

Meet Our Brothers and Sisters in East Africa



Typical face tattoos of women from the Nuer tribe

In October representatives from the Lutheran Church of Central Africa – Zambia Synod, the Pastoral Studies Institute and One Africa Team visited the countries of Kenya & Ethiopia. Missionary John Hartman writes:

On 10 October, Pastor Simon Mweete and I flew from Lusaka, Zambia, to Nairobi, Kenya, to begin a two-week trip to visit three groups of African Lutherans from different nationalities at three different levels of development. The days were full of God's grace and favor on display working among the people of eastern Africa!

The three groups are the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, in Kenya; the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church, made up of members of the Nuer tribe from South Sudan, but presently living in refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia; and the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia, founded by Dr. Kabede in Bishoptu, Ethiopia, which is in fellowship with the WELS.

On the day we arrived in Kenya, we met with leaders of the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ. We were joined by Professor Allen Sorum from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Wisconsin, and Pastor Mark Onunda, President of the LCMC and also our chauffeur and guide. We visited with both LCMC members and pastors. At each place Pastor Mweete taught on Church Fellowship, Prof. Sorum taught the Doctrine of the Church and I taught on Pentecostal issues.

Our purpose was to teach the people what the Bible says on these topics so that the members of the LCMC may decide if they agree with us. I look forward to April 2018 when a delegation from the LCMC will be traveling to Lusaka and meeting with the LCCA-Z Doctrinal Committee for more formal discussions as the churches work toward fellowship.

You can read more about the LCMC Kenya visit at <https://welsfriendsof africa.com/true-friends-of-the-bible/>



Bajaj taxi waiting to take us to the church

On 16 October Pastor Mweete and I started the next leg of our journey. We flew into Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and were joined by Missionary Terry Schultz from the USA and Pastor Peter Bur. Pastor Bur is a South Sudanese of the Nuer tribe who immigrated to the United States several years ago and graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 2015. Because of flight connections we had an overnight layover, which gave Terry Schultz time to go shopping for clothes because his luggage had not arrived from the USA. It also gave us time to visit the Orthodox Church where Emperor Haile Selassie is buried. The stained glass windows and stone statues made us think we had arrived in Europe!



Terry Schultz, from MLP, teaching a class to the Nuer pastors and evangelists

On 18 October we flew out to Gambela, Ethiopia where four refugee camps are located. Because of a civil war within the country of South Sudan, over one million people have fled the violence into neighboring countries of Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda. Pastor Bur has been teaching Lutheran pastors and church leaders who have organized themselves into the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church within the refugee camps.



Nuer refugee women singing and greeting us on arrival

A choir of singing and dancing men and women came out to greet us as we dismounted from our Bajaj taxi, a three-wheeled vehicle with room for three passengers. We were led inside the church yard and seated on a bench, where the women took off our shoes and socks and poured water over our feet. That was a welcome I have never experienced before!

The ten pastors and six evangelists who had gathered are from the Nuer tribe. The Nuer are easily recognized by the traditional practice of scarification. Men have scar lines across their foreheads and women have scars on their cheeks.



Peter Bur, Nuer refugee living in the United States, teaching fellow Nuer pastors and evangelists in Gambela, Ethiopia

Over the next few days, Terry Schultz taught the leaders about the doctrine of Justification. Pastor Bur taught from Luther's Catechism, which he had translated into the language of the Nuer. Pastor Mweete and I each taught a lesson and conducted a devotion. Pastor Bur was busy as he taught his own lessons and translated for the rest of us. Each day we rode the Bajaj taxi to our hotel, where monkeys watched us as we ate our meals. We never used the horse-drawn taxi-carts, one of which almost ran over us one day!

Plans are in the works for further training and encouragement of our Nuer brothers and sisters in the refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia. Please pray that the fighting stops soon, so that they can return to their homeland in South Sudan and be a blessing to the church there.



Pastor Kebede of the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia baptizing a man in Bishoptu

On 21 October Pastor Mweete and I flew back to Bishoptu, Ethiopia in time for the installation of a new pastor in the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia and the second graduation of the Maor Theological College and Seminary. Maor Theological College was founded and is run by Dr. Kebede Yizgezu. Dr. Kebede is the founder and President of the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia as well as the primary professor of the College and Seminary. This year's graduating class numbered 34 students in six different levels of theology. Dr. Kebede was the only pastor in the church until the ordination and graduation of a second pastor, Shambel Hordofa Robi. Prof. Allen Sorum from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary preached at the service and Pastor Mweete and I assisted with the presentation of diplomas.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary currently sends its professors on short-term teaching trips to Maor Theological College. We pray that this arrangement may continue, and that other avenues of training the leaders of God's church in Africa may be explored as well.



How do you spell Coca Cola in Ethiopia?

These are our brothers and sisters in Christ from Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan! All of them rejoice with us in the Scriptural truth of full and free salvation! All of them are thankful to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation! Let us give thanks to God for our fellow Lutheran Christians and pray for their growth in the truths of his grace!

Missionary John Hartmann lives in Lusaka, Zambia and coordinates outreach for One African Team

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>