

Partnership visit to Benin 2nd – 9th December 2015

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Aims – To meet with the senior leadership of Eglise Protestant Methodiste du Benin (EPMB)
 To visit British Methodist mission partners serving in Benin
 To meet Nationals in Mission Appointment recipient in Benin

I arrived at Benin airport and met with EPMB leaders afterwards to discuss partnership issues. I was told that Rev Alagbada was re-elected as the President of EPMB for a second term and I also met the new lay vice president and the accountant at the Connexional office in Cotonou. They were all appreciative of the scholarship offers under the SALT (Scholarship and Leadership Training) programme as well as grant support for EPMB mission activities. They commented positively on the impact of trained church personnel on strengthening the church and equipping potential leaders. They also thanked MCB for the emergency solidarity fund of £7,500 given to refurbish the radio studio that was burnt down in January 2015. The whole building has been renovated and is now fully operational and this was a significant evangelical and



Constant praying with some of the EPMB leaders

communication tool for the church. Rev Alagbada was also very appreciative of the immense contributions by Joanna and Michael Tetey at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Porto Novo.

Meeting with Mr Constant Lokossou – National in Mission Appointee Translator

Mr Lokossou works as a translator at the Good Samaritan Hospital, translating medical documents into English and/ or French under the National in Mission programme. He also interprets the local language during consultation with Joanna Tetey at prenatal and post natal clinics, health promotions and at training workshops. Constant informed me about the successful recent workshops for all hospital staff conducted by Michael Tetey in improving hospital administration. He said he felt fulfilled and grateful to be part of the programme. He also told me how hospital staff gave him feedback on improved employee relations at the hospital and how staff morale has improved with improved communication with management and other hospital departments.



Constant – Hospital interpreter/ translator

In addition to this role, Constant also attended the African Methodist Council meeting held in Ghana in October 2015 where he served as the interpreter to Francophone leaders during all the sessions. He commented to me that he has witnessed improved relations between EPMB and its Anglophone partners since he took up this post in September 2014.



Joanna Tettey – MCB mission partner serving as Hospital Midwife

1. Meeting with Joanna and Michael Tettey – MCB mission partners

It was good to see Michael and Joanna Tettey. They were busy conducting workshops when I arrived. Joanna was working closely with the Women Fellowship to improve maternal and child care through health promotions at various churches. She said she visited various parishes to meet and listen to the women's concern particularly on primary health practices in their communities. She said it was an effective way to reach out and encourage members to invite other community members to various health promotions. EPMB church

members were also encouraged to visit the Good Samaritan mission hospital at Porto Novo as and when necessary for antenatal and post natal care. After church services, Joanna performed basic health check -ups at the various parishes e.g. gave advice on diabetes and hypo - and hypertension etc.

Later I had a meeting with Dr Antoinnette along with Michael and Joanna. Dr Antoinnette, the medical director, was appreciative of Joanna's professional contributions in improving antenatal and postnatal care delivery at the Good Samaritan Hospital. There was still much focus on the existing space problem at the antenatal clinic resulting in women in labour climbing the staircase to the maternity ward due to no lift in the building. Michael focussed on addressing personnel issues to improve hospital administration, promote resource mobilization and



Michael Tettey – MCB mission partner serving as Hospital administrator

implement efficient systems at the hospital. EPMB plans to visit to Wenchi Methodist Hospital in Ghana in February 2016 on a cross-cultural exposure visit by its leaders and hospital management. This would hopefully encourage exchange of ideas and best practices. Other challenges encountered by the Good Samaritan hospital,

such as lack of essential hospital equipment, the need to expand the hospital to accommodate the public health unit and centralising their records unit could be discussed. It was good to hear about strengthened relations between both MC Ghana and EPMB conferences since MCB mission partners were stationed in Benin. The new Presiding Bishop of MC Ghana, Bishop Titus Pratt has sent his formal invitation to EPMB.

2. Visit to Porto Novo



Dr Antoinnette – Medical Director of the Good Samaritan Hospital

After our meeting in Cotonou the next day, we travelled to Porto Novo to meet staff of the Good Samaritan Hospital, unfortunately due to very bad traffic we arrived there very late to meet the staff. However I heard great news from Rev Alagbada and Dr Antoinnette about recent workshops conducted by Michael to improve customer satisfaction, promote team performance, boost staff morale and sharpen the business strategy for the hospital. Michael told me that the feedback from staff indicated that more work was needed to boost staff morale, bring senior management closer to staff and encourage staff to consider their work as a mission priority for EPMB. Hopefully a great working environment would distinguish this mission hospital from the government

hospital when staff members think of their services as being vocational not only as a job. It was also noted that there was an increasing challenge to pay and retain medical workers in Benin and various incentives were being considered that could be linked to performance management. This was a good opportunity for me to listen as a partner and get feedback on mission partners' contributions regarding the importance of capacity building and promoting intra-regional relations within Africa. It was refreshing to hear Rev Alagbada comment on how partnership with MCB in recent years has improved relations with neighbouring conferences and injected new ideas and ways of working at EPMB.

3. Meeting with Benin dignitaries

I later had the privilege to meet the Benin Minister for Education who was very grateful for MCB's contributions to UPAO – EPMB's university. He commented that over these few years, the university has blossomed and it is now better resourced with its computer suites. Annual visits for the SALT group training programme sponsored by MCB has attracted international lecturers to work alongside local ones thereby promoting exchange of ideas and resources in a local context. UPAO has acquired West African regional recognition among Francophone countries for its improved standard especially in its Theology department. The institution is also increasingly popular nationally because UPAO staff members were not on strike when other institutions closed for various reasons. The lack of closure caused an explosion of student



Rev Dr Alagbada – EPMB President

numbers particularly following government endorsement. It was good to witness the positive impact of MCB's partnership with EPMB and I was grateful for the acknowledgement by a government minister. I later encouraged EPMB about the importance of having good systems in place to support and sustain this great work. Rev Alagbada commented that the greatest challenge is that UPAO students still enjoy subsidised fees due to financial hardships, therefore raising sufficient funds to maintain high academic standards and good infrastructure have to be addressed.



Bunmi at the partnership meeting

I met with Dr Raphael Edou, the Deputy Mayor of Benin in spite of his tight schedule. It was an opportunity to introduce him to Michael and Joanna Tettey as MCB mission partners serving in Benin. Dr Edou was formerly the CEO of Bethsaida Trust, a Christian organisation that owns a mission hospital, and runs conservation projects poverty alleviating schemes. He works closely with heads of churches and commented on the role of the church in instituting changes in societies. He also revealed that he attended a recent conference in the US where it was confirmed that churches play a pivotal role in community development and

transformation. This was due to committed personnel and the ability to serve for a long period when other organisations were long gone. Dr Edou hopes to work closely with EPMB as well as other churches in addressing climate change issues and promoting food security in Cotonou. It was great to see Christian politicians serving the people and openly demonstrating their Christian values.

Thank you
Dr Bunmi Olayisade
Africa Partnership Coordinator