



# Mission News

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

## South Korea

### Leave Everything! Come This Way!

*Rev. Jacob Kempfert  
Member of the Asia Committee BWO*



### From the Editor

*Rev. Thomas Heyn  
Board for World Outreach  
Administrator*

We recently returned from the annual field visit to Korea. It was the first time that Asia committee member Jacob Kempfert visited the country. He shares his impressions and observations with us in this month's feature article. We pray that you share his excitement about the opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in South Korea. We always appreciate your prayers and your support for the world mission work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

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

**On** the 14-hour flight from Detroit to Seoul, I happened to be seated in an exit row. With the extra legroom also came extra responsibility: in the event of an emergency, I was to assist other passengers in getting safely out the emergency door. The attendant instructed me, should such a situation occur, to shout to the other passengers, "Come this way! Leave everything!"

It struck me that, as a pastor, these instructions should be easy for me to remember. For this is exactly what Christ calls all His disciples to do: "Follow Me! Leave everything! Lose your life to find it in Me!" And it was exactly this message that brought me on this trip to South Korea in the first place through the work of the Board for World Outreach: "Follow Christ, for He is Life! Leave all else, for all else will perish!"

Unlike their neighbor to the north, the greatest threat to Christian faith in South Korea is not the persecution of Christians or the suppression of the gospel. South Korea enjoys religious freedom that I would say extends even beyond what the United States currently offers. Rather, the greatest threat to Christian faith, similar to the United States, is indifferent materialism.

In recent decades, South Korean culture has earned the notorious nickname of balli-balli, or "hurry hurry" culture. Coinciding with its rapid economic development since the 1980s, Korea has also developed a culture of fast-paced and constant work in professional, academic, and even family life. Remarkable amounts of energy are put into studying hard to get high academic placement to get a good job to get promotions to get a big apartment and slick fashion and a nice car to get more promotions to get more money.

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# South Korea continued

In Seoul alone, 10 million souls flood subways, streets, and skyscrapers in pursuit of this kind of “life”—which many are beginning to discover is no life at all. Into this rush of busyness and noise and ladder-climbing, in the midst of hearts that are “anxious and troubled about many things” (Luke 10:41), our synod continues to speak the still, soft voice of God’s peace: “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1), and so the Lord God “will speak peace to His people” (Psa 85:8).

What a blessing, then, on our BWO February field visit to our South Korean churches, to see our dear siblings in Christ around the world gathering together around the same unchanging Word of the Prince of Peace! The work of Jesus Lutheran Korea Mission is

exactly what its name proclaims: the gospel of Christ Jesus proclaimed to all in Korea that we are given life, purpose, and peace by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Seoul Lutheran Church, shepherded by Rev. Sam Choi, continues its proclamation of God’s Word, despite recent setbacks during and after the Covid pandemic. Additionally, many Koreans are increasingly distrustful of Christianity following numerous public scandals among pastors at prominent mega-churches. Jumping on these

scandals, the Korean media frequently have a negative bias against Christianity and Christians.

Despite these difficulties, the members of Seoul Lutheran Church refuse to give up. They are currently exploring new ways to reach out in their community, and in the personal relationships they already enjoy. It’s encouraging to see their love for God’s Word and their church where that Word is shared with all. We pray God continues to bless them with an eager love for souls and the wisdom to capitalize on every opportunity the Spirit brings.

Great Light Lutheran Church is a new mission congregation planted by Rev. David Choi. The building where they gather is in a prime location, a quick walk from Seoul Station, the very heart of Seoul. Through English conversation groups, Bible studies, and Sunday afternoon Divine Services, Great Light has seen steady growth from 6 core members to around 25 in attendance on Sundays, and climbing.

Additionally, Rev. David Choi has made connections with other pastors in the greater Seoul area who have an interest in Lutheran theology and our synod’s work. [See the photos of Pastor Kim below and Pastor Young Chul Choi on the far right, Page 3.] We met and talked with some of these pastors and learned about their congregations. There are many other such pastors in Korea who are hungry for the truth of the gospel, instead of the work righteousness and glory theology all too prevalent in “hurry hurry” Korean Christianity. Through some of these pastors, we may then have opportunity to witness not only to those in Korea, but those in China and beyond as well.

Who knows what souls in Korea (South and North alike!) who today have no hope, will yet join us at the everlasting feast table of heaven because God’s gracious Word of peace was shared with them in the days and months and years ahead of us?

Who knows? God alone. But we have His certain promise that wherever and whenever His Word goes forth, it will not return to Him empty, but will accomplish that which He purposes (Isa 55:10-11). And His desire and purpose is that “all people be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” the eternally saving truth that Christ Jesus “gave Himself as a ransom for all,” and in Him alone all will find Life (1 Tim 2:4-6).

God alone knows, for now—but because of your prayers for and support of your Board for World Outreach, we too will know in full that blessed day when we will, face-to-face, see all those whom God has called. Truly we can proclaim with joy: **“Leave everything! Come this way!”** ■



▼ worship at Great Light Lutheran

▲ Bible study at Great Light Lutheran



▼ English language class

▼ Seoul Lutheran Church



Pastor Kim (and his wife) is interested in studying Lutheran theology



▲ Pastor Young Chul Choi is interested in becoming a Lutheran pastor





## News From Other Mission Fields

**Peru** The Peruvian church is facing challenges with increasing violence and crime in the country. The pastors continue their work with the Shawi pastors in the jungle churches. Pastor Gutiérrez regularly visits the congregation in Cajamarca. The third story addition to Martín Lutero School continues to face challenges from governmental red tape in moving forward with the project.

**Chile** Pastor Mario Gálvez has various classes with members of the congregation in Santiago which prepare them for evangelism and ministry. The congregation rejoices as they see new communicant members being added to the congregation.

**India** The leaders of LMSI are planning youth rallies in both districts. Additionally, they are initiating health fairs to provide humanitarian help and to make known the Lutheran Mission of Salvation - India.

**Australia** Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Brisbane, Australia, continues to call a pastor to serve their congregation.

**Latvia** Seminary teaching continues with two men enrolled in seminary studies. A 100-year-old building is being renovated as the church home of a mission congregation in Jelgava.

**Czech Republic** The BWO continues investigating options for the future 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.

**Ukraine** Administrator Dmytro Maksymenko is developing and promoting new ways of Gospel outreach through the pregnancy counseling centers and mobile clinics. 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](https://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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