

Liberia Education Update

September/October/November 2022



Nursery class at Dweken UMS, Dweken, Grand Kru County, Kru Coast District, greeting me on October 5, 2022.

School visits in Southeast Liberia

On the morning of September 21, 2022, I set off on motorbike from Greenville, Sinoe County to visit the nine United Methodist schools in Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee, and Grand Gedeh Counties. There are no paved roads going from Sinoe to Grand Kru or from Grand Kru to Maryland and cars have difficulty going through the mud and on log bridges. I rode with an experienced driver who was able to navigate through the mud and rain. We reached J. J. Dickson United Methodist School (UMS) in Barclayville, Grand Kru County, Kru Coast District in about six hours. We were dirty, wet, and tired, but thankful for a safe trip. At J. J. Dickson UMS, the kindergarten, first and second grade classes are combined and a total of 10 children were present.

My observation in the classroom next door was suddenly interrupted when a girl in the early childhood class saw a powdery tree snake coming down through a space in the zinc roof. That stopped class time for everyone. We were all focused on the snake. When the snake went onto the roof, the English teacher, Stephen Saplak, climbed on the roof with a stick and machete to pursue it. He used the stick to hit the snake and throw it off the roof. The responsiveness and courage of the English teacher was impressive.

My next stop was Grand Cess to visit David Tweh Toe UMS. The Kru Coast District Superintendent, Rev. John Jappah Sikloh, Sr., took me on a walking tour and told me about the history of the city. In 1889, Rev. James Bowie Robertson, a Methodist missionary, started a boarding school in Grand Cess. He met Pleyono Gbe Wolo, the son of a chief, and encouraged him to continue his education at Monrovia Seminary (now College of West Africa). In 1917, Plenyono Gbe Wolo became the first African to graduate from Harvard University.



Rev. J. B. Robertson started a school in Grand Cess in 1889. It was the first Methodist school in Grand Kru County. The school was named David Tweh Toe in 1978. J. B. Robertson UMC members are making a stick and mud building next to what is left of the former school building. They are appealing for funds to renovate the old structure. September 27, 2022

David Tweh Toe UMS is using the J. B. Robertson UMC building. Students are leaving the church building at the end of the school day, September 27, 2022.



At Anna E. Hall UMS, Garraway Beach, Grand Kru County, Garraway District, the annex work continues. Doors and colombo windows were added. Now chairs are needed so the students can move in. September 28, 2022



Thomas H. Brewer UMS in Bewahn, Grand Kru County, Garraway District has 38 students in first through fifth grade in this stick and mud building and 48 students in the nursery and kindergarten classes in the church building, September 29, 2022.



The 6th grade class at Flanagan UMS in Fish Town, River Gee County, Gee River District, October 6, 2022.



The road to Diyankpo, Sinoe County to visit Toe Gbardee UMS, Nana Kru District. We did not pass any moving cars going or coming on the three hour ride. We did see the same two trucks stuck in the mud, November 22, 2022.

The United Methodist Church in Grand Cess is named after Rev. J. B. Robertson and the church members want to continue the tradition of education that he began.

My journey continued to Anna E. Hall UMS in Garraway Beach and Thomas Brewer UMS in Bewahn, Grand Kru and then to Jasper Grant UMS in Pleebo, Maryland where there is a paved road to Fish Town in River Gee.

Flanagan UMS in Fish Town opened for the first time as a junior high school in November 2021. This school year, 10th grade was added with 14 students – 9 females and 5 males.

While in Fish Town, I made a day trip to Dweken in Grand Kru. When I arrived at Dweken UMS, the 60 students in the nursery class ran outside to greet me with a group hug. I almost fell over. It was the most enthusiastic greeting I've ever experienced.

After a Cessna plane flight to and from Zwedru UMS in Grand Gedeh County, Gee River District, I ended 4 weeks of travel. I stayed in Greenville until November 21 when I was back on a motorbike to go to Diyankpo in Sinoe.

The teachers at Toe Gbardee UMS asked me to come for in-service training. We had good discussions about the role of the teacher and practical things we can do in the classroom. The next morning, the kindergarten teacher changed the seating arrangement to improve her engagement with the students. I am thankful for daily opportunities to be in schools and daily, I lift the students and teachers in prayer.

Thank you for supporting education in Liberia with your prayers and by giving to The Advance.

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I joined the 88 students for morning devotion at Toe Gbardee UMS, before heading back to Greenville, November 22, 2022.