

TOGETHER



July 3, 2018

Update on an amazing opportunity in Vietnam

The Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC), a Christian church body in Vietnam that had been without trained pastors for 50 years, has become an unexpected and amazing opportunity for the spread of the gospel. In 2013, leaders of the HFC heard a grace-filled sermon from WELS Pastor Bounkeo Lor over the Internet. They were intrigued and invited Rev. Lor to come to Vietnam to train church leaders. The pastors of the HFC recognized that, for the first time, they were learning biblical truth and the true meaning of the gospel. They asked for more training, wanting their church body to be fully instructed in Lutheran doctrine. Rev. Lor has made repeated trips to Vietnam in the years since, training over 60 leaders of the HFC.

That was amazing enough. Since instruction began, the HFC has grown from 65,000 to 100,000 members. And even more amazing, the communist government of Vietnam has expressed its approval and support for this training. One government official has commented that, of all the Christian churches working in Vietnam, WELS is the only one that is teaching what the Bible says. The government has invited our synod to construct a building that can serve as the center for this expanded training.

“WELS is being given a priority that other [foreign] church bodies don’t have,” says Rev. Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions. “It’s an unprecedented, unique door that God is opening up for us.”

Building a new facility will allow the HFC more freedom to schedule training for its leaders. It will give students, who live mainly in rural areas far from Hanoi, a place to stay when attending classes. And it will provide worship space for local Hmong to attend services.

Representatives of the Board for World Missions are working diligently to iron out the details of the property acquisition and the construction of the training center. While we recognize that there is risk in making this commitment, there is full agreement that this is a God-given opportunity that should be seized.

Learn more about opportunities in Vietnam and how you can support the effort at wels.net/vietnamhmongoutreach.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 

WELS Youth Rally wraps up

From June 26-29, Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio hosted the WELS International Youth Rally. Approximately 2,100 WELS teens and youth leaders gathered for worship, learning, and fellowship under the theme “Never Alone.” This theme was based on the message of Matthew 28:20: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Attendees were assured that God is ever-present in their lives and that they are not isolated in their belief.

The teens and leaders alike were encouraged and entertained by the events of the rally.

Sophia Busse, Trinity, Waukesha, Wis., remarked, “It’s been really incredible. I’ve never been with so many people who share the same faith.” This was Busse’s first time attending the rally, and she called it a “really cool experience.”

Tabitha Vannieuwenhoven, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., enjoyed discussing topics of faith with new people at the rally. “I loved all the workshops and hearing everybody else’s point of view on stuff that my friends and I talk about.”

Youth Leader David Denninger, Redeemer, Maple Grove, Minn., gathered a great deal of knowledge from other leaders to take back to his home congregation, “It’s eye-opening, and you know you’re not alone. There are resources out there, and they’re plentiful. People are giving you ideas about what you can do, and you can do it in your church no matter what the size.”

Rev. Donn Dobberstein was installed as the director of discipleship for WELS’ Congregational Services on the final day of the rally. Affirming the mission of the event, he shared a story he heard from a Florida pastor about his group of teens: “One of them was a teen girl who had just been baptized six months ago. To be able to see this event through her eyes—the eyes of someone who is new to the faith—and then to experience it on a large scale with youth from all over the nation . . . to me, that is what the event means: To let the kids know, like the rally theme says, ‘You are never alone.’”

Rev. John Boggs, a member of the rally planning committee and chairman for the WELS Commission on Discipleship, hopes that the event has a lasting impact on the attitudes of all the WELS teens who were in attendance. “It’s to give them—even if it’s just for a few days—an opportunity to celebrate the fact that their God knows who they are, their God deeply loves them, and he has put people in their lives who want to build them up instead of tear them down,” says Boggs, pastor at Divine Savior, West Palm Beach, Fla. “That’s hopefully something they’ll take with them throughout their lives at this critical time.”

The rally was organized by the WELS Commission on Discipleship. ☪

WELS women gather to support missions

From June 21-24, 1,450 women attended the 55th annual Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society

(LWMS) convention held in Green Bay, Wis. Special guests included members from WELS’ mission field on the Apache reservation and members of South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission, WELS’ sister church body in Hong Kong.

The LWMS serves Jesus “by increasing awareness of, interest in, and support of the mission outreach of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.” The convention features WELS missionaries sharing stories from their mission fields, worship services and devotions, and displays that offer more information about WELS’ missions and the organizations that support them.

One highlight of this year’s convention was the keynote presentation by Rev. Kirk Massey and Rev. Gary Lupe, Apache pastors who told attendees about the 125 years of God’s grace during which WELS has been sharing God’s Word on the Apache reservation. As Massey presented the history of the mission field, Lupe entertained the audience with stories from his life and ministry. To learn more about how WELS is celebrating the 125th anniversary of its work on the Apache mission field, visit nativechristians.org.

Wendy Wright, a WELS member from Joplin, Mo., shared her story of how she was inspired by a presentation at the 2017 LWMS convention to pursue opening a home mission in her community. As she noted, “On April 12, [our core group] heard

that we were selected as a new WELS mission! Only 10 months after God provided the seed at the last convention, he prepared the soil and watered it . . . and we are now rejoicing in seeing a home mission sprout up in Joplin, Mo.!” Wright encouraged attendees to consider how the Lord may be speaking to them at the convention.

Missionary wives led a workshop about the ministries in which they serve. Attendees marveled at the ways that God is using these women.

Every year, local LWMS circuits collect offerings for one Home and one World Missions project. At the 2018 convention, the LWMS presented these offerings to WELS Missions. Over the course of 2017–18, the LWMS raised \$37,985 each for Cameroon projects and the Caribbean Scholarship Fund. The LWMS also raised \$49,443.57 for feeding Jesus’ lambs in Nepal through its kids c.a.r.e program.

“We thank the women of the LWMS for this generous support,” says Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Home Missions. “The LWMS is an active partner with both Home and World Missions.”

For information on the 2018-19 mission projects and to learn more about the 2019 LWMS convention being held in Des Moines, Iowa, from June 27-30, visit lwms.org. To view recorded sessions from the 55th annual LWMS convention, go to livestream.com/welslive. ☪



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