

# **A Look at our WELS World Missions: Principles, Programs and Policies**

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[Presented at the Convention of the Pacific Northwest District, June 17-19, 1980]

*“Behold... Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”*

The impact of these words is the same whether you look over the Samaritan countryside on the day Jesus first spoke them, whether you stand at the head of a stairway in a Tokyo railroad station and realize that but one half of one percent of the 600,000 persons passing there each day know Him as their Savior, or whether you are driving across the seemingly endless space of an African landscape dotted with villages where superstition and fear is still the order of the day. There are people out there in numbers which stagger the imagination, people who are as much in need of the assurance of God’s grace and forgiveness in Christ as is each person present here today.

It is these and many more whom the Savior would have us see, even when there seem to be more immediate and pressing obligations for us in the church’s work. The disciples were performing an important service for Jesus. They had just come back from town with food and they insisted that Jesus eat what they had brought. But, Jesus reminded them, even at that very moment there was something more important for Him and for them than was that eating. There was something “out there” that He wanted them to see. It was a rich and ready harvest, not of ripened grain, but of people, people whom He had come to save, people who needed Him and the hope which only He could give them.

The Lord’s words are meant for us as well as for the Twelve. It is so easy to become so fully occupied with the things at hand that we forget that there may be work in the Lord’s kingdom which has priority over the things presently claiming our attention. It is significant that each time Jesus defined the task of His disciples and the work of His believers of all time, He used language which asks us to lift up our eyes and look, to raise our sights and look beyond the little circle in which we happen at the moment to be living and working. “Into all the world” is where the preaching of the good news is to take us. “All nations” are the ones whom we are to make His disciples by baptizing and teaching them. “To the ends of the earth” we are to be His witnesses.

It is not our purpose to minimize the importance of the work which we are doing in our home congregations, in our districts, in our Synod at large. This is important work, our preaching, the teaching of young and old, our Christian day schools, our Lutheran high schools, our worker training programs, the comforting of the sick, the reclaiming of the lost and erring. All of this and more needs to be done. It is vital and is at the very heart of all the Savior has given us to do. Yet we can be doing all of it and yet be very much in need of Jesus’ admonition to “lift up our eyes and look.”

We are thinking here of mission work, more specifically of world mission work. By this we mean the work of reaching out with the gospel across the barriers of language, culture, and international boundaries. There is something distinctive about world mission work. It is the one thing we do in the preaching and teaching of the Word in which we are concerned only with the Great Commission without expecting any direct benefit or return. World missions does not build our own congregations, provide us with needed pastors or teachers, or provide income for our Synodical treasury. We do it simply because our Savior makes it clear that it needs to be done and that His own are going to do it.

It is the distinctive nature of world mission work that sometimes makes it seem less urgent, less necessary than that which is closer to us. The disciples came with food in their baskets. Surely, they were supplying an important service to their Lord in bringing that food to Him. I have an idea that they were somewhat taken aback when He indicated that what was more important at that moment was out there in that field, white to the harvest.

A similar reminder surely is in place for all of us. It is fitting that at this convention our thoughts should similarly be directed toward a work which is outside our congregations, a step removed from the other activities which occupy us as a Synod. We have many things to consider during these three days. A large number of them have to do with the preservation and continued growth of that which the Lord has already given us. It is good and it is necessary that we consider these matters which are so close to us. It would be tragic, however, if we failed to realize that in the final analysis all that we have here at home must serve the spread of the Gospel to those who do not as yet have it, remembering that by a ratio of 20 to 1 those who do not have it are part of another culture, speak a different tongue, and live in a different land.

It is to this end that we would like to take a closer look at those more distant fields, white to the harvest, giving special attention to those which the Lord has already made it possible for us to enter. May He give us joy and zeal for the task as we take.

## **A LOOK AT OUR WELS WORLD MISSIONS, PRINCIPLES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

### **Where We Are Today**

The extent of our Synod's world missions is best seen by looking at the statistics on the last page of this presentation.

We are working in eleven countries beside the United States.

Called Workers: There are 50 missionaries, 24 missionary teachers, 22 national pastors, and 42 national evangelists.

Membership: Our world missions number nearly 6,500 communicants. We are serving some 14,400 souls.

In our world mission program we have two distinctly different types of activities.

1. Mission fields in which we work directly through expatriate missionaries. We have WELS missionaries in Apache and Spanish work in southwestern U.S.A., in Puerto Rico, Colombia, Malawi, Zambia, Japan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Taiwan. It is not possible because of various government regulations to have expatriates resident in Mexico, Cameroon, and India. Two missionaries live in El Paso, Texas, and make regular trips into Mexico to guide and supervise the work there. Our Mission Counselor in Hong Kong makes periodic visits to India. A special worker training program is underway in Cameroon and involves men both from Central Africa and the United States.

2. Young overseas confessional churches which receive some measure of support and guidance through our Board for World Missions. They are located in Sweden, Nigeria, and Brazil.

### **A Bit of History**

It has not always been so. In my early years in the ministry our Synod's involvement in world missions was very limited. We had our mission among the Apaches. Also, we were supporting a small confessional church in Poland and had a ten percent interest in the Synodical Conference mission in Nigeria and among the Blacks in southern U.S.A. It has been my privilege in these past forty years to see that small beginning turn into the sizeable world mission thrust which has taken us to places which were only names to us a generation ago.

Each of our present mission fields has a history of its own. It all began in 1893 when the first two missionaries, John Plocher and George Adascheck, were sent to Arizona to begin work among the Apache Indians. This work has grown until it involves the support of active programs on five continents. The dates on which we entered new fields are as follows:

1893 Apache Indian Mission

- 1924 Mission in Poland. After World War II its members largely fled to Germany and there became the Church of the Evangelical Lutheran Confession. Since January 1, 1976, this church has become a member of SELK and no longer is a WELS mission.
- 1936 Nigerian Mission. This was begun with the synods of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. It was taken over by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1963 when our Synod severed fellowship relations because of confessional reasons.
- 1948 Spanish Mission (Tucson)
- 1952 Japanese Mission
- 1953 Northern Rhodesian Mission (Now Zambia)
- 1962 Nyasaland Mission (Now Malawi)
- 1963 Puerto Rico Mission
- 1964 Hong Kong Mission
- 1966 Spanish Mission (El Paso)
- 1968 Taiwan Mission
- 1969 Indonesian Mission
- 1969 Mission in India
- 1975 Cameroon Mission (First contacts went back to 1971.)

The original appeal from Christ the King Lutheran Synod in Nigeria goes back to July, 1969. The beginnings of our Synod's contact with the confessional church movement in Sweden date back to late 1971. It was during 1975 that the request first came to us from a small confessional congregation in Porto Alegre to work in Brazil.

### **Administration**

Originally, both world and home missions were administered by one board, the General Mission Board. The 1955 Synod convention resolved to divide the administration of the mission program, giving the responsibility for world missions to a newly created Board for World Missions and that for home missions to a General Board for Home Missions.

The Board for World Missions is made up of five three-man executive committees and a chairman elected by the convention of the Synod. There are two pastors and one layman on each executive committee, each elected for a six year term. The chairman is elected every two years. The executive committees are as follows.

- Executive Committee for the Lutheran Apache Mission
- Executive Committee for the Lutheran Church of Central Africa
- Executive Committee for the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church in Japan
- Executive Committee for Southeast Asian Missions
- Executive Committee for Latin American Missions

The board calls an executive secretary to coordinate the world mission program and to serve as an advisor to the board.

A five-man Interim Committee is responsible for ongoing contact with the churches in Sweden, Nigeria, and Brazil. Three of its members are from outside the board, one of them a member of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations.

The individual executive committees are fully responsible for the administration of the fields assigned to them. The board itself is primarily a coordinating and equalizing body and meets three times a year to consider the overall world mission program.

## Underlying Principles

One of the first tasks facing the newly formed Board for World Missions was to define the principles which would guide it in its work. This resulted in the formulating of a set of underlying principles which was recommended to and adopted by the 1965 convention of the Synod.

These underlying principles are in themselves worthy of much more time and study than we can give them here today. They clearly and in some detail set forth the scriptural principles which must form the basis for our world-wide outreach with the gospel. We would like to summarize them as follows.

1. The Board for World Missions, as the official board charged with the responsibility of administering and advancing the world mission program of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, must understand, represent, and implement the Lord's Word concerning world missions.

2. The Lord's Word is clear. "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation... Go and make disciples of all nations..." The good news is that God has reconciled the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them and that He did this by making Him to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. It is this message alone which is the power—of God to convert the sinner and make him a disciple of Christ.

3. It is the Lord's own people who are to win others to repentance and faith in Christ through the preaching of His Word. Through His apostle He has declared, "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praise of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."

4. We have a divine call to do this at all times and in all places where the gospel has not been preached. We are to reach all people, all nations everywhere.

5. This world-wide commission from the Lord is a matter of precious privilege and primary responsibility for the Church. It is of life and death importance for those who are without Christ.

6. In its approach to world-wide missions, the Church must be guided by faith in, love for, and obedience to the command and promise of Christ, as also by love for the souls whom He loved and for whom He died. Human reason and circumstances, even "sanctified common sense" must not be used to dissuade the Church from its God-given missionary responsibility.

7. Those to whom the Lord has given and preserved the gospel in purity carry the greater obligation to share His saving Word with others. Concern for purity of teaching must consistently extend also to those who do not have it and who might become the victims of false teachers, a false gospel, and a false hope.

8. It follows then that in carrying out the Savior's mission command we are to hold fast to the truth of His Word and impart it faithfully to others. In bringing the message of salvation to others, it is essential that we teach them to keep, hold onto, guard, and preserve all things which Christ has commanded.

9. Time for this work is rapidly running out. Christ's faithful followers will redouble their efforts to preach the Gospel in all the world before it is too late.

10. This world-wide mission will prosper. It has been commanded by Him who has all power in heaven and earth. It has His assured blessing.

If all of this appears to be something which in our circles is taken for granted, it is because there is a solid scriptural base for all that which is here stated. We have gathered it all together here in one place so that we might the more clearly be able to see the nature, the urgency, and the assured outcome of our missionary task.

## Our Primary Objectives

Out of these underlying principles flows the "how" and the "what" of our work. The same convention which adopted the underlying principles also approved a set of primary objectives for our world mission program.

Again, instead of reading these objectives in their original detailed form, I shall summarize them, pausing at intervals to show how these objectives have been carried into practice.

The objectives of the Board for World Missions are

1. To share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people living in countries outside the United States of America and with people within the United States who because of language and cultural barriers are not being served by other agencies within the WELS.

The key here is the phrase, "language and cultural barriers." We expect to find them overseas. On occasion we find them close to home and this is the reason why our Apache work and some of our Spanish language work in the United States remains under the jurisdiction of the Board for World Missions. Admittedly, the line at times is a rather fine one, and it is entirely possible that some of this work will one day become a part of our home mission program.

2. To investigate and explore world mission opportunities and to persuade the Synod to extend its world mission outreach.

The opportunities are there. While leads for new work come from many different sources, it is the Board for World Missions which must investigate and evaluate these and persuade the Synod to expand its work and to enter new fields. Such expansion surely is in keeping with the letter and spirit of Holy Scripture. Isaiah 54:2; 62:12.

3. To call, train, commission, and support missionaries to carry out the world mission program adopted by the Synod.

From the standpoint of administration, this is the aspect of our world mission program which most fully occupies the Board for World Missions and its executive committees. Included are the setting up of qualifications for overseas missionaries, their orientation, language training, providing for shipping, housing, transportation, education of children in a foreign environment, and a long list of additional matters.

4. To plant indigenous churches rather than long dependent missions.

From the very beginning we look ahead to the day when we can withdraw from a mission field, leaving behind an established church which is able to carry on its gospel work without further active help from the mother church. It is in line with this objective that we have fully organized church bodies in a number of our mission fields, notably Central Africa, Japan, and Colombia. More elementary forms of organization are found in each of our other mission fields.

5. To encourage and foster Christian instruction of young and old.

High on the list of priorities in each of our fields is the development of sound, scriptural Sunday school and instruction materials and a thorough membership training program for young and old alike.

6. To establish programs for the training of a national ministry which is qualified to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and effectively in accord with the Lutheran Confessions.

It is in line with this objective that we either already have or contemplate establishing worker training programs in each of our overseas world mission fields. We today have Bible institute programs for the training of evangelists in Zambia and Colombia.. A Bible institute is to get underway in Hong Kong in September and our new Bible institute in Malawi is to open its doors by September of 1981. Theological seminaries are in operation in Lusaka, Zambia, Medellin, Colombia, and Tsuchiura, Japan: A fourth seminary for our Mexican Mission located in El Paso currently has no students enrolled. A special seminar type program is being used in Cameroon and is contemplated also for Nigeria.

7. To foster confessional unity of faith among the churches founded through the world mission effort of the WELS.

Basic, of course, is a thorough teaching of God's Word throughout our world missions so that these new churches all speak the same thing. Isolated as they are and surrounded-by every branch of Christianity and a host of heathen religions and philosophies, it is important that they not only know where they stand, but also that there are others who hold the same doctrine as they do. Studies are underway to determine how these churches might be gathered into a world-wide organization which will give expression to the unity of faith which they have.

8. To encourage limited medical and health services in those mission fields in which they are found to be advisable or necessary.

We currently have two such medical missions, one in the Mwembezhi area of Zambia and the other near Salima, Malawi.

9. To count that work successful which is faithful to the Great Commission and to the Lord's instruction to "teach them to observe all things" which He has commanded.

Here we would like to quote the very fine statement in the Handbook of the Board for World Missions.

"Because of the natural desire in men to register demonstrable success and to measure effectiveness on the basis of numerical gains, the Board for World Missions would, finally, express its determination to guard and warn against neglecting the Lord's only prescription for success in His ministry, 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.'

"Instead of broadcasting only a vague and elementary Gospel, it is the duty of Christian missionaries to follow the counsel of the Holy Spirit in furthering and deepening the faith and knowledge in Christ of those whom the Lord has brought to faith through their faithful witness of the 'full counsel of God.' 'As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding with thanksgiving.'

"In world mission fields, as in the church at home, we must be ever aware of these things, lest we develop a weak church, unable to discern or to take a stand against false teaching which will result in the failure of our missions, despite the illusion of success which might be given through impressive numbers and capable organization. 'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.'

To achieve this, the principle followed by St. Paul, the greatest missionary of them all, must ever govern and guide us: 'For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.'"

## **A Glance at Our World Mission Fields**

There is no way in which we could here today give you a full and detailed description of each of our world mission fields. The Lord's blessing has been too large for us to see it all in one glance. We take for granted that you have kept yourselves informed and that among other things you have had the opportunity to read the world mission reports in the REPORT TO THE TEN DISTRICTS which forms a large portion of the business before this convention. However, a brief look at our various fields may be helpful in tying it all together.

### **Apache Mission**

There is encouraging growth in church life. Annual contributions now exceed 100,000 dollars. Communicant membership has grown 29% in the last nine years. We have four Christian day schools and a high school. A new girls' dormitory is under construction at East Fork High School. Completion is scheduled for early fall.

### **Japan**

Steady growth continues. The number of souls is up 15.6%, contributions up 17.6% over the previous year. A new congregation has been formed in Yokohama and prospects for growth are good. Missionary John Boehringer will be serving as its pastor. There are seven missionaries and three national pastors. Student Akagami is in his final year in the seminary. A new chapel/parsonage is to be built in Chiba on Tokyo's northeast side.

### **Central Africa**

Zambia... After several years of serious unrest there is relative peace and quiet since the forming of a majority government in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia). Pastor Adolph Harstad and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduate William Greenlee have accepted calls and are preparing for their move to Zambia. There are prospects for sizeable new classes in the Bible Institute and in the Seminary.

Malawi... Growth here is encouraging. The number of members now exceeds that of any of our other world mission fields. Construction is underway at the new Bible institute in Lilongwe. Pastor Walter Westphal has accepted a call to serve as principal of the institute.

Cameroon... It still is not possible for us to have a resident mission staff in Cameroon. A unique kind of worker training seminar has been carried out by Professor E. H. Wendland of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and by Superintendent R. G. Cox of our Central Africa Mission. In attendance were the four national pastors. These pastors in turn are taking the training materials and teaching them to the evangelists and lay workers in the Cameroon church. This second phase of the program should be taking place during this month of June.

Medical Mission... This is carried on in the Mwembeshi area of Zambia and in the Salima area of Malawi. It is supported entirely through non-budgetary gifts. There are four expatriate nurses. Together with their national staff they treated over 70,000 patients in 1979.

### **Latin American Missions**

Southwestern U.S.A.... There are two Spanish-speaking congregations, one in El Paso, Texas, and the other in Tucson, Arizona. Membership totals 40 communicants and 121 souls. Thirty-two children are enrolled in the school in Tucson.

Mexico... Five national pastors serve ten preaching areas. Two missionaries, resident in El Paso, serve as field counselors. The church in Mexico numbers 266 souls and 68 communicant members.

Puerto Rico... Missionary Paul Hartman has moved to Humacao to begin an active program there. This is about 25 miles east of Guayama, the center of our work in Puerto Rico. One of the members in Humacao is a prospective candidate for training as a full time evangelist. During the present summer months four Wisconsin Lutheran College students are serving as volunteer workers in Puerto Rico, helping particularly with the Vacation Bible School program.

Colombia... The national church has been formally organized with three congregations and two preaching stations. Missionary Roger Sprain after fifteen years of faithful and energetic work in our Latin American missions has accepted a call to a stateside congregation. Pastor Lawrence Retberg now serves as Field Counselor, Pastor Larry Schlomer as Director of Theological Education.

### **Southeast Asia**

Hong Kong... Recent progress is encouraging. Our missionaries are using the difficult Cantonese language for much of their preaching and teaching. Weekly attendance of 45 to 60 in the weekly youth group Bible Class. Enrollment in Immanuel Lutheran Middle School is 220. A Bible Institute program for the training of workers is to begin in fall.

Taiwan... Missionaries Manthey and Meister are making good progress in their language study and are giving some assistance to our national pastor, Rev. Victor Chang. Pastor Charles D. Found's commissioning next Sunday completes the three man missionary team for Taiwan.

Indonesia... Both missionaries have finished their formal language programs and are at work, Pastor Ahlers in Bogor and Pastor Festerling in Jakarta. Work is also being done in Sukabumi. Pastor Robert Sawall is still waiting for visa clearance to enter Indonesia. There are two national workers, Pastor A. A. Dipa Pandji Tisna and Evangelist J. E. Epiphanius.

India... Pastor Paul Mitra conducts services in three locations in the Madras area. Since government regulations make it difficult to place an expatriate missionary in India, periodic trips for the purpose of counsel and help are made from Hong Kong by Counselor John Chworowsky.

### **Overseas Confessional Churches**

Sweden... The Lutheran Confessional Church in Sweden is now in its sixth year. There are eight congregations in Sweden and one in Norway with a total membership of 312 souls and 218 communicants. It has begun a pastor training program. The first graduate was ordained and installed in August of this past year. Though annual contributions of its members average over 350 dollars per communicant and though most of its pastors gain a substantial part of their income from outside employment, financial help is still needed. Our Synod's support comes entirely from non-budgetary funds. Generous and continued gifts by our members to the Sweden Conference and Aid Fund are encouraged and needed.

Nigeria... Christ the King Lutheran Synod numbers 10 congregations with 886 souls and 701 communicant members at the end of 1979. A limited amount of support has been available through the Aid to

Nigeria Fund. Plans are being made to initiate a worker training seminar similar to those conducted during the past year in Cameroon.

Brazil... The Orthodox Lutheran Church of Brazil consists of a single congregation in Gravatai near Porto Alegre in southern Brazil. Since the return of our missionary a little over a year ago, it is being served on a part time basis by a Brazilian pastor who has full time employment as a school administrator. The congregation receives no financial support from WELS. Mission prospects in Brazil warrant further in-depth investigation and evaluation.

### **Some Concluding Thoughts**

1. In the past three or four decades the Lord has permitted us to see remarkable expansion in our Synod's world missions. For this we are thankful. It is He who has moved our hearts to reach out to others.

2. There still are fields white to the harvest. The growth of the world's non-Christian population continues to outstrip the growth of Christian missions. Opportunities abound for new and expanded areas of work. These our Lord would have us see as He bids us to lift up our eyes and look.

3. To date we are still committing a relatively small portion of our total resources to bringing the gospel to people of other lands and other cultures. Our total expenditure for world missions is less than three and one half cents of every dollar brought by our members for the Lord's work.

4. World missions need to have high priority in our thinking, praying, and working. God's Word will give us direction and strength. There is encouragement in the flow of mission news coming to us through various sources, Northwestern Lutheran articles, the President's Newsletter, Stewardship Department Updates, presentations by missionaries on furlough and others. Take in as much of this as you can. What you read and what you hear will bring joy to your hearts.

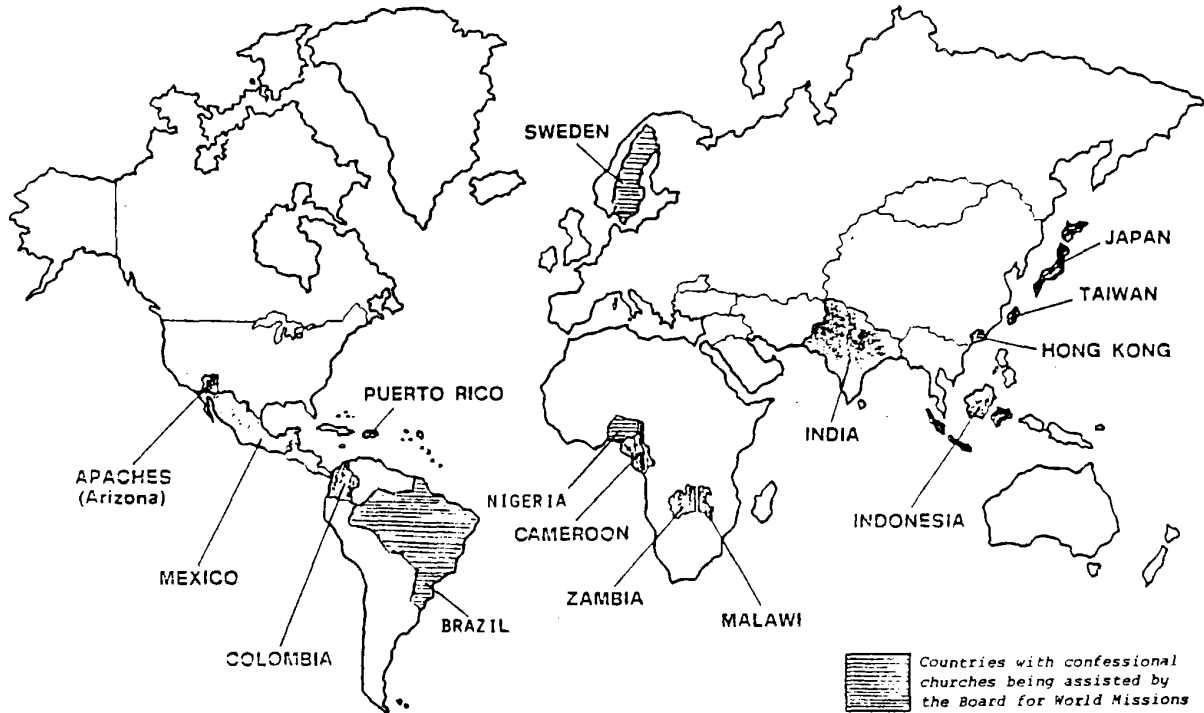
5. Let us anticipate the Lord's blessing as we reach out to others with the gospel. In almost the same breath in which He asked His disciples to lift up their eyes and look on the fields white to the harvest, Jesus also said, "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

We look to Him to give us that joy.

Theodore A. Sauer  
June 16, 1980

# WORLD MISSION STATIONS

OF THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD



## Summary of Statistics - 1/1/80

<u>Mission</u>	<u>Mission-aries</u>	<u>Souls</u>	<u>Communi-cants</u>	<u>National Pastors</u>	<u>National Evangel-ists</u>	<u>Mission Teachers</u>
S.W. U.S.A	2	121	40			1
Mexico	2	266	68	5		
Puerto Rico	3	180	57			
Colombia	5	208	44		1	
Apache	7	3,013	1,262	(1)		21
Malawi	5	3,705	2,111	2	16	
Zambia	10	3,569	1,731	5	17	
Cameroon	0	2,642	825	4	2	
Japan	7	267	165	3		1
Hong Kong	3	214	96		4	1
India	0	55	4	1		
Indonesia	3	61	25	1	1	
Taiwan	3	99	67	1	1	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>14,400</b>	<b>6,495</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>24</b>

## Overseas Confessional Churches

Sweden	312	218	12
Nigeria	886	701	3
Brazil	c. 25	c. 16	1

## Missionary Vacancies as of June 16, 1980

Zambia - 1                      Mexican Mission - 1  
 Colombia - 1  
 Indonesia - 1 missionary has not yet obtained entry visa for Indonesia