



Rockrohr News and Notes

www.rockrohr.net

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Ministry Information:

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Our website has the latest news of our work and family!

A Few Impressions from the First Three Weeks

Dr. Weber, the Rector of the Seminary, asked Carl to write an article about our first impressions for the seminary newsletter. It is also good for this newsletter!

After six months of preparing and raising support for our move to serve in South Africa, Ted, Deborah and I felt very ready to move. The last days in the U.S. Deborah's parents helped us finish packing and organizing our house, which we will lease. We left Detroit on 20 January, arriving in South Africa on 21 January. The day we left was the coldest day of the mild winter in Detroit, 5° F (-15° C). We met 81° F (27° C) in Pretoria. We traveled from the winter of the northern hemisphere to the summer in the southern hemisphere.

We attended church the next day at St. Paul Lutheran Church in

Arcadia only one block away from Lutheran Theological Seminary. We had made friends in the congregation when we visited Pretoria for a week in March 2011 and we wanted people to know we had arrived. St. Paul is a German-speaking congregation, so we understood the liturgy fairly well but the sermon escaped us. Friends from the congregation said hello to us after the service.

The following days we caught up on sleep from jet lag and also attended a number of meetings for both the church and the seminary. The next Saturday, 28 January, Deborah and I were invited to attend a funeral service for a young pastor of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa who had died, leaving behind his wife and three small children. We left Pretoria at 4:30 am for

the service which started at 7:30 am. The service, along with the graveside liturgy, lasted until noon. Many area pastors and women's groups came for the funeral as well as the people of the local congregation and town.

The funeral service and burial was mostly in Tswana, but also in some Zulu and English. There was grief expressed, yet also thankfulness for the pastor's faithfulness and the hope of life everlasting with the Lord Jesus. The local tradition is to take the coffin directly to the burial site right after the service, similar to U.S. customs. Since it was a small town all walked behind the hearse for several blocks to the graveyard. What was different, however,

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Ministry News and Photos Available Online

We are able to share more photos online than we can in the newsletter. Carl also occasionally adds sounds files such as

sermons or singing from the seminary and church services. If you have internet access please visit our site at:

www.rockrohr.net.

Please share our newsletter and website with friends who might be interested!



Deborah and volunteer missionary Pat Hoffmeier examine the security bars of the deaconess dorm as they prepared the residence for the students the week before classes started.

First Three Weeks (cont.)

From page 1

was that the burial rites included lowering the coffin and covering it with the pile of earth right then and there. Attending pastors and men of the community shoveled in the dirt and rocks while a choir of women from the Women's Prayer League and the Women in Action groups led all congregants in singing Christian songs. I was privileged to stand right behind Bishop Weber watching the men burying the coffin while being literally surrounded and enveloped with Tswana hymns sung by a women's choir of at least 50 voices.

Though sung in Tswana, I fully recognized the melody of the second last song that was sung: *Joy to the World*. And so

Lutherans in a small South African town sang at a young pastor's burial the very hope that we Christians proclaim to all: Joy - for God has given us His Son to save us, even in the midst of death.

Lutheran Theological Seminary, the place to which Deborah and I are called, has just started classes today (7 Feb). We have about 41 students in all (some are still arriving). The students are from South Africa, Liberia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zambia, Sudan, Botswana, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Six of the students are doing masters or honors studies at the University of Pretoria. Eight of the students are women who are part of the first class of residential

deaconess training.

Though our instruction is in English, our students represent many languages and cultures. The students' homes range from villages to large cities. Sometimes in missionary work one is working primarily among one culture and language group. That was the case with our previous work in Ghana, 1993-98. Not so at LTS, where the students are from many tribes, cultures, races, and mother tongues and social conditions. We also have volunteers from the U.S., Germany and South Africa working at LTS!

We are thankful to God and to His Church for sending us to serve Him at LTS.

Supporting Our Work

In January we had a number of new supporters. Thank you!

As is the case with all LCMS career missionaries, we are responsible to raise and maintain our donor base. The interest and support of donors directly affects our work.

We do need to continue to build up our donor base

for both immediate budget needs as well as long-term work. **Please share our newsletters with others who may be interested!**

How to give support:

To donate by phone call: **1-800-433-3954** (Designate your gift "for the Rockrohrs.")

You can find the links for online giving at:

www.lcms.org/rockrohr

Or, make checks payable to LCMS World Mission with "Rockrohr" noted on the memo line and mail to:

**LCMS WORLD MISSION
P.O. Box 790089
St. Louis, MO 63179**



Deaconess Insights: Mercy and Grace...

...from Beginning to End

With the start of the new academic year two weeks ago, the residential deaconess training programme at LTS was launched. While a new thing, this is not a new idea for LTS. In fact, it has been the dream to add deaconess training for some time now. Initially, LTS was able to offer deaconess training only on a short-term intensive course basis. This year, we have eight women who have come to study on a full-time basis for two years. By God's grace we will yet add another student in the coming days. We know she is trying to come, and have a place reserved for her, but she have so far been delayed in travel.

As the director of the residential deaconess training programme, the work for me is

simultaneously exciting and daunting. It is a big task to design and then carry out a programme to train these women. It is a big responsibility to see that they are well cared for, and have a healthy, comfortable and safe living and learning environment. And yet, what joy to see these new faces and to know that these women are eager to learn and develop their skills so that they can extend the mercy work of the church both within the congregation and into their communities! Carl told me recently that he has not seen me smile so much nor so often as I have in the last few weeks since we arrived in Pretoria and began preparing in earnest for the tasks ahead. Whether that is true or not, I can tell you that I look forward to each new day with joy and great anticipation!



The first residential deaconess class at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Pretoria

The Lord has already showered great mercy and grace upon this fledgling programme. I invite you to rejoice with me as I recount just a few examples of the Lord's blessings already received.

1. Eight women have safely arrived from various towns and villages in South Africa, Botswana, Liberia, and Zambia and are already settling in and taking up their

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Six joyful things we give thanks to God for:

Ted:

1. *Ted is happy he is making new friends at school quickly.*
2. *Kit Kat candy bars are readily available. ☺*

Deborah:

3. *We found a nice house to lease and it was the first of several we looked at.*
4. *We are rapidly feeling at home in Pretoria. It is a lovely city.*

Carl:

5. *South Africans have been very pleasant and welcoming to us, especially the Christians with whom we work.*
6. *Deborah's smiles. She is very happy to be working with her deaconess students.*

Housing Found!

Our first place of rest for several days was on the seminary campus. For the last few weeks we have stayed at the guesthouse, *Oorkant Loftus*. Translation: "Opposite Loftus." Loftus is the local rugby stadium about 4

blocks from the seminary. We need to move to another guest house nearby for several weeks since rugby season is starting and *Oorkant Loftus* is booked solid during the matches.

For long term we have signed a lease for a townhouse with 3 bedrooms, nice office space and patios. God truly led us to it, it was the first place we saw and it is lovely. We will move into it on about March 8th.



Ted attends 7th grade at Waterkloof House Preparatory School. He has formal (pictured), daily and sporting uniforms for school. Currently the afterschool sport is Cricket. It is an all-boys school with a pleasant and studious atmosphere. They have Scripture readings and the Lord's Prayer at the start of each day.

Deaconess Insights (cont.)

From page 3 studies. We hope one more student from Uganda will arrive soon.

2. A beautiful residence has been provided for the women, Dube House. Those who have previously visited the seminary will have known it as guest quarters only. Now it is the deaconess student residence, and has sleeping rooms, bath facilities, a fully-equipped kitchen and laundry, and a large study room.

3. One of our students accidentally left her purse (with passport) on the luggage trolley in the parking lot of the airport. It was only after the hour-long journey to the seminary and then while settling into her room that she discovered it was missing. After making



Carl and Deborah attended a funeral of a young Lutheran pastor

several phone calls, we learned that the purse, with passport and all contents intact, had been spotted by an airport worker and taken to lost luggage. That same afternoon we were able to retrieve the purse and passport! We praise God for His provision and protection in what could have been a disastrous turn of events!

As we have begun with a recounting of God's grace and mercy on the start of the new residential deaconess training programme, we also pray that His mercy and grace will continue throughout, from beginning to end, and that soon we will send out women from LTS, fully trained and qualified to be received as deaconesses in their churches.

We're on the Web!

www.rockrohr.net

and

www.lcms.org/rockrohr

Thank You and Please Forward Us!

Thank you to St. Paul Lutheran Church in Northville, Michigan for taking up the work and cost of printing and mailing the paper copies of our newsletter starting with this issue.

It is important for our work that we keep

building our base of readers, pray-ers and supporters. *If you think a friend would be interested in our work, please do forward the paper or email versions of our newsletter.*

Thank you again to the

many folks back in the U.S. helping us in many ways. Some are praying, some are giving donations, some are raising support for us, and some are taking care of our bills and other necessities of life. May God bless you!