



Lutherans IN Africa

FORMING AFRICAN LUTHERANS TO BE TEACHERS OF THE FAITH

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First Impressions

New Missionaries Are Here!



After countless prayers and preparations, the Ristau family's way to Kenya opened up. A final challenge presented itself when their oldest child, Katelyn, scored a positive in her travel Covid test and had to stay behind in Canada a little longer. God granted a safe passage also to her, and she is now happily reunited with her family. The first month has included many "firsts" and certainly has not been an easy task. Moving within your own country and culture can be difficult. Moving to another continent and facing quite a different everyday life, is likely overwhelming.

Let us hear from these people themselves, what kind of thoughts and feelings they have about their decision to come and serve the Lord in Africa. What do they do now that they are here?

Rev. Dr. Harold Ristau

I have been a member of the LIA board for a couple of years now. Even before that, from 2019 on, I have had the privilege to see how the work of LIA has expanded and how the LST seminary campus has grown. The need for more missionaries has been on

the agenda for a long time. During my time on the board, I have been part of the search for a good fit to fill the position of a missionary for LIA. We have considered a few candidates, but for one reason or another, the position remained vacant. When it was suggested that I would take the position, I was very reluctant. After all, I was called as an Associate Professor at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary in St. Catharines, Ontario. Relocating the whole family was a massive undertaking, especially after my decision to release from the military which was partially governed by the desire to make a permanent home for ourselves in Canada. But God had other plans.



At first we considered only an exchange with the Mays. I would have stepped in for Pastor May at LST and he would have taught in my stead in Canada. The May family did come to Ontario and Pastor May taught at the seminary for the fall semester of 2020, but we stayed put. Yet shortly thereafter, we began considering whether or not moving to Kenya was the Lord's will. One factor that helped me in my decision was a deep and heartfelt belief in the value of historical and "orthodox" Lutheranism. In a day and age when

true Christianity continues to be watered down in practically every church body, it was exciting to see the potential to do things better in Africa - on a continent that is begging for good sound Biblical teaching about our Triune God and the loving measures that He has taken to save the world from our sin through the cross of Christ.



When I visited LST in 2019 as a guest professor, I was impressed how faithfully Pastor May had begun his project of forming truly Lutheran pastors. It is never easy working alone, and I believe that I can help in the endeavor and mission of LIA in both spreading the Gospel to the lost but also forming new servants for the Holy Ministry.

The Canadian Seminary CLTS has now deployed or “loaned” me for three to five years as Academic Dean of LST. After that point we will re-evaluate LIA/LST’s institutional needs and also consider whether or not the Lord would have us continue to serve Africa. One secondary task of mine during my time here is that I am hoping to help with LST’s accreditation. I have been closely involved in the accreditation processes in North America, for both St. Catharines and Fort Wayne seminaries, and spent several years working in a similar capacity for the Canadian Forces Chaplain School and Center.

Due to my vast array of experiences in theological training and education, I believe that I am well positioned for partnering with the Director in ensuring that LST’s program continues to develop as a highly academic institution that merits

recognition from both the Kenyan government and larger Lutheran community. Together we want to make sure that students are formed to a high theological degree in spite of the diversity of their academic backgrounds. Yet we also wish to ensure they have the necessary skills to be effective proclaimers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and serve their churches humbly, as faithful stewards of the means of grace.



Prior to coming to Africa, my wife, children, and I spent a lot of time in discussion and prayer. Naturally, a husband and father’s greatest worry was wondering what is best for the family. Certainly, the Gospel comes first, but we are also stewards of the physical, mental, and spiritual health of our dependents. Yet, the family adjustment was easier than I thought. Of course there will be challenges ahead, but during this last month my wife and children have demonstrated that they are somewhat of a natural fit. It helps that the May kids were already good friends with my own. After their homeschooling hours, they eagerly help in the gardens and do other outside chores as is also the case with the students. I believe that our families are a mutual blessing to one another and invite you to join us in prayer that this may be the case for years to come, and that the Lord would always be our strength and joy.

Elise

To be honest, I did not want to move. We were uprooted so many times during my husband’s time as a military chaplain that when we moved into our current house, we planned to never move again! We

put a lot of work into our house and rural property and were just starting to enjoy the fruits of our labors. I wanted the kids to have a permanent school and friends and put down roots.



Things changed, however, when the COVID measures were implemented. All of a sudden, the schools were closed. Our friends and relatives were not free to visit us any more. We faced restrictions everywhere, even in the church. Canada no longer felt like a place where our children could have the life that I had foreseen for them. In addition, we had growing reservations about worldly ideologies being propagated in the kids' schools and even their extracurricular programs. Wanting to shield our kids as much as possible, I had started homeschooling my younger kids before the schools even reopened. Suddenly a life in Africa, away from the technology-obsessed secular Canadian culture, held a new appeal. We recognized the benefit of learning to live with less and the life education



inherent in the self-sufficient work/study system at LST. Best of all, we would be learning from the example of our African Christian brothers and sisters who are giving up so much in order to study and share the Gospel.

After hearing Pastor May give the LIA mission presentation in Canada, I was inspired. Hearing about the great spiritual hunger in Africa, compared with the general spiritual indifference of many Canadians, made me more open to a life in the mission field. It was not an easy process for us to get all travel permits and documents but all the while God's hand was leading us through. It was comforting to think that we would only be able to get to Kenya if He wanted us there and would pave the way despite all those difficulties.

We have been here for such a short time that it does not even feel real yet. One challenge is that at the moment our family is spread out in two different buildings. Despite this, we have managed to get homeschooling going quite nicely. Naturally, there are many things to learn while we are in transition and trying to make a system of how to live here. Leaving my house, native country, aging parents, and friends was also not easy. But I am looking forward to meeting the students who are arriving soon and getting settled into our new life in Africa.



Ristau Children

All four Ristau boys are doing homeschool. This fills up several hours of their days, but thankfully there is still plenty of time for other activities. Playing

with the May boys, helping out in chores, playing their instruments, and spending time with the family are some of the things. The younger boys mention the farm animals as one of the funnest new additions in their life after the move. They love watching and petting baby bunnies and feeding all the animals. "Seeing the calf being born was kind of gross but also exciting", they exclaim.

Katelyn is here to volunteer for this year. She has been an asset in cleaning, organizing, and labeling the library books. Another task for her will be to help the French speaking students when they are navigating their courses in English.



Volunteers Robert and Denise Nocella

What a blessing it has been to also have our long term volunteers here! Denise is a retired nurse and is putting her talents in use by conducting health check ups for all students, staff, and some of their



family members. She collects everyone's health background and puts it all together with any possible needs they have according to her findings. In addition, she is very gifted in music and serves by playing in chapel and giving piano lessons to four missionary kids. Denise also works with Katelyn in the library.



Robert has a massive amount of knowledge in various areas of engineering. His expertise is put in use in several tasks. He fixes appliances, checks wiring and connections, does landscaping and draws designs for outside ramps and stairs for the new cafeteria. Robert masters the backhoe and consequently the dam will collect more water when the rains come and the roads will hold together better due to his tireless efforts in hauling out rocks and soil and taking them where they are needed.



All of us together have enjoyed some cultural experiences having been invited to visit neighbors' homes and close by churches or eating goat in roadside restaurants. The beautiful Ngong Hills have inspired people to hike them already twice. We are excited to have many more activities and visits together in the future. For now, however, the high priority is placed on the incoming students. You can learn more about them in our next month's letter!

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