

## Debts of Gratitude

Between 1999 and 2003, through **WELS Kingdom Workers** grants jointly prioritized by WELS<sup>1</sup> Home and World Missions, Beth Thompson gave 50 seminars on English Conversation Outreach to WELS congregations in the U.S., Antigua, and Canada.

In 2002, **Rev. Dan Koelpin**, Administrator for WELS World Missions (retired 2013), read Beth's Master's thesis<sup>1</sup> and asked, "How would you use this for the Lord?" She presented her plan for a program that would implement the proposed recommendations from her research and serve as a model for congregations that wanted to reach out to their changing neighborhoods.

In 2003, **Rev. Harold Hagedorn**, Administrator for WELS Home Missions (retired 2010), joined Rev. Koelpin in sponsoring Beth's application for a Thrivent Churchwide Foundation Grant, which was awarded in March 2003.

In Fall 2003, **Pastor Robert Jensen** asked Beth to consider **Gethsemane Lutheran Church**, which had already started an ESL Outreach program in January 2003, as a home for the WELS Model ESL Program. Thanks to Pastor Jensen's leadership, the first class took place on February 2, 2004. By Fall 2005, Gethsemane had become "the church that helps immigrants learn English" as the waiting list swelled to over 100.

In 2005, Gethsemane proved its long-term commitment to its neighborhood through renovating its fellowship hall into a comfortable, multi-purpose classroom. The congregation continues to provide all facilities, utilities, phones, and Internet service. Members also contribute towards the compensation of the Spanish-speaking Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary student who assists the program director and provides Spanish-language devotions after class in the sanctuary.

Since 2003, Pastor Jensen and congregational volunteers have personally demonstrated Christ's unconditional love through their hours of service as English tutors and through hosting the bi-annual Visitors Evening. Special thanks go to Gethsemane members **Phil Roever**, who served as ELPW's first board president, and **Ron Manchester**, who devoted many hours to bookkeeping for the WELS Model Program and ELPW.

Thanks to Revs Koelpin's and Hagedorn's advocacy, the WELS Model ESL Program was awarded Thrivent funds for six years. This critical anchor funding made it possible to successfully apply to two other foundations during those years.

**The Siebert Lutheran Foundation** awarded grants for four years (2004 to 2008) and a \$60,000 anchor grant in 2012 to provide financial stability while ELPW is building administrative infrastructure and implementing its fund development plan.

**The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation** began supporting the WELS Model Program in 2004 and has provided grants every year since, including \$50,000 in 2010 when the WELS Model Program was making its transition from fiscal sponsorship to independent nonprofit.

The **WELS Committee on Relief** provided critical funding for the Model Program's final two years.

Encouraged by **Pastor Peter Panitzke**, many volunteers from **St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Muskego** joined him and served as tutors at Gethsemane. The congregation also gave significant financial support for four years.

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<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

After seven years of fiscal sponsorship, a grant from the **Nonprofit Management Fund** provided expertise to help ELPW acquire tax-exempt status in March 2011. In February 2012, thanks to a second NMF grant, ELPW engaged a consultant to work with a committee of community members and ELPW stakeholders to create a fund development plan.

In 2010, **Dorothy Schlueter, Ken Breitenfeldt, Phil Roever, and Julie Nommensen** bravely and selflessly undertook the formidable responsibility of forming a board to govern the fledgling nonprofit. **Luz Valdez Kuehn** (2011) and **Nicole Rakers** (2012) also served on the board.

The fiscal sponsorship provided by the **Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod** enabled the program to establish itself in Milwaukee as a model for community outreach. ELPW owes a debt of gratitude to the many people in WELS' administrative offices who cheerfully handled all the financial issues from 2003 to 2010.

Many other people gave generously of their time, talents, and funds over the years, *and* they prayed that the Lord would make it possible for this initiative to continue.

Those prayers were answered through the above people and organizations. The WELS Model ESL Program, born in 2003, was able to provide uninterrupted programming through the years of transition as it became a new nonprofit institution – English Language Partners of Wisconsin.

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## ABSTRACT

BARRIERS TO SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION  
IN THE ESL LITERACY CLASSROOM:  
THE EXPERIENCES OF AN UNSCHOOLED, NON-LITERATE ADULT  
THOMPSON, BETH CORDES, M.A., *Minnesota State University-Mankato*, 2002, 178pp.

This case study proposed to discover why a Latina, who is unschooled and non-literate, has been unable to participate in adult ESL literacy classes. The data, which were collected from a series of ethnographic interviews, reveal that she employs a number of strategies to manage her life in the U.S. dominant society without first language or English language literacy skills. However, she is excluded from two major domains -- the driver's license bureau and the adult ESL literacy class -- because of the institutionalized literacy requirements in those domains. Without schooled literacy in her first or second languages, she cannot pass the written driver's license test. She cannot participate in multilevel, print-oriented adult ESL literacy classes because she does not have first language literacy skills. An ESL program that would best fit the needs of this student is proposed.

In 2002, this thesis was unanimously nominated by Minnesota State University--Mankato to represent the university for the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools (MAGS) Distinguished Thesis Award.