

Thailand/Laos Oversight Committee. Kehl says that a new freshman class will be starting at the seminary this fall, and several others trained in other locations are only a few courses short of graduating.

Then, from Aug. 10–14 about 30 men and their families—along with Rev. Kenneth Pasch and Rev. Bob Edwards, members of the Thailand/Laos Oversight Committee—met in Chiang Rai to discuss future ministry plans for the national church in Thailand. Kehl says this was a momentous occasion because it brought together church leaders from two previously separate mission efforts of Home and World Missions. Now the ministry is coordinated through the Thailand/Laos Oversight Committee of the Joint Mission Council.

“This is the first time this wider group of leaders and their spouses came together to discuss how to understand each other, appreciate each other, and get to know each other,” says Kehl. “They discussed how we can unite this ministry to be something we can work together on for the glory of God and the spread of his kingdom.”

Pasch will begin full-time work as the new on-site field coordinator for Thailand in September.

Hagedorn accepts new call

Home Missions administrator Harold Hagedorn has accepted a part-time call to St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis. Hagedorn announced in July that he would be retiring from full-time ministry.

Hagedorn’s new call will include visiting the homebound, teaching Bible classes, and overseeing St. John’s membership retention and assimilation programs. He says, “I am thankful to the Lord our God for this opportunity to be involved on the frontlines of the parish once again. By God’s amazing grace, St. John’s congregation is alive and active in Christ. To be a part of the aggressive gather and equip gospel ministry of the congregation is a high privilege.”

Hagedorn also notes that the part-time nature of this call will allow him to complete some responsibilities for Home Missions and work with other outreach opportunities. Hagedorn’s full-time service to Home Missions will end Sept. 30. His call to St. John’s begins Oct. 1.

The Board for Home Missions will call a new administrator when it meets on Sept. 24 and 25. The list of nominees for this position is available online at www.wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports.

TOGETHER

Aug. 17, 2010

New agency to provide relief and humanitarian aid

After years of discussion, two WELS agencies have now been combined into a single new entity. Representatives of the WELS Committee on Relief and the WELS Humanitarian Aid Committee met last week to create a new, single agency called “WELS Care”—WELS Christian Aid and Relief.

For more than 50 years, the WELS Committee on Relief has gathered and distributed gifts for disaster relief efforts to communities and individuals here in the United States and around the world. The committee has also worked with groups like WELS Kingdom Workers to encourage and support WELS members who volunteer their time and talents to help in time of need. Over the years WELS members have shown their Christian love by responding to those needs with generous gifts and with their volunteer efforts. It was the Committee on Relief that used those gifts of money and time to respond to events like 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the earthquake in Haiti. The committee also has responded regularly to smaller and more localized disasters such as floods, fires, and tornadoes.

The WELS Humanitarian Aid Committee was a sub-committee

of the Board for World Missions. Its role was to provide funding for planned humanitarian aid projects in our various world mission fields as a means to “build bridges” and provide a point of contact for gospel outreach. Its efforts have included such things as providing water purification facilities in places like India and Indonesia, digging water wells in African villages, and providing medical supplies in Eastern Europe.

The work of these two groups has always seemed somewhat similar and related, even though the purpose of each was different. The Committee on Relief responded to sudden needs while the Humanitarian Aid Committee carried out planned projects. In spite of the different focus of each group, the distinct purpose of each was not always clear in the minds of our synod members.

These two entities have now been combined into an agency that will be known as WELS Care. WELS Care will be a single “human care” agency, under the direction of a single committee, overseeing both kinds of work (disaster response and humanitarian aid projects in world mission fields). It was the conviction of both the Committee

on Relief and the Humanitarian Aid Committee that a new entity having both responsibilities would put these similar efforts under the direction of a single committee, improving efficiency and ending any possible confusion.

The committee overseeing WELS Care will consist of five members appointed by the synod president. One of those members will be appointed from a slate of candidates provided by World Missions. This will ensure that the various humanitarian aid projects proposed by world mission fields will be communicated to the committee and will receive appropriate attention.

All of these efforts—disaster relief or humanitarian aid projects—are ways in which WELS Christians can follow Paul’s encouragement in Galatians 6:10, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” Showing Christian love and providing help to those in need are ways in which we can let our light of faith shine. In addition, these efforts—especially the humanitarian aid projects—will serve to provide points of contact for gospel outreach in places around the world.

Thank you for your past support of the work of these two committees. I am confident that WELS Care will faithfully use your future gifts to carry out an important part of our synod’s work.

Note: Details of the merger will be worked out over the coming weeks and months. For the time being, you will continue to see references to the Committee on Relief and the Humanitarian Aid Committee—for example in the following story about flooding in the Midwest.

Serving in Christ,
Mark Schroeder

TOP NEWS STORIES

Flooding causes major damage

Damage from flooding following heavy rains on July 22 continues to plague congregations in the Midwest. Three congregations’ facilities and dozens of members’ homes were seriously damaged during the storm.

“Flooding damage is always more widespread than it first appears,” explains Mark Vance, the director of operations for WELS Committee on Relief. The Committee on Relief has granted emergency funds of \$24,000 to five different congregations—\$10,000 to Siloah, Milwaukee; \$10,000 to Atonement, Milwaukee; \$2,000 to Garden Homes, Milwaukee; \$1,000 to Our Savior, Freeport, Ill.; and \$1,000 to St. Peter, Savanna, Ill.

Vance reports that Siloah, Milwaukee, appears to be the hardest hit. The church/school basement received more than seven feet of wa-

ter with initial damage estimated at \$400,000. Phil Leyrer, principal at Siloah, says, “We are grateful to report that we are making steady progress toward restoration. The final assessment of our damages, however, was greater than we and the restoration contractor first estimated. Much of our lower level is a loss. This includes boilers, air conditioning units inside and out, our electrical panel, elevator ‘brain,’ all built-in cabinets, all doors, and all floor tile. The blower for our organ was also declared a loss.”

Siloah must delay opening its school until repairs are made to the building. The school opening is now scheduled for Sept. 7.

Nearly 10 inches of water and raw sewage filled Atonement’s church basement, and more than two feet of water filled the basement of Atonement’s early childhood center. All items in the childhood center’s basement were destroyed. Some teachers’ and congregation members’ homes also received heavy flood damage.

At Garden Homes, the church and school escaped with only minor damage, but its former school building—which Garden Homes rents to another church—received heavy flood damage to the lower level and furnace room. One teacher had major damage to a basement wall.

In Illinois, members at Our Savior, Freeport, and St. Peter, Savanna,

were also hit hard during the storm. One member’s home was completely destroyed.

The Committee on Relief will continue to assist these congregations as funds allow. To support these relief efforts, visit www.wels.net/relief.

Also the committee currently is monitoring the flooding that took place in Iowa last week and has already made a donation of \$5,000 to help with the devastating flooding in Pakistan that has claimed 1,500 lives and displaced millions of people.

Celebrating in Thailand

A seminary graduation and a national church workers retreat for WELS’ mission in Thailand were cause for celebration this month.

Seven Hmong men graduated from the seminary training program in Chiang Rai, Thailand, Aug. 6, bringing the total number of national pastors serving the Thailand Evangelical Lutheran Church to eight. Three of these men will be pastors of nearby village churches while the remaining four will serve as professors at the seminary or as pastors at large to help with new mission efforts.

“This is a substantial step in the continuation and expansion of mission work in Thailand and is the fruit of many unique connections and efforts over the years,” says Rev. Dave Kehl, chairman of the