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SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER

Trip Report (March 1-13 2020)

by Rev. Stephen Preus, Secretary, Saint Philip Lutheran Mission Society

For ten afternoons, three hours a day, I taught 28 men from LTS the principles of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics). There were 26 students from LTS in the class and two guests. The guests were from South Africa and Germany. The students were from Congo, Ethiopia, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia. Our main text for the class was *Biblical Interpretation: The Only Right Way* by David Kuske. With this book as a guide, the students learned how to put into practice their belief that the Bible is God's Word and centers on Christ, our Savior. The class broke down into three sections.

First, we considered the proper way to interpret the Scriptures by focusing on six principles of biblical interpretation. The students learned which books of the Bible are canonical (authoritative); how the Scripture's worldview is a supernatural one; how the only text that is foundational is the original; and the importance of the historical, grammatical, and Scriptural settings of the Bible.

Second, we studied the history of interpretation from the time of Christ until the modern era. This included looking at the early church's use of allegory, the middle ages and Renaissance's continuation and elaboration of this allegorical method, and Luther returning the church to the simple, plain meaning of Scripture in the Reformation. The students also learned about how the errors of Pietism, Rationalism, and Existentialism interpret the Bible for their own purposes.

Finally, we gave an overview of false methods of interpretation that fall under the umbrella of

historical-criticism. Among these were Rudolf Bultmann's existential demythologizing approach and gospel reductionism. By comparing these false methods of interpretation to the true way of approaching Scripture, the students were able to see more clearly how important a class on hermeneutics is for guarding the good deposit entrusted to us in Scripture (2 Timothy 1:14).

I taught this course as a representative of St. Philip Lutheran Mission Society (SPLMS). SPLMS formed after several students from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN traveled to LTS in the spring of 2008. While there, we saw the influence the education at LTS had on Lutherans in Africa. Desiring to help the students learn Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions into the future, we created SPLMS to help provide financial aid to students, to pay for the travel of guest lecturers, and to raise money for other seminary needs (like the library extension for which we raised \$15,000—it looks great, by the way, and will be a wonderful addition for the seminarians for years to come!). Due to donations of members of the board of directors, every dollar donated to SPLMS goes to help LTS and her students. So, it was an honor to return to LTS not only to teach but also to represent my brothers of SPLMS.

It was also a privilege to be a colleague of my seminary professor, Dr. John Pless, who is a regular visiting professor at LTS. He taught on Law and Gospel in the mornings while I taught on hermeneutics in the afternoons.

Dr. Pless and I arrived in Johannesburg on March 1, and were picked up by Dr. Hiestermann, the

new professor of New Testament and registrar at LTS. He informed us that a water main in Pretoria had broken and that the seminary had no running water for at least a few days. Dr. Pless and I had planned on staying at the seminary guesthouse but were instead graciously hosted for four nights at Dr. Hiestermann's house (Dr. Pless) and the house of the rector, Dr. Winterle (Pr. Preus). Dr. Winterle and Dr. Hiestermann and their families receive special thanks for their hospitality and brotherly conversation while we were with them. Once the water main was fixed, we were able to stay at the seminary guesthouse, which, thanks to the work done by members of St. Paul's in Pretoria, is a convenient and comfortable place to reside while teaching at LTS.

In addition to teaching I was responsible for two sermons during our two weeks of daily chapel. I also preached at English Lutheran Fellowship in Randburg, Johannesburg on Sunday, March 8. Rev. Toby Ahlers is pastor there, as well as an instructor at LTS. He and I studied together for a year at Westfield House, Cambridge, England from 2008-2009. So, it was a special bonus for me to see an old friend and to converse with him and his wife and children over coffee and a braai.

The hospitality of the students, professors, staff, and area pastors left an especially good impression upon me. LTS not only has a dedication to Lutheran theology but also a cordial atmosphere that flows from their love of Christ and His Word.

It was a privilege to teach at LTS. Shortly after our departure, like many schools in the world, and like our congregation, too, the seminary had to close her doors due to COVID-19. We pray they are open again soon in order to continue the good work they have begun. God grant LTS years of faithful teaching and diligent learning in the name of Christ, our Lord.)

COVID Update

The Seminary in Pretoria was also affected by the COVID-19. Not that one of us – students or lecturers - are affected, but we are closed since 18th March. The lock down was extended till end of April, and we are planning to begin the classes on 5th May. But it seems that it will not be possible, as South Africa has one of the strictest lockdowns in the world, as the News are reporting. Most of the students went back home. Only four foreigner students and one lecturer stay on the campus. We are giving support to them with extra food, and contacting them and all the other students regularly via e-mail, WhatsApp group, or phone. The four of them are working on the veg garden and sweeping the campus. We are in Autumn in the Southern hemisphere and many trees are losing their leaves.

The lecturers are giving assignments and readings to the students. The Intensive Course/2 was cancelled. The lecturers are working from home. When the classes begin, I'm not sure if I will be allowed to go to the Seminary, as I'm in the group of risk. One day after the other, we wait for God's solution and trust in His love and care. We pray that God may deliver us from evil, and may shorten these days for the sake of His Kingdom and of His beloved ones.

Rector Winterle, LTS-Tshwane



Financial Stewardship

- SPLMS remains committed to ensuring that every dollar you donate goes to LTS.
- In 2019, only 3.9% of incoming funds (\$379 total) were used for overhead (wire transfer fees, banking fees, website fees, logo design, etc.).
- All overhead is paid for by the donations of SPLMS board members. 100% of all other donations go to LTS.

2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

Tuition aid sent to LTS: \$7,000

Books for Rev. Preus's students: \$160

Overhead: \$134



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Saint Philip Lutheran Mission Society
c/o Rev. Anthony Oliphant, Redeemer Lutheran Church
123 E. St. Charles Rd., Elmhurst, IL 60126

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