



It was a joy to re-connect with old friends, such as Rev. LARÉ Kolane

A JOYFUL RETURN

Last month I had the honor of addressing the *Conseil Administratif de l'Union (CAU)*, which is the administrative council for the eleven francophone African churches sharing our Lutheran confession of faith who are working together in the Lord's ministry in West and Central Africa.

Though I have spoken conversational French most of my life, this was a bit of a challenge for me: a speech in proper French to a distinguished assembly! Thankfully, the Lord was with me and several delegates have asked me for a copy of my address. The topic? I'll give it to you in English: The Powerful Witness of the Lord's Song.

*"He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD."
- Ps. 40:3*



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Can They Sing with Us, Too?



Each day, more and more children came to sing with us. The joy of the Lord was abundant!

The second week I was in Togo, I taught a class of seminarians. The Sunday beforehand, we announced that anyone interested in learning hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs would be welcome to join us. On Day One, we were joined by a couple of teenage girls, a daughter of one of the seminarians and one of her friends. The next day, a few more teens came. By the end, we had quite the crowd making a joyful noise! They posed for a more formal photo, but here I had asked them to wave at you, explaining to them that I am only able to come teach them because of the generous brothers and sisters who support my teaching ministry. They want you to know how much they appreciate your support.

Some of those pictured are local, but most are either seminarians from other countries or their children. Whether from Togo or from Guinea or Côte d'Ivoire or Congo, they all wanted the classes to continue. Everyone kept inviting me to come teach in THEIR country. A young

man named Arisse echoed the sentiments of many, saying they want to learn more "good Lutheran songs" so that they can "make their churches strong" and "teach the young." His friend Josué added, "We don't want to sing the songs of the Pentecostals, we need more good songs which sing about our life in Christ, what Jesus has done for us, and what our Father in heaven keeps doing for us through Him."

They were particularly concerned about the young. Now that Western music is heard everywhere, the traditional folk music is less appealing to them. While African harmonies and rhythms are naturally retained – and desired – many are attracted to the new sounds they are hearing. So the question is not whether or not they will learn new songs, but rather which ones they will learn. I'm so happy to be sharing Lutheran ones. Thank you for enabling me to share our rich inheritance with these dear brothers and sisters!

The Fruit is So Good

I'll be the first to admit that working in Africa is not easy. This last trip I breathed in Harmattan dust for three weeks which took a couple more weeks to work out of my lungs. The temperatures in sub-Saharan Africa are particularly brutal when you come into them from the winter temps of the American Midwest. I've made six trips to Africa thus far and have picked up intestinal bugs four times – a .667 batting average I don't want to have! This last trip I came down with malaria and spent two days in a hospital in Lomé.

So why am I so eager to go back? Well, the picture on the right says it all. I've got a story to share, but first let me offer a list of reasons why the work we are doing has meaningful, personal impact. As you know, our Lutheran hymns bless in so many ways. My African friends say they bring:

- *Comfort in times of hardship*
- *Greater sense of our unity in Christ*
- *Strengthening of faith*
- *Much joy*

For these and many other reasons, our brothers and sisters take these songs to heart. Of course, not every hymn is memorized by every student. Just like you, they have their favorites. But sometimes seeds that I plant really take root and bear fruit. When I see and hear that happening, it brings me great joy and encourages me.



Jean-Jacques singing the Gloria.

As difficult as the work can be sometimes, these efforts are not in vain. I was blessed with such encouragement on my first day at the Dalwak Retreat Center last month when I ran into a seminarian named Jean-Jacques.

I had forgotten that Jean-Jacques had been at my 2017 workshop in Dapaong. He attended as a youth interested in church work and stayed in the background. But he was definitely paying attention. He told me that at my workshop he had learned my setting of the Gloria, a French version I composed in an African style during a trip to Congo in 2010, and then went back to his village church and taught it to his congregation. He said they are still singing it, and so I asked him to sing it for me. I was blown away. It had taken on only slight changes over three years, even as neither he nor anyone at his church had the music – nor could they read the notation even if they did. Clearly, this song of praise touched this young man deeply, and his love for this canticle moved him to teach this song to others. Given that I was planning to teach this Gloria to the class at Dalwak, I was overjoyed that he was more than willing to help me teach this to the folks there.

Whenever I see evidence that the psalms, hymns, and canticles I am teaching are being taught to others, I know that I am not just having a time of fellowship with our friends in Africa. We are giving them treasures — treasures which they cherish and share as the Word of God dwells among them richly through the gift of music.

THE FOOD'S NOT BAD, EITHER

I enjoy my daily bread. There are few things I don't like to eat. I'm not the best cook and so probably don't qualify as a "foodie," but my son Trevor jokes about how I seem to remember every banquet and every restaurant I've been to.

by a piece of roasted fish from the nearby river. Dessert was awesomely fresh mango slices.

Bon appétit!

I do get asked about the cuisines I encounter and so thought I'd share my favorite Togolais meal with you. On the right is something called pâte, fufu, or couscous de maïze. It is found all over Africa and is basically a cake of hearty grits. I am a Southerner, so am no stranger to such deliciousness, but they do take their grits to a higher level. One the left is some of the pâte (i.e. "paste") topped with a delicious vegetable sauce. At the top of my plate is some sticky rice accompanied





Helping This Brother in Need

I had a rough few first hours alone at the hospital in Lomé, but fortunately Emmanuel and another brother named Albert came to be with me. Emmanuel even spent the night in my room and watched over me – and the staff – like a hawk. He didn't leave until I had been released and was safely in a cab back to my hotel.

A couple of days later it was time for my flight out. Emmanuel insisted on joining me for my (long) wait at the airport. He was again a special blessing, as my Air France flight was cancelled and I prevailed again upon his help in communicating with airport employees as I worked out new travel arrangements. Please join me in thanking the Lord for this dear brother!



Meet Emmanuel. You may recognize him from my last newsletter. He attended my Togo workshops in 2015 and 2017 and is a youth leader in his church body and a song leader in his congregation. Upon my return to Lomé from Dapaong, I met with him to catch up and do some consulting. We met outside my hotel there, pictured above. Two days later I was in the hospital with . . .

LE PALU (MALARIA!)



We invite you to join us in praising the Lord for all the faithful contributors who have joined together to support this teaching ministry. We are humbled by the outpouring of offerings that enable Phillip to travel in Africa, gather and connect with students, provide for workshops, supply hymnals, and so much more. With your help, he is able to share our rich heritage of church music and equip many for teaching psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to their congregations.

Each day, as we walk by faith, we learn more and more how our Heavenly Father indeed “richly and daily provides.” Thank you for trusting His love — to you and through you. Soli Deo Gloria!

- Phillip and Cheryl Magness

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- The seminarians in Dapaong and their families, that classes may resume and that family routines may return to normal.
- Peace in the region, that radical Islam not make more advances in West Africa and that many will turn to Christ and know the peace which “passes all understanding” — the true peace we have with God through the forgiveness of our sins.
- The missionaries who were evacuated from Africa because of the pandemic, and the missionaries who have chosen to stay. May all be kept safe in their travels, be guarded from this pestilence, and be able to return to their service in the Lord's ministry soon.

GIVE THANKS FOR:

- My dear friend Emmanuel, who came to my aid in great time of need.
- The joyful reception of sound Biblical teaching we see among our mission partners.
- Our son's engagement. Yes, Trevor Magness and Amalia Helmkamp are getting married! July 25 in Parker, Colorado. Rev. Max Mons will preside. Deo Gracias.



There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at lcms.org/service. Click on “Service Opportunities.”

To support the LCMS through the work of Phillip Magness you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

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