



Lutherans IN Africa

FORMING AFRICAN LUTHERANS TO BE TEACHERS OF THE FAITH

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Pastor May to Prison and Construction Proceeds

"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

Ezekiel 36:26

"For me, it was reaffirming for the doctrine of faith that the Word can change the hearts of prisoners. We don't need behavioral therapy. We need the Word of God."

Pastor May

Pastor May's Account of His Visit to Oloitokitok Prison



Earlier this year, I was invited to visit a prison in Kenya. A local Lutheran pastor, George Araka, told me that no one was assisting him. He was asking for any sort of evangelism materials to help in the prison ministry. He also asked if I would come visit and speak with the prisoners. I didn't know at all what to expect.

Definitely, it was a life changing experience. In order to prepare for prison ministry I read the biography of Timothy Carter, an LCMS prison officer and chaplain. His experiences were unlike anything that I could have expected in Oloitokitok. The Kenyan prisons are very different than those American prisons Carter described.

First of all, there was no tension in the air when I arrived. In fact, the lack of expected tension created some sort of unease at the beginning. Prisoners were dressed in black and white striped uniforms but they were walking around without any chains. They were just working on the farm from which they grow all the foods for the prison.

At first I was told that there would be no time to talk with the prisoners because they had to do their chores, but I was given permission to go look around and then I could give them some gifts. I was asked to buy bathing soap and toilet paper because these were not provided to the prisoners. In addition, I brought Good News magazines for them to read. When the prisoners heard that a pastor from America had come to see them they rushed to complete their chores. They were not abandoned. The message spread, "Someone from the outside had come to see them!" They also wanted to receive me as a special guest.

What this means in Africa is that they wanted to sing and perform a couple skits. They sang some Christian praise songs to show that they believed in



God. The singing by the prisoners was louder and stronger than in many Lutheran Churches I have visited in America. After hearing the songs, the prison officer asked if any of the prisoners had Bible verses that they wanted to share. I was amazed that many of the prisoners stood up and recited scripture from memory. Some of them were given a chance to mention why those verses were important to them.

When the microphone was handed over to me, I was so dumbfounded that I didn't know how to begin. So I just told them exactly what was on my mind. I commended them for having memorized so many Bible verses. I told that I wonder if even half of the adult members in an American congregation could stand up and recite Bible verses they had committed to memory.

That brought to my mind one of the first Bible verses that I had memorized, Romans 5:8 *"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* This verse came to mind because it demonstrates that Christians are not holy nor righteous because they are good people according to their deeds. Christians are righteous because Jesus first loved us even when we were sinning and committing crimes. I gave examples of sin in my own life and confessed that I am not better than them, because of what I do. Rather, the most important thing for our salvation is to recognize that in fact we are not righteous and we cannot get to heaven by what we do. We do not merit Heaven. It is Jesus who has freed us from captivity of the prison of the devil and our sin. And it could be that

it was God's blessing to bring them to prison for a time to recognize how the devil, sinful desires, and the world had enticed them to do bad things and to realize their depravity. Nevertheless, they were not abandoned, they were not forsaken. They were still loved in spite of their sin. This is what grace and mercy is. I told them that I was there because I had love and compassion for them just as Jesus has love and compassion on them, and me; a sinner.

Development Update

In the following photos you can see how far the seminary classroom building, cafeteria, and student dormitories have progressed. Please keep the development and also the new semester in your prayers. Classes begin on September 1!

Student Dormitories





Cafeteria



Seminary Classroom Building





Students visualize the interior of their future classroom.

LST's cows and goats have moved into their brand new dwellings and seem satisfied of their living quarters. One of the cows is due to give birth in July, and we are praying for a full term pregnancy and a healthy calf. After the cow shed and goat pen were completed, we celebrated and appreciated the whole construction crew by preparing some of those goats for a delicious lunch :)



Enjoying lunch together

The final quarter of LST's garden area was tilled and taken into use. We thank God for provision of crops for people and animals alike.

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