in the United States** do not identify as Christians.
- Outreach efforts to the other **572 reservation areas** in the United States has begun with a Native Christians counselor position added to reach the four tribes in the Four Corners region of the U.S.

**60**

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE APACHE CHRISTIAN TRAINING SCHOOL (ACTS)



**Rev. John Holtz** was installed as a Native Christians counselor in October 2022.



# LATIN AMERICA

The Latin America mission team uses *Academia Cristo*, an online outreach and training tool, to share God's grace with as many people as possible as well as identify and train potential leaders who can plant churches.

## FAST FACTS

- **Over 1.8 million** people follow *Academia Cristo* on social media.
- **Over 900,000** people have downloaded the *Academia Cristo* mobile app, where they have access to four self-guided courses that present the truths of God's Word.
- **Over 630** people have taken at least one live course with *Academia Cristo* instructors.
- **Over 20** groups planted by *Academia Cristo* students have completed a course on sin, grace, faith, and works. These groups continue to meet regularly for worship and study. They are called Grupos Sembrador.
- In February 2023, the first Grupo Sembrador became an official congregation of **Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional**, WELS' sister church body in Latin America, after completing a two-year church planting program.

## Faces of Faith – Sandra

Several years ago, Sandra Luz was searching for a way to study the Word of God. Her husband took it upon himself to help her find a great program. He stumbled upon *Academia Cristo*

online, dug into their resources, and said to his wife, "This one; this is it." Sandra quickly began working her way through the self-study lessons on *Academia Cristo*'s mobile app. She was then welcomed into live classes via Zoom led by WELS missionaries. She completed 13 live Zoom courses and officially became a Confessional Lutheran. When asked if she desired to share the gospel message in her community, Sandra responded with,

**"How can I not?! People must know."**

Now Sandra informally gathers a group of five in her home every Saturday, including the children of these adult students. Guided by a WELS missionary advisor and by her continued courses in *Academia Cristo*, Sandra is currently leading her group through Bible Information Class. Her husband has been regularly attending her gatherings and is now also showing interest in the Confessional Lutheran faith. She prays for a Lutheran church to develop in her border town of Mexico, where there currently is none. She still rejoices in the growth of the members of her group and in those who may soon join her in the Lutheran faith and be able to lead. "Luz" means light, and Sandra Luz certainly is a gospel light in her family and in her community.

**FROM ELISE GROSS, Dean of Women's Ministry**



## DID YOU KNOW?

18 people were confirmed in **Tenancingo, Mexico**, in August 2022 after hearing the gospel through *Academia Cristo* outreach efforts.



# MULTI-LANGUAGE PRODUCTIONS

Multi-Language Productions (MLP) has created more than 2.9 million video, audio, print, and online training resources in 56 languages to date. They have also introduced a new online Bible-based training platform called TELL (Think, Evaluate, Learn, Lead), to bring the gospel to English-speakers around the world. With the Lord's blessing, the TELL network will allow for the creation of new TELL platforms in additional languages in the future.

## Faces of Faith - Clarise

I'm from Bamenda, Cameroon. It was hard not to feel abandoned when my mother passed away when I was very young. I not only lost my mother, but soon found myself caring for my siblings as well. Not only has my family experienced tremendous loss, but now many families in Cameroon are suffering due to the unrest. Yet, I

trust that God is working in the background and that I have not been abandoned. The following has kept me going and growing since I was a child: **"Every disappointment is a blessing in disguise. . . it might not look like a blessing right away, until the Lord's work is done and you realize how blessed you were to have been through all those moments you thought he had abandoned you."**



I work for Qatar Airways and on a recent flight from Chicago to Doha, I was reminded of that same truth. During that flight, I met several WELS representatives who were traveling to Zambia for meetings. At 30,000 feet, I was introduced to the TELL program. I read my Bible but don't always understand what it is saying. Since downloading the TELL app, it's crazy how I have learned so much in just the first course. I have been using TELL since the day I landed back in Doha. It has really helped in my relationship with God, helped organize my Bible studies, and has changed my life a lot. I see so many things differently now. TELL is amazing. I can't wait for the virtual classes!

## FAST FACTS

- TELL Facebook pages reach more than **1.5 million people**.
- There are more than **200 active TELL students** studying God's Word to become group leaders and church planters.
- TELL Network has launched new online training programs in **Mandarin and Tagalog**.



**200+**

STUDENTS  
TRAINING TO PLANT  
CHURCHES

### WELS Multi-Language Productions

(MLP) helped provide Hmong hymnals for members of the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam.







Missionaries Benjamin Foxen and John Roebke visit Tanzania.

# AFRICA

The WELS One Africa Team currently works with established church bodies in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zambia, partnering in outreach and assisting with theological education programs. The team is also working with groups or exploring outreach in six additional African countries and following up on contacts identified through Multi-Language Production’s TELL program. Currently, seven missionaries serve on the One Africa Team and an additional Multi-Language Productions missionary oversees the TELL Africa program from his home base in Zambia.

## FAST FACTS

- In 2022, three of WELS’ sister church bodies in **Cameroon** and **Nigeria** graduated a combined 25 men after five years of seminary studies.
- WELS is declaring fellowship with **Obadiah Lutheran Synod** in **Uganda** at the 2023 Synod Convention.
- The One Africa Team is in doctrinal discussions with the Africa Mission Evangelism Church, a group of almost 100 Lutheran congregations in northern **Tanzania**, to see if our church bodies share the same Scriptural beliefs and practices.
- The **Confessional Lutheran Institute (CLI)** provides sister churches in Africa with formal continuing education and professional development opportunities for African pastors and consultation on seminary programs.



.....

The **Lutheran Church of Cameroon** has a great tradition of bringing students’ wives onto campus to be with their husbands and study Scripture together, as well as develop relationships with other Lutheran pastors’ wives.





Baptism in Uganda



## Faces of Faith – Maksimu

Pastor Maksimu Musa (Moses) is the leader of the Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda. God has blessed him with the opportunity to bring together and grow congregations around the eastern and northern parts of the country. The church had very humble beginnings—three men meeting in one of their homes in 2008. After 15 years, they had worked with very limited resources to gather and shepherd 21 congregations with a total of more than 4,000 souls! Of course, only by God's blessing. Some of that blessing comes in the form of Pastor Musa, a humble leader who has a strong passion for the truth of Scripture and for sharing that truth with more people. He also recognizes the importance of sharing the work with others and training new leaders within the church. **With God's continued blessing, Pastor Musa's leadership will continue to benefit the Obadiah Lutheran Synod for years to come and will bring many more to learn the truth about their Savior.**



FROM BENJAMIN FOXEN, One Africa Team missionary

### DID YOU KNOW?

The **Africa Regional Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC)** brought together WELS mission partners in Lusaka, Zambia, in January 2023.





## CENTRAL AFRICA MEDICAL MISSION

The Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM) oversees the Lutheran Mission Rural Health Centre, a permanent clinic in Zambia, and the Lutheran Mobile Clinic in Malawi, where staff travels to five designated villages for a day of clinical work and care. Both clinics focus on providing Christian counseling and education, HIV testing and treatment, malaria treatment, wellness checks and immunizations for children, and treatment of other minor injuries or illnesses. CAMM partners with the Lutheran Church of Central Africa and WELS missionaries to help the spiritual and physical needs of people in Zambia and Malawi.

### Save the date! June 15, 2024

Join your brothers and sisters in Christ from around the world for Taste of Missions, a hybrid event occurring every summer. By combining an online event with an in-person gathering at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis., all WELS members can get a “taste of missions,” no matter where you might be around the world.

- Inspirational worship
- Sample ethnic cuisine + view recipes
- Get to know missionaries
- Family-friendly activities

*Taste of*  
**MISSIONS**  
June 15, 2024



Learn more at [tasteofmissions.com](https://tasteofmissions.com)





## Faces of Faith – Wilfred

Mr. Wilfred Bendabenda isn't a Lutheran Mobile Clinic patient or a Lutheran Church of Central Africa pastor, but he does have an important role serving the Malawian clinics. Born in Lilongwe, Malawi, his faith grew through encouragement from his Christian mother and WELS missionaries. He was confirmed as an adult at Chikhulupiro Lutheran Church in Mwalaulomwe. Recently, his strong faith and the work of the Holy Spirit brought his father to faith as well. Wilfred loves the Lord's Prayer because, "I feel like it has got the whole procedure of a Christian life."



Through prayer and a WELS missionary's encouragement, he started his own construction business. He trusted God who rewarded him with a successful business. Now he lets his faith shine through construction work. Having built the new CAMM Msambo clinic and renovated the clinic buildings at Suzi, Thunga, and Mwalaulomwe, he has become the

go-to guy for repairs or construction work at the nurse's house. Wilfred was amazed by the work of the Lutheran Mobile Clinic, which is "just simply out there to help people, not to make money or treat only those that can afford clinical care." He also valued the cooperation and relationship between the church and the clinic.

We rejoice for his spiritual faith and his construction talents, which helped renovate multiple clinic buildings. We look forward to seeing his faith and business grow in the years ahead!

**FROM JOHN ROEBKE, One Africa Team missionary**

## FAST FACTS

- The clinics in both Zambia and Malawi are now completely **staffed by nationals**.
- Together, the clinics in Zambia and Malawi serve close to **80,000 patients a year**.
- The **cost per patient is about \$3.90**, which includes staff salaries and benefits, fuel, maintenance, insurance, utilities, and medications.



**80,000**

PATIENTS SERVED  
EVERY YEAR AT  
CAMM CLINICS





# Connect

WITH  
WELS MISSIONS



## **SPEAKERS**

Request a mission speaker for your next church mission festival, school assembly, group meeting, or LWMS rally at [wels.net/speaker-request](http://wels.net/speaker-request).



## **FACEBOOK**

Like the WELS Missions Facebook page at [fb.com/WELSmissions](https://fb.com/WELSmissions) for additional photos and updates from our mission fields.



## **SUBSCRIBE**

Subscribe to read weekly stories and quarterly news updates from home and world missionaries at [wels.net/subscribe](http://wels.net/subscribe).

Learn more at [wels.net/missions](http://wels.net/missions).

