

Handling the Word of Truth

Supporting Theological Education in Togo and West Africa

Missionary Rev. Jacob W. Gaugert

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G.I.A.L.

GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF
APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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Numerous supporters from parts of Iowa and Nebraska share a prayer and blessing over me during a presentation on March 19th at Mission Central in Mapleton, Iowa

Update

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up,
just as you are doing. - 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Dear friends in Christ,

The Church recently celebrated Trinity Sunday, when many congregations throughout Christendom recite the Athanasian Creed that clearly teaches the unity in the Trinity – the perfect fellowship that the three Persons share in saving sinful humankind. As baptized believers in the faith we are brought into this communion with the Holy Trinity and all those who believe and confess the same faith in our Savior, Jesus. The Lord has placed us into our communities of families, congregations, and our local areas to bless us with the gifts He gives to us through others and also for us to serve as a blessing in helping others in their daily needs and to share the hope that we have in Jesus with them.

Over the past few months I have been blessed to do quite a bit of traveling with visiting friends and family, studying, and continuing to make visits to generous supporters. I usually have a theological focus to my newsletters, but in this issue I would just like to give you an overview of

Did you know that there are other LCMS partner churches that are involved in mission work in Africa? The SELK, the LCMS partner church in Germany, has been involved in evangelization and theological training in the southern part of the continent for decades. Partnerships exist between confessional Lutheran church bodies in South Africa and the LCMS partner church in Brazil that have helped outreach efforts in Portuguese-speaking countries such as Mozambique.



My sister, Billi Jean, with my niece/goddaughter, Wilma Jean.

What I have been up to personally over the past few months.

Christmas in Wisconsin

The last time I had been in the states was in August of 2014. Since that time my sister gave birth to her first child, Wilma Jean. I was unable to be at her baptism last year and so my uncle stood in for me as the sponsor. I saw her for the first time in mid-December when I had arrived to spend a few weeks with the family. It was a real blessing to be able to see both sides of my family over the holidays and to enjoy traditional American meals. While in the area I also took some time to visit with a few friends from seminary and to preach and visit several congregations in southern and northern Wisconsin.

GIAL

The main reason I had come back to the states for a while was for some continuing education in culture and linguistics at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics (GIAL) in Dallas, Texas. It was in light of the good experiences of other members of our LCMS mission team who studied there that that I chose to begin their program. I drove from Wisconsin to Dallas so I was able to make a couple of stops on the way. In Chicago I was able to visit another one of my godchildren, Sergio Adam. I also took a short detour in the St. Louis area to meet my new LCMS International Mission Area Director of West and Central Africa, Rev. Gary Schulte, and his family. Rev. Schulte is a veteran missionary who served in the Togo field for several years. Afterwards he attended Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and served parishes in Missouri. His wife, Stephanie, is a registered nurse and will also





Rev. Ryan McDermott, missionary to Ghana, and I after church service at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in DeSoto, Texas

be returning to West Africa to organize mercy medical trips and clinics through the LCMS. Both Rev. Schulte and his wife are still in their fundraising stage but they should be moving to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in July or August this year.

While at GIAL I met up with some other new LCMS missionaries, Rev. Ryan McDermott, his wife Emily, and their children. Rev. McDermott and I studied at the Ft. Wayne seminary together a few years ago. He has accepted a call to Ghana to work with

the training of evangelists and pastors to serve in the deaf community. We took an anthropology class together and enjoyed many visits and meals in their apartment. We would often attend services at the local LCMS congregation, Cross of Christ Lutheran, in DeSoto, TX. Pastor John DeYoung and his parish were very welcoming toward us during our time in the area.

At GIAL there are several different Bible translation organizations that have offices or send students to study at their campus. Wycliffe Bible translators is one such organization. The Wycliffe branch that is located on campus has a chaplain who is an LCMS pastor. Rev. Marshall Schultz and his wife Vanice had been involved in various translation projects in Africa in the past. In his current position Rev. Schultz assists with worship, offers devotions, Bible studies and pastoral care to the missionaries and staff on the campus. I was able to have several visits with these two wonderful people and they were even kind enough to spend a day with me visiting the stock show where I was able to see all of the different varieties of chickens that people raise. When I was much younger I used to show chickens with FFA and 4-H and so this day trip brought back a lot of fond memories.

CAC Meeting

In early March the Board of Directors (CAC) for the CLET seminary met in Dapaong for their annual meeting. Although I was taking courses in Dallas at this time I went back to Togo for a week to help with transportation and translation for this meeting. Each of the partner churches in francophone Africa who send students to the CLET were represented. Two churches, one from the eastern part of the DRC/Kinsahsa, and another from Burundi, were participating for the first time. They were very excited to be able to have this connection with other confessional Lutheran bodies and the CLET. Also in attendance were Rev. Fred Reinhardt, LCMS-OIM Area Facilitator for francophone Africa and Rev. Dr. Timothy Quill, who is responsible for theological education through LCMS-OIM. A budget for the next year was approved that will permit our student body to number about 23 this next fall. May God grant that they are all able to make it with their families and get the most out of their time at CLET.



Rev. Albert KOUTIA (purple clerical shirt) explains an important matter during the CAC session before the African leaders and members of the LCMS-OIM francophone Africa team.

One blessing that came from this meeting is that the partner churches agreed to re-introduce a small tuition charge for each student when they attend CLET. Often when I speak with donors in the states they will ask me what the Africans themselves give to support their seminary. Unfortunately, I was always obligated to answer “nothing.” This does not encourage people to support the seminary. People in the states ask, “If we are willing to give to support this seminary and the African partners will benefit from the educated pastors, then shouldn't they also contribute at least something if they truly care about this?” Yes, they should. And this matter was addressed and a decision was made at this meeting. From now on each CLET student or his sending church body will be obligated to send an amount annually that is roughly a month's wage in West Africa in order to attend the CLET. This is not a small amount, but it is also not beyond the means of the African partners if they make it a priority. Stewardship of God's gifts is not a strong point among our African partners and this decision is a good step in the right direction to encourage the church leaders and the laity to make financial sacrifice for the sake of the gospel – rather than just waiting with open arms to receive something from overseas. Such an attitude of dependence on foreign aid is unhealthy and it cripples the work of the church here on the continent. Our African brothers and sisters may be financially poor, but they do not have “nothing.” They also have been blessed with gifts for daily life and they should take joy in giving back to God and the church a small portion of what He has already given to them.

Mission Central and Supporter Visits

On March 19th I was able to stop in at Mission Central to visit with Gary Thies and several of the dedicated donors and volunteers who support so many of our LCMS missionaries and their work. I was able to present to a wonderful and interested group of believers on the joys and challenges of working in the mission field. They asked very good questions about our CLET seminary and were interested to

learn about the spiritual warfare Christians face in a context where there is so much idol and ancestor worship. I drove up into Wisconsin afterwards and had the opportunity to attend and present on my work in several congregations in the Milwaukee area.

Travel in Europe and Africa

In April I took some time to visit some friends and donors in Germany and South Africa. In the past, some members of the LCMS sister church in Germany (SELK) have been generous to provide donations of books in French for our CLET library. I was able to present an update to these donors and also to have an initial meeting with a book publisher to discuss the possibility of printing more resources and textbooks for our students at CLET. Shipping to Africa is cheaper from Europe than from the U.S. and there are no quality printing facilities in West Africa. So, publishing in Europe could be better stewardship of our resources than bringing books from the states.

I also took a bit of time to visit some friends who are currently studying at the Lutherische Theologische Hochschule in Oberursel, Germany. This is the seminary of sorts for our German partner church. I studied there in 2006-2007 and made many lasting friendships.

After Germany I went to South Africa where I visited with some more friends whom I met while studying in Germany, Rev. Tobias and Walda Ahlers and family. Their son, Daniel, is one of my godchildren. Tobias serves as a Lutheran pastor in our LCMS partner church in South Africa, the FELSISA. I preached and presented at both his congregation and St. Paul's congregation, near the University of Pretoria. One can easily forget how diverse and vast the African continent is. The South



Preaching on Mission Sunday at St. Paul's Congregation in Pretoria, South Africa.



Godson, Daniel, and I in South Africa.

Africans really appreciated hearing about our LCMS-OIM mission work in francophone West and Central Africa with our CLET seminary.

The LCMS has doubled the amount of missionaries that we have in the field over the past few years – and this includes Africa. In the last week of April all of the LCMS missionaries in Africa and their families met in Kenya to have an all-Africa retreat. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet other members of our team face-to-face for the first time. The Lord has certainly blessed our Africa team with capable and caring workers. We were also joined by representatives from the LCMS-Office of International Mission from St. Louis who discussed the Lutheran character of our mission work, the importance of mercy in times of disaster, and entertained our various questions on our work

Pray:

Thanksgiving for the safe travels in the States, Europe, and Africa.

Thanksgiving for student applications to have a large student body at CLET this fall.

Thanksgiving for friendships and dedicated coworkers in the Church.

That the member churches of the francophone Lutheran Union would continue to prepare more students to study at CLET in upcoming years.

That the Lord would bless and guide the African partners to be sacrificial givers to support the work of the gospel among them.

That the Lord would use the Luther Academy conference in DRC/Kinsahsa to strengthen this partner church.

For continued, generous support of this and other ministries of our Synod with gifts and prayer.



All-Africa LCMS-OIM retreat group picture with visitors from the LCMS International Center and St. Andrew Lutheran Church

and our policies in the mission. The week was filled with times for devotion, Bible studies, worship, and celebration of the Lord's Supper. A very generous team of gifted church members came from St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, under the leadership of their pastor, Rev. John Dehne, to lead the worship services and offer pastoral care. We sincerely thank them for their time and sacrifice to support us that week.

Future Plans

I am now back in Dapaong, Togo and making preparations for the upcoming months. Over the next few months I will be traveling to Central Africa to present conferences on Lutheran theology in the DRC/Kinshasa and Congo-Brazzaville. In addition to the conferences I will be visiting possible satellite sites for the first level training of our theological education program at CLET. The possibility of our African partners taking the initial steps to plant more theological institutions in their local contexts is a good development. We pray that this will open more doors to encourage more candidates for the Pastoral Ministry and other auxiliary offices to pursue formation in biblical and confessional Lutheran theology.

I was blessed to cross paths with many friends and family over these past two months – too many to mention in one newsletter. With a tight schedule it is always difficult to visit everyone in one general area. I thank those of you who were welcoming and hospitable to me in my hectic travels. For those I was unable to visit, I pray that we can meet up the next time I am stateside for an extended period of time.

I thank you all sincerely for your prayers and support of our Lord's mission in Africa.

In Christ,

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The rains have returned to Dapaong after a long dry season. This means it is time to plant. Pictured here is the vegetable garden at my house. You can see the sweet potato mounds toward the back of the garden.



MEET



Rev. Gary and Stephanie Schulte

Rev. Shulte is the new Area Director for West and Central Africa with LCMS- Office of International Mission. He served as an evangelist missionary in Togo and the Ivory Coast from 1987-2000. After studying at Concordia Seminary in St.Louis from 2003-2005, he served as the pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Hillsboro, Missouri. Stephanie serves as a registered nurse and will be involved with planning Mercy Medical Missions to areas in West Africa. They were married in 1986 and have been blessed with four children. We of the LCMS missionary team in West and Central Africa look forward to Gary and Stephanie joining us with their years of experience in the field with local languages, pastoral responsibilities, and mercy care. We pray that their support and schedule allow them to move to Ouagadougou, in Burkina Faso as early as this July. May God grant it!



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