

Portrait of a Gospel Harvester



2019 Graduates of the Greater Africa Theological Studies Institute (GRATSI) from left to right: Pastors Mecious Lubaba, Jonathan Kangongo, Eliya Petro, Forward Shamachona, Mascrif Mulonda, Stanley Daile, Alfred Kumchulesi, Ellason Kambalame. Missing: Pastor Enock Mkwase.

Picture Moshe, a first-century Galilean farmer. Moshe learns that Yeshua, the traveling rabbi he has heard so much about, has returned to the fishing village.

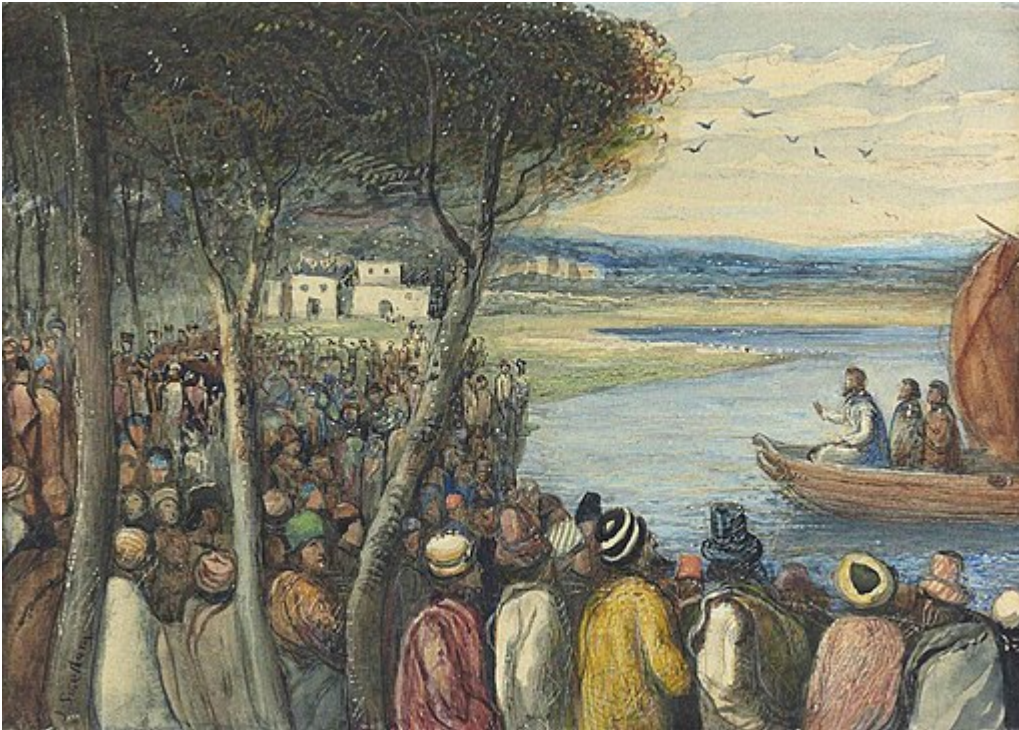
Moshe aches, head and heart, for God's kingdom. He decides to leave his farm for a day, walk the whole way, or catch a ride on an ox-cart, and see Yeshua.

Yeshua, rumor has it, claims God's kingdom is near.

If it is so, ... is the kingdom coming right away? Will God finally blow Roman taxes and military might away?

Moshe wonders if today, Yeshua will show the way.

Instead, when he reaches the lakeside village, K'far-nachum, Moshe sees a strange sight. Yeshua sits in a boat, just off shore. He talks to a crowd at the water's edge.



Jesus preached to the people of Capernaum from a boat (Lk 5:1-11)

Yeshua describes the kingdom not as a revolution, but in terms of *farming*, of all things. The rabbi seems to know, in Moshe's world, just how things go.

Moshe catches the end of a first story, something about four types of soil, and a huge harvest. Yeshua says, "Whoever has ears to hear with, let him hear!"

Moshe thinks, "I have ears. I'm hearing. ...What does he mean?"

In private, Yeshua tells a second farming story. Moshe hears it later, second-hand. It seems weirder.

"God's reign," Yeshua says, "is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. Nights he sleeps, days he's awake; and meanwhile the seeds sprout and grow — how, he doesn't know. By itself the soil produces a crop — first the stalk, then the head, and finally the full grain in the head. But as soon as the crop is ready, the man comes with his sickle, because it's harvest-time" (Mark 4:26-29).

Moshe's head aches anew. Huh? He is a farmer, like his father. Any farmer waits

and waits. Moshe knows, too: No farmer knows how seed grows.

But God knows everything. God can do *anything*. He is King! God freed his people from Egypt, suddenly. He brought Jews back from Babylon, dramatically.

Why, if the Messiah appears, must God's kingdom come so hiddenly, so slowly?

Picture modern Moshes. They know farming well. They are pastors, sowing the seed of God's word in Africa, in countries such as Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, and Zambia.

Many come from farms and farming communities. Many tended large gardens for years, on the side, while they studied to become pastors. Many still tend gardens. They must, to feed their families.

They have walked, hitch-hiked, and ridden crowded minibusses to study for kingdom service and to be part of it. To hear Jesus speak to them over many years, and now to preach his holy name, may mean tough travels. Few own automobiles. Bicycles can be blessings. Some pastors have motorbikes but struggle to afford petrol for them.



Like fictional Moshe long ago, the way the kingdom comes also can make a headache. God's way puzzles. Hard work fizzles.

The devil works hard to snatch seed away, so it does not even penetrate hearts.

Christianity is common in many African places these days, but sorrows abound too. Some people fall away from Christ when trouble comes.

Others turn to a prosperity gospel that is no good news at all. Alcoholism, animism, materialism, and tribalism choke African gospel growth.

Still: "Whoever has ears to hear with, let him hear!"

Picture the one who said so: The perfect planter and the perfect pastor. From his virgin mother's womb, he was perfectly patient, in your place.

(You lose your struggle with patience so often, don't you?)

Picture the king who made himself nothing, who willingly left his throne on high so he could die in place of every sinner. He paid, in your place.

"What I am about to tell you is so true," he tells a crowd. He knows in three days he will be so ashamed, so guilty, so alone. Dead on the cross. Dead between heaven and earth. Dead between God and us all.

How can the kingdom grow if its king dies disgraced?



“Unless a grain of wheat that falls to the ground dies,” he says, “it stays just a grain; but if it dies, it produces a big harvest.” (John 12:24).

Picture, then, a tiny slice of God’s kingdom.

Picture an African effort in Christ crucified, risen, reigning, and soon reappearing. It began in 2010. It’s growing again. Expanding. The former GRATSI (Greater Africa Theological Studies Institute) is now CLI (the Confessional Lutheran Institute).

One of CLI’s aims: ongoing formal education for pastors, after their seminary years. Degrees like Bachelor of Divinity and Masters of Theology through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, diplomas will say.

Q&A about CLI Degree Program

How do pastors apply for CLI’s BDiv program?

They fill out one-page application form available from BDiv director Daniel Witte, and include a recommendation letter from a church body leader above them and from a leader/leaders of a congregation they serve.

What kind of test do pastors have to take before entering CLI's BDiv program?

They write a test on the Bible and its doctrine, along with a small amount of church history. The test helps CLI compare a pastor's aptitude for further study with the aptitude of other applicants. CLI chooses up to 20 pastors to form a BDiv cohort.

What if a pastor does not make it into the BDiv cohort?

CLI plans to offer pre-BDiv certification courses for such pastors, in hopes that they will be able to enter the next BDiv cohort.

How many modules does CLI's BDiv program offer?

Pastors, God willing, will take two classes a year for four years, plus an extra class on writing and research.

The main eight classes will be two each from these four categories: Biblical theology (Old and New Testament), doctrinal theology, historical theology, and pastoral theology.

Where will these twice-a-year classes be held?

In the past, classes have been held at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Lilongwe, Malawi, and at the Lutheran Seminary in Lusaka, Zambia.

If God allows, we hope in the new BDiv cohort to hold at least one of the eight main classes in Nairobi, Kenya. Classes also may be taught in Nairobi by other means.

Who will teach the classes in CLI's BDiv program?

Experienced professors from Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota and from Wisconsin Lutheran College in Mequon, Wisconsin will teach the classes, along with CLI Formal Continuing Education director Missionary Daniel Witte.

From where do pastors receive their CLI BDiv degree?

From the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Does CLI offer any other degrees besides BDiv?

Pastors who complete the BDiv degree well may, upon further testing, be able to enter CLI's MTh program. It offers further, more specialized instruction.

Is CLI's BDiv program new in 2020?

No. We are renewing and expanding our commitment from the past, with a new director living now in Lusaka, Zambia.

The prior program, the Greater African Theological Studies Institute (GRATSI), has already had two BDiv cohorts, 2010-2014 and 2015-2019.

Our relationship with WLS remains and is becoming deeper; our commitment to providing godly instruction and beneficial degrees continues!

Picture, though, more than beaming pastors' faces and spiffy diplomas, the real result your missionaries aim at, as we partner with our African brothers: deeper and wider seed scattering.

See in studies for a future BDiv or MTh degree what only God can see: His seed going into the hearts of men who have learned from slow, bitter experience, that neither the planter nor the water is anything, but only God, who makes things grow (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Picture post-seminary classes?

Better, picture modern Moshes. Picture more planting. Foresee the final harvest.

How does God's word reign in fellow pastors' hearts? And take root more deeply? We don't exactly know. When will the harvest be? We don't know.

So we sow.

Missionary Daniel Witte lives in Zambia and is the head of the Formal Continuing Education branch of the CLI. This is the third in a three-part series on the Confessional Lutheran Institute



Join the joint WELS/LWMS missions convention at <https://welstasteandsee.com/> to view more missions presentations and devotions

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>