

SANTIAGO, CHILE MISSION

\$29,400



Pastors of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile (IELCHI) are joined by Rev. Dr. Jorge Groh, regional director of Latin America and the Caribbean for LCMS World Mission, during the installation of Rev. Omar Kinas.



Rev. Omar Kinas with his wife and daughter.



A poster advertising the Seventh Annual Children's Gathering at the Santiago Mission in October 2009.

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About 85 percent of the Republic of Chile's 15.8 million people are concentrated in the central provinces of the country, which stretches some 2,700 miles (about the distance from San Francisco to New York) along the southwestern coast of South America. Wedged between the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, Chile's climate range is extreme, from the hot Atacama Desert in the north to the Antarctic tundra of the south. Its width never exceeds 150 miles, but its lands also include Easter Island in the Central Pacific Ocean.

Forty percent of the people live near the capital city, Santiago. A fairly homogeneous people, 72 percent are mestizos (mixed Indian and Spanish ancestry) and 20 percent are of European descent. Nine people groups of Amerindians and other indigenous people equal eight percent of the population. Spanish is the official language of Chile, but 10 languages in total are spoken.

A former Spanish colony, Chile gained its independence in 1810, and since that time has been self-ruled. In 1970, a socialist government was elected, followed by a bloody military coup in 1973. Under the regime of Pinochet, political conformity and economic change spread over the land, as well as a wave of human rights abuses. An electoral referendum and electoral defeats of 1988-1989 made way for a democratic government. Industry, commerce, agriculture, and mining (particularly copper) provide a livelihood for 60 percent of the labor force. In recent years, Chileans generally have prospered through expanding free-market, export trade. Still, 20 percent are living in poverty and unemployment stands at eight and one-half percent.

The state Catholic Church was disestablished in 1925. While nearly 90 percent of Chileans claim to be Christian, occult practices—much in evidence in Chilean culture—have left their imprint on religious life. Some indigenous people are animists. Among Christians, there are many divisions resulting in rivalry and the desire to gain power. Today there is religious freedom, but not all are treated equally. As many as 1,200 denominations are competing for membership growth. Pentecostal groups have particularly grown in number and influence. Lutheran ministry in Chile is an extension of the Lutheran Church in Argentina.

The Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile (formerly known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Republic of Chile) is a sister/partner church of the LCMS. It has a presence in Viña del Mar, Vaparaíso, and Santiago. The IELCHI works closely with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina, which operates Concordia Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where many of the pastors who serve in Chile are trained.

The IELCHI is reaching out to the extensive urban capital of Santiago. The city is the largest in Chile, one of Latin America's most modern metropolitan areas, and a major cultural and financial center. The city, therefore, is a vital location for the development of a church plant—a center in which all of Chilean society interacts. The church in Chile views this as a critical area for the growth of their church body.

A missionary has been placed in Santiago to begin church planting and outreach in the urban center. Pastor Omar Kinas was born in the city of Leandro N. Alem, Misiones province, in northeastern Argentina, on Nov. 24, 1984. He was baptized on July 27, 1985 by Pastor Marcos Berndt St. Peter Lutheran Church.

Omar is the oldest of five children—he has two sisters and two brothers. He completed his studies in Alem and helped out at the church since he was young. He was confirmed on April 4, 1999 by Pastor Carlos Nagel.

He entered the university in Misiones to studying engineering, but then discovered the other vocation to which God was calling him since his Baptism. He abandoned his studies in Misiones and entered Concordia Seminary in Buenos Aires in 2003.

He married Eliana M. Müller in 2007 during his vicarage at the congregation in Puerto Esperanza, Misiones. God blessed their marriage with the birth of Sofia in 2009.

The subject of his graduation thesis at Concordia Seminary was “Law and Gospel in Interfamilial Sexual Abuse.”

As a pastoral candidate, he received a call from the IELCHI as a second missionary in Santiago (Puente Alto). He accepted the call and was ordained and installed on Sunday, March 14, 2010.

Pastor Omar is joining a mission with great challenges and needs. The Santiago Mission began in 2007 in the community of La Flordia. In 2009, a second location was established in Puente Alto.

Puente Alto is one of the most populous communities of Chile, which was without a Lutheran presence until the IELCHI began work there. As a missionary, Pastor Omar will begin a hospital chaplaincy ministry in one of the biggest hospitals in Santiago. He will also strengthen and encourage the ministry that has already begun there.

In addition, Pastor Omar is joining the teaching staff of the Biblical Lutheran Institute, which forms leaders for service in the Church. Classes begin in May, with “Christian Doctrine I.”

The challenges for the IELCHI have only increased since the arrival of Pastor Omar—the Feb. 27th earthquake and the resulting tsunami have presented new opportunities in the same area and also in southern Chile.

Funding will be used for:

Funding for this project will help to cover the missionary's expenses and any materials he may require to carry out evangelism in Santiago.

Prayer needs:

- Pray that God will help Omar and his family adapt to life in Chile. His ministry will bring the saving Gospel of Christ to many people.
- Praise God for the resources that have been provided in response to the February 27th 8.8 magnitude earthquake and tsunami. Pray for Lutheran Christians in Chile, as they reach out in Christ's love to those who are suffering and looking for answers after these events.
- Pray for the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile (formerly known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Republic of Chile) and its leadership, outreach, and education programs. Pray for boldness in the Church to share the Gospel with those unreached, but also with the many nominal and complacent Christians in Chile.