

MONTLY DEVOTION



Rev. Daniel Grams

District Executive for Congregational & School Services



Philip ran to him [the eunuch] and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:30-31

Led by the Spirit ... The Gospel is Carried Forward

One of my favorite narratives in the book of Acts is the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (*Acts 8:26–40*). Unlike the dramatic demonstration of the Holy Spirit’s work on the Day of Pentecost—when thousands believed and were baptized through the apostles’ preaching—Acts 8 tells a quieter story. **The Spirit leads Philip to a desolate place to preach the Gospel and baptize just one man.**

As the Ethiopian official reads from Isaiah 53, Philip explains the Scriptures and proclaims the good news about Jesus. The Ethiopian believes, is baptized, and continues on his way rejoicing—carrying the Gospel home with him. Christian tradition holds that he became the “founding father” of ancient African Christianity. This account reminds us that the Holy Spirit continues to guide the church as the Gospel is carried from place to place and from person to person by those whom the Spirit sends to proclaim it!

That same Spirit-led mission is reflected in the Kansas District’s ongoing relationship with French-speaking Lutheran church bodies in West Africa. For nearly three decades, congregations of the Kansas District have supported the continued

preaching of the Gospel through their prayers and through their financial support of the Pentecost Offering.

In Guinea West Africa, Lutheran mission work began in the early 1990s when pastors and evangelists fleeing conflict arrived in refugee camps. There, in the midst of hardship, the Holy Spirit was at work, carrying the Gospel forward. Much like the Ethiopian returning home with the good news, the message of Christ did not remain confined to the refugee camps. By God’s grace, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guinea was established.

Pastoral formation is central to the mission of the church and to the carrying forward of the Gospel. The Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip, “How can I understand unless someone guides me?” (*Acts 8:31*). Likewise, the Apostle Paul writes in *Romans 10:17* “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” People cannot believe in Christ unless they hear the Gospel proclaimed, and they cannot hear unless pastors are sent to preach it.

The Kansas District’s Pentecost Offering support the formation of future pastors for the church in French-speaking West Africa. These gifts provide necessary financial resources for the Centre Luthérien d’Études Théologiques (CLET) in Guinea. Local men complete their first year of pastoral formation before travel-

ing to CLET Togo to complete their seminary education. Through the training of faithful pastors, the Holy Spirit continues to ensure that the Gospel moves forward throughout West Africa.

This year, we rejoice that the Holy Spirit opens new doors for mission in Africa by sending Rev. Michael and Shanna Hageman from Kansas to begin missionary service with the LCMS in Tanzania. Rev. Hageman, formerly the District’s Second Vice-President and senior pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Garden City, now serves as a theological educator, helping to train pastors and church workers who will proclaim Christ throughout East Africa. His wife, Shanna, will serve by teaching English.

Just as Philip was sent to explain the Scriptures and proclaim Christ, the work of training pastors ensures that faithful servants of the Gospel continue to be sent wherever the Spirit leads.

As Pentecost approaches, we invite Kansas District congregations and members to prayerfully consider supporting the Pentecost Offering. Through your support the good news of Jesus Christ continues to be carried forward in Africa as pastors are formed, congregations are strengthened, new churches are planted and the Holy Spirit raises up new believers who confess – with the Ethiopian eunuch – that Jesus Christ is Lord. **To Christ alone be all the glory!**

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