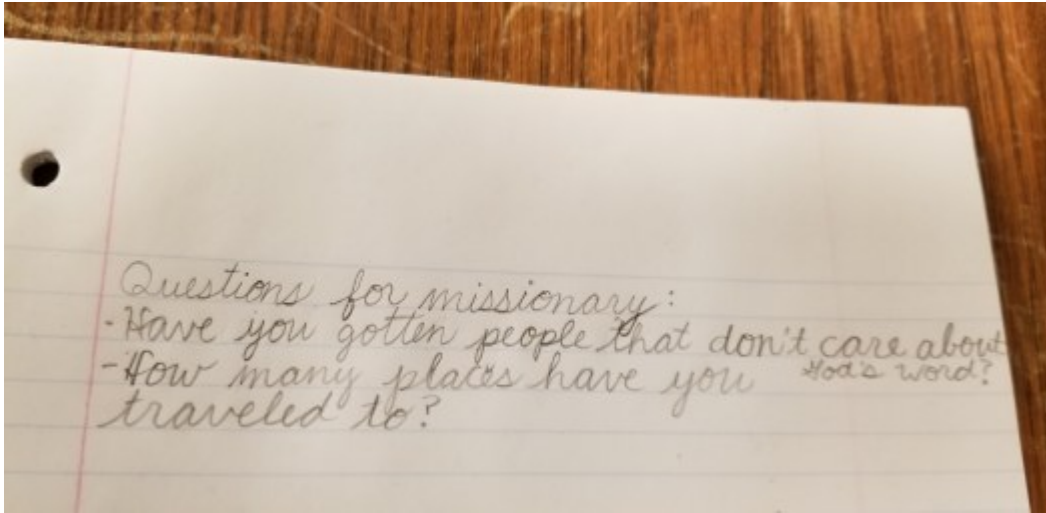


Live Chat with a Missionary



A student's questions for WELS missionaries living in Africa

What do 10-year-olds in rural South Dakota know about Africa? Probably what a textbook or teacher has taught him or her. Probably that there are seven continents, and Africa is one of them. If they attend a WELS grade school, perhaps they know that there are missionaries in Africa. A 10-year-old South Dakotan would probably do better at telling you how to operate a combine than how to locate either Malawi or Cameroon on a map.

On October 31st and November 22nd, students from St. Martin's in Watertown, SD, had the opportunity to Skype with missionaries from Africa and learn some lessons I pray will stick with them for life.

Why Africa? Why Watertown, SD? What's the connection? How and why did a partnership developed between St. Martin's Lutheran School in Watertown, South Dakota, and the One Africa Team?

Dear Pastor Roebke,

We have heard about
your missionwork in Malawi.

We are praying for you
so that God will help you teach
others God's Word and keep you
safe. Thank you for your work.

Please pray that we share God's
Word too. Keep up the good work in
Christ. God bless you!

In Christ,

Zeke Rybke

Levi
Katelin

Grace

Matthew

angelica
Peyton

(The purple gorillas @ St. Martin)

Letters like these were sent to WELS missionaries all over the world

Two months ago, St. Martin's students wrote letters to 12 missionaries and their families across the world. Huge 25×30 inch letters were written with big handwriting and colorful somewhat messy pictures. The letters shared that students were praying on behalf of the missionaries, their families and their congregations. Students asked what life was like in their settings and shared Bible passages to encourage missionaries and their families.

We heard back from many of the missionaries. Some sent email replies. Another missionary sent a 12-minute YouTube video response. It was rewarding for students to hear back from these missionaries and their families. Through back-and-forth discussions with John Roebke, a missionary on the One Africa Team, we decided to attempt a Skype call between Missionary Roebke and the entire St. Martin's school.

Because neither St. Martin's nor Missionary Roebke had tried this "live audience" Skyping presentation method before, we held a test Skype call and worked through some of the technology glitches and operator error.



Students viewed slides and a video from Missionary Roebke prior to their chat. The day of the presentation was Reformation Day, Wednesday, October 31, 2018. (St. Martin's has chapel on Wednesday mornings at 8:30.) After chapel, we showed a slideshow of images from Malawi and a short video of John's security guards preparing and eating lunch. These served as background information and a "lead up" of sorts to the actual Skype call and presentation. At 9:04 am in Watertown, SD (4:04 pm in Lilongwe, Malawi), we called John Roebke. He answered. His face

showed up about 12 feet tall on our two large screens in church and he greeted all of the St. Martin's students with a "Happy Reformation Day!"



Streaming live from Missionary Roebke's living room to the sanctuary of St. Martin's John spent 15 minutes sharing about life in Malawi: the food, the people, the place and what his ministry was like. As we Skyped I remember thinking it was incredible that we were over 8,800 miles away and yet were able to interact and hear a presentation from a real-life missionary. After his presentation, the students asked questions they had prepared. What is the weather like? (Hot.) What kinds of food do you eat? (Nshima, mangoes and pineapples) How big is your congregation? (40,000 members, because I get to help produce sermon books for all the congregations of the LCCA in Malawi) Do you ever miss home? (This is my home.)



Skyping with Missionaries Dan and Karen Kroll

Three weeks later on, on Friday, November 22, we were able to Skype with a second missionary and his wife who serve as part of the One Africa Team: Dan and Karen Kroll, who serve in Cameroon. Because of the tense political state in Cameroon, Cameroon was no longer a safe place to be. Instead the Krolls were staying at a house in Malawi. We were able to Skype with them and hear about how the Christians in Cameroon, who need our prayers, are still committed to sharing God's Word during this time of political unrest.

We also heard about a day in the life of Dan and Karen. Dan shared how he gets to serve as a teacher for individuals looking to become pastors in Cameroon. Karen shared how she enjoyed serving in whatever way needed as a missionary's wife - including everything from a morning of exterminating rats in their house to driving an ambulance in the afternoon. Additionally, Karen explained how she leads Bible studies for the wives of Dan's seminary students.

Once again, students were able to ask questions: What is the weather like? (Hot) What is church like? (Sometimes a long distance to travel) Where is your home? (We've lived and served in Africa for over 20 years in Malawi and Cameroon. This is our home.)

The experience opened students' eyes. Students were able to see and talk to a real-life missionaries in real time over 8,800 miles away. Students learned that missionaries serve in multiple ways; they not only preach, but also teach, write and encourage as a big part of their ministries. Students heard that missionaries were happy to serve in their homes of Africa, and that Africa is indeed their home.

Both John and the Krolls closed their respective Skype sessions in the same way. They encouraged the students to consider how they might serve God, not only now, but also in the future. They planted a seed for mission work perhaps somewhere down the line and urged students to think about how they might be able to share Jesus with others.

The Skyping experience was a wonderful opportunity. It provided our St. Martin's students an opportunity to hear why and how missionaries share Jesus with others. It was free and fairly easy to organize. Students now have a few real faces and names to connect with mission work in Africa. We look forward to Skyping again and, we look forward to seeing how God blesses the missions in Africa and the students here in South Dakota.

Jonathan Niemi is the Principal of St. Martin's Lutheran School in Watertown, S.D.

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