

Where *He* Leads...

FOREIGN MISSION NEWSLETTER

of the APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

Vol. 13, No. 1

January-March 2011

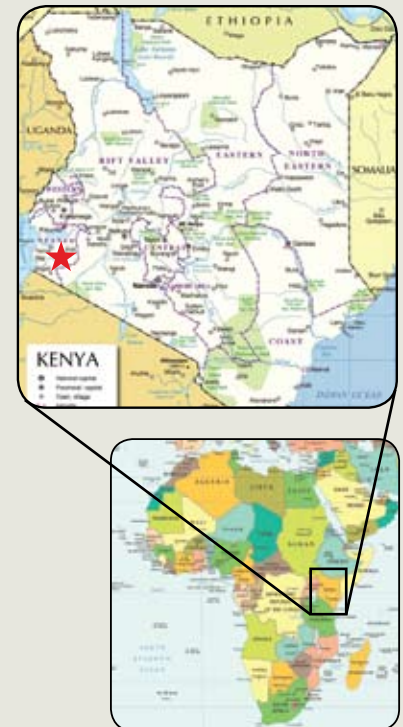
Greetings from Kenya, East Africa

Earlier this summer I was motivated to speak to some people in our area that were from Kenya, not realizing that this was the beginning of a journey to that far-away land. I feel it was a special calling from God that I was not even aware of. As time went on, the Foreign Mission Board talked about sending someone to Kenya to answer the call that had been made by these people, who had no actual church name, but were searching for the truth of God's Word. They had found our website and had read about us. Hence the call.

I went with John Ruotsala, our Foreign Mission administrator, on this the first Foreign Mission trip to Kenya.

We were met by Pastor Charles and members of his congregation in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. They welcomed us with open arms, and we spent the night in a house in Nairobi. Then we were off to the villages of Gucha and South Gucha, which are west of Nairobi near Lake Victoria.

When we arrived at Pastor Charles' congregation, the love and kindness shown us surpassed anything that we could have expected. These people live without electricity, running water, or any kind of refrigeration, and live from hand-to-mouth preparing new meals each day. The land was totally cultivated, lush and green beyond imagination.



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Pastor Charles and members of his congregation.



Lush and green countryside.

From the Foreign Mission Administrator Desk

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***And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.
(John 10:16)***

These are the words of Jesus, the Savior of all mankind! Jesus suffered, bled, and died for the sins of everyone that was ever born or will be born. It has always been, and always will be, our Lord's desire that all would be saved, no matter what fold they are from, or in today's vernacular, whatever nationality they are or wherever they may live.

Sometime back while I was visiting London, it was such a joy to find the above verse engraved on the memorial stone of David Livingstone, a missionary to Africa, in Westminster Abbey. It was wonderful to see that God's Holy Word has been preserved in stone in the most prominent location of one of the most prestigious buildings in all of England.

Let us pray that God, through the Holy Spirit, would give us a heart and an urgency to take part in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ, beginning first at home and then as far away as the Lord leads us! To participate in the work in His Vineyard, you do not have to go yourself if that is not your calling. You can support the work through prayer and other options available through your Foreign Mission, which is always looking for your input. Simply email

foreignmission@comcast.net so we can communicate. Phone calls and letters are also welcome.

The 4th quarter of 2010 was a busy and blessed one for the Foreign Mission. Trips were completed to Russia, Liberia, Ghana, Guatemala, and Kenya. I would like to relate a short story of the exploratory trip to Kenya that Chad Kuivanen and I went on in November 2010.

After flying to a place totally unknown to us, we began a car journey with people who were strangers to us, except for my one-year of email contact with one particular host. We drove about seven hours on a road in a questionably safe car. We then were on a muddy, dirt road for two hours to get to the village where we were going to spend the first week. These villages have no electricity and only mud homes. However, our host said we must first go to the police station. Imagine what we thought, not knowing the country, the people, or even if they were Christian friendly (many places where we go are not).

When we arrived at the station, the chief, two deputies, and a room full of people were there. The chief looked at us and said, "So, are you here to preach the Gospel?" Our answer was, "Yes." What

was going to be his response? The police chief extended his hand and said with a big smile, "You are most welcome! My deputies and I will protect you and will watch over you. You will be safe here. We need the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached here in Kenya. This year there are two of you; next year bring ten!"

With that he asked us to sign the guestbook, and then he asked me to say a prayer! Imagine the joy in saying a prayer to our Almighty God right there in the police station in this unknown place. This is the mighty bear hug type of feeling that we were treated with on this entire trip.

The doors are wide open for the Word of the Lord to be spoken in Kenya. There is much religion in Kenya, but much is questionable doctrinally. Our host stated that it was his feeling that we could preach to one million people in five years if we would continue to come to that area. I told him that only God knows and God will decide where His Word is spoken. Please be in prayer for this new mission field, which seems so open at this time.

I welcome you to go to <http://www.foreignmissionnewsblog.blogspot.com>, which you can also access at www.themissionsite.com for more about Kenya and for ongoing updates on many of the mission trips that take place.



Bibles in their native tongue distributed by the Foreign Mission in Kenya.



Pastor Simeon with his wife and 5 sons.

We visited two different congregations, which were some distance apart. We held devotional services and provided spiritual instruction and guidance in the way that they should go. John and I were so amazed at their reception of the Word and the joy and happiness of the people at receiving His Word. We both agreed that God had prepared their hearts to receive it. It warmed our hearts as we journeyed through the Word as God led us.

There was much thanks given to God on our behalf, and they said that God had

love for them. Many were the repentances as God gave them faith in the mighty work of Christ on the cross and His glorious resurrection in their behalf that they might know the true God and how much He cares for them.

These people live in such humble surroundings that it was hard for us to believe that people in this world still live under such circumstances – poor and without earthly possessions, but yet with great love in their hearts. May God be praised and glorified for sending us there,

sent us to them. So it was with pure joy that we served them, preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name and blood. This is the command of Christ: to go unto all nations and preach this Gospel message that they might come to know Christ and His

for truly we felt His hand upon them and us as we worshiped together.

In conclusion, they were in awe that "this old man," as I was called, came from so far to preach to them and they didn't want us to leave. They said they have a "home" for us in Kenya, and even gave us a key to it. This was such an opportunity God gave to us that it will live in our hearts forever. We pray that God will continue to feed them and water their hearts with the Water of Life. Their desire is for the second coming of Christ, and they want to be ready.

On this trip, John and I went by faith, God leading us, and how wonderful it was. May God bless and keep these wonderful people so that their journey through this life will be successful to that Eternal Shore.

God's Peace,

– Chad Kyivanen

NOTE: Since our return, the Kenyan people have sent messages concerning our time spent with them. These are posted on the Foreign Mission website.

VISITING THE BACKWOODS OF GRAND GEDEH COUNTY, LIBERIA



Site of the original church in Zwedru. Left, Pastor Othello S. Tyne, President of the Apostolic Lutheran Church in Liberia. Center, Evangelist D. Christian Bowah. Right, “Mamu Taru,” wife of the late president of the church in Liberia. Dennis and Paul in front.

In the middle of December, Paul Somero and I returned from a blessed time in the eastern Liberian backwoods of Grand Gedeh County, which is actually a state. We were based in its capital of Zwedru, which is quite close to the border of the troubled Ivory Coast. The ten or eleven hour ride each way from the capital city of Monrovia would have been worse than ever except that this time we obtained an air-conditioned Jeep-type vehicle. The bone-jarring jolts along the entire journey were not softened much by the Jeep, but we did avoid all those hours of billowing red dust in the car that we have had to put up with on previous trips as well as the excessive sweating since most days were in the 90’s. When we got to Zwedru we found the church and the other churches in the area to be in an active and healthy condition.

Site of the ruins of the original church in Zwedru. This church was actually visited by both Pastors Andrew Mickelson and Gus Kandoll in the early 1970’s, but later destroyed during the long civil war that only ended five years ago. “Mama Taru,” the woman in the picture, was the wife of the late president of the church in Liberia. She was present at this church building during the visits of Mickelson and Kandoll!

Presenting Bibles to the lieutenant governor. In Zwedru our first obligation was to report to the governor of the state of Grand Gedeh. He actually was unable

to receive us when we arrived at the state offices, but the lieutenant governor welcomed us and received the gifts of Bibles we had brought for three of the top officials that day. For the governor we had prepared a special leather-bound volume.

Later, the governor himself had a special audience for us thanking us profusely for the beautiful Bible he had received and confessing a warm and living faith in Jesus Christ. Through his office, and by his special personal sanction and assistance, we were able to schedule a unique crusade evening in the main square of the city (which is actually a triangle) that Saturday night, which I will return to later.

Prison visits. While in the office of the lieutenant governor we were also promised permission to visit the local prison. This developed into two visits to the rather new prison. During the first one about 35 inmates were gathered and enthusiastically received the Word, singing from the heart their songs of faith and joy. We arranged to return a few days later and deliver about 50 Bibles to the prisoners – that is, 10 Bibles for each of their five blocks, totaling 150 prisoners. What happened when we returned with the Bibles on Tuesday is almost indescribable. When we approached the gates we heard

powerful singing. “They are waiting for you!” the prison director announced as he met us at the gate. And were they ever! A great majority of all 150 prisoners were now gathered in the main room singing with POWER and enthusiasm. We were in no way expecting this since we thought we were just going to drop off the Bibles. But we were suddenly on the platform and I was preaching a completely unprepared but Spirit-given sermon to one of the most enthusiastic crowds I have had the humble honor of facing. When I invited those who felt the weight of sin

“They are waiting for you!” the prison director announced as he met us at the gate.

upon their hearts and consciences to come forward in confession before the Heavenly Father, first one man came trembling and then another and another until at least half of the men were crowded around the podium in penitence with bowed heads receiving the blessed Gospel assurance of the forgiveness of all of their sins in Jesus’ name and atoning blood. And then when they all sang afterwards there were no more bars left around their hearts and souls and it was as if the roof would just fly off. God is so wonderfully good and so is the Chassel, Michigan congregation for donating the Bibles to this prison and many other people in need of them during our week in Liberia.



Liberian friend Pastor Natt. The Bibles were transported by car from Monrovia to Zwedru.

For all of the Bibles we were able to deliver in Zwedru, we owe a great debt of gratitude, as I said, to the Chassel congregation and Matthew and James Niemela. One hundred seventy-two very nice regular KJV Bibles, 10 in the local language (most people in Liberia are very well versed in English and read their Bible in English), and 15 big, large-print leather bound Bibles were purchased at the Bible Society in Liberia.

Bible studies and revival services.

After the regular worship service on Sunday, it was time to begin morning Bible studies for members of the Zwedru congregation, as well as those of other local congregations, from Monday to Thursday. Brother Paul and I shared the responsibility for these four-day sessions, which actually turned out to be far more in-depth and richer than we had anticipated. On Wednesday evening the four days of revival services began. But who would have anticipated that it would be the governor himself recommending the main city square as the venue for the final one on Saturday evening, and then to even offer his support to see that we could pull it off with God's help! The revival services on Wednesday through Friday evenings were held at the church and were very well attended, but the crusade evening on Saturday night really broke the barriers.

Preaching in the central "square."

Most fortunately, when God provided us with a driver from Monrovia to Zwedru, He not only provided us with someone who could maneuver a car well on those roads hour upon hour (note all those extra gallons of gas for the road), but in the same wonderful person, named Otis Pope, he provided a living Christian brother, a sound and light technician and a talented



Our driver, Otis Pope. In this picture he is dressed in preparedness for the long journey from Monrovia to Zwedru.

musician. It was Otis who organized everything technical for Saturday evening, including a projector (provided by Paul) and big screen so that everyone could follow what was happening. He also took responsibility for seeing that there were plenty of lights, microphones, and speakers to cover the necessities. He was everywhere, capable of "everything." A driver mind you! A simple driver!

After the sermon on the Good Samaritan an invitation went out to anyone who "had been left by the wayside," who were burdened by sin, guilt, doubt or fear. At least 50 or 60 people,



Family father in Zwedru with his cherished new Bible.

especially young people and even children, came forward in penitence to confess their faith, receive the absolution in Jesus' name and blood and a fervent prayer for their souls. And through it all, the governor sat in the front row and even brought his own short, powerful personal message before the sermon. It was all truly exhilarating and very humbling, and all on the big screen (which could be seen from both front and back) for the whole town to see and hear. The first of its kind in the state of Grand Gedeh!

A gifted and devoted group of "prayer warriors" led the praise and worship prelude and assisted throughout the whole evening. Some of the men are



Prayer warriors who led the praise and worship prelude and assisted throughout the evening.

missing in this picture, which was taken before the evening began, because they were involved in setting things up. We estimate that over a thousand people crowded around that big main triangle of the city on that Saturday night. It was awesome and inspiring, and for me, who was scheduled to speak, a bit daunting! It was also awesome to see how the Zwedru congregation conducted the big service that evening.

Farewell. On Sunday, we had a very special long service at the church, which was particularly characterized as a farewell occasion for Paul and me. In addition to my sermon, there was special music and singing after which they presented a special certificate of appreciation for the teaching and preaching God had allowed me to do, and Paul and I were robed in special chieftain's shirts and given Liberian names. That Sunday service was a wonderful celebration which concluded a truly blessed twelve days in Zwedru.

Making this trip together with Paul was a most rewarding experience. He is such a wonderfully compassionate, generous and



"We're in this together!" Paul comforting an older Liberian sister.

spiritually-minded person who makes a difference wherever he goes. It was Paul or Paul's camera that took most of the pictures included in this article.

Back at our unique Hotel Kendeja by the Atlantic Ocean in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. At this hotel every day at 8:00 we were able to gather in a part of the laundry room with the service staff of the hotel to share in their morning devotions – in the Word, in prayer and in singing spiritual songs. Refreshing – that's Liberia!

In God's love and peace,

– *Dennis Hilman*

MINISTERING IN RUSSIA



University Professor Victor Ivanov (seated beside Greg) and one of his English language classes at the Chuvash State University.

In November 2010, Shane Juuti and I traveled with Greg Greve to Russia for a three week mission trip. It was Greg's prayer that we would be able to bring the gospel message to many people that have not heard it before. I know that this was the prayer of many of you who had heard of this upcoming trip. God graciously provided the occasion to speak to at least 13 different classes of students in four universities. Class size ranged from as little as 2 to as many as 100, with at least 250 total students.



Speaking to students at the Mari State University.



Our first opportunity came in the city of Izhevsk through our dear friend Diana, a former English language professor whom Greg and I have known from previous visits and at whose apartment we stay when we visit Izhevsk. Diana introduced us to a teacher named Tatiana who invited us to address her class the next day.

Our classroom visits usually went something like this: The class professor would introduce us to the class and then we would each tell the class a little bit about our life, family, and work. Greg would then ask each student to say a little about themselves, asking the student several questions to draw them out. Most students were shy and a little nervous about speaking English, but they relaxed under Greg's encouraging questions.

We then allowed the students opportunity to ask their own questions. It is illegal to intentionally teach Christianity at schools in Russia, so we had to be careful how we brought out the Gospel teaching. We could, however, answer questions from the students and when it was their turn, one would usually ask, "Why are you here in Russia?" and we would reply that we are here to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to the people of Russia. This usually led to similar questions giving us a chance to teach this Gospel of Jesus Christ to the class without getting anyone in trouble and thus destroying our welcome for future visits. When we were on the topic of Christianity, Greg would ask how many believed in God, and almost always everyone would raise their hand. He then pointed out that there is a big difference in just believing in God and being a follower of Jesus Christ. The students were encouraged to get a Bible and to read it.

Next we went to the city of Cheboksary where we had opportunity to speak to students at two universities through contacts made through a young Christian man named Kostya, who I have never met. His mother, Ludmilla, is a professor at a university where

we were invited to speak to one class and ended up speaking to three classes. Kostya, as I understand, knew another Christian professor named Victor at the language school who arranged for us to speak to three of his classes and two others.

It really was amazing to see the beauty of God's provision and how He hears and answers the prayers of His people. Thank you all for your prayers for this mission and for the people of Russia. We came to Cheboksary thinking that we would speak to one or two classes. We spoke to one class, then word got around and other professors would request that we speak to their class as well. For them it was a good opportunity for the students to hear and speak with native English speakers, but for us it was God opening the door for His Word to be brought to His people.

The most memorable class we attended was Professor Victor's one hour class that started at six o'clock pm. He mentioned that it could go long, if necessary, since it was the last use of that room for the day and we wouldn't have to make way for a following class. Our Father in Heaven allowed the discussion to be turned to matters of faith. Greg told how his heart was awakened to belief in God through a simple confession of faith by two young Christians when he was 19 years-old and how he was led to purchase a Bible and read it. He spoke of being brought to his believing grandmother's house two years later where this Gospel of the forgiveness of his sin was spoken and believed. This prompted many questions. Finally, Victor announced that we had to depart because it was after 9 pm and the building needed to be locked up. I rejoiced that at a university in Russia, a language class could run 2 hours over because the students were asking and learning of the matters that are of eternal value. Praise be to God our Father in Jesus Christ our Lord!

— *Brian W. Niemitalo*

Where He Leads... is published quarterly by the Foreign Mission Board of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America, 13519 NE 181st Circle, Battle Ground, WA 98604, under authorization number (USPS 02 1-043), and is distributed free-of-charge to congregations in America, Canada and foreign countries.

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My observations are of some of the spiritual conditions in Russia in the areas we traveled.

We visited several churches and groups that we have had previous contact and dealings with, most of which are affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia in Ingria. It seemed, however, that we were placed in a role of talking to people who had little or no exposure to living faith or perhaps have had a very shallow, at best, teaching of God.

We were invited to talk with several groups of “charismatics,” as the Russians call them. They had boisterous worship services with a lot of “Praise God!” and “Hallelujah!” and often speaking in tongues. They asked us to speak, and we were able to share how forgiveness is found at that altar of mercy that abides in

the hearts of believers... how Christ gave us the keys to the kingdom of heaven... how the blood of Christ can be sprinkled on a heart through the proclamation of forgiveness in Jesus’ name and blood... how believing this for one’s self brings the peace of a good conscience and salvation. Without exception, the people thanked us and asked us to please come and share with them if we are able to make it back to their respective areas. One young pastor that we spent a night with said it this way, “Our worship services have lots of Hallelujahs, arm waving and singing, but the quiet, confident truth that you spoke with was so different and beautiful. Would you please come back and share with us again? If you are ever in the area, our doors are open.”

There appears to be a hunger for the Word of God. While what they have been taught may be shallow, it’s all they know, and when they heard the depth

and truth of God’s Word, they embraced it with open arms and thankfulness.

There were so many separate incidences that it would be impossible to relate them all. I have to say that the scripture found in Matthew 9:37-38 was brought to mind often: *Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.* I have had to pray, and would encourage all to pray, that God would send forth laborers. Not just that laborers would go forth, but that God would send laborers. In even the small portion of Russia we visited, the harvest appears almost overwhelmingly plenteous.

May God richly bless all His servants, but especially those that He asks to go to foreign lands to share the Gospel message.

– Shane Juuti