



World Mission Notes & News

South Central District Pastoral Conference
Meeting at Our Savior Lutheran Church
Georgetown, Texas
April 24-25, 2006

The joyous Easter message, "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" that has filled our churches recently, stirs our hearts and renews our zeal and commitment to the mission Christ has given us. Readings in the book of Acts show how powerfully the Easter message of the risen Christ motivated and impelled the apostles as they went from nation to nation carrying the gospel to the first century world. Their preaching centered on the resurrection of Christ and what it means for our justification and new life. God give us in our world-wide mission today resurrection-centered faith and preaching that we too, together with the people we serve, might know "the power of the resurrection" (Philippians 3:10).

The Board for World Missions is in process of meeting the same days as this pastoral conference (April 24-25). The plenary board met this morning by teleconference call, 8:00 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. The Policy Committee of the BWM is in session at this time. This reporter will rejoin the meetings tomorrow morning, 8:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., for the Priority Committee meeting and the return to the plenary session for completion and conclusion to our business.

1. BWM Restructuring

Reports will be made to the District Conventions this summer on proposed changes to our BWM administrative structure. All synod restructuring proposals will probably be made by a single MOT members. Keep posted.

2. Associate Administrator Position

The BWM has reassigned the responsibilities that formerly belonged to Associate Administrator Walter Westphal, whose position comes to an end June 30, 2006. This is purely a fiscal measure taken by the BWM with a position that has been very valuable to our work and a man whose faithfulness and work output has been exceptional. We thank Wally for his work on our behalf in world missions these past seven years, and wish him God's blessings.

3. WLS Extends Call for Seminary Professor

Leon Piepenbrink was called March 17 to the seminary in Mequon to fill the first WM professorship. This position is being funded by the BWM. What this means, when this call is filled, is that one WLS professor will be made available to serve in theological education in one of our world fields throughout the year without reducing the staff of WLS. The men going out into the world fields will teach several weeks or a quarter, and will rotate through the entire WLS staff, thus giving world mission exposure to all our sem profs. We look at it as a win-win situation. Our world mission theological education programs will get much-needed theological expertise from WLS, our WLS profs will gain insight and understanding into world missions, and bonds of fellowship with our world fields will be forged and strengthened.

4. Other Calling Activity

Calls for Friendly Counselor to Bulgaria, missionary to Cameroon, and Malawi LBI, are currently unanswered.

5. World Seminary Conference

The conference is set for August 7-11 in Mequon, under the theme, "Entrust the Gospel to Reliable Men So They Will Be Able to Teach." Forty to fifty who are involved in theological education in our world fields

are expected as participants. Professor E. Allen Sorum will be conducting the conference, taking over this segment of Walter Westphal's work.

6. Multi-language Publications

The list of publications just since October 2005 shows how large this program coordinated by Paul Hartman has grown. The work of the MLP is being wonderfully blessed throughout the world, allowing us to bring the gospel into some countries where physical presence of missionaries is prohibited.

7. Mini-Focus on India

We cannot share with you here all the exciting news of the winning of souls for the Kingdom of our Lord that is going on in the world through the missionaries we have sent, but we will share a few of the things reported at our current BWM meetings about the work in India. At each BWM meeting, in addition to the full reports of each of our five administrative committees on the world fields they administer, two mission fields in rotation are selected for a more in-depth report. Min-focuses on India and Brazil were presented this time.

What is happening in India? Ten years ago WELS was working with Pastor Mitra in Madras, Kaki Devabushanam and a handful of congregations in the Nayudapeda area (Christ Lutheran Church – CLC) and with Rao Dasari in the Guntur area (Bible Faith Lutheran Church – BFLC, with about 20 congregations).

Then (1996) we took on the work of the Lutheran Mission of Salvation, a large group that was for the most part Lutheran in name only, with most of the workers from a background other than Lutheran, mainly, it would appear, Pentecostal. Clearly, a great deal of theological education was called for on our part. This all was put under the name Christ Evangelical Lutheran Ministries.

Much has changed in the ten years since. Part-time WELS coordinators have been replaced with full-time resident counselors. Pastor Dasari was called to his eternal rest, and most of the BFLC and about half of those under the name Lutheran Mission of Salvation left our fellowship.

In spite of these difficulties, the Lord continues to richly bless this gospel ministry. There are now 121 congregations and 34 preaching stations scattered over five states covering a geographic area the size of Texas and Montana combined. The population in these five states is 325 million 25 million more than that of the U.S.A. The CELM now numbers 5,952 souls, an increase of 21% over last year. Sunday church attendance averages 5,972, a number that equals the baptized membership. One thousand two hundred and twenty-seven were baptized last year (533 adults and 694 children), an increase of 69% over last year. Considering the Pentecostal background of many in this body, we rejoice that infant baptism has become the norm in our congregations.

Seventy-five men are enrolled in the theological education program. A two-day Pastors' Institute is held every other month to provide continuing education for the national pastors. Two hundred fifty children are nurtured body and soul in eleven orphanages. One hundred eighty children hear the Word of God daily in two Christian elementary schools.

WELS personnel in India: John Hildebrant has been in India four years and has become fluent in Telegu. Mark Krueger has been in India seven years and is the principal of our seminary and pre-seminary program. Dave Beckman has just accepted the call to be our third man in India. He will take over Hildebrant's teaching responsibilities in the seminary, freeing Hildebrant to concentrate on publications and congregational work. Susan Krueger oversees the orphanages and the two Christian elementary schools, and teaches English classes in the seminary and pre-seminary.

Praise God for the wonderful blessings of the gospel in the world. Pray for re-doubled efforts in our members' giving to the cause of Christ, and in our winning souls for eternal life and salvation.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen P. Valleskey