

WELS NEWS

June 2015

WELS Christian Aid And Relief Responds

Nepal Earthquake

A little more than a week ago, Nepal suffered a 7.8 magnitude earthquake, centered in Kathmandu and the Gorkha district, which is about 400 miles from where our World Mission contact is located in Dhangadhi. He has reported that he is safe, though he did feel the quake, even from that distance. Various news sources are reporting that more than 7,000 people have been killed by the earthquake and its aftermath. Thousands more are hospitalized, and large areas of the country are still inaccessible.

Our World Mission contact in Nepal reports, “There are numbers of rural areas where the government has no access. Most of the relief agencies are starting to pour in at capital city. We want to reach areas in the Dhading, Gorkha, Chitwan, and Rasuwa districts with supplies--medicine, food items, and clothes.”

He continued to explain that because the earthquake occurred during worship time and the church buildings are small, many of our members were spared. He plans to travel to the rural villages that aid agencies can't reach to bring medicine, tents, blankets, and food.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief continues to assess the situation and has already begun to provide relief.

Malawi Flood Relief

In January, Malawi experienced damaging floods that destroyed or damaged the homes of an estimated 3,200 LCCA families and nearly 20 LCCA church buildings. The floods washed away crops, depleting the local food supplies, and also increased the threat of diseases such as malaria and cholera.

Relief efforts have been ongoing in the flood-damaged areas of Malawi. WELS missionaries in Malawi, leaders from the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Malawi (LCCA), WELS Christian Aid and Relief, and WELS Kingdom Workers have been collaborating to meet the needs of affected LCCA members. So far, Christian Aid and Relief has designated \$50,000 to relief efforts, but initial assessments indicate that needs are extensive and ongoing.

WELS Kingdom Workers volunteers and LCCA leaders, working with Christian Aid and Relief, have been distributing supply buckets with sheet plastic, nails, and blankets to provide temporary housing to affected families, but traveling around Malawi can be slow. To help expedite the travel and delivery process, Christian Aid and Relief is enabling volunteers to rent additional trucks in Malawi and get supplies to members more quickly.

To help support relief efforts for the earthquake in Nepal or the flooding in Malawi, you can [donate online](#) or send checks to WELS, Re: Christian Aid and Relief, earthquake disaster and/or flood disaster relief fund, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive, Waukesha, WI 53188-1108.

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

A New Way To Give

Online searching and shopping now have an added bonus - they're another way to support the synod.

WELS members now can give to WELS' operating fund when they shop online at Amazon. Through the program AmazonSmile, you'll find the same products and deals as on the online shopping site, www.amazon.com, with the added benefit that the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible purchases to your selected charity. To choose WELS as the charitable organization you wish to support, go to <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/39-0842084>. Then when you shop, go to smile.amazon.com.

WELS members also can support WELS through using www.GoodSearch.com as their search engine. Simply choose "Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Waukesha, WI)" from the pull-down menu when you search. Each search will generate approximately \$.01 for WELS. More than \$10,000 has already been earned through use of this search program. The GoodSearch organization has also added GoodShop, which donates a percentage of your purchases from several online retailers to your charity.

Martin Spriggs, WELS chief technology officer, says, "The benefit is, you're searching [the Internet] anyway, why not benefit the charity of your choice, in our case WELS?"

Six New Home Missions Authorized

At its April 17 meeting, the Board for Home Missions authorized the establishment of six new home missions throughout the United States totaling \$563,000 in funding. The new mission openings being funded are located in Blair, Neb.; Colorado Springs, Colo.; Fenton, Mich.; Las Vegas, Nev.; Liberty Hill, Tex.; and Tyler, Texas.

"As a church body, it is a huge blessing when Home Missions through district mission boards can partner with active congregations looking to have a hand in starting the next mission," says Rev. Keith Free, administrator of the Board for Home Missions. Many of these new Home Mission starts have a core group of WELS members from our established churches in their area. "Some of these Home Mission starts already have 50 committed members willing to offer their time, talents, and offerings to help support the new congregation. In most of these locations initial outreach has already started by active core groups supported by the existing congregations near these six communities."

One of the new places is in Blair, Neb., a city 20 miles north of Omaha. Rev. Stephen Helwig, pastor at Gethsemane, Omaha, was excited to learn that this mission had received funding to help start a new church in Blair.

For years Gethsemane has asked its vicars to serve a core group of 15-20 members in the Blair community. "It's been a great thing to see the vicars come in with their enthusiasm to canvass a new area and lead Bible classes for our core group," says Helwig. "It's about sharing our Savior with a new community outside the Gethsemane church neighborhood."

It is a huge opportunity for an established congregation like Gethsemane to assist in the start of a mission, but it will also require the prayers and support of the synod. "It isn't everyday a Home Mission congregation gets started, so it is very important for the community to understand that we are establishing a church that is in it for the long haul and wants to become part of their community," adds Helwig.

A vital partner to Home Missions, the WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF), recently adopted an unrestricted net assets policy that provides annual special grants to Home Missions over and above CEF's matching grant programs. "The new CEF policy is allowing us to open two new Home Mission starts in Fiscal Year 2016," says Free.

"We continue to be blessed by people investing with CEF and by remembering us with bequests and gifts," says Mr. Ron Hillmann, CEF president. "Our first responsibility is to ensure the security of our investors' money, which we do. Once that is secure, then the extra dollars are used to do mission work."

Home Missions has been provided increased synod support, which was made possible by Congregation Mission Offerings and the WELS Church Extension Fund grant. That, coupled with direct gifts to Home Missions from WELS members, provided enough funding for the six new mission starts. "One of the neat things is the cooperation of each district mission board in determining the feasibility of these six sites. We had many excellent proposals presented and if we had the extra funds, we had at least three more missions we would have been willing to authorize," says Free.

Learn more about the work of Home Missions at www.wels.net/missions.

New Survey Asks For Members' Favorite Hymns

What's your favorite hymn? A new survey from the WELS Hymnal Project asks WELS members that very question.

The survey gives worshipers an opportunity to share up to ten of their favorite hymns from *Christian Worship* (CW) or *Christian Worship: Supplement* (CWS), three from *The Lutheran Hymnal* that aren't in *Christian Worship*, and three from the songbook *Let All the People Praise You*.

"Use this survey as an opportunity to celebrate our rich heritage of hymns by sharing with us your personal treasures," says Rev. Jonathan Bauer, chairman of the Communications Committee of the WELS Hymnal Project. "We simply want to know the hymns that are close to your heart."

For those who want to do a more extensive review of the hymns in CW and CWS, an additional survey allows worshipers to rate each hymn individually.

A special effort is also being made to give students the opportunity to share their thoughts on their favorite hymns. "The [student survey](#) will be accompanied by a lesson plan that teachers can use in a hymnology/religion class," says Bauer. "It will serve as a way to do a little education and introduce students to the project in addition to giving them a chance to think about their favorite hymns."

The [favorite hymn survey](#) can be taken online or printed and filled out by hand. All surveys are due by May 31. "There are so many good hymns. If nothing else hopefully this exercise leads people to appreciate how many good hymns God has blessed us with," says Bauer.

The results of these surveys will be shared with the members of the WELS Hymnal Project as they continue to determine what hymns to include in the new hymnal that is being developed. Bauer says the Hymnody Committee is also looking at current usage of hymns as well as carefully reviewing and examining each hymn individually for its quality and usefulness in worship.

Four additional surveys have been conducted by the WELS Hymnal Project. A look at the survey results will be included in the May and June issues of Forward in Christ.

Find the favorite hymn survey at welshymnal.com.

Women's Ministry Committee Meets

The Women's Ministry Committee, part of the WELS Commission on Adult Discipleship, met last week at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis. The gathering included all members of the executive, development, conference planning, and congregational ministries teams. The full group meets once every two to three years.

Naomi Schmidt, a member of the executive team, says, "Having the opportunity to sit down at a table, face to face, allowed us to make tremendous strides on several important projects. It also allowed us to spend several hours in Bible study together, giving us the strong foundation of Scripture to guide and motivate all we do. The unity we experienced deepened friendships to the glory of God and was a blessing that makes the communication so much easier."

The women used their time at the conference to make headway on conference planning for their upcoming 2016 [Women's Ministry Conference](#) on July 21-23, 2016, at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

In addition to conference planning, the committee made plans to continue developing resources such as devotions, Bible studies, and Advent by Candlelight programs for women and women's groups in congregations. All resources are available for free online at www.wels.net/women.