

We Go Farther Together



“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together” — Zambian proverb

For over 80 years the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has supported mission work on the African continent, bringing both spiritual and material relief to weary and burdened. Over that time, nearly one hundred called workers and their families have given up the comforts of life in the United States to offer their time and skills in service of God’s kingdom. There have been missionaries who spent only a few years in Africa, and there are those veterans who have spent the majority of their lives here yet the Lord has used each and every of them to accomplish his own goals, in his own time.

From the very beginning of our mission outreach in Nigeria back in the late 1930's, American expatriate missionaries performed all the Gospel ministry tasks such as teaching and baptizing, preaching and administering the sacrament of communion and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ both in English and in foreign tongues. Who could begin to count the cost of these missionaries' sacrifices, the time devoted to learning foreign cultures, the trials of life-threatening diseases, the threat of post-independence civil unrest? These sacrifices are hard-won trophies known only to the missionaries and their merciful God, who gave them their confidence to keep on moving forward in spite of all obstacles.



National pastors perform all acts of ministry in WELS' partner synods in Africa. Today we witness the fruits of their hard labor, and God's blessings on the preaching of his Gospel through the ever-increasing numbers of Christ's followers gathered in the Lutheran churches of Africa and the national African pastors who serve them. There are over 125 ordained African pastors serving over 50,000 members, forming seven independent Lutheran church bodies located in six countries. Our "children" have grown up and are reaching out to their countrymen on their own. Although WELS still supports 11 expatriate missionaries in Africa, none of them are currently ministering directly to African congregations. None of them are baptizing or teaching or confirming new Lutherans. None of them are preaching in the local languages of the people.

Instead, the missionaries of One Africa Team have

transitioned into a new role as consultants to the leaders of our sister churches in Africa. One Africa Team has stated its core focus thus: "Through theological education and coordination of WELS resources, we assist our partners in Africa to grow as independent, healthy church bodies." WELS is committed to securing theological training for African pastors both on the undergraduate and graduate levels by supporting both expatriate and national teachers in African worker training schools.



OAT connects African partners with other WELS entities such as WELS Multi-Language Publications

In some countries, expatriate missionaries teach side by side with national teachers. In West Africa, where it is currently not safe for Americans to live, our missionaries provide remote support to teachers via assistance planning curriculum and encouragement over the phone and email. In Ethiopia, the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary sends guest professors to Maor Theological College, which is headed by Dr. Kebede Getachew. The LC-MC Kenya, WELS' newest partner in Africa, and One Africa Team are exploring options for training pastors.

One Africa Team, which consists of missionaries living on the continent as well as stateside administrators, is the official face of WELS in Africa. One Africa Team is in a prime position to help connect our sister churches in Africa with the vast array of WELS resources available to assist them in other ways. Recently, the OAT missionary of Publications helped coordinate a pan-African Publications conference in Lusaka, Zambia which was

underwritten by WELS Multi-Language Publications. OAT has helped connect our sister churches in Zambia and Malawi with WELS Christian Aid and Relief on projects of a humanitarian nature, such as drilling boreholes. OAT is partnering with the WELS Mission Journeys program, which will give WELS members

the opportunity to participate in short-term mission trips to Africa that will benefit local partner congregations in their ministries. OAT missionaries are willing to facilitate our African partners' connections with a multitude of other WELS groups such as the Global South Sudanese Committee, the Central African Medical Mission, Kingdom Workers, the Vulnerable Children's Fund, and Grace in Action (to only name a few).



OAT facilitates the digging of boreholes in Africa for clean drinking water through grants from WELS Christian Aid & Relief

As our African partners are assuming an ever greater responsibility for their ministry in their own countries, One Africa Team missionaries have trained their sights on outreach to new groups of believers in countries that are new to WELS missions. Africa's huge landmass is the same

area as the USA, China, India, Japan and Europe combined, and its population will be upwards of 2.5 billion by the middle of this century. These are compelling reasons alone for WELS missions to continue to invest its time and manpower in Africa, but let us remember that the blessings of African mission work flow in two directions, both from the sending church to the daughter church and vice versa. WELS' involvement in African missions over the last 80 years has kept Gospel outreach at the beating heart of our ministry and mission. We do not send missionaries only to build hospitals and schools, but to preach the life transforming Gospel of Christ that sets people free from fear and superstition.



Rev. B. Mjinga used the WELS produced movie, “Luther & Me” to teach Reformation history at the Blantyre District Youth Rally

That is why One Africa Team is currently exploring new opportunities to partner with Christ's followers from Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe who share our passion: “Christ for All, Great News for Africa.” We need to work closely with our partners, to overcome cultural barriers and to lovingly work through the resulting misunderstandings that often arise. OAT has set the goal of declaring fellowship with 12 groups of Christians in a total of 12 countries by the year 2025, with another 6 prospective groups of Christians in 6 other countries in the process.

And OAT has set a goal for empowering its African partners to assume a greater role in the training of new pastors, as well as the continued

nurturing of their current corpus through peer mentoring and formal education program by the middle of the next decade.

One Africa Team's prayer is that Christ continues to bless our journey together with our partners that benefits all parties and advances His kingdom goals around the globe.

*Missionary John Roebke lives in Malawi and coordinates
Communications for One Africa 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>*