

## LIBERIA EDUCATION UPDATE

MARCH, APRIL, MAY 2016

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In March, we began a restructuring process in the Department of General Education & Ministry. At the Annual Conference in February, Rev. Dr. Sampson Nyanti was appointed as Director effective March 1, 2016 and I am serving as Associate Director for Supervision for the rest of this school year. In September 2015, Moses Kollie, our former cashier and warehouse manager graduated from Cuttington University in Monrovia with a master degree in Business Administration. Moses is now our Associate Director for Administration. In 2013, our department secretary, David Geddeh, graduated from University of Liberia with a bachelor degree in Accounting. David is now the cashier and warehouse manager. And on March 14, Jebbeh Kpaka joined our office as a volunteer secretary. Jebbeh is a junior at University of Liberia majoring in Public Administration.

After serving as Education Director for 7 years, I know that teachers in many of our Liberian schools need more guidance in how to teach. I feel called to teach teachers and I would like to take a 1-year study leave to focus on the art of teaching. My study leave request for the 2016/2017 school year was approved in April.

According to the Ministry of Education's Calendar of Events, the 2015/2016 school year for basic and secondary schools in Liberia ends on July 12. I am trying to visit as many schools as possible before then. Here are highlights from our schools for the past 3 months.

During the 2015 retreat in Gbarnga, the principals decided that the next retreat will be held at our Diecke United Methodist School (UMS) in Diecke, Guinea. On March 18, 2016, I joined 3 principals for an assessment visit to Diecke. The staff of the Diecke UMS was very happy about the visit and is looking forward to hosting the retreat. On our way back to Monrovia, we heard on the taxi radio that new cases of Ebola were confirmed in Guinea about a 3-hour drive from Diecke and the border was closed shortly after we crossed. Then on April 1, it was confirmed that a woman died of Ebola in Monrovia. We are thankful that the lessons learned from the Ebola outbreak kept these cases from spreading.

In March, 2 teams from the East Ohio Conference went to J. F. Yancy UMS at Camphor Mission in Grand Bassa. Volunteers also spent time at Ganta UMS on our mission station in Nimba County where they tiled the school's library and held a training on phonics attended by Ganta UMS teachers and teachers from 4 other schools in Gompa District. We are grateful that Karen Crist, Beckie Trout, Karl Stone, Aaron Phillips and Paula Shaw all made it safely to the U. S. after being in transit at the Brussels airport on the morning of the bomb blasts.

The Rev. Herbert S. Zigbou Laboratory Complex at Ganta UMS was dedicated on March 25, 2016. The building will house the computer and science labs for the high school. The North Carolina conference has been very supportive of the school and sent \$3,575 to help equip the science lab.

Water for Life (The Advance #3020811) continues to bring water and sanitation to our schools. In April, we dedicated the latrine with flush toilets at Janice Lee Mclain UMS in Marshall, Margibi County and Water for Life also installed a hand pump at Jemima Camp Freeman UMS in Voinjama, Lofa County.

Julie Rolfs from Peoria, Illinois joined a team from East Ohio. She brought letters from deaf students in Peoria to share with our students at Hope For The Deaf in Monrovia and carried letters from our students in Monrovia to Peoria. Julie also brought a Sign Language manually that was put together with love and prayer.

Hope for the Deaf receives support from the Uniting Church in Sweden. In May, Rev. Christer Daelander, Regional Coordinator for Africa and Human Rights Coordinator for the Uniting Church, made his first visit to Liberia. During his 4-day stay, we spent time at the Hope For The Deaf elementary school in Monrovia which has an enrolment of 52 students and at our Inclusive Education program for high school students at the nearby Global Free Pentecostal Mission High School. 18 deaf students are enrolled in this school. Hope For The Deaf in Monrovia has an afternoon skills training program with tailoring and shoe-making classes. Rev. Daelander was able to meet with students in both classes. We drove to the Sign Language program in Kakata where we have 29 students in 3 classes- the beginners class, kindergarten class, and first grade class. The school in Kakata is a Sign Language training school helping deaf children to build their communication skills in sign language before enrolling in a full academic program. Back in Monrovia, Rev. Daelander participated in the School to Home Program designed to teach Sign Language to the parents and relatives of deaf students. We also drove to Clay Ashland across the St. Paul River to see the land where we hope to build the Hope For The Deaf National Training Institute. The Liberia Annual Conference donated 15 acres of land for the project and Dr. Victoria Brown from Middletown UMC in Maryland, USA spent many hours working on a USAID grant proposal for the construction of the buildings. The proposal was due on May 2 and we will find out in October if it will be funded.

Flanagan UMS in Fish Town, River Gee County is now at window level. Rev. Sam Kanwea, Grand Gedeh District Superintendent, is supervising this construction project funded by the Vermillion River District of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. Once the school building is completed, we will have United Methodist schools in all 15 counties of Liberia.

Every Sunday, I look forward to being with the children at New Georgia UMC. The children have a choir and on Easter Sunday, they sang beautifully in the sanctuary and recited Bible verses about Jesus dying for our sins and giving us new and eternal life. I will miss being with the children with whom I have interacted for the past 8 years, but I'm excited about being able to concentrate on what and how children are learning in our schools.

When I'm away from Liberia next school year, I will be in communication with the Department of General Education & Ministry and hope to be able to visit many congregations in the States.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

You can support education in Liberia by donating to The Advance #15125B Scholarships for Elementary, Secondary, College & Seminary Education, The Advance #3020670 for Construction of New School Buildings, The Advance #3021654 for Sheltering the Children of John Dean Town (dormitory project), The Advance #14488A Swords Turned into Plowshares (carpentry program at Gbarnga Mission Station) and The Advance #3021129 for missionary support in my name.

I wish you the peace of Jesus Christ.

Blessings,

Helen Roberts-Evans  
Department of General Education & Ministry  
Liberia Annual Conference/The United Methodist Church  
[hevans@umcmision.org](mailto:hevans@umcmision.org)  
[micradon@hotmail.com](mailto:micradon@hotmail.com)

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