



JULY 2021

Mission News & Helping Hands

Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Board for World Outreach
*Sharing the Gospel in
South America and Asia*

A New Worker in the Asian Field

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service" (1 Tim 1:12).

In early May, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary student **David Choi** graduated with a Master of Divinity degree and received a Divine Call to serve as an ELS missionary-pastor in South Korea and Eastern Asia. Under a joint call from the Board for World Outreach (BWO) and Seoul Lutheran Church, he will serve that congregation in eastern Seoul while also seeking opportunities to preach and teach the saving Gospel message to other areas of that huge metropolis.

David is a unique blessing for the ELS, the BWO, and Seoul Lutheran Church. He is a Chinese-born person of Korean heritage and is thereby uniquely positioned, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to bring the Lutheran faith and message to the large population of Chinese Koreans who have emigrated from China to South Korea for jobs and educational opportunities. From that base established in Seoul, and with God's guidance, the ELS and Seoul Lutheran will be well-positioned to identify opportunities to establish mission work in other areas of East Asia. While Christianity is prevalent in South Korea, the simple and comforting Lutheran faith is under-represented there. The ELS, together with Seoul Lutheran, is in a unique position to take the Lutheran lead in South Korea.

How David came to study in southern Minnesota for the Lutheran ministry is unique and directly emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in David's life. David, whose Chinese name is Cui Jinfeng, was born in northeast China, not far from the North Korea border, in an area heavily populated by Koreans who had come to China during WWII due to the occupation of Japanese forces in the Korean Peninsula. David's father worked for the Chinese government as a forester and Communist party leader, while his mother owned a beauty supply business. David has one brother who studied in China and South Korea and is now a PhD chemistry professor.

David pursued a career in telecommunications. After receiving a master's degree, he started upon a thriving career path in that field. During his university years, David attended the 2008 Beijing Olympics as a tourist. While staying at a youth hostel in Beijing, he met other young people who were Christians who read and studied

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From the Editor

*Rev. Thomas Heyn
Board for World Outreach Administrator*

Updates from Asia are the focus of this month's issue. Rev. Young Ha Kim retired from active ministry in South Korea at the beginning of 2020. But a young man that he instructed and recruited for ministry, **David Choi**, has been trained and called to work in Seoul, South Korea. His story appears in this issue.

While we hear this encouraging news, we also have received updates about **Covid in India**. The BWO together with the Board for Christian Service continues to ask for your generous offerings to continue providing help for our Christian brothers and sisters hit hard by the pandemic.

We appreciate your prayers for the work in our world fields and your financial support that makes this work possible.

"O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief" (Ps 143:1).



**David Choi with
Seminary President
Schmeling**

the Word at the hostel. The seed of faith was planted in David's heart during that visit to the Olympics in 2008.

David, returning from that life-altering Beijing experience to complete his degree program and begin his career, sought out a small, and often clandestine, "house church" to continue to grow in his Christian faith.

In 2015, David took vacation time from work and visited relatives in Seoul. These relatives, unlike many of David's other family members in China, were practicing Christians and, in fact, were members of Seoul Lutheran Church. David attended Seoul Lutheran with his relatives, and it was there that he met Rev. Young Ha Kim. Pastor Kim encouraged David to consider the pastoral ministry. David studied for a while at Seoul Lutheran, and later attended classes at Asia Lutheran Seminary. David's non-Christian parents were not pleased with his new career path, and it was decided that David could best prepare for the ministry by studying at the Bethany seminary in Mankato.

David started Bethany College in the fall of 2016 to study the pre-requisite biblical languages while auditing classes at the seminary. He became a seminary student in 2017. David's vicar year was spent at Reformation Lutheran Church (WELS) in San Diego, California. It was a unique and beneficial year full of rich experiences—not only in the normal vicar experience of learning from Pastors J. Werner and N. Birkholz, but also working with Pastor Birkholz in outreach work among the sizeable Asian community near Reformation Lutheran and elsewhere along the West Coast.

David departed for Seoul in early-June, and after a

mandatory Covid quarantine period upon his arrival, will be installed at Seoul Lutheran to begin his ministry there working alongside Pastor Sam Choi.

Please join us in praying for a successful and God-pleasing ministry for Pastor David Choi / Cui Jinfeng.

Dan Browning, Chairman, ELS Board for World Outreach



David Choi and family



With Pastor Neil Birkholz and family



Covid Updates from India and a Plea for Continued Help

The Covid pandemic in India is chaotic at the moment. Many have lost their employment and even their lives to Covid. A lot of pastors, too, lost their lives. Since churches are closed, there are no offerings and it is a challenge for pastors to even have a daily meal with their families. Unfortunately, a few children lost both their parents leaving the children shattered and hopeless.

Even so, our God never fails at his providence. In the midst of this devastation, there are many stories that glorify our God, the Most High.

There was a 72 year old man who was on oxygen support for 5 days. When he was asked to pay the bill, he was in tears. The doctors thought he was poor and did not have the money to pay the bill. But the old man shared his testimony that it was not a problem for him to pay the bill. Rather, he came to realize how wonderful our God is who provided oxygen every second of his life before getting on support. We praise God for him.

Another young man had the virus and lost his smell and taste. After his recovery, he exclaimed how we take things for granted, but God had been so faithful to us that His providence is beyond comprehension.

Last but not least, though a few families were hit very badly due to Covid, the Lord has preserved their faith and the hope of being reunited with their loved ones in joy and in a better place.

We are saddened by the situation around us, but are encouraged to minister during these tough times and to witness how amazingly God is being glorified. We appreciate very much your thoughts and prayers. Please continue to pray for us and support us.

Rev. Simeon Mamidi, Lutheran Mission of Salvation—Hyderabad

In the past two years, many families were devastated, many businesses went bankrupt, and many churches became dysfunctional because of Covid's disrupting impact leaving many in much grief, panic and anxiety.

Our country, India, with its 1.2 billion population is no exception. Our country thought we had dealt with the pandemic effectively during the first wave. In only a matter of months it was proved wrong. The second wave of Covid-19 in India has caused unthinkable and unrecoverable havoc throughout the country. At one point India recorded more than 400,000 new cases and more than 4,000 deaths each day.

Every morning we were gripped by the tragic stories—how so many died due to lack of oxygen, so many died due to lack of hospital beds, so many died due to lack of testing and proper medical assistance, etc. Every day when my phone rang, I was expecting some bad news.

Already in the first wave my father succumbed to the deadly virus and all our family members, including me, were infected. Many of our close relatives, friends, and members of our LMSI churches had become Covid-19 victims.

The virus has affected many of our gospel workers and their congregations, both physically and emotionally, because of sudden deaths in their families and unmanageable

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financial drought and unexpected medical expenses. Many church members (especially the daily wage workers), gospel workers, and Bible women have been facing a real hard time coping with the pandemic restrictions and lockdowns. All our LMSI congregations, due to lockdowns,

have zero offerings because they are not allowed to hold worship services. For many families, daily sustenance has become a burden as prices have increased considerably for essential items including food, dairy products, poultry, meat, and edible oils.

Yet, in all this trouble and hardship we trust that God has a purpose as we are constantly reminded in the Holy Scriptures of Christ's love and care for us. Therefore, we have been constantly consoling and comforting our brothers and sisters with many Bible passages. **Besides that, we are sharing your love with them by providing some financial help which has become possible through the gifts you have been able to send us. For that we all are very grateful to you and praise God for you.**

Rev. Kalyan Gollapalli, Lutheran Mission of Salvation India—Rajahmundry

News from Other Mission Fields

Peru—The Peru synod leadership is encouraging pastors and congregations to work together as the church body works to resolve certain problems during these trying times. The country is recovering from a severe second wave of coronavirus.

Chile—The country is slowly recovering from another wave of Covid. They hope to resume in-person worship and visits to homes by the end of summer.

Latvia—The churches continue under quarantine due to the coronavirus. Work continues with a new evangelism and apologetics center in a historic part of Old Town Riga.

Czechia—A surge in the coronavirus has once again severely limited in-person gatherings in the church as well as in Martin Luther School.

Ukraine—Administrators Nick and Kerry Laper will return to Ukraine in July. The counseling centers and medical clinics continue looking for ways of offering their services. Plans are underway for upgrades and purchase of new equipment for the clinics.

How Can You Help? With your prayers and gifts!

Pray for each of the mission fields, for the national pastors of these churches as well as for the members of their congregations to remain faithful in their homelands that often do not welcome the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray for these Christian brothers and sisters who often do not have the kind of medical care and government help that is available to most of us in the United States. May the Lord continue to care for them and strengthen their faith. 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, have 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.

For more information contact us in the following ways:

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