

Handling the Word of Truth

Supporting Theological Education in Togo and West Africa

Missionary Rev. Jacob W. Gaugert

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Spirits at Home?



This is an example of a “fetish” in West Africa – a mound where sacrifices are presented to influence ancestors and spirits that are believed to be active in blessing and cursing the living. Families have their traditional fetishes in their homes and courtyards. Despite this devotion, people live in constant uncertainty, not knowing if their ancestors are pleased or displeased with them. What a joy to know that we have peace with God because of the blood that Jesus shed in His love toward us sinners!

A Home Where Christ Dwells

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. - Joshua 24:15

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On January 27th, after around a year and a half of construction, the move-in day at our CLET dormitories had finally arrived.

The students and their families were very excited and joyful to be housed together in the new housing units. We had a very festive dedication service with singing, dancing, prayers, and preaching. Rev. Desirée Tade, a member of the CLET faculty, led the service as liturgist. Rev. Micah Wildauer, fellow LCMS-OIM missionary, preached in French. The president of the Lutheran Church of Togo, Rév. Prés. Lambon, was present with several fellow pastors in the ministerium of the Togo church. As part of the dedication service, the pastors broke into teams to bless the individual homes and the families that were going to live in them. We followed the traditional Epiphany custom of chalking the doors. The formula 20 + C + M + B + 18 is written over the lintel or next to the handle of the door. The letters have two meanings. First, they represent the initials of the Magi - Caspar, Malchior, and Balthazar — who came to visit Jesus in His first home. They also abbreviate the Latin phrase, *Christus mansionem benedicat*: “May Christ bless the house.” The “+” signs represent the cross, and the “20” at the beginning and the “18” at the end mark the year. Taken together, this inscription confesses that Christ is the Lord who blesses and dwells among the faithful who dwell in the home. In the African context, this rite serves as a Christian replacement to traditional pagan rites that involve animal sacrifice and the placing of blood on the walls of a new house to offer protection and blessing to the family.



The CLET community, neighbors, church and local authorities assemble for the dedication service.

Pray:

Thanksgiving for the generosity of so many faithful folks who supported the dorm construction and the work of LCMS-OIM missionaries in Dapaong, Togo.

Thanksgiving for the good relationships with the neighbors and the chiefs in Dapaong.

That the Lord would grant a spirit of thankfulness and good management in the students and their families as they live in and take care of the dorm units.

That the Lord would guide the members of the African churches to give generously of the blessings that the Lord gives them to the work of the Ministry and evangelism.

To grant continued political peace and stability in West Africa.



MEET

Francois Karaguto



Francois comes from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Francois speaks Kiswahili, French, English, and a few other local languages spoken in his home region. Francois excels at his studies and is quickly mastering Greek. Please pray for Francois and his family in his absence and pray that he would be kept in good health and spirits as he pursues the next 2 years of his studies at CLET.

We also had a festive meal to commemorate the dedication. The wives of the students and the ladies of the CLET women's school prepared a delicious meal of guinea hens and peanut sauce soup over pounded yams and rice. The local chiefs and families in the neighborhood also attended. It was a great opportunity to strengthen ties with the local population and to invite them to hear and see where our hope is in Jesus Christ.

This move-in day marks a big, positive change in the lives of our students on our campus that we pray will help the students to focus on their studies. The dormitories offer several amenities and features that are not usually available in other housing arrangements in the city:

1. The housing is managed by the CLET – this spares the students the stress of having to deal with Muslim and pagan landlords who treat foreigners unjustly.
2. The neighbors in the compound are other CLET students - sometimes when the students are housed in larger compounds the wives who do not speak French or the local language will have misunderstandings that can escalate quickly. In our CLET community among other Christians, tensions can be more easily and directly dealt with before escalating out of control.
3. The toilet facilities have a closed septic system – this system has pipes that take the waste and water to a closed tank. This is a great improvement over the old system: a direct drop-down



The different neighborhoods in the city of Dapaong are still divided up among chiefs and their families. The CLET dorm property is located in an area that is close to the jurisdiction of several chiefs. Their presence at the dedication was very important and will help us in the future in dealing with local issues and disputes.

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Or

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outhouse-like setup where flies can easily go in and out and spread cholera, malaria, and other diseases.

4. There is a new well on campus with fresh drinking water. Before the students had to carry large, plastic containers of water on their shoulders or on their bikes back home for use. Sometimes the city water supply gets contaminated and the students and their families would become ill. Or they would have to pay to use a neighbor's well closer to home that could also become contaminated. This new well is owned by the CLET and is located just meters from their front doors.

5. The electricity account will be handled by the CLET – often the students do not have electricity in their rental rooms in the city and oftentimes the landlord will not pay the bill and the electricity will get shut off. The new housing electricity will permit the students to charge their tablets and study in the light overnight. Sometimes they have had to forego doing their homework because there was no electricity in the room to charge their tablet battery to read a book.

6. The buildings have elevated, concrete floors – in some houses in the city the floors are dirt and oftentimes flooding occurs. This can damage the students' property – especially books, which are expensive – and clothes. The floodwater can also bring diseases into the home where the families sleep.

7. The buildings have windows on two sides – this allows for adequate airflow which is better for health and for keeping the rooms cooler in the hot African sun.

8. There are hand washing sinks near the toilet facilities to reduce the risk of transmitting diseases.

We already have enough pledges for next year to complete a property wall. This wall will add necessary security and it will permit the students to farm the other two thirds of the property without their crops being damaged by neighbors' pigs and other livestock. We are truly thankful for the generosity from LCMS members that have permitted us to make this important addition to our campus.

In Christ, *Jacob W. Gaugert*



Fellow LCMS-OIM missionaries, Molly Christensen and Rev. Micah Wildauer, walk with students past the showers and the toilet facilities in the center of the compound.



Rev. Desirée Tade blesses the new well at the CLET dorms.



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