

Floor Committee #8: Home Missions

Subject: General report

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 97-103

Report No. 01

It is the role of the Board for Home Missions (BHM) to coordinate planting of churches and aiding mission-minded congregations in the United States, Canada, and the English-speaking West Indies so that many more people may hear about Christ's love. We are pleased to report the BHM continues to be faithful in its role as it works in coordination with its district mission boards and various mission counselors.

The report of the Board for Home Missions in *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM) appeals to our Savior's commission to "Go" with the promise of his authority, his presence, and the power of his Word and sacraments (Matthew 28:18-20). Our committee would like to underscore our support of the 100 missions in 10 years initiative adopted at the last convention in pursuit of the Great Commission. We do so with the observation that almost 800 of our roughly 1,250 congregations are in just three states: Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. While there is still much mission work to carry out in these places, we are not nearly so well positioned to proclaim the gospel in other areas of the country with significant and growing populations. This initiative gives us the opportunity to establish more footholds of gospel proclamation where the harvest is increasingly plentiful.

The challenges we face in such a goal are not few. Monetary support and adequate internal operations are a concern. We recognize, as well, the increased challenge this initiative presents for pastoral staffing. Vacancy rates are already high. Opening more missions increases demand. However, it is noteworthy that some congregational consolidations have occurred in places where one larger congregation can do more gospel ministry than two smaller congregations. Should this become a trend, it could allow for the gradual reallocation of more pastors to other fields over the next ten years. We find it encouraging that WELS had more pastors in 2021 (1,388) than we had in 1990 (1,361), the year our membership reached its all-time high. As a church body we want to steward all our resources as wisely as possible.

We are confident the Board for Home Missions is taking these challenges seriously and continues to work diligently to address them. Our encouragement is that we collectively recognize this work does not just involve the BHM but all the people of WELS. In that spirit, pray the Lord would raise up workers for his harvest field, not only that we might reach a goal but that more and more might be won for the kingdom. Pray for the leaders who have been asked to coordinate the effort, that they are given an extra measure of wisdom and strength for the task. Pray that God would stir our hearts to work together selflessly for the extending of God's kingdom, and open our eyes to opportunities new and old to do just that. Finally, pray that the Lord would increase our trust in all his promises.

In accordance with his promises, the Lord of the Church has already blessed the launch of our "100 in 10" initiative. We are delighted to report that, since the publication of BORAM, two of the nine newly approved mission starts have been staffed with graduates from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. As of the writing of this report, one more has been filled through the acceptance of a call from the field. We thank God for this encouraging start and ask him to continue to provide us with the missionaries, the money, and adequate Home Missions support staff as we proclaim his saving name in North America.

We are thankful for the yeoman's work of Mr. Sean Young, senior director of Missions Operations, and Pastor Mark Gabb, chairman of the Board for Home Missions, on the "100 in 10" initiative during the vacancy of a full-time administrator. We pray that God provide the right man at the right time.

It is with thanks to God that we highlight the support provided by the BHM toward our WELS Campus Ministry as it strives to connect college students from around the world with the life-giving message of the gospel. Additionally, we give thanks to God for the WELS Mission Journeys program as it provides WELS members many and varied opportunities to walk together in the Great Commission.

We are especially grateful to the Lord for the generosity of the Church Extension Fund, which has been an invaluable partner of WELS Home Missions by providing finances and grants to congregations to support and expand gospel ministry.

We also want to acknowledge and ask the Lord's blessing on the BHM's new relationship with Space Together, a service that could prove to be very helpful for both established and mission congregations in their efforts to be wise stewards of their financial and property resources.

Finally, we entrust the results of all our efforts to God alone. Whatever "trophies" he places in our hands, we lay them at his feet and crown him Lord of all.

Pastor David Koelpin, chairman
Pastor Michael Seifert, secretary