

Holding up the Prophets' Hands in Kenya

I serve as the One Africa Team liaison to the LCMC Kenya, one of WELS' partners in Africa. COVID has kept me from visiting the churches in Kenya for the last 18 months. Nevertheless, God has been giving me many opportunities to assist and support our Gospel partners in East Africa.

Online Teaching in Kenya

16 national pastors and 17 national evangelists serve 46 LCMC churches in Kenya. In 2019, eight of those evangelists began taking courses towards earning a diploma to serve their church body as ordained pastors. The Pastoral Studies Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary committed funding a 3-year course of instruction that included in-person visits by WELS teachers before COVID, and online instruction since the start of the pandemic.

In December 2020 I began teaching Koiné Greek online to these students. When I studied Greek many years ago, my teachers taught me a lot of grammar in a very short time. This is a method of teaching “dead languages” that has served generations of WELS pastors well. However, it presupposes that the student has a good understanding of how grammar works.

My Kenyan students are gifted language learners and are able to speak 3-5 different languages, including English, Swahili, and local tribal dialects. However, due to their limited educational background, we decided to use a conversational approach to teaching Greek. Incidentally, teachers are using the same method at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Malawi.

Biblical Language Center is an online school for teaching Greek and Hebrew as spoken languages. The website hosts videos and quizzes that encourage students to

learn the same way that children learn - by listening and repeating what they hear. Each student has an account they can access at any time during the week. I host a live session with the students once a week on Google Meet. I use the time to set the stage for a section of the video content.



Puppets are useful for drilling 3rd person forms, and they're easy to work with

For example, to teach vocabulary about farming I filled a tub with dirt and used puppets and spoons to pantomime the actions of carrying shovels, digging and planting vines. I ask the students in Greek what the puppets are doing, and they must respond with the appropriate forms of the verbs and nouns. Compared to the way I learned Greek many years ago, we are making very slow progress. On the other hand, my students are able to speak simple Greek sentences using the correct grammar - something that I never was able to do until now. They have made truly amazing progress.

Building Projects in Kenya

WELS and LCMC are also partnering to provide houses of worship for several congregations. Some congregations have been able to raise funds locally to purchase property and to begin building the walls of their churches. With funds provided by WELS donors, LCMC congregations are able to complete the construction of simple worship facilities.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church is located in the village of Ponge, near the shores of Lake Victoria in Western Kenya. The congregation of 85 members had been worshipping in rented school property and also under shade trees. After an elderly female member of the church donated the land for a permanent structure, the group quickly began raising the walls of their new church.



Evangelist Samson Mambo of the LCMC Kenya

Samson Mambo, one of the students currently enrolled in the diploma program, serves as the congregation's Evangelist. He visits sick church members and prays for them. Evangelist Mambo also teaches Sunday School, leads Bible class, and preaches sermons. The congregation is made up of teachers, builders, drivers, electricians, and small-scale farmers. With the funds from WELS, the congregation completed the construction of their church walls, poured cement pillars to support the roof, cut down trees to build trusses, and purchased iron sheets and nails for the roof.



Ribbon cutting ceremony for St. Paul Lutheran's new church building

On May 23, 2021, President Mark Onunda of the LCMC Kenya presided over the dedication of the new worship facility. A large group of people from the community joined the members of St. Paul in thanking God for this new house of prayer in Ponge. You can watch a video of the celebration on One Africa Team's YouTube channel.

There are another five churches in Kenya waiting to receive assistance in constructing new worship facilities. I thank God for the opportunity to facilitate these projects and to "hold up the prophets' hands" (Ex. 17:12) as OAT liaison to the churches in Kenya.

Missionary John Roebke lives in Malawi

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