



# Lutherans IN Africa

FORMING AFRICAN LUTHERANS TO BE TEACHERS OF THE FAITH

[www.lutheransinafrica.com](http://www.lutheransinafrica.com) | January 2023

## Building up the Church in Kibwezi

Blessed year of our Lord 2023 to all of you,  
Dear Supporters of Lutherans in Africa mission and  
our Friends in Christ!

You have read about the small village near Kibwezi in our previous newsletters. Lutherans in Africa (LIA) has visited Pastor David Matheka, a former student and graduate of Lutheran School of Theology (LST), and his congregation several times in the past. When Pastors May and Ristau taught there last fall, the need for a new, larger church building was brought up again. Members of the congregation had begun the construction efforts but asked for help.



### Raising up the Church Building and the Body of Christ

An idea was formed that some of LST's second year students would accompany Pastors May and Ristau to Kibwezi, while a class of confession and absolution was offered to other students with a visiting professor at LST. So, as soon as the first semester of 2023 kicked off, Fanuel, Pacifique, and Prosper, who have already taken this course,

jumped on the opportunity to travel to Kibwezi. There, they were introduced to a holistic fieldwork: they offered hands-on help in the construction of the new church building, sat in classes with the professors, and had additional opportunities of practicing evangelism outreach and home visits.



Pastors May and Ristau slept in tents in Pastor Matheka's yard. Everyone woke up early each morning and went to the church where morning devotions were held. In addition to the students, construction workers together with some members of the congregation, attended the devotions before their daily work routines began.



A couple of the construction workers from LST volunteered to go to Kibwezi to help because they have expertise in masonry. Pastor May's background as an architect benefited the church as well especially since he was able to offer ideas on how to use local materials in building. Quite similar to LST, they also have stones which could be used, although these stones are volcanic rock. One of the tasks was to go to the areas closer to the dormant volcanoes and transport large piles of rock to the church construction site. Other task was to carry water from the village well, jerrycan by jerrycan, to the site for mixing the cement.



The evangelism outreach and home visits were made to different groups of people. These included visiting the members of the congregation, whose other family members do not attend the Lutheran church. The professors and the students shared Luther's catechism and Good News magazines with them to teach them a bit more about the Lutheran faith. The students also had the opportunity to visit some of the shut-in members. In particular, a member who has not been able to come to the church for over a year because he had a stroke and was rendered unable to walk. The family does not have money to purchase a wheelchair, and even if they did, it would be very difficult to wheel it on the rocky dirt paths of the village. So now he got to hear the word of God, receive Good News magazines, and also be prayed for. The last group of people that was visited were people who do not attend any church. This gave the students good practice how to present the basics of the Christian faith and invite

them to church. Many of these people did end up coming to church on Sunday as a result of the visits. The goal was to teach the students that pastors should not just sit on their hands waiting for people to come, but that the Gospel must go out. Sometimes people who are fearful or uncomfortable coming to the church for the first time are helped by a friendly visit to their home where they can more comfortably ask questions about Christianity.



*"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God..."* Ephesians 4:11-13a

### **Building up Children and Youth**

Before the construction, at the very end of the year 2022, LIA had a previous opportunity to engage with the people in Kibwezi. That time the teaching



was geared towards the children and youth during their Christmas VBS. The May Family's oldest child, Maggie, a deaconess student in Concordia University Chicago (CUC), taught the accounts of Christ's birth and resurrection together with her father.



Maggie tells, "I was glad to get this chance to come to Kenya and be involved in the mission work in a small way. I grew up in Africa as a missionary kid: first in Burkina Faso and then in Kenya. I followed closely what my father's work was like. Of course my siblings and I participated in many things in the mission field, but I did not really ever teach others. During my previous visit to Kenya in 2021, I was somewhat involved in teaching the youth when we organized a Catechism VBS at LST. Now, in Kibwezi, it was great to work with my dad again. To get another glimpse on what a mission work can be like."



"During my university years, I have started to form an idea of my future work as a deaconess. I feel that my strengths are in counseling field especially among the children, youth, and women. In Kibwezi, I felt that I was a bit outside of my comfort zone when I was teaching. Children were very adorable and I loved spending time with them, but maybe teaching is not my strongest quality. God knows what my future work includes and where I will serve, but I am grateful for all opportunities to try different things. That helps me gear my studies towards the areas where I feel my talents can be best put in use to serve others."





Please keep Pastor David Matheka, his flock, and the continuing church construction in your prayers.



Pastor May leading devotions at Pastor Matheka's home.

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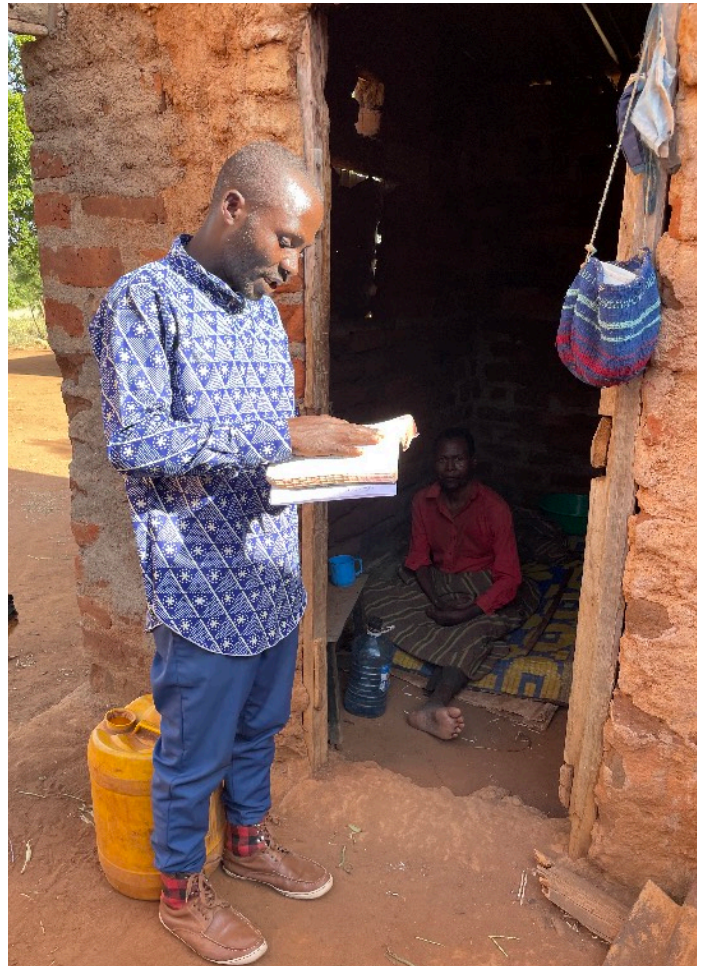
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Prosper evangelizing to paralyzed man



102 year old lady happy to have visitors