



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

LEFT: Susan Smith, ELCA missionary
RIGHT: Students use a classroom provided by the Village School Program of the Lutheran church.



Lutheran schools fill the gap

Many children in the Central African Republic have no school to attend. But thousands of students can now attend a "Village School" started by the Lutheran church in that country – and supported in part by Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) members.

Susan Smith, an ELCA missionary serving with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Central African Republic as an adviser to the Village School Program, says there are now 20 primary schools in areas where there aren't any government schools. The program supports the schools and teachers by helping create parent organizations, visiting classrooms to give teachers feedback, and providing quarterly exams.

As in any school, parental involvement is important, but in these schools it is the lifeblood. "Parents pay half of the teachers' salaries and the Village School Program pays the rest," says Smith. "Parents are also responsible for building temporary classrooms, which have wooden supports and a straw roof." The goal is to eventually have permanent buildings. And while the ELCA funds much of the construction of the building, parents are responsible for collecting stones and sand and making mud bricks, Smith says.

Today, thanks to ELCA member contributions, the Village School Program educates over 3,000 students, and, Smith adds, "The schools often have a better reputation for quality than the nearby government schools."

Your gifts to ELCA Global Church Sponsorship directly fund missionaries like Susan Smith as they work hand in hand with our neighbors around the world. Learn more at www.ELCA.org/globalchurch.



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