

# Handling the Word of Truth

Supporting Theological Education in Francophone Africa

Missionary Rev. Jacob W. Gaugert

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## Language Levels

**CEFR**  
**“Common European Framework of Reference”**

### **Beginner**

**A1 – basic**

**A2 – limited conversation**

### **Intermediate**

**B1 – expanding vocabulary and conversation**

**B2 – comfortable everyday use in conversation**

### **Advanced**

**C1 – professional language fluency**

**C2 – mastery of intricate nuances of the language**



The Harmattan dust from West Africa leaves a haze over the Arkansas Ozarks in June 2020.

## Update 2020-2021

*For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.*

*- Psalm 91:3-6*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from Montpellier, France.

The past year has been quite a challenge for all of us – our families, workplaces, and parishes. The lives and activities of our mission partners and our work with LCMS-OIM Africa were also affected.

Last year in January-March I was invited to teach Greek at the seminary of the Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church located near the city of Bo in Sierra Leone. I had been invited to help fill in after the departure of the previous missionary family, Rev. Douglas and Angela Thompson, who had served in Sierra Leone for a few years. LCMS-OIM is currently communicating with the leadership of the church in Sierra Leone to consider how best to meet the needs of the seminary with possible OIM missionary presence in the future.

I also was able to attend the annual CAU meeting (board of directors of the CLET) of the Francophone Lutheran Churches. This was held in March in Dapaong, Togo. Member churches elected new board members and initiated discussions on a reworking of a common curriculum for the three institutes of the Francophone Union that now train future pastors for the Union churches. The delegates also considered possible restructuring of the Francophone Union in order to establish a clearer and more solid base of Lutheran theology and practice as the Union desires to increase the level of theological instruction at the institutes and to branch out into more projects of education, translation, and community development.

**Pray:  
Thanksgiving for  
health and safe  
travels over the past  
year.**

**Thanksgiving for the  
opportunity to take  
advantage of the  
current travel  
challenges to focus  
on graduate and  
language studies.**

**Thanksgiving for a  
safe return of Valerie  
Stonebreaker in  
Togo to assist with  
the CLET library and  
to mentor Lutheran  
youth and young  
adults.**

**That the leaders of  
the Francophone  
Union churches  
would gain a greater  
understanding and  
appreciation of the  
role of theological  
formation and  
church practice as it  
relates to fellowship  
and faithful pastoral  
care.**

After completing my time in Sierra Leone, I returned to Dapaong to take up teaching responsibilities as scheduled. However, it was at this time that Covid-19 was spreading globally and there was much uncertainty on freedom of travel and the level of medical care that would be available in case of an outbreak in Togo. In considering these factors the Wildauer family, who have served along with me in Dapaong for the past five years, decided at the end of March to evacuate. At that time, I still desired to stay in Dapaong to continue teaching and to accompany the CLET leadership as they would navigate the challenges of the pandemic. A few days after the Wildauer family departed to catch their flight back to the US, LCMS-OIM leadership decided that it would be too much of a risk for me to remain in Togo by myself without another member of the OIM team. So I packed up a few of my belongings and drove to Lomé to catch one of the last available flights out of Togo. There were only nine passengers in my flight to Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia and about fifteen on the flight to the US. After landing in Chicago, where the O'Hare airport was practically abandoned, I rented a car, drove into Wisconsin, quickly bought a stock of groceries at Aldi, and then drove to our family's cottage in central Wisconsin for two weeks of quarantine.

After two weeks with no symptoms, my parents came to visit for a few days. It was nice to see them after several months away. Not wanting to just sit in Wisconsin, I decided to drive down to my modest house in the Arkansas Ozarks, where there were plenty of house and yard projects to work on while collaborating online with OIM and African church leaders and reading and writing for graduate studies. Because movement was limited in the US in the 2020 spring and summer while the pandemic was continuing to spread, I did not make any trips to visit congregations at that time.

It had been desired that I would return to Africa in the fall of 2020, but because of questions on transport and safety measures of Covid-19, my return continued to be pushed back until the end of March this year.

I finally was able to arrive back in Togo, practically a year to the day since I had left. I had the privilege of teaching a two-week intensive class on the Means of Grace to the first-year students at CLET. It was a joy to see my African colleagues and to be able to participate in seminary and parish worship services again. I was able to preach for two weeks in a row and to baptize three children. It was also nice to see Ms. Valerie Stonebreaker, a former OIM missionary, now retired, who had



Ms. Valerie Stonebreaker, retired LCMS-OIM missionary in Togo, arranges and prepares books in the CLET library in order to place new call number tags on the volumes.

**Ministry Information:**



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*Thank you for your continued prayers and support of this Ministry of our Synod.*

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also returned to Togo and was helping to catalog the newer volumes in the library that had been added with the container project that arrived a few years back.

At the current time, I am writing from Montpellier, France where I am participating in intensive language courses in order to refine my professional, written French and to be certified in this level (C1) according to the Alliance Française. Although I have spoken and taught in French in daily life for the past seven years, the limitations of the language used by the local Africans and my students with whom I usually speak is not at a very high, formal level. Aside from teaching, my responsibilities as a theological educator also include translation work and professional verbal and written communication. Because movement on the African continent is still a bit of a hassle and because vaccination is not progressing especially rapidly in some African countries, rather than try to travel in Africa at this time, I, in collaboration with OIM leadership, have opted to use this time to stay in France, where I can work on this language formation and certification that I have been wanting to pursue for the past few years.

Lord willing, I will be back on the African continent in early September to attend the annual CAU meeting of the Francophone Union, which is to be held in Congo-Brazzaville. This will be a very important meeting for these church leaders as they give further consideration to their subscription to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and what that means for the practices of their churches in caring for the souls entrusted to their care. There will also be discussion and clarifications on the administrative aspect of their partnership among their own church bodies and with LCMS-OIM. I ask for your prayers for these leaders as they will need to dedicate themselves to much prayer, study, and communication in preparation for this meeting so that the discussions and decisions that take place would be fruitful for the work of Christ in His Kingdom among them.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support for the Lord's work to train future pastors in Francophone Africa.

In Christ,



**MEET**

**Rev. John BUNDOR**



**Rev. BUNDOR is the current president of the Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sierra Leone. Alongside his duties as president of the national church, he also teaches courses at the Seminary and is a coordinator with the literacy project in the local Kissi language. Please pray that the Lord would continue to guide and strengthen Rev. BUNDOR in his work.**



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