

The General Secretary's statement

In a two-day meeting where church leaders from the OAIC Kenya Chapter held discussions on issues of peaceful elections, conversations and arguments consumed participants during the deliberations. The peaceful elections discourse is a process that OAIC International office has been facilitating the Kenya Chapter to engage in for almost a year. I sat in this meeting on the second day and listened to the leaders as they raised their concerns for the country as it prepares for elections set August 2017.

I sat at the back of the meeting room and this gave me an opportunity to observe how the meeting was run. Seasoned facilitators in areas of peace and governance engaged the group of church leaders who comprised of multiple ethnicities yet the key word in the room was Kenya and not my tribe. Bishops, women leaders and youth leaders were equally engaged in this rich conversation that focused on their role in working for peaceful elections. Issues on security, voter education as well as integrity of church leadership in dealing with politicians were raised. The other key phrase from that meeting was 'we have to' as the leaders referred to their responsibility



Rev. Nicta Lubaale addressing church leaders during the meeting in Nairobi.

and actions in working with the citizenry, public institutions and political leadership in enhancing just and peaceful elections.

In my reflections I dreamt of lifting the environment in that room and placing it in every corner of Africa. Yet I realised that it is not I nor us but the Spirit of God which works in us to overcome anxiety as the Apostle Paul asserts that "God has not given to us the spirit of fear but of Power and of Love and of a Sound Mind." 2 Timothy 1:7.

In June, I participated via Skype in a leaders meeting held in Soweto South Africa. The meeting was led by the Most Reverend Dr. Daniel Okoh - the International Chairman of the OAIC - who was visiting South Africa and had paid a courtesy visit to Archbishop Tshabalala the leader of Believers in Christ

an African Independent Church (AIC) in South Africa. This was another community of enthusiastic leaders from an AIC. Issues raised varied from the role of the OAIC in responding to poverty and hunger; young people's issues; organisation of OAIC structures as well as the role of the OAIC is in the on-going political debate in South Africa. This communicates the depth of social consciousness that the churches have, which is

a resource for mobilising and equipping OAIC member churches to play a constructive role in shaping the destiny of Africa. This social consciousness is based on the historical role of AICs in responding to political; cultural and economic domination during the colonial era. In both Soweto and Nairobi the Spirit of God was in the room and this is the Holy Spirit which inspired the founding vision of AICs in the early 20th century hence enabling common men and women working through their anxieties by reading the scriptures while listening to the Spirit of God and consequently responding to the socio-political challenges of their time. We have more resources on our hands in our generation we should utilise them constructively for building a more just world.

The United Church of Canada's Pilgrimage to Kenya; Visit to West Pokot and Worship at ADC



The UCC pilgrimage team with partners during the orientation at the All Africa Conference of Churches Nairobi

The Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) was one of the United Church of Canada's (UCC) partners selected to host pilgrims from UCC members in late March and April 2017. 17 people from across the UCC participated in the Mission and Service Global Pilgrimage to Kenya. At the OAIC, the team led by Fiona Imbali the Communications and Livelihoods Coordinator and Ven. John Gichimu visited West Pokot where OAIC implements the Livelihoods Programme. West Pokot is one of the far flung areas characterised by a difficult terrain, but with a lovely people who are majorly pastoralists but gradually changing their ways of living by embracing agriculture as a livelihoods.

At the time of the visit, Kenya was experiencing severe drought, but it had just rained and nature

had started sprouting in all its splendor and the communities gave a resplendent welcome to the visitors.

BULLS OF SAKALE

Sakale was one of the sites visited. Here, the team got a glimpse of a women's group with 38 members Christened Simama Umoja (unity is strength) which buys and fattens bulls as their means of livelihoods. Despite the ravaging drought, the bulls were not malnourished. The group started as a women's group but the men were awed by the strategies that the women were putting in place to enhance their livelihoods and joined them.

Started in 2006, the group was set up as a model for empowering women despite the high levels of illiteracy. It started as a union of 3 women's groups seek-

ing to broaden their financial base. Despite their core business being the rearing, fattening and selling of bulls, they also keep chicken and rear goats.

"We started by buying 6 small bulls. We feed and fatten them for approximately 2 years and sell them making huge profits. A calf costs Kshs 10,000 averagely but after 2 years we sell them for between Kshs 40,000 to Kshs 80,000 depending on the size. Our biggest bull is called Saiwal which assists in the breeding process to enable us get the best breeds for fattening. We however, face challenges of feeding the bulls and especially during the drought periods. The profits we make are put in our account and we share dividends at the end of the year. Nevertheless, some money goes into buying seeds for planting in our farms. The

County government saw the great work that we had done and gave us a grant of Kshs 100,000 to expand our business. They recently gave us seeds worth Kshs 60,000 and we have recently managed to buy a small piece of land worth Kshs 150,000 for the group. The trainings and support given to us by OAIC continues to empower us,” notes Maureen Wapes the group’s Chairlady and OAIC’s field officer.

The group also has a medium term project to construct rental houses. With the continued drought, the group is seeking for better ways of enhancing food security through improved farming practices. They have also managed to link up with lending institutions that continue to give them cheaper loans. They currently have 10 bulls. Members noted that more schools had sprung up in the region due to the various projects they had initiated enhancing vibrancy in their midst. The compound where the bulls were herded has a school that was largely supported by OAIC. 4 classes and a latrine were built by the OAIC. Rev. Tim Raeburn from UCC was impressed with the groups work noting that Canada has a giant statue of a bull called Big Bruce and was happy to see them succeed. Jane Harding also from UCC wished the community grace and peace while Rev. Sarah Grady noted that she was learning different methods of farming while appreciating the hard work that the community does. Rev. Ruth Noble on the other hand noted that she lives in a farming community and occasionally goes to work on the farm



Bulls of Sakale

with women who work harder than men and accomplish much. “You’re an inspiration to many,” she noted.

THE HILLS OF KAPTOLIWO KAPFUYWA

When one stands on the hills of Kaptoliwo, they are able to see Uganda. Here, the farmer’s plant drought-tolerant crops like sorghum, millet, cow peas, legumes as well as amarathus and the group was able to see the seed bank set up by the community.

In the compound of the Zion - Parish- a building stands out as the church for the community. This building however, is divided into two. One is used as a house of worship and the other smaller room is used as a seed sanctuary, a seed bank where seeds from harvest are stored. Before planting, the pastor leads the community in prayer before seed distribution and planting. Christopher Keditany who heads the department of agriculture here noted that wheat, millet and cow peas performed well but sorghum didn’t due to unre-

liable rainfall. While requesting for more seeds for sorghum; millet; beans as well as amaranthus, he noted that they are considering other crops like green grams; soya beans; katumani maize as well as black night shade for planting.

Seed banks were launched sometime back in the different zions and distributed to the various congregants’ homesteads. Jonathan Karita, OAICs Farmer Resource Person (FRP) in the region noted that food is energy, power and agribusiness noting that they continue to put in place strategies to ensure best agricultural results for their community. The church has 14 zions - parishes- and continues to engage on better ways of farming for the community with each zion having a representative on food security. They recently bought a tractor for the church to enhance their farming.

Ven John Gichimu noted that OAIC works with churches throughout these processes of development as it seeks to enhance their structures on issues of Livelihoods and Theology and



At Kaptoliwo seed bank, a prayer is said before distribution of seeds and planting is done

other programmes which keep OAIC going.

UCC's Rev. Sarah Grady was full of joy after visiting these communities.

"We were there to work, to witness and to listen. Despite the drought, the people of Pokot were valiant in their Livelihood projects. The challenge of water collection is common though as we saw a truck taking water to the people.

They are not well off but I saw a

lot of hope in them. This partnership has enabled me us to meet the people where they are at," she stated in an interview.

THE GREEN MAIZE IN SINAYA SEKERR ZION

As we traveled up the hill towards Sekerr, the area looked neglected. Not so much could be seen as one climbs a very steep hill that enables one to reach the top most area and see the tip of the Telecom Kenya mast.

Once on top of the hill, one meanders in scattered populations to the village in Sinaya Sekerr where communities have joined hands in order to do community farming. Some farms are owned by individuals while others are owned by groups. It was amazing to see the green maize plantation despite the drought that was ravaging the country. The community had been able to mobilise and get some pipes enabling them to tap water and irrigate their farms.

They explained to us how they have benefited from the trainings offered by OAIC and would continue to put their best feet forward in ensuring that they improve their farming practices. After the session, the generous people of Pokot welcomed the visitors for a meal comprising of fresh milk, brown ugali made from millet and traditional chicken which was very much appreciated.

Small gourds were given to the ladies as presents to remind



The green maize in Sekerr



The girls at Jerusalem welcoming the visitors with Pokot songs

them of the communities they visited in West Pokot.

JERUSALEM GIRLS

One of the most notable sites we visited was Jerusalem Girls Secondary School. This is a girl's school that was started and sponsored by Dini Ya Roho Mafuta Pole Church in West Pokot, one of the largest African Instituted Churches (AICs) and a member of OAIC. OAIC and other partners continue to support the school. Jerusalem girls' acts as a rescue centre for girls running away from Female Genital Mutilation -FGM- and early marriages.

The school started with 32 students and the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) enabled them to put up a building for the school. When it started, the teachers and students used to sleep in the classrooms but currently they have one dormitory. "We still continue to face challenges as we still lack sufficient classrooms as one off our build-

ing is used as a multipurpose hall. Housing for the teachers is also a big problem. Nevertheless, we're optimistic that next year we shall present our first candidates for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) and hopeful that they will perform well," notes Ms Lydia Naibei, the school's Principal.

Ms Naibei who teaches English literature is a role model for the girls as she continues to urge them to work hard. With a student population of 126 students, 16 of them are set to sit for their final examinations next year. It currently has 7 teachers, 3 of whom are employed by the government while 5 are employed by the Board of Governors. (B.O.G).

Unfortunately for girls in this largely patriarchal society, they are merely perceived as assets for their parents to get wealth when they become old enough to get married. Girls as young as 12 are usually married off once dowry

has been paid for them. Often many end up dropping out of school and by the time they are in their 20's, some have 4 or more children.

"Jerusalem Girls first started as a safe house for girls who were running away from punitive traditional practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriages that are common in this community. The church saw the need to start a school that would help the girls and admitted many of whom were young mothers. Most of the girls leave their children with their maternal grandparents when they join the school," notes Ms Naibei.

"Early child marriages are common. At the age of 10, when they see the characteristics of womanhood, they feel like the girl is ready for marriage. Here paying dowry starts early and the bride is booked. The church thought it wise to protect the ones who desiring to continue with education. Some people would like



UCC visitors , OAIC staff and members of the ADC church in Kawangware

to blame situations such as hunger as the incentive to get dowry from rich older men for their daughters,” noted Job Mwetich OAICs field officer.

Gloria Cherop experienced FGM and a near early marriage. She notes that where she comes from in the Northern part of the region, they value FGM perceiving it as an advantage and a good thing culturally. “I was married off when I was in Standard 8 as my family didn’t value education much; girls’ education was not valued. I believed that education would help me transform my community. I was lucky as my mother helped me to escape. I found when Jerusalem was just starting and joined. The church has supported me since then as they continue to pay my school fees. I am working hard as I would like to join university and become a teacher.”

Another girl narrated how she was married off early and got pregnant while in standard 8.

After getting 2 children her husband died and was to be inherited but she instead ran to Jerusalem girls’ school. Her parents had already received dowry and could hear none of it but her relatives assisted her to join the school. She’s currently a Form 3 student.

Philomena Chemutio a Form 3 student narrated how she was forcefully married off after her parents received dowry. At just 23 she has 3 children. She got her first child at 16 years. Her husband’s family also wanted her to undergo FGM as she has not been circumcised. She ran away and found refuge at Jerusalem girls. She hopes to study and secure a future for her children. She hopes to join University and become a teacher of Kiswahili and Mathematics.

Felistus Cherop and Dorcas Cherotich who also ran away from early marriages want to be doctors after completing university. The school’s annual fee is

Kshs 29,950 (USD 300).

Rev. Tim Raeburn (UCC) noted, “It’s an exciting time to be a student at Jerusalem Girls Secondary School and know you belong only to yourself and your maker.”

OAIC OFFICES VISIT

From West Pokot, the UCC visitors visited the OAIC offices in Nairobi. These were their observations of the activities in the field:

“I saw stewardship of the land as the people were committed to what they were doing. In Kanyarkwat I appreciated the different micro-climatic conditions experienced as the people clearly know what works for them. The development was very local. Just like the Mennonite tradition of making marginal land more productive was clearly evident. Doing farming in adverse conditions yet succeeding. The people were so committed to their lifestyle and were grateful to OAIC for their support. The Simama



ADC church members during the service in Kawangware

Umoja women group were very excited to see Fiona and this shows that OAIC is doing a great job on the ground,” Rev. Tim Raeburn.

“The County Executive Commissioner we met in West Pokot was grateful for the support OAIC accords to the people. In Jerusalem the girls’ stories were powerful. When they narrated their own experiences, it had a beautiful Theology on how to change their situations to the community they envision. They would definitely like to make their community a better place. Despite them being too young to experience what they had experienced, they were hopeful. I was impressed by the people in the field as they said OAIC doesn’t dictate to them what to do but rather guide them on how to best engage on development activities. Context is key for development and it was exciting to see that,” Rev. Ruth Noble.

“I experienced God closer at Sekerr. The connection to the land was high up and thin. The

air, the work, the community was beautiful. I always look for thin places where God and people can be as close as can be.

The people in Kanyarkwat had tremendous respect for us and it was humbling. When they saw us, they ran to wear robes so that they could come and worship at the sanctuary which was attached to the seed bank. They blessed the seeds which was very powerful and we saw them for who they were. It is however, sad that indigenous communities still suffer greatly with regards to access to water,” Rev. Sarah Grady.

“Theology is people making sense of God in their own circumstances; to express it in their experiences. Their experiences were so natural and raw. Intellectual naivety is assuming that one knows what to do but there’s need to listen to them to understand them and ensure development is context-specific which was the case at West Pokot. I was impressed that they prayed for seeds before planting. Before

they blessed the seeds they said that seeds were energy, life and hope for tomorrow,” Jane Harding.

Rev. Nicta noted that there is a lot of resourcefulness of the people in the field and OAIC gains through listening to them and engaging them from that point. “The church in West Pokot was recently just registered (2012) as a Church 50 years after independence. They are able to educate their children out of the culture of our people. What will transform the world are not global visions but visions of millions of the people that we have interacted with. OAIC is here to harness these visions and ambitions that will transform Africa.”

WORSHIP AT ADC

Some other members of UCC joined the OAIC for a church service at Kawangware’s Africa Divine Church -ADC-, one of the OAIC member churches. On arrival, there was an entrance song accompanied by eventful drum beating as is the custom with ADC services. When the service

commences, the congregants cast out demons using drums. After testimonies, songs and dance follow and Ven. John Gichimu prayed to close the session on testimonies. Often AIC church sermons are not liturgical and preachers are allowed to change the course of the days order on how they deem fit.

The preacher of the day preached from Proverbs 10:4 noting the importance of hard work as when people work hard they become better and get wealth castigating those who work with poor hands as they are likely to end up being paupers. In AICs some people find it peculiar that during offertory, congregants would ask for change if they didn't carry sufficient change in order to give offerings. This is quite normal in some AICs.

Rev Joseph Masere noted that the Kawangware church was a small assembly and if they had the entire region they would have done a procession as the church was too small to fit them all. Board members of the church headquarters and other church leaders from the churches headquarters joined the service.

Reverend John Keronze during his speech was grateful to the OAIC for the several trainings they had initiated and sponsored some pastors to get advanced education and certification in Theology. "I was taken to a big school which empowered me. I was then sent back to ADC to shape the



Denise More at ADC Kawangware

church and I am grateful to God for moving me from one glory to another." Rev. John Keronze also heads Bishop Chabuga Foundation which also takes care of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) in Western Kenya.

One congregant was excited to welcome the visitors from UCC. "When we heard that we were going to have visitors, we were excited. Thank you for visiting us and feel at home," she said. Ven John Gichimu noted that UCC visitors would become OAICs brand ambassadors and share

what they had learnt about their experiences in Kenya. Visitors to the ADC service from UCC were: Joanna Bennet from Newfoundland Labrador who was excited about the visit in Kenya as she had learnt a lot. Others were Marlene Lightning from Alberta Canada; Hope Rowsell from Newfoundland and Labrador who was honoured to have been part of the team. Denise Moore from Ontario was grateful and noted that her cup was

full. "The sermon and the service has touched me. The preacher said we need to be hopeful as we were from One God and are thus one body and one church. I stand in partnership with Kenya to raise awareness to raise funds for them. Together with us and love us," she noted.

Sandra Fowler from Saskatchewan who is a lay worship leader and a farmer comes from Western Canada. "I continue to be impressed by the warm reception we got from Kenya. I have learnt so much and I am humbled to

see how people work hard to better themselves. The enthusiasm in this church is awesome. I think my church back in Canada could do with some of the energy epitomized here today. Carol Bennet from Ontario was also grateful to God for enabling her to come to Kenya. "I've learnt so much and all the work that UCC partners are undertaking is great. I know God is happy. We shall tell the stories when we go back home."



Carole Bennet at ADC Kawangware

UCC pilgrimage in Kenya pictorial



The Organisation of African Instituted Churches from Professor Eric Anum's Lens



Professor Eric Anum when he visited OAIC offices in Nairobi

As the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) gears towards the celebration of its 40 years of existence, Reverend Professor Eric Anum from Ghana who was once a General Secretary (G.S) of the OAIC was excited to share his experiences while at the helm of the organisation.

Professor Anum 62 holds a BA (Hons) in Religion and Philosophy from the University of Ghana, a Masters and PhD in Theology from Glasgow Scotland. The Professor was OAIC's General Secretary (G.S) for 2 years. He noted that he had worked for the OAIC for some time as he would often travel to Kenya each year for 3 months then return to his native Ghana. He added that he was appointed the G.S as he was an obvious choice having worked for the organisation for some time. "I was asked on phone whether I would like to be the G.S and I accepted," he noted.

Between 1985 and 1989, the Professor worked with OAIC as a course writer for Theological Education by Extension (TEE) Programme as

a distant course trainer. He would travel to Kenya for 3 months each year to do trainings. In 1992, he was appointed as the G.S and stayed on until 1994 when he decided to travel abroad to Scotland to pursue a PhD.

While at the OAIC Anum was a course writer in the continent where he was able to train people from Democratic Republic of Congo; Tanzania; South Africa; Kenya as well as Ghana where as he noted they would all gather to work on varieties of TEE materials. The trainers would use diverse theologies and ideas to write materials. This was interesting for the Professor as he was able to meet facilitators from diverse countries to share ideas which he notes helped the team to learn about operations of the various churches that were members of the OAIC.

The Professor noted that OAIC is an organisation that has tremendous potential and opportunities for AIC members. He cited the existence of loads of documents that Theologians could learn from and

utilise for their betterment. "At times people get bogged down with church issues and refuse to develop themselves in other areas. There's a lot of research that can be done for the AICs to enable people get their doctorates. I did my research amongst the Bishops in Kenya on various Theologies and I was assisted by someone who was working for the OAIC at the time with the research in the field work. It's an entire research that is lying dormant that could be properly utilised to publish a lot of work on OAIC and AICs. I didn't have time while at the OAIC; I would have loved to publish each and every one of them."

Some of the Churches that he did research on include Israel Nineveh, former OAIC Chairman Abednego Mathews Ajwoga's Church -Church of Christ in Africa (CCA). The Professor notes that he did his research in about 60 churches in the 90's, an era where there were no computers and was still able to gather a lot of credible information which should not be left to lie under-utilised.

While at the helm of the organisation, he found ways of working to broaden the departments to include women in development, rural development by extension as well as TEE. At the time he had a feeling that he was serving the continent in a more holistic manner. "The continental meetings were very exciting as there were a lot of inputs from the various people from the various countries: Madagascar; Mauritius and each part of Africa were represented. During worship and ecumenical meetings, there were various textures of worship and spirituality that came together," he noted.

The Professor notes that he misses

out on the contribution to leadership which OAIC pastors gave and which he notes the OAIC family rarely feels these days. “Those days Pope Shenouda’s presence, the Coptic Church and the Apostles were felt more and the leadership input was very profound. These were people who led thousands and thousands of members and congregants yet they maintained good leadership. The contributions they made should be recognized from the 70s throughout the 90s. These days you don’t hear about it. Nowadays when you hear about the non-orthodox leadership in non-main-line churches the reference goes to Pentecostals and Charismatic and not OAICs. But the AICs are still very original in their contribution to spiritual leadership in Africa as compared to the Pente-Charismatics that use a lot of European models of leadership.”

The Professor further adds that if he was the G.S he would definitely do things differently. “I would ensure that OAIC is more supportive of AICs in terms of liturgical development and theological formation. Since I left, I have worked a lot with them. I would link up with a theological college that would be able to serve various regions. The training programmes will then hence be

certified and people can feel like they are not just doing short programmes that have no certification. Things have changed and we have more graduates and elites in the OAICs more than ever before.”

Would he accept to be the G. S again if called upon? The Professor wouldn’t mind working for the OAIC again but at a different capacity and not as the G.S. The Professor notes that he would work with OAIC on preserving institutional memories which he notes are key and he wouldn’t mind being a resource person.

He has good memories of the OAIC but feels things could be better developed. “If given the opportunity, I would develop OAIC to be a place that is vibrant where people could come in like a Mausoleum where artifacts about OAIC will be displayed to attract people. I would ensure that artifacts from all over the world are displayed here at the OAIC. Nairobi is a tourist place and I’m sure people would be attracted to come to the OAIC and learn how far we’ve come.”

As a Professor and a carrier of repository of institutional memory, he says that he would like to see memories of OAIC stored properly and especially getting information from the founders and other people

na Chapter is no longer as active as it used to be before. “I am willing to engage with the team to see how to improve on this. Whenever I do my presentations at the University in Ghana I invite some chapter members and they often come,” he noted.

As OAIC gears to celebrate its 40 years of existence, the Professor notes that there is a lot that has been achieved over the years. “On training, I believe the OAIC TEE programme was very distinct and its contribution can’t be wished away. During those early years, it was a bit difficult to do anything in South Africa but OAIC was offering training for pastors in S.A. OAIC was able to strategically hold TEE programmes in Mauritius that allowed South Africa to join them in the trainings. For a long time, AICs were trained by OAIC.”

He is yet to hear of any other organisation that pulled together such a large number of big and small churches into one association continentally and held them together whilst supporting them over the years.

“OAIC also has an ecumenical flavor and recognition of partners and others as a growing house for the AICs. Nevertheless, in the 1980s and early 90s there was a lot of momentum but as time went by, it seems as if changes globally and the leaning of resources have slowed down OAICs operations. By then, the organisation was very pro-active and most organisations felt that OAIC was a force to be reckoned with. But I think OAIC is not the only one affected as some other regional and national organisations are not as active as they used to be. Perhaps there should be more regular meetings for AIC members,” he added.

The Professor is currently engaged at a University of Cape Coast in Ghana.



Rev.Nicta Lubaale and Profesor Anum at the OAIC offices

who have walked with the OAIC the journey that they’ve come. As a member of the OAIC in Ghana, the professor feels that the Ghana

OAIC International facilitates Church leaders on discussions for peaceful elections



Church leaders from various parts of Kenya during the meeting in Nairobi

Democracy in most African countries often seems like a far-fetched idea due to perceived complexities as often opposing sides complain of mismanaged electoral processes. As Kenyans count days to the general elections set for August 8th 2017, issues such as high cost of living, high inflation rates, insecurity, voter bribery as well as corruption scandals has seen both sides campaign to convince the electorates that they would be best suited to handle them well. During the part primaries, both sides experienced instances of violence and rigging claims. Political analysts opine that this election will one the most highly contested in recent times.

Reports indicate that 1 in 2 Kenyans received bribes to influence their voting patterns during the party primaries while others

were paid to change their constituencies in order to be able to vote for their tribesmen during elections. The current available elective seats are 1871; a minimum of 20,000 people ran for elections. Over 700 of the candidates had integrity issues.

OAIC International facilitated a discourse on peaceful elections with church leaders in Kenya. It is worthwhile to note that strong institutions are key in ensuring that countries are able to deal with challenges that citizens grapple with on a daily basis. Failure by subsequent governments to create institutions that would enable wealth creation and distribution continues to be a challenge as this encourages high levels of inequality.

The 2nd reference group meeting with OAIC Kenya church leaders was held in April. The

first meeting was held in October 2016. The objectives of these meetings were to listen to church leaders and engage them on issues related to electoral violence as well as situational analysis on the current happenings in the political landscape.

“We’re going to consolidate and put together all our early warning signs to ensure peaceful elections by identifying challenges early. We intend to have discussions on how to respond to those early warning signs and have a consensus on actions to be taken on the warnings,” noted John Kamau the Programme Manager.

Rev Phyllis Byrd Ochilo, the Just Communities Director noted that it would be prudent for the leaders to ask themselves vital questions on what God was saying to them and share their observations on the happenings on



Rev. Phyllis Byrd Ochilo addressing the church leaders

the ground with regards to the electoral processes. “It is important that you report the happenings in your communities and on the ground even before the media highlights them as that is the purpose of the early warning system. Send the information to us as the responses are important.”

The church leaders were urged to consolidate Early Warning Signs of chaos which if not checked could be problematic for Kenyans during elections. These systems would enable the country understand issues that drive electoral tensions as well as their contexts and probable solutions that could put a break to arising conflicts and eventually break those cycles.

Noah Otieno, OAICs field coordinator in Migori, stated that young people in Migori County continue to be used to cause skirmishes. Nevertheless, they had been keen to engage and sensi-

tize them on the importance of peace before, during and after elections. “During the recently concluded party primaries, missing names in the register led to chaos where young people were paid to cause disruptions. These anomalies should be rectified before elections as it might be a recipe for violence. When charged communities come to polling stations because of anomalies, this is usually the start of violence. Nevertheless after several trainings in Migori, the boda boda (Motorcycle) association agreed that they would not be used by politicians to cause mayhem.”

Rev. Titus Makusi noted that there continues to arise instances where negative use of language was a daily occurrence. “I met people on my way to work who wanted to engage in a fight and one observant asked the one who started the fight, “why do you want to throw stones to hit your friend? Don’t you know the

time for throwing stones is coming?” There are a lot of idle young people in these estates in Nairobi which is problematic and one can clearly see a lot of re-aligning and re-grouping based on tribes. You can see fear in people’s eyes as they speak, some have even begun moving some of their property to the countryside.”

Gladys Kedogo one of the women leaders decried illiteracy as a problem that has led to a lot of mis-representation. “During the mass registration of voters a lot of people didn’t have identification cards. Many applied and months later they are yet to get them. There are a lot of illiterate people amongst us and when they go to vote the agents misrepresent them as they vote for their preferred candidates. People should be encouraged to come to vote with people they can trust.”

The church leaders were urged to incorporate the young people in their programmes in church and have discussions with them on the importance of not engaging in reckless political rhetorics. That young people belong to churches and a lot more should be done to engage them. Bishop Nicholas Ooro noted that he visits a lot of places where the young frequent and interacts with them without the Bishop’s collar to catch their attention. “Our lifestyles should demonstrate what we are doing. Let’s not talk much and do nothing. Let’s stop spiritualizing everything and be practical in our engagements. We need to have a well thought-out strategy to engage the youth. In Kisumu, there’s the Baghdad boys group which is slowly dying. I know

where they are; I go there and engage them. I let them know why violence does not help. When a leader talks to them they often listen,” he noted.

Houghton Irungu Associate Director at Society of International Development noted that it was important for church leaders to understand their commitment to Kenya and know their space in serving the country. He urged the leaders to learn to serve and lead above self.

Rev. Phyllis noted that currently the political fever is too high to enable constructive engagement of the youth. She urged the church leaders to think about long term strategies to engage them, “We need to deal with an entire multi-faceted approach on young people. My concern is we wait for 4 years and do nothing until when the elections are near. This is our nation; I cannot be well, if Central or the Northern part is not well. The continent is getting younger, how do we address this vis-a-vis poverty, hunger as well as the erratic climate change?”

Bishop Obiero noted that the massive irregularities seen during the party primaries are a precursor for what to expect in the general elections. “This is not a battle we can fight in isolation. We shall have candidates from different parties. Church leaders could decide to come together and call politicians to address issues that are affecting the society. If we decide that in our churches we can preach and talk about the kind of nation we want and the leaders we want, there will be progress. Our unity as humans is a formidable force. Our oneness

‘I see a lot of passion in Kenyans. We need leaders who will direct this passion in the right direction.’

is a force to be reckoned with.”

Dr. James Oranga from the University of Nairobi School of Journalism noted that several African countries had been able to achieve credible elections by streamlining their electoral processes. “The church wields a lot of power as it has the moral authority that many in society don’t have and can thus bring sanity to our political system and behaviour through pro-active engagements.”

Fr. Joseph Mutie, the General Secretary for OAIC Kenya Chapter noted that it was important for all stakeholders to raise their voices during this electioneering period. That it would be prudent for Church leaders to play their prophetic role whilst shunning politicians who seek to compromise their ideals.

Rev. Nicta Lubaale the General Secretary of OAIC International noted that elections come with tension and anxiety. The role of church leadership is to enable the people to work constructively through the anxiety. This is what brings forth hope

and church leaders are needed to provide the leadership that is needed in such times. He urged them to immerse themselves and work through the uncertainty with their congregations.

“I see a lot of passion in Kenyans. We need leaders who will direct this passion in the right direction. Church leaders need to reclaim their space and lead with the guidance of the Spirit of God. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, which we have just celebrated, has given us hope. We should not be consumed by anxiety. Work for what will bring hope in Kenya. We need to move towards collective discernment which comes out of process of collective reflection.

There’s need for accountability among church leaders on the commitments to work for peaceful elections. Church leaders are responsible for defending the weak while helping to transform institutions that have left them weak whilst averting State capture.

Migori County, where the OAIC Kenya Chapter is working in partnership with the member churches and community organisations is among the five counties that accounts for 50% of maternal deaths in the country and this is one of the issues that should be at the centre of politics; is that the point that is causing tension in Migori between politicians? We don’t have to be exceedingly rich to care for everyone.

In Africa we have enough for everyone to be well. We need to turn public resources into public services and goods,” he noted.

OAIC Nigeria participates in a World Bank meeting

The World Bank recently held a consultative meeting with Faith Based Organisations in Nigeria. The theme of the meeting was: Ending Extreme Poverty; A moral and spiritual imperative. Adam Taylor from the World Bank noted that extreme poverty is the biggest threat to human existence today and sadly majority of the world's poorest live in Sub-Saharan African. Countries like Sudan continue to face famine with sounds of war machines in the Middle East, poverty continues to face more people daily which thus call for serious concern and faith leaders hold key to the solution.

Victor Ivoke the Nigeria Chapter General Secretary notes that the faith community embraces the moral imperative because they share the belief that the moral test of our society is how the weakest and most vulnerable are faring. "Our sacred texts also call us to combat injustice and uplift the poorest in our midst. No one regardless of sex, age or race and belief should be denied the opportunity of experiencing the fullness of life."

The existence of extreme poverty in the world today is inimical to growth and sustainable development. Ending it will require concerted efforts in tackling its underlying causes: preventable diseases, lack of access to quality education, joblessness, corruption, violent conflicts, discrimination against women, marginalization of ethnic minorities and other causes. The participants called for a change in the habits

that cause poverty like greed and waste.

"Our faith is tested and our hearts broken when, in an age of unprecedented wealth and technological advancement, so many still live in inhuman conditions. This is an affront to human dignity as no one should be made to fight for their daily survival," noted Victor.

He further noted that to end the scourge of extreme poverty should be through restoring right relationships among people, affirming human dignity, opening the door to the holistic development of all people. "If we are more committed to living these values, there will be less poverty in the world. Our shared convictions call us to empower and uplift - not denigrate those living in poverty, so that they can become agents of their own transformation. We must abandon politics that too often marginalize their voices and blame them for their condition. Now is the time to turn fatigue into renewed commitment so that together we can end extreme poverty by the 2030."

A presentation on the Nigeria States Health Investment Project {NSHIP} was also made by the team showing the number of interventions in health sector in Nigeria. The team managed to visit Karu Health Centre which is a pilot case and a good success story. With a grant of \$5,000 two years ago, the management of the hospital has erected new structures, attends to a large number of patients than before

and maintains an impressive account balance and have in stock large quantities of drugs for different ailments. This performance based financing was designed to act as a catalyst for the improvement of the quality of health care delivery.

Civil Society Organizations and faith leaders from several West African countries noted the importance of the World Bank Group finding an entry point for FBOs and CSOs into their projects without necessarily going through federal governments. They urged that this should be at the entry point during the conception stage to ensure that they made inputs into the nature and quality of the projects that will better serve the interest of their members.

World Bank officials were also urged to increase their consultation and collaboration with faith leaders as they have a moral authority and are widely respected by millions of followers. This will play a big role in ensuring that incidences of pilfering and corruption are reduced tremendously. The discussions were extolled by the World Bank staff as fruitful as they pledged to take home the resolutions and report back with a concrete action plan for more meaningful engagements.

OAIC Executive Committee Member promoted as a Professor in Ghana



Professor Thomas Oduro in Nairobi

A member of the OAICs Executive Committee was recently promoted to an Associate professor's in Ghana. Rev. Professor Thomas A. Oduro, President of Good News Theological Seminary in Accra, Ghana, holds a Ph.D. (Distinction) in History of Christianity from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN. U.S.A. He also holds a M.A. in Systematic Theology from Luther-Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, MN. U.S.A.

The position of an Associate Professor is based on a scholar's published works; teaching abilities and contributions to the church/Christianity/society. "I applied for the position in October 2016. I listed all my articles and books that have been published after my promotion to the position of a Senior Lecturer. I listed all the years I have taught; undergraduate and postgraduate theses I have either supervised or graded; the Professional Bodies I am a member; conferences and seminars I have attended; presentations I have made at church confer-

ences; ecumenical positions I hold and what I have been doing to help AICs.

The Assessors read through and graded all the published work I presented one by one (including the books I have authored). They also considered all the other non-documented activities before recommending my promotion," stated Professor Oduro.

He has authored many academic articles and books, the latest book being, Church of the Lord (Brotherhood): History, Challenges and Growth. His academic areas of specialty are History of Christianity, African Christianity (with special interest in African Independent Churches) and Systematic Theology. He is a historiographer of African Independent Churches.

His teaching career spans three decades. He is a full-time lecturer at the Good News Theological Seminary and an adjunct lecturer at Dominion University College, Accra, Ghana and Bethel Theological Seminary, Abuja, Nigeria. He used to be the President and Lecturer of

the Good News Theological College and Seminary (Abuja Campus) at Abuja, Nigeria (2009-2011).

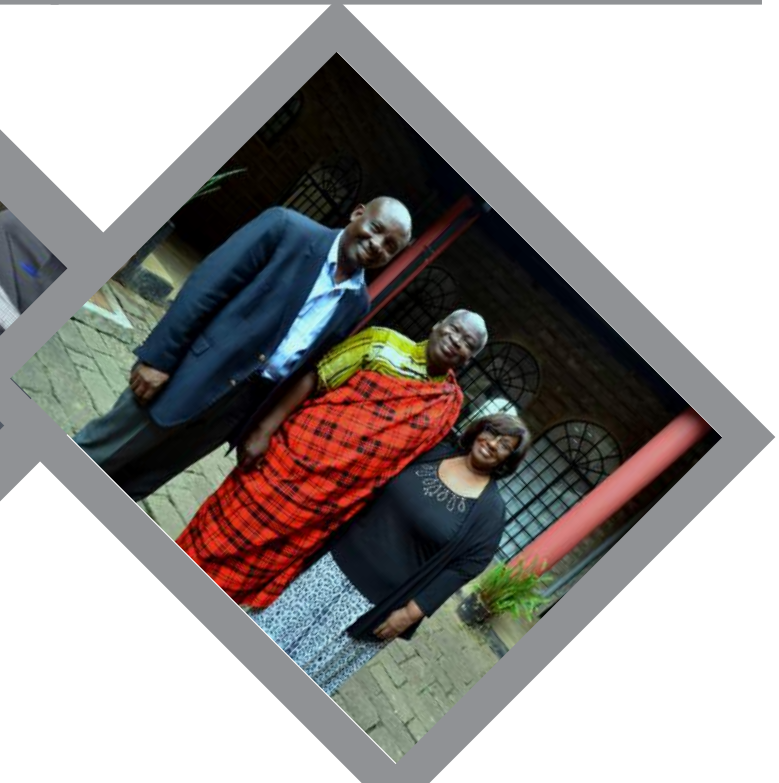
He has held many ecumenical positions, including Regional Chairman of West African Association Theological Institutions (WAATI) and Chairman of International Council for Higher Education (ICHE), Ghana. He has led Local Organizing Committees to organize many ecumenical conferences, seminars and workshops.

He is presently, a member of the following professional bodies: Dictionary of African Christian Biographies (DACB), Center for Early African Christianity (CEAC), International Council for Higher Education (ICHE), International Council of Ethnomusicologists (ICE) and Missiological Society of Ghana (MSG).

He is an associate pastor of the Awoshie congregation of Christ Holy Church International, an African Independent Church. He is a speaker at many ecumenical conferences, seminars and workshops. He trains Adult Sunday School teachers and Sunday School Manual writers. He writes evangelistic tracts. He is currently, the Chairman of the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) Ghana Chapter, a member of the International Executive Committee of the OAIC and Chairman of the Theological Resource Team of the OAIC.

He is married to Jemima Oduro. They have six adult children. His hobbies include: research, reading, singing, walking, photography and making friends.

Executive Committee pictorial: Appreciating Professor Oduro



OAIC participates on Sustainable Development Discourse in Berlin Germany

Ven John Gichimu was invited by the Bread for the World to Berlin Germany to give a presentation on OAICs role in development on a series titled "African Independent Churches Approaches to Theology and Development" at Humboldt University Berlin.

The lecture series is part of the research project titled "Potentials of Cooperation with African Instituted Churches for Sustainable Development" that has been commissioned to Humboldt University Faculty of Theology by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The objective of the research project is to find out how African Initiated Churches (AICs) and development cooperation agencies can work together for sustainable development. The two thronged research aims to: i) Research area on the institutional level. This thus focuses on the development relevant work of AICs, their administrative structures, their understanding of development, their capacity to implement development programmes and their compatibility with development agencies. Special attention is paid to the interrelation of spirituality and development. Moreover, it focuses on the instruments of German development in order to also evaluate to what extent they are relevant to and compatible with the work, approaches and structures of AICs. The aim is to suggest ways and mechanisms of possible engagement between the two and to highlight the potential of such engagement.

ii) Research on the ideological level. While development cooperation sees human rights as a guideline, AICs mainly draw motivation for

their work – also the development related work – from their religious belief and their spiritual world view. The research area investigates how the churches' notions of development and sustainability (which are embedded in religious world views) relate to the understandings of development and sustainability in Western development policies (which are embedded in secular world views). It is to be investigated to what extent and in which fields the different systems of values are mutually compatible or suitable to question each other critically. This includes the holistic world view of AICs, but also questions of human rights, sociopolitical engagement and gender justice. The guiding questions are how the holistic world view of the churches can be taken into account in a potential cooperation for sustainable development and what the common ground of values would be for an equal and mutually respectful partnership.

He made a presentation at the University to more than 150 students and was later interviewed by Philipp and Marie-Luise who are part of the team of research project at the University. The visit included project relevant interviews with research-team and experts whilst also taking part in discussions at Bread for the World - Protestant Development Services-. He was also interviewed by the University's research team and later attended a meeting on Agenda 2063 organized by EMW where Dr. Andre Karamaga of AACC spoke.

He also participated in the activities of The German Church Convention (Kirchentag) which is a lay movement of the Evangelical Churches in Germany. The attendance was estimated to be from

150'000 to 200'000. This theme of this year's convention was "You see me" (Gen. 16:13). "Seeing commences relationships not only with God but also in the co-existence of all humans. Being looked at by God is the foundation of man's dignity as a creation of God. 'You see me' is a sentence that expresses recognition, appreciation and attention," noted Ven John.

He was also engaged at a meeting that brought together close to 150 delegates at the Federal Foreign Office on 'Responsibility of Religions for Peace and other interactions at the Bread for the World head office to discuss ecumenical and inter-religious tensions.

He also attended a meeting organized by Joint conference on church and development, "The Contribution of Churches to Just Peace in Africa" and later presentations at the university by Lady Maboe from South Africa and Adebayo from Nigeria. Research project activities took place at the Humboldt University faculty of Theology while other engagements took place at different places and venues.

"It is important to note here that AICs were invited from East Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa as follows: The most Rev Rufus Ositelu (The Church of the Lord Aladura Worldwide, Nigeria), Rev Adebayo Anthony Kehinde (The Church of the Lord Aladura Worldwide, Nigeria), Lady Bishop Dorcas Maboe (St John's Apostolic Faith Mission, South Africa) and Rev Senamo Molisiwa (Council of African Instituted Churches, Southern Africa).

The venerable noted that it was an enriching experience which puts AICs in the global map.

Partnerships:

Meeting with EMW

OAIC management team held a meeting with Dr. Elmut from EMW on 2nd March 2016. She noted that OAIC and AICs have always been part of the work at EMW and an example of what cooperation and sharing of church work happens.

The discussions majored on Theology and the common ground between the Pentecostals and AICs from the 70s to present and how scholars are beginning to appreciate this. Theologies of AICs were discussed; personal salvation and social gospel. Dr. Elmut noted that she believed in listening and appreciated the engagements with OAIC.

The development of the master plan for theological education for the AICs remains a major task of the OAIC-Programme for Theology and Ministerial Formation. The training of tutors will be a key factor as it will provide the member churches with skills need to train pastors. The Master plan will also respond to

the need for training ministers to respond to socio-economic issues such as food security nutrition; security; and social justice in view of answering the question of the role of the church minister in development.

The plan shall endeavour to look and answer the question, is what we're training appropriate? The first meeting with regards to developing a master plan was held in 2009. In 2013, another workshop was held in 2013 which ironed out the nitty-gritties of what should be considered in the development of the master plan. Partnership with scholars and institutions from the mainline traditions and the evangelical community provides an opportunity for critique from outside. EMW continues to support resource pool of scholars in Africa through various scholarships offered.

Meeting with ICCO and Kerkinactie

Rev. Cokkie van't Laven from ICCO and Kerkinactie visited the Secretariat and the focus of the meeting was the Programme for Theology and Ministerial Formation (PTMF). The discussions focused on the development of materials for training AICs, the training of tutors and support for training AIC scholars in universities and seminaries.

All this is under the process of developing the master plan for theological education which is an on-going process in the OAIC. Rev. Cokkie appreciated the fact that the OAIC is focusing on developing the theology of AICs. "This will be a major contribution only to the AICs but also to the wider ecumenical family".

Rev. Cokkie and Dr. Elmut participated in Sunday worship service at a congregation of the Africa Divine Church at Kangemi at the outskirts of Nairobi.



Ven. Gichimu; Rev. Nicta and Cookie at the OAIC offices

*Newsletter prepared by Fiona Imbali, OAIC Communications and Livelihoods
Coordinator.*

For any inquiries please send an email to communications@oaic.org