



a mission movement to encourage and celebrate sharing our faith

UPDATE

SPRING 2010

Families share Jesus' love with their communities and beyond

Two families in the northeast find various ways to reach out to those around them in Christ's name



Rev. Jim Buckman and his wife, Cathy, have five children: Jacob, Jim, Sarah, John, and Grace. The Buckmans live in Westfield, N.J.

Rev. Jim Buckman serves as an urban strategy missionary with LCMS World Mission in Newark, N.J. He enjoys taking advantage of opportunities for his family to be involved in his ministry!

Jim writes, "On Saturdays, I work with three house churches in the Newark area. One Saturday morning, as I was making French toast, my six-year-old daughter Grace asked me, 'Dad,

can I go prayer walking with you?' I said, 'Sure!' The others kids also chimed in—they wanted to go too.

"As we drove up to Parsippany, where we are reaching out to Asian Indians, I reviewed prayer walking with my children. I asked them,

'What is prayer walking?' and they all started laughing; they have heard me preach and teach on this many times. 'Dad, it's simple—just walk up to the door, ring the bell and ask them how we can pray for them.'"

"At the first apartment, my son Jim rang the doorbell and a middle-aged Asian Indian lady answered. Jacob said, 'Hi, I'm Jacob. We are praying for the community. How can we pray for you?' I wish you could have seen her face—her heart just melted. She couldn't believe that a teenager was at her door asking how he could pray for her. She said, 'For health.' Jacob said, 'We will do that. Could you tell me your name?' She shared her name with us and we took down her address and prayer request.

"I spent the next hour prayer walking with my five children; it was the best 'quality time' I've had with them in ages. They called on six homes; five of them shared prayer requests. Two Asian Indian families asked us to come into their apartments and pray with them right then and there, which we did. These five households will be followed up with by members of the house church that we are planting in that apartment complex."



Daniel Partlow and his wife, Victoria, have two daughters: Natalie and Isabella. The Partlows live in Westport, Conn.

Daniel Partlow and his family are members of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Westport, Conn. Daniel and his daughters, Natalie and Isabella, are always looking for ways that their family can share the Good News of the Gospel with others in their community.

Daniel works as a managing director at Stanfield Capital Partners, which means that he must commute into New York City on the train every morning. Daniel admits that he used to dread the commute, but

now uses the time for Bible study and creative writing—and finds himself refreshed by the commute! He is also working with others in his community to build and maintain a blog that highlights local evangelism opportunities and resources. In the fall of 2009, Daniel and his older daughter, Natalie, attended an apologetics conference together, and are now working on a book of children's stories about how kids can share and defend their faith in Jesus.

Daniel writes, "I developed a one-page tract with several apologetic questions and answers directed at people of different faiths and world views, along with an article about Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, and Christmas, and an invitation to join us at St. Paul Lutheran Church for the holidays. My two daughters, a friend from church, and I distributed nearly 1,000 of these brochures on Westport's Main Street and at the commuter train station. We wished everyone a Merry Christmas and invited them to join us at church.

"Earlier this year, when I told Natalie, 10, and Isabella, six, about the devastation in Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake, they agreed to make pralines and sell them to raise money for the Haitian people. They had just learned the recipe from their great-grandmother. More importantly, they put together a flyer and a Web site, www.lovalines.com, which included the Bible story of the Good Samaritan and an invitation for people to join them at church. Natalie and Isabella recruited their friends to help them spread the news about their pralines and visited all the local commuter railroad stations before school to hand out flyers about their project and to take orders and donations. "

Daniel shares, "For me, the greatest inspiration [to share our faith] comes from Jesus' command to 'love our neighbors' and to His instructions to 'let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.' The Holy Spirit has caused my heart to be broken for the many close friends I've had that did not know Jesus, and made it my goal to reach as many as I can with the message of salvation."

How can I share?

- Share the opportunities that the Lord has given you to tell others about Jesus at www.lcms.org/ablaze.
- Download the free resource, "Friendship *Ablaze!*" at www.friendshipablaze.com.

GEO missionaries* in Hong Kong



Megan Birney previously served as a missionary for one year in Togo, West Africa, where she home-schooled a missionary family's children and helped with outreach initiatives.



Andrea Bolognini is completing her internship to become a director of Christian education through her two-year missionary service in Hong Kong. She is a student at Concordia University Texas, Austin, Texas.



Lynette Lierman initially served in Hong Kong on a short-term mission trip in the spring of 2009, and immediately felt that God was calling her back to serve there for a longer period of time.

**GEO missionaries are globally engaged in outreach and serve around the world for terms of 1-2 years.*

God is using GEO missionaries as they reach out to students together with Hong Kong church

Serving through LCMS World Mission, three GEO missionaries are sharing the Gospel through serving in LCHKS schools

GEO missionaries Megan Birney, Andrea Bolognini, and Lynette Lierman are the first to be sent by LCMS World Mission to serve in God's mission in Hong Kong as relationship builders through teaching English as a Second Language. They teach at Holy Word Lutheran Church and five schools of The Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod (LCHKS), help to plan and execute special outreach events, and help to host short-term missionaries who come to Hong Kong in English-teaching teams that create additional faith-sharing opportunities.

In Hong Kong, only about 10 percent of the population is Christian, so it is still a field ripe for harvest, with 6.3 million inhabitants who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Megan writes, "During Chinese New Year, I was privileged to see some incredible fireworks, a parade, and some great sights. However, superstitions were very prevalent everywhere we went. For example, people told us not to buy shoes because the word for shoe sounds like the same word for evil and that we should cut our hair before Chinese New Year, because if you cut it during the new year celebrations, you will die early. It was eye-opening to personally experience how much tradition influences people's beliefs. It is humbling to be here teaching that because of Jesus, we have no need to fear bad luck."

Hong Kong is a densely-populated special administrative region of China, where 7 million people live in 421 square miles. The average size of an apartment where a family of four lives is between 350 and 700 square feet! The LCHKS celebrated its 60th anniversary in the fall of 2009 and is one of the oldest partner/sister churches of the LCMS. More than 22,000 students

attend its six secondary schools, six primary schools, and sixteen kindergartens. The LCHKS' membership includes more than 8,500 Lutheran Christians who worship at 33 congregations and 10 mission stations. In addition to its schools and congregations, the LCHKS also serves people through nurseries, youth centers, social centers for the elderly, and a center for the deaf and physically disabled.

Andrea writes, "March included many Easter activities in LCHKS schools! In general, Hong Kong society does not emphasize Easter, because it is a Christian holiday. Some of the stores display chocolate bunnies and candy eggs, but I have seen very little that expresses the true meaning of Easter. However, the students who attend LCHKS schools hear the true meaning of Easter in religion classes. Many of our students have an understanding of Christianity even if they are not Christians.

"I was very excited to share the full Easter story with my students. I had many chances to explain why Jesus died on the cross and rose again. Most had been taught this, but still have not grasped or accepted the effect that Jesus' resurrection has on our salvation. Others did not understand why the death of one man means that God loves and forgives us. Through many activities, my fellow missionaries and I were able to try to help the students understand these things. I was very excited when a student named Sam drew Jesus standing alive in front of a cross! It shows that God works in a variety of ways and can touch people of all ages. In the youth group English classes that I teach, we did other Easter activities. I am now teaching two classes every other week. One is for low-level English high school students and the other is for high-level English

speakers. These are part of the Saturday youth-led church ministry with which I am involved. Last week, the topic was the true meaning of Easter.

"All of my students either attend or are alumni of Concordia Lutheran School North Point, so they understand the meaning of Easter. Thus, I focused on challenging them to think deeply about Jesus' suffering and the significance of Easter for our salvation. I was trying to get them to think beyond the statement that 'Jesus died and rose from the dead' and on to the idea that we are forgiven and have the promise of heaven because of His sacrifice. The students took time to slow down from their hectic lives and thank Jesus for what He did many years ago."

Megan, Andrea, and Lynette's presence at the Lutheran schools in Hong Kong also make these schools more appealing to parents considering where to send their school-aged children. Lynette writes, "As faces that represent native speakers of the English language, we have been able to help increase the enrollment numbers in our schools here—in one school by 70 percent and in another by 30 percent. While we can reach out to individuals personally, those increased numbers of children are guaranteed to hear about Christ for the next six years of their elementary school education from the staff and teachers."

How can I help?

- Download prayer cards for missionaries serving in Hong Kong and around the world at www.lcmsworldmission.org/prayercards.
- Give in support of these missionaries' ministry online at www.lcms.org?6195.





UPDATE

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A campaign to gather financial support for the *Ablaze!* movement and LCMS World Mission

***Ablaze!* Covenant Congregation reaches out to the unchurched in Southern California**



Above: Rev. Richard Schmidt talks with a family before worship in Chula Vista, Calif. This woman's baby was baptized on Easter Sunday.

The LCMS hopes to plant 2,000 new congregations in the United States by 2017 as a part of the *Ablaze!* movement. In support of this goal, LCMS World Mission is providing leadership and assistance to help healthy congregations plant new communities of believers. Working with LCMS mission leaders, districts, and other partners, more than 200 Synod congregations, called *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations, have already committed to plant up to four congregations by the year 2017. Concordia Lutheran Church in Chula Vista, Calif., applied to become an *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregation in March 2009, and was later awarded a grant for training and deploying leaders, establishing a worship site, and other start-up expenses.

Rev. Richard Schmidt is leading Concordia as they reach out to their unchurched community with a relational emphasis that concentrates on “connecting people to people—not people to programs.” Schmidt

notes, “Concordia is all about the relentless pursuit to create a place where the whole family can experience God together, grow in God together, and make a difference in the community together.” Less than 30 percent of Chula Vista residents regularly attend a place of worship. Concordia’s launch team is committed to serving the needs of the community and introducing them to Jesus through the preschool, FamJam—a unique contemporary family worship experience, and outreach ministry groups. Concordia preschool and childcare center opened six months ago with an enrollment of 118. The preschool now has more than 150 children and families enrolled and connected to the church. Pastor Schmidt says, “We will connect with our community and offer them an opportunity to meet Jesus through a relational model in small groups and through a larger venue model by corporate worship. First, however, we must connect with them on a personal and community level, by demonstrating our interest in serving them and being a positive, stable, and trustworthy influence in the community.”

On Feb. 21, 2010, Concordia celebrated its official launch service with more than 220 people in attendance. Sunday mornings at Concordia include a traditional worship service, followed by a contemporary worship service, known as FamJam. The FamJam worship format is a unique and experimental one in which the whole family can learn about a “Big Truth of God” together at the same time and in the same place. This 70-minute experience includes six-minute blocks that share a message, drama, music, and activity. The interactive message is communicated in a variety of media and methods. In fact, it is normal for members to experience scooters racing down the worship center, masks, balls, and silly string during FamJam—all for the family to experience God together in a unique setting. A take-home packet helps families reinforce the biblical lesson during the

week. This is complemented through a Google group where families can upload drawings, tell stories, and interact with other families. Pastor Schmidt’s goal is to “create a context that families can take back home with them, so that what they experience on Sunday can have a direct influence on family conversations during the week.” On Easter Sunday this year, the worship service was packed—there were more people than seats! God brought 73 first-time visitors to Concordia, where they heard the Gospel message of Jesus’ resurrection.

As part of their desire to connect with members of the community on a more relational level, Concordia is using unique outreach ideas. They recently launched the first of www.meetup.com groups to serve as connection opportunities for the Chula Vista community. Concordia member and ministry assistant Melissa Salomon shares, “We began with a bi-monthly scrapbooking group that spends six hours together! We have had two meetups and have had 15 women from the community attend. A walking group, a basketball group for dads, and coaching workshops are on the horizon!”

In January, Pastor Schmidt and others on the launch team set a goal of baptizing 100 people in 2010. He says, “I don’t know if we’ll reach it or not, but by making it our goal, it forces us to focus on the target—people who don’t have a connection with God.” In order reach this bold goal, they hope to enlist the support of 1,000 prayer partners. They already have more than 425 prayer partners from five different continents.

Learn more:

- Visit Concordia’s Web Site
www.concordiachurch.com
- Become a prayer partner at
www.concordiatogether.com

Rocky Mountain District Update

LCMS World Mission celebrates with the Rocky Mountain District, who recently agreed to partner with *Fan into Flame* in 2010. The district board of directors set a goal to raise \$2 million in 2010 for international and national missions through Igniting Church and Culture for Christ, the district’s application of the *Fan into Flame* campaign. Specifically, funds raised through Igniting Church and Culture for Christ will be designated for the Lutheran Hispanic Missionary

Institute, Biblical Orthodox Lutheran Mission, Mission: Southern Africa, and others. We give thanks to God for individuals and congregations in the Rocky Mountain District for their partnership and financial support in this historic effort to reach 100 million people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Learn more about the Rocky Mountain District at **www.ignitingchurchandcultureforchrist.org**.



Celebrating completion of a church building and ongoing theological training in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Fan into Flame project encourages national church and provides much-needed facility

On Oct. 11, 2009, Concordia Lutheran Church, the national Lutheran church in Kyrgyzstan, was dedicated to the service of God and the people of Kyrgyzstan. This building not only houses the first Lutheran church in Bishkek, but also serves as the headquarters of the emerging national church body, also known as Concordia Lutheran Church. The construction of this multi-purpose building was made possible by funding and support from Concordia Mission Society—a long-time and key partner for the work in Kyrgyzstan and



Kyrgyz Pastors Mansur (L) and Kenjibek (R)

Kazakhstan—with some additional funding provided through *Fan into Flame* as part of the “ends of the earth” segment of the campaign.

On this special day of dedication, Kyrgyz Pastor Mansur and Bishop Kenjibek led the congregation through a worship service and communion. Afterward, the ladies of the church used their new kitchen facility, built with help from the Iowa District



Former missionary Sue Pfeil (right) greets a Kyrgyz woman at the celebration.

East Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML), to prepare food and sweets for everyone in attendance, including delicious plov, a Central Asian rice dish made with beef.

Walking through the building, Pastor Mansur pointed out the spaces that can be used as classrooms for children and for adults, with classes both on Sunday morning and during the week. Classes in the weekday program are for men who want to explore theology in greater depth, with the hope that they might one day become pastors in area congregations. Their studies combine a theoretical foundation laid in the classroom, with opportunities for practical application in field education experiences in some of those neighboring congregations, where biblical theology is put into practice in some very interesting and challenging contexts.

The weekday program continues the work started by Rev. Bob Pfeil, who served in Bishkek as a theological educator for more than a decade. He set up the original course of studies and taught most of the classes himself in rented facilities for a number of years until his retirement last summer. The church’s classes continue now with Pastor Mansur doing the bulk of the teaching.

Plans are in place to offer programs in the new building for youth and young families, as well as continuing the weekly eyeglass clinic that uses the multi-purpose sanctuary space. “Now we have this big, beautiful building that shows people in the community that there is a church here,” Pastor Mansur said.

Recently retired missionaries Rev. Bob and Sue Pfeil were present for the Oct. 11 dedication, in addition to other



Concordia’s new sanctuary was full for the dedication service.

LCMS World Mission personnel—including Rev. Jon Muhly from Russia and Rev. David Baker and Amy Kashenov from Kazakhstan. Rev. Bob and Sue Pfeil recently retired from serving alongside the people of Concordia Lutheran Church in Bishkek for 11 years. They made the journey from northern Wisconsin for the special occasion. Greeting old friends with tears in her eyes, Sue said, “I can’t believe the difference in this building between when we left and how it looks now. It’s incredible and beautiful.” In 1998, Concordia Lutheran Church, the national Lutheran church of Kyrgyzstan, was founded in Bishkek with 14 confirmed members. As of May 2010, there are now more than 35 churches and home groups.

Learn more:

- Take a video tour of the church online at www.youtube.com/lcmsworldmission. Click on “Kyrgyzstan Celebration.”
- View photos online at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ConcordiaBishkekDedication>



Fan into Flame reaches \$56 Million

Over the last several years, the LCMS has gathered around *Fan into Flame*, the ambitious fundraising effort to support new mission outreach initiatives in congregations, districts, and around the world. More than 1,000 congregations have already committed their prayer and financial support for this monumental effort to reach 100 million people with the Gospel by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. To date, more than \$56 million in gifts and pledges has been received for *Fan into Flame* from individuals and congregations—praise God!

Because our church body is so vast, we know that there are many congregations that have not had an opportunity to participate. There are others that intend to

take part in *Fan into Flame*, but may need more information or may simply need material to conduct their own fundraising effort. We encourage every congregation to prayerfully consider participating in this historic initiative to share Christ’s love with our world. If your congregation has already participated: thank you! The reports that we are hearing back from your congregations are tremendously positive. Members are discovering mission involvement opportunities at local and global levels. One pastor writes, “Just make the offer. Let the people know that it takes extraordinary measures to do extraordinary things. This is about spreading the Gospel, not the maintenance of buildings and programs. The people will respond—and respond enthusiastically.”

It is LCMS World Mission’s hope that every member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has an opportunity to hear about the *Ablaze!* movement and has an opportunity to consider a gift to support expanding mission work through *Fan into Flame*. Some district volunteers are calling pastors to provide more information, and several districts will soon be writing letters to pastors and congregation presidents inviting them to learn more. Join us in this initiative to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Learn more:

- Visit www.fanintoflamelcms.org
- Call LCMS World Mission at 800-977-2017 to learn how your organization can participate.