

THE KOREAN PROBLEM: IMPROVING THE SPIRITUAL CARE
OF KOREAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Roughly one hundred Korean international students are enrolled in Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod high schools this 2015-2016 school year. This blessing from the Lord gives domestic students a taste of Korean culture, increases enrollment in schools, and allows pastors and teachers to reach out to souls who would otherwise be unreachable. Having established a continuous flow of Korean students into WELS high schools, the WELS is now able to focus on encouraging these students to continue into the public ministry. This paper aims to remind the WELS of the incredible blessing that walks into its area and preparatory high schools' halls and to encourage spiritual care and outreach to Korean international students. With the input of Korean pastors, Synod workers, international coordinators, and Korean students I examine the past, present, and possible methods used to enroll, care for, and follow-up with Korean international students. The WELS can benefit from the Korean desire to send children to American schools, but to do so the WELS will need a structured outreach program for Korean students, recognizing that they are a mission field that requires mission work effort.

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1. Introduction

Witnessing a 돌잔치 (Doljanchi) is an experience one will never forget. There is something exciting and mesmerizing about a Korean infant celebrating his or her 1st birthday. Dressed in the traditional hanbok (dress), the infant is placed on a table in front of various items. The item the child picks is believed to foretell the child's future. Will the child pick the thread and enjoy a long life? Maybe the pencil and be a scholar? Or perhaps that young child will take hold of the money and be a wealthy entrepreneur? The parents are proud no matter which item the child picks and joyously celebrate with family and friends.

This is just one of many cross-cultural experiences a person will likely encounter while visiting a Korean church in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.¹ Yet, it is an experience that this author hopes will become more common in the WELS as Korean students continue to enroll in WELS schools both on the high school and college levels.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) supports and runs schools starting from early childhood all the way up to college and seminary. The WELS has 409 early childhood ministries, 318 Lutheran elementary, and 23 area Lutheran high schools. The WELS also maintains one college, Martin Luther College; a seminary, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary; and two preparatory schools, Luther Preparatory School and Michigan Lutheran Seminary.² All of these schools share one common goal: they are committed to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ.

This commitment by the WELS to teach and train its young people in the truth of Scripture began over 150 years ago when, in June 1863, the Wisconsin Synod resolved to found a seminary. In 1865, Northwestern (Wisconsin University and Grammar School) was founded. This school and its commitment to the gospel still exist in the form of Luther Preparatory School.

Though a commitment to Gospel teaching and training is still reflected in every WELS school, the faces of the students who attend these schools have changed. In the past, classrooms were typically filled with Caucasian boys and girls with German backgrounds. The classroom is

¹ My Vicarship in Vegas exposed me to a WELS Korean Church. It was amazing to see how the Korean culture was maintained and taught to the younger generations. The Korean children were proud of their history and heritage. They were also proud to share their love for their Savior Jesus. It was an incredible experience to work and learn among a group of believers from a different culture.

² Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. *WELS Numbers*. <http://wels.net/about-wels/history/numbers/> (Accessed October 1-November 30)

increasingly becoming a place of diversity. As a growing number of people are immigrating to the United States, students from all different backgrounds and ethnicities are finding their way into WELS schools, specifically WELS high schools.

The number of international students coming into the United States has steadily increased each year. The number of international students who came into the U.S. during the 2013-2014 school year was a staggering 886,052³ of which 68,047 were Korean making them the 3rd largest source of foreign students in the U.S. Only China and India send more students than South Korea.⁴

These international numbers reflect what is occurring in WELS high schools. As of this 2015-2016 school year, the 25 WELS high schools (Area Lutheran and Preparatory) have nearly 400 international students on their campuses. Out of those 400 international students, WELS high schools currently host 98⁵ Korean students on their campuses. Koreans make up the largest percentage (roughly 23%) of international students in the WELS, yet seemingly few Korean students matriculate into worker training programs at MLC and later Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.⁶

Since Koreans are the majority of international students attending WELS schools, they will be the focus of this thesis. However, to be clear, this focus on Koreans does not imply other international groups are less important. Far from it! It only means each international group requires its own study.

When studying the diaspora of Korean students to American, it's important to take note of their motivation to attend high school, the focus of their high school choices and finally, the benefits and incentives that led to their respective choice. To help understand these points, a former Korean student who attended Luther Preparatory School was asked to share his experience in the WELS high school system.

³ Project Atlas. <http://www.iie.org/Services/Project-Atlas/United-States/International-Students-In-US> (Accessed October 1-November 30)

⁴ East-West Center. *South Korean Students in America*. <http://www.asiamattersforamerica.org/southkorea/data/students/koreansinamerica> (Accessed October 1-November 30)

⁵ This number reflects the answers from all those schools which responded to my surveys. It is therefore likely the actual number is higher.

⁶ Currently MLC has six Korean students and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has zero.

David Choi attended a high school in the United States at the insistence of his parents. A person with a high school degree is able to apply to college and with a college degree job opportunities grow exponentially. Graduating with a high school and later a college degree will also create significant wage increases. For all these reasons, Choi's parents insisted that he further his education, and high school is the preliminary step to a higher education.

Choi would have preferred to attend a high school closer to home, but his parents decided to enroll him in a school across the Pacific; they decided to send him to the United States. At the young age of 14, Choi's parents enrolled him in a small private Lutheran school located in Wisconsin.

Choi did not choose to go to this school; it was the desire of his parents. They wanted Choi to learn and to speak English. They, and countless other Korean parents, believed a mastery of the English language would allow their child to succeed in the world. Why the small Lutheran school in Wisconsin? Simple, by word of mouth the parents had heard this school was a safe place for their child to attend. Sure, it was costly. Sure, it meant a long and distant separation, but it meant an English education.

This is important to understand because most international students who attend WELS high schools enroll to learn English. There is no thought or desire to pursue a career in the public ministry. Koreans come to WELS schools every year. They are placed in religion courses, attend chapel and church—an evangelism opportunity pastors only dream of—but then they disappear back into the diaspora from which they came, never to be heard from again. How can numerous Korean students walk through the doors of WELS schools, walk out four years later, and then never be heard from again?

The body of this thesis utilizes four main areas of research: surveys taken and interviews given by administrators at WELS high schools, secular research on Korean culture and history, email and Skype interviews with four Korean students and three Korean pastors, and face-to-face interviews with several members of the Global Ministry Committee (GMC). This thesis will, Lord-willing, improve the spiritual care of Korean international students in WELS high schools and create discussion on how to care spiritually for those students who graduate and attend secular colleges. This thesis also will seek to address the spiritual needs of those Koreans returning home to South Korea for work and military service. It will examine the barriers that exist for Korean students in WELS high schools who might consider furthering their education at

MLC. Finally, this thesis will prove that the WELS will need a structured outreach program for Korean students, recognizing that they are a mission field that requires mission work effort.

2. Korean Religious History

For Koreans, history is the most important part of their culture. The history of the Korean people shows a people who struggled to create their own religious identity. This has a significant impact on those Korean students who attend WELS schools. Few of those students understand Christianity as the average WELS student, and even less have a working knowledge of Lutheranism. In order to better understand the Korean student's outlook on religion, a brief lesson on Korea's religious history is necessary.

2.1 Korean Traditional Religions

The primary religion of Korea is not easy to explain. "It has often been said that Korea is a land without religion...yet the Korean has never been without a deep-rooted conviction of the presence of spiritual beings."⁷ Korean religious life has roots in animistic shamanism, Buddhism, the teaching of Confucius, Taoism and Christianity.

Early Koreans practiced shamanism, an animistic nature worship. In mid to late 300 A.D. Buddhism became the popular religion after it was introduced through China. Buddhism became a state-supported institution for over a 1000 years ending at the beginning of the YI dynasty (1392-1910).⁸ The effects of Buddhism are seen in Korean culture still today. "Buddhism has preserved a primitive animism and a fatalistic and passive attitude toward and active way of life among the people"⁹

After Buddhism, Confucianism became the recognized religion in Korea. This religion, like Buddhism, came to Korea from China. "Confucianism was the moral and religious belief founded by Confucius in the 6th century B.C. Basically it is a system of ethical precepts—benevolent love, righteousness, decorum and wise leadership—designed to inspire and preserve the good management of family and society."¹⁰ The customs of Confucianism, such as ancestral

⁷ Won Yong Ji. *A History of Lutheranism in Korea: A Personal Account*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 1991), 33.

⁸ Ibid, 35.

⁹ Ibid, 36.

¹⁰ Korean Information Service (KOIS). *Historical and Modern Religions of Korea*. <http://asiasociety.org/historical-and-modern-religions-korea?page=0,2> (Accessed October 3, 2015)

worship and funeral rites, would become points of conflict when Christianity first arrived in Korea.

Taoism is the final religion that plays a critical role in Korean history. Tao is a form of mysticism. Tao is the first cause, the Self. Tao is everywhere, encompassing and sustaining everything. Today, Christians use Tao to translate “logos” in the Gospel of John. It is important in the study of Korean Christianity to recognize the influence these past religions had, and continue to have, on the people of Korea.

2.2 Christianity in Korea

The beginning of Christianity is credited to a 27-year-old Korean named Yi Seung-Hun. In 1784, this well-educated man of royalty was baptized in Peking, China. His baptismal name was “Peter” for he was to be the foundation of the future Korean Catholic Church. Seung-Hun returned to Korea and began to promote his “su-kyo” (Western) teaching and amassed several thousand followers. It is ironic that the beginnings of Christianity would stem from a Korean man baptized in a foreign land who then returns and builds a church before a single missionary arrives.

The early years of Christianity in Korea faced a harsh hand of persecution. During three periods of persecution, 1800-1815, 1838-1840, and 1866-1867,¹¹ the government of Korea attempted to stamp out Christianity. Yet, as God promises his Word will never pass away, but it will accomplish what he desires. Catholicism grew slowly in Korea until 1884 when two protestant missionaries visited Korea. The two men, Rev J. W. Heron, M.D. and Horace N. Allen, M.D., were sent by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions.¹² These two men had little success in Korea until December 1884 when, after a coup left several dead and prince Min Yonk-Ik seriously wounded, Horace Allen was summoned to treat the prince. Horace saved the prince and was appointed physician of the royal court and was allowed to open a government-sponsored hospital. This was the first “official” approval of Protestant missionary work in Korea.

In the late 1800s John Ross, a Protestant missionary, was the first to translate Scripture into Korean. This was significant for two reasons. 1) It was the only complete Korean translation

¹¹ Won Yong Ji. *A History of Lutheranism in Korea: A Personal Account*, 42.

¹² Reformed Church in America. *Annual report: Treasurer's Tabular and Summary Report of Receipts*. (New York, New York. 1884), <http://findit.library.yale.edu/bookreader/BookReaderDemo/index.html?oid=10845634#page/13/mode/1up> (Accessed October 8, 2015)

of the New Testament until 1900. 2) It introduced theological terms, which are still in use today. “It was Ross who selected *Hananim* for God; a pure Korean word for the Ruler of Heaven. “¹³

2.3 Lutheranism in Korea

The first Lutheran missionary to Korea was Karl Gutzlaff in 1832. Though Gutzlaff served mainly in China, he strongly urged missionaries to be sent to Korea. It was not until 126 years later (1958) that the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) answered the call. The LCMS sent three American missionaries and one Korean missionary to serve in Korea. The Korean missionary’s name was Won Yon Ji. Dr. Ji translated much of Luther’s writings into Korean. He used the Korean desire for education to his advantage as he taught Bible information courses. Dr. Ji eventually left the Korean Lutheran Mission to become the Asian Secretary for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).¹⁴

“Religions have been an inseparable aspect of Korean life since the beginning and given the present circumstance it does not look as though they will wither away anytime soon. The complexity of Korea's religious dimension is a fascinating, and ongoing, object of study for many scholars.”¹⁵ The people of Korea have been exposed to religious beliefs from all ends of the spectrum. They’ve survived numerous wars, including a civil-war, and they have not forgotten the struggles of their past. It is a part of them and they carry it with them wherever they go. It is necessary to understand this as we see what led Korean families and students to the U.S.

3. A Place to Learn

The mixture of Korean religious beliefs and cultural differences creates a unique environment for ministry. As an entire culture migrates its youth to the U.S. for education, we thank God that many Korean parents choose to use WELS schools as a place for their children to learn. The early movement of Korean students to the U.S. and then in the U.S. is a fascinating journey to explore.

¹³ Simon Kim. *Memory and Honor*. Vol. 1. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), 33.

¹⁴ Simon Kim, *Memory and Honor*, 169.

¹⁵ Se-Woong Koo. *Religions of Korea Yesterday and Today*. (SPICE Digest: Fall issue), http://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/religions_of_korea_yesterday_and_today (Accessed November 16, 2015)

3.1 Student Movement to the U.S.

“In 2006, 29,511 children from elementary through high school level left South Korea, nearly double the number in 2004 and almost seven times the figure in 2000, according to the Korean Educational Development Institute, a research group that tracks the figures for the Ministry of Education.”¹⁶ That number reached 68,047 in 2014.¹⁷ All these Korean students are coming to the U.S. for one purpose, to learn English.

Koreans are aggressive entrepreneurs and they understand knowing English, good English, is essential to get ahead in business. Korean parents believe learning English will give their children more opportunities when applying for schools: “Ms. Kim said she believed that English fluency would increase her sons’ chances of gaining admission to selective secondary schools in South Korea and ultimately to a leading university in Seoul. Her husband, Park Il-Ryang, 43, graduated from a little-known Korean university, and he said that the resulting lack of connections had hampered his own career.”¹⁸

This student-immigration began with the wealthiest Koreans sending their children to the US and Canada to learn English. Often these wealthy parents worked for one of the six main companies that dominate Korean society. Those six companies are: Samsung, Hyundai Motor, POSCO (steelmaker), Kia Motors, Hyundai Mobis, and LG Chem.¹⁹ The parents realized, in a global market, good English was necessary to earn a high paying job. Therefore, they began to send their children across the Pacific to learn English to the extent that now 50% of all Korean high school students attend school in Canada or the U.S.²⁰

At first, students were sent only to American colleges and it was done for prestigious reasons; to add that “name-brand” American college to your resume. However, soon Korean parents discovered that it was easier for their children to get into the good colleges if their English was better and they began enrolling them in U.S. high schools. This trickled down into

¹⁶ Norimitsu Onishi. *For English Studies, Koreans say Goodbye to Dad*. (New York Times), 1. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/08/world/asia/08geese.html?pagewanted=all>, (Accessed September 5, 2015)

¹⁷ Project Atlas. <http://www.iie.org/Services/Project-Atlas/United-States/International-Students-In-US> (Accessed October 1-November 30)

¹⁸ Norimitsu Onishi, *For English Studies, Koreans say Goodbye to Dad*, 3. (Accessed October 3, 2015)

¹⁹ CNBC. *Investing in ...South Korea*. http://www.cnbc.com/2012/07/23/South-Koreas-10-Biggest-Companies.html?slide=2_, (Accessed October 3, 2015)

²⁰ Rev. Paul Prange. interview by author, Brookfield, WI. October 14, 2015.

all Korean working classes and now, if able, most parents will send their child across the Pacific to learn English.

3.2 Student Movement in the U.S.

When Korean students first came to the States they naturally attended schools on the West coast. Why travel further into the U.S. when good schools and big cities with large airports are located right on California’s shores? Yet, it did not take long before international students began applying to prestigious Eastern schools. Soon Korean students spread all across the country. The WELS was not untouched by this diaspora of Korean students.

Today, international Korean students can be found in twelve area Lutheran high schools and in the two Preparatory Schools operated by the WELS. In the chart below, The first column contains the name of each area Lutheran high school in the WELS. The second column tells how many international students are enrolled at that school in the 2015-2016 school year.

International Student 2015-16 Data

Arizona Lutheran Academy	21
California LHS	3
Divine Savior Lutheran Academy	0
Evergreen LHS	14
Fox Valley Lutheran	55
Great Plains LHS	12
Huron Valley LHS	5 (China)
Illinois LHS	3 (2 China, 1 Vietnam)
Kettle Moraine LHS	9
Lakeside LHS	0
Luther High School Onalaska	2 (China)
Manitowoc LHS	16
Michigan LHS	16
Minnesota Valley LHS	3
Nebraska Evangelical LHS	17
Northland LHS	12
Rocky Mountain LHS	0
Saint Croix LHS	18 (Korean)
Shoreland LHS	22
West Lutheran High School	7 (6 China, 1 Japan)
Winnebago Lutheran Academy	5 (Korean)
Wisconsin LHS	39

From this chart, created by the Global Ministry Committee, it can be concluded there are seventeen area Lutheran high schools that have international students enrolled in the 2015-2016 school year. Out of those seventeen schools fourteen of them have Korean students enrolled.²¹ The total number of Koreans enrolled in those fourteen schools is eighty-one students. This does not include the two Preparatory schools. Luther Preparatory School and Michigan Lutheran Seminary currently have seventeen Korean students enrolled.²²

Note the comments on Michigan Lutheran High School and Wisconsin Lutheran High School. All the schools that enroll international students have some form of housing specifically for those students. This housing can be dormitories on campus, housing with host families, or a special facility built specifically for the international students that come each year. This is one significant reason WELS schools may attract Korean students; they provide safe living conditions.

3.3 Choosing a WELS School

Since Korean parents are often unable to go “school shopping” they turn to special enrollment agencies. Korean enrollment agencies are often made up of immigrants who spent years living in the U.S. The people in the agencies have knowledge of U.S. laws and have connected themselves with schools, for the purpose of recruiting international students. Parents, who want to send their kids to school in the U.S., start by contacting one of these agencies in the States.

The agency proceeds to help the parents enroll their child(ren) in a school. If the parents liked the school the agency had connected them with, they let other parents know that the agency was respectable. This is how the Korean people operate; a few test the waters to see if it is safe and then tell others once they find a program, in this case an agency, that works. Word of mouth has played a significant part in the enrollment of Korean students into WELS high schools.²³

An example of how word of mouth brought Korean students into WELS high schools is seen in this story from Pastor Paul Prange. According to Pastor Prange, the first Korean at Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) came from a Korean family located in the Czech Republic. This Korean family heard, from another Christian family in the Czech, that MLS was a safe

²¹ Area Lutheran High School, surveys given by author, Mequon, WI, September-November, 2015.

²² Ten students are enrolled at Luther Prep. and seven are enrolled at MLS.

²³ Dr. Jeff Lemke, phone interview by author. Mequon, WI, November 2, 2015.

school where their child would receive a good education. The Korean parents listened and their child enrolled at MLS. Koreans in Europe, the US, and Asia are all connected. Whether or not a person is living in Korea is not an issue with Koreans. They are an ethnic group that is worldwide; they do not think of borders. Keeping the culture in this global diaspora, however, is huge!²⁴

The first Korean students who enrolled with WELS area Lutheran high schools were connected with the schools by agencies, but in 2005, another source appeared that has steadily supplied WELS high schools with Korean students. This new source was Pastor Young Ha Kim. Pastor Kim is an Evangelical Lutheran Synod pastor who started a church in South Korea on October 31, 2005. The story of Pastor Kim and the steps that led him to join the ELS follow the typical church-model Korean missionaries use when they want to form a new congregation.

Pastor Kim moved to Chicago in 1985 to study theology. While in Chicago, he decided to start a church. Kim asked a local WELS church if he could use their building in the afternoons. This church was Jerusalem in Morton Grove. The pastor, Dennis Kleist, told Pastor Kim he would first have to study with him. The study sessions occurred and Pastor Kim grew to love the Gospel message.²⁵ In 1997, he decided to attend Bethany Seminary. He graduated from Bethany in 1999 and was assigned to a church in California.²⁶

Pastor Kim successfully started a Korean congregation and showed specific interest in making sure children received a solid Christian education. He began to realize the possibilities that existed with WELS high schools. Kim knew the schools had dormitories and host families available and he knew the schools would give young students a Christian education. With this in mind, Pastor Kim convinced the ELS to send him to Seoul. His plan was to recruit high school aged Koreans and send them to WELS high schools where they would receive a good education in a safe environment. This plan included a period of time in Seoul where, for eight months, he would daily teach the children religion courses and confirm them before sending them across the Pacific.²⁷ Another portion of Pastor Kim's plan included adult bible classes with the parents of

²⁴ Prange, interview.

²⁵ Prange, interview.

²⁶ Pastor Young Ha Kim, Skype interview by author. Mequon, WI, October 27, 2015.

²⁷ Prange, interview.

that child. These classes were mandatory if the Korean parent wanted his or her child to be part of Pastor Kim’s recruitment program.

The ELS supported Pastor Kim’s plan and gave him two elementary school teachers to help teach the children English. This was, and still is, a great mission model. Pastor Kim’s church has become self-sufficient and just celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Pastor Kim has translated significant religious material into Korean and his high school program sends about fifteen to twenty kids each year to Lutheran schools. Word of mouth has been Pastor Kim’s best friend. It has helped his program grow and has placed WELS high schools on many Korean parents’ radars.

Below is the same chart that was used above, but now, included is the method the area Lutheran high schools use to enroll their students, and the yearly tuition cost. Again, this chart is provided by the Global Ministry Committee (GMC).

International Student 2015-16 Data

AREA LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOLS	Current International Student Enrollment	International Student Tuition and Fees	Strategies to increase enrollment of International Students
Arizona Lutheran Academy	21	\$29,800 includes all costs	Reaching capacity Traveled to China and South Korea Working with one agent in China and another international agent
California LHS	3		
Divine Savior Academy	0		
Evergreen LHS	14	\$15,000	Kitebridge organization recruits/screens students. They dorm students in Tacoma. Enrollment is expected to increase by 10 next year.
Fox Valley LHS	55	\$16,530 (varies due to different agencies/sources J1 student rate lower than F1 student rate)	Maintain strong relationships with agencies. Goal is to keep international student enrollment at 10%
Great Plains LHS	12	6 J1 and 6 F1 F1 tuition & fees = \$18,500	Developing relationships with more agents/agencies. To date we have not made regular trips abroad.
Huron Valley LHS	5 (China)	\$20,000 includes \$7000 for housing	No formal program, local agencies and word of mouth.
Illinois LHS	3 (2 China, 1 Vietnam)	\$22,000	Agency in China, inquiries from website, biggest challenge is not enough host families.
Kettle Moraine LHS	9	Tuition ranges based on agency NACEL = \$11,500	Considering building a dorm

		Pastor Yu = \$28,600	
Lakeside LHS	0		
Luther High Onalaska	2 (China)	\$17,200 Host family receives \$5000 for housing	Only enroll students through SEVIS Host family also receives \$2500 tuition assistance for their child / grand child
Manitowoc LHS	16	Varies by country Base price \$27,000	Desire to expand program Challenge to differentiate instruction & assessment
Michigan LHS	16 (11 in student housing 5 in homestay)	Tuition varies from \$20,000 to \$28,000	We work with current agencies and go on international trips via agency fairs.
Minnesota Valley LHS	3	\$19,000	Referrals from current international students
Nebraska Evangelical LHS	17	\$17,000 (scholarships available for some agencies)	Develop / Maintain relationships with agencies. Considering international recruitment trips.
Northland LHS	12	\$9300 \$1850 if ESL needed \$3700 if ESL & Language development needed J1 and F1 Visas	Attending a very small school in the North of a very cold state is a deterrent. Willing to partner with other area Lutheran high schools should you have a surplus of international students Strengthening feeder schools & possibly joining CWPCP
Rocky Mountain LHS	0		
Saint Croix LHS	18	\$32,400.00	
Shoreland LHS	22	\$24,000 includes tuition fees and housing (\$7000)	Expand number of agents with which we work Traveling to China in October
West Lutheran High School	7 (6 China, 1 Japan)	\$23,000 includes tuition, Rm & Board	To date international students have sought out West. Developing plans for more active marketing & recruitment
Winnebago Lutheran Academy	5		Three from Pastor Kim and two from other sources
Wisconsin LHS	39 (26 reside in WISCO housing 13 in homestay)	Tuition rates vary Non-refundable fees = \$200 /application fee \$3000 / enrollment fee Tuition & fees = \$27,800 *Total \$31,000	*Please note: This includes health insurance, housing, and food. The application and enrollment fees are also included in the total cost. All figures are subject to change. Students should plan for a 5 to 10 percent annual increase for all costs. Seeking agreement with other agencies in new markets. Make family visits. Remain in regular communication with agents & families. Make several annual tours. Word of mouth has been best recruitment

Looking at the fourth column, the majority of the area Lutheran high schools use agency groups to enroll international students. Other schools rely on word of mouth. Five of the thirteen area Lutheran high schools who responded to an email survey used Pastor Kim's program

alongside their agency program to enroll Korean students. Those five schools are: Arizona Lutheran Academy, Fox Valley Lutheran, Great Plains Lutheran, Michigan Lutheran High School, and Nebraska Lutheran High. The two prep schools exclusively use Pastor Kim to supply Korean students.

The WELS has reaped the fruits of Pastor Kim's mission efforts and the mission efforts of WELS high schools through agency groups. Looking at the fourth column one also sees how the area Lutheran high schools are working to strengthen their recruitment efforts through their respective agencies. Lord-willing, this mission work will continue to expand and attract more Korean students.

4. The Cost of an Education

The movement of Korean international students into the U.S. has benefited the WELS by increasing enrollment and giving domestic students a taste of foreign culture. Yet, after studying the data from both surveys taken and the chart above, one question arises: "Are WELS high schools offering fair tuition prices to Korean international students?" The next section will delve into that question, and will apply it to all WELS international students.

4.1 Unfair Cost

Looking at the chart on pages 15 and 16, the tuition for international students is high and not uniform. Several factors play a part in the decision of how much an area Lutheran high schools charges international students. One obvious factor is housing. Five of the fifteen area Lutheran high schools have dormitories for their international students, the others use host families, and at least one school has allowed international students to make their own housing arrangements.²⁸ The cost of dormitory fees or giving a subsidy to a host family will increase the overall cost of school for a Korean student.

When a high school begins enrolling international students, new administrative positions are also added. It takes a considerable amount of time and effort to coordinate and work with international students. Classes have to be planned from long distances. The students often do not make an initial visit; they first arrive on campus when the school year starts. International students also need places to stay during long holiday breaks. This requires a full time coordinator and increases cost.

²⁸ Area Lutheran High School, surveys. Evergreen High School has a unique situation in which some Korean students have family and friends in the area. The students have permission to make arrangements to live with them.

Finally, many area Lutheran high schools simply do not offer much in the area of financial aid to international students. Aid given varies from nothing, to a few scholarships, to offering as much aid as possible. Domestic students often benefit from having some financial support from their home church or other local churches. It is also easier for them to qualify for government financial aid and grants. Taking all these points into account, it makes sense that international student costs would be higher.

An issue that needs to be put to rest is that WELS area Lutheran high schools purposely raise the fees and the tuition for those attending their schools from overseas. On paper, it is possible to see why some would accuse area Lutheran high schools of charging international students' higher costs. Californian Lutheran's tuition and Great Plains Lutheran's tuition is "about three times higher"²⁹ than domestic students. The other area Lutheran high schools are similar ranging from double to nearly triple the cost than the average domestic student.³⁰

Dr. Jeff Lemke, the Director of Admissions and International Programs at St. Croix Lutheran in St. Paul, Minnesota and Beth Humann, the International Program Administrator at Evergreen Lutheran High School in Tacoma, Washington both shared their opinions about international student tuition rates. Dr. Lemke said, "Schools are a tool. Yes, it [St. Croix] does serve dual purposes. Students are brought in to be taught both secular courses and religious courses needed for them to be functional adults, but, along with that, their enrollment helps to pay the bills. Our school is a ministry, but it is a ministry that requires money to exist."³¹ When Beth Humann was asked about the high rates and fees for international students she seemed surprised that anyone would accuse a WELS school of purposefully raising rates and tuition for international students and went on to say "we love our students and we do our best to accommodate their needs."³²

WELS area Lutheran high schools are not seeking to make a nice profit from international students, they are seeking to keep their doors open. They recognize the ministry that their campuses offer, and they wish to maintain and grow that ministry. Yet, there remains this one fundamental problem: those international students who walk their halls for

²⁹ Ibid, CLHS.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Lemke, interview.

³² Beth Humann, phone and email interview by author, October 26, 2015.

four long years often, upon graduation, no longer receive the same spiritual care they did when enrolled in an area Lutheran high school or Preparatory School. In an effort to study the spiritual care given to Korean students, the WELS formed (or perhaps reformed) the Global Ministry Committee.

5. The Global Ministry Committee (GMC)

The Global Ministry Committee (GMC) was the source of the charts above and have provided necessary resources and advice about international students in the WELS school system. But what is the GMC? Below Pastor Paul Prange shares the history of the committee.

Back in 2005, the presidents of the ministerial education schools asked the synod administrators for ministerial education, home missions, and world missions to form a committee with the president of WLS, the director of the WLS PSI program, and the WLS world mission seminary professor. The prep school presidents were interested, for example, in what we should be training the Korean students for. The stated purpose of the committee would be to discuss individual cases when international students enrolled at ministerial education schools. The committee formed and after looking at a few other options, decided to call itself the Specialized Training Program Coordinating Group (STPCG). When the prep school presidents asked the STPCG to discuss the individual cases of the Korean students, the STPCG said, honestly but not that helpfully, “We don’t know what to do with them.”³³

The STPCG was the first step in forming the GMC. In 2012, another effort was made to leverage the enrollment of all of the international students at the preparatory schools, area Lutheran high schools, and Wisconsin Lutheran College. The Board for World Missions authorized the new International Students Committee (ISC) to research the matter. The ISC was replaced three years later by the Global Ministry Committee.

Early in 2014, the new world mission’s administrator, Larry Schlomer, approached the Joint Mission Council with a proposal to call someone to be a Coordinator for Global Cross-Cultural Outreach. The idea is that the person would help immigrants to the U.S. (including international students) take the gospel back to their countries of origin. They called Pastor Prange. In January 2015, the Joint Mission Council formed a committee to help him with the work. It is called the Global Ministry Committee (GMC). We met weekly by teleconference from January through May 2015. We have not met since we got our new chairman. In one of those teleconferences we discussed what to do with and for international students at the ministerial education schools, including Korean students at the prep schools.³⁴

One statement, mentioned above, points to the ongoing struggles the WELS had in identifying the possibilities of Korean international students. “When we, prep school presidents, asked the STPCG to discuss the individual cases of the Korean students, the

³³ Rev. Paul Prange, email correspondence with author, Mequon, WI, October 22, 2015.

³⁴ Ibid.

STPCG said, honestly but not that helpfully, ‘We don’t know what to do with them.’³⁵ It is true, the STPCG was uncertain what to do with Korean students.

Back in the early 2000s the WELS had a Korean student who went through the normal WELS system. He attended a Preparatory School, went on to Martin Luther College (MLC), and then attended Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). The Korean’s name is Tom Park. Despite attending school in the United States for twelve years, Tom retained his Korean culture. This became an issue after Tom graduated from the Seminary and received his first call to Great Plains Lutheran as a tutor. He was uncomfortable at Great Plains and left to further his education through the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod placed him in an Asian ministry in Florida.

Tom Park was one of the last Koreans³⁶ to walk through the halls of Wisconsin Seminary. It is the goal of the GMC to create more opportunities for Korean students to continue through MLC and WLS and to place them in places where they can reach out and minister to members of their own culture. There have been many different approaches by area Lutheran high schools and the prep schools to do this very thing.

6. Different Approaches

The area Lutheran high schools and the two prep schools all work under the umbrella of the WELS. Yet, each school has a different method in the recruitment of Korean students, the spiritual care of Koreans, and post-graduation follow-up with Koreans. Since there is not one unified procedure, it was difficult to research. However, some insight can be gained from the different methods and ideologies each WELS high school uses when recruiting and educating international students.

6.1 The Synod’s Approach

As mentioned above, the WELS formed the GMC to help coordinate and encourage international ministries. The GMC has created several projects focusing on different areas of ministry. Three of the projects the GMC has pursued will be examined in the following paragraphs.

The first project focused on international student recruiters. On February 18, 2015, the GMC reported that, for the first time ever, the international coordinators of the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ To the knowledge of this author, Pastor Chung is the only Korean who attended the Seminary after Tom Parks.

WELS high schools will be meeting together. Their goal will be to study and implement better recruitment procedures and enhance current catechism instruction.

More than 400 international students are enrolled at these schools this year. About 1/3 of the students are from China, 1/3 are from Korea, and the other 1/3 are from at least 35 other countries. About 30% of those students are connected with Lutheran churches of our fellowship in other countries. About 10% come from other Christian churches in their country of origin and about 60% of those students are not Christian when they enroll in our schools.³⁷

The GMC has pointed to Joshua Yu as a recruiter for Chinese students and Pastor Young Ha Kim as a recruiter for Koreans. Frank Kim, a recent graduate of MLC is also willing to help recruit Korean students. The whole goal is to part ways with recruitment agencies and, instead, use Synod recruiters who can better instruct and place international students. Pastor Yu is already serving part-time as a recruiter and is willing to serve full-time once St. John's Wauwatosa can find a replacement to serve their Chinese-speaking members.

Much has already been said about Pastor Young Ha Kim, but his student recruitment efforts have not been fully explored up to this point. Pastor Kim “advertises that he will place your child in a good, safe school in the United States. When Korean parents contact him, he explains that it will be a Lutheran school, and that the Lutheran schools ask him to teach the Korean parents and students what Lutherans teach from the Bible before the students go to the United States.”³⁸

Pastor Kim and his wife run the academy in Seoul and now have a fully self-supporting Lutheran (ELS) congregation. When the students from Pastor Kim's congregation are in the United States, Pastor Kim's daughter, Julie Kim, serves as liaison and mentor. Pastor Kim sends more than 70 students each year. This number includes grade school students. Pastor Kim is willing to be the only agency the WELS uses for recruitment, and this could be done in a simple manner:

If all of our schools would tell Koreans who contact them that the Koreans should work with Pastor Kim as their agent, we would be able to work with all of the families of those Korean students. All WELS high schools have been asked to do this. Some Lutheran high schools are not willing to risk the reliable source they have for supplying them unbelieving Korean students in order to increase the chance that we would be able to teach their families in Korea about Jesus.³⁹

³⁷ Global Ministry Committee. *Project- International Student Recruiters*. February 18, 2015.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

One other issue needs to be discussed in regards to Pastor Kim—tuition. As some in the WELS believe area Lutheran high schools charge unfair tuition and fees for international students, Pastor Kim experiences the same frustrations in South Korea. Pastor Kim and his wife have been accused of using their mission model to make money. As he negotiates with parents to find the best school, Pastor Kim often does not share the tuition and fee rates of each individual high school. However, the Korean parents in Seoul compare notes on how much they pay each year in tuition. The tuition and fees of the area Lutheran high schools ranges drastically, and the Korean parents wonder why their children are not sent to the cheaper schools. They think Pastor Kim receives some form of kick-back for sending students to the more expensive schools.

The Kims have suggested that they get out of the middle of the American fee system altogether, and have proposed that all Korean parents send the same amount of money to WELS, which can pay the different amounts the elementary schools and high schools that the students attend. With the right fee structure, WELS might pay Julie Kim a stipend and travel expenses for her work. She could be hired or called as a Korean recruiter.”⁴⁰

What could be gained if this were done? Pastor Kim and his wife would no longer be mistrusted, and it could lower prices and draw in more parents.

The second project the GMC focused on was college outreach to international students. The spiritual care of Korean students does not end in high school, but continues on into college. The best way to provide spiritual care from high school to college is still being discussed. How can the synod keep in contact with and nurture the faith of those Korean students who spent four years in WELS high schools? Are college campus pastors enough?

Most WELS campus ministries are run from existing congregations. The campus ministries are served by a pastor or volunteer. The WELS has over 200 campus pastors, but they lack time and don’t always understand the culture of the international student whom they are serving. It is a system that needs to improved.

The third project the GMC explored was ministerial education for international students. The discussion revolved around the plan followed when enrolling an international student. On paper, when MLC and the preparatory schools enroll international students, they are expected to contact the mission workers of our fellowship in the students’ country of origin. The school then answers five questions before enrolling the student. The questions are:

⁴⁰ Ibid.

1. How does enrolling this student fit with the ministerial education program of the field from which the student comes?
2. What parts of the school's curriculum / extracurricular / student services serve the needs of the student and the field?
3. What does the school have to add / subtract / tweak to make this partnership work?
4. How do we envision follow-up with the student once he or she graduates?
5. How will the student's expenses be paid?⁴¹

By answering these five questions, schools have a working picture of how to enroll, encourage, and evangelize to international students, both inside their walls and after they graduate. This cuts out any confusion about goals and purpose and establishes a focused mission effort.

6.2 Area Lutheran High Schools' Approach

Recall that some 60% of international students who attend WELS high schools are not Christian. What do area Lutheran high schools do when a non-Christian Korean student enrolls? How do they care for them spiritually? It is difficult to nail down how the area Lutheran high schools approach the spiritual care of their Korean international students. Each school is certainly interested in teaching and training the students in God's Word, but the extent to which they encourage their students varies. St. Croix Lutheran High School and Evergreen Lutheran High School demonstrate the variety that exists among the area Lutheran high schools.

6.2.1 St. Croix Lutheran High School

St. Croix approaches their non-Christian Korean students with a question. "Are we expecting the students to be full-blown WELS members or are we setting them up so they can use Scripture in their own churches one day?"⁴² St. Croix offers two levels of religion courses, starting non-Christians on the lowest level to teach them bible basics. The school has made the expensive, added effort to buy each international student a bilingual bible. They have involved the local pastor (Crown of Life, St. Paul, MN) in their outreach efforts. That, along with special after-school bible class gatherings which are offered to students who show a faith attitude, demonstrates St. Croix's desire to care for the spiritual welfare of their Korean students. St. Croix does not force students to attend WELS churches. If a Korean is Catholic, they are free to attend the local Catholic church.⁴³

⁴¹ Global Ministry Committee, *Project-Ministerial Education School International Students*. March 3, 2015.

⁴² Lemke, interview

⁴³ Ibid.

6.2.2 Evergreen Lutheran High School

The international program at Evergreen highlights the importance of social media. The school maintains significant contact with their Korean graduates. Beth Humann, Evergreen's International Program Administrator, believes keeping in contact is easier when host families and their Korean guests form strong relationships.

Once the students graduate from Evergreen Lutheran High School (ELHS), we do not have a particular system to track them. Many of the Korean students stay in touch with our faculty or their former home stay families via social media, so we sometimes are able to follow up on what they are doing. Those students that lived with our local WELS/ELS families do stay in touch with them, so I often ask the families how "so and so" is doing, but this is certainly not a systematic approach.⁴⁴

Beth also spoke of one significant problem the WELS faces in the follow up of Korean students. "Until we have stronger WELS ties in Korea, we won't have a lot of follow up care for our students."⁴⁵ Beth's statement shows a real weakness the WELS has in Korea: we rely almost entirely on Pastor Young Ha Kim and his program. If the WELS can establish a stronger presence in South Korea, retaining relationships with former students will be manageable.

6.2.3 General Comments

Based on survey responses and other correspondence with area Lutheran high school administrators, it appears the schools are dedicated to ministering to international Korean students. Almost every school encourages chapel attendance. Many offer special religion courses and have English as second language courses available for those students whose English is weak. When Koreans live with host families, those families are encouraged to model Christian love and are asked to bring their guest to church whenever possible. Several schools have sought to get their local pastors involved with the international students, but the amount of involvement depends on the busyness of the individual pastor.

Overall, area Lutheran high schools see the ministry opportunity that arrives on their front porch each school year. They do their best with the resources they have to minister and reach out to their Korean international students with the Gospel. Though the schools are not unified in their approach, constant attention is given to the spiritual health of the student as he or she is on campus. However, as is often the case even with domestic students, the spiritual care tapers off once the students graduate.

⁴⁴ Humann, interview

⁴⁵ Ibid.

6.3 Luther Preparatory School and Michigan Lutheran Seminary's Approach

“Both Luther Preparatory School (LPS) and Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) understand themselves as single-purpose schools. They know that they are to provide enough qualified candidates to the college ministerial education programs to meet the needs of our church body.”⁴⁶ LPS and MLS both draw exclusively from Pastor Young Ha Kim’s recruitment program.

LPS does not recruit international students solely with ministry service in mind. The governing board prefers to have a slightly narrower understanding of the school’s role in the church body. Therefore, the Governing Board states, “The continuing mission and purpose of Luther Preparatory School is to prepare and encourage young men and women for the full-time ministry in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.”⁴⁷

MLS has made a special push to encourage their Korean students to serve in the public ministry. The school addresses international students specifically in its new mission statement: “The special purpose of MLS is to train students for the public ministry of the gospel and to enroll them upon graduation at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota. It also trains international students for service in the U.S. or in their country of origin.”⁴⁸ MLS has also asked Pastor Kim to send students he (Pastor Kim) thinks would consider serving as a teacher, staff minister, or pastor.

Though the two schools have different approaches in what they expect of their Korean students, their commitment to students’ spiritual needs is the same. The two schools offer regular chapel, religious courses, and provide opportunities for regular church worship. Since they receive students from Pastor Kim, the two schools do not need to provide religious courses above and beyond the required curriculum. Though there are still some language struggles, most Korean students have few issues.

7. Issues to Consider

Having reviewed the care offered to international students, the area Lutheran high schools or the two Preparatory Schools are not ignoring the spiritual care of their Korean international students. Looking at the number of Koreans who attend WELS high schools, it

⁴⁶ Global Ministry Committee, *Our Preparatory Schools and the World Missions of Our Fellowship*, 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Global Ministry Committee, *Our Preparatory Schools and the World Missions of Our Fellowship*, 2.

might seem discouraging to see how few Korean students matriculate on to Martin Luther College (MLC) and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS).

Currently MLC has six Korean students on campus; all six are teacher track. Last year (2014) one Korean was pastor track, but he left to complete required military service in South Korea.⁴⁹ Why, if Koreans are the largest group of internationals enrolled in WELS high schools, do we find only six at MLC? Are the high schools not doing enough outreach to Korean students? Are the Korean students simply not interested in being a pastor, teacher, or staff minister? There are several issues that Korean students need to overcome as they consider attending MLC and WLS.

7.1 No Model to Follow

If students at MLC were surveyed, and they were asked why they decided to study to be a pastor, teacher, or staff minister, the surveyor would receive a variety of answers. Some students might say their dad was a pastor or teacher and that inspired them. Others might comment on the encouragement they received from their local pastor or one of their teachers. It is likely that many MLC students attended a WELS grade school and WELS high school, and were familiar with the WELS educational system. International Korean students do not have the same familiarity and knowledge of the WELS education system.

When Korean students are recruited to an area Lutheran high school or Prep School, they likely do not have a father or a mother who was a pastor, teacher, or staff minister. Even if Korean students are considering a career in the public ministry, no one who looks, talks, or thinks like they do is performing this type of ministry work in the U.S. The students are not able to picture themselves pursuing this kind of profession because they have never seen it! “Humanly speaking it is a lot bigger leap for Koreans to do this [serve in the public ministry], because they are made aware that they are different from the norm.”⁵⁰

Korean students who go on to MLC also face the reality that their skill with the English language and their lack of familiarity with American customs may hinder their teaching or pastoral career. Gabby Moon, a student at MLC, wrote:

I questioned my profession choice many times. Because I never experienced American elementary school system, especially Lutheran grade school, I did not know some basic things that I can connect with my students such as children songs, stories, and things like that. Also, teaching

⁴⁹ Megan Kassuelke, email correspondence with author, Mequon, WI, November 10, 2015.

⁵⁰ Prange, interview.

phonics and things that are very basic for American were very challenging for me because English is not my native language. Because those were so challenging, I sometimes felt like I have to change my major to secondary because that way I can only teach students about things that I know (information wise) and I had some background experience with American high school.⁵¹

This comes full circle to the earlier discussion of Tom Park. How can a Korean serve a WELS American congregation without feeling uncomfortable? Can the WELS create settings where Korean pastors and teachers will thrive? This is an issue that needs continued discussion and thought in the WELS.

7.2 New Converts, New System

Gabby Moon's insight into the faith of her Korean brothers and sisters adds another issue that needs attention. Gabby wrote, "Many Korean students in Lutheran high schools are students who are recently converted or who have a faith that is not as strong as American Lutherans. In my opinion, because their faith is not that strong and they don't really know much about God, they do not really want to choose a profession that involves things they are not familiar with."⁵²

The Korean people have a rich religious history, but today, the religious practice of the average Korean varies. "According to a government survey conducted in 2005, more than 29% of Koreans identified themselves as Christian (18.3% Protestant and 10.9% Roman Catholic), while 22.8% were solidly Buddhist. Almost half (46.5%) of those questioned claimed not to be religious, but upon closer inspection, even they engaged in religious activities of various kinds."⁵³

Koreans have held on to their past religious roots and have no issue mixing their beliefs with other religions that they encounter.

It has been remarked that Koreans practice an "instrumentalist" approach to religious life, or simply put, subscribe to any religion so long as it proves beneficial to their goals here and now. Although Korean religious groups defend themselves passionately and not infrequently denounce others as a way of asserting their superiority, in reality many Koreans see little wrong in taking advantage of every religious option available to them. Even the most fervent Christian or Buddhist will consult the clergy of competing traditions if he or she believed it would serve a tangible purpose. Such is the classic formulation of Korean religiosity: people adrift in a sea of beliefs, relying on anything and everything to survive.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Gabby Moon, email correspondence with author, Mequon, WI, November 15, 2015.

⁵² Gabby Moon, email correspondence.

⁵³ Se-Woong Koo, *Religions of Korea Yesterday and Today*.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

This poses a problem as Korean students enroll in WELS high schools. Korean students who come from recruitment agencies often receive no Lutheran instruction and are exposed for the first time to Lutheranism when they arrive on the opening day of school. These new converts see Lutheranism as another religion and are comfortable worshiping in a Lutheran manner while holding on to their other religious traditions. Students recruited by Pastor Young Ha Kim have a better understanding of Lutheranism than the average Korean from a recruiting agency, but still need further instruction once in the U.S.

The Korean students who are recruited by Pastor Kim receive eight months of daily catechism instruction. They are confirmed and then sent to the U.S. for high school. Consider that, eight months of catechism instruction, and often this is the first contact these children have with Lutheranism. Compare that with the average WELS child who is brought up from childhood in God's Word and receives four years of catechism instruction. It is no surprise being a Lutheran pastor or teacher is not high on the list of occupations for a Korean international student.

New Korean students not only are new to Lutheranism, but they are also new to the WELS education system. Those who grew up in the WELS system understand that MLC is the school to attend if one wants to be a pastor, teacher, or staff minister. This is not always the case with international students. Chiseon Kim, another Korean student at MLC, wrote: "I knew very little about MLC when I was high school. I have been at MLC, but it was not enough. I did not know what kind of classes are there and I also did not know what kind of majors are there too. I think MLC needs to advertise themselves into the Lutheran high schools more."⁵⁵

Finally, a source who works closely with the Korean recruitment process points out MLC is not on many Korean students' radars.

Most Koreans are highly educated and value education greatly. This is why parents feel it is worth the sacrifice to send their kids far away at such a young age. Keeping this in mind, Koreans have a goal of sending their kids to colleges that are "brand" name. It is incredibly and increasingly getting difficult to get jobs in Korea and they feel the only way to get interviews to have the "brand" name college on their resume. So this is part of the reason why students do not matriculate into MLC.

The other reason is that since MLC is a specialized college for future pastors and teachers it is not usually what our students tend to pursue. Half our students are from non-Christian families so pursuing the ministry would be a stretch unless God has that planned of course! Pursuing teaching is a focus in the humanities area of study which is writing and speaking heavy, for someone who is trying to master another language that is a daunting field unless they feel they have a passion for

⁵⁵ Chiseon Kim, email correspondence with author, Mequon WI, November 22, 2015.

that area. Most of our students tend to pursue a degree in Engineering, Business, Computer Science, or Fine Arts where it's more about attaining a skill and less writing and speaking focused.⁵⁶

Those Korean students who are new converts and new to the WELS need extra attention and direction to understand the education they could receive if they attended MLC.

7.3 Korean Culture

Korean culture is an integral part in the discussion of Korean students attending MLC or WLS. For Koreans whether or not they live in Korea is not an issue. They are an ethnic group that is worldwide and they do not think of borders. Keeping the culture is important to Koreans in the diaspora, and this is lost to other nations who expect immigrants to assimilate.⁵⁷ If the WELS and its schools are looking at Korean students as a mission field they must keep these three areas of Korean culture in mind: Korean views on age and honorific titles, their drive to succeed, and their desire to remain Korean.

One major part of Korean culture is respect. The older a person is in Korea the more honor he or she receives by right. This is natural to Koreans. According to Dr. Lemke, "There is a definite pecking order, the oldest male student has the final say in any matters amongst the Koreans."⁵⁸ This pecking order shows itself not only in school, but also in the professional world.

In the WELS, if a pastor track student does not take any years off from school, he will graduate and be a pastor between the age of 26 or 27. In Korean culture being a pastor at the age of 26 or 27 is difficult.

In Korea you have to be over 30 years old to be ordained. In Korean cultures seniority is very important. In my experience I purposely delayed my ordination for 10 years because the people take seniority so seriously. Even when I started my own ministry at the age of 36, there were people older than me who still thought that I lacked not in experience in ministry but a lack in life experience.⁵⁹

A Korean student on the pastor track at MLC discovered the importance of age and experience when he served with Pastor Tae Sang Kim in Las Vegas.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Prange, interview.

⁵⁸ Lemke, interview

⁵⁹ Pastor Tae Sang Kim, email correspondence with author, Mequon, WI, November 22, 2015.

Pastor Kim made clear that a Korean this young could not be a Korean pastor; he could not be given the proper Korean honorific titles because of his age. He would need to return to Korea work, and gain life experience.

Here is how Chinese and Koreans think of it, they just know this to be true. If you want to be a pastor you're far too young to be a pastor, I can't give you the right honorific words at your age. So I will go and get a degree then work in a church while supporting myself. Once I've proven myself capable of managing myself and my home well, I will earn the right to be a leader in the church; this is the Asian model.⁶⁰

Jay Lee, a current PSI student in Las Vegas, voiced his concerns about being too young to serve. Jay and his friend Pat are both in their early 20s and have served as youth leaders in Pastor Tae Sang Kim's church (Korean Fellowship Lutheran Church). Jay expressed his doubts that he would be able to go through PSI courses and then serve with Pastor Kim. He believes he will need to wait until he is older before he can return to Vegas and serve in a pastoral role.

This idea of age and honor permeates throughout Asian culture.

A boy from China who enrolled at MLS explained to me, through tears at the death of his respected grandfather (a pastor in our Hong Kong field), that he would become a pastor, and it was very clear to him how he would do that. Upon graduation from MLS, he would enroll at Michigan State, get his degree in engineering, serve in his father's company for a decade, then attend seminary in Hong Kong.⁶¹

If this is the model for Korea, China, and other Asian fields, it would be good for the WELS to agree on how such a young man's faith and preparation for ministry could and should be nurtured through the college and first-career years.⁶²

The second area of Korean culture revolves around the Korean's desire to succeed. Korean students come to the U.S. for one simple reason—and this was mentioned earlier—their parents want them to learn English, get into a prestigious college, and then find a career building job. Though American parents surely want their children to be successful, their desire pales in comparison to that of their Korean counterparts.

Se-Woong Koo wrote in the New York Times that the educational programs used in South Korea amounts to child abuse.

Cram schools like the one I taught in—known as hagwons in Korean—are a mainstay of the South Korean education system and a symbol of parental yearning to see their children succeed at all costs. Hagwons are soulless facilities, with room after room divided by thin walls, lit by long fluorescent bulbs, and stuffed with students memorizing English vocabulary, Korean grammar

⁶⁰ Prange, interview

⁶¹ Global Ministry Committee, *Our Preparatory Schools and the World Missions of Our Fellowship*, 5.

⁶² Ibid.

rules and math formulas. Students typically stay after regular school hours until 10 p.m. or later...South Korean students work up to 13 hours a day.⁶³

Korean parents keep a close eye on other parents to see how many hours of schooling or what type of tutoring they give their children, only to match or beat it by sending their children to school longer or by hiring a better tutor. Speaking anonymously, a pastor remarked that, though it appears Korean children are self-driven, hardworking, and respectful, it is their parents who are the driving force.

These same parents are expecting their children to return home, to South Korea, to work. Yet, increasingly, this is not the case. The Korean students are staying in the U.S. to find work, creating doubt in the upper echelon of South Korean leadership. “They (Korean leaders) are starting to question the model of sending Koreans to the U.S. because the children are starting to want to stay. The culture is still discussing this; how will it play out?”⁶⁴ While this is playing out, and Koreans continue to be sent to WELS schools, the WELS has a golden opportunity to share with the students Christ and his love.

This idea of success theology naturally spills over into the third area of Korean culture that needs to be addressed: Koreans’ desire to remain Korean. This desire to remain Korean creates friction amongst Koreans in U.S. schools. Some Korean students begin to adopt American customs while others remain firmly rooted in their culture. Pastor Prange, while he served at MLS, witnessed Korean students berating another Korean student for being too “American.” In the book *War With Pigeons*, author Tae Kim describes Asian American society and how the Asian culture still remains prominent in Korean lives at many levels of society.

For Koreans in America, there is a strong sense of wanting to be Americans and make the most of the freedom and opportunity for success that America has to offer...But there is another side to being a Korean in America—an enduring adherence to the long-standing traditions of a Korean class system characterized by an aristocratic sector that rolls over a working class population—and if you’re not Korean, you’d never know it’s there.”⁶⁵

There is a definite culture struggle going on within Korean society. Older Koreans wish for the younger to maintain the old ways, while the younger are torn between their heritage and their new-found home in America.

⁶³ Se-Woong Koo, *An Assault Upon Our Children*, 2.

⁶⁴ Prange, interview

⁶⁵ TaeHun Kim, *War With Pigeons* (Printed in the United States of America: aStoryTelling, Inc, 2010), 65.

In many cases, some Koreans don't feel terribly connected to their home country, but they never truly feel like Americans, either. They are somewhere in the middle, torn between the extremes of the inner circles of the many Korean communities around America and the forces of westernization and modernization that are inherent in living and working as American citizens. It's been this way for decades, and I'm not sure it's going to change any time soon.⁶⁶

While this cultural struggle plays out, Korean youth are still required to protect and serve their country. This is evident in the scores of Koreans who return to Korea to serve the mandatory two-year Korean military service.

In 1965 South Korea established a conscription law which stated, "South Korean men over the age of 18, including American citizens of Korean decent, are subject to compulsory military service."⁶⁷ Regardless of where a Korean male is in the world, he has to serve in the Korean military or renounce all citizenship. The earliest the males can serve starts at age 18, but they have until age 35 to complete their service. Most Koreans serve right away, and there is a reason. "If you wait until later, say, when you are 30, you start at the bottom. By that I mean you may have 18 year olds or 19 year olds holding higher rank than you and in Korea this causes a lot of confusion. Age is important, and so most Koreans enroll as soon as they are 18."⁶⁸ For WELS high schools, Korean military conscription exacerbates the issue of spiritual care and recruitment on to MLC and WLS.

Koreans are proud of their history and their culture. Korean culture is firmly rooted in many of the Korean students who attend WELS schools, and it is a culture that the WELS needs to understand. By understanding the history and culture of the Korean students that walk through the halls of WELS high schools, the WELS can better serve those students spiritually and can fashion new ways to improve outreach and recruitment on to MLC and WLS.

8. How to Improve

What can be done? How does the WELS improve upon its current outreach and service to Korean internationals? There are four areas where the WELS and its high schools could improve and need to improve in order to effectively minister to Korean students. Three of these areas are

⁶⁶Asian American Press, *For Koreans, the issue is assimilation, not immigration*. (By AAnews in books, 2010). <http://aapress.com/arts/books/for-koreans-the-issue-is-assimilation-not-immigration/> (Accessed October 23, 2015)

⁶⁷International Center, *Information on South Korean Military Service* (San Diego, CA), <http://icenter.ucsd.edu/ispo/current/forms-guides/guides/korean-military.html> (Accessed November 20, 2015)

⁶⁸Jay Lee, Skype interview with author, Mequon, WI, November 10, 2015.

not earth-shaking ideas, and they are areas where the WELS can quickly improve and will likely see results. The fourth area will require discussion within the WELS and ELS and will need to be explained clearly to Pastor Young Ha Kim if it were to be approved.

If the WELS is serious about treating Korean students as a mission field, it will put forth a mission effort in these four areas: 1) The WELS will convince the area Lutheran high schools and preparatory schools that a unified approach to recruit students will benefit all. 2) The WELS will establish a system that will provide spiritual care for students in high school, college, military, and beyond. 3) The WELS will create a working model for Korean students to recognize the possibility of being a pastor, teacher or staff minister. 4) The WELS will establish a stronger presence in South Korea creating more opportunities to reconnect with Korean students who return home.

8.1 A Unified Approach

Pastor Young Ha Kim desires that all WELS high schools enroll students from his program. Currently only Luther Preparatory School and Michigan Lutheran Seminary exclusively use Pastor Kim. The area Lutheran high schools use a mixture of agencies and Pastor Kim to enroll Korean students. The area Lutheran high schools will argue that Pastor Kim is not able to supply them with the number of Korean students they would like to enroll. More international students from a variety of sources fill schools, pay bills, and allow for the gospel to be taught to more souls. Finally, several area Lutheran high schools have good relationships with their recruitment agencies and have had success. So why change?

There are some in the WELS that say using Pastor Kim exclusively would allow for more souls to hear the gospel.

An area Lutheran high school can only partner in ministry with a willing partner. When a foreign mission field indicates its willingness to partner, especially in a case when it does not cause any extra effort for the area Lutheran high school, it allows for more souls to come into contact with the gospel, and gives a better chance for continued family support in the faith when the student graduates from the area Lutheran high school.⁶⁹

Pastor Kim is a willing partner in a foreign mission field who wants to connect with WELS high schools.

Koreans largely share ideas by word of mouth. The idea is that if a Korean student would apply to any WELS high school, that school would refer them back to Pastor Kim who would put

⁶⁹ Rev. Paul Prange, email correspondence with author, Mequon, WI, November 8, 2015.

the student through his eight-month instruction course. Once Korean parents hear that there are these great schools in America, that are safe, Christian, and the only way to get into them is if they send their children to Pastor Kim's school, the numbers will increase. Not only will the numbers increase, WELS high schools will begin to receive Korean students who have received some English tutoring and, more importantly, have had eight months of catechetical instruction.

MLS has agreed to this plan⁷⁰, but the area Lutheran high schools will need convincing. Governing boards will need to understand how this will benefit the church as a whole. It may hurt international numbers in the short-term, but in the long-term the schools will receive Korean students who have a Lutheran foundation and significantly better English skills than their predecessors.

Having a unified approach will allow for better follow-up and outreach in South Korea. Pastor Kim will know the students who return to Korea and will be able to care for them spiritually. The possible snow-ball effect could allow for Korean students, shepherded by Pastor Kim, to share their faith with family and friends. Using the resources God has given the WELS in Korea would greatly expand ministry efforts to Koreans and enhance the spiritual care for those students who attended WELS schools.

8.2 Handing off the Torch

When a Korean student attends a WELS high school they are under the spiritual care of that school. If the student lives with a host family, he or she attends the host family's home church. Does that mean the student falls under the spiritual care of that church's pastor? Herein lies the problem: the average WELS congregation does not know what to do with Korean students. They are not sure if they are baptized or confirmed, and often both the high school and pastor do not take the initiative to find out.⁷¹

When a Korean student is enrolled through an agency group, it is difficult to determine if he or she has been baptized or confirmed. Some students will write on application forms that they are "Christian" because they believe it will improve their chance of enrollment.⁷² Who finds out about their religious beliefs? Who does the teaching? Who does the baptizing? The local

⁷⁰ Having received no feedback from LPS, I cannot comment on their stance.

⁷¹ Prange, interview.

⁷² Humann, email correspondence.

pastor? “A few WELS pastors in the United States regularly instruct the international high school students when they live with host families in their congregations. They make the students members of their congregations, taking care of arranging for their spiritual needs after graduation.”⁷³ Some pastors are seeking guidance on how to establish partnerships with local Lutheran high schools, but other pastors do not know what to do.⁷⁴ The WELS high schools are just as unsure of their role in the spiritual care of the Korean student.

What happens when the Korean student graduates? Who goes on to connect them with the campus ministry at their college? Who registers a domestic student with the campus ministry? It is usually the congregation not the high school. If there is a Korean student with no home church in Korea and no church in the States, now whose job is it? These same students only know Christianity in one context—their high school—and then need help seeing it on the college level.⁷⁵

This lack of coordination does not nurture the spiritual health of Koreans while in high school, and it allows for many Koreans to fall through the cracks after graduation. Pastor Young Ha Kim, for his part, has tried to connect his students with good host families, a home church, and a campus pastor once in college.

In the summer of 2014, he attempted to contact every WELS pastor or layman taking care of a college campus ministry where one of his students would be attending in the fall. Only half of the pastors and laymen responded to his query. A teleconference was held giving pastors tips about dealing with Korean students of college age who are young in the faith. The pastors were told about the individual family and religious circumstances of each of the students.⁷⁶

Pastor Kim is attempting to create the best atmosphere for his Korean students’ spiritual health to thrive, but he has difficulty connecting with campus pastors and other volunteers.

Campus pastors are not able to dedicate their time solely to international students. These campus pastors serve a large number of college students who know English; can it then be expected that they will take the time to work with the one Korean student who (in their mind) does not know English? To complicate matters that same Korean student (if

⁷³ Global Mission Committee, *International Student Recruiters*, February 18, 2015.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Prange, interview.

⁷⁶ Global Ministry Committee, *College Outreach to International Students*, February 24, 2015.

male) will leave to serve in the military for two years, and when he returns to college the campus pastors are often not made aware. This is not meant to be a judgment of the campus pastors; they have to choose where their time can be used best. Where can improvements be made?

The WELS can improve by establishing clear roles for the high schools, churches and campus pastors. If roles are not laid out, the tendency is that nothing is done and the Korean students do not receive spiritual care. The simplest way to establish roles is to treat the Korean student like a domestic student. This student, either through his or her host family or through the school, is attached to a local congregation. The pastor of that church is then the spiritual shepherd of the student. If the student wishes to be baptized or confirmed, the pastor takes the lead. If the pastor baptizes the student, the student is also made a member of the church. If the student wishes to be confirmed, the pastor offers the classes.

Communication is key. The pastor would work closely with either the host family or school and make sure the spiritual needs of the student are met. Upon graduation, if the Korean student chooses to attend a U.S. college, the pastor would notify the nearest church or campus pastor and hand the torch to them, but he would still treat that student as a member and maintain contact.

The campus pastor would benefit from this early shepherding and would have a clear picture from the student's pastor about his new Korean ministry. Though he may still struggle with reaching across cultures, he would know that he is not alone in his efforts of sharing the gospel but would have another pastor who shares similar interest and concern for the student's spiritual welfare. If the campus pastor, church pastor, or anyone else would have questions, there are several people whom they could contact: Pastor Paul Prange, Julie Kim (the daughter of Pastor Young Ha Kim), Tae Sang Kim (pastor in Las Vegas, NV), or Joon Ho P Chung (pastor in Los Angeles, CA).

Though this method establishes the pastor and later campus pastor as the primary spiritual shepherd, the high schools can serve as secondary spiritual caretakers. Fox Valley Lutheran High School and Evergreen Lutheran High School have informal approaches to provide spiritual care for their Korean students and graduates. Beth Humann spoke fondly of what Evergreen does to care for its Korean students:

At Evergreen many of the Korean students stay in touch with our faculty or their former home stay families via social media, so we sometimes are able to follow up on what they are doing. Those students that lived with our local WELS/ELS families do stay in touch with them, so I often ask the families how “so and so” is doing, but this is certainly not a systematic approach. With the students’ permission, we will send their name to the local college campus pastor when they choose a college. We especially try to do that for those Korean students who have been baptized or confirmed WELS/ELS. Most of the other ones are not interested in religious follow up in the college years, which can also be said, unfortunately, for many of our domestic students. Years ago, when I was teaching ESL Bible History with some of the students, I would give their names (if they allowed it) to mission contacts we had in Korea so that they would follow up on the Korean students who went back to their home country after they left us.⁷⁷

Evergreen uses host families and social media to maintain some contact with past Korean students. If a person were to speak with Beth Humann about her students, the love she feels for each student would be hard to miss. Continuing to show Christian love and maintaining relationships is the most basic, but also the most important, step WELS high schools can take to continue improving their spiritual care of Korea students.

A person who has close ties to each Korean student sent by Pastor Young Ha Kim had this to say about the spiritual care of the students:

If teachers and staff at the schools can keep in mind that they are examples of how Christians live their daily lives it can greatly help in our mission. If teachers see that our students are not doing so well in their classes, taking a minute to pull them aside to check in with them to make sure they are understanding the material or just having someone at school take a small step to show they care would go a long way. Our kids are a long way from home, trying to study in another language, they are stressed, lonely and homesick at times. I think someone being a beacon of love at school would really make a difference in nurturing their spiritual lives.⁷⁸

Being a person the Korean student can trust and talk to will allow professors and teachers to build relationships. This in turn creates more avenues for communication, follow-up, and spiritual care.

The importance of relationship building and showing Christian love can be seen in this success story shared by Beth Humann:

We do have one Korean student heading to MLC after graduation this year. I believe his “success story,” his desire to continue on a path to ministry is three-fold. One: he came to one of our WELS elementary schools and studied there for a number of years. At that time, he lived with a strong WELS family, participated in worship and church functions, was baptized and confirmed. Two: he came to ELHS and his home stay family members were also very strong WELS members, again making sure he was in church regularly, attending youth group, going to communion, living their faith life with him. Three: he studied here at ELHS, and was fed with the word daily and was encouraged to think about ministry. Just as with our domestic students, “train(ing) up a child in the

⁷⁷ Humann, email correspondence.

⁷⁸ Anonymous, email correspondence by Author, Mequon, WI, November 28, 2015.

way he should go” is an incredibly strong influence on young lives. Christian doctrine, example and education are the way to change hearts and lives.⁷⁹

Establishing relationships early and maintaining them will allow for easier follow-up and Lord-willing, an international Korean student who holds firmly to the faith he or she received by daily hearing God’s Word.

8.3 A Working Model

The most significant problem the WELS had was that it was unable to show a working Korean church or school model to its Korean students. This was not because the Koreans had not established churches in the U.S., but because there was not a Korean church or school in fellowship with the WELS. This all changed a few years ago when Pastor Tae Sang Kim finished his PSI courses and brought his Korean church (Korean Fellowship Lutheran Church) into the WELS.

Having one working Korean church model here in the States allows Korean students to see how a Korean church works and how they could, if they desired, do the same type of ministry. Michigan Lutheran Seminary is planning to take its Korean students to Las Vegas in 2016 to show them this Korean church model.⁸⁰ Currently, three other WELS Korean pastors are attempting to imitate Pastor Kim’s church model. Lord-willing, their efforts will succeed, and the WELS will have more Korean models to share with Korean students.

Recent graduates⁸¹ from MLC have also paved the way for more Korean students to see how it is possible to be Korean and a teacher in the WELS. These graduates have put an end to worries concerning work visas. Now Korean students know they will not be wasting time by attending MLC, and that they will find places to serve within the WELS. MLC for its part has extensive details on its website⁸² showing international students how to apply for work visas, and has other up-to-date information about applying for work and aid in the States.

As God continues to bless the WELS with working Korean church models in the U.S., it is the prayer that these models will open the eyes of WELS Korean students leading them to see

⁷⁹ Humann, email correspondence.

⁸⁰ Prange, interview.

⁸¹ The Choi sisters both were able to teach in the U.S.

⁸² Martin Luther College, *Prospective Students* (New Ulm, MN), <https://mlc-wels.edu/international-student/prospective-students> (Accessed November 26, 2015).

they too could one day be a Korean pastor, teacher, or staff minister. As God blesses the WELS with more Korean pastors and teachers, it is the prayer that these new Koreans will take the lead and show the WELS how to care and reach out with the gospel to other Korean students who enroll in WELS schools.

8.4 A Stronger Presence in South Korea

Currently Pastor Young Ha Kim is the only Pastor in Korea connected to the WELS. Though his church is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Pastor Kim continues to work closely with the WELS. Besides Pastor Kim, the WELS does not have a significant presence in Korea. The WELS must discuss if establishing a presence in Korea is something that could benefit the ministry to Koreans. With a WELS mission in Korea, the WELS would be able to build and manage its own network, establishing ties in Korea, and making WELS a familiar entity in Korea. A mission would allow for easier follow-up of students who returned to Korea for further schooling or work. A WELS mission in Korea, might also provide spiritual care to students who join the military. Yet, it is unclear how Pastor Kim or the ELS would view a WELS presence in Korea. Would they see it as sheep stealing? Could the two missions remain far enough apart to avoid conflicts? If the sole purpose is to establish a stronger network of outreach and spiritual care, a WELS presence should not create problems.

This WELS presence may not be necessary if the area Lutheran high schools agree to work only with Pastor Kim; he would be able to maintain the necessary contact with returning students. Until the area Lutheran high schools are convinced, the WELS may need to find other means to reach out to those students or find another avenue of follow-up using Pastor Kim and his church.

9. Closing Remarks

While the WELS continues to discuss and examine the best way to reach out to its Korean students, Korean parents are attempting new methods to give their children the best American education. In the February 2016 *Forward in Christ* magazine an article was published describing a young Korean boy who moved to the U.S. and lived with the family of Rev. Paul Prange while attending 8th grade at St. John's Lutheran Elementary School in Burlington, Wisconsin. More than 12 percent of Korean parents want their children to attend elementary

schools in the U.S. and that number is growing.⁸³ The WELS might benefit from establishing elementary schools that are certified by the federal government to enroll international students.

Another method being explored by Korean parents is the establishment of Western schools in South Korea. Currently the South Korean government is financing a 940-acre “Global Education City” in Seogwipo, South Korea. In this self-contained community, there will be twelve prestigious Westerns school branches, and everyone living in the community will speak English. It is the government’s hope that this education city will catch the eyes of parents who wish to keep their children closer to home, and thus stem the diaspora of Korean youth from the country. China has begun to do something similar, and the WELS already has a strong foothold; it would be wise to monitor the situation in Korea and if possible gain a foothold there.

10. Conclusion

“Open your eyes and look at the fields,” Jesus told his disciples, “they are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35). God has blessed the WELS with a tremendous opportunity to reach out with God’s Word to hundreds of international students each year. These students come by their own free-will to attend WELS high schools, and in so doing they receive an excellent Christian education. These Korean students are daily fed with Scripture and witness God’s love as it is exemplified by host families, teachers, and even other students. However, the spiritual care of these students does lack in several areas.

As the WELS presses forward in its ministries, it will need to continue treating Korean students as a mission field. The synod must encourage agreement among all the Lutheran high schools to enroll only Pastor Young Ha Kim’s students or refer any students that seek enrollment back to him for English and religious courses. The synod will need each Lutheran high school to coordinate with local congregations and pastors to ensure that each understands their role in the spiritual care of the Korean students. This includes the passing of the torch to a campus pastor or another pastor when the Korean student enrolls in college. By God’s grace the WELS has already established a successful Korean model, graduated three new Korean pastors through PSI courses, and has had several Koreans graduate from MLC as teachers. With these new Korean leaders, the WELS would wisely listen to them as they contemplate their next steps in Korean mission work. Finally, if agreement cannot be reached among the Lutheran high schools, the

⁸³ Rev. Paul Prange, email correspondence.

WELS will need to discuss the possibility of establishing its own mission or church in South Korea to reach out to those Koreans who return to live and work in their homeland.

The Korean problem is not really a problem; it is an opportunity. It is an opportunity given by God to the WELS, its leaders and members, to reach out to Koreans both here in the U.S. and abroad in South Korea. It is a blessing from God to see how His Word does not return to him empty, but accomplishes what he desires. It is a lesson from God to learn patience, to wait as more Koreans slowly begin to consider the idea of full-time ministry. The Lord is providing His Church with thoroughly trained Korean Lutherans who love their Savior, know the truths of Scripture, and are able to serve and work in both American and Korean cultures. Let us pray that God continues to bless and watch over these new fruits of the Gospel.

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