

## **Washington – Geoduck Circuit (mid-Seattle and north)**

### **Geoduck Circuit Report – Spring 2022**

#### **Saviour of the Nations, Vancouver, BC—Geoff Cortright**

We are still trying to move forward after a split that happened last summer with two prominent families quitting our church. Our core group has moved forward, but we feel the loss of being reduced in number from that split and the long break from COVID. We were essentially forced into online ministry from March 2020 to September 2021 so worship numbers have been reduced into the low 20's. That said, we rejoice that the families who stayed are committed to God's Word and trying to move forward with outreach strategies more in line with our size. We are renewed and focused on doing ESL ministry and children's ministries to the best of our ability. We have had an influx of Japanese people interested in hearing the gospel and learning about Christianity. We are navigating having an influx of non-Christians through ESL in particular. One prayer request is for wisdom, spiritual maturity, to serve two married homosexual men from Hong Kong who have been faithfully attending our church for six months. One of them is aware of our scriptural position; his partner is not a believer in God, yet comes to church every week. We are praying the Holy Spirit will work faith and repentance in both of their hearts.

Additions:

- I am deliberating a call to Divine Savior, FL (as you know).
- Three days after receiving the call we learned our landlord church, Wilson Heights, is closing. This gives us a nice window of opportunity to worship in the morning; but unless we find a way to buy the building for \$6-7 million, the window of opportunity will last 2-3 years only.
- We also were contacted by the local Lutheran Church-Canada (=LC-MS) congregation that they might close and have families come to us. This ended up not happening, but their pastor wants to maintain open dialogue because both groups are tenuous.
- We are going to be celebrating Easter in a joint service in Surrey for the first time. Our Sudanese people are very excited about this.

#### **Surrey Sudanese Ministry—Simon Duoth, moving to AZ**

Our leader in Surrey, Bidit Liech, stepped down in early 2021 and caused controversy at the time. I am grateful that God brought the situation to resolution and repentance and that the Sudanese members have stepped up. We are praying for a new leader to fill the void who is scripturally qualified and gifted to do that. They continue to meet for worship weekly and even have requested more involvement from me in catechism, teaching Sunday School and leadership training.

#### **Coquitlam, BC—Qiang Wang**

Blessings

1. Three online Bible Studies, including Monday Morning, Wednesday Morning, and Saturday Night, are going well.
2. Online Sunday School is going well.
3. Events like hiking, potluck, online exercise, and Dancing classes, are going well.
4. Hosting, visiting, and preparing food for the prospects are doing well.

Challenges

1. Moving to the Brentwood area of Burnaby. May God bless us to serve more people in this new place.
2. Wechat may not be available. I hope this never happens. We need a person to help us build the church website.

### **Illume - Seattle, WA—Kent Reeder**

- Illume Coffee, a coffee trailer on Illume's campus, is now open three days a week.
- Currently six small groups are meeting each week to walk together through the Spotlight.
- Illume's monthly live Spotlight events have taken us to some really interesting locales: a yoga studio in Ballard, the Sons of Norway Great Hall, and a German immersion school.
- The Master Use Permit for Illume's building project has been approved by the city of Seattle. The new facility will include early childhood, a coffeehouse, non-profit incubation, and beautiful event spaces.
- Illume's "illumination" of Joana Madzime's incredible poem "Dear God" has become the most viewed video on the YouTube channel by leaps and bounds, amassing over 15,000 views so of this writing.
- Illume has been partnering up with Friendship Heights, a local tiny home community on the corner of 125th and Aurora, to bring a sense of community and hospitality to the residents - including holding a Christmas Eve carol sing around the 14-foot Christmas tree we had the chance to help put up in the neighborhood square.

### **Beautiful Savior - Everett, WA—Fred Schleg, CP**

#### **Blessings**

- Just before the pandemic, we made a big paradigm shift in our outreach ministry - similar to our brothers and sisters at the Vine in ID. That of course lost a lot of momentum with Covid. Now that most restrictions have been dropped, we look forward to regaining that momentum by refreshing "Joining Jesus on His Mission" followed by the two WELS programs "Let's Go" and "One by One" being adapted into a summer sermon series and a new year / Epiphany 2023 sermon series.
- The pandemic did give us a few blessings. For the long term we will continue to offer Zoom Worship on Sundays at 9 am. Our midweek growth groups have also transitioned to Zoom for the benefits of not wasting time in Seattle traffic and a more convenient starting time. We have adopted a couple of WELS groups as our online ministry partners as the content they are producing is designed for online consumption and much better than anything we could produce.
- March 13, 2022 was the first time in two years that we could worship in our sanctuary. It feels as if we are restarting as a congregation. The deacons / elders are using this restart to invite our inactive members to restart with us.
- We have made tremendous progress in paying down the principle of our current CEF loan through a debt retirement program. We are now under \$1.2 million. Still a long way to go for a congregation our size.

- All our major tenants have renewed their leases.
- As part of our goal of becoming a community center that happens to have a church meeting on the same property, we hope to develop a partnership with the YMCA and a couple of other local non-profits.

### Challenges

- The pandemic has been hard on us in terms of membership numbers and people power for ministry. Five active young families used it as an opportunity to move to another part of the US. The driving force for everyone was the high cost of living in our area.
- We will also be losing two more very active couples (empty nesters) in the next year. By selling their homes here and moving to another part of the country, they can retire much earlier than planned.
- In other words, our congregation got “old” in two years. We will probably be sending half our current worship attendance home to Jesus in the next 10 years.
- And on top of loss of key families - like most of our WELS congregations in the Pacific Northwest, we continue the challenge of connecting with the unchurched in our community.
- The next five to ten years are going to be critical for our long-term future as a viable congregation.

### **Christ the King – Bremerton, WA—Andy Schwartz**

- CTK is blessed to see God's people beginning to return to in-person worship after the past 2 years of in-person mixed with online worship. We were blessed all along the way with people worshipping either in person or online, but to see more smiling faces in person has been a great blessing!
  - We are embarking on the final stages of deciding what all we are going to be able to do with a building project. God-willing we will be breaking ground on several phases of our site plan that will benefit both our church and school with expanded space and more physical opportunities to gather- we have been waiting to move forward for 5 years now!
  - CTK LES celebrates God's grace in bringing more and more children before the Gospel through our school! With the public school's curriculum and response to COVID serving as some of the greatest "free advertising" we have ever experienced, we now have waiting lists in every class! Prayers for clarity as to how best to move forward!
- Prayer Opportunities:
- Prayers for our departing teacher Kristine & Todd LaPoint and her family as they head to Oshkosh to serve God's people at Martin Luther! She has served CTK and our District for 17 years!
  - Prayers would be great for our leadership and elders as we work together to reach out to God's people to encourage them to return to worship and that the WELS program God's People Gather (which seeks to encourage people to return to worship in-person) is met with joy and fruit!

- Prayers that God allows costs to remain where they're at for building!

### **Calvary - Bellevue, WA—Erich Neumann**

#### **Blessings**

- We have been blessed with several pre-Christian families who have visited multiple times since the new year started. Some of them are currently taking our First Steps (BiC) course.
- We purchased the new Christian Worship. So far, we are enjoying it.
- We are completely updating our pre-school's playground this summer. Very excited!
- Our school's enrollment has doubled since the start of the school year (13)
- Our church started a new program for toddlers "Jump Start into Preschool." Wonderful opportunity to meet new families and build relationships!

#### **Challenges**

- Our WELS traditions and culture do not match the culture of our community. (This point is not referencing doctrine.)
- Ministering to the vast number of different cultures and ethnicities with a dominantly one cultured, one ethnically based congregation.
- Creating community within our church and focusing on one goal and not several personal goals.
- Old facility upkeep
- Members are leaving the area for economic and political reasons.
- Though mandates are gone and case numbers down, COVID continues to impact our ministry. At best, we are down % from pre-covid attendance.