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THE WORD DOES NOT RETURN EMPTY, IT ACCOMPLISHES ITS PURPOSE!

ISAIAH 55:11

Lutherans in Yambio celebrate Easter in a new cathedral

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in South and Sudan (ELCSS/S) is a growing Confessional Lutheran Church body formed 32 years ago with now 78 trained pastors, 200 congregations, five dioceses, and 150,000 members according to 2022 statistics. Over 90% of ELCSS/S churches operate in temporary shelters, open spaces and under trees. There is a great need to construct permanent church buildings at least in every diocese of the ELCSS/S.

The plan to construct a permanent church building at the ELCSS/S HQs started in 2019 and in 2022 God blessed the plan through the generosity of Mr. Lim and his family. Thanks be to God for Dr. Bernie Lutz and his wife

Dr. Elly Lutz who shared the need with the donors and worked hard to find financial assistance for the construction. There would be no cathedral without the support of Dr. Bernie and Dr. Elly!

April 20, 2025 was a special Easter Sunday for the Lutherans in Yambio and the entire local community as hundreds gathered to celebrate the great miracle of Jesus' resurrection and to witness

the inauguration of the splendid St. Paul's Cathedral, the first ELCSS/S completed permanent church building! In attendance was the Acting Governor of Western Equatoria State, H.E Daniel Badagbu Rimbaso, other government dignitaries, representatives of the Azande Kingdom, international church partners and local sister churches among others.



Celebrations at LHF Lake View Gardens April 20, 2025

The sermon was delivered by Rev. Dr. Bernie Lutz who preached from 1Corinthians 1:23: *We preach Christ crucified, the power and wisdom of God!*

At the occasion was the Rev. Dr. Robert Rahn, founder of Lutheran Heritage Foundation who reminded the congregation of the Fellowship endorsed in 2023 with the LCMS. "It was not because you had good buildings, it was because of your doctrine. You have the Word with you, may that Pure Word continue to be preached from this pulpit" Dr. Rahn stated.

The ELCSS/S Presiding Bishop, the Rev. Peter Anibati Abia expressed his appreciation to all those present and especially the church partners who supported the construction of the new church. He indicated that the new cathedral was a symbol reflecting God's power and sovereignty. *It points people to Christ who is the owner of everything, the Bishop said. The money could have been used to fund any other needed*

projects but we decided that a permanent church building be constructed first because we are a church in which God's Word is number one. This church building represents what the ELCSS/S stands for, namely the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Now that we have a place where we can meet, talk, listen and be blessed by God, I am confident that God will also provide for other needs.

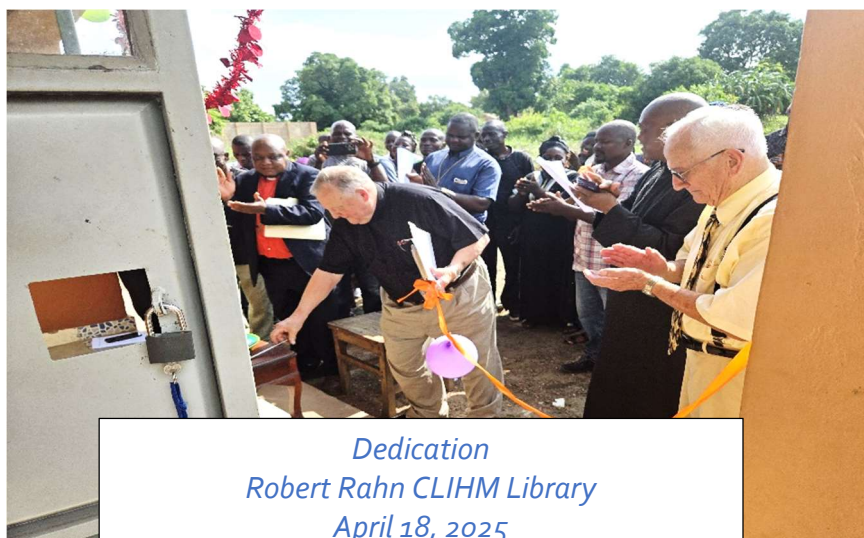
The Acting Governor of WES congratulated the church for this milestone and reaffirmed the government's commitment towards peace and development. He encouraged the faithful to *embrace peace and be ambassadors of development.*

After the divine service the reception was held at LHF Lake View Gardens where the occasion continued for the whole day with presentations, traditional dances, meals and entertainments. It was a joyous celebration, a day to remember and to thank the Lord for all His wonderful deeds. Christ is Risen Alleluia!

The Robert Rahn CLIHM Library is dedicated

The Concordia Lutheran Institute for the Holy Ministry (CLIHM) is a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan and Sudan established in 2001 in Khartoum, to train workers for the ELCSS/S. Since 2008, the seminary was moved to Yambio where it has been operating for the past 17 years. The Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF) under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Robert L. Rahn helped to establish both the ELCSS/S and the CLIHM. Every year, a good number of visiting instructors mainly LCMS pastors facilitated by LHF come to teach at CLIHM. These Pastors raise their own support to cover travelling expenses to Yambio. These instructors have not only helped to train students, they have also supported the ELCSS/S with various projects and provided for the needs of the students. Without the mission work of LHF in Sudan, there would be no ELCSS/S or CLIHM!

In recognition of this important work and particularly the work and contributions of Rev. Dr. Rahn, the leadership of the ELCSS/S and the seminary decided to name the seminary library as Robert Rahn - CLIHM library and the official dedication took place on April 18, 2025. The Rev. Dr. Bernie Lutz a great supporter of CLIHM and the ELCSS/S since 2008 appreciated the gesture and thanked Dr. Rahn



*Dedication
Robert Rahn CLIHM Library
April 18, 2025*

and LHF for their service. The Presiding Bishop in his speech reminded those present that LHF was formed to translate, publish and distribute books but God used them to create something special in South Sudan and Sudan, namely a church body and a seminary. "This is very unusual for such an organization. We plan but God determines the way and His ways are not our ways," the Bishop said.

The Rev. Elinama Jacob Bisi who is CLIHM Acting Principal stated, "It is proper and fitting to honor our grandfather in this way because he has done a lot for us," referring to Dr. Rahn. After the library name was unveiled, The Rev. Dr. Robert Rahn was asked to cut the ribbon while the women of the church were singing with joy and men clapping their hands.

Dr. Rahn thanked the audience for the opportunity to address them. He also said, "It was certainly most humbling to find one's name inscribed in tribute to one's work among you. Thank you again for the honor... Therefore, our prayer is that these books shelved in the ROBERT RAHN CLIHM LIBRARY be used to the glory of God and the extension of God's Kingdom through the seminarians, pastors and people using the books of this library." He quoted from Scriptures, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory for Your mercy and Your

truth's sake." Psalm 115:1

The Concordia Lutheran Institute for the Holy Ministry (CLIHM) has trained most of the ELCSS/S pastors who now are serving in the congregations. The need for more pastors remains great. A pastor in an area usually serves multiple congregations. There is need to increase the capacity of the seminary to be able to recruit more candidates but it requires more financial support. The current facility can only accommodate a maximum of 25 students until graduation making the congregations wait four years before they can get a pastor or send a candidate to the seminary. This year the seminary has 12 vicars who will be graduating in November and 25 new students waiting to join the seminary in 2026. Keep these students and staff in your prayers!

ELCSS/S Diocesan Bishops Installed

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan and Sudan has now five dioceses since 2023. When the diocesan bishops were elected the Presiding Bishop had to travel to each diocese to install the bishops. The installation program started last year with Bishop Simon Gatluak Geng in Maiwut town of Upper Nile State on August 4, 2024.

Earlier this year the Presiding Bishop traveled to Akobo Town to install Bishop Peter Chuol Bayien of Jonglei Diocese. This took place on February 9, 2025.

On February 16, 2025, Bishop Musa Albina Kadum was installed in Karindi, Nuba Mountains as the Bishop of Sudan Diocese. The installation of the Bishop of Central and Eastern Equatoria Diocese, the Rev. Ogiki Benjamin Martin is scheduled for May 5, 2025.

Through the leadership of these men, the Lord of the church continues to draw people to Himself through the ministry of Word and Sacraments despite the many challenges the Bishops face. Keep them and their flock in your prayers.

ELCSS/S Distributes food to Refugees and IDPS

The conflict and insecurity in South Sudan continue to be the major drivers of need in the country. This conflict has not only affected the livelihoods of the people but has hindered access to essential services such as water, sanitation, education and healthcare. The economic crisis, intercommunal conflict, and the influx of refugees and returnees from Khartoum, Sudan have exacerbated the situation, with many people facing crisis, emergency, or catastrophic levels of hunger according to World Food Program. Over 57% of South Sudan's population face acute food insecurity as recorded by the United Nations World Food Program. It is heartbreaking to see so many children malnourished and weak mothers struggling to survive.

This conflict has not only displaced people across borders (refugees) but also across the country internally (IDPs). When people are forced from their homes, they lose their possessions, crops and income, and are often stranded in strange places with no help.

In February this year, thousands of people were forced from their homes in Agoro Payam of Magwi County and they fled to Magwi Town in Eastern Equatoria State. The majority were women, children and the elderly. In this conflict, many people lost their lives including the elder brother of our diocesan bishop Ogiki Benjamin. Two of our vicars narrowly survived but they lost everything as their houses were burnt down by the attackers.

In these challenging times, the generosity of our friends enabled us to bring relief to these people. We distributed food and hygiene kits to the internally displaced people in Magwi County and in the Nuba Mountains where thousands of refugees from Khartoum are sheltering. In all these places food was given to all the needy in the name of Jesus despite their religious affiliations.

While distributing relief in Nuba Mountains, the newly translated Otoro Simple Explanation of Christianity by LHF was distributed at the same time. No single book was left, all were given out in one day! The people are not only hungry for food, they are also hungry for the Word!



Distribution of food items in Nuba Mountains

Nuba Mountains is one of the neglected areas in Sudan with so much potential to grow if only peace was given a chance. The future of the Lutheran church in the area remains promising as many are joining the Lutheran Church.

The Passing on of two missionaries into glory

It was on January 6, 2025 that we received the below message from Dr. Bernie Lutz, *Dear Friends of CLIHM: Kevin Cramm went to be with Jesus this afternoon in Almagordo, NM his beloved home. Please keep Lisa and family in your prayers and concerns.* Rev. Cramm traveled many times to South Sudan and taught at CLIHM and in Gambella, Ethiopia. Rev. Cramm was truly a gift to the ELCSS/S, his love for the people of South Sudan and his zeal for God's work will never be forgotten.

Again on February 4, 2025 we received similar news that Robert Lutz, the founder of House of Hope Orphanage had passed. Rob, as he was known among us was a dedicated servant of the

Lord. He came first to Yambio in 2008 and taught English and Music at the seminary. Since then he became passionate about mission work in South Sudan. Rob and his wife Paula expanded the Lutheran primary School in Yambio and constructed the House of Hope Orphanage which is now home to many orphans in the area. Rob loved the people of South Sudan, especially the children, and he dedicated his life, time, and talent to serve them.

On April 19, 2025, a memorial service was held at the compound of House of Hope Orphanage to remember and give thanks to God for the faithful service of the two departed brothers. The ELCSS/S will forever remain grateful for their dedication and service! The ELCSS/S is indebted to Pastor David Johnson, a lifelong friend of Rob, and Grace Lutheran Church Becker MN that continues to support the House of Hope orphanage.

Please join us in praying for the beloved families especially for Lisa Cramm and Paula Lutz who are grieving the death of their beloved husbands. "The Lord

gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21).

How can you participate or support the mission work of the ELCSS/S?

For the ELCSS/S to continue doing this important work we need your prayers, partnership and support in the following areas:

- Training of pastors and workers for the ELCSS/S. **The ELCSS/S has 200 congregations with only 78 trained pastors.**
- Support for pastors - especially those serving in the refugee camps and villages where the churches are growing fast (**Can your congregation consider sponsoring a pastor?**)
- Health care (St. Luke Hospital) and Humanitarian assistance. **57% of the population are food insecure. 77% deaths are caused by communicable diseases which can be treated. Life expectancy is 57 years (Can you help to save lives?)**
- Lutheran Schools and youth ministry. **About 2.8 million children are out of school and 70% of adults cannot read or write in South Sudan. (Can you partner with the ELCSS/S to provide education for the children?)**

- Seminary Students' dorm, Admin building, Library expansion and lecture halls. **The current facility can only accommodate a maximum of 25 students until they graduate making the church to wait longer for pastors. (Can you help?)**

For all inquiries you can email:
[**elcss.soffice@gmail.com**](mailto:elcss.soffice@gmail.com)

*Follow our Facebook Page: Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan and Sudan for regular updates Check [**www.elcss-s.org**](http://www.elcss-s.org) for more info*

A big thank you to all our friends and partners. Through you God has blessed us beyond measure and we continue to do what we are doing because of your prayers and support.

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil 1:3-6).



*Kevin Cramm
RIP*



*Rob Lutz
RIP*

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.
"Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."
Revelation 14:13