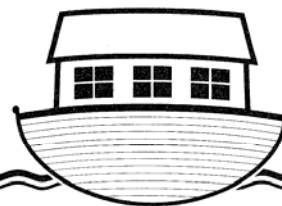


# U.S.S. ARK

Lent/Easter  
2009



God's Work, Our Hands in the Upper Susquehanna Synod + Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

***God's Work, Our Hands in the U.S.S.  
News of God's People in Action***

## Oldest U.S.S. Work Team Member Returns to Liberia

Zion, Sunbury member "Mother" Ruth Koble may be in her 70's, but she's got more enthusiasm and drive than many people half her age! In preparation for her return to Liberia this January with the U.S.S. Work Team, Koble intentionally gained five pounds to offset her usual weight loss of 5-10 pounds over the six week trip. "Thank God, it worked!" she reports. "I was strong, as Liberians say."

Koble spent most of her time in Liberia at the Lutheran Training Institute in Lofa County, which offers vocational education to ex-combatants from Liberia's civil war, and to women and others seeking to develop job skills. While waiting four weeks for delivery of supplies from the U.S.S.-sent shipping container, Koble served as "chief cook" for herself, Esther Thomas (LTI school administrator), and any guests who visited LTI. She also offered a pastoral "listening ear" to many in the community, hearing their stories and learning news of former students and leaders in the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL). One visitor was LCL Bishop Harris himself, returning from the rededication of St. John's Lutheran Church in ZorZor (see story on reverse).

When the container contents finally arrived at LTI, Koble used her "brain and brawn" to organize and unpack the many boxes...more than 40 hours of work. She also visited with a group of women at their Community Sustainable Development Organization office. The women's work is based on food preservation, and employs the many canning jars sent previously in U.S.S. containers.

Koble hopes to return to LTI with the next U.S.S. work team in January 2010 to continue her work with teacher and literacy training.



*Liberian teachers receive attend a ceremony marking the completion of a teacher-training program in the just-renovated sanctuary of St. John, ZorZor, Liberia.*

## Teaching the Teachers

Could you teach 100 six-year-olds...with no textbooks...no pencils or paper...and only 30 chairs in a classroom? More than three dozen Liberian teachers recently honed their skills in classroom management thanks to classes offered by U.S.S. Work Team members Deb Winters, Sandra Nelson, and Barbara Dierksheide.

The classes were offered to three different groups on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in a room at Current Lutheran Hospital. Private and public school teachers attended the morning sessions; church school teachers came in the afternoon. The teachers reported that classroom management had become their primary concern since the Liberian government--under President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson--had mandated **free** education for children Kindergarten thru Grade 6. The resulting influx of children into the school system makes teaching an even greater challenge in Liberia.

The three American women began each session with singing. During one session they  
*(continued on reverse)*

## Could You Build A Church In A Week?

This was the challenge facing the U.S.S. Work Team in Liberia...to complete the renovation of St. John Lutheran Church in Zorzor in a week's time. Why just a week? To finish in time for LCL Bishop Sumoward Harris to rededicate the building at a service scheduled for February 15.

Liberian workers had already raised walls and completed the cement floor when the U.S.S. team began the weeklong push to finish. Gary Winters and Joe Kanagy designed vaulted wooden trusses for the roof. Working with Liberians, the team built, raised, and installed the trusses and roof. The youth of the church whitewashed the walls and the women cleaned. The contractor delivered the new pews--not the tied-together log sit-upons that are the usual primitive seating--but colonial-style wooden benches with backs. Two days to go, and the paint crews spent 48 hours non-stop to finish the painting. Saturday night - 10 o'clock: Gary, Joe, and Carl Dierksheide added the three crosses to the altar frontispiece, hammering them in place...the workspace lit by a flashlight.



*Congregation awaits Bishop Harris's ribbon-cutting before entering the renovated St. John Lutheran Church in Zorzor.*

Rededication Day: Excited parishioners, church choirs from as far away as Guinea, and local dignitaries lined up behind Bishop Harris and Pastor Francis Weedor to process--singing and dancing from the center of town to the church. Bishop Harris read the Proclamation and cut the ribbon crossing the sanctuary doors. Then the crowd surged forward for more singing and dancing in the church. U.S.S. Work Team member Pastor Deb (Spinks) Winters was honored to deliver the dedicatory sermon, challenging church members to be "lights" to "help others do what has been done here."

*("Teaching the Teachers", continued")*

showed the teachers how to make blackboards. And they stressed that discipline need not begin with the "switch", as was so often the case.

Six of the teachers had perfect attendance despite walking an hour each way to travel between Curran Hospital and their homes. Teachers in Liberia are to be commended for their dedication. They are underpaid. Some are not paid at all, but are teaching because they know that education is the key to Liberia's future.

*Please contact 2009 U.S.S. Liberia Work Team member Joe Kanagy (719-935-9916), Sandy Nelson (570-995-9327) or Ruth Koble (570-286-2340) to arrange for them to speak at your next Sunday School class or church event about their experiences in Liberia.*



*LCL Bishop Harris leads the procession to St. John Lutheran Church for the rededication service on February 15.*

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