



## Greetings from Liberia!

### Level 3 Completed by Evangelist and Deacon Students



Sixteen evangelists and 2 Deacons from parishes all over Liberia have now finished Level 3 of the two-year training at the Louis T Bowers Lay Leaders and Ministers Training Center in Totota, Liberia. In this Level 3 training I taught 3 classes: Epistles, Reformation History/Documents, and Preaching.

We had a great time in the preaching class, where we told stories, studied Lutheran understandings of how to study a text and pull-out things for sermons. The ending of the class was a 3 hour Preaching Festival, where each student presented a 5-minute sermon on a text from the Lectionary for this coming year. Highlights of that were to see the improvement of all of the students in their understanding and presentation of the preaching task. The clearest and most heartfelt sermon came from a woman evangelist in the class. She has had very little formal education, but came to study with a determined mind and a heart for the Gospel. Her sermon spoke to everyone (she was amazed at the students who talked to her about how it had touched their hearts; it brought me to tears.) The thing that was most exciting to me was the way the students could clearly identify how they and their student colleagues had grown and developed in the preaching task.

As a part of our preaching class, I took all 18 students to two different congregations to experience worship, but most importantly to hear and evaluate preaching that was not done by them or their classmates.

### Visit to Salala Parish—a Place of Resurrection and Rejuvenation!

One of the churches the students visited for preaching class was St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Salala, Liberia. St. Andrew's has a story of resurrection and rejuvenation I want to share with you.

About 6 years ago, the Pastor of St. Andrew's became very sick and died suddenly. He left a young wife, several children, and a church that was very sad. His death was unexpected and occurred at the end of an illness of a couple of weeks.



The Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Liberia appointed Rev. Korboi Weegie, a much-loved, experienced and skillful pastor to be the interim pastor at St. Andrew's in the aftermath of Rev. Bornor's death. The congregation, under his Rev. Weegie's leadership began to flourish and move ahead. They loved him and he loved them; he loved the ministry.

After about 1 ½ years of ministry together, Rev. Weegie became very ill and suddenly died. It was a loss and a grief for the whole Lutheran Church in Liberia because of the man and the

pastor he was; it was a particularly hard loss for St. Andrew's where the church had begun to grow and trust again.

I will never forget, as we traveled in a long funeral procession from Monrovia to Rev. Weegie's home just past Salala, the situation when we arrived in Salala. Lining both sides of the road from the outskirts of Salala to the church were crowds of crying people. The church was packed with the congregation spilling out all around the walls of the church. People were mourning, some loudly and some in what looked like stunned silence.

In the weeks and months following, people at St. Andrew's were wondering if they would be able to get another pastor. The rumors and gossip going around was that St. Andrew's is where you go if you want to die. After a while a young pastor was appointed the new pastor of St. Andrew's. He invited me to preach at the Church Convention right after his arrival. I preached on our hope being in Jesus Christ, gave thanks for this young pastor who had come to lead them, and encouraged them in the ministry that was unfolding in front of them. The convention was fairly subdued, not too much joy or praise. The people, it seemed were still reeling from Pastor Bornor and Pastor Weegie's deaths. It's hard to move ahead in the midst of great grief and despair.

But what the people of St. Andrew's have taught me is that indeed "Our Hope is Built on Nothing Less than Jesus' blood and righteousness", a song that is beloved here in the Lutheran Church. When I visited with the preaching class students a few weeks ago, the people of St. Andrew's were alive and well in their praise and worship of God. What had been subdued and quiet (not the usual Liberian Lutheran Worship style) was lively, spirit-filled, well-done, and full of praise for the goodness of God.

Indeed---resurrection and rejuvenation are possible for the people of God no matter what has come before. The people of God at St. Andrew's, Salala are a testimony to that truth!

The students from LTBLLMTC saw it that day---and they learned.

Blessings to you and yours. Please remember Liberia in your prayers as we are in the middle of election season which involves the whole country and includes Senators, Representatives, and the President/Vice President.



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