

# **The history and beginning of the African mission work in Indiana District LCMS Since the year 2000**

As we have heard many times in recent years, the world mission field has come to the United States. People from all over the world are leaving their homelands due to wars, poor economic conditions, and religious persecution, seeking the same things our forefathers sought - freedom from danger, freedom to seek their fortune, and freedom to worship without fear.

Africans immigrating in large numbers are emigrating from their home countries. They come not only to the United States, but to Australia, to Europe, and even to parts of Asia.

As did many of our German Lutheran ancestors, the Africans are thrust into a totally foreign culture. Our forefathers, for many decades, maintained their culture and language by establishing schools where German was the primary language in which the subjects were taught.

As German immigrants settled in this country, many were cut off from their culture and language because they established homes and farms isolated from other German immigrants. They were cut off from their churches and many were in danger of losing their faith. Missionaries were sent from Germany to minister to these immigrants and their families. In Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio for example, many of these isolated German immigrants were ministered to by Pastor Wyneken who worked out of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Two other missionaries came to Fort Wayne, who were not Germans, but rather a Ghanaian and a Gambian respectively. Pastor Isaac Gyampadu and Pastor John Loum. Like Pastor Wyneken, Pastor Gyampadu and Loum each came to pursue a higher education in the United States. In the case of Gyampadu and Loum, but especially with Gyampadu, the Lutheran Church of Ghana in partnership with the World Missions Department of the LCMS sent him as a missionary to the United States. Partly his task was to bring African immigrants the Gospel of Jesus in the context of their own cultural background.

Pastor Loum and Pastor Gyampadu were both in the United States singly without their families, but then with Loum, after three years of separation, St. Peter's congregation in Fort Wayne brought his family from Africa and has continued to support them. The children of the Indiana District LCMS schools participated in raising the funds to make this reunion possible.

Today Pastors Gyampadu and Loum are ministering to their African brothers and sisters at the facilities of Trinity congregation - a congregation with 146 years of ministry behind them. The two worshipping communities share the facilities and have even joined together for special worship celebrations.

As in every worshipping community, people are baptized, men and women are united in marriage, meals are shared, and deaths are mourned. Recently a memorial service was held in memory of two family members who died in the fighting still going on in a number of African nations. In attendance were African believers from Ghana, Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Sudan.

A number of African Americans have come hoping to connect to their ancestral culture. But also many white Anglo-Americans and immigrants from every part of the world have come to worship with these African believers. Russians, Asians, Hispanics, and yes, even some Germans have been worshipping our Lord with singing, clapping, and even dancing. What a foretaste of heaven! What a picture of what Christ's Church is meant to be!

It is an awesome task, Africans come from a continent of many nations, tribes, and languages. The work is slow, but the Word of God is continuing to reach new people daily.

Many of the Africans coming to the United States are not able to get jobs with adequate salaries. Many have no transportation. That makes it essential that Christian brothers and sisters support this mission outreach with their prayers and offerings.

As the ministry evolved, the model of St. Paul was adopted, where Pastor Gyampadu then moved on to establish ministries among Africans in other places. As for Pastor Loum and his family, they continued their ministry in Fort Wayne by strengthening and firmly establishing the first African immigrant population in the Indiana district in 2000, while at the same time developing African ministries all across the Indiana district.

Throughout our nation, people from every tribe and nation have come seeking the freedoms which countless others before them have sought. What an opportunity God has opened up to us! Men and women of God are still "going" and "making disciples of all nations"; and the Lord of the nations, Jesus Christ, is still calling all people to Himself.

This in essence was how the first african immigrant congregation comprising fourteen different african nations, including african americans and a host of North American and other caucasians from other countries were gathered together irrespective of color but joined by one common faith in the saving and delightful gospel of the good news of Jesus Christ. This then was a true reflection of Revelation 7, where all nations and people were gathered together in worshipping Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Hopefully, this would become a new model and pattern for missionary work in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and perhaps in Western Europe. May the Lord of the harvest, bless all mission work, be it African immigrant and others.

To God be praised! Submitted by Dr John Loum