

Why We Visit

A pastor who visits people makes people who visit church. That's why I devoted two nights a week to visit both members and visitors when I lived in the United States. Sometimes I would call ahead, most times I just showed up at the door. I only got a gun pulled on me once – but that's how he greeted everyone.

I don't make house calls anymore because I don't have a congregation. However, every other month I'm on the road. My father asked me, "Is it necessary to visit all these people?" It's true that we can handle a lot of our work online. But this post will show why we visit in person.

What We Saw

I just returned home after a two week visit to Uganda, where we partner with the Obadiah Lutheran Synod. We are also pursuing relationships with two new groups. One is called the Confessional Lutheran Synod of Uganda (CLSU). Two years ago, conservative pastors broke away from the Lutheran Church of Uganda. They formed their own church body and Seminary, and are seeking partnership with WELS.

Missionary Ben Foxen and I were greatly encouraged by what we saw during our visit. Members of Christ the Vine enthusiastically welcomed us. We worshipped in their newly constructed sanctuary, constructed of mud and wattle and roofing sheets. We witnessed baptisms, confirmations, and the installation of four congregational evangelists. They were greatly honored by our visit.



Bishop Benson is the leader of CLSU

We also visited Mt. Calvary congregation, whose members worship in a schoolroom. Several CLSU congregations have started schools as a means to reach out to the community. Bishop Benson Barahuka, the leader of the CLSU, joined in the dancing and fun. He asked the members to contribute towards a church building project. A visit like ours shows that every member and congregation are valued and connected to the body of Christ.



School building where members of Mt. Calvary meet on Sundays

Missionary Foxen and I sat down with CLSU leaders for a week to study Lutheran teachings and practice. I had met some of them previously, while leading an online

course on the Augsburg Confession. We all agreed that meeting face to face is better. Bishop Benson thanked WELS donors for making our visit possible. He told us, "You care." He was glad we made a visit - and so are we.

What Needs Work

The other group we are working with in Uganda is the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession Uganda (ECACU). This group also came out of the Lutheran Church of Uganda. Rev. Simon Peter Waako is their leader.

At our opening worship service we sang from The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH), which had been donated by LC-MS congregations in the USA. The tunes we sang did not always match what was printed in the hymnal. Almost all of the long meter (LM) hymns were sung to the tune of, "I Know that My Redeemer Lives."

The liturgy was conducted in the Runyoro language, although not everyone in attendance spoke that tongue. Throughout our visit, everything we spoke in English had to be translated twice. This slowed us down considerably. Did you know that over 3,000 languages are spoken on the African continent?

Our visit to God Bought congregation was also a challenge. Our van got stuck in the mud and we had to walk the last kilometer to the church site. A small group of Christians gather every Sunday under a tree. The owner of the adjacent property evicted them from their building because he wants to farm crops there.



The next visit was to Kakasato church, which has 50 members. A local man invited ECACU to start a congregation in his barn. They offer Sunday School and Bible class, in addition to worship. We also made a visit to Kabatindule, which means “felling a tree.” The congregation meets under a lean-to on the property of one of the members. They do not have any Bibles, catechisms or hymnals.

Our visit showed us there’s a lot of work to be done with ECACU before we declare fellowship. There’s no way we could know this without coming in person. This is why we visit. And God-willing, we will make another visit soon.

Missionary John Roebke lives in Malawi.

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>