

# Network Newsletter 1

January 2001

Institut Luthérien de Théologie, Meiganga (CAMEROUN) – Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary, Addis Ababa (ETHIOPIA) – Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Fianarantsoa (MADAGASCAR) – School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger (NORWAY) – Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mapumulo (SOUTH AFRICA) – Makumira University College of Tumaini University, Usa River (TANZANIA) – Department of Religious Studies, Makerere University, Kampala (UGANDA)

## Network consultation

On the initiative of the School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger (Norway), seven theological institutions came together in Stavanger, November 7-9, 2000, to discuss the establishing of a network of theological institutions.

The background for the consultation was a vision of establishing a network for the sharing of resources and experiences through South-North, North-South and South-South relationships. The School of Mission and Theology was founded in 1843 to train missionaries for service in South Africa, and throughout more than 150 years it has been a major missiological training institution in Scandinavia. Today's more than 170 students – coming from different parts of the world – follow various programmes, from diploma courses up to postgraduate programmes.

The School of Mission and Theology has throughout its history developed a close contact with many theological institutions in Africa; still, the contact has been on an informal level. The time has now come, it is felt, to formalize this contact, and six African theological institutions were therefore invited to a consultation to discuss the establishing of a network of theological institutions.

The consultation decided to establish such a network of theological institutions. The vision of the network is a sharing of spiritual, academic and economic resources and experiences – through various kinds of South-North, North-South and South-South collaboration. Three key areas of collaboration were identified:

- to promote exchange of students and teaching staff
- to promote research cooperation
- to promote cooperation with regard to infrastructure development

The following institutions were represented at the consultation, and agreed to participate in the network: Institut Luthérien de Théologie, Meiganga, Cameroun (Rector: Dr Joseph Ngah), Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Principal: Dr Yonas Deressa), Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Fianarantsoa, Madagascar (Dean: Dr Randrianasolo Joseph), School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway (Rector: Dr Thor Strandenaes, Dean of Studies: Rev Einar Engebretsen, Library Director: Rev Arne B. Samuelsen, M.Phil. Coordinator: Dr Ove C. Hanssen, Network Coordinator: Dr Knut Holter), Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mapumulo, South Africa (Chairman of the Board: Dr Ramathate T.H. Dolamo), Makumira University College of Tumaini University, Usa River, Tanzania (Provost: Dr Gwakisa E. Mwakagali), Department of Religious Studies, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda (Head of Department: Dr Serapio Kabazzi-Kisirinya). The School of Mission and Theology is owned by the Norwegian Missionary Society, and most of the participating institutions are related to churches that have some connections with the this organization.

As for the organizing of the network, it was agreed that the participating institutions will keep in touch through a newsletter published biannually. It was also agreed that the organizing and content of the network will be evaluated after three years. As for the coordination of the network, it was agreed that it shall alternate between the participating institutions. For the period 2001-2003 it will be located in Stavanger.

## **Plans for 2001–2003**

The participants at the network consultation agreed to focus on the following areas of collaboration for the next three years:

- Exchange of students
  - South→North: this will continue through the M.Phil. program of the School of Mission and Theology
  - North→South: establish means to encourage students from the School of Mission and Theology to spend some time in the African institutions
  - South→South: explore funding possibilities
- Exchange of teaching staff
  - North→South: encourage the School of Mission and Theology to send teaching staff twice a year to the African network institutions

- South→North: explore funding possibilities for sending teaching staff from the African network institutions to the School of Mission and Theology
- South→South: explore funding possibilities
- encourage teaching staff to spend parts of their sabbaticals in the network institutions
- Exchange of information
  - share syllabi
  - share doctoral dissertations as well as Masters and Bachelor theses graded A
  - share general information relevant to the network
- Research
  - encourage each institution to develop common research projects
  - encourage each institution to develop textbook projects
  - explore the possibilities for arranging an international conference on a topic relevant to the network
- Infrastructure
  - encourage the institutions to seek relevant accreditation
  - develop a pilot project with regard to the sharing of library resources

## The current situation

We are now at the beginning of this collaboration, and it is, for obvious reasons, important to make it operative as soon as possible. There are two sets of challenges. One is to develop good projects. This is very important; without good projects there will be no real collaboration. The second challenge is to secure funding for the good projects. There is no money in the network as such. Therefore, whatever we would like to do of exchange, research, or institution development, we first need to secure a solid funding.

### Exchange

In this area we do have some funding, and the network is accordingly already operative:

- Exchange of students, South→North: The School of Mission and Theology runs a two years M.Phil. program in theology. Entrance requirements are a B.Theol./B.A., recommendation from church/educational institution, and a satisfactory knowledge of English. The school has a quota of 10-14 scholarships, funded by the Norwegian state. At present the program has 13 African students (Cameroun, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Tanzania). Closing date for attested and recommended applications is March 15.
- Exchange of students North→South: A program will start this year. There is some funding from the Norwegian state and the School of Mission and Theology, and then the Norwegian students will be expected to pay parts of it themselves. At present only short visits of 5-6 weeks are planned. The point is to expose the Norwegian students for an African context of theological and religious studies.

- Exchange of staff, South→North: At present there is some funding, but it only includes four of the network institutions: The Norwegian Missionary Society has agreed to fund a South→North exchange of staff from the institutions it already has an economic relationship to Institut Luthérien de Théologie (Cameroun), Mekane Yesus Seminary (Ethiopia), Lutheran Graduate School of Theology (Madagascar), School of Mission and Theology (Norway). As for the remaining network institutions, funding will have to be found elsewhere. Current plans: In February and March 2001, Professor Rakoto Endor Modeste (New Testament Studies), Lutheran Graduate School of Theology (Madagascar), will visit Stavanger as a guest professor.
- Exchange of staff, North→South: Here the School of Mission and Theology has funding for two professors each year visiting (3-4 weeks) one of the network institutions for intensive lecturing. Current plans: Assisting Professor Jan Opsal (Science of Religion, Islam) will visit the Institut Luthérien de Théologie, Cameroun, for three or four weeks in the fall term.

## **Research**

The funding situation is here difficult.

- On the one hand, a research collaboration is already operative: The School of Mission and Theology M.Phil. program, which has a number of scholarships funded by the Norwegian state, is a research Masters. Quite a number of candidates has successfully completed their training since the program was initiated in 1994.
- On the other hand, however, there is no secured funding for other examples of research collaboration. Nevertheless, research projects are being developed, and funding agencies approached. A couple of Ph.D. projects in biblical studies and practical theology can here be mentioned as examples of projects that will be presented in applications for funding later this year.

## **Institution development**

Two projects can here be mentioned:

- A library project: The School of Mission and Theology (Norway) – together with the Department of Religious Studies, Makerere University (Uganda) and the Lutheran Graduate School of Theology (Madagascar) – will develop a pilot project on the sharing of library resources. The idea is to let the library in the former institution be a base from which researchers in the two latter institutions may order scholarly articles. No funding is here yet secured.
- A textbook project: The Norwegian Missionary Society has agreed to fund a project where a senior staff member in one of the institutions it cooperates with (Institut Luthérien de Théologie, Cameroun; Mekane Yesus Seminary, Ethiopia; Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Madagascar) is invited to the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger for one term – to write a textbook which reflects the contextual demands of that particular institution. The three institutions will receive additional information.

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