

Liberia Education Update

December 2023



Zwedru UMS PTA chairperson, Mr. Bewehyee, at school fence under construction. Dec. 6, 2023.



Zwedru UMS principal, Rev. Sam Kanwea, with cement blocks for school's fence. Dec. 1, 2023



Zwedru UMS 10th grade class. Dec. 4, 2023

Fence construction for Zwedru United Methodist School

On Thursdays, Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) has flights from Greenville in Sinoe County to Zwedru in Grand Gedeh County. After my motorbike ride to Grand Gedeh in June, I decided to go by Cessna plane to Zwedru for my final visit to the Zwedru United Methodist School (UMS) to check on the fence project. I left Greenville on November 30. During my week in Zwedru, I stayed at the Catholic Mission House and enjoyed meals and conversations about God's Word with the priests. At Zwedru UMS, I met with the PTA chairperson, Mr. Bewehyee, and the principal, Rev. Sam Kanwea, about the fence project. Land encroachment and security are concerns for our schools, so fences are needed. In Zwedru, the PTA chairperson is an engineer, and he is helping with the project. Gifts to The Advance #3020670 are currently at work in Zwedru.

Early in the morning of Tuesday, December 5th, I was awakened by the crying of women. It was the crying women do when someone dies. I thought someone in the community died, but when it was light and I went outside, I found out that the person who died was the newly elected representative, Madison Gwion. He would have been installed in office that Friday.



In front of Toe Gbardee UMC, Diyanoko. Dec. 10, 2023.



New Toe Gbardee UMC under construction. Dec. 10, 2023.



It took one week to build this shelter next to the Toe Gbardee UMC to hold all the 468 delegates at the 83rd District Annual Session of the Nana District Conference. Dec. 10, 2023.



Marching to the closing worship service of the Nana Kru District Annual Session in Diyankpo, Sinoe County. Dec. 10, 2023.

Hundreds of people went into the streets demanding justice. They believed that his illness and death were planned by people opposed to him. The house for the traditional council was set on fire. I turned back from my walk when I saw flames engulfing the building. All students were sent home, and schools and businesses were closed for the day in Zwedru. We are thankful that calm was restored by the afternoon and the next day schools and shops were open. I lift Liberia in prayer for continued peace.

83rd District Annual Session of the Nana Kru District Conference

Instead of two days on the road, I spent less than one hour in the air and was back in Greenville on Thursday, December 7. The next morning, I was up and out on motorbike for a three-hour ride to Diyankpo in Sinoe County to attend the 83rd District Annual Session of the Nana Kru District Conference. The delegates started arriving on Monday. Tuesday was set aside for working on the district's agriculture project. Meetings began on Wednesday. When I arrived on Friday, someone took my helmet and backpack, and I went right into the session wearing my muddy boots. We discussed the business of the 23 churches in the district, but plenty of time was spent in singing, dancing, praising God, and teaching. The theme for this Annual Session was *Don't Lose Your Identity* with the Bible text Matthew 5:13-16.



Dancing to the offering basket during the closing worship service for the 83rd District Annual Session of the Nana District Conference. Dec. 10, 2023.



For the football game, the host church, Toe Gbardee UMC, in green played against the Nana Kru District team in yellow. Dec. 9, 2023



Rev. Brownell Konton marching along side the Nana Kru District members parading to the football field. Dec. 9, 2023



A typical street in Diyanko. Dec. 10, 2023.



The streets in Diyanko filled with people to see the Nana Kru District members parade to the football field. Dec. 9, 2023.



Koi Koi Flomo was the driver for DGEM for at least 20 years. We met in July 2008 and went to all 15 counties of Liberia. He retired in 2023 and our staff honored him with a shirt and hat made from traditional country cloth. Nassah Logan and Samuel Karr are next to me. Nassah beautifully sang *The Goodness of God* at my Dec. 18, 2023 farewell program.

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All the church choirs participated in a singing contest. Nana Kru District gatherings also include a parade and a football game. While men beat drums, we sang and danced our way to the football field (which was originally an airstrip). The host church, Toe Gbardee United Methodist Church (UMC), played against the Nana Kru District team. It was a close and exciting game. In the end, the district team scored the only goal. The goalies were great!

After the Annual Session, I stayed in Diyankpo until December 12th to meet with the teachers of the Toe Gbardee UMS. As with other United Methodist Schools, enrollment is lower than usual this school year. Many parents said they did not have the money for tuition and many parents, fearing election violence, wanted to wait until after the elections to enroll their children. This school year, Toe Gbardee UMS has 68 students. Last school year 88 students were enrolled in this elementary school. I am grateful for the dedication of the seven teachers, who are committed to the students.

On December 14, I flew with MAF to Monrovia for two weeks of final meetings with the Department of General Education & Ministry (DGEM) staff before my retirement on December 31. During the Wednesday morning chapel service, there was a farewell program for me. It was good to see Central Office staff; UMS principals, Rev. Alex Harmon (my pastor at New Georgia UMC when I first came to Liberia in July 2008), Bishop Quire, GBGM missionaries, and Global Mission Fellows.

I am thankful for my experiences serving as a Global Ministries missionary. This has been a journey of spiritual growth. I am thankful for the prayers and project support of so many individuals and congregations who journeyed with me.



Etta Farley, principal of Rev. C. W. Duncan UMS appreciated me with a gown during my farewell program. Dec. 18, 2023