

Handling the Word of Truth

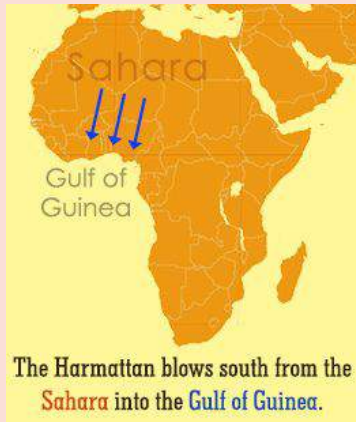
Supporting Theological Education in Togo and West Africa

Missionary Rev. Jacob W. Gaugert

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Harmattan



The Harmattan blows south from the Sahara into the Gulf of Guinea.

The Harmattan is the dry season that begins in late November and continues until the middle of March.

Humidity drops to less than 15%.

There are very fine particles of dust brought in by the winds from the Sahara that can become chokingly thick.

Many people suffer from respiratory ailments because of the dust, which can also carry meningitis.

Dust to Dust

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

- Genesis 3:19

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are familiar with the scripture quote from the curse of Adam in Genesis. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust" (Gen. 3:19) as we hear quoted at grave-sides and on Ash Wednesday. Dust is all around us and in us. Our bodies are comprised of matter that has passed through different cycles of plants and the animals that we eat to be added to our flesh. All that we consume comes from the dust. The dust is a constant teaching and reminder of our mortality that is in the world since our forefathers Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Life is not easy. As the Psalmist says: "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength, eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; soon they disappear, and we fly away." (Psalm 90:10)

For most modern day Europeans and middle class Americans, the "toil and trouble" of life certainly touches us in the forms of loss and stress in family and work and the busyness of our rat-race lives. But very seldom do we really know what it is to suffer the challenge of not knowing where our next meal will come from. Our fridges and cupboards are full. A hot meal is only a microwave, a drive-thru, or a credit card swipe away. Worries of the toil to find "daily bread" to eat are the concerns of the poor in the inner cities or the stories of our elders who lived through the Dust Bowl or the Great Depression.

How different our comfort and security in life is from the daily life in many parts of Africa. Most of the population lives on sustenance farming. They live off of the land they have inherited and they subsist mainly on the



A view from the bluffs overlooking the landscape toward Dapaong in Togo. Note the dry ground and the dust on the horizon.

Pray:

Thanksgiving for safe and joyous celebrations over Christmas and the New Year at CLET.

Thanksgiving for the care and maturity demonstrated by the Togo Lutheran Church to help their brethren in Burkina Faso in their time of need.

That the Lord would continue to instill a heart for Christ-like service and self-sacrifice in our CLET students and the leaders of the Lutheran churches in francophone Africa.

That the Lord would bless the regions of West Africa with generous rains and a large harvest this upcoming growing season.

To grant continued joy and peace to all followers of Christ in their various vocations.



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**MEET****Demteni Doti Lamboni**

Doti is in his second year of studies at CLET. He asks difficult but important questions in class and has a very pastoral heart. He comes from the village of Mogou, where he is a member of the southernmost parish of the Lutheran Church of Togo. Doti lives in Dapaong with his wife Marie. Please pray that the Lord would bless Doti and his family as he studies at CLET.

corn meal, wheat, or rice that they harvest. If the harvest is bad the family eats poorly. This is the case for many of our brothers and sisters in Christ in our partner churches in West Africa - especially this year. This year the rains were sporadic and there were diseases that weakened the crops. As a result, the harvests were only about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ what they normally would be. Our LCMS daughter church in Burkina Faso has been hit by an especially poor harvest. The harvest was a couple of months ago and, in some cases, the food has run out. Now there is the heat, the dry, and the dust of the Harmattan season. The Harmattan is the time of year when the winds of the Sahara bring in dust to other parts of West Africa. Nothing grows at this time and many people fall sick because of the dust. It is a time when each person can see, feel, and taste (because the dust gets in your mouth) the curse of life in a fallen world.



Rev. Gary Schulte (left) LCMS-OIM Area Director for West and Central Africa, delivers the collected grain donations from the Togo church to Rev. Joseph Napon (second from right) and other leaders from the Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso area churches.

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Or

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But the dust is also a lesson in the comfort we have in our Lord and His promises. The prophet Job exclaims in hope "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God."(Job 19:25-26) Even Job in his destitution and suffering hung on to the promises of eternal life in the Lord. In all suffering today, in body or soul or mind, when the dust clouds and corrupts the blessing of life and creation, we know and believe that we are not abandoned and that the Lord remains faithful. We shall not die but live. This promise in faith in Christ allows us to live boldly and to confront the sufferings thrown at us and at others with joy and confidence. This is what has been demonstrated by Lutheran brothers and sisters in Togo towards their brethren in Burkina Faso. Even though Togo was also hit by a poor crop this year, an appeal was made to ask every Lutheran family and parish in the sector of the city of Nano (not far from Dapaong) to bring a bowl or two of corn or rice to share and send to Burkina Faso. And God's people responded. Not more than a week after the appeal was published, almost 2 large sacks of corn and rice were collected at a regional Lutheran church meeting. In addition, the parish at the CLET seminary campus contributed about 22,000 francs (about \$42). The Togolese Lutherans who gave, they themselves did not have much, and the donation will help for only a few months. Yet, the important part of this action is the good faith and the gesture of hope and solidarity toward others in their suffering. Having hope in the promises of God, for life eternal and the life here and now, believers gave back to the Lord what He had already provided to them.

In Christ,

Jacob W. Gaugert



AT HOME



The Lord graciously provides us with all that we need to support our body and life. (Small Catechism: Creed, 1st Article) In Western countries we have been especially blessed with material goods that we can share with those in need. Perhaps in your kitchen you could place a jar where you collect donations for mercy charities and projects. Perhaps your parish hosts meals in your community or other sister parishes may have programs in more impoverished areas.

*You shall not steal or take away what others worked for night and day, but open wide a generous hand and help the poor in the land.
 Have mercy, Lord. LSB #581:8*



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