

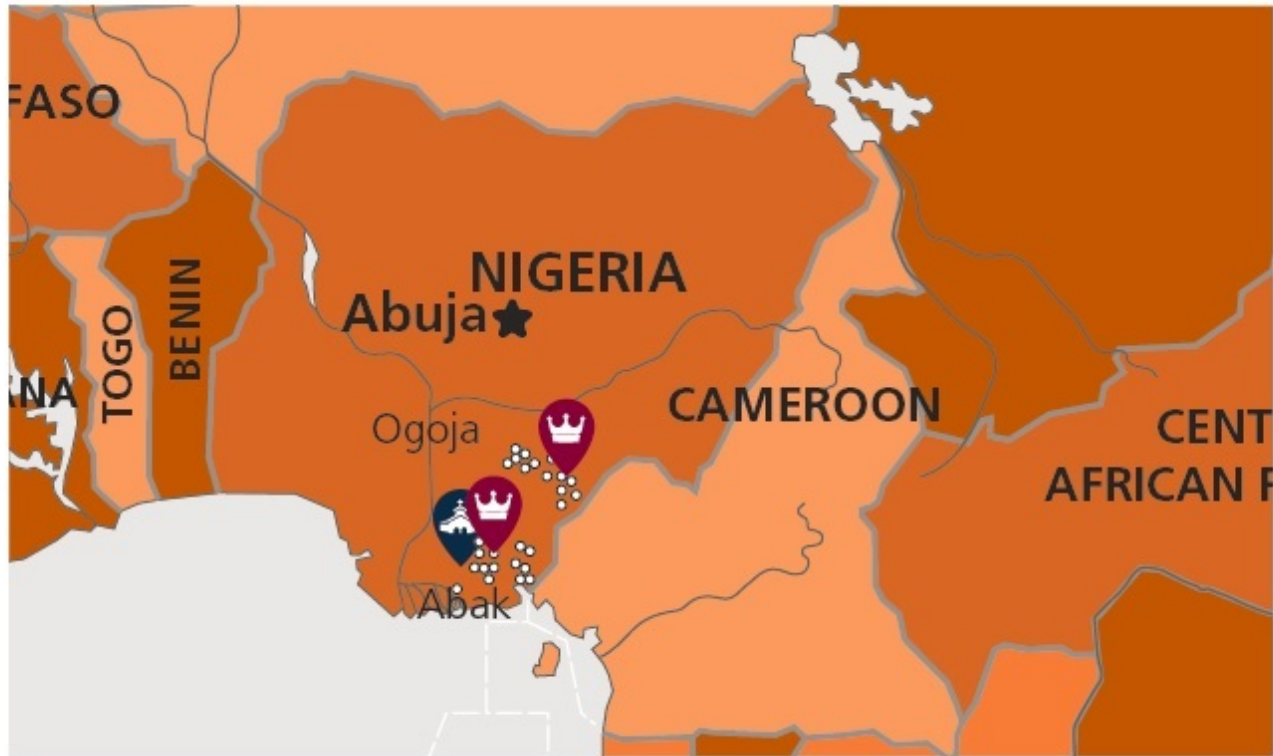
New Face, Old Friendship



My name is Missionary Jeff Heitsch, and I just returned from my very first visit to Nigeria. I spend half of my time working with two independent Nigerian Lutheran church bodies. The rest of my time I serve the Lutheran Church of Cameroon, along with Missionary Dan Kroll who accompanied me on this first trip.

The initial date of our first visit to Nigeria had been set for the end of October, but as my wife and I just arrived in Cameroon we were not able to leave until the beginning of November. Due to political tension in Cameroon, and because the land border between Cameroon and Nigeria was closed we began our journey to Nigeria

on Friday, November 24th. Our purpose was to meet with the leaders of Christ the King Lutheran Church and All Saints Lutheran Church, the two sister church bodies with which the WELS strives to collaborate efforts and to provide financial support.



★ Capital

👑 Church Headquarters

○ Church

🏛️ Seminary

The majority of the congregations Christ the King Lutheran Church are located in the southeastern part of Nigeria, about two hours north of the town of Calabar. There are also congregations in Calabar and in Port Harcourt. The church body's headquarters are located in the town of Uruk Uso. All Saints Lutheran Church is located in the central part of Nigeria in the area known as the Cross River State, about a 6 to 7 hour drive north from Uruk Uso.



Two buildings house students on the seminary campus in Uruk Uso

The two church bodies are independent of each other. Each one teaches their own pre-seminary classes, but they jointly operate a seminary together. At this time, Christ the King Lutheran Church of Nigeria has enrolled 9 pre-seminary students who will matriculate in March of 2018, and one other man who has already completed his pre-seminary training. All Saints Lutheran Church of Nigeria currently has 12 students enrolled in their pre-seminary courses, so there is the potential enrollment of 22 seminary students. The seminary operates out of the headquarters of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Uruk Uso where there is a small classroom and limited dorm space. A bigger classroom and more living quarters will need to be constructed before the new class of students arrive in 2019.

On this first visit we flew into Lagos, Nigeria but had to make a different connection than we originally planned. That added another two hours of travel time by vehicle, but we were eager to attend the worship services of each church body. Mr. Solomon George, who has been driving the WELS Missionaries and visiting teachers for years, agreed to meet us in Calabar.



Christ the King Minister Group Officers prepare to start a meeting

On this first visit I met personally with various leaders and national pastors of each church body, and I heard firsthand accounts about the blessings and challenges that each group is facing. Nigeria is currently in the midst of a severe recession and this has caused severe financial struggles for members, pastors, and the church. I was appreciative of the opportunity to share the truth of God's Word and God's promise to care for us and give us what we need, and to focus on the truth that we already possess a treasure that all the world's money and riches could never buy - the treasure of salvation through the blood of Jesus our Savior. I assured all the groups that we would keep them in our prayers, and that we would continue to serve them with God's Word and encourage good administration and stewardship as we work together in our Gospel ministry.



Opening Meeting and Fellowship Meal at All Saints Lutheran Church in Ogoja

After we booked our flight to Nigeria, the land border between Nigeria and Cameroon was opened up. We decided to return to Cameroon by car as a test case. We arrived at the border on a crowded and busy day, so we had to cross on foot rather than being dropped off with our luggage. When we arrived in Nigeria there was an unexpected surprise waiting for us – our wives came to pick us up! We pray that this border crossing will continue to be open as it allows us to make much more efficient use of our time and money. I am looking forward to my next visit at the end of February, when I will have the opportunity to meet the seminary students.

Missionary Jeff Heitsch lives in Cameroon. His wife Stephanie has been blogging about their experiences at <https://jsheitsch.wixsite.com/africa>

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>