

Report

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For service at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Pretoria, South Africa

4 – 15 April 2016

I have had the privilege of teaching 1 Corinthians (selections) for two weeks (4-15 April 2016) at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Pretoria, South Africa. This is my eighth teaching trip to South Africa and funding this venture has always been a challenge. In addition to my summer preaching engagements, where I show slides and attempt to solicit funds, two years ago I secured a generous travel and expenses grant from the Elm Grove Lutheran Foundation (Elm Grove Lutheran Church, Elm Grove, WI; Rev. Eric Skovgaard) which covered my plane ticket and most additional expenses for two years (2015-2016). A lesser gift was received from Faith Lutheran Church, Merrill, WI (Rev. Kevin Hoogland) to cover the books I needed to teach the course to 22 students. It is very gratifying to establish contacts with Lutherans in America who are willing to finance my teaching ministry at Pretoria. The largest expense is of course the round-trip air ticket to Johannesburg. However, once that has been paid I have rejoiced to see that most of my expenses in South Africa (meals, etc) are largely covered, due to the generosity and kindness of my host, Dr. Wilhelm Weber and his family with whom I have been living during my time in South Africa.

Instruction for the 1 Corinthians class consisted of roughly 4 hours of instruction per day. This time I taught 17 male first and second year students, and 5 deaconess students, from the following countries: Ethiopia, Congo, Liberia, South Africa, Zambia, and Ghana. It was a real thrill to be teaching so many students again. The downside was that these students were only just beginning their Greek instruction so I had to vary my instruction and quizzes accordingly (I did in fact teach them various Greek terms, like σοφία, μυστήριον, and λαλέω, to stimulate interest). Nevertheless, I teach from the Greek text itself and don't "talk down" to them. It works quite well to project the text from an LED projector onto a wall and work through a passage, same as I do with any class at CTS Fort Wayne. Due to the large number of first year students we had to split the first hour of instruction into two: I met half the students (10 or so) in the LHF room from 8:00 – 9:00 a.m., then repeated the same lecture with the second class from 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.; then from 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., and again from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. I taught the entire group in the larger room.

As in former years, I projected the Greek text of 1 Corinthians onto the wall and worked through selections of the material exegetically and theologically. I certainly could not cover everything, but I am pleased to report that those portions of 1 Corinthians most pertinent to an African context were covered: the Salutation and Thanksgiving, Christ the Wisdom of God, the brother caught in sin (1 Cor 5:1ff), sexual immorality, marriage, food sacrificed to idols, speaking in tongues, orderly worship, the role of women at the congregational assembly (1 Cor 14), and the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 15). I quizzed the students 5 times on this material, had a two-page Corinthians hand-out for them to complete during the first weekend I was there, and final exam for the last day. These quizzes and projects helped reinforce the material, and also helped me more

quickly to learn the students' challenging African names. The students drank it all in and had many questions regarding the practical matters involved. I was also able to incorporate into my teaching relevant portions of Carleton A. Toppe's *1 Corinthians* (Concordia, 2005) which provides more a fresh translation and folksy paraphrase of the text than a scholarly treatment. Also in my luggage were 15 *Lutheran Service Books* (which had been dedicated by Elm Grove Lutheran Church last year) and several new volumes of the Concordia Commentary Series (*Ephesians*, *Mark*) for the library.

Here are the assignments I expected from each student in the 1 Corinthians class:

5 quizzes	(approx. 1 quiz per day)	50 %
Assignment Sheet on Toppe	(due over the weekend)	20%
Class participation	(attendance, questions)	10%
Final Exam		20%
Total		100 pts possible

I might have had 7 daily quizzes (like last year) and pushed the students perhaps a bit harder except for a complicating factor: while driving home from the airport I complained to Dr. Weber about how expensive dental care is becoming in the USA. He thereupon got me in to see a dentist (Dr. Maurice Bouckaert, Wilgers Hospital) on Tuesday, who gave me a quote, and by the first Thursday I had the major drilling done and impressions made. A magnificent bridge was fitted to my lower left jaw on the second Thursday, and on my final day in South Africa (Monday 18 April) a high point was sanded down. All in all it was excellent dental surgery performed which saved me thousands of dollars. Provided I keep it cleaned, flossed, etc., the bridge should last me the rest of my life. But due to the frenetic pace of the surgery and fitting I did miss teaching the students one day, which is my prime reason for travelling to South Africa in the first place. Nevertheless, I feel my students did derive tremendous benefit from my lectures on 1 Corinthians I was able to deliver this year.

In addition to teaching the two week intensive Rector Weber requested my preaching at Chapel during the 10:00 a.m. services on 6 and 13 April. During the first weekend of my stay (8-10 April) I accompanied the Webers to a wedding, which I did not actually attend. Instead I stayed with a South African farm family (Harry and Heidrun Johannes) who proudly showed me their farm (pine and gum trees) and talked to me long into the night about America. They were most hospitable and gracious hosts. Then Sunday I attended Evangelical Lutheran Church in Panbult, South Africa (Rev. Matthias Albers), followed by a funeral for a long-time member, Mr. Reginald August Paul. It was German-speaking, and most interesting. Two things stand out: they interred the body immediately before the funeral service: young German guys lowered the body into the grave, then filled up the hole energetically with dirt as the congregation sang verse after verse of a very long hymn, accompanied by a brass band; second, they allowed me to sing in the German choir (3 selections, plus many more hymns during the service). I must say, those German-speaking Lutherans really do things right! The service was stunningly beautiful, very Christ-affirming. Then a wonderful luncheon buffet at the end. It was a most interesting trip and opportunity to see how a traditional, German-speaking Lutheran

church worships the Lord Jesus Christ in a part of the world very far removed from Fort Wayne, IN.

During my final weekend (15-17 April) I had the distinct pleasure of accompanying Wilhelm and Angelika to the Hlane Royal National Park in Swaziland, several hundred kilometers east of Pretoria. This is a 22,000 hectare park where the king of Swaziland hunts. We saw many dozens of impala, bush buck, wart hog, wildebeest, a giant boa constrictor, hippopotami, a rhino and her cub, and three elephants right at the end. The accommodations were first-rate and we had a marvelous time. This part of my trip I finance myself, but find it well worth treating myself to an authentic African vacation after working so hard for two weeks before boarding the plane for home. Also, this is a perfect time to be traveling and spending money in South Africa: the exchange rate was 14.57 Rands per 1 U.S. dollar (sometimes the rate is 7 to 1). So I bought much wine and gifts for my return home. During our weekend at Hlane we celebrated Jubilate Sunday by ourselves (John 15: "I am the Vine, Ye are the Branches"). The Webers are a very devout family and observe family devotions together daily. It was a joy to join their family worship, sometimes in German.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Wilhelm Weber, Jr., his wonderful wife Angelika, and two of their four children (Frederika, Detlev) who so kindly hosted me in their home throughout the entire two-and-a-half week period. Every day I'd wake at 6 a.m., breakfast, and accompany Angelika and kids in rush-hour traffic to our respective places at the University of Pretoria or the seminary. Then when the day was over we'd retire to the Weber home where I'd relax: check my e-mails, drink Windhoek Beer, decompress, and generally enjoy myself. I should also mention in this connection that I received a free and nutritious lunch every day with the students at LTS prepared by Emily Ngubeni, a local African. Also, during my two weeks there, I went out to dinner with Rev. Jacob Corzine (a CTS grad whose primary ministry is to students at the University of Pretoria), Dr. Karl Boehmer (teaches at LTS), and Rev. Martin Paul (pastor of St. Paul's, the FELSISA Lutheran Church just down Arcadia Street from the seminary). Another couple that had me over to their place for wonderful German cuisine was Rev. and Mrs. Guenther Hohls, who was a pastor in the FELSISA until his retirement. Rector Weber has been to me a great host over the years and a real brother in Christ. It is vital that the LCMS continue to support LTS with our offerings and prayers, even as we respond to dramatic requests for assistance elsewhere. I welcome this opportunity to have served the Lord and his church by teaching at LTS in April 2016 and hope, by God's grace, to return to teach next year in April or May.

Sincerely,

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USA