

Swahili Ministry Team
Fall 2010 Update/Year-End Report

The Swahili ministry of Gethsemane and Ascension Lutheran Churches has continually grown since its inception, but now the ministry is actually “calling” people to church. Non-church-goers and church-goers alike are drawn to worship *because* of this ministry; in fact, now some worshippers are even identifying themselves as not only “Christian” but also as “Lutheran” simply because they feel that the ministry and worship service are providing them with a “church home.” (In some cases, people who have not been to church since immigrating to the U.S. are returning to church!) Because of the Swahili ministry, strangers are becoming friends, old friends are renewing friendships, families are growing stronger, and significant bonds are being formed in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Members of the Swahili ministry team continually report that this ministry is bringing people together, the number of willing volunteers is increasing, and that information regarding the ministry is spreading like wildfire. The Swahili ministry continues to gain popularity, grow in strength, reach more people, and, most importantly, inspire everyone involved. Some have even dared to say that this ministry is bettering the Swahili speaking community in and around Ohio. In short, the Swahili ministry is changing lives and growing the church!

These are the most recent happenings in the Swahili ministry: a more formal choir is now practicing and leads song during the worship services; a larger pool of volunteers are filling roles and taking on duties during the worship service and fellowship time (often on short notice); as of December, the worship services are now being broadcast world-wide on internet radio; a change to more familiar Eucharist practices (i.e., silverware, glassware, and wafers) has doubled the number of people taking communion; the confidence of lay leaders has grown as the support of both Gethsemane and Ascension Lutheran Churches has become more apparent; the members of the ministry team are now mostly responsible for preparing materials and the sanctuary for worship as well as the narthex/hall for fellowship; Pastor Tim Mueller has taken on the responsibility of pastoral care and other, more formal clerical responsibilities on behalf of the Swahili ministry; a few baptisms have taken place as a result of the Swahili worship service (in consultation with Ascension/Pastor Mueller, Gethsemane/Interim Pastor John Stroup, and the Southern Ohio Synod); attendance is “up” for worship services (now printing 100 bulletins) and fellowship events; the Swahili ministry is beginning to develop a rapport with local African congregations; and there is some desire for an additional fellowship event and/or worship service each month.

To be sure, these happenings are positive; yet, there is still much work to be done. Other local and national Swahili ministries have also experienced initial growth only to eventually grow stagnant or fold entirely due to political, social, or financial circumstances, and this reality is driving the Swahili ministry team to focus on long-term success. The Swahili ministry team is aware of potential pit-falls and is continually evaluating practices and procedures as well as focusing on the future in a level-headed manner, and the Swahili Service Coordinator has been helpful with this endeavor. The Swahili Ministry Team and Coordinator wish that the Coordinator position remains as is for the time being; especially as the Gethsemane Church Council transitions into a new year and the search for a full-time pastor continues. Further ministry organization and development with Gethsemane and Ascension Lutheran Churches lies ahead for both the ministry team and Service Coordinator. Nevertheless, it has been a great year for Swahili ministry and the Swahili ministry team and Service Coordinator are excited about the near future.

In Christ,

Swahili Ministry Team
Carl Bjork