

Who's in Charge Here?



I wish I would have kept track of the number of times I said to myself, “Ok, I guess we are **not** in charge of these matters.”

In December of 2019, I was blessed to visit Uganda for a teaching trip on behalf of the One Africa Team Outreach Committee. I accompanied Missionary John Hartmann for the third meeting with a group of Pastors, Evangelists and other church leaders. Since this was my first visit, I wasn't sure what to expect. I was pleased with what I saw there -a solid and serious group continuing to hunger and thirst for the true righteousness only Jesus can provide (Matthew 5:6). These people were eager to know the truth and see how those teachings fit into real life. Most of them had experience in the church that left them thinking “there should be more to what I'm hearing and seeing from the leaders of my church body.”



Pastor Hartmann teaching with a lively lecture method

One of the problems we have run into here in Africa is the overwhelming temptation to bring our own American logistical organization into the African contexts in which we work. Since most these logistics are NOT doctrinal, we are currently making a conscious effort to avoid setting up American methods and standards for non-biblical matters. It will be more truly “African” if our new brothers take ownership of those logistical matters and our missionaries focus more specifically on the doctrinal matters as they are presented in Scripture. In order to do that, our WELS missionaries must remind themselves regularly to “go with the flow” because we are **not** in charge of these matters.



Plenty of various foods for us to enjoy

Here are some examples to help us remember who was and was not in charge of this program:

- Because one of our planes was late getting into Entebbe, we were not able to stay where we had planned on the first night.
- On the first full day, we waited about 4 hours on the side of the road for a drive shaft to replace the one that had fallen off the car.

- Since food is such an important part of the culture, we ate twice on our arrival: 10pm and midnight. We are not accustomed to such hospitality, so it was a good reminder that we are **not** in charge of these matters.
- “Starting teaching time” = “when everybody is present,” by somebody else’s evaluation. We learned flexibility.
- We were late for Sunday worship at Nairika Congregation because of a broken wheel, due to incessant rain and an odd stone that appeared in the road. The members were patient, waiting until 2 pm for us to arrive. Maybe they also recognized that they were **not** in charge of the situation. Our return “home” was delayed by 1) getting stuck in the mud and 2) a broken-down sugar cane truck on a one-lane mud road. We made it back to Pastor Musa’s house in God’s (good) time, since he himself (God) was in charge of these things.



Legs sticking out from under the vehicle became a fairly common sight for us in Uganda



Our “kitchen” and other support staff did a great job!

Rather than being in charge, the members of the One Africa Team are working hard to fit into the program of Obadiah Lutheran Synod there in Uganda. We came to do the teaching. The what and the how of that teaching activity is absolutely in our hands (unless God himself intervenes again), and we consider ourselves very much blessed to be subject to the culture and methods of our brothers where those cultures and methods do not conflict with God’s will. We are **not** in charge of any other logistics regarding when and where that our teaching would take place. Pastor Musa, together with Pastor Edward, Pastor Isaac and Pastor Wilberforce were taking ownership of this program by making decisions about those logistics. It was a great blessing to see these men take control of their own church body while we filled them with the Lord’s good counsel to guide their hearts. We are planning for three more visits in the coming year or so, to build a strong, Ugandan-owned and operated church body.



Small groups keeps the learning in the hands of the learners for culture and language

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