



**LUNCHEON MEETING  
July 7, 2011**

Our meeting began with a devotion and prayer led by our chaplain, Pastor Larry Schmidt

**Announcements**

**Visitors** were Dr. Cleophas Tsokodayi, our speaker, and his wife, Rutendo, and son and daughter, Tafadzwa and Yemurai, Rev. Anne Dwiggin, St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, MD, where the Tsokodayi family attends church, and Dr. Machivenyika T. Mapuranga, Ambassador to the US from Zimbabwe.

**Dan Bella announced the name of the recipient of the \$1,500 LLF Scholarship. She is Michelle Tisch, a member of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Haymarket, VA.** Michelle attends Old Dominion University, majoring in International Management. She hopes to go into the Peace Corp after she finishes her studies. Hopefully Ms. Tisch can come in person to our August meeting to accept her award. Congratulations to Michelle Tisch and many thanks to Dan Bella, Bonnie Priebe and Tom O'Brien for their work on the Scholarship Committee. Since Tom and Dolores O'Brien have left the area, Dan Bella would welcome another person to work with him and Bonnie on the Scholarship Committee.

**President Robert Sargeant announced that the notes of the LLF speaker's presentation will be placed on LLF's website, rather than printed in the newsletter. The newsletter will contain an announcement of the next month's speaker and title and pertinent news. Hard copies of the speaker's talk will be available the month following the presentation at the LLF luncheon meeting.**

At the end of the meeting **Robert Sargeant – President, David Berg – Vice President, Sue Schmidt – Secretary, and John Priebe – Acting Treasurer, were sworn into office for another term of office by Chaplain Larry Schmidt.**

## **SPEAKER'S NOTES**

Dr. Cleophas Johannes Tsokodayi introduced himself and his family. His topic at our meeting was the **“Establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe.”**

### *Summary*

In Zimbabwe, the churches include the Roman Catholic Church, the Seventh-day Adventist, Anglican Church (UK), Methodist Church (UK – John and Charles Wesley) United Methodist Church (US), Salvation Army, Church of Christ (New Zealand) and of course the Evangelical Lutheran Church etc.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) was established largely in the south of the country at Mnene, Manama, Masase and Musume Missions [*map*].

In addition to missionary work, these “traditional churches,” as opposed to the newer “Pentecostal churches,” have historically played a very significant role in the *education* and *health* sectors of the colonized African population, alongside state institutions. Some have even established universities.

Because of their pervasive role in the educational field, Churches also helped raise political consciousness of the colonial subjects and were therefore often viewed with suspicion by the colonial authorities.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe has had a fairly high profile within the international Lutheran community. The Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko of the ELCZ was General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation for many years.

Among the international partners of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe has been the Upstate New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) which has partnered with the ELCZ under the ELCA's Companion Synods Program.

In general terms, our discussion will attempt to show how churches in general, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in particular, has affected or impacted the lives of Zimbabweans in general, and those of my family.

**Definition:** In this discussion, the term “church” generally refers to the religions associated with Jesus Christ that came to Zimbabwe through European expansion. It excludes the more recently established churches generally referred to as “Pentecostal Churches.”

### ***Personal and Family Association with Lutheran Church***

I grew up in Rusape (in the near east), an area where the Catholic Church is more dominant. In my youth, I was baptized and confirmed a Catholic and attended Catholic schools. Most of the Catholic missions are run by Irish Carmelites and German Jesuits.

French Canadian Marist Brothers run 3 Catholic missions and I attended one of them – Marist Brothers Inyanga Secondary School. Even to this day, my French, which I learned from the Canadians, can enable me to go by in a French-speaking environment.

My wife, Rutendo, comes from the Midlands, an area dominated in the south by the Evangelical Lutheran Church bordered by the Church of Christ (New Zealand) and the Methodist Church in the north. She had even attended a nursing school at Mnene Mission before it was closed due to “Chimurenga” – the war of liberation.

As a family, we first became members of a Lutheran Church when we were in New York 1988-92. There we attended St John’s Lutheran Church in Mamaroneck. Our four children were baptized there by the Rev. Marvin E. Henk.

When we have been in Zimbabwe, we attend All Souls Church, which has the distinction of being run jointly by the Anglican Church (UK) and the Methodist Church (UK – John and Charles Wesley).

### **Establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe**

The history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) dates back to 1903 when the first Swedish Lutheran missionaries from Natal (South Africa) established a congregation in what is now Shurugwi. It was at this Midlands town that the Swedish missionary and his wife, Rudolf and Ester Hellden, and their infant son settled and established a congregation.

Unfortunately, Ester died of malaria, Rudolf became ill, and fearing for the welfare of their infant son, he also left the area. The grave of Ester Hellden is still tended by the congregation at the Ester Hellden congregation site.

A new church building was reportedly dedicated in 2003 at the congregation’s centennial celebration during a visit of the Upstate NY Synod Bishop Marie Jerge.

Abandoning, Shurugwi, Evangelical Lutherans went on to establish 4 Lutheran centers at Mnene, Manama, Masase and Musume Missions.

For quite some time then, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) was a mission field for the Lutheran Church in Natal. It became autonomous in 1962.

Like other Churches, as ELCZ members migrated to urban areas, the church also moved with them; so there are ELCZ Churches in Harare and other major urban centers. In Harare, if you want to meet people from the Lutheran areas, go to the Lutheran church in *Highfield (Western Triangle)* and you will meet them.

## **Churches and Education**

Teaching the Bible necessarily required that converts be able to read and write. Therefore, as everywhere else, the first order of business for the missionaries in Zimbabwe was to educate the local population by establishing mission schools.

Mission schools did more than just facilitate literacy for the purposes of enabling congregations to read the Bible; they filled a very large educational vacuum left by colonial authorities.

In colonial Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) there were two distinct education tracks: the Department of Education catered for “European” education while a separate Department of Native Education catered for “African” education.

While the colonial state authorities established a few “government schools” in the urban centers, it was “mission schools” which catered for the education of majority of the native African population in the rural areas.

Thus the churches, with the assistance of the Headquarters in the metropolitan countries established missions surrounded by smaller schools to cater not only for the spiritual needs of surrounding areas but also for their educational needs.

The role of the colonial administration was to pay the salaries of the teachers as well as to provide grants to the missions based on school enrolment.

My first exposure to anything Evangelical Lutheran was in 1971. In that year – in between my high school equivalent and my departure to India for my higher studies in 1973 – I joined the Unified African Teaching Service (UATS) of the Department of Native Education as a clerk. UATS was the body responsible for the payment of salaries by the colonial government to the teachers in the African school system.

The UATS generated paysheets for each mission and its affiliate schools. The combined paysheets for each religious denomination were sent to the local headquarters of the church with a single check for all the teachers under that denomination. The local headquarters would in turn distribute the salaries to the missions and schools.

I remember distinctly that for the Lutheran Church, there were four paysheets corresponding to the four mission centers – EL Manama, EL Musume, EL Masase and EL Mnene (EL being the acronym for Evangelical Lutheran). A Salvation Army mission paysheet would have the acronym “SA” standing for Salvation Army; Seventh - day Adventist Church “SD” etc.

## **ELCZ Educational Statistics**

Currently, the ELCZ reportedly runs four primary and seven secondary schools, of which six have an "A-level" component. Nine of the schools have units for visually impaired and hearing-impaired pupils at primary, secondary and high school levels.

## **Churches and Health**

Again, as everywhere else, in order for them to learn the Bible, the congregation needed good health. Hospitals were usually attached to the regional mission centers. The Lutheran missionaries added medical work in 1915, thus completing "the three-fold ministry of Christ – preaching, teaching and healing."

The Mission hospitals provided, and still provide, both inpatient and outpatient services. Most importantly, mission hospitals were maternity centres. During a brief stay in Zimbabwe on our way to New York, we had occasion to visit my wife's sister-in-law when she was preparing to give birth to her daughter. Guess where? At Mnene Hospital!

It is not surprising that the birth certificates of most Zimbabweans have the names of mission centers as the "place of birth".

ELCZ has four hospitals at their four mission centers – Mnene, Manama, Masase and Musume – two of which (Mnene and Masase), have been designated referral hospitals by the government.

Mission hospitals have also been centers where primary health care givers, particularly nurses, have been trained. The ELCZ has one such School of Nursing is at Mnene Mission were, as I noted before, my wife joined the nursing course in 1975, before the center was forced to close because of the impact of "Chimurenga" – the armed war of liberation.

## **Churches, Political Consciousness and the War of Liberation**

Because they played a disproportionately huge role in the education of the colonial subjects (and education is often identified with political consciousness), churches were often regarded with suspicion by the colonial authorities. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the leadership of the anti-colonial movement came from the mission schools.

## **Acknowledgement**

My thanks go to Elizabeth Walker, *Global Mission Chairperson, and Companion Synod/Twinning Coordinator* of the Upstate New York Synod for the information she provided on ELCA/ELCZ companionship.

## New Book Published

**Dr. Tsokodayi announced the publication of his book, “Namibia’s Independence Struggle: The Role of the United Nations.”**

Please check this website: [www.namibiasindependencestruggle.com/](http://www.namibiasindependencestruggle.com/) for a summary of his book and his background.

Respectfully submitted, Sue Schmidt

