

FAR REACH MINISTRIES

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER HERALDING EDUCATION FOR THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN IN THE AFRICA GREAT LAKES REGION

Brethren Nursery School now called *Brethren Academy*

Not to confuse anyone with the new name, but when government officials were recently visiting the Gisenyi nursery school, they suggested changing the name to Brethren Academy, as that would allow future growth into primary and secondary school classes. A great idea!

Three classes, three classrooms

When school opened again in September, we were pleased to be able to accommodate 50 students (up from the 30 we had previously). With some renovations we now have three classrooms: Baby, Middle, and Top class. Each class has a teacher, with Grace Elliott going from class to class teaching English.



The Prosperity Gospel

One of the major challenges for the Africa Great Lakes church is the prevalence of the prosperity gospel. This is the teaching that promises such things as:

- Health and wealth to Jesus' followers
- A general lack of suffering in the believers life
- He or she is blessed because Christ took the hit for us
- The Savior suffered so we won't have to
- Gifts to the church/ministry will be blessed and multiplied back to you.

While the above definition may be a bit simplistic, I think you all know what I'm talking about. There are a myriad of variations, depending on the context and the individual who is interpreting it. From what I read, it is an issue throughout Africa (as well as North America), not just the Great Lakes region. On one hand, it is not difficult to understand how such a teaching would become popular among some of the most impoverished people in the world. If God can bring me to a different better place physically and financially, of course that is the "truth" I want to accept. Some of the preachers promoting it generate income by



Your prayers and support are greatly appreciated!

Donations are cheerfully received by way of the Southern Pennsylvania District Office (Church of the Brethren) at the following address:

Southern PA District
3375 Carlisle Rd; Suite A,
Gardners PA 17324.

Be sure to write **Africa Great Lakes** on the memo line!

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encouraging giving to the church, but it is not working for the average Christian. It's a teaching we've heard multiple times, in multiple ways, coming out of multiple places over multiple decades. Probably over centuries, but I don't go back that far.

"Give your tithes to XYZ church. God will multiply it back to you ten times!" A little like the lottery or a trip to Vegas, it sounds great. Put a little in and get a lot back. I for one believe that God blesses our giving. I believe that we receive back far more than we give. But not necessarily financially. And while I believe that we should indeed be giving our tithes and offerings to the church, the rub comes when we see misappropriation of funds by the leadership. Lavish lifestyles of preachers when the parishioners are living in deep poverty.

Another side of the prosperity teaching is that often its proponents lay claim to special prophetic powers that allow them to announce to all listening that they have a unique message from God. Sometimes it comes as prophecy revealed by speaking in tongues. They utter their unintelligible gibberish and then "interpret" the message. It's a rather convenient way to tell the folks what the speaker wants them to hear, something that isn't exactly biblical (sometimes entirely unbiblical), but convincing because of the delivery method. "God is telling me to take another wife." "Everyone in this church is going to have a car/house/etc." Of course in the end there are broken relationships and disappointed people that lose faith in God rather than being encouraged and strengthened by their church. Our sinful propensity toward covetousness and immorality is preyed upon.

Therefore, among the immediate needs of the Africa Great Lakes church is appropriate training that will provide Christ-centered, Bible-based teaching for our pastors and church leaders. It remains our plan to open the Great Lakes Bible School in early 2023.

You and I won't be able to fix all the theological ills of the African church. We certainly aren't doing a very good job with the US church. But it is my prayerful hope that we will use the opportunity before us to support strong teaching and training for our church leaders in the Africa Great Lakes region.

For the Master, Chris Elliott