

BISHOP'S COMMUNIQUE

Holy Week, 2008
Sierra Leone, West Africa

Maundy Thursday – March 20, 2008

Greetings from Sierra Leone, West Africa

"This is my command; that you love one another." Today, in Sierra Leone we see this Maundy Thursday command of our Lord lived out, in the flesh.

After and often-delayed, 36 hour trip we arrived at our hotel in Freetown on Palm Sunday morning at 6:00 am. Nevertheless, three of our young adults were up and around by 9:00 am to join me for the Palm Sunday procession at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Calaba Town. Nearly 200 worshipers waved palms and sang as we processed three blocks to the church for the worship celebration. With great singing, wonderful preaching, and the love of Christ we joined the crowds in remembering Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. Later we were joined by the rest of the group for a lunch at the Lutheran Centre in Calaba Town and a program to celebrate the Lutheran schools at Calvary Lutheran Church. At that event, on Palm Sunday afternoon, we experienced the energy and enthusiasm of 150 students who sang and helped us understand what attending a primary school in Freetown is like. We viewed the construction of a new, desperately-needed school building being funded by our own Living Word Lutheran Church in Grapevine. Then, the real parade began! With a marching band and flag wavers, we processed about 2 miles from Calvary to St. Mark's. Along the way we picked up many villagers and our parade soon grew from 150 to about 500 people, singing, dancing and celebrating! Our group was pumped up to participate in this terrific experience!

On Monday we toured some of the sites of the city, including the Cotton tree, the central landmark of Freetown from which freedom from slavery was proclaimed and celebrated. We saw the state house, the homes of some of the dignitaries of Sierra Leone, and then we headed back to the Lutheran Centre for a visit to the Women's Center where we modeled and purchased clothes produced by the women's outreach ministry of the ELCSL. They taught us how to tie-dye shirts and each of us made our own shirt. Then the Youth of the ELCSL put on a cultural program that included songs, dance, and drama of "Jesus on the Way to the Cross." Our own youth taught some songs from their Briarwood experience and by the end of the evening we were all on stage, dancing and singing and celebrating together...even the most shy of our group joined the excitement. When we returned to the hotel, I was exhausted and went straight to bed. Many of the youth stayed up to 4 am, talking and playing cards to unwind. Two days of excitement were hard to unwind from!

On Tuesday we took a very grueling trip to Senehun, about 4 hours by very rocky and bumpy roads. There we visited Rev. Jere Yovonie in his home village where we were welcomed by the

members of two congregations in his district. We visited an Intermediate School that is seeking status in the ELCSL and then onto Jere's farm where we enjoyed lunch, a native program where, once again, the devil was driven out of the community in dance and song, and watched as they drew "palm wine" from the palm trees of the forest. I was named "honorary Paramount Chief" for the day! Unfortunately one of our two buses broke town and we were all forced into one bus for the trip to Njala and our return home. In Njala we visited King of Glory Lutheran Church and the agricultural university that is rebuilding after having been destroyed in the war. The return trip was even more grueling as we were quite jammed into the bus and many were suffering from the common traveler's complaint of overseas travel. Most of us were giving thanks for Imodium! To their credit, not a single young adult in our group complained. Our group has quite a spirit about it! We arrived back home about 11 pm, without having had dinner. Many grabbed a hamburger and stayed up until 4 am once again to unwind.

Wednesday morning was beach time and shopping time. Then we visited the University in Freetown and shopped in the Big Market in downtown Freetown. We met on Wednesday evening at the new site of the Lutheran offices and dedicated them with a picnic. Again the youth of the ELCSL joined us and we sang songs late into the evening.

Today, Maundy Thursday, we are catching some beach time in the morning and then we will head to the Jubilee Lutheran Centre to tour it and hold our evening service of foot washing and Eucharist. On Good Friday we will worship in small groups at two congregations in Freetown. On Holy Saturday we will visit the church at No. 2 River for a beach bar-be-que that will include baracuda in peanut sauce and then head to the Jubilee Centre for the Vigil Service where we will baptize 23 or more candidates who have prepared throughout Lent.

This trip is joy-filled, energizing, and life-giving to us. We share the stories of our synod's life and they share stories of their faith. Thus far the trip has enacted Jesus' command that we love one another, in a dramatic way, for which we give thanks to God.

May your Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday celebrations be filled with grace! We thank you all for your prayers of support. You are here with us in spirit and in the flesh.

Grace and Peace in Christ,
Kevin S. Kanouse,
Bishop

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Holy Week, 2008
Sierra Leone, West Africa

Easter – March 23, 2008

Greetings from Sierra Leone, West Africa

"Jesus Christ is Risen Today! He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!" The first Easter cry rang out about 8 PM on Saturday from the terrace of the rising Jubilee Centre in Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa. We were joined for the Easter Vigil by about 200 other worshipers who met in the gathering darkness to hear seven Old Testament readings plus the Easter Gospel in preparation for 42 (!) baptisms of infants, youth, young adults, and senior citizens! "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...You are sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever...Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." 42 times those words were spoken and the candles of the newly baptized glowed, filling the terrace with the new light of the Risen Jesus Christ. It was a marvelous culmination of the Triduum, the three Holy days leading up to Easter.

On Maundy Thursday our 14 young adults plus Billye Jean and I remembered our Lord's last supper as we also worshiped on the terrace of the Jubilee Centre. On Good Friday, we went to two local congregations, King of Kings Lutheran Church at the Fire Force building next to the Jubilee Centre or at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Kissy. It was a moving experience to share in the walk through Holy Week with our Sierra Leone brothers and sisters.

Today, Easter Sunday, our youth split into four groups and we celebrated the Resurrection of our Lord at Faith Community (Pastor Marie Barnett's church in Lumley), St. Mark's in Calaba Town, St. Paul's in Kissy, and at Calvary Lutheran Church where we visited the school earlier in the week.

It has been a week of celebrating, making incredible new friends, learning the culture of our Companion Church, and enjoying the beach. On Saturday, we had a picnic at No. 2 River where we visited Lord of the White Sands Lutheran Church. On the way there, we stopped at Baw Baw and visited King of Glory Lutheran Church and school. Throughout the week we have been accompanied by about 50 youth and learned that the MAJORITY of the members of the churches are 29 years of age or younger! This is a youthful and growing church from which we can learn a great deal about [DiscipleLife](#) Formation.

Some of our young men joined the fishermen along the beach to pull in the fishing nets full of a new catch. We've had a few opportunities to shop for souvenirs and we've eaten at a variety of authentic restaurants where our youth were not afraid to sample the local cuisine.

Tonight we conclude our time here with a visit to the home of Bishop Tom and Marie Barnett for a closing dinner and celebration where 75 are expected for a night of singing, sharing, and perhaps a few tears as we bid farewell to our new friends and prepare to return home on Monday and Tuesday. All of our young adults have been deeply moved and are committed to coming back at some time in the future. We give thanks for your prayers for our journey, your words of encouragement to our youth, and your financial contributions that made this trip possible. We look forward to telling more of our story at the Synod Assembly and through a post-trip video we will put together.

Grace and Peace in Christ,
Kevin S. Kanouse
Bishop