



May 2015

In The Way

with the St-Onges

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Anguilla

Deaconess Training in Jamaica

A couple of weeks ago I joined Sisters Katie Ziegler and Danelle Putnam in Kingston, Jamaica to introduce the women in our congregations there to the work of deaconesses. We and Rev. Obot Ite met for four nights, Friday through Monday, with seven women of St. Andrew and Faith Lutheran Churches. I contributed an opening devotion each day on our work together as the Body of Christ, and Pastor Ite closed our discussions with prayer.

Sister Katie did an excellent job talking, first, about Christian identity. In America, our identity is caught up in our ability to *do* things. It's no surprise that the major contribution of America to philosophy is utilitarianism, the idea that things should be valued based on the outcome they produce. In other countries, like Jamaica, identity is formed differently. For Christians, our identity is found in God's claim on us in our baptism into the death of Christ. We are now children of God because of God's actions toward us from the outside, and as children God disciplines and shapes us from the inside now by the Spirit. We are also sinners, and by recognizing that fact we ensure that we do not ground our identity as children of God in our own works.

Katie, with help from Danelle, discussed the identity of the deaconess, as a Christian woman specially called to bring the mercy of the Church into the wider community, and to connect the wider community to the gifts of God given in the Church. In the context of Acts 6, the pastor puts the teaching of the Word and prayer first and foremost, while the deaconess serves that work by showing love for the widow, the orphan, the poor, and others in need (James 1:27, Galatians 2:10).

They also discussed the many hurts that women can feel when their roles are undermined or belittled by others. As sinful people, we are still works in progress and fall short of God's desires for us. Broken families, men who no longer serve appropriately as husbands and fathers, a culture that has lost a sense of what our genders mean; all these things can bring crises of identity. But Christ continues to speak to us through the Word, bringing healing and a renewed sense of hope as daughters – and sons – of a Heavenly Father who never leaves us or forsakes us.

The hope of the training is that we might begin identifying local leaders in Jamaica to be more formally trained as deaconesses. Please pray that the Lord of the harvest would fulfill that desire!

Mission Moment

"I'm a missionary with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod." That's how I normally introduce myself, like to the cab driver in Kingston, Jamaica as we waited to pick some people up. He said he was connected with the Church of God in Jamaica. He mentioned hearing about the martyrdom of Christians in the Middle East, and what a tragedy that was.

"I notice that you're a pastor." All my emails mention my mission work in the footer, and so this comment wasn't surprising. But this Quebecer said that he, too, was a Christian – and in a majority culturally Roman Catholic province, that means something, normally membership in an Evangelical Church.

"You're a missionary?" Yes, I share the good news that we are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus Christ. The barber didn't quite know what to make of that, but she asked some questions to learn more.

"I'm a Christian." As I buried my grandmother earlier this month, I realized that is my first and primary identity. I am baptized – and that is what ultimately matters.



Pictures, Top Left: Dedication of new paraments from St. John, Hutchinson, MN; **Top Right:** Worship at St. Andrew; **Bottom Left:** Amera, Sister Danelle and Goodness working "hard" at deaconess training; **Bottom Right:** Training session at St. Andrew led by Sister Katie.



News and Notes

Special thanks to Rev. David Markworth and the saints at St. John, Hutchinson, MN who donated a whole set of paraments for use at Faith in Kingston. Note above the Easter paraments being put to use right away!

Earlier this month my grandmother, Luella Ashick, fell asleep in Christ and took rest from her labors. You may remember that her husband of over 70 years, my grandfather, passed away while we were serving in China last year. It was a privilege that this time I was able to be with my family to lay her to rest. All seven of her grandchildren served as pall-bearers.

Olivia and Sophia completed 5th and 2nd grade, respectively, last week. Deb had another problem diagnosed in her left eye, this one coming from complications of her Graves Disease treatment right before deployment last year. The good news is that it is treatable. The bad news is that it is still very hard for her to read, or be in bright light.

We are still considering what shape the future will hold for us, especially now that our rented home of the last 10 months has been sold and we need to move somewhere in the next 3-4 weeks. I know you have all been waiting with us for news. I will update you with an email announcement before June 12.

Prayer Concerns

- For the women trained in Kingston, Jamaica, that they may put what they've learned to good use,
- For the Hasskarls as they spend time back in Texas before returning to the Caymans in mid-June,
- For Charles, that the decisions he reaches in the coming days may be God-pleasing and provide for the health of our family,
- For Deb, Olivia and Sophia, as they prepare for their fourth move in two years.

Support Us

Make checks payable to The LCMS, memo line: St-Onge Family Support, and send to:

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or

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