

45. The Methodist Church The Gambia – Progress Towards Autonomy

This report describes the situation as at the time of preparing the Conference Agenda. A further report and fuller resolutions will be brought to the Conference.

- 1 David Gamble reported to the April Council on his visit to the Gambia January 29th – February 5th for the District Synod and further talks re the forthcoming autonomy. The Synod decided by an overwhelming majority that May 24th 2009 (which falls on a Sunday) would be the preferred date for the Foundation Conference.
- 2 Much progress has been made by the Gambian Law and Polity Committee in response to queries regarding the two essential documents, the draft Act of Parliament and the Deed of Church Order. Both documents are nearing completion at the time of writing this report. Further work has still to be done on clauses relating to
 - a. the Foundation Conference, and
 - b. how property will be held. (The intention is that all property will be held by the Gambian Conference or its appointed body as custodian trustees, with local Circuit Meetings as managing trustees. There may need to be some form of Model Trusts as part of one of the two foundation documents.)
- 3 The Gambian Law and Polity Committee has done most of the necessary work on draft Standing Orders, which will need to be adopted by the Conference of The Methodist Church The Gambia after autonomy is achieved.
- 4 Mr Tom Sowe, appointed via the Nationals in Mission programme, has compiled a catalogue of all Methodist property in the Gambia, with details, photos, and (where available) deeds. This will make the transfer of the property from the current District to the new Conference much easier.
- 5 At the Synod, hope was expressed that The Methodist Church Act could go through the National Assembly during its session after Easter. This now seems a bit ambitious, but there is still reasonable time for the legislation to go through the necessary processes in the Gambia. The District Chair, the Revd Norman Grigg, requested a letter from the Secretary of the Conference to the relevant Secretary of State in The Gambia confirming that autonomy is the wish of the British Church as well as the Gambian Synod. This letter has been sent.
- 6 It is hoped that the necessary preparation will be completed in time for the 2008 Conference. Precedent suggests there will need to be the following resolutions to the Conference:
 - a. Approval of the terms of the Gambian legislation and that the Conference resolves to participate in the Foundation Conference of the Methodist Church The Gambia.

45. *The Gambia*

- b. Appointment of four representatives to be members of the Foundation Conference as the representatives of the Methodist Church and a direction that they express the views of the Conference at the Foundation Conference.
 - c. Approval of the terms of the draft Deed of Church Order and a direction to the four representatives to vote for any resolution at the Foundation Conference for the settlement and adoption of the Deed in that form and (as to the representatives named in the Deed as parties) to sign, seal and deliver the Deed when so adopted.
 - d. An expression of thanksgiving for the work of the Methodist Church in the Gambia over the past 168 years, rejoicing that it should now come to fruition in an Autonomous Conference and looking forward to future fellowship with that Conference.
 - e. (If required, which it may well not be) An instruction to those responsible to ensure that all arrangements are duly carried out for the transfer of property.
- 7 In order to bring this work to completion, the Council empowered a small group of people to continue to work with those responsible in The Gambia on finalising the documents. The group consists of John Hicks, Nwabueze Nwokolo (also a member of the Council), Brian Beck and David Gamble, with help where required from the connexional solicitor, Lynn John.
- 8 The Council directed that a list of names of representatives to the Foundation Conference be approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee for presentation at the Conference. The Strategy and Resources Committee agreed the following list:
- The Revd Stephen J Poxon, President of the Conference
 - The Revd Elaine Woolley, former mission partner
 - The Revd David Gamble, officer for legal and constitutional practice
 - Mrs Nwabueze Nwokolo, member of the Law and Polity and Council Review Group on The Gambia autonomy

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 45/1.** The Conference receives the Report.