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SUPPORTING LUTHERAN PASTORAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER

COVID-19 and LTS-Tshwane

From Rev. Dr. Heinz Hiestermann, Lutheran Theological Seminary-Tshwane

First, Dr. Hiestermann provides a brief update on the COVID-19 situation 'on the ground' in South Africa:

On March 18 the South African government had ordered classes to be halted at all schools and tertiary institutions, which includes the LTS. LTS reopened 3 months later on July 17, but only final year students were allowed to return due to social distancing measures. This means that our first year students have not returned yet. They have not been able to study for more than four months now, which obviously is not ideal. We still do not know when government will allow first year students to return to campus.

The final year students have finished classes (July 24) for the first semester yesterday and their exams start on Monday. The second semester will commence on August 18. It still is the plan that these students graduate on November 19.

We pray that this will be possible, as the president of South Africa on July 23rd ordered schools to close again for four weeks. At the moment tertiary institutions and LTS are not affected by this, and we will continue teaching the final year students as long as government allows.

Next, Dr. Hiestermann lays before the supporters of SPLMS a pressing need:

I first was confronted with the students lack of computer skills when Prof. Pless taught his

intensive on Law and Gospel at LTS in March this year. Students were required to prepare a sermon and hand in their transcripts. I was surprised at the high number of handwritten sermon transcripts given to Prof. Pless. Only after talking to the students about this, I learned that many students wrote their sermons by hand because they are not computer literate. Another reason was that there is only one computer in the library students can use to do assignments on, and there were more than 30 students attending Prof. Pless' class. Most students do not have their own computers. Of our 11 final year students, only two own laptops.

We therefore will, God willing, teach our final year students computer skills for the remainder of the year. We want to improve their computer literacy not only for their own benefit, but also so that they are able to teach computer skills to their congregations and communities in future. We as the staff of LTS also want to stay in contact with our graduates. It is important for us that when they return to their respective countries of origin, they can still contact us if they need advice or access to library resources. For this they need to have basic computer skills.

We furthermore plan to in future teach computer skills to all first-year students. The current Covid-19 pandemic has taught us the necessity for this. When government ordered LTS to close in March, our idea was to send students assignments and reading material via email, so that they could at least partly

continue their studies. But we soon realized that this was not a viable option, as many of the students either do not have access to computers and internet, or are not computer literate.

The lack of computer literacy is one of the reasons the first year students are not able to continue their studies during the Covid-19 pandemic. The other reason is that they do not have their own computers or no internet access at home.

If the students were computer literate, they could at least visit internet cafés to access their assignments via email. Our two final year students from Zambia are continuing their studies this way. They went home to Zambia before the lockdown in South Africa and have not been able to return. We are sending them assignments and reading material via email. They then go to an internet café to access their emails. They print the assignments, complete them, and email them back to us. Although this solution is not perfect and it would be better for the students to attend class, they can at least continue with their studies.

We therefore need more computers at LTS to teach computer skills to our students. The computers will be stationed in the library (the most secure location on campus), where students will be able to use the computers to practice their computer skills, to do their assignments, and for research purposes.

Computer Fundraiser

Dr. Hiestermann has laid before the board of directors of the Saint Philip Lutheran Mission Society and its supporters the need for student computers. The board of directors has agreed to respond: will you join us?

A serviceable computer for an LTS student costs about \$300, while a more upgraded model costs \$600. There are eight final year students who are in need of computers.

The Saint Philip Lutheran Mission Society will match any donations earmarked for LTS computers up to the first \$1,000. The total amount raised will be sent to LTS to purchase as many computers as possible.

Donate via check, on our website, through Facebook, or GoFundMe.



Prayer Requests

- Dr. Winterle, that he would be granted a swift recovery from surgery
- LTS staff and students, that preparation for service in the Kingdom of God would continue during various COVID-19 lockdown measures

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 YTD FINANCIAL REPORT

Tuition aid sent to LTS: \$4,020

(May: \$1520, July: \$2500)

Library software: \$480

Overhead: \$207



TO SUPPORT

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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