

All Twenty-Two Pastors and Clarice, Too

A seven-day Psalms study with African pastors in Lusaka, Zambia might seem like a story without sizzle. But this one: wow.

In a way, the story starts almost two years ago. In June 2020 the Confessional Lutheran Institute (CLI), the educational arm of WELS World Missions' One Africa Team, formed a cohort of African Lutheran pastors. These men, all ordained, want to keep learning Bible, church history, doctrine, and shepherding God's flock.

For most of the 19 pastors currently in the cohort, our March 31-April 7, 2022 Psalms course was the third in a series of nine courses and a final thesis, all of which will lead, God willing, to a Bachelor of Divinity (BDiv) degree from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

The main teacher for this Psalms course, in which students met mornings and afternoons and worked on learning Psalms like the back of their hand, was WLS Professor Bradley Wordell.

Dr. Ernst Wendland from Lusaka Lutheran Seminary, who has published extensively on Psalms, also taught two afternoons. He got help from several seminary students who had composed Psalm settings in Chewa, Nsenga, and Tumbuka. Missionary Daniel Witte taught the last day and a half.

Ho-hum? Hardly.

Pastors as Students

This was the first time the full CLI BDiv cohort was able to be together in person. Previous Covid-19 travel restrictions had forced the BDiv brothers into one previous course via WhatsApp — an online communication platform, and the most common

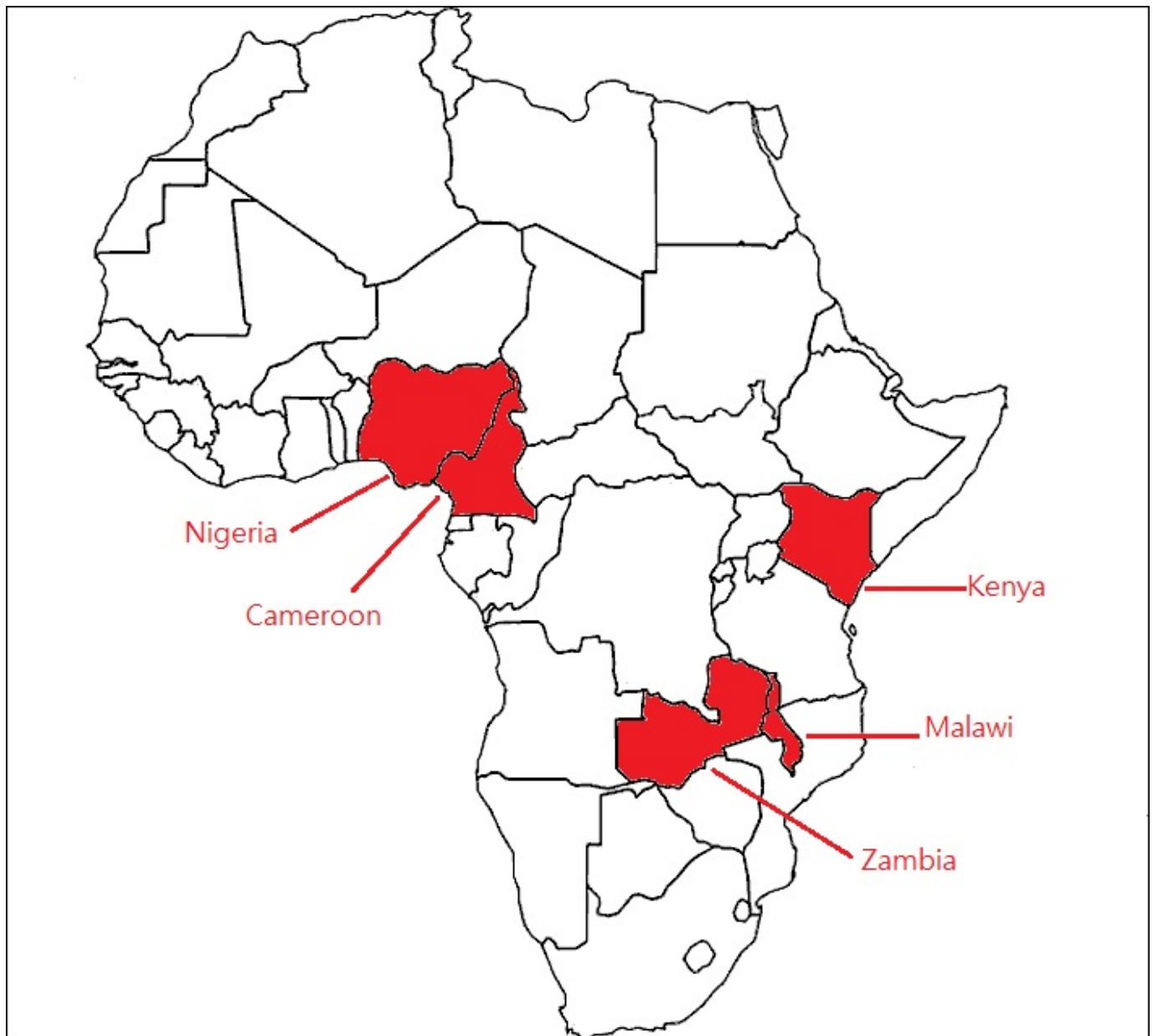
way to communicate via cell phone in Africa — and one course held successively in separate countries.



The current cohort of BDiv students

From 2010 to 2014 and 2015 to 2019 the Greater African Theological Studies Institute (GRATSI) had organized similar classes for other African pastors in our fellowship, but only pastors from Malawi and Zambia.

Now GRATSI has become CLI, and pastors in the current BDiv cohort are from five countries: Cameroon (1), Kenya (3), Malawi (5), Nigeria (2), and Zambia (8).



This Psalms course also brought together three other Kenyan pastors who already have bachelors degrees in theology. They are starting on a Master of Theology (MTh) program, also through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.



Chrispinus Omuse, one the new MTh enrollees, listens intently to Professor Wordell

I wish you could have been with all of us in Lusaka to see the new camaraderie between these twenty-two pastors: the laughs, the discussions, the prayers.

I wish you could have experienced the energy in the meeting room as pastors saw more clearly than before how all the psalms center in Christ and connect in a story that summarizes the whole Bible, ending in the most perfect praise to God.



Frank Shonga and Evans Makowani in Psalms class

I wish you could have been there near the end of the last day as the pastors composed and sang for each other a refrain for Psalm 118. The melody is in both the WELS' 1993 and 2021 hymnals, from Tanzania.

The refrains your African brothers wrote for that melody (we drummed it with our hand on the tables, too!) were not in Hebrew nor in English ("Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his covenant-love is eternal"), but in their heart languages, such as Akoose, Chewa, Kiswahili, Lenje, and Tonga.



Rev. Mesue Israel teaches at the Lutheran Seminary in Cameroon

Ps 103. Notes: My soul praises God (branch

singing Psalm 118 in Akosee - Israel

Mekaned meh beh neh (sang) diob e Agum
Edionge eche e waa asog.

Ban be Israel be hobe nene e
Edionge eche e waa asog.

N dab e Aaron e hob nene e
Edionge eche e waa asog.

Ban be diob beh hobe nene e
Edionge eche e waa asog

A metia ke meh cheen san diob-
an ag wog meh ^{awech} asong e meh

Mekaned me beh neh (sang) diob e Agum
Edionge eche e waa asog

15

A Long Overdue Visit

Another unforgettable part of the story: Professor Bradley Wordell brought his wife Andrea and her mother Clarice Fastenau along on the trip.

Clarice's husband, Missionary Don Fastenau, served as principal of the Lusaka Lutheran Seminary (1969-1980). He went to be with the Lord in 2018. The Fastenaus had left Lusaka in 1980. Andrea and Clarice had not been back to Zambia in 42 years.



L-R: Andrea Wordell, Clarice Fastenau, Bradley Wordell

Andrea and Clarice loved seeing Zambia again. They marveled at how things had changed. And Clarice, now age 82, was spry! “Energetic” hardly fits. At Victoria Falls, Clarice climbed all the way down to The Boiling Pot and back up the rocky stairway.



At the foot of Victoria Falls

So now Clarice has a story to tell friends and family for the rest of her life, of how many things had not changed in 42 years, and how different Lusaka looks today.

And I have a story to share of God’s grace uniting pastors across a continent and believers around the world.

And *you* have a story too. Tell someone else about how WELS work in Africa is becoming fewer missionaries doing things for others, and more and more a partnership in Christ.

For instance, here is Pastor Mesue Israel, principal of the Lutheran Seminary in Kumba, Cameroon, encouraging his classmates and Professor Wordell and me with a heartfelt message from Isaiah 53 about Christ crucified, risen, and reigning.

Pastor Israel and many other pastors continue to study the Psalms too, so they know them like the back of their hands. With joy, Pastor Israel told me a whole story about it again just this morning!



Pastor Daniel Witte lives in Lusaka, Zambia, partners with the Pastoral Studies Institute at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and heads the Confessional Lutheran Institute of the WELS One Africa Team.

Please pray for those working in fields that are ripe for harvest. Share their story, engage with future news and receive updates. Learn more about our mission fields in Africa and how the Holy Spirit is working faith in people's hearts at <https://wels.net/serving-others/missions/africa>