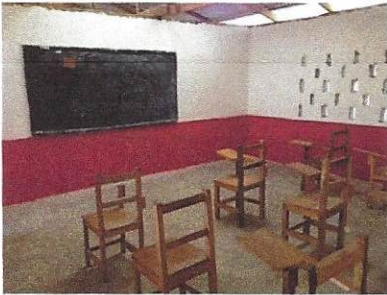


The History of Goll Farm School Liberia

St. Christopher's support for a small school in Liberia, West Africa, began in 2009 when The Rev. Prince Wreh came to the United States to study for his Master's Degree in Theology at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge. Prince had been a good friend of then parishioners Steve and Jackie Keenan since 1968.



At that time, the Wrehs were living in Ivory Coast after fleeing the Liberian Civil War. In Ivory Coast their focus had been on vocational training for war victims, refugees and child soldiers and the establishment of the Keenan Institute . When they returned to Liberia, the Keenan Institute was operated on the Cuttington University campus in Bong County offering the same vocational training as in Ivory Coast. When Cuttington needed the classroom space back, the Keenan Institute purchased land with the hope of constructing a ten room building for both academics and vocational training.



While in Cambridge, through the Keenans, Prince became active at St. Christopher's: preaching, meeting with the Sunday School, and sharing his dream of building an elementary school to serve children in rural Liberia, a dream he also shared with the Chatham Rotary Club. His hope, in his words, was to "narrow the gap between the privileged educated and those who wander in the darkest pit of ignorance." During his time at EDS, Prince wrote that "Brian and Gail shared their pulpit with me" and that he "co-celebrated with the late Barbara Harris...what a great demonstration of love..."



In 2011, after Prince had completed his degree program, Jackie and Steve Keenan and Barbara Gibson traveled to Liberia to visit Prince, his wife Relhetta and their children Orthea, Jackie, Steven and Quami, and to see first hand the land set aside for the Goll Farm School. While there, they toured the cleared site, visited families in the community who would benefit from the school, and broke ground for the school construction. At the groundbreaking they were joined by the father of one of the school's first students who would go on to Cuttington University and Bong County Technical College, and eventually return to Goll Farm School in 2020 as a teacher.

Upon returning to Chatham, the Keenans and Barbara Gibson reported on the Wreh's dream to St. Christopher's Aid to Africa committee, the Church and Rotary. Both our Rector, Brian McGurk, and his Assistant Rev. Gail Smith were enthusiastic about the project.



In 2013, Gail Smith accompanied the Keenans on a return trip to Liberia. By that time the foundation for the school was completed and walls were going up and St. Christopher's Aid to Africa committee, the Rotary Club of Chatham, and Grace Episcopal Church in Madison, N.J. were actively contributing financially toward the school's construction.

By 2015, eight classrooms were completed; the roof was on and 150 children, pre-school through grade 6 were attending Goll Farm School. Relhetta had done an outstanding job as construction manager and was now school superintendent. Once again, St. Christopher's parishioners Steve and Jackie Keenan, Linda and Peter Hughes, David Smith and Barbara Gibson visited Liberia. During that trip they visited classes, helped organize the library, visited with students and their families and Peter, David and Steve installed the first solar panels allowing electricity to power lights and eventually a computer lab.



The school has grown to 250 students, pre-K through eighth grade. Carol and Charles Rader, formerly of Chatham, continue to fund a feeding program which provides students and faculty with hot meals during the week. The Goll Farm community continues to thrive despite set backs such as the Ebola Crisis in 2015-16 and the current Covid-19 pandemic. During the Ebola crisis, St. Christopher's sent funds to provide supplies and training on personal health & safety. The school operated as a community center for training and supplies.



During Ebola, the Rotary Club of Chatham sent 250 Backpacks with school supplies and packets of hand sanitizer. This was made possible through a grant from Rotary International. In 2016, Goll Farm School was selected as a National "Liberia Reads" Center. "Liberia Reads" is a literacy program founded by former Peace Corps volunteers.

In 2018 all twelve eighth graders passed the rigorous West African Standardized test allowing them to continue on to High School. Goll Farm was one of only a very few schools in Liberia that met 100% success in this testing.



Three graduates, students at Goll Farm School at the very beginning, have gone on to continue their education at Cuttington University and Bong County Technical College . David Kerhula, Thomas Sarkollie and John Torkpah have returned to Goll Farm to teach because "of what you all (St. Christopher's, Rotary, etc.) did in their



lives.” As Prince went on to say, “Faith and gratitude seem to work hand in hand. For it is only those who have faith that can be grateful for the very process that transforms their lives.”

St. Christopher’s continues to support the Goll Farm School and the Wreh family through fundraisers, an annual African Sunday service, individual contributions and church-wide solicitations.

The church is joined by the Rotary Club of Chatham, The Rotary Club of Garbanga (Note: Relhetta is now a Rotarian in Garbanga) , St. James Episcopal Church in Madison, NJ, Carol and Charles Radar, Friends of Liberia and Steve and Jackie Keenan.

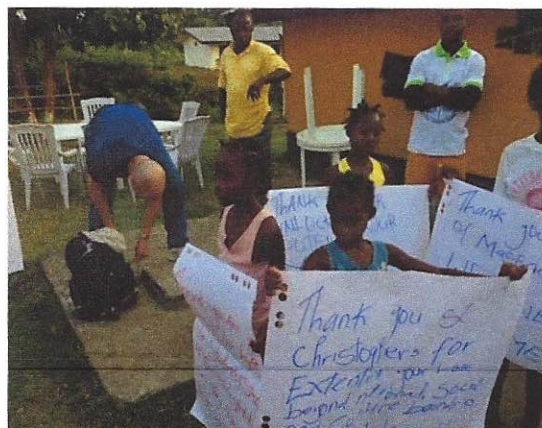


Goll Farm School now includes a computer lab and a meeting hall which serves as a school assembly space, community center and chapel. The newest addition to the school program is a day care center available to the Goll Farm community.

These words from Prince and Relhetta clearly explain the importance of our continued support:



“Even though it is believed that there is a free education policy in our country (Liberia), the truth is that quality education with qualified teachers and good learning facilities is...available...to only those who can pay...Many poor kids know for sure that to become educated without the intervention of kind souls like you is only a dream unfulfilled...This is why the Keenan Institute was established and the Goll Farm School was built....to gather poor kids around the light of education that points to their better future.”



Goll Farm School provides a cost effective, quality education. It costs \$100 per semester, \$200 per year to educate a student. Without our continued support these children would be required to work to support their families. St. Christopher’s, through its scholarship appeal, sponsors 50 students, 20% of the school population. We can and should do more. We remind you that an education can never be taken away . Please help us to invest in the future of the children of Liberia.

St. Christopher’s Together With Africans (TWA) committee