



Lutherans IN Africa

FORMING AFRICAN CHRISTIANS TO BE TEACHERS OF THE FAITH

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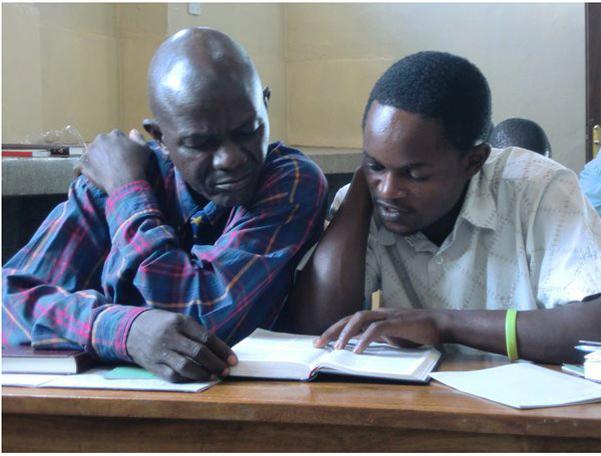
Notes from the Mission Field: The Fruit of God's Word in Zambia



Zambia has three Lutheran Church bodies. The largest is the Lutheran Church of Central Africa, which was planted by WELS in 1953 and is found primarily in Malawi and eastern Zambia. The smallest is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia, which was started most recently by Lutheran World Federation, but has been seen as bringing teaching contrary to scripture. Our current partnership is with the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Africa (LECA), begun by the Congolese, which has some 35 congregations and 4000 members and is predominant in western Zambia.

Many Congolese fled their country and settled in Zambia during the reign of Mobutu Sese Seko, who aided by the CIA during his grab for power in 1960. While he was anti-communist, which was attractive to the West, he simply cared more for his own person than he did for the welfare of his people. To be blunt, Mobutu embezzled over \$5 billion from his own impoverished country, caused great suffering during his dictatorship, and had scores of his own citizens killed, even those who were only suspected of standing against his policy or person. Many consider him the most corrupt African leader in the last half century.

After decades of massive financial support for this African leader, Mobutu's flagrant and numerous human rights abuses led to the loss of the backing of the US government. However, after the US State Department finally refused to issue him a visa, so strong was his cult of personality, despite the truth of his actions, prominent public figures and Christians, such as Pat Robertson, vowed to help this "hero." Despite the reprieve, his selfish and brutal reign finally ended in 1997, though the Democratic Republic of Congo endured another seven years of turmoil before a stable government was established. The country has been riven by war, greed, and oppression and remains impoverished despite vast natural resources. Please pray for this country and her people.



Clearly the suffering of the Congolese has been great, yet even in suffering can God bear the fruit of the Living Word. In this case, He used Congolese refugees in Zambia to proclaim the sweet, sweet Gospel and teach the Lutheran faith to His flock there. In the late 1990s, the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF) worked with Congolese Lutheran pastor Ndaye Bwanya to translate Luther's Small Catechism, the Augsburg Confession, and Luther's Large Catechism into the Congolese language Tchiluba. All of these are now out of print, but the Congolese continued to read them and share them with others as they moved into Zambia. In western Zambia, one of the predominant languages is Lunda. LHF is still working on the Lunda

translation of the Small Catechism and anticipates completion in 2012.

Thus came the pure doctrine of the Living Word to Zambia. Christ be praised!

However, due to lack of available biblical and doctrinal training, teaching the Living Word at the congregational level has remained very weak. Recognizing this need, Rev. Samson Kipaila, Bishop of LECA, invited Lutherans in Africa (LIA) to teach a seminar to train pastors how to teach Luther's Small Catechism at Lusaka Evangelical Bible School. As I taught, was heartened to see Bishop Kipaila attending the lectures and actively taking notes. As Luther himself found, one can never really finish being a student of the Catechism!



While the training course usually takes two weeks, only one remained in their seminary semester. At the end of the week, Bishop Kipaila lamented that up until now, most pastors had only taught the catechism to children; a missed opportunity since this course taught them helped them understand there is great value for believers of all ages! He has already invited LIA back to: 1) finish the course; 2) teach additional seminars on Lutheran Liturgy and an introduction to the Augsburg Confession; and 3) to facilitate the translation of the Small Catechism in Lunda and other languages.

You can listen to him talk about the value of training pastors here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTALTZfZm7k>.



While we worked to learn how to share the pure doctrine with those who hunger to understand the Living Word, each day our sessions were punctuated by the cries of prayer from the mosque adjacent to us, a constant reminder of the task at hand. Islam is a minority religion in Zambia, yet Muslims are actively evangelizing and teaching their false doctrine.

Sadly, most Christian organizations in Zambia are primarily focused on social concerns, so there is great confusion in doctrine. Many seeking Jesus are tossed to and fro between different presentations of the Gospel. What results is a tendency to join the Pentecostal church, which does not place an emphasis on doctrine and, thus, at least sets their confusion to the side. In those churches, people are taught to pray for material needs and desires and to speak in tongues. Yet even though the doctrinal confusion is gone for these sheep,

there remains in them a dissonance between a desire to know their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and a teaching that is everything that the cross is not.

After the catechism seminar, I was asked to present the work of LIA at the International Confessional Lutheran Conference. The conference theme was “The Gospel is the power of God” (Romans 1:16). Lutheran church leaders from all over Africa were invited to meditate upon topics such as “Law and Gospel,” “Lutheran Mission Theology,” and presentations from various countries on the work of spreading the Word of God. LIA presented on our activities of training church leaders and distributing Lutheran literature.

Sharing with each other the work of the Holy Spirit in gifting the faith of Christ across the continent of Africa, it became clear that while many sheep are hungry for the sweet, sweet Gospel, our foe is strongly active, as Luther reminds us below:

If we would be Christians, therefore, we must surely expect and count on having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies. They will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where God’s Word is preached, accepted, or believed and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be missing. And let no one think that he shall have peace. [BOC, LC, III, 65]

Thus, the fellowship we shared was doubly rich, as God gave us each other to encourage one and other and to pray together.

As you consider this small sliver of life in Africa, we ask that you join us in praying for the Lutheran pastors in Zambia, who face not only a lack of solid instruction in the pure doctrine, but must also address both the false doctrine of Islam and a twisting of the Gospel itself. We ask that you pray for the resources needed, both transportation funds and materials, for the additional educational seminars and the catechism translation project requested. And we ask that you pray for continued opportunities for LIA and other brothers and sisters in the body of Christ that is the Lutheran Church to serve Bishop Kipaila and the LECA in order that Christ crucified might be continue to be proclaimed throughout Zambia.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. James May, Jr.



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