



China

Russia

North Korea

Sea of Japan

Yellow Sea

South Korea

MAY 2024
Mission News & Helping Hands
Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Board for World Outreach
Sharing the Gospel in South America and Asia

Korea The Land of the Morning Calm

by Justin Marthaler, Member, Asia Committee



From the Editor
Rev. Thomas Heyn
Board for World Outreach
Administrator

In early March, I visited our mission fields in South Korea with **Justin Marthaler, the newest member of our Board for World Outreach.** Although Justin had visited Korea previously, this was the first time he visited to see the work that our ELS supports. We hope you enjoy his insightful report. We always appreciate your prayers for the work in our world fields and your financial support that makes this work possible.

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15).

Korea, The Land of the Morning Calm, is a flurry of activity after everyone awakes and hurries into their day driven by balli, balli (hurry, hurry) culture. I could feel balli, balli as I walked through the packed market of Gwanjang, rode the subway during rush hour, or walked down the sidewalk. It’s a country driven to work hard and achieve success. That culture seeps into religion. While Christianity has a foothold in Korea, it’s often approached much like work: Do more, pray more, work hard, worship faithfully, and success will come. In this environment, it’s easy to forget that Christ has done the work for us. It’s a gift of grace that we cannot earn through our work or worship. Our work and worship are not driven by a desire to be accepted by God but by our appreciation for what He has done for us.

Amidst this busy culture, the work of Jesus Lutheran Korea Mission is taking place. The members of Seoul Lutheran Church hear God’s saving grace and offer their praise and worship in return. Anyang’s Hope Lutheran Church worships faithfully and reaches out into the community. And new opportunities are being cultivated among Chinese speaking ethnic Korean immigrants.

Understanding the culture’s drive to succeed can be a useful tool in spreading the Gospel. **Learning and cultivating proficiency in English is a highly desired skill, so English-based outreach efforts are a good way to build friendships that open opportunities to share God’s saving word.** Pastor David Choi, along with his wife Ashley, and Doug Tabor from the Friends Network have cultivated a lively

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Pastors J W Kim and David Choi ▼



Class for English speaking: Justin Marthaler in plaid shirt ▼





English Bible study ▲



David and Doug at Anyang "Camp" ▲



Doug Tabor Friends Network ▲

conversation group on Tuesday evenings at a neighborhood coffee shop. Everyone gathers around a table and starts talking. Conversation topics range from family and children to schooling and travel and everything in between. Two hours slip away as strangers become acquaintances and the beginnings of friendship form as personal experiences, gentle encouragement, and warm laughter join together. First time visitors are warmly welcomed and returning conversationalists pick up where they left off. Two days later, the group gathers again at the same coffee shop for an English-based Bible study where conversations turn to God's word and His impact in our lives.

This English-based outreach is also used in Anyang, a Seoul satellite city. Hope Lutheran Church hosts a Saturday morning Bible class for middle and high

school children and their parents. Students from the area break the ice by sharing a little bit about themselves in English before the Bible lesson for the day. Then they memorize a verse in English and recite it for the group. If time allows, a fun activity follows or perhaps a piano recital by one of the students.

These efforts are the seeds of the true Gospel message being planted in Korea. Please join me in praying for the pastors who are cultivating the land. Pray that their efforts bear fruit and that they would support, encourage, and cooperate with one another. Pray for the men who are interested in pursuing theological training to become Lutheran pastors. Finally, pray that the Gospel message will spread throughout Korea and bring hope, peace, and refuge to those caught up in the balli, balli culture. ■

“ These efforts are the seeds of the true Gospel message being planted in Korea. ”



Saturday English "Camp" at Anyang. ▲

Introduction to New Pastors in INDIA

Editor's Note In our last issue, we introduced you to two of the recent graduates from the seminary program of the Lutheran Mission of Salvation-India. We are pleased to introduce two more. Be assured that your financial help has been a blessing to LMSI to prepare these men to become pastors and to be a blessing to many in this land of a million idols, preaching the one true God.

From the Hyderabad district

I am Pastor P. Solomon, working as a pastor in the Suryapet district, in the Hyderabad district. Before I became a pastor, I was a police officer. My job was to load bullets into the guns and unload them at the end of the day. Though it was a respectable position, I did not have peace in my life.

One day, I was introduced to President Solomon Mamidi who invited me to his class and to attend a seminar. I asked him if I could continue to attend his class. He welcomed me to the pre-seminary program. I left my job as a police officer to become a full-time gospel worker. After ten years of pre-seminary training, I joined the seminary program. While I was a pre-seminary student for many years, my preaching and understanding of the Bible was not so great, but after the seminary training program, I am more confident in preaching the Word of God and I have learned many things. Thank you all for your prayers and support. I am thankful to the Lord for replacing the bullets with a Bible in my hands—the living word of God.



Pastor P. Solomon ▲

From the Rajahmundry district

Balaswamy, who was born into a Hindu family, was originally a tailor, running a workshop for vehicle seat covers. Although he became a Christian when his parents were converted in his childhood, he never anticipated to become a pastor. But his life took a decisive turn in 2002 under his brother's influence, leading him to the LMSI workshops. His engagement with LMSI moved him to appreciate the public ministry and founding of a mission church in Ankalagudem five years later. As a Gospel Worker in LMSI, the persuasive encouragement of Rev. Ananda in 2017 propelled him into seminary studies.



Pastor Balaswamy ▲

During his time at the seminary, Balaswamy delved deep into the doctrines of Word and Sacraments and the critical distinction between law and gospel, which significantly refined his preaching, earning recognition from his church community. He views his seminary education as a profound blessing, marking a significant shift in his spiritual journey and approach to ministry. Balaswamy extends his heartfelt thanks to God, his seminary professors, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod for their financial support, acknowledging that the opportunity to study at the seminary free of charge was instrumental in his development as a Lutheran pastor and servant of Christ. ■

Special Seminary Opportunity

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WELS) has made a generous offer for world theological educators to attend their Summer Quarter at the end of June. We have six men from three of our fields who will enroll. This will be a wonderful opportunity for these educators to enhance their knowledge and expertise for teaching in their seminaries. The cost for travel and lodging will be approximately \$2,000 per student. Can you possibly help with the cost for one of these students to attend? If so, please direct your gift as indicated at the end of this newsletter.



News From Other Mission Fields

PERU The Peruvian pastors continue their work with the Shawi pastors in the jungle churches. We look forward to further mission development in Cajamarca in the northern Andes. The third story addition to Martín Lutero School should be completed soon.

CHILE Pastor Mario Gálvez continues with several adult confirmation classes in Santiago. The congregation continues to grow there. He continues to reach out in Linares with the help of a vicar.

INDIA The pastors have completed a very busy season of Lent (with forty days of daily worship). They look forward to the start of seminary training for a new cohort of twenty-four students in June. Work at the schools and orphan homes is always ongoing.

AUSTRALIA Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Brisbane, Australia, continues the process of calling a pastor to come to Australia to lead their congregation.

LATVIA Seminary teaching continues with the four men enrolled in seminary studies.

CZECH REPUBLIC The BWO continues to evaluate the status of St. Paul's congregation in Pilsen which has no full-time pastor serving them. Pastor Martin Vrsecky manages and teaches religion at Martin Luther School. Petr Krakora, a former pastor of the congregation, has joined another church that, unfortunately, is not in fellowship with St. Paul's congregation.

UKRAINE Administrators Nick and Kerry Laper have returned to the United States. Although we have not been able to find another U.S. couple to replace the Lapers when they retire this summer, they have found a very capable Ukrainian manager to oversee the work. All counseling centers are open and providing services. The mobile clinics also continue their work. Although the war with Russia is a challenge for the work of Gift of Life, the Lord continues to bless this work for his glory and the blessing of many.

How You Can Help

Pray for each of the mission fields, for the national pastors of these churches as well as for the members of their congregations who live where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not always welcome. May God work all these challenges for the good of his people, as he has promised.

Please—prayerfully consider a gift or regular donation for the work in the various fields. Every field, and some more than others, has many needs where God's people can provide much needed assistance.

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. You may also scan the QR code to be taken to the donations page.



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