

WHERE HE LEADS..

FOREIGN MISSION OF THE APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

West African Mission

BY FRANK KODJO FAMIYEH, GHANA

The Lord has laid it upon my heart to share the story of the West African mission field and my personal mission efforts in partnership with the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America (ALCA). While I cannot explain everything in such detail that will make readers have a complete grasp of the West African situation, I pray that the Lord will use this to give you a deeper understanding of His mission in this part of the world and the direction He is leading His servants to save perishing souls.

During my last visit to the USA in July of this year, I said to the congregations where I preached that I owe what I am today, as the Lord's ambassador, first to the Lord Himself and to the FMB. I cannot recount the complete story of how it all happened, but let me suffice to say that it was at an FMB sponsored Bible seminar held in the home of Pastor Bob Maki that the Lord touched and turned my Christian life around completely. Here I gained a deeper understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what it meant for my life. Even though I had graduated and taught theology in a reputable Bible College in Ghana for years, I only came to know for the first time at the seminars that my salvation was consummated and guaranteed by the shed blood of my Lord Jesus Christ. I have no doubt whatsoever that it was the Holy Spirit that brought me to this point of faith and reminded me about the Lord's bidding: "...as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

When I made the decision to quit teaching theology in the classroom and instead go and preach the Gospel, I knew this was the prompting of the same Holy Spirit. Even before I completed my term as president of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of Ghana, the Lord led me to the Western region in Ghana to minister the Gospel to folks living in the forest belt, many of whom had only a vague or no knowledge of Jesus. It did not make sense to my friends that I would leave the more dignified job of seminary dean to work among jungle people, but this is where I



perceived the Lord was leading me in order that He might use me to accomplish His purpose of saving perishing souls. This article thus comes to you from deep down in the forest belt of Western Ghana.

In the last four years, the Lord has led me to establish a church in a village called ASANTEAYE, as well as four preaching centers within a radius of 20 miles of the village. The mission field in this area is obviously wider, for several people groups living within a radius of 50 miles are unreached with the Gospel, and my plan is to

cover all of these areas in five years, God willing. In the meantime, I am focusing on the areas within 20 miles radius of Asanteaye. The whole of the wider area I am referring to is inhabited by migrant, cocoa farmers, who have come from various parts of Ghana, Togo, and Burkina Faso. People of the same tribe and culture usually constitute a community here. A few preachers have come here to preach before me and still trickle in. The message churned out is what makes the difference. Sincerely, I have not met one preacher here who preaches the life-saving Gospel

of Jesus Christ! And how could they do this when they themselves have not imbibed the Gospel? I regret to say that as blind guides they do more harm than good to the people to whom they "preach." It is as our Lord said: "They are blind leaders of the blind. And if



Brother Yaw, a new convert, being welcomed to church for the first time.

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From the Foreign Mission Administrator Desk

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Current or completed trip: Kenya, East Africa (October 27 - November 18)

Upcoming trips:

South Africa: January 6 - January 28

There is still space for a couple people to join us. Email foreignmission@comcast.net if interested.

India: January 19 - February 9

This trip is fully booked with willing servants. Please sign up early for a spot in 2016 if you desire to share your God-given gifts in India.

Ghana and Togo, West Africa: March/April 2015 – Exact dates TBD.

Other trips are being planned for later in 2015, but those will be announced later in this newsletter and online at the latest newsblog button, which you can access from our website: www.themissionsite.com

You are always invited to join us on mission trips, and/or be a part of this mission work stateside! Please support your Foreign Mission with prayer as we truly desire to be obedient to our Lord Jesus when He said: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

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the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." The truth is, many are being led to fall into the ditch here in the Asanteaye area.

Blind leaders aside, there are also charlatans who take advantage of the vulnerable village folk to extort monies from them under the pretext of offering solutions to their problems spiritually. Can anyone imagine a man of God threatening poor and ignorant folks with fire and brimstone from God if they failed to pay a tithe? The charlatans do this! They sell all kinds of things like handkerchiefs and "anointing" oil to the people, which they claim contain power to solve problems of all kinds. This whole area has become a hotbed for charlatans because of the high rate of illiteracy. Only a small percentage of the population can read and understand the Bible, and so they become susceptible to the skirmishes of the so-called men of God.

There also are the heretics or false teachers, who, for me, are the most destructive. They teach what makes sense to the human mind as opposed to the Gospel of saving faith. My work among these village folk is therefore not just preaching the Gospel of salvation but also working hard to change minds about false doctrine and the manipulations of charlatans. I believe the Lord is leading me to

swim against the tide this way in order that His mission of bringing salvation to the Asanteaye area might be accomplished.

Many here have remarked to me that my teaching and preaching is different from the message of other people who come to preach. I don't get surprised at these remarks because I am very much aware that only a very small percentage of preachers in Ghana actually preach the Gospel that leads to life eternal. I do not claim to be winning all the people in this area for Christ, because a good number of them have been brainwashed to the extent that some even scoff at my preaching. How right was apostle Paul to say: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God!" In any case, the Spirit of the Lord is touching hearts here in the Asanteaye area through the preaching of His servant. I am trusting the Lord to win over for Himself even the brainwashed as I gain strength from Him to fearlessly persist in the preaching of the saving Word.

What is needed is logistics to carry on a more effective ministry. For instance, the people who go with me to preach, and myself, require means of transport like motor bikes so we can cover more ground and also not get stranded as we often do when we go out

to do open-air crusades/evangelism. Then too, when we do these open-air meetings, we require a public address system so that our message would reach farther out. For now, we rely on a battery-operated microphone, which takes too much energy and is also not able to carry the message very far. The PA system is preferred because some homes will not entertain Christian preachers, but they are the ones that need the Gospel message the most. The PA system will help us reach such homes without even having to go there.

On one occasion when we used a rented PA system (at a prohibitive cost) at an open-air crusade, we were able to reach every home in the community with the message without going to the homes. At the end, a young man from one of such homes that would not welcome us was touched by the Lord to come to us and seek further clarification of the Gospel, which intrigued him. When he heard that Jesus Christ shed His blood for all people, that through faith in Him and the power in the blood, they can receive God's forgiveness of their sin, he drew nearer to find out if this message was applicable to him, an idol worshipper. After a few more questions from him concerning God's promises had been answered and the forgiveness of his sins was pronounced, he believed, and was saved. Thank God that today this man worships with us and is one of the people we are recruiting to train to preach among their tribal people.

The village of Asanteaye.



Farmers drying cocoa beans.

Brother Yaw, for that is his name, comes along with a colleague animist to church on Sunday and is already telling people in his home and friends about the new experience he has with Christ Jesus. Hopefully he will draw more to Christ when he begins to preach the Gospel! I have already started training a few committed Christian brothers to preach, but I also have plans to do a special training program for people like Brother Yaw, whose background is in animism, so they would serve as frontline preachers in the communities steeped in idolatry and animism (the belief that plants, objects, and natural things such as the weather have living souls, which cause tribal people to worship them). Then the way will be paved for me to follow up without encountering any animosity or resistance. This program will start as soon as our church in Asanteaye has raised adequate funds to support it.

Meantime, I take this opportunity to make a passionate appeal to our foreign mission partners to continue giving attention to some of our material needs so our minds will be completely free to offer greater service to our Lord as we go forth with His Saving Word under relatively more difficult circumstances in Africa. Thank you, dear readers, for taking time to read this, and thank you for being there for the Foreign Mission Board to assist us in remaining faithful to the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Peace!

To read the full article, please visit our website www.themissionsite.com and click the "Latest News Blog" (green button.)

Greetings from the Philippines

BY SENIOR PASTOR BERT M. SENOSIS

Note: Pastor Dennis Hilman served in the Philippines in late August and September. Here are a few pictures from that wonderful experience and a short report from Pastor Bert.

I, the contact person and senior pastor of the Overcomers Apostolic Lutheran Churches in the Philippines, give thanks to you and most of all to our Heavenly Father for sending Pastor Dennis Hilman and Marilyn for the specific purpose of encouraging us pastors and our people.



Such a loving group of people – the riches of His fellowship!

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We visited churches in different areas talking to pastors and church workers about preaching and teaching a present revelation of truth in the Bible. Pastor Dennis prepared a "Gospel Focus" theme – the blessing of preaching the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Many came in trucks and small buses – a happy outing for all, with bounties of both spiritual and natural food.

We are very thankful for your financial support. Every pastor and church worker has notes, which are put in plastic folders so that they will last longer. Pastor Dennis advised us to keep it properly so that we can use it in an orderly manner and receive blessings spiritually and materially. For His word says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33)



A large seven-church farewell service in Tagoloan after serving six weeks in the Philippines.

God's Peace to all in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Myanmar Miracle

BY DENNIS & MARILYN HILMAN

We have just completed a two-week time of service in the clean and orderly country of Myanmar, which has a long border with India, China, and Thailand. Right now, the small minority of Christians is experiencing a greater religious freedom after the military dictatorship was loosened a couple years ago. But even in the toughest times, the Rev. Dr. Van Cung Tum led a Bible college that trained and equipped hundreds of Christian "soldiers" to take the Gospel to many parts of this country, which was formerly called Burma. They often paid dearly for this – even with their lives. Also during that time, he established the Apostolic Lutheran Church of Myanmar together with Pastor Bob Maki and others.

Jesus was there, as Isaiah said in chapter 58, to "loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free." And so within a few short months the nightmare of the restrictions of the past were

lightened and the formerly oppressed became much freer. This does not always apply in outlying states and regions where local laws and radical followers of the predominant local religion have no tolerance for converts to Christianity. It is not uncommon for their necks to be slashed, or hands or feet hacked off.

Within the last year, the young Kyaw Aye Maung received the grace to receive the gift of faith in the living and saving Lord Jesus while far away in his home state of Rakhine, one of the 10 racially identifiable states in Myanmar. He fled to avoid persecution but with only one purpose: to find a Gospel-oriented church in Yangon where he could be trained, equipped, and strengthened to take the name of Jesus back to his homeland, cost what it may cost! At our service in the church, which has provided a refuge for him, he came forward in tears, pleading to be comforted and blessed in the name of Jesus and in the mighty conquering power of His blood.

The real miracle of Burma for us was the hunger, thirst, and heart-moving reception



Rev. Dr. Van Cung Tum seated on box; Marilyn in yellow; Pastor of this ALC Church on left, his wife seated; translator and brother Chosen Lian in sunglasses, faithful driver, Maung Soe, who converted from Buddhism on our last trip, on the right. Most of the congregation was at work on this weekday.

of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. This was accentuated by the beautiful, melodious hymns they sang, such as *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, translated from English. But even as their own spiritual songs were translated for us, they were deeply reverent about what Jesus has done for us (not just what we are doing for Him), with His redemptive work on the cross of Calvary, the blood that He shed and the freedom that we have from our guilt and sin, and the peace we have been given along with the glorious hope of eternal life. Indeed, while feeding we were fed. The seed has been sown on good ground! And it never has been shown clearer to us before that. *They that sow in tears reap in joy. (Psalm 126:5)*



Burning to take the Gospel to his people at any cost!

A visit to Russia

BY BRIAN NIEMITALO

When Greg Greve asked if I was willing to go to Russia with him in August, I agreed and also asked if it would be possible to also go to the Black Sea coastal city of Golenzhik to visit the parents of Yesa Pavlova, a young English student who stayed a summer with us three years ago. On my last trip to Russia, Yesa, who is a Russian Orthodox believer and not generally trusting of other religions, came to trust me. She went on to say that she was concerned for her father and mother because they were not believers. Her mother had gone to the Orthodox Church and was baptized, but she does not go to church regularly. Yesa asked if I could go with her to visit her parents in Golenzhik to speak to them about the Gospel, and I agreed.

She knew that we were able to bring a spiritual message to her parents. This is how it is sometimes. We are unable to speak about these most important eternal matters to those we love the most. She told me how difficult it is for a Russian daughter to try to teach her father anything. It reminded me of the words of Jesus, when he was in his home town of Nazareth and the people heard him teaching in their synagogue,



Front row: Boris and Galina Nagovitsyn, Sister Eva, Brian Niemitalo, Elena Korepanova (translator)
Back row: Marat Fazlullin, Lyubov Kuzmakova.

and were astonished and said, “When hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son...?” and they were offended in him.

Jesus said, “A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.” Also, “He did not many works because of their unbelief.” And so it is now with this young Russian daughter with her unbelieving father and mother. She felt that if missionaries

went very late, it was given to Greg mostly to speak at length to them about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We prayed for them, and when we were walking back to our hotel, Yesa told us how glad she was that we spoke the Gospel to them and reiterated how difficult it’s for her, as their daughter, to speak to them about these things. The parents were friendly and respectful, but we didn’t see any fruit or effect from the words spoken.

could come and speak to them, they will listen. And she was right – they did listen.

We arrived in Gelnzhik and were met by Yesa at the airport. That evening we were brought to their apartment for a prepared feast. During the evening, which

Sometimes this is discouraging, but I try to remember that Jesus did not commission His disciples to convert people, but He commanded them to go into all the world and preach repentance and remission of sins. Isaiah writes about God’s Word: “...it shall not return unto me void but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper whereto I sent it.” It is comforting to know that converting the soul is God’s department, and not ours.

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Yesa and her parents.



Thoughts about Russia

BY GREGORY GREVE

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Luke 13:1-5

In July, just before I left for Russia with Brian Niemitalo, I was asked to give a presentation about my upcoming mission trip at the (Dutch) Christian Reformed Church in our city. About a week before, a Malaysia Airliner carrying 298 people crashed in a war zone of Ukraine. Everyone on board was killed, including 193 Dutch nationals. There still is much controversy about why the plane crashed. It seems, in all likelihood, that the plane was accidently shot down. There is an ongoing international investigation and eventually we may have clearer answers as to how and why the plane crashed, but for now all sides in the conflict continue to speculate and blame each other for what happened.

On the morning I was to give my presentation, I suddenly felt much apprehension about how it might be received. The church was of Dutch heritage and I wondered, with no little anxiety, how these people might now feel about Russia because so many

from the Netherlands were killed on that plane and our politicians and media were working full tilt to place the blame for the crash squarely on Russia. My fears were unfounded, and in truth, I received no negative response to my words that Sunday morning about my coming trip, but over the last few months, witnessing this dispute from both sides of the ocean, it has hit home how the first thing we lose in war and conflict is truth.

As I traveled in Russia, I was asked over and over again about my opinion concerning the conflict in Ukraine. Ukraine and the conflict in that region are deeply on the minds and hearts of all Russians. I knew this was the case before arriving here and purposely avoided talking about the conflict. I want to say I avoided this “political conversation” so as to avoid any offense and not to hinder the Gospel message, which, in sincerity, really was my main concern and I believe the right decision. But I also realized that I avoided this conversation to some extent because I was afraid of being condemned personally if my views did not fit with the prevailing public opinion.

Many I met in Russia this summer wondered if people in North America really hated them and asked, “What are they saying about us?” One lady on a bus, when she heard us speaking in English, commented on how Russians hate Americans. Our comment back was, “We love Russians,” and our words were immediately received with relief and more friendly relations. By the time we parted ways, this same lady was wishing us well and, with sincerity, hoping we might come back to Russia again soon. The politicians on both

sides of a war conflict work to feed their political aims, swaying their citizens with half-truths. No matter how we fight to find the truth in these situations, we will never really find it in totality. The greater matter then, for us as Christians, is to find the truth of God’s Word, which is love, and to apply that truth to our lives and relations with one another and with the world.

We are all, with Isaiah, men of unclean lips and we dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. But thanks to God the Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, that our sin debt was paid fully on the cross. The Word of God warns us of wars and rumors of wars to come, but let us not, as children of The Most High, use these wars and rumors of wars to hate and condemn one another, but may we instead be lights in the midst of the darkness, focusing not so much on the political, but on the eternal, being instant in season and out, preaching with all love and longsuffering the gospel of repentance and remission of sins in every nation and in every situation. Of all the tragedy of this world, there is none greater than the eternal consequences of not coming to know Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord in this time of grace. May the Lord give us wisdom to speak when we should speak and to fight when we should fight, but most important of all, let us speak and fight for love, both inside and outside the church.

From India

BY DR. K. SYAM KUMAR (MISSION HOSPITAL)

Bibles for New Converts

We thank an anonymous donor for giving Bibles to new converts and the poor. With the money received we were able to purchase 168 Bibles (\$3.00 each) in the Telugu language, and they were distributed in 17 different churches. All the people who received the Bibles are very thankful for this generosity. Now the new souls have the Word of God in hand and they can read it and follow the truths in the Bible.



Praying over the Bibles.



Some of the believers who received Bibles.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**HAVE YOU MOVED
RECENTLY?**

When we get returned newsletters, the Foreign Mission has to pay for the return postage. Help us avoid this unnecessary cost by notifying us if your mailing address has changed. Please send email to Kris Matson at krismatson2@gmail.com.

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Water Distribution Center

A water distribution center was again opened this summer in the city of Rajahmundry (population about 3 million). The center was sponsored by donations from America. The temperature in this part of India can reach over 120 degrees F in the summer, and many people,

especially the elderly and children, die from dehydration or heat stroke. More than 100 people died each day in our state (population about 80 million). This year the center was open from May 10 to July 22. The poor people cannot afford to buy the water packets that are sold on the streets to quench thirst and were very thankful for the opportunity to have free water.

At the water distribution center, buttermilk with a little salt is first given to the people. The buttermilk helps to cool the body. Afterwards, water is provided to help quench the thirst of the people seeking the water. The people also received some bread.



Many people were prayed for and taught about the love of Jesus Christ. There were many thanks to the donors from all the poor people who were served.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom...for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink...Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matthew 25:34,35,40)

