

Handling the Word of Truth

Supporting Theological Education in Togo and West Africa

Missionary Rev. Jacob W. Gaugert

Jan.-Oct. 2019

Vol.7 Issue 1

Travel

July 2018-Jan 2019
- Home service visit to the US

Feb. 2019
- Teaching intensive at ELCG seminary

Feb.-Mar. 2019
- Annual CAU meeting in Dapaong
- Teaching at CLET in Dapaong

April 2019
- Annual Missionary retreat in Lomé, Togo.
- Visit to Liberia to meet with church leaders.

May-June 2019
- Teaching regular classes at CLET

July 2019
- Visit to Congo-Kinshasa and MMT in Congo-Brazzaville
- Return to US for home service visits and continuing education

Aug.-Sept. 2019
- Teaching regular courses at CLET

Sept. 2019
- Visit to Burundi for Small Catechism seminar and meeting with church leaders

Oct.-Nov. 2019
- Teaching regular classes at CLET

Nov.-Dec. 2019
- Possible trips to Sierra Leone and Congo-Brazzaville to teach intensives and meet with church leaders

Update

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. - Colossians 2:6-7

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from Togo!

After almost eight months of travel in July 2018-January 2019, and almost a year back in Africa, I am finally able to catch a bit of a breath to give you an update in newsletter form. It was very nice to meet so many of you in your communities and parishes while I was stateside. I especially appreciate the hospitality I received while staying in your homes and the opportunity to share with you what the Lord is doing in Francophone Africa.

Teaching at ELCG Seminary

On January 27 I left American soil, flying from Chicago through Brussels, and landing in Accra, Ghana. I was finally able to accept a long-standing invitation from fellow LCMS-OIM missionary Rev. Steven Schumacher, Academic Dean of the Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana (ELCG). You may remember that back in 2014 I had lived with the Schumachers and had initially begun teaching in Africa during the 2014 fall semester at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana seminary. I was happy to learn that a good number of the students that I had taught several years ago were currently on their vicarages. It was very nice to spend two



Using the artwork of Lucas Cranach to teach on Law and Gospel at the ELCG seminary.

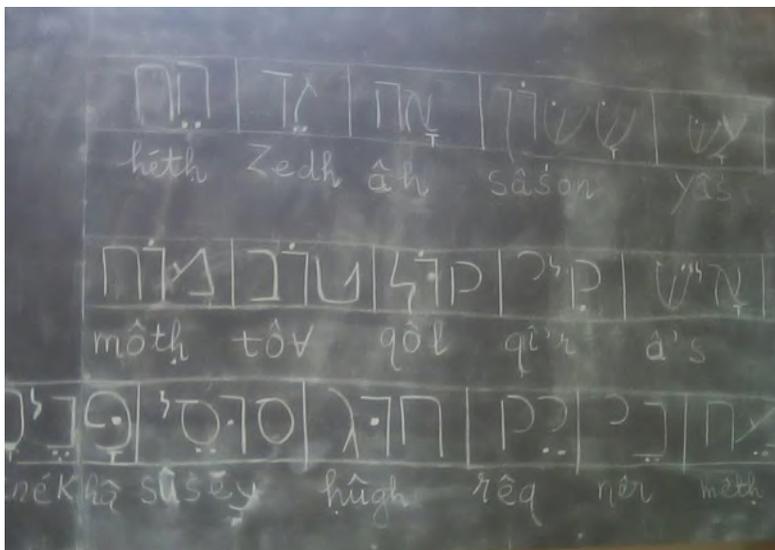
weeks with the Schumachers and the ELCG Seminary community. I had been asked to present on Law and Gospel. We used a textbook called *Handling the Word of Truth* written by Dr. John Pless and the book *The Hammer of God* by the late Bishop Bo Giertz. Using these two resources was helpful to present the theory of dividing Law and Gospel but also having a narrative of Law/Gospel pastoral care in novella form from the stories in the *Hammer of God*.

Annual CAU/Board of Directors Meeting and Scholarships

As is the case each year, this February we had our annual Board of Directors meeting for our CLET seminary in Dapaong. Among the various discussions on finances and local support of the church, we also were able to discuss a first step in a long-term plan to raise the level of education at CLET and among the Francophone pastors. Part of this improvement includes providing scholarships so that the Africans can pursue further formation and degrees to sharpen their own skills and knowledge, but also to gain accredited degrees that will be necessary for faculty members in order to seek accreditation for their theological academic programs. We made a concrete move toward opening more doors toward education programs by offering a scholarship program through LCMS-OIM. These scholarships provide financial support to pastors and students who have demonstrated academic aptitude and a pastoral heart in their ministries and involvement in the church. These scholarships will initially offer support for programs in French-speaking Africa in the area of theology, history, administration and language. We hope that in the future we will prepare more students and their church bodies to benefit responsibly from education programs in Europe and the United States. However, at the current time, the language barrier and the need for improvement in the areas of transparency and administration in many of our Francophone partner church bodies, coupled with the great expense of these foreign programs, constrains us to be rather patient with the churches and demanding of potential candidates. We are also pressing the local churches to understand and prepare for their stewardship responsibilities to support these students, pastors, and their families during and after such formation. So far, we have three candidates pursuing B.A. level studies in the Ivory Coast and DRC/Kinshasa. Next year we hope to expand these scholarships in other countries and for language programs – especially German for translation projects.



Rev. Guehi Guehi MARC (left) president of the Lutheran Church in the Ivory Coast (ELA-Sci) and the Francophone Union with Rev. Julien KOTEMBEDOUNO (right) president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Guinea-Conakry. Recipients of the 2019-2020 scholarship to study in the Ivory Coast.



An example of transliteration exercises done by the Hebrew class at CLET Dapaong.

Teaching at CLET – Dapaong

It is good to be back in Dapaong to see my students and colleagues as we work together to train faithful pastors for the Lord's Church. I returned with feet running, preaching and celebrating Holy Communion the first Sunday I was back in Dapaong. In the final trimester of the academic year I taught classes on the Letter to the Hebrews, the History of the Reformation, and Lutheran Identity. So far in this new academic year, I have taken on the responsibility of teaching the History of the Early Church and Hebrew. It is possible that I may be teaching intensive courses in Sierra Leone and Congo-Brazzaville in November and December.

Baptisms and Confirmations

I was also asked to teach a Baptism and Confirmation preparation course for the parish that meets at our CLET campus each Sunday. So, in mid-June, we had a total of eight candidates for Baptism and Confirmation. This wave of Baptisms and Confirmations was a bit unique because there were a few women who had begun to attend the Sunday services, but who only spoke the local language Moba-Ben, not French as we do the majority of the service. Thus it was necessary to have one of our CLET Togolese students interpret for me during the instruction and he also helped the ladies to memorize parts of the Small Catechism in Moba-Ben for the public examination of Confirmation.

Graduation at CLET

At the end of June, thirteen students finished their academic studies at CLET and were sent back to their home countries and churches. Eleven of them are cleared to begin vicarages and two of them will most likely serve in other auxiliary offices in the church. It has been encouraging to see on social media that several of these students have already received gifts and support from their families and local communities so that they can dedicate their time to service and evangelism in their vicarages.



(top) The thirteen students who have completed their time of study at CLET. (bottom left) Vicar Stephane GAYA from the Ivory Coast sells bales of used clothes that were donated to him by local supporters to gain income for his family and evangelism work. (bottom right) Vicar Hermann ZOIGNAN and his wife are received by their congregation in Touleplou, Ivory Coast with gifts of rice, other foods, and household items.

Visit to Congo- Kinshasa – Potential New Church Partners

In July I made a special trip to both of the Congos. I spent a few days in Kinshasa in order to have a meeting with members of a visiting delegation of representatives from our two OIM partner churches in Congo-Brazzaville and Congo-Kinshasa, Rev. Guy Kasongo of Milwaukee and Vicar Albert Bakat of Sioux Falls, SD. This delegation of Congolese brethren undertook a trip to visit five different Lutheran church bodies located in the interior of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. All of these church bodies have requested to have a relationship with LCMS-OIM and with the other church bodies of our Franco-phone Union. The goal of the trip was to give an introduction to the projects and the programs that OIM can offer in theological education and training, as well as gaining on-the-ground information regarding the current state of theology and practice of these church bodies. It is hoped that this trip will open more doors to assist with training pastors and church leaders and encourage cooperation and unity among the confessional Lutheran Churches in the DRC and Francophone Africa.



Rev. Guy KASONGO LCMS (left) and Vicar Albert BAKAT LCMS (right) pose with Rev. Benjamin TOMBISA (center), secretary of the Lutheran Church in the Congo CELCCO, before boarding the plane to fly to the interior of the DRC for meetings with other Lutheran Church bodies.

Congo-Brazzaville Mercy Medical Team (MMT)

After having spent a few days in Kinshasa, I crossed over into Congo-Brazzaville to assist with a Mercy Medical Mission (MMT) in the village of Kingomo, in the heart of that country. We were led by Stephanie Schulte, Rev. Gary Schulte, and Rev. Michael Awe, who served as the team leader and chaplain. I served as a translator since most of the team did not speak French. Every morning began with a small prayer service to let the community know that it was the love of Christ who serves sinners that brought us there to serve them. Over the course of four days, the clinic was only able to serve around 60 people. Usually an MMT can serve 250+ people in that period of time. However, this MMT was slowed down by a few local personalities that would not follow directions. As we know, such things tend to happen in the church. Despite these complications, all of the volunteers from the US took the challenge in strides, maintaining positive attitudes and keeping the service to the people in focus. It was an opportunity for growth and learning for our LCMS-OIM team, volunteers, and for the local church. We hope and pray that our next MMT in this church body will run more smoothly. We were pleased to learn that a few weeks after our visit there was a service in the parish in Kingomo where several adults and children were baptized into the Christian faith.



Group picture of the Congo-Brazzaville Mercy Medical Team July 2019 – with minibus drivers and volunteers of the Lutheran Church of the Republic of the Congo.



Processional with baptismal candidates before service a few weeks after the MMT at the Lutheran congregation in Kingomo. Rev. Albert KOUTIA, who was born in the village, presided over the baptisms.



Rev. Arnel OUADIKI, general secretary of the EELC and administrator of the CLETCO theological institute in Pointe Noire, R. Congo, takes a moment to pray and give pastoral care to clinic visitors in Kingomo.



Rev. Albert KOUTIA (left), incoming president of the EELC, and Rev. Joseph MAVOUNGOU, outgoing president, shake hands during a meeting where legal representation and bank accounts of the national church are transferred.

Church Conventions and Elections

Over the course of the summer several of our Francophone partner churches held national synod conventions and elections. As you may hear in the news from time to time, elections in Africa can be a tricky subject. Oftentimes those in power will not respect election results and often there are attempts to influence elections by corrupt practices. Such sad manifestations of human greed and power are also seen in the church politics in Africa. We thank God that all recent elections in our Francophone churches were held with transparency and trust and that election results were respected. Thus, there are no new break-away groups or factions that have formed as a result of the conventions. Three new church presidents and bishops were elected and initiated into their positions of ecclesiastical and legal authority. We ask you to keep the following new leaders and their churches in your prayers: Rev. Bishop Albert NGOMA of the Lutheran church in DRC-Kinshasa (CELCCO), Rev. President Guehi Guehi MARC of the Lutheran Church in the Ivory Coast (ELA-Sci), and Rev. President Albert KOUTIA of the Lutheran Church in Congo-Brazzaville (EELC).

Departure of McDermott family

We did have an unfortunate change in our LCMS-OIM Togo team over the summer. Rev. Ryan McDermott and his family, who had just become established in their home and were getting into the rhythm of daily life and work in Dapaong and the CLET, were called to return to the states for service there. Rev. McDermott will be pursuing a call where I am sure he will be able to serve faithfully. But their departure from the field has left a void in our camaraderie and the workload at CLET. Please keep the McDermott family, the CLET faculty, and our remaining LCMS-OIM Francophone team in your prayers at this time of transition.



Rev. Ryan and Emily McDermott and family

**Pray:
Thanksgiving for safe travels during fundraising in the US and visits in Africa.**

Thanksgiving for the recent CLET graduates and the academic and spiritual growth over their three years on campus.

That the home parishes and communities of the CLET graduates would understand their responsibilities to support their new vicars and their families.

That LCMS-OIM would continue to forge fruitful and God-pleasing relationships with more church bodies in the DRC and Francophone Africa.

That our CLET graduates and church leaders would act and speak with integrity in their service to the Lord.



Trip to Burundi

In late September I was able to travel to Burundi at the invitation of the Lutheran Church in Africa – Synod of Burundi (ELA-Sbu) with Rev. Gary and Stephanie Schulte, Mr. John Wolf, project manager for LCMS-OIM, and Rev. George Ondieki and Mr. Tuomo Simojoki from Lutheran Heritage Foundation. Stephanie, who is responsible for Mercy Medical Missions (MMT), worked with two other nurse volunteers to present on “a woman's cycle of life.” This presentation addressed feminine health matters as well as relational matters in community and family. While the women were hearing their presentations, Rev. Schulte and I presented on the six chief parts of the Small Catechism. The Burundian church had prepared a special, provisional translation of the Small Catechism for the participants. It was a joy to hear the believers reciting the words of the Catechism in their own language, Kirundi, during the seminar and daily Matins and Vespers services. This small church body is very young, but they have a very good base of well-educated lay-leaders. Most importantly, they have a sincere desire to teach and practice correctly according to God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions.

Thank you all again for your support and your prayers. I especially thank you for your patience with my intermittent communication regarding the work going on in Francophone Africa. May the Lord continue to bless you all richly as you serve Him in your parishes, communities, families and your daily callings.

In Christ, *James W. Dyer*



Rev. President Fidèle MBUNDE leads the rite of Holy Baptism during a service held one of the evenings of our trip to Burundi.



Rev. George ONDIEKI and Mr. Tuomo SIMOJOKI (left) present materials published by Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF) in French and Kiswahili to the participants of the Small Catechism seminar in Burundi. I am presenting some of the Dr. Wilbur KREISS dogmatics that were also published by LHF and sent to Africa on the container project.

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Thank you for your continued prayers and support of this Ministry to form faithful servants to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the lost.

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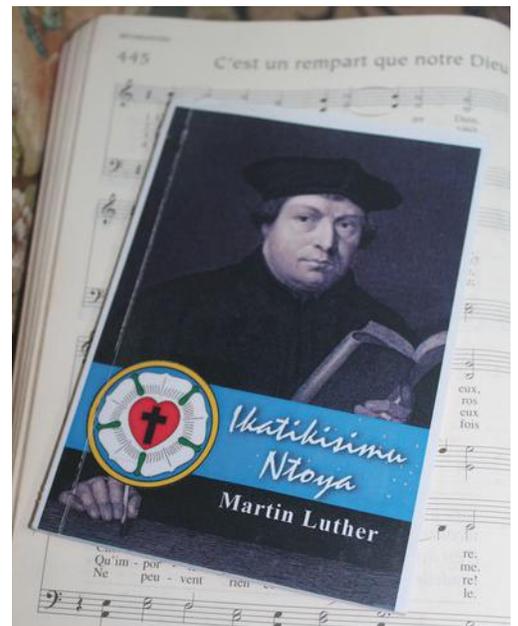
Protais has just successfully completed his three-year program of study at CLET. He is planning on beginning vicarage near the city of Gitega in central Burundi. He has an interest in doing outreach among the blind and other people with conditions and disabilities. Please pray that he is able to complete vicarage and maintain a caring heart for the weak and poor throughout his future Ministry.



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I mentioned in this newsletter issue that Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF) accompanied our LCMS-OIM team to Burundi for the Small Catechism seminar. They are mainly involved with translating the Small Catechism into local languages in Africa. As you may recall from my previous newsletters, LHF has been very instrumental in printing and providing theological resources in French for CLET and other institutes. Please consider supporting their work with your gifts and prayer.



www.lhfmissions.org

1-800-554-0723

A copy of the provisional Small Catechism in Kirundi, the national language of Burundi. LHF will be working with the Lutherans in Burundi to rework and revise this Catechism to make it cover a broad range of vocabularies and dialects in the country so that it will be well-accepted in a wide readership across several church bodies.



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