



Lutherans IN Africa

FORMING AFRICAN LUTHERANS TO BE TEACHERS OF THE FAITH

www.lutheransinafrica.com | February 2023

Finding Peace and Joy in Lutheranism

Pastor Mark Barz opened the Lutheran School of Theology's (LST's) spring semester as a guest lecturer. He was warmly welcomed by everyone at LST and its surrounding community. Below, you can read his report on his time here. We also asked our first year student, Vénuste, to introduce himself and share his thoughts of Pastor Barz's teaching.

Pastor Mark Barz: Teaching & Learning in Kenya



I'm a pastor of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. I've been privileged to serve the people of God at Crown of Life Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas, for the past 36 years. Rev. May and his family visited Crown of Life on several occasions and were guests in our own home. His repeated question to me was: "When are you coming to Africa and teach?"

I finally – but not reluctantly – agreed. On 15 January, right after Sunday Service, I headed to the airport. Arriving in Nairobi late on Monday, Rev. May was waiting for me. The ride from Nairobi to the Lutheran School of Theology kept me awake. "Wait! They're driving on the 'wrong' side of the road! Wait! Is this really a road?" His Toyota

LandCruiser didn't seem to be bothered by the terrain.

At 8:00 am on Tuesday, I was in the Luther Chapel for the Morning Devotion and began teaching my first class right after. I would teach Confession and Absolution for the first week, followed by two weeks of the Gospel of Mark.



Confession and absolution are not only central to Christian discipleship and Lutheran worship, they are also a key component of the care of souls in pastoral ministry. In this class, we discovered together the place of confession and forgiveness in the life of Joseph and his brothers, in the narrative of David and Bathsheba, Joab and Nathan, and in the teaching of Jesus to His disciples – including in the Lord's Prayer.

We reviewed together Confession as the fifth "chief part" of Luther's Small Catechism and the various ways confession and absolution are expressed in the liturgies available to the people of God in the Lutheran Service Book. My final teaching was considering and practicing "Individual Confession and Absolution." This was demonstrated with the

men in the Chapel. There were also daily quizzes for the students and a closing exam.

When the Gospel of Mark class began, several more students from South Sudan had arrived, so the contingent was now fourteen men from Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan. After spending the first day presenting background on the writing of the four Gospels and on this inspired portion of God's Word, we worked our way through the 16 chapters of Mark. A special emphasis was placed on pondering who "sees" and who does not "see" in Mark's Gospel.

Each of these class sessions began with a portion of Psalm 119, that long psalm filled with words about the Word. As I taught, I encouraged these men to use this Scripture in their future teaching and preaching. As with Confession & Absolution, there were daily quizzes. These were not just "tests" for them, they allowed me to consider how clearly and effectively I was presenting the material. The men also took a midterm and final exam.



During weekend, I traveled with the Mays. We drove through a game reserve exploring many of the creatures God created and allows to live in this part of the world. From the park our drive continued on rough Kenyan roads to Kisii in western Kenya. We were joined by Bishop Joseph Omwoyo Ombasa and his assistant of the Southwest Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya for dinner. On Sunday, we gathered with our fellow-Lutheran disciples for worship in Itierio. I was given the privilege of preaching about the foolishness of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-25) with Bishop doing the translating.



A teacher teaches. And a teacher learns. I learned a great deal from teaching at the Lutheran School of Theology. I learned stories of life and faith and service to our Lord. I learned the Church's story of proclaiming the Gospel in east Africa. I learned by worshiping with the students, hearing the Word, praying the Psalms, and singing the Gospel. I learned that these men will, by God's grace, bring



their gifts and their experiences into future ministries for the sake of Christ. I learned – as one student, Adelino, shared on behalf of his fellow-students on the last day – that these men will, in their teaching and preaching of the Gospel of Mark, remember and share what they learned from me. I also discovered that quiet students in the classroom can be the most energetic on the football (soccer) pitch. We had a very dusty game on my final class day.

I thank God for this opportunity to serve at the Lutheran School of Theology. It was a challenging but very rewarding experience. May the Lord of the Church continue to bless Rev. James May and his family, Rev. Harold Ristau and his family, all the support staff at the Lutheran School of Theology, and all the students who are being formed for service to our Lord and to His people across Africa.

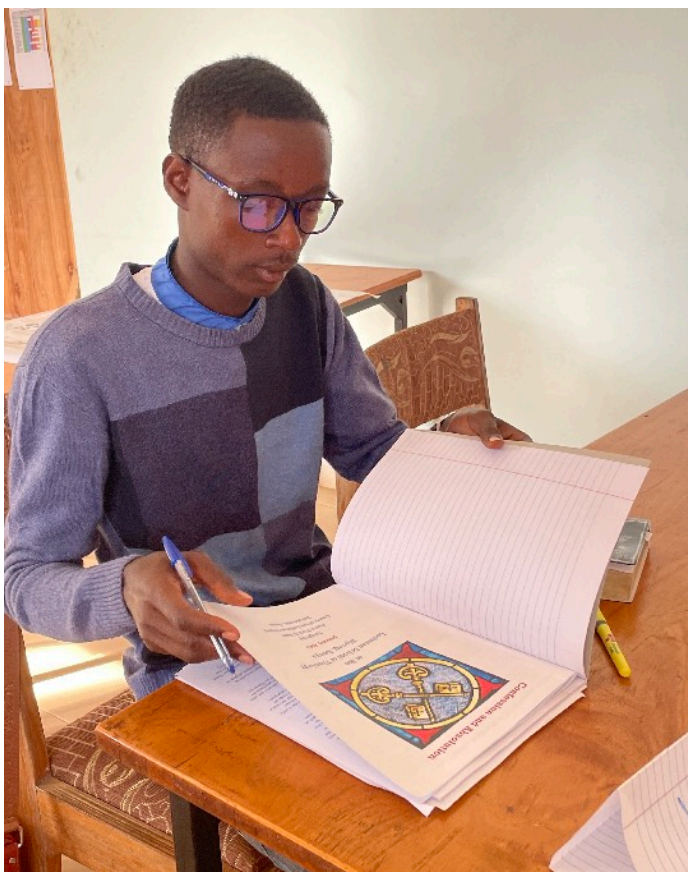
Vénuste: At Peace in Jesus

Vénuste comes from Kitega, Burundi. He has three sisters and two brothers. Before he became Lutheran, Vénuste attended the Assemblies of God church. There is one Lutheran church near by his

home and one day he heard people singing the liturgy in the church. He was attracted by the singing and entered the church just to see what the Lutherans are all about. The pastor welcomed him warmly. After service, the pastor invited Vénuste to talk with him and shared about Lutheranism. He returned home excited and happy and told his parents about the pleasant visit to the Lutheran church. He said that he wanted to begin going there.

Since the music was the first reason why Vénuste entered this Lutheran church, he started attending the choir practices. After six weeks, the choir master welcomed him to join the church choir. “I am so happy to be Lutheran!” Vénuste proclaims his eyes sparkling. “I have been Lutheran for two years now. First thing, I memorized the Small Catechism in Kirundi. In Assemblies of God church I did not serve in any way. Now, in addition to choir, I help teaching Sunday school children and sometimes I am asked to read the Bible readings. Also, all my siblings are in the Lutheran Church.”

“I thank our teacher Pastor Mark Barz. He is a very good teacher. He explained everything word by



word. During his course on the Gospel of Mark, I learned so much new English vocabulary and Pastor Barz made it easy for me to understand. I do hope he will come back again to teach in the future."

"In the Gospel of Mark, we see Jesus' human and divine natures. He sleeps on the boat like any human being, but then has the power over the storm to calm it. He eats with sinners, heals the sick, drives out demons, and raises people from the dead. Jesus announces his own death and resurrection several times."

"To me chapter five was such a powerful passage to learn and study. Jesus heals a man with a demon, a woman with a discharge of blood, and raises Jairus's daughter from the dead. Many people around him doubt him, but for those who believe in him and put their hope in him, he gives peace and healing that the world cannot give. Jesus demonstrates his power over sickness, death, and the devil. When we have faith in Jesus, we don't need to be afraid of troubles we face on earth. Jesus says, 'Peace be with you.' As Christians we have this peace. He died for our sins and rose again. In our baptism we were buried with him into death, and just as he was raised from the dead, we will be raised too. At the time of our death we are at peace and not afraid."

Support the work of Lutherans in Africa

USA

- By mail: Checks may be sent to
Lutherans in Africa
PO Box 121, Ocean Shores, WA 98569



- Online: Go to www.lutheransinafrica.com and select either the Paypal button or the Donor Perfect button.
- Selecting Lutherans in Africa as your charity: Thrivent
Direct your Thrivent Choice Dollars to Lutherans In Africa. Follow the link [here](#) for instructions.

Australia

- By mail: Checks may be sent to
Lutherans in Africa - Australia Inc
C/O PO Box 6094
Shepparton, Victoria, 3630
- Online: [LIA-Australia Paypal](#)

Canada

- By mail: Send a cheque, payable to "Concordia Lutheran Mission Society" and with the memo line "2118 Lutherans in Africa", to
Concordia Lutheran Mission Society, P.O. Box 455,
Water Valley, AB T0M 2E0
- Online: through Canada Helps: visit the link below and apply your donation to project "2118 Lutherans in Africa" – <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/concordia-lutheran-mission-society/>

