

# ***Lutheran Mission Matters***



Volume XXVIII, No. 1 (Issue 56) May 2020

## Inside This Issue: Missionaries on the Move

Mission in a World on the Move is the pronounced theme for this the 56th issue of *Lutheran Mission Matters*, journal of the Lutheran Society for Missiology. In this issue the journal emphasizes specifically three key words: *mission*, *world*, and *movement*. Movement is perhaps the centerpiece, characterizing both the mission of God and the world into which He sends His people for His mission. Movement brings about change. Changes affect human beings in their lifestyles, culture, and worldview. Nevertheless, the church has an unchangeable, nonnegotiable message to proclaim in this changing world. This issue attempts to examine movement and mission for the sake of the Gospel of God in a Lutheran way. The editors pray that readers will have a remarkable experience as they interact with the essays and mission reflections presented here.

The religious authorities of our Lord's time on earth feared that the whole world was going after Him as He was ushering in God's kingdom by means of the words He proclaimed and the mighty acts He performed (Jn 12:19). Indeed, the whole world is going after Jesus more than ever as more people in our generation are finding in Him their very life and salvation. The Lord's self-giving, sacrificial death on the cross draws to Him people from everywhere as they see in Him the wonder of His redeeming love personalized for them. The Word continues to grow among all nations in an awe-inspiring and unpredictable way. The Holy Spirit is calling people from everywhere and gathering them into the household of God. This movement is simply unstoppable.

Even if no dead man is rising before our eyes, the Gospel of God is moving powerfully today across languages, cultures, and nations as God's people give witness to His mighty acts in the footprints of the early disciples and the apostles of the church.

This issue begins with a very poignant story of a faithful servant of Christ in our generation. The Rev. Dr. Laokouxiang (Kou) Seying has been a dear friend, brother, colleague, mentor, and professor to many of us in the Lutheran household. God raised him up in Laos and brought him to the United States at a very young age. Kou was an immigrant to this country who was able literally to achieve the American dream during the short span of life God allowed him on earth. Kou excelled as an ideal all-American Lutheran. He was trained in the Lutheran education system in college and seminary. Kou was a soccer player and coach and he flew airplanes. Kou was ordained into the holy ministry and served as pastor, theological educator, consultant, missionary, and mission developer. Kou's heart was attuned especially to the people of his native culture and the Hmong immigrants spread across the nations. The Lord in His wisdom called Kou to Glory at a time those of us who knew him thought—in our weakness—that was much too early. While still grieving his loss with his family, we dedicate this issue to Kou Seying and the legacy he has left behind for the Gospel's sake. In fact, this issue begins with several reflections on Kou by those who knew him, an essay

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Kou published earlier in *Missio Apostolica* (the predecessor of *Lutheran Mission Matters*), and an extract from a preliminary draft of his intended doctoral dissertation.

Other essays speak directly to the theme of the people on the move. Speaking from within, Jon Braunersreuther considers that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has been missionary from the very beginning, reaching out with the Gospel to friends and neighbors who did not belong in the same culture or share a common worldview. Himself a new immigrant, Leo Sánchez illustrates how a sanctified life guided by a Spirit-Christology can serve as a model for inviting new immigrants to Christian congregations and for accepting them with gentleness and respect as brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of the diversity in language and culture they bring with them.

This issue is privileged to publish the Rev. Robert Zagore, who directs the LCMS's Office of National Mission. Zagore explains the direction the Synod is taking to reach out to multi-ethnic populations in the country and to welcome the new Americans. Following resolutions of Synod's 2019 Convention, the LCMS confirms its intentionality to plant churches for the new ethnic groups, provide resources to districts, and offer training for leaders and church workers through distance education. As the world continues coming to America, the future is clear.

Immigration is a global phenomenon that opens new opportunities for mission. Christianity may not be the dominant religion in America anymore since American culture is becoming increasingly pluralistic. New immigrants who come to this country do not change their worldview immediately, nor do they embrace Christianity as their new religion, argues Chad Lakies. Christians must seize immigration as an opportunity for witnessing the faith with the confidence and the assurance that the church's mission truly is God's mission. Immigrants are in no way a threat, but a great opportunity God is bringing to our doorsteps to make His Name fully known among them.

The mission reflections included here show that the Gospel of God transforms people's lives and communities regardless of their geographical location, the languages they speak and the cultures that shape them, according to Jim Pressnell and Miguel Torneire. Christian mission must engage people and communities, appreciating the diversity they bring to the Church of Jesus Christ and recognizing that they contribute to the common good and the edification of God's people. In Christ, the people of God grow together, celebrating differences yet keeping the unity of faith. In the end, "this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations" (Mt 24:14) for their salvation. For that purpose, this journal is on the move.

Victor Raj, Editor, *Lutheran Mission Matters*

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