



# CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

MARCH 2011

## MONTHLY MISSION NEWS

### DOMESTIC MISSION CONGREGATION SERIES

#### Mt. Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Madison Heights (Detroit), Michigan

When the Apostle Paul, in the course of his missionary travels, came to a new community, it was his practice to go first to the Jewish synagogue. There, as the "new teacher in town," he was usually given the opportunity to address the members of the congregation who gathered on the Sabbath. Sometimes word got around that Paul's message was something new and remarkable and even non-Jews came to hear what he had to say. These opportunities to speak of Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah, were used by the Holy Spirit to work saving faith in the hearts of many who heard the Word. (cf. Acts 13:14,15; 17:2-4)

While we proclaim the same crucified and risen Savior as the Apostle did in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, we can no longer expect to be invited to address the local synagogue. There are, however, times when a change in location or place of worship makes one of our congregations the "new kid on the block." Following the example of Paul we can turn the fact of our newness or change of situation into an opportunity to share the Word of life with others.

For over 30 years Mt. Zion held services in various suburbs of Detroit, including Canton, Birmingham, Southfield and Royal Oak – at the homes of members or in rented quarters.

At different times property for a permanent worship site was sought but nothing developed until 2008. Beginning in February of that year the Lord led the people of Mt. Zion to investigate a small (seats 65) church in Madison Heights that was for sale. One thing that made it appeal to a congregation with a limited budget was the possibility of remodeling the basement into an apartment for the pastor and his wife.

By the grace of God and with the aid of many in the CLC (through a CEF loan, a temporary increase in subsidy -- and special advice, counsel and hands-on help from our brothers in Saginaw) in November 2008 the church building on the corner of Spicer and Northeastern Hwy in Madison Heights, MI became the new home of Mt. Zion Lutheran and (downstairs) Pastor Walt and Kathy Schaller. This loca-

tion, though in a different suburb, was only 6 miles from the Weight Watchers at 13 Mile and Woodward where we had been holding services. (see Metro-Detroit map)



One of the first things Mt. Zion did as the "new kid on the block" was to erect a new sign and distribute introductory flyers announcing

who we were and inviting our neighbors to "check us out." These flyers were hand-delivered (as much as possible) to the homes in the immediate area – with special attention given to the two short streets that intersect at the church. A visitor or two came in connection with this initial introductory flyer.

Because Mt. Zion has, instead of a lawn, a 20-car parking lot, the asphalt area behind the church became a patio of sorts when outdoor furniture was added.

Relaxing here on summer evenings made for excellent opportunities to meet and interact with the neighbors. These casual contacts became friendships the Lord blessed in a number of ways – the most important being instruction classes. Two families (4 adults and 3 children) were involved. One of these families is now regularly attending church and Sunday

school, with the father having become a member and the oldest youngster in confirmation instruction. In early December of 2009, on a Sunday after church, a number of members of Mt. Zion went to the homes on Spicer and Northeastern with a colorful printed invitation to our Christmastide services – and a plate of cookies prepared by the ladies of Mt Zion. While

(Continued on backside)



# BELC GRADUATION REPORT



Eighteen men graduated from the Martin Luther Bible School in Nagalapuram, India. After two years of studying with men like D. Paul, Ashirvadham, Sampath, and Rajamani, eighteen new pastors were dedicated and sent out for the Lord's work in India on February 28, 2011.

Two years may seem like too short of a time to properly prepare men for the work of ministry in God's kingdom, but here are eighteen men filled with the knowledge of their Savior and ready to work. From an earthly standpoint how many years would it take? Including catechism class with my father, I had ten years of schooling, yet I was hardly prepared for what awaited me. From a spiritual standpoint we know that the Lord who has received all authority will prepare His own workers. We dare not use such thinking as an excuse for neglecting the charge entrusted to us, yet when we have done what we can we send them forth into the Lord's keeping unto the task He has appointed for them.

The day was sunny and cool, low 70s, as Missionary David Koenig, Mary and Myself set out. With a two and half hour drive ahead of us we had plenty of time to discuss upcoming work, read, and get in a quick nap. Upon arri-

val in Nagalapuram we were startled with large posters greeting us to the days ceremonies. Missionary Koenig quickly signed the appropriate certificates for the graduating men and we ascended on top of the building where the assembled students and teachers waited for us.

The ceremony itself began at 10am, with singing and music and the reading of appropriate biblical texts. Pastor D. Paul, president of the BELC and the MLBS, welcomed all with the traditional giving of garlands and shawls to the guests. Myself followed by Pastors Koenig, T. Sampath, Moses Raghu, and V. Rajamani all gave sermons encouraging the graduates in the work that lay before them. Pastor D. Paul read the installation promises to which the students responded. After which individual prayers and passages were given for the individual graduates by the pastors present. Graduation certificates and gifts were handed out by Missionary Koenig. The student representatives, Barnabas and David Venkatesh, gave thanks to their teachers. Finally Pastor Ashirvadham gave the closing prayer, and the students were sent out with the Lord's benediction.

The missionaries and MLBS teachers ate a quick meal at the MLBS building, while the students were sent to Pastor D. Paul's house for graduation lunch. These eighteen men will be assigned to congregations and villages throughout the BELC and will continue to participate in district conference meetings. We commit them to the grace of God and the word they have learned.

In Christ, Pastor Matthew Ude

Pictures @ <http://lutheranmissions.org/category/media/india/?album=6&gallery=54>

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## **(Mt. Zion Continued)**

we learned that in the future we should choose a different time for this type of contact (less than 50% of the houses called on had anyone home), we did stir the interest of a neighbor who visited services a number of times.

Focusing on the immediate neighborhood around the church, flyers and signs have also led to VBS opportunities. This is something most of our CLC congregations have done, but information gained in connection with another outreach effort leads me to encourage an annual distribution of VBS information – house by house, if possible. Here's why. We have been sending 4x6 informational postcards to new move-ins within a mile of the church. These postcards invite these people to visit our services. We were surprised to find that in the last 6 months there were more than 200 new move-ins within a one-mile radius of us. That's a lot of turnover. And this in an area severely affected by the recent recession.

In spreading the Gospel it is good to use opportunities elicited by changes in our situation and those occasioned by changes in location on the part of others. We also should not assume that our church's neighbors actually know who we are and what we believe and teach. Finally, let us not forget that life-changes in the homes that surround our churches may be used by the Spirit to provide opportunities for us to share Christ where only a few days previous there was no open door.

- Pastor Walter Schaller