

Report on the 2024 Mission to Middelburg
February 26—March 14

Building Up the Kingdom— Together!

From the Mitten to Middelburg

32 Americans made their way from Michigan to Middelburg, South Africa, to celebrate the partnership we have in the Gospel as we build up the Kingdom together. The occasion was the annual meeting of Christian Outreach For Africa (COFA) and the second Building Up the Kingdom Conference in Middelburg, organized by Rev. Dr. David Maier of Frankfort, Michigan.

Our Savior Lansing members included Pastor & Kristin Wangelin, Bob & Linda Glenn, and Melisa & Royce McKendry. Each couple has been a longtime supporter of the mission work in South Africa and each plays a key role in coordinating the partnership with churches in Michigan.

Team members arrived from Michigan at intervals between February 26 and March 4. They departed in intervals from March 8 to March 14. Our partners in Middelburg did an amazing job coordinating transportation, housing, and logistics for such a large and multi-faceted group, and God's sightings were everywhere. It was a blessing to encourage, hug, worship with, and pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ doing the Lord's work in South Africa.

Worship at St. Peter

Worship at St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church in Middelburg is always a highlight of the trip. Rev. Craig Bickel of Grand Rapids preached the sermon, and Pastor David Maier gave greetings from the Michigan churches. The three hour long service was filled with lively singing and glorious music. Lutherans would recognize the components of the service—invocation, Scripture, the Creed, sermon, prayers, the Sacrament of the Altar, but everything is interspersed with singing and even a liturgical conga line!

The congregation is served by Intentional Interim Bishop David Tswaedi, a retired bishop of the Lutheran Church of Southern Africa (LCSA). He has served in Middelburg since March of 2022 and has done a remarkable job stabilizing and strengthening the church in the wake of Bishop Mandla Khumalo's sudden passing in March 2021. Bishop Tswaedi's steady guidance and encouragement have helped strengthen the church to embrace the hope and a future that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.





Bob Glenn at Amajuba Children's Home

New Name for Hannay Children's Home— Amajuba

The Cedric Hannay Children's Home opened in 2017 with support from COFA and Middelburg residents David and Janey Hannay. The home was a long time dream of Pastor Mandla Khumalo, and he wanted it named after David Hannay's father, who was a dear friend of Khumalo's.

Today the home serves 17 children served by two full-time caregivers. A recently addition will accommodate 10 more children.

The term 'children's home' was preferred to orphanage, because this is exactly what Pastor Khumalo and the Hannay family want this place to be—a true home. There is even housing for the children once they age out of the orphanage system and yet still need a place to stay.

The home was recently renamed Amajuba, which is the name of the place where David Hannay's grandmother was from, which means "Place of Doves." The dove as a symbol of peace and the Holy Spirit is a fitting symbol for this place that lovingly cares for these children, gives them an amazing education through St. Peter Christian College, and ensures that their spiritual, emotional, medical, and relational needs are met in a loving home.



"Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me into His care. Teach me Thy way, O Lord; do not give me up to the greed of my enemies." Psalm 27:10



Kristin and Melisa at the COFA meeting



David Hannay presenting to COFA



COFA Meeting in Middelburg

Christian Outreach for Africa (COFA) serves as the state-side non-profit organization that supports and oversees the mission work in Middelburg and other parts of Africa. They hold an annual meeting in various locations, and this year's meeting was held in Middelburg during the trip. Members of the COFA board include Rev. Dr. David Maier, Gary Grom of Arlington Heights (chairman), and Bob Glenn from Our Savior Lansing.

Since Pastor Khumalo spent time in Michigan, there has been a growing number of churches and ministries in Michigan that are partnering with COFA. For this reason, a Michigan Advisory Board was created in 2022 to help communicate and collaborate the Michigan-based initiatives for South African mission work. Our Savior Lansing (OSL) members Melisa McKendry and Kristin Wangelin serve on this board, with Kristin serving as Chairperson.

The meeting was held Monday, March 4, at St. Peter Christian College, and included presentations from the leadership in Middelburg, David Hannay who oversees most of the projects and financials, Muzi Khumalo, Bishop David Tswaedi, members of the Michigan Advisory Board, and new partners interested in medical missions from Concordia Wisconsin and the Meros Center, a WELS based medical mission support organization. Information was also shared on Care Village, an orphanage in Middelburg that has been working closely with Amajuba and COFA. Updates were given on St. Peter Christian College, the Confessional Lutheran Synod in South Africa, the Amajuba Children's Home, and various other projects that COFA supports.

Kristin Wangelin gave an update on the work of the Michigan Advisory Board, including the Hearts for Jesus Campaign with the LCMS Michigan District. This campaign involved Lutheran grade schools around Michigan giving their chapel offering to support scholarships to St. Peter Christian College. There are two initiatives to raise support for current scholarships and also a \$1 million endowment fund for ongoing support. The Hearts for Jesus Campaign was a major step in reaching these goals and sharing the word about this important work.



Pastors, deaconesses, and church leaders gathered for the conference.

Building Up the Kingdom Conference

A major part of the trip was the Building Up the Kingdom Conference, intended to edify and strengthen the leadership of churches in the Middelburg area. Over 80 pastors, deaconesses, and church leaders from Middelburg, Witbank, and nearby towns gathered at St. Peter Christian College for the three day event.

The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) was comprised of the pastors and leadership at St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church. It was amazing to see them host and lead, doing devotions and serving as MC, setting up breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the participants, and making sure people had water during the hot summer days with no air conditioning. Each day was filled with song and prayer.

The conference theme was “God’s Essential Mission to the World.” The training session topics ranged from preaching to social ministry to pastoral care. The pastors wives also led a session. Pastor Wangelin gave two presentations on the history of God’s Mission.

The first was “The Mission of God in the First Three Centuries” which focused on evangelism in the early church from Pentecost to Constantine. The emphasis was on how the church grew during persecutions and while caring for the sick during the plagues in the Roman Empire.

The second was “Lutheran Mission Movements in the 19th Century” which told the stories of the mission endeavor to Frankenmuth, Michigan, and the Hermannsburg mission to South Africa. Both stories included a visionary pastor in a small town that led a revival of faith and the Lutheran Confessions that resulted in mission work. The emphasis was on the sacrifice and commitment of these missionaries to share Jesus with people, even at the cost of their lives.

Each conference participant received a certificate and took a picture with David Maier and Pastor Wangelin. Conference attendees commented on the value of this training and the encouragement it provided.

The conference coincided with a Women’s Conference led by Pat Maier and the pastors wives. There was also a two-day professional development training for teachers of St. Peter Christian College, led by Pastor Craig Bickel on how to incorporate the Christian faith into teaching. All of this happened concurrently with the support of the staff and leadership of St. Peter. Amazing!



Service Projects at St. Peter

During the Building Up the Kingdom Conference, other projects were being done by members of the Michigan team working alongside African partners.

Royce McKendry helped paint the vestibule at St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church in Middelburg, along with members of their church. He noted the difference in approach and skills in painting, but was pleased with the overall result. It went from a dark purple to a light pale blue. He also went up on the roof at the church and Bethel preschool to help with repairs.

One day was spent in the nearby village of Doornkop, where Mama Grace runs a feeding program for children. Royce and the team helped them plant onions in Mama Grace's vegetable garden. The OSL Mission team visited Doornkop in 2023 and saw the garden in use.



Royce McKendry painting the vestibule

Pastor Wangelin delivered a marble plaque that describes the St. Augustine window that OSL gave to St. Peter in memory of Pastor Khumalo. The marble was donated by Paxton Countertops and the engraving done by Steve Boyce. The plaque will be installed under the window at a future date.



St. Augustine Window from Our Savior

A New Kitchen for Mama Grace

Mama Grace runs a feeding program in the village of Doornkop, just outside of Middelburg. In 2023, the OSL Mission Team helped serve 70 children hot breakfast and lunch during their winter break. They cooked the meal over an open wood fire / grill, and cut vegetables in a dilapidated tin roof shack. One of Mama Grace's prayers was for a mobile kitchen.

When Royce McKendry and a fellow team member went to Doornkop to help Mama Grace plant vegetables in the community garden, they discovered that sponsors had in fact purchased a brand new mobile kitchen for the feeding program. Praise God!

In June, 2023, St. Peter Middelburg commissioned a church planter for Doornkop, Mr. Ranger Nkosi. There is now a preaching station of St. Peter in this town. One of the pastors from the 2024 team, Rev. Jason Bauer from Interlochen, Michigan, preached at the house church on Sunday, March 10.



Mama Grace's new portable kitchen

St. Peter Christian College's new initiative is going "from Good to Great"

St. Peter Christian College is a Lutheran School with grades Kindergarten through 12th grade, and over 400 students. The school provides a quality Christian education in a former black township of Middelburg called Mhluzi. The school is largely funded by tuition, with American sponsors providing capital projects and scholarships through COFA. It is a life changing opportunity for so many children, including almost 80 children from area orphanages.

This year, the school administration rolled out plans to take St. Peter Christian College "from Good to Great" based on the title of the book by Jim Collins. It is addressing facilities, teacher professional development, and attracting quality teachers.

With over 40% unemployment and a community still reeling from the pandemic (this area had a disproportionate mortality rate due to poor health conditions and inadequate medical care), the need for scholarships only grows. The Good to Great initiative challenges the previous goal of sustainability and will most likely need outside support for the foreseeable future to remain financially viable.



The Rock Ceremony

Bishop Mandla Khumalo instituted a special tradition in Middelburg and its partner churches involving a pile of rocks and a special ceremony. Based on Genesis 35 where Jacob pours out oil and wine on a rock that he set up at Bethel, remembering the promises and faithfulness of God, the members of St. Peter set up a pile of rocks as a memorial to God’s faithfulness, and do a ceremony pouring out oil and wine on the rocks with prayers to God. The mission team in 2021 did the rock ceremony in five different locations!

On Tuesday, March 5, 2024, Pastor Wangelin led the rock ceremony at St. Peter Christian College, since he had the most experience with it. (It is not a custom of the LCSA, where Bishop Tswaedi is from.) Wine in the Bible is often associated with heavenly joy (Ecclesiastes 9:7, Isaiah 25:6, Luke 22:18). Oil is associated with several things (joy, cooking, anointing) including healing (Luke 10:34). We offer up prayers of rejoicing and prayers of brokenness asking God for healing.

The pile of rocks at St. Peter was there before any of the buildings were constructed, when it was an open field. Similar to a cornerstone laying, with scripture and prayer, the pile of rocks serve as a focus for prayer and a testimony to God’s goodness and faithfulness over the years.



Pastor David Maier participating in the Rock Ceremony

“God’s work, in God’s timing, will always meet God’s provision.”

- Bishop Mandla Kkumalo

Connecting with the FELSISA in Durban

There are two other Lutheran synods in South Africa that are in fellowship with the LCMS and St. Peter in Middelburg. One is the LCSA, where Bishop Tswaedi is from. The other is the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA). Pastor Wangelin has a special connection to this church body.

While most of the team went on Safari in Kruger Park, Pastor Wangelin and Kristin traveled to the coastal city of Durban and visited Pastor Helmut and Giesela Paul and their family. Pastor Paul visited OSL in 2019 and preached at both services and gave a presentation on the FELSISA during Bible

Class. Pastor Wangelin got to return the favor by preaching at Pastor Paul’s congregation, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Westville-Durban, on March 10. They have an early service at 7:45 with coffee hour following. Their late service at 9:30 is a German service. Pastor Wangelin preached in English and in German!

Pastor and Kristin met Pastor Paul during the exchange program at the seminary in Oberursel, Germany, in 2004 and have maintained their friendship through the years. Pastor Paul is currently the bishop of the FELSISA, and open to partnering with the mission work in Middelburg.



St. Peter Lutheran Church, Durban



Coffee Hour / Kaffeestunde





Vicar Given Massemola



Raising Up the Next Generation

A noticeable feature of the Building Up the Kingdom Conference was the leadership shown by the young pastors and vicars of St. Peter Middelburg, under the guidance of Bishop Tswaedi. Two young men have graduated from the Lutheran seminary in Pretoria and have begun their year-long vicarages. One of them, Vicar Given Massemola, will be attending Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne for a year and a half starting in August 2024. We pray God’s blessings on this adventure of faith for Vicar Given and on all the pastors and vicars in Middelburg and the satellite congregations.

Since Bishop Khumalo and Pastor Geoffrey are with the church triumphant, the church has been in serious need of leadership. Pastor Manqoba Zungu recently moved away and is serving in a different church body. The associate pastors at St. Peter (Pastor Sam, Pastor Mduduzi) and vicars (Vicar Given, Vicar Vuyisile) are the future of the church leadership. There are Deaconesses, church planters, and Board Members who help advance the Kingdom of God. We pray God will continue to raise up the next generation of men and women to shepherd and care for the flock.

When Vicar Given is at the seminary in Ft. Wayne, we hope to have him visit Our Savior Lansing and possibly preach and share a presentation on the ministry in Middelburg from his perspective. We are grateful for the opportunity to continue encouraging and working together with our friends and ministry partners on the other side of the world. Jesus is the Savior of all nations!

Our Ongoing Support

There are a number of ways we can continue to support and work together with our mission partners in Middelburg, South Africa. We are thankful for the friendships and partnerships that the Lord has blessed us with over the years. OSL has been involved in mission work in Middelburg since 1989 when St. Peter was established! In the past, OSL raised money for land for satellite churches, curriculum for Pastor Khumalo’s Center for Missionary Formation, and scholarships for St. Peter Christian College. We have welcomed friends from Middelburg to Lansing over a dozen times through the years, including two teams of students who visited our school and stayed with host families. Pastor Khumalo, his wife Lindie-we and grandson NK lived in Lansing for two years during a missionary stay and attended Our Savior. We are truly family in the Lord and partners in the Gospel.

What you can do:

Pray! The first task of mission work is prayer.

Visit africaoutreach.org to learn more about COFA and ways to support financially.

Gifts are especially needed for the scholarship program at St. Peter Christian College, and the endowment fund being established for that purpose.

Ask Kristin and Pastor Wangelin, Melisa and Royce McKendry, Bob & Linda Glenn, Matt Couser, Kaitlynn Mews, or any of the 20 other OSL church members and staff who have visited Middelburg over the years of their first-hand accounts.

An informational **meeting** about a potential OSL mission team to Middelburg in late June, 2025, will take place at OSL on Sunday, August 25, after worship at 10:30 a.m.

You can learn about the FELSISA at www.felsisa.org.za

