

Network Newsletter 3

January 2002

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)

Exchange

Exchange – is an important aspect of our network: exchange of professors and students, exchange in south>north and north>south directions. The present issue of our network newsletter presents some recent experiences of our exchange programs. A few professors have been allowed into new classrooms and new libraries, to do research in new contexts and to address students coming from these contexts. A few students, too, have been allowed into new classrooms and libraries, and they have experienced a fellowship that transcends contextual differences.

One year after the establishment of our network of theological institutions we have secured funding and developed programs for south>north and north>south exchange of professors and students, and the programs seem to be working well. However, we should lean back and rest on our laurels. There is a need for more funding and more exchange programs; not least is there a need for south>south exchange programs.

Exchange of professors

Cameroon → Norway

During the fall of 2001, I spent three months at the School of Mission and Theology of Stavanger in the scope of the agreement on the exchange of staff, financed by the Norwegian Missionary Society. The aim was to write a textbook, as one of the November 2000 recommendations stipulated. The book is going to be printed at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon printing House. The book is entitled *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme en Afrique*. I hope it will be a useful tool for French speaking students and a help for future missionaries in Africa. The particularity of the book is that its approach is not merely descriptive; it is correlative. That is, it attempts to make a correlation between African religion and Christianity. Eight chapters deal with themes such as creation, anthropology, cosmology, means of solving ambiguities of life, divination and revelation, eschatology and death.

The School of Mission and Theology is an appropriate setting. I was surprised to see what I could realize in such a short period of time. Manifestly, the reason was that I was away from my habitual occupations such as teaching and administration, and it was possible to concentrate on the project. The academic milieu with colleagues that can give useful suggestions, a well stocked library with a friendly staff ready to find the book I am looking for or even to borrow it from another library, the assistance and the spirit of solidarity of former missionaries, all these factors were encouraging and stimulating. I once more seize this occasion to express my gratitude to the NMS and the School of Mission and Theology of Stavanger for giving me the opportunity to realise that project.

Rev Dr Joseph Ngah, Dean and Professor of Systematic Theology,
Institut Luthérien de Théologie de Meiganga, P.O. Box 9 Meiganga, Cameroon

Norway → Cameroon

In November I had the privilege of teaching at the Lutheran Institute of Theology in Meiganga, Cameroon. My visit was a part of the exchange program in the network. I was assigned to teach a course on Popular Islam and Christian Ministry to Muslims to a special group of students.

The Institute offers now a one-year course on Islam and Christian Ministry to Muslims. The students are pastors working in areas where Christians and Muslims are neighbours, and the students come from six different churches in Tchad, Central African Republic and Cameroon. Thus the course demonstrated

that the Institute in Meiganga is a key institution in this part of Africa, especially for the Francophone Lutherans.

My teaching formed one intensive section of this one-year course, and covered topics like sufism and sufi brotherhoods, the popular reinterpretation of Islam along with popular practices like amulets and Quranic medicine. The Missiological part dealt with the Christian approach to popular Muslims and to the issues raised by popular Islam. The students brought with them practical experience and a high level of motivation for the topic. We had lively discussions and sessions of reflection on the themes raised in the lectures and related to their ministries.

I also had some opportunities to relate to the staff and the other students at Meiganga, and also in this way to strengthen the ties between our two institutions.

Rev Jan Opsal, Assistant Professor of Religion,
School of Mission and Theology, Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway.

Norway → Ethiopia

As part of our exchange programme I will spend part of my sabbatical leave in the Spring term 2002 at the Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary, teaching a course on pastoral care in the African context. The course will be for B.D. students. At the same time I will start research and writing on a manual on pastoral care in the African context with special emphasis on the challenges facing the churches by hiv/aids.

Rev Dr Øyvind M. Eide, Rector, Department of Practical Theology,
School of Mission and Theology, Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway.

Exchange of students

Uganda → Norway

On behalf of the M.Phil.-students at the School of Mission and Theology and on my own behalf, I would like to say that it gives us pleasure to be part of a long established institution in pursuit of academic goals, which is a global phenomenon in modern times. The fulfilment of the academic objectives of the School has of recent added on another dimension by expanding the network to include institutions from South Africa (Lutheran Theological Seminary) and

Uganda (Makerere University), in addition to other African institutions which for some years have had M.Phil.-students in Stavanger, as well as a couple of Asian institutions which are also represented here. We promise to keep the candle burning and look forward to a wider expansion of the network and funding of its projects by everyone who sees the need for such a noble cause.

My discipline is Science of religion. I am working on new religious movements and the Catholic Church in Uganda and particularly on the relationship between the Catholic Church and two new religious movements that sprung from the Church, The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments and The Association of the United Altar for the Lord of all Armies. The reaction of the Church to the movements as well as the movements' evaluation of the Church will be dealt with.

Mr Mugeniy Justice Kinto, first year of M.Phil.,
School of Mission and Theology, Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway.

Norway → Tanzania

We were three students from the School of Mission and Theology (Norway) who went to Makumira University College (Tanzania), and we stayed there for one month in the fall term 2001. Both the Makumira administration, the profesors and the students welcomed us very well, and we were allowed to choose the topics that fitted our programs back in Norway.

I attended classes in African church history and in Pastoral care and counselling. Because of the new context, I learned a lot, and I was challenged to see various matters from new perspectives. I also appreciated the way the students included us in discussions, sports activities and choirs. I learned some Tanzanian cooking, some few words of Kiswahili, but above all: I got the chanch to know brothers and sisters whom I hope to see again. I praise God for this chance to be strengthened by their faith, and their letters continue to encourage me.

Ms Ingvild Sandve, second year of theology,
School of Mission and Theology, Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger.

.....
Network Coordinator / Editor of the *Network Newsletter*: Dr Knut Holter,
School of Mission and Theology, Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway.
Tel.: +47 5151 6227. Fax: +47 5151 6225. E-mail: kh@mhs.no