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*Serving the Eastern Conference of the
WELS Nebraska District*

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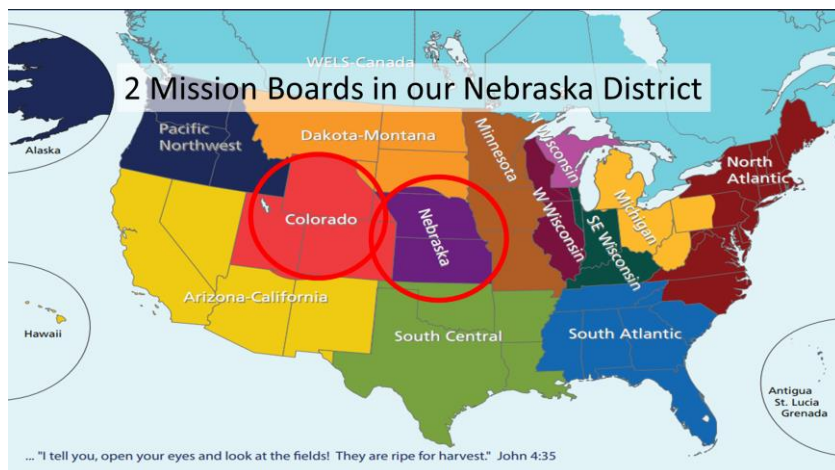
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Report to the Convention of the WELS Nebraska District

Kansas City, KS; June 3-5, 2024



Update on Nebraska District Mission Board **"Fields Ripe for Harvest"**

"Victory Lutheran Church" in Wichita, KS

(Subsidized since 2023)

Pastor Jake Jenswold reports...

Victory Lutheran Church had its first worship service on April 14th. After a six-hour training session on April 13th, we were finally ready to try setting up our new "church in a box" ourselves. It was an overwhelming sensation. Overwhelming in the fact that there were a lot of cords, a lot of chairs and a lot of hiccups to work through; but that paled in comparison to how overwhelming it was that after a year of waiting, it was finally happening! We were meeting as the body of Christ in a place that the body of Christ had not previously been meeting. Emotions ran high that day in the best possible way.

We have continued to worship since then in our rented facility, just us and a couple of our “guests,” and it will remain that way for the summer. With the fluidity of schedules in the summer, we decided to push our big launch/grand opening service to the second week of September! So for now, we continue to worship and invite our close friends/prospects to come worship with us and give us feedback! (To maybe sprinkle a little Holy Spirit on them, in the place that he works; the Word.) We also had the privilege of receiving feedback from an “old” friend in the middle of May when Mission Counselor Matt Vogt came to give us some helpful tips.



For now, we continue to seek ways to connect in and with our community through things like partnering with our local food bank to collect donations and setting up stalls at local festivals to start conversations. We pray the Lord continues to bless the work being done between our sister sites in Wichita and connects more people to the saving message of sins forgiven in our Savior Jesus.

“The Vine Lutheran Church” in Joplin, MO

(Subsidized since 2019)

Pastor Jordan Bence reports...

Psalm 113 - From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

Apart from Him we can do nothing. Alienated from Him we are nothing. But then the story of salvation played out and what should have been will no longer be. Hope foretold became reality. A prophecy of promise was fulfilled in Him. When He attached Himself to us, everything changed. Because we have been adopted by Him through blood, we know that we lack nothing. We belong to Him. He calls us by name. He chose us for glory everlasting. The Church shall stand firm against every assault that the evil one and his kingdom will inflict against the Almighty. In the end, the Light will defeat the darkness, the dragon will be thrown down, and death will be swallowed up in victory by the Resurrection and the Life. This is our message, our peace, and our entire life.

December of this year will mark the beginning of our fourth year of worship in the storefront on Main Street. That means for over three years the Lord’s people in Joplin have gathered around His altar of atonement

and feasted on His forgiveness. We have grown in the Good News as God has served it up in Word and Sacrament. The Lord has hand-delivered some who have never heard His name or known about His grace before. He has worked wonders by bringing others back who were estranged from Him because they fled from Him.

Every year we implement new strategies, try out events we haven't done before, and improve upon efforts from the past in hopes of bringing another new one into the flock. This year we have made a conscious effort to evaluate, adapt and update our previous way of ministry. That meant scaling back on some things that we put a great deal of effort into in the past, trying out entirely new ideas, and listening to new opportunities that are out there in our area. This all started with an "idea share" congregational meeting at the start of the year. Each member was given a handful of sticky notes and asked to share any idea that they think would provide opportunities to share Jesus down the road. It was such a blessing to receive input from our longtime members as well as new members that bring a unique perspective. They were able to share what worked with them, what they think will work for people like them, and what we might consider changing to really target the lost to the best of our abilities. There were dozens of great ideas that we were able to digest and consider.



The Church Council recently met and consolidated those ideas. Many of them have already been added to the calendar over the next sixth months. Some of those new ideas include family movie night, game night, BBQ throwdown at Friendsgiving, food drive canvass with Pastor Vogt, trunk-or-treat and candy giveaway, Men's Bible study, and Mornings with Mommy women's Bible study. There were a number of smaller events that we added to the calendar as well and some ideas that we have stockpiled away for down the road when we have more resources and capabilities to host such an event.

There can be so many evolutions, updates, and adjustments in ministry. But we know that there is one aspect that will never change. Because if it does then we are taking the cornerstone upon which the Church stands or falls and replacing Him with a feeble and futile foundation that will fail. It is our prayer that the Lord would take our efforts and bless them. We know that we don't make the work of the Holy Spirit any easier. It is a miracle of miracles that He can take a spiritual dead corpse and make it alive in an instant. The power to do such work doesn't come from us. But it is our beautiful calling to plant the gospel in as many places as possible and He will take it from there. Please continue to keep us in your prayers my dear brothers in the faith! We are always humbled by the overwhelming support you all provide! God be with you!



“Grace Hmong Lutheran Church” in Kansas City, KS

(Subsidized since 2010)

Pastor Ger Lor reports...

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” 1 Corinthians 1:3.

God has blessed the work of the gospel in Kansas City, which might seem like an unlikely place for mission work because most of the Hmong people in the Metro Area are Christians (Baptist & Christian Missionary Alliance Church). Nevertheless, the gospel is not bound. God sends his Word where he pleases to accomplish what he pleases (Isaiah 55:10 -11).

From 2023 to now, Grace Hmong Lutheran Church has grown as God has blessed this church family. The members of Grace Hmong Church have grown from 95 to 105. There were 5 confirmed (including 1 adult) into faith and 5 (4 babies and 1 adult) were united to Christ in his death and resurrection through the waters of baptism.



At the beginning of this month, the members of Grace and 12 people from the community went camping at the lake. During these 3 days camping, we studied the Bible, worshipped, and enjoyed fellowship with plenty of food together. One of the blessings from God during this camping trip was an adult who completed membership class. She was confirmed and baptized into faith in Jesus Christ at the lake.

On Easter this year, there were 22 adults and children who came to join Grace Hmong’s Celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The children of the community enjoyed Bible study, games, and foods together with Grace’s children during the Easter egg hunt service.

There were 25 visitors (some of them are prospects but some are first time visitors) who came to worship and fellowship with Grace at our Thanksgiving and Christmas services this past year. Grace is praying that they will continue to join Grace’s worship services and events.

Other ministry that is happening at Grace is Pastor and laity continuing to reach out to the community by joining church member’s events, parties, and the festivals of the community as usual. By the grace of God, Pastor Lor has had the chance to present the Law/Gospel to the community/non-Christians more and more according to the love of God.



Pastor visits the sick at the hospital and offers prayers and short devotions to them, both to Grace’s members and those in the community. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God penetrated the hearts of the people, which will sprout into faith, sooner or later, in accordance with his will.

Praise God for his grace and mercy forever and ever as we serve Jesus Christ our Lord together!

“Living Savior Lutheran Church” in Blair, NE
(Subsidized 2015-2019; Unsubsidized since 2019)
Pastor Steve Helwig reports...



We just celebrated our one year anniversary in our new location – Little Blossoms Childcare Center. This old historical building is tied to the rich tradition of our community here in Blair. Our partnership with Little Blossoms has been wonderful. We have access to their gymnasium for worship and to several of their classrooms for Sunday School and Confirmation Class every Sunday afternoon and evening. Many of the families who make use of Little Blossoms are now on our prospect list. Fourteen of those families sent their children to our Christmas for Kids event in December. We continue to share news and notes with them.

Another rich tradition in Blair is the annual Gateway to the West Days. Gateway to the West Days includes a local parade, carnival rides, booths, and local bands. Living Savior has been a part of this parade for the past several years. We will participate again this year handing out not only candy but also invitations to a one-day VBS that will conclude with a cookout and an outdoor service. We continue to thank God for the opportunity we have every week to gather at the feet of Jesus and to hear the one thing needful. We pray that others can join us so that many more in our community can have and enjoy the peace that only he can give.



“Good Shepherd South Sudanese Ministry” in Omaha, NE

(Subsidized through the Joint Mission Council; Overseen by the NE DMB)

Pastor Peter Bur reports...

We are still doing our worship service two Sundays a month, but sometimes three or four Sundays when our people don't have to work on Sundays. We have one Sudanese family joining our church in Sioux City. I used to go there sometimes when he needed help. Thank you and God's richest blessing.



What's Next?

Where else is the NE DMB exploring opportunities to expand our gospel ministry efforts?

- Southwest Kansas City – A Mission Expansion Team (MET) has been working since the Fall of 2023 on a request to receive funding to start a new mission in southwest Kansas City. The MET and core group is mostly out of Mt. Olive in Overland Park, KS. Lord-willing, they will have their request ready to be submitted to the BHM Spring 2025.
- Southeast Lincoln – Expansion is taking place in southeast Lincoln – housing developments, a new public school, a new hospital, and a bypass to easily access this area. The NE DMB has been working on this area for some time. A long-term vacancy at Mt. Olive in Lincoln caused the NE DMB to put a pause on these efforts. With Pastor Julius Buelow accepting the Call to serve there, the NE DMB will be resuming efforts soon.
- Omaha 4 – For 25 years, the NE DMB has looked into the Omaha area south of I80. It's the fastest growing area in Nebraska, and remains on the new start radar.

We meet every month in person or via zoom, so please let us know if there is anything we can do to help serve you!



**100
MISSIONS
IN 10 YEARS**
WELS HOME MISSIONS 2023-2033