



MISSION NEWS & HELPING HANDS

Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Sharing the Gospel in South America and Asia

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GIFTS OF THE MAGI

From the Editor—

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Administrator

This month's issue arrives during the church season of Epiphany. We remember the arrival of the wise men, the Magi, who recognized Israel's King and Savior as their King and Savior. They not only worshiped Him but also took the news of Him back to their homes. I suppose we could say they were the first missionaries to the nations.

Epiphany—the Season for Missions

Open your hymn book and take a look in the section of hymns for Epiphany. You'll see hymns like "Arise and Shine in Splendor" and "Rise, Thou Light of Gentile Nations." These mission hymns remind us of the well-known account of the Magi coming to Bethlehem to see the "King of the Jews".

But He was also the King of these men who "came from the East." They worshiped him as their King. For the Lord had promised that His Son would be Lord of the nations. God brought these representatives from the nations to see the young King of Kings and they, in turn, brought the news of the King of Kings to the people of their lands.

See earth in darkness lying,
The heathen nations dying
In hopeless gloom and night.
To Thee the Lord of heaven
Thy Life, Thy Hope hath given
Great glory, honor and delight.

Lift up thine eyes in wonder;
See nations gather yonder,
They all come unto Thee
The world has heard Thy story
Thy sons come to Thy glory,
And daughters haste Thy Light to see.

"Arise and Shine in Splendor"



India: Lutheran women at prayer

We who have heard the good news about Jesus, our King and our Savior, want to share the message with others. For He who lived and died on our behalf, to redeem us from sin and restore us to God's family, know that this message is for others as well.

See the blindness of the heathen, Strangers to Thy glorious light,
Straying hopeless till they find Thee, Wand'ring aimless in the night.
See their pitiful condition; Lo, gross darkness covers all,
And no ray of hope refreshes Nor dispels the dreadful pall.

If Thou, merciful Redeemer, Hadst not saved us from this plight,
In like darkness we should languish Hopeless, helpless, in sin's night.
Lovingly Thou, Lord, didst seek us In the beauty of Thy grace;
Now with joy we freely serve Thee, We, Thy blessed, chosen race.

Knowing Thee and Thy salvation, Grateful love dare never cease
To proclaim Thy tender mercies, Gracious Lord, Thy heav'nly peace.
Sound we forth the Gospel tidings To the **earth's remotest bound**
That the sinner has been pardoned And forgiveness can be found.
"Rise, Thou Light of Gentile Nations"

As the members of our churches support the mission work of the ELS, we are able to carry out this work in "**earth's remotest bound**". The great mission hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," reminds us where that mission work is carried out.

From Greenland's icy mountains, From **India's coral strand**,
Where Afric's sunny fountains Roll down their golden sand;
From many an ancient river, From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver Their land from error's chain.

Can we whose souls are lighted With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted The **lamp of life** deny?
Salvation! Oh, Salvation! The **joyful sound** proclaim
Till each **remotest nation** Has learned Messiah's name.
"From Greenland's Icy Mountains"

Indeed, the ELS mission work is found scattered around the globe. As we prepare another year of visits to the various mission fields and partners that we support, here are some highlights.

India

We may not be in "**India's coral strand**", but we continue our work in **INDIA** in the districts of Hyderabad, Rajahmundry and Jabalpur. Congregations are found in the larger cities ... and in small villages. Gospel Workers are men who serve the villages with Bible studies and lead the people in worship. Some of them are taking seminary classes to become ordained pastors. Bible Women meet women congregation members and visitors in their homes where the men cannot go. Several orphanages are found in each district where dedicated workers care for their physical needs while pastors provide spiritual food.



Korea: New mission at Incheon Lutheran Church



Peru: Worshipers in Chimbote



Peruvian Amazon: Shawi worshipers



Chile: Church dedication, Familia de Dios congregation, Santiago



Latvia: Members of Lutheran church in Kekava, Latvia



Ukraine: Counselor at the Kiev counseling center seated next to Rev. Buelow of the BWO

Korea

In **KOREA**, the congregation in Seoul continues to reach out to that city of about 10 million people. A new mission has been developed in Anyang. The latest mission is in Songdo near the port of Incheon. Songdo is described like this:

Songdo International Business District is a new “smart city” built from scratch less than 15 years ago. It will feature two business towers. Schools, hospitals, apartments, office buildings and cultural amenities are to be built in the district. Replicas of architectural hallmarks, including New York City’s Central Park and Venice’s waterways will also be incorporated. This 10-year development project is estimated to cost in excess of \$40 billion, making it one of the most expensive development projects ever undertaken.

This “**remotest nation**” is fast becoming a world center. What an opportunity!

Peru

This past year our synod rejoiced with the Lutheran Synod in **PERU**, celebrating 50 years of God’s blessings. Work continues in cities and towns where outreach has been done for many years. Work also continues in the Amazon jungle region of Peru where evangelism continues among the Shawi people. Over ten Shawi men are involved in a seminary program. There are schools in the villages where education (and much needed nutrition) are being provided. New areas for mission work continue to be investigated.

Chile

In **CHILE**, three congregations are at work sharing the message of the King in the capital city of Santiago, where prosperity and secularism make the work challenging. The Familia de Dios congregation celebrated the ordination of the first Chilean pastor in 2017 and this past December dedicated a new church sanctuary. The congregation in Linares faces a different challenge—they have no resident pastor. But the pastor and two vicars in Santiago have been serving the vacancy. So, the Gospel message continues to be proclaimed in this southernmost mission of the ELS.

Thoughts of Faith Fields

As the hymn writer calls it, the “**lamp of life**” and the “**joyful sound**” continue to be proclaimed in the three Thoughts of Faith fields: Latvia, Ukraine, and Czech Republic. In **LATVIA**, a project has been proposed to produce and record Christian Gospel-focused lullabies to help in outreach to a people that absolutely love to make a “**joyful sound**” and may be made to think back on their Christian Lutheran heritage of old.

The Gift of Life program in **UKRAINE** reaches out in rural areas with the “**lamp of life**” Gospel together with medical and dental treatment via the Medical Clinics on Wheels. At various Life Counseling Centers, a life-saving alternative is offered to women

considering abortion as a solution to a challenging pregnancy while they also hear about the One who gives eternal life.

In **CZECH REPUBLIC**, where religious wars over the centuries, and recent communist, atheist thinking has shaped so much of the current culture, the Gospel is still proclaimed in a mission school and in several small congregations.

Africa

Finally, we continue to evaluate opportunities in Africa. We currently are working with Lutheran pastors in **KENYA** as we review our Lutheran doctrine and confessions to discover whether we are in agreement with one another and can pursue establishing full fellowship with one another.

And Those Gifts of the Magi?

In all of this work, you rejoice with us as we share the Good News—just as the Magi did. However, not only did they worship the newborn King. They also were moved to bring him precious gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. We, too, bring Him precious gifts. The fifth verse of “Rise, Thou Light of Gentile Nations” says it like this:

May our zeal to help the heathen Be increased from day to day
As we plead in true compassion And for their conversion pray.
For the many faithful heralds, For the Gospel they proclaim,
Let us all be **cheerful givers** To the glory of Thy name.

“**Cheerful givers**”...yes, how important you are! We thank you for your prayers and offerings to support these mission outreach efforts. Please consider prayers you can offer and treasures you might bring as together we work to proclaim His name, not only during this Epiphany mission season, but throughout 2019.

What can you do to help?

- Pray for each of the mission fields in this article. Pray for the national pastors of those churches as well as for the members of these churches, that they might remain faithful in their homelands that often do not welcome the message of the Christ.
- Please—prayerfully consider a gift or regular donation to the work in the various fields. You may designate a gift to a particular field or project on the memo line of a check. You may also go to els.org and click on “Donate” in the top banner on the right-hand side.
- If you have questions, please contact us in the following ways:

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Czech Republic: Students in
Martin Luther School