
Konde Partnership Newsletter

A publication of the Konde Diocese Committee of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, ELCA



May 2010

Editor: Jacob Maser cpo.jake@verizon.net

COMPANION GATHERING IN MAY

The Konde Diocese Committee of the Synod is holding a simulation visit to the Konde Diocese. On Saturday May 22 from 9:30-1:00 you can make a 'virtual' visit to the Diocese by coming to Camp Kirchenwald in Colebrook. The event is open to all ages – children are welcome. It will begin at the 'airport in Dar es Salaam' (the pavilion beside the kitchen). Travelers will then 'visit' a church in the diocese, a medical facility, a kitchen, and a school. The event will conclude with a Tanzanian lunch back at the 'airport'! Come and learn more about our brothers and sisters in Tanzania and enjoy the setting of Camp Kirchenwald. Reservations are due by May 10. Emailing who is coming is a fine way to register.. Directions to the camp will be given to those planning to attend. A free will offering will be taken during the 'trip'.

NEWS FROM SUEDTONDERN

by Gertruda von Holdt-Schermuly

(ED NOTE: In a partnership such as the one we share with the Konde Diocese and the Germans, it is good to share what is happening everywhere. This article conveys a sermon given in Germany.)

In July 2009 Suedtondern had a sunday service about Tanzania, conducted by Gertruda von Holdt-Schermuly Hauke Christiansen, and Jan-Uwe. It was a good one and some money was collected for Iwambi (an orphanage in Mbeya).

Sermon on July 12th 2009 in Deezbüll (Germany)

First Speaker (1)
Second Speaker (2)

1. Dear Sisters and Brothers, Africa: 650 million people; fifty countries; thousands of great peoples and small ethnic groups, cultures and religions. In the atlases used by the Romans the only comment in the regions beyond the Sahara

was: *Hic sunt leones. Here are lions.*

Africa: the cradle of humanity, the lost paradise, the Dark Continent, the heart of darkness.

Africa is best known as the c-continent: c for crises, catastrophes, corruption, criminality, capital flight; and for wars and sickness. Africa screams, Africa weeps, and Africa dies.

2. But Africa sings Africa laughs and Africa dances.

1. Africa is a continent that can find no peace and yet at the same time seems to be caught in a kind of permanent paralysis. A continent somewhere on the road between tradition and the modern world; leaving behind many confused people on the edges of the road.

Africa nigra, a cursed, lost continent? Black disaster? All of us have our own Congo in our heads: our personal projection surface for Africa.

2. Africa the comforter: is waiting for you when you

arrive, tired of modern-day society, burnt out, exhausted from forever living with the clock. You withdraw into yourself, don't dare to hope for a way out, don't trust yourself to get too close. But it casts its spell over you. The warmth, the blaze of colour, the vast expanses, the wealth of impressions, majestic peace, noisy activity and the people's friendliness - it overwhelms you, changing both you and your picture of Africa.

1. Is it not presumptuous to pass judgment on this part of the earth? Must we not appear arrogant, when we talk about the nature of the African people and yet cannot speak a single one of their two thousand languages?

In Africa you learn to live with question marks. You grasp what you cannot grasp. And over the years you become more cautious, more careful, and perhaps even more merciful in the way you judge this continent.

Africa, so simple, so mysterious. We can only perceive Africa and the Africans through our European eyes. We have no others.

2. Africa, so complex, so inconceivable. Why do I feel that I must get involved, if I don't know anything about them? Nothing about their traditions, their dreams, their possibilities. I try to look deeper, to become aware, to

listen. I will never really understand, but I can change my European way of looking at things to a more positive one.

1. Oyibo the children call after us in Yoruba-Land in Nigeria, the Fon in Benin use the word jovo, in Kiswaheli they call us mzungu and in Lingala, the main language in the Congo, we are mundele. The meaning is the same everywhere: a white person, a foreigner, a sensation. Why are you visiting us of all people? What are you up to? What do you want? But only just a few sentences later, suspicion is replaced by an overwhelming kindness and hospitality that you would be hard put to find in a German village and under no circumstances if you had a dark skin.

We are invited into a hut, offered millet beer or palm wine, the evening meal is shared with us and we are offered a place to sleep. We are in good hands in Africa. It gives us a sense of basic trust.

2. The children run behind us laughing. In villages, where a Mzungu is rarely seen, the little children hide behind their mothers and begin to cry. The adults adopt a policy of wait and see. We are foreigners and foreign!

But Africa does not leave us in this foreignness. It holds out its hand and amazes us.

1. As a European we must be careful about offering advice. For most of our fine development theories have failed miserably when put into practice in Africa. The huge continent has pushed away all forced attempts at modernization just as if they were annoying germs. How many development experts are working off their helpers' syndrome just now and regaining their health through Africa's suffering? The Africans should ... they shouldn't ... they absolutely have to ...

2. The Africans should work, they can't always be unpunctual, they simply have to think further than just tomorrow!

1. Even today there is still no lack of schoolmasterly lectures from the north. They follow whichever welfare concept is in fashion. At present it says: "Open your markets! And everything will be fine."

Priests of a mission station enthuse about the deeply religious Africans, about their ardent singing, their colorful liturgies, and their fiery faith. The living spirituality of Africa is a rejuvenation cure that could renew the churches of Europe.

2. Africa the fisher of men: Who would not like to believe as children do? Who would not like to give themselves to God in complete trust? In which structures, in which regulations have we hidden and lost our spirituality? In the churches in Africa the nets are full. They not only fish for people in their own country, they fish for us too. And it is really easy, for we want so much to be caught. By their services, which, on account of their length alone, are foreign to us and yet move us, and with music and dancing carry us away? With their prayers, which engage us in conversation with God. And we immerse ourselves in a world that is foreign and nevertheless makes us feel at home.

1. But one can also look at Africa in a different way: critically, without condemning it; optimistically, without transfiguring it.

The mechanic in Kinshasa keeps on fighting as if to say: "You haven't a chance, so use it." He disproves the caricature of the lazy African. The gold digger in Ghana, the sisal cutter in Tanzania, the miner in South Africa, the diamond panner in the Congo, the lumberjack in Cameroon, the seamstress in Namibia, everywhere people slave away under indescribably harsh

conditions, such as we in Europe cannot even imagine any more.

It is the women who I think of first. Millions of women who work in the fields in extreme heat, digging, planting, weeding and harvesting the crops, who walk kilometers every day to collect firewood or bring water, often with a child on their back and two others clinging to their skirts. They carry more than half of the African sky. And if their labor produces a little bit of money, it is sometimes even enough to send the boys to school for a while.

2. Africa: women's country

I see groups of women, colorfully and magnificently dressed, carrying tree trunks, whole sacks of potatoes or wood, and buckets full of water on their head and a child on their back as well. And making it look as though it were nothing! I see women who care for the old and the sick, always have a child at their breast and need hours of preparation to be able to cook one warm meal a day. I see women sweeping and washing, harvesting, making pots, selling things and walking, walking, walking ... to make a little bit of money, so that there is food for the family, and to allow for education.

1. Africa - this continent can steal our hopes in the morning and give us fresh confidence in

the evening. It often leaves us at a loss and sometimes makes us furious and then, when we don't know what to do, it shows us a new way out. But whenever we think we have really understood something, it poses the next riddle for us. Even in the end it is just an incomplete mosaic. Perhaps that is a picture of Africa!

2. Africa: dreamland

In my dreams I drive through the steppe, through dried up river beds, past baobab and umbrella trees, elephants, zebras and giraffes, see the still snow-capped crater of the Kilimanjaro mountain, the friendly smiling faces of the people, hear the strange and well-known sounds, smell drought and grilled chicken, breathe in dust, feel the sweat on my skin, am on the move and yet have arrived. Amen.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Benevolence or general questions: Pastor Cliff Eshbach, Assistant to the Bishop, LSS. Email: ceshbach@lss-elca.org

Companion Congregation program: Pastor Sally Gausmann, St Paul, Trinity Road, York. Email: Pastor.Sally@comcast.net