

Fish for People in French...in Cameroon?

Fresh fish! Look at these fellas and the catch of the day! For one week in the middle of June, two One Africa Team missionaries got to work by the sea in Cameroon with a group of church leaders, not only in English but also in French. As far as anyone can tell, this may have been the first time WELS World Missions has provided in-person training in Africa in French!

Sweating in Douala

Missionary Dan Kroll (with many years of experience living in Cameroon) and I (Missionary Keegan Dowling) went to the port city of Douala, and the church leaders traveled from their inland homes to meet with us there. Douala is a dank, green city on the Gulf of Guinea—and just about smack-dab on the Equator. As a matter of fact, I used to sweat as a pastor in Canada, so you can imagine I was soaked during my week in Cameroon. (Sometimes, I went through 4 shirts in a day!)



Douala is Cameroon's biggest city and a major port. Where we stayed was right next to where the huge freighter ships docked. And there was PLENTY of fresh fish to eat—even HUGE, spicy prawns. (Fun Fact: The country of "Cameroon" was named after the Portuguese word for "prawn"!) We got so much fish on the street that the sellers got to know us... and rival sellers would tussle over us, trying to physically direct us toward their stalls.

Fish for Souls

But the real reason Missionary Kroll and I were there was not *to eat* but to catch fish. More specifically, we were there to help train some local fishermen: a group of leaders from Holy Trinity Lutheran Synod, whose calling from Jesus—like each of us Christians—is to fish for people, not necessarily for fish.



the leaders of Holy Trinity Lutheran Synod

Holy Trinity is not yet in church fellowship with the WELS. They are just beginning their journey of exploring the road to church fellowship. This starts with an emphasis on doctrine—specifically, a comprehensive overview of doctrine like you would find in a bible information course at a church in North America. I’ve known French since I was a teenager and would read *Le Monde* newspaper and listen to Radio France Internationale and collect French films in college.

But I can be thankful now that the Lord called me at Seminary graduation (2013) to serve as a pastor for 9 years in Orléans, Ontario, which is the eastern part of Ottawa, the capital city of Canada: Ottawa is the largest bilingual city in the country. While there, seeing and hearing French every day, I soaked up a lot of detailed vocabulary which is coming in handy now in Africa, where 167 million people speak French.

Teaching God's Word in French

WELS Multi-Language Productions (MLP) gave us permission to put my favorite bible information course—*Basic Bible Christianity*, by Pastor Jon Buchholz—into French, and use it in our training workshops. We spent time with our new friends in Cameroon honing in on such aspects of doctrine as communion, baptism, Law-and-Gospel, the history of the Bible, and confession, among others. We plan to meet with these very same men at all our upcoming workshops so that we can forge personal relationships and make progress as we grow deeper in our studies and our planning together.

When we were men about town, Missionary Kroll and I both got a lot of exposure to French: It's the language of the city of Douala. It is still a new and fresh experience for us, to use French in our ministry. It was also a new and fresh experience for our friends from Holy Trinity Lutheran Synod to explore biblical doctrine systematically with a bible information course presented both in French and in English. Missionary Kroll and I hope we grow stronger in our use of French with each visit we make to Cameroon. And we hope the leaders from Holy Trinity will also grow stronger in their understanding and use of God's Word—which sounds sweet in any language.

Missionary Keegan J. Dowling lives in Lusaka, Zambia

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>