

SERVING THE LORD IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

NEWS FROM PHILLIP MAGNESS



Summer 2020



In February, while in Togo, I met with Rev. Marc Guehi-Guehi, President of l'Église Évangélique Luthérienne Synode de Côte d'Ivoire (Evangelical Lutheran Church – Ivory Coast Synod). Their church has grown significantly in recent years, with several new pastors trained at CLET, the francophone confessional Lutheran seminary in Togo. He told me that his people are “ready for you to come and teach.”

NEW DESTINATIONS

Earlier this year, I addressed the *Conseil Administratif de l'Union* (CAU), the administrative council for the eleven African churches who are our francophone mission partners in West and Central Africa. I enjoyed seeing old friends and making new ones. These leaders hail from eight different countries, yet all had the same message for me: “Please come and teach among our people.”

The global pandemic has delayed my trips to Burundi and the Republic of Congo, but plans are underway for me to make those trips, head back to Togo, and go on to Côte d'Ivoire in 2021.



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Preparing to Return



After Divine Service with seminarians (L-R) Mawule, Prudence and François

The main seminary for francophone confessional Lutherans is called by its French acronym, CLET (Centre Luthérienne d'Études Théologiques) – the Lutheran Center for Theological Study. Having now taught there three times, I've made plenty of friends at CLET. While some are yet there, the majority have moved back to their home countries – and are waiting for me to come teach with them in their congregations.

This year, I originally planned to go to Burundi in June and then to the Republic of Congo in September. This summer would have been my first trip to Burundi, where the emerging Lutheran church there has moved out of the capital city and planted two churches – one of which is now pastored by one of my star students, Rev. Protais Bukeyenzeza. The economic consequences of the pandemic have been very hard on this country. Also, their president, Rev. Fidèle Mbunde – who is also president of the CAU, the administrative council for our eleven francophone mission partners – came

down with C-19 back in May. Thankfully he has recovered. Both Protais and Fidèle are eagerly looking forward to my arrival there in 2021.

Next year I also plan on returning to the Republic of Congo (ROC), where I had hoped to go this fall. Like most of Africa, ROC has been shut down and severely limiting travel as well. Fortunately, the country is opening back up at the end of October and so our missionaries who live there, Rev. Gary Schulte and his wife, Stephanie, and Rev. Jacob Gaugert will be returning. I have taught twice in the capital city of Brazzaville and will return there en route to Pointe Noire, where the CAU now has a satellite seminary. Pointe Noir is becoming a hub for Lutheran ministry, and several of my friends now live there, including former ROC church president Joseph Mavoungou, who invited my first trip to Africa back in 2010. I am very much looking forward to teaching and worshipping there.



PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- All our brothers and sisters in francophone Africa who are burdened with the economic consequences of the global shutdown. May everyone be able to get back to work soon!
- Refugees from Islamist violence in Burkina Faso, and, yes, for our enemies who persecute us. May they hear the Gospel, be turned from their ways, and walk in the new life we share in Christ Jesus.
- Our missionaries who are preparing to return to the field now that the travel bans are being lifted. May they have safe travels and a happy return to their ministries in the field.

GIVE THANKS FOR:

- The technologies that have allowed us to stay connected despite the pandemic, and for the opportunities for ministry we have via teaching, studying, and sharing via the internet.
- The abundance and freedoms we enjoy in the USA, even in troubled times.
- The marriage of my son, Trevor, and his wife, Amalia. The wedding was in Colorado in July. Deo Gracias!

Ongoing Ministry via Internet

With plans for Burundi and Congo cancelled due to the global pandemic, my work has gone in some different directions this summer. Some aspects stayed the same: building my support network, taking my missiology course online with Rev. Dr. Detlev Schulz via Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne with other missionaries in my cohort, improving my French, and staying in touch with pastors, seminarians, and musicians in Africa.

Other things, however, changed. Instead of travelling to Africa in person, I've done more connecting via the internet. Each week I'm not on the road, I try to develop some sort of accessible, helpful recording of one of the songs from the French LSB, *Liturgies et Cantiques Luthériens (LCL)*.



The Wittenberg Parish Chorale

I was blessed with this note after I sent out my recording of the French version of "Now that the Daylight Fills the Sky":

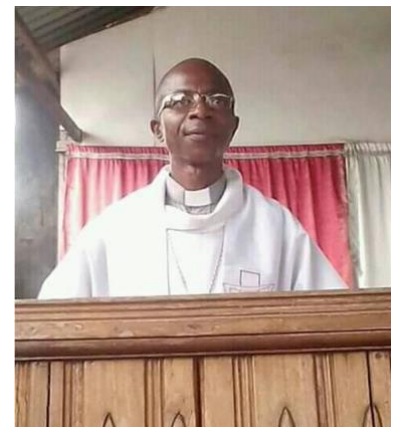
"This is a MOST EXCELLENT morning hymn, my brother Phillip MAGNESS. We will share these songs with others after we learn them and sing them in our parish. Glory be to God! Thank you, thank you, thank you, in the name of our Triune God."

Rev. Joseph Mboundou, Wittenberg Parish, Pointe Noire, Congo

This involves much more than just sitting down and making a tape of me singing the hymn. To make a convincing and engaging recording, one needs to really "own" the song. As Russian pianist Vladimir Feltsman says, "You can't give away something unless you have it!" So I first learn all the words by heart, and then develop a simple, rhythmic piano style to frame the hymn in a way that is more relatable for the intended audience.

I am also using technology to help with another project: setting Luther's Small Catechism in French to music. I did this in English a few years ago with *Sing the Faith* for Concordia Publishing House. Just as I first listened to people recite the catechism in English for that project, now I'm listening, via WhatsApp, to recitations in French from brothers in Africa as I write melodies for the six chief parts and their meanings *en français*.

The ministry online has also expanded with more training and team meetings via ZOOM. This year, the two Africa regions were combined back into one, so now I enjoy a weekly meeting with the all-Africa team. The Synod has also provided more learning opportunities. It's been great getting up to speed on what others in the team are doing while gaining some new skills along the way.



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."

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