



Faces of FAITH

STORIES FROM WELS MISSIONS



2025/2026

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD



WORLD



DEAR FRIENDS OF MISSIONS,

As administrator of WELS World Missions, I witness firsthand the impact of ministry across the globe. We are thrilled to invite you into a collection of stories that showcase God's love reaching across borders.

These pages are alive with the voices of real people—men, women, and children transformed by the gospel. Jesus came to save sinners, and we are saved. But billions of people alive with us on this planet also are in need of this Savior. **That's our mission: to share Christ crucified with the nations.**

From remote villages to bustling cities, our world mission teams walk alongside communities, bringing the hope of Christ. You'll meet individuals who have found peace amid hardship, families united by faith, and churches blooming where the Word has taken root. Each story is a testament to the Holy Spirit—and a reminder of the privilege we share in this mission.

What excites me most is how these accounts reflect not just the impact of our missionaries but the partnership with you—our supporters, prayer warriors, and ambassadors. Your faithfulness fuels this ministry, and together, we are witnessing the Kingdom grow in ways we could scarcely imagine. Your support has made these stories possible.

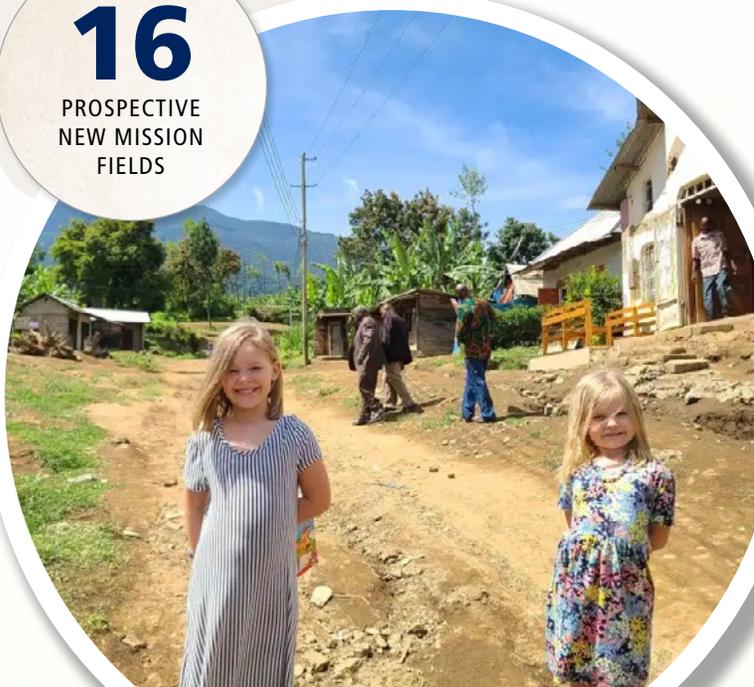
So, turn the page. Be inspired. Be encouraged. And celebrate the boundless ways God is moving through WELS World Missions. These aren't just stories—they are living proof of his grace. Thank you for being part of this journey.

In Christ's service,

PASTOR LARRY SCHLOMER,
World Missions administrator

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PROSPECTIVE
NEW MISSION
FIELDS



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WORLD Missions

WORLD MISSIONS SUPPORTS MISSION WORK:

- in **Africa**, where missionaries partner with national church bodies in eight countries and are exploring outreach in ten additional locations throughout the continent;
- in **Asia-Oceania**, where 17 missionaries partner with God's people to equip, encourage, and empower others to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the billions still lost in darkness;
- 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;
- in **Latin America**, where tens of thousands of people are being reached through *Academia Cristo* online courses and more than 35 individuals are actively leading a group in worship and study;
- through **Multi-Language Productions**, which has produced materials in 56 languages and reaches tens of thousands of English-speakers in 32 different countries through the TELL online training platform;
- and on **Native American reservations**, where the gospel is being shared on the Apache reservations in Arizona and the Native Christian Network has begun outreach to additional tribes.

MISSION
PARTNERS IN

49
COUNTRIES

45

WORLD
MISSIONARIES

400+

STUDENTS IN
THEOLOGICAL
TRAINING





Liberia

AFRICA

The WELS One Africa Team currently works with established church bodies in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, partnering in outreach and assisting with theological education programs. The team is also working with groups, exploring outreach, and following up on contacts identified through Multi-Language Production's TELL program in 20 additional African countries. Eight missionaries serve on the One Africa Team and an additional Multi-Language Productions missionary based in Zambia oversees the TELL Africa program.

Faces of Faith – Bishop Kaaya

The leader of the Africa Mission Evangelism Church (AMEC), Bishop Baltazar Zakayo Kaaya, is a gentle soul. I've always been impressed by his respect for others, even if they don't agree with him. **He shows care and concern for the individual.** This has made him a valuable leader in the years after a split with the much larger Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, which AMEC broke away from in the 1990s.

Bishop Kaaya has worked to make AMEC a distinctively Lutheran church body, founded on Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. He has led AMEC through the process of getting to know WELS and its representatives on the One Africa Team and has also worked with his leaders to create a written confession of faith document and constitution that are faithful to the biblical principles he holds dear.

When you hear the title bishop and see the clothing Bishop Kaaya wears for a church service, you may instinctively think "Roman Catholic," but you would be wrong. Though the church has adopted some more formal practices in this regard, their teaching and practice remain true to Scripture. It's been a joy to work with AMEC and with Bishop Kaaya in particular. I pray that the Lord will continue to bless his efforts to lead the saints there for as long as he is able!



FROM BEN FOXEN, Africa missionary

Faces of Faith – Pastor Joseph

Four times a year, up to 30 pastors and future pastors from Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda gather for two weeks of training and encouragement. We called our study of John’s gospel “We have a better story.”

And that we do. We have a better story than those lying about Jesus, those leading people away from God. We have a better story: Jesus is God’s eternal Son. He died for all. He lives and reigns. Soon he will reappear. By believing in him we have life in his name.

Pastor Joseph was sharing his own story with us all in the tent during one of our trainings. He used to submit to Allah. He used to wear a tight-fitting cap—sometimes called a kufi—to show his submission. Then he took the cap off and started trusting Jesus. It fascinated the brothers in

the tent. What happened next? “Oh, I got threats,” Pastor Joseph grinned. And yet, Pastor Joseph still follows Jesus, and he leads others to follow Jesus too—with a smile. Nobody in the tent made everyone laugh more than he did.

May Pastor Joseph’s Spirit-given smile make you glad too. **Share your joy.** We have a better story! The best story.

FROM DAN WITTE, Africa missionary



OUTREACH IN

20

ADDITIONAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES



The **One Africa Team** is having doctrinal discussions with church bodies in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Liberia.

Fast Facts

- There are **1,450+** active TELL students in **23** different countries throughout Africa.
- There are **7** TELL students enrolled in the multiplication level of the program who are actively leading groups or assisting in ministry at established churches.
- WELS’ sister synods throughout Africa currently have **97** men enrolled in pre-seminary training in **7** different countries. This training is led by **17** African national pastors.
- One Africa Team missionaries are learning **French** and **Swahili** to assist in outreach to new groups.

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 four designated villages for a day of clinical work and care. Both clinics provide Christian counseling and education, HIV testing and treatment, malaria treatment, pediatric wellness checks and immunizations, and treatment of other minor injuries or illnesses. CAMM has also partnered with other African sister synods to offer short-term medical camps in Kenya. CAMM is blessed to partner with the Lutheran Church of Central Africa, other sister synods in Africa, and WELS missionaries to serve the spiritual and physical needs of people in Africa.

Faces of Faith – Anthony

Anthony Kasonga, a Zambian national, works at the Lutheran Mission Rural Health Centre in Zambia as a medical laboratory technologist. Mr. Kasonga manages the lab and assists Mr. Jackson Kalekwa, clinical officer in charge, in overseeing clinic staff. With a diploma in biomedical science, he was inspired to pursue his career due to his love for microbiology. The faith-based nature of the Centre appeals to him, and his favorite phrase is **“We treat, and God heals.”**



Mr. Kasonga’s favorite Bible verse is John 14:1, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me,” which comforts him in times of trouble. He is often thanked by patients he meets in various settings, motivating him to always give his best. He acknowledges the blessings from supporters and the importance of showing kindness and God’s love to patients.

FROM ERIN PIGEON, Central Africa Medical Mission
public relations coordinator



Fast Facts

- The Lutheran Mobile Clinic in Malawi saw **61,700 patients** in 2024 and acquired a new ambulance.
- CAMM partnered with the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ-Kenya (LCMC-Kenya) to provide an inaugural **medical camp** in 2024, leading to the establishment of two daughter churches by St. Peter’s Church in Karima, Kenya.
- In 2019, only four African staff members were Lutherans. That number has now increased to **11**.
- Clinic administrators in Malawi and Zambia earned their **master’s degrees** in hospital administration and public health, respectively, with support from CAMM.



Hong Kong

ASIA-OCEANIA

The Asia-Oceania Team comprises 17 missionaries serving 18 different countries throughout Asia and Oceania. The team—with members in Thailand, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Australia—partners with God’s people to equip, encourage, and empower others to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the billions still lost in darkness. The Asia-Oceania Team explores new mission opportunities, supports existing sister synods, and trains current and future leaders through Asia Lutheran Seminary for service in their churches.

Faces of Faith – Brother Yong



Imagine one night you’re eating at a friend’s elderly mother’s house. You, a church leader, and a few of your members enjoy fellowship and a homemade meal. Suddenly there’s a knock at the door. In come the FBI, the CIA, and a SWAT team. They put you all in the back of their squad cars, drive you downtown for questioning, and release you hours later. But they promise they’ll be watching you and visiting again.

This is what happened to Brother Yong in one of our sister churches in Asia. The Asian equivalent of these

government departments came to question him and the other church leaders—for “gathering illegally,” to worship together.

Despite this, by God’s grace, Brother Yong and his whole church still find opportunities to gather. They still preach, and they still baptize new members. Fear and threats have not stopped them. **Though they face fiery trials, the Word burns brighter and hotter within them.**

Please pray for those who face persecution in churches around the world, especially in Asia.

FROM AN ASIA-OCEANIA MISSIONARY

PHOTO | iStock

Fast Facts

- In 2024, **11,900+** individuals were baptized and **7,000+** were confirmed.
- **677 men** are serving as pastors or are being trained to be pastors through Asia Lutheran Seminary.
- **1,600+** lay leaders are being trained to lead groups.
- Over the past year, an average of **159,838 people** gathered for worship every week.
- A **video-based evangelism tool** is being developed for outreach in the Philippines.

Faces of Faith – Ramdin



Ramdin is from a tribe in a South Asian country. He had eye problems and could not see properly for many years. He went to an eye clinic, but the doctor said he could not help him. He started visiting many temples, asking religious people to bless his eyes. While traveling,

he found a Christian who shared the good news of Jesus with him. Then the Christian prayed for him. His eyesight improved, and Ramdin became a believer in Jesus.

He devoted himself to Jesus. He used to walk over eight miles each Saturday to attend worship. When he became a Christian, there were no other believers in his village, so he began a church in his house. Now others have joined him in the kingdom of God. He is so happy to welcome believers into his house.

FROM A LOCAL LEADER IN SOUTH ASIA

Faces of Faith – Wynn

Throughout her life, Wynn had sporadic encounters with God's Word. She attended Christian primary and secondary schools, where pastors would occasionally visit. Later, friends and co-workers would sometimes bring her along to church. Sometimes Wynn accepted these invitations, and sometimes she rejected them.

But God never gave up—he was unrelenting in his pursuit of Wynn, continuing to bring her in contact with his Word.

During COVID, Wynn began attending an English worship service in Hong Kong.

Shortly afterward, she moved to the United Kingdom to study abroad. She found herself spending many hours alone in her apartment after the pandemic shut down in-person classes. With time on



her hands, Wynn began to pray earnestly, asking God for opportunities to serve him. When she returned to Hong Kong, she joined a local congregation of WELS' sister synod, South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM). In 2022, Wynn was baptized and confirmed.

God heard, remembered, and answered Wynn's prayer to serve him. Her congregation invited her to help with a summer Bible camp for kids. Soon after, Wynn was asked to be a Sunday school teacher—and now, she teaches the Bible to children on Saturdays as well.

FROM TONY BARTHELS, Asia-Oceania missionary

11,900+
BAPTIZED IN 2024



EUROPE

The Europe mission team partners to share Christ's grace in Albania, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Russia, and Ukraine while supporting sister church bodies in seven additional European countries. Two WELS missionaries reside in Europe.



Faces of Faith - Erik

Erik Pozzato was born and raised in Roman Catholic Italy. "As a boy, I did what everyone did. I studied in confirmation class, got confirmed, and had a big party," he shares. "Then I left the church."

Erik married Michela, and they moved to Sweden. They were curious about the spiritual world and began dabbling in Masonry and the occult. Evil spirits started troubling Erik's family in obvious ways. They were afraid. That's when Michela said, "We need protection. We need help from God."



They found a local pastor to bless their house, but that wasn't the answer. Then Erik came across a Lutheran pastor online. "The pastor taught us that we are saved by grace alone, through faith in Scripture alone. It was what we were waiting for!" Jesus came into the family's home and hearts, and the demons left. **"Faith alone cleared up everything for me. When we put on the whole armor of God, the devil can't hurt us,"** Erik says.

Today Erik and his family are members of WELS' sister church, LBK-Sweden. Erik landed his dream job, and he's also studying for ministry. "When I think about my life and what Jesus did for us, I cannot be silent! I have to share this with everyone."

FROM LUKE WOLFGAMM, Europe missionary

Fast Facts

- Weekly worship services are held at three different locations in the United Kingdom, and average weekly attendance increased from 12 in 2023 to **47** in 2024.
- The European region of the **Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC)** met for their annual conference in Nerchau, Germany, in May 2025, with 11 countries represented.
- Thirteen men from six countries registered for the **European Summer Quarter class** in Ljungby, Sweden, in June 2025.
- In July 2024, 180 people from 7 countries gathered in Hjälmgården, Sweden, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of WELS' sister church, the **LBK-Sweden**.



LATIN AMERICA

The One Latin America Team uses *Academia Cristo*, an online outreach and training tool, to share God's grace with as many people as possible as well as to identify and train potential leaders who can plant churches. Ten missionaries serve on the One Latin America Team.



Faces of Faith - Viriana

(Pictured second from right)

During the pandemic, churches in Argentina closed their doors, and I felt something was missing. I had always read the Bible, but I longed to truly understand God's message. With time on my hands, I searched for online Bible studies, carefully avoiding groups that didn't align with Scripture.

That's when I found *Academia Cristo*. The self-study course caught my attention with its biblical questions. It was a study that was rooted entirely in God's Word. I was so eager that I finished the course in just a day and a half. Then came an invitation to a live class. I signed up right away.

My first course, *The Word Grows: Disciple*, changed everything. **I realized I was a disciple of Christ, called to grow in his truth.** At first, I struggled

with the idea of salvation by grace alone, as legalism is common in many churches here. But through my studies, I came to fully trust in Christ's merits, not my own works.

I never missed a class after that. I learned from incredible teachers, and by God's grace, I now teach others. Looking back, I see how God prepared me for this path. The best investment I've made is not for worldly wealth but for my soul—peace, joy, and confidence in Christ alone.

VIVIANA VIGNA, Buenos Aires, Argentina



Faces of Faith - Henry

When Christ found me in November 2022, I knew almost nothing about the Christian faith. I downloaded a Bible app, and every time I opened it, I saw an ad for *Academia Cristo*. At first, I ignored it. The registration asked for my personal information, and I wasn't ready to take that step.



Months later, curiosity got the best of me. I started filling out the form. At the last moment, I hesitated and backed out. After a few more days, I committed and began studying with *Academia Cristo*. The program starts with self-paced Bible courses, where I could watch lessons and answer questions to check my understanding. At first, I skipped the videos and just tried to pass the quizzes. But near the end, I started watching the lessons and realized how much I had missed!

After completing the self-study courses, I was invited to live online classes, where I could interact with teachers and other students. Excited to learn more, I signed up for every class available. Today, I continue studying with *Academia Cristo*, and through its pastors and teachers, **I have come to know God's truth.**

HENRY ISIDRO CHONILLO, Guayaquil, Ecuador
(Pictured left)

Fast Facts

- **32,200+ students** have enrolled in Self-Study Level courses through WhatsApp.
- **1,250+ students** have completed one Discipleship Level course.
- **130+ students** have completed the entire Discipleship Level of courses.
- **50+ students** have completed the Church Planting Level of courses.
- **35+ church plants** have been started by *Academia Cristo* students.



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.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow WELS Missions on Facebook and Instagram @WELSmissions for additional photos and updates from our mission fields.



E-MAILS

Read weekly stories from home and world missionaries and receive quarterly Missions news updates in your inbox at wels.net/subscribe.

MULTI-LANGUAGE PRODUCTIONS

Multi-Language Productions (MLP) has created video, audio, and print resources in 56 languages for use in global gospel outreach, with nearly three million resources distributed worldwide. It also operates the TELL Network, an online training and church multiplication program offered in English, Mandarin, Spanish, and Tagalog. Working closely with WELS world mission teams, TELL Network provides Bible study curriculum focused on leadership training for students across the globe, preparing them to gather groups, lead Bible studies, and plant churches.

Faces of Faith – Pastor Davison

“I don’t know how I was found, but the Lord found me,” Pastor Davison Mutentami of Zambia shared as he reflected on his ministry. He grew up in the church, and the Christian education he received prepared him to serve in ways and in places he couldn’t possibly have imagined.



As a young man, Pastor Davison took on responsibility for Sunday activities in his home congregation when the WELS missionary was traveling to other church locations. He was later recommended by his congregation to study for full-time ministry. He was assigned to serve three churches in northern Lusaka

before being called back to the seminary to serve Bethel congregation and was elected to be the Lutheran Church of Central Africa-Zambia synod chairman. He went on to serve a congregation in the Copperbelt for several years before arriving at his current ministry in Chongwe.

Pastor Davison became involved with TELL Network in 2020. He has recorded devotional material and helped produce videos that are part of the curriculum. By God’s grace, he will take on a new role in 2025 as a TELL counselor, encouraging and equipping TELL students to share what they’ve learned with others. Through this work, we pray that many others who are lost will be found and brought into the family of God.

FROM JOEL HOFF, TELL missionary



Fast Facts

- **1,600+ students** have participated in online Bible study with TELL.
- **500+ students** are currently in live online TELL classes.
- **50+ students** who have completed more than 8 courses are working with a TELL counselor for extra support and in-depth doctrinal study.
- TELL students are **leading Bible study groups** and gathering regularly for worship.

NATIVE AMERICAN MISSIONS

The Apache mission in Arizona celebrated 125 years of God’s blessings in 2018 as the first world mission of WELS. Today, WELS’ Native American missions serve nine churches and two elementary schools, and it provides theological education through the Apache Christian Training School on the White Mountain and San Carlos Apache reservations in Arizona. New Native American outreach is also occurring in the Four Corners area of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado through the Native Christians Network.

Faces of Faith – Marlene

Mrs. Marlene Truax lets her light shine as the receptionist at East Fork Lutheran School in Whiteriver, Ariz. She’s been a friendly face to students, parents, and visitors since 2016. She’s been a Lutheran her whole life. She was baptized as a baby at Open Bible Lutheran Church, attended East Fork Lutheran School, and raised her family in the Lutheran church. Being a lifelong church member doesn’t mean life is easy. Like many fellow Apaches, Marlene has faced some tough times. She has learned that **“God is always there, no matter what.”**

Marlene’s humble and faithful service supports the teaching staff on the “front lines” in the classroom. She keeps everyone organized and offers a cheerful wave to students who pass by her office. Besides keeping busy with her receptionist duties, she also functions as the school medic. She comforts hurting kids with adhesive bandages and ice packs, and always with compassion.

Known affectionately by the students as “Miss Marlene,” she enjoys seeing the kids each day and watching them grow in size and in faith. “We have an excellent school because we teach God’s Word,” says Marlene. One of her favorite Bible verses is Matthew 5:16: “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Marlene inspires me with her hard work and dedication and love for God and his Word. I’m so thankful for her!

FROM MINDY HOLTZ, world missionary wife

Fast Facts

- The **Apache Christian Training School (ACTS)** serves 60 students, providing theological courses to train and equip Apache members for ministry.
- WELS’ Native American missions are partnering with the **Native Strength Network** to address the mental health crisis in Native American communities by re-establishing **peer recovery groups** that offer culturally relevant support and foster community resilience.
- An average of **623 members** worship weekly at nine congregations on the Apache reservations.



On February 9, 2025, six young people were welcomed into God’s family at **Grace in San Carlos, Ariz.**, during a special Baptism Sunday.

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WELS Foundation
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod



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- Inspirational worship
- Hear mission presentations
- Get to know missionaries
- Sample ethnic cuisine + view recipes

Taste of
MISSIONS
June 13, 2026



Learn more at tasteofmissions.com



PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

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 theological education programs and coordinates advance degree programs and visiting instructors upon request.

Faces of Faith – Natinael



I am Natinael from Ethiopia. Because of persecution from my government, I left my home and family and came to Canada in hopes of a better life. I am now living in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and trying to sponsor my wife and daughter to live here with me. I grew up in a Lutheran church in Africa, so I was looking for a Lutheran church here. Sadly, while there are various Ethiopian churches in Calgary, none of them were committed to the truth of the Bible as expressed in the Lutheran tradition. **Even though there are various opportunities to worship in my own language, I was not content to compromise on my Lutheran faith.** Eventually I found St. Paul Lutheran Church in Calgary and quickly came to love the people there and their commitment to the Lutheran Confessions.

I still, however, missed worshiping in my native language, Amharic. I talked to the pastor about this and lamented the lack of Ethiopian Lutheran churches in our city. Pastor asked me, “Well, do you want to make an Ethiopian Lutheran church happen?” and I said, “Yes!” After that, I enrolled in the Pastoral Studies Institute and have been receiving training to become a pastor. Together with St. Paul, my goal is to gather my people for Bible studies and eventually plant the very first Ethiopian Lutheran Church in Calgary. Please pray that I would study faithfully and that the visa applications for my wife and daughter would be approved. I miss my family dearly.

Fast Facts

- PSI currently trains **40** students from **13** different people groups in **31** locations throughout North America.
- PSI currently trains **310** students from **11** different people groups in coordination with WELS’ five regional world mission teams.
- PSI’s **Joshua Urban Ministry Program (JUMP)** in Milwaukee, Wis., is currently training eight inner-city men for the pastoral ministry.





DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIEND,

The gospel changes hearts and lives. That is illustrated by the stories you will read in *Faces of Faith*. Behind the glossy images of smiling faces are hundreds of others who have been touched by the gospel. They are faces we may never see in this life but will see in heaven—by God’s grace—working through our WELS home mission congregations.

There are missionaries ministering to those struggling with lifelong issues that have burdened them with guilt and shame—but they now know and believe all their sins are forgiven. There are those who have been endlessly searching for peace in all the wrong places, whose lives are now changed because they know the peace we have through Jesus. There are those in prison, one even on death row, who now know the hope we have through Jesus who said, **“Because I live, you also will live.”**

Real people with real hurt are seeing their lives being changed—because Jesus is real. The gospel is powerful. It changes hearts. It changed yours. It changed mine.

This is the gospel our missionaries are privileged to proclaim because of your support of Home Missions. Your generous gifts enable us to continue to reach more people whose lives are being transformed by the power of the gospel. I thank God for you, for this partnership we have in the gospel, and for your ongoing support that enables us to reach more of the lost.

Your Brother in Christ,

PASTOR MARK GABB,
Home Missions administrator

HOME MISSIONS



144
HOME MISSION
CONGREGATIONS

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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 30 of those being cross-cultural mission congregations. Home Missions also provides more than 50 campus ministries with financial support while assisting hundreds of other congregations that serve college students around the United States and Canada.

Faces of Faith – Cheri

In 2025, God led a precious soul to the waters of Baptism through . . . TikTok!

Our congregation has been using a free online ad tool that connects local pastors to people in their zip code who have spiritual questions. One day Cheri was scrolling through TikTok when she saw a video ad and clicked on it. Soon, she found herself messaging with our pastor. After asking about our church's core beliefs and our worship service, she decided to attend worship the very next Sunday. A new round of Bible Basics class happened to be starting immediately after worship. Cheri agreed to try the class and was immediately hooked! She became a regular at both worship and Bible study, with a boundless appetite for asking deep spiritual questions and finding the answers in God's Word.

Cheri joined our congregation in fall 2024. She was baptized, confirmed, and received the Lord's Supper all on the same day. Now, she rarely misses a Sunday of worship, a Bible study, or any church event and has become a key volunteer on our AV team.

Who knows how many more “Cheris” might be out there right now, spending time online while longing deep down to learn more about God. **We thank the Lord for every opportunity to connect with people—even through TikTok!**

FROM LUCAS BITTER, home missionary at Intown in Atlanta, Ga.





100 MISSIONS IN 10 YEARS

WELS Home Missions approved **11 new home mission starts and enhancements** in April 2025. That puts us at a total of 21 new starts and 24 enhancements as we work towards our synod's goal of starting 100 missions and enhancing 75 ministries by 2033.

NEW HOME MISSION STARTS

+ **Arlington, Tenn.:**

Arlington, located 25 miles northwest of Memphis, is on the brink of rapid growth with Ford Motor Company set to build a new plant for electric truck production. Since 2022, the South Atlantic District Mission Board has been working with a dedicated group of 60 members and Pastor Jim Turriff from Gloria Dei, Memphis, who plan to relocate and establish a fresh start in Arlington under a new name.



holding weekly worship in October 2024. The group has identified 90 prospects, many of whom they connected with by volunteering in the Jarrell Bible Community Food Pantry. The plan is to rent space for eight years before securing land and constructing a permanent church home.

+ **Erie, Colo.:** Erie, located 30 miles north of Denver, has experienced a 55 percent population increase from 2010 to 2020, with continued growth expected. The Colorado District Mission Board began exploring this area in 2022. A core group of 10 adults has been gathering for fellowship and Bible study while attending local festivals to share its plans for a new church.



So far, 25 people have expressed interest in learning more about the mission efforts.

+ **Madison, Wis.:**

The center of Madison is expected to grow by 200,000 in future years, with many residents seeking an urban lifestyle. A core group of 14 adults, familiar with the area, has been working together since 2022—meeting regularly for Bible study and ministry planning—and has also secured a rental space for worship and community activities. Twenty prospects have expressed a strong interest in learning more about this new mission. A new mission plant in the center of urban Madison would allow WELS to reach new people there.



+ **Jarrell, Texas:** Jarrell is a rapidly growing town located 44 miles north of Austin in northern Williamson County. The county has seen its population surge from 426,000 in 2010 to 671,000 in 2022, with continued growth expected.



For the past three years, Pastor Don Patterson has been working with a core group of 11, which began

+ **San Tan Valley, Ariz.:**

Located on the eastern edge of Phoenix, San Tan Valley is experiencing rapid growth with no signs of slowing down. Since 2022, the Arizona-California District Mission Board has been working with Heritage in Gilbert, Ariz., to plant a new mission in the area. A core group of 26 adults has been gathering regularly for Bible study and community events, building connections and momentum. In October 2024, they began holding regular worship services and have already identified 127 prospects interested in learning more about the new church.

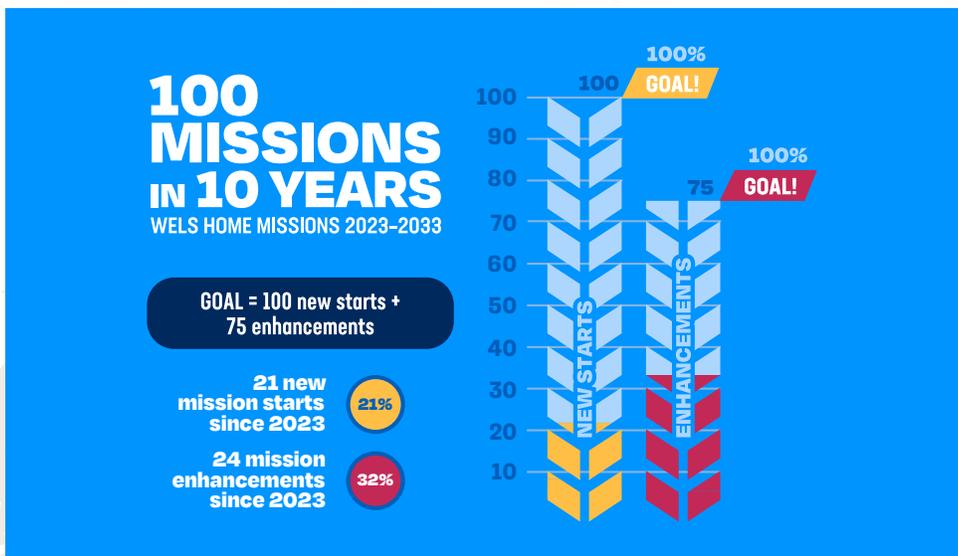


ENHANCEMENTS



Home Missions enhancements provide short-term funding to help congregations expand their outreach efforts. This could include calling an additional pastor, staff minister, or lay staff member; starting a cross-cultural ministry; or restarting a church where members have renewed their efforts to go with the gospel into their community.

- ★ Christ, Clarksville, Md. (restart)
- ★ Redeemer, Edna, Texas
- ★ Living Word, Petaluma, Calif. (restart)
- ★ Risen Savior, Lakewood Ranch, Fla.
- ★ Living Word, Waukesha, Wis.
- ★ St. Mark, Mankato, Minn.



READ MORE
about these new starts and enhancements at wels100in10.net.

Faces of Faith - Sean

"It was amazing. It was the greatest thing . . . just to know that Jesus still loved me and still cared about me and wanted me to be part of his family again, that meant the world to me."

Hear more from **Sean O'Doherty**, member at Cross of Christ in Nampa, Idaho, about how the gospel shared with him through a WELS home mission congregation brought him back to his Savior.



Faces of Faith - Jerry and Denice

"It was like the light bulb came on, and you felt so much more peace when you went to church," says Denice.

Hear more from **Jerry Laster**, a trauma surgeon, who draws a powerful parallel between his work of healing physical wounds and the church's role as a hospital for sick souls. Discover how he and his wife, **Denice**, found peace and healing through God's free grace at Christ Alone, a WELS home mission congregation in Keller, Texas.



Faces of Faith – Todd and Rochelle



Rochelle and I faced some challenges in our life. We struggled with faith and constantly questioned why evil seemed so pervasive in the world and good was scarce. In the middle of these struggles, like most people, we couldn't find a solid foundation.

However, through our family, we discovered The Vine in Hayden, Idaho. When we heard Pastor Schultz's message one Sunday, we realized where our true strength was—in Jesus. **The Vine has brought us immense joy, peace, and grace amidst the turmoil of our world.** And we've formed cherished connections with so many others in The Vine family. While life still presents its difficulties, we now can see the goodness of God that was once so elusive in our lives.

Faces of Faith – Chantel

Chantel (pictured left) was born into a Catholic family, baptized, and put in a Catholic school, but her family did not attend mass except at Christmas and Easter. As she got older, she found the answers the priests and teachers gave to her questions to be unsatisfying. Her teenage and young adult life led her down some dark paths, but all the while, she was being loved by her friend, Katie (pictured center), a lifelong member of our congregation. Katie would talk to her when things were bad and tried to encourage her. Katie invited Chantel to church, but at first it didn't click for her. Katie was a genuine, committed friend and continued to patiently love Chantel. After a few more conversations and invitations, Chantel agreed to try our Bible Basics course. She found not only good answers to her thoughtful questions, but she

also found the gospel to be beautiful, almost like she had not heard it before. Chantel is a joy to know and has become a loved and valued member of our church. Is it any wonder why? **The work**

of the Holy Spirit and the genuine love of Christ shown through his people does amazing things.



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





Living Hope

dedicated their new church building in March 2024.

Faces of Faith - Chattanooga, Tenn.

Our Oktoberfest event couldn't have gone any better. In partnership with some local businesses next door, we were able to welcome more than 600 people onto our church campus. But easily the best thing that happened that day was meeting Eborah. Eborah had marked that she was interested in finding a church home and taking a Foundations class. In my initial follow-up with her, the first thing she mentioned was that she was still struggling, mentally and spiritually, after losing her mom earlier in the year. Her mom had been her spiritual mentor, and now she felt she'd lost that connection with God when she lost her mom. After an initial counseling session with me, Eborah agreed to take our Foundations class, knowing her mom would have loved for her to keep studying the Bible. After the first lesson, Eborah asked if her daughter Natosha

could join us. After a couple more lessons, she said her son, Amasa, would join us too. The next week her youngest daughter, Lexus, came to study along with her children KJ, Ka'myah, and Kenzo. You could just see Eborah beaming with joy as she sat at the table learning about God's Word every Saturday afternoon with her entire family. The best blessing of all was getting to see Natosha, Lexus, KJ, Ka'myah, and Kenzo get baptized in March 2025. Eborah was beaming with joy. **It's amazing how God can turn the story of one hurting soul into a story of baptismal joy for an entire extended family!**

FROM ERIC MELSO, home missionary at Living Hope in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Faces of Faith—Eian

As a disabled veteran and first responder who was spending his first year in Texas, Eian Poblador was struggling

more than words can say. He remembers waking up one night and concluding that it was time for real help and answers. He'd seen churches that would model something spiritual in this world, but what caught his eye was a church that modeled "peace." He walked into Amazing Grace.

He said, "I felt no fear from God or others . . . the church and its

pastor were the first people to take time to know me and spend time to teach me God's Word, the forgiveness of my sins, and the gift of the Lord's grace."

Eian defended, served, and protected his country, and now he protects the special gifts that he received from God's Word. It's no small task to cherish, uphold, and defend how pure the law is and how amazing grace is each day. Today, you will find Eian sitting in the back of Amazing Grace with a friendly smile. He's keeping watch. Why? **He knows that someone else is keeping watch over his soul for eternal life to come.** He has a story, just like each person who needs to hear God's Word and come to know their Savior.

FROM HANS THOMFORD, home missionary at Amazing Grace in Amarillo, Texas



Faces of Faith— The Joseph Family

Jemoye and Kandy wanted a good education for their daughter. That's how they found St. John's Lutheran School. In 2017, their daughter graduated! The parents celebrated their new grad's achievement and then did what many parents do . . . moved on. Jemoye and Kandy were unchurched, and they really didn't have an interest in joining a congregation.

One day in 2022, they showed up with Jessie, their baby boy. The birth of their son stirred something in them. Their growing family needed something more. They needed a church

home. The seed that had been planted years ago at

St. John's took root! For their family, 2024 was

a special year—Jemoye was baptized along with their new baby girl. Jemoye and Kandy

married, and the whole family joined their new

Christian community. As Jemoye describes it, "**St. John's**

is a place that helps us pursue godliness and follow God's Word. A place I find support on my journey with Christ." If the Joseph family is any indication, no matter how long ago seeds of the gospel have been planted, the Lord can cause them to grow!

FROM JONATHAN KEHL, home missionary at St. John's, Saint John, Antigua and Barbuda



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CROSS-CULTURAL
MISSIONS

Faces of Faith—Reece and Caroline

Reece and Caroline started out as classmates, attending the same middle school and high school. Conversations and overall knowledge of each other's existence was minimal in their earliest years, and their paths split after their 2018 high school graduation. Caroline went on to nursing school, and Reece joined the United States Marine Corps. In many instances, they were on opposite sides of the planet. The culmination of Caroline's four-year education and graduation alongside Reece's final year of military service led to a reconnection and eventual relationship that would start because of a simple match of mutual interests. Their relationship soon grew to be one rooted in faith, grace, and an overall understanding that to best serve each other, they must center themselves in Christ.

Finding Divine Peace in Rockwall, Tex., was, at first, just a place for weekly worship, but it soon became Reece and

Caroline's new home. **They are unified and committed to each other as husband and wife, but also to Christ.**

The two of them appreciate everything they have learned and been provided by Divine Peace, as well as Pastor Gunnar, who has been an invaluable source of support and education for them. As a newlywed couple, Reece and Caroline appreciate the constant spiritual growth opportunities that help them grow in their faith.



Faces of Faith—Uncle Manh Le

On Dec. 22, 2024, we held our first worship service in Vietnamese at King of Kings. We also got to baptize Uncle Manh Le.

Uncle Manh came from a family with Buddhist roots and ancestral worship. He had never known God. I first met him through the citizenship class offered by the church. I had the opportunity to

help him with his studies, talk to him, and pray with him every Wednesday.

He had failed the test many times and had to reapply. He was sad and upset, but I comforted him and introduced him to

Jesus Christ. I told him, **"People may forsake you, but Jesus Christ will never forsake you."** One day I asked him if he believed in God. He replied, "I do." What a blessing! A week later he called to tell me he passed the citizenship exam.

Four months later, after Uncle Manh finished Bible information class, I baptized him. Another soul was recorded in the registry of heaven. Despite his family's opposition, Uncle Manh realized that becoming a citizen of the kingdom of heaven is even more important than being an American citizen.

FROM TRUNG LE, missionary at King of Kings Vietnamese Outreach in Garden Grove, Calif.





Anchor
launched public
worship in
September 2024.



Faces of Faith – Johnathon

My wife, Sarah, our children, and I have been going to Anchor Church in Marquette, Mich., from the beginning. We were on the hunt for a family church. Our children are eager to learn about Jesus and have a lot of energy and personality, and we were looking for an understanding church that could provide a setting to learn more in a fun and engaging way.

I met Pastor Joe Lindloff about a year before Anchor opened its doors to the community. Our families loved getting to know each other. One Friday morning on a toddler hike, Pastor Joe asked what

we needed in a church, and we got to sit down and brainstorm how Anchor could best serve the community youth.

Fast-forward to now. Our children have fallen in love with their church family. They light up when they see Pastor Joe. It's the most wonderful opportunity that I have as a husband and father to be empowered and equipped to lead my family in their faith journey. **I'm thankful Anchor Church gave that to me.** As my family grows, I look forward to joining in more and serving our God and our community.

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NEW MISSION STARTS/
ENHANCEMENTS
SINCE 2023

Faces of Faith – Thomas

It was a Sunday evening in July when I received an e-mail from Thomas. He and his family were preparing to move from East Asia to Boston so he could pursue further education. Additionally, they were eager to join our home mission church and become part of our community. **What joy!** From the moment they arrived, Thomas and his family have been an incredible blessing to mission work in Boston. They regularly welcome Thomas' classmates into their home for study nights and meals, hosted a Lunar New Year celebration, and share the gospel freely with anyone who will listen.

Their faith and hospitality serve as a powerful example and highlight the many opportunities we have in Boston—both in cross-cultural ministry and among college and graduate students.



FROM JOSHUA KOELPIN, home missionary at Harbor in Boston, Mass.

Faces of Faith – Channel

At the beginning of this year, I found myself as a brand-new staff member at an unfamiliar school. As an evangelist, the idea is to connect school families to our church and share opportunities to grow in relationship to Jesus. It was, admittedly, a bit intimidating for me, but God always provides the opportunity.



Within the first week on the job, I was walking up the sidewalk for 3:00 p.m. dismissal and heard beautiful worship music blaring from a car that was waiting to pick up a scholar. I walked up to the window and met Channel McClellan. After a brief initial chat, she attended church and shortly after

we were running through virtual membership Bible classes. In addition to her growing faith, she and her fifth-grade daughter, Kellise, have a unique spiritual habit. Every morning at 7:45 a.m., they pull up in front of school, but the car doors don't open; Channel and Kellise remain in the vehicle and pray together. Channel prays over her daughter and the day ahead, inviting Jesus into every moment of their life. **What an example of faith**, even to the lifelong Christian—a humble mother and her daughter, sitting in the chilly Wisconsin winter air, praying before they each run off to their busy days. I need more faith like that in my life. We all do.

FROM BRENT KROHN, campus evangelist at St. Marcus in Milwaukee, Wis.



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 - Parker

When Parker made the trek to Houghton, Mich., to attend Michigan Technological University, church was the last thing on his mind. His schedule was packed with demanding classes; exploring the Christian faith wasn't a priority. That changed when he moved in with his friend John. John's unwavering faith and commitment to Wednesday dinners and Bible study at Peace intrigued Parker, who initially believed John just wanted to avoid his cooking. Yet friendship and the persistent invitations sparked his curiosity.

Parker decided to visit Peace and was surprised to find himself nourished not just by the Bible studies but also by the welcoming campus ministry community. As he

grew in this faith, he signed up for Bible information classes and joined Peace along with his girlfriend and another student. He took the step of Baptism, marking a new beginning in his faith.

A simple invitation opened the door to a life-changing experience. The Holy Spirit worked

wonders, and Parker found a profound connection with his Savior.



FROM THOMAS WELCH, campus ministry pastor at Peace in Houghton, Mich.

Faces of Faith - Oliva and Anne

Anne and I met on Instagram while searching for roommates before our freshman year at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We

immediately hit it off, and when I mentioned that I was Christian, Anne said that she had recently started studying the Bible and was looking for a church. I knew we were going to be great roommates and friends.

Anne, who comes from a non-religious household, began studying the Bible on her own in high school,

while I grew up in a strong Lutheran family and attended Christian schools. We had very different perceptions and concerns regarding life as a Christian on a diverse campus. **We started attending Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, and it immediately felt like home.** We found a welcoming Christian community among both peers and staff, joined a Bible study, and grew in our faith together.

Our different backgrounds bring unique perspectives, helping us grow closer to Christ and encouraging each other to shine our Christian light on campus. We are grateful for the community, support, and time spent in God's Word at the Chapel.



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