

Aim – To attend a leadership conference for African leaders in Malawi

Malawi Conference

The African Biblical Leadership Initiative (ABLI) conference took place at Golden Peacock Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi. The theme of the conference was ***Transforming the Culture of leadership in Africa*** and it was officially opened by the President of Malawi (the Warm Heart of Africa)–Prof Peter Mutharika. There were participants from Malawi, Uganda, Togo, Botswana, Ghana, Benin, Cameroon, Kenya and partners from the UK, USA etc. The plenary sessions were moderated by Lord Paul Boateng (a member of the British House of Lords). The forum was birthed from the



Few African leaders with Lord Boateng

African Union Prayer Breakfast in 2010 and its purpose was to gather representative groups of African leaders to engage in productive discussions about the role of the Bible in leadership.

The focus of the ABLI Forum debate was around economic life, social harmony and justice with emphases on the character of leaders as well as issues to empower and inspire leaders of all backgrounds. Delegates and participants were from government, finance, business, civil societies and the Church. This forum also provided opportunity to network and exchange ideas on a wide range of issues pertinent to African cultures.

ABLI Malawi 2015 thematic subjects were

- Integrity – Discussed issues on corruption, bribery and honesty in private and public offices
- Healthcare systems – Appraise leadership tradition in African health care systems in light of the Ebola crisis
- Social Harmony – Discussed political conflicts in South Sudan and religious violence in Nigeria
- The next generation – Offer opportunity for youths to air their views on issues important to them
- **Ethical leadership and societal transformation**

Leadership could be defined as engaging, equipping and empowering a growing force of willing followers as participants towards accomplishing a common vision. Who are the people and what can they do? Good leadership has various qualities guided by ethics. The transformation of Africa is necessary and possible.

Ethics	Qualities
Self interest	I have enough! I can now give the rest of my life helping others
Self sacrifice	Ability to put the interest of others above yours! Rejoice when others excel above you
Ethics of intention	Comes with a sense of responsibility. Be cautious in the declaration of intention.
Ethics of result	Leadership is about results. Do not feed only on negativity about Africa. Do not be expert in reciting history but in making it!
Ethic of impact	Seek the betterment of people. It has a limitation that the end justifies the means. Therefore do not bring happiness to some at the expense of others.
Transformational ethics	Do not destroy the future and the fortune of others. Impact with a foundation of justice and the impact should be evaluated from beneficiaries feedback. Empower the people to become self-sustainable.
Resourcefulness	Know the competencies you have in relation with your resources. Be experts at adding value e.g. polished diamonds, oil refinement etc. Have the ability to acquire needed resources to become developed.

There were several panel discussions on *Perspectives on Leadership*

- ***Africa and corruption: Where did we go wrong? By Dr Patrick Lumumba***

At the 2010 AU meeting, it was mentioned that \$1.8 trillion dollars was lost between 1970 and 2008 from Africa through illegal transfers and collaboration with external partners. This could have paid all of African debts. The recent Cashgate saga in the media made Malawi a good venue for the conference. The Church had a role to play to ensure that the gospel is impacting the society by encouraging *Social holiness*.

Dr Lumunba said corruption is pervasive and pernicious in Africa and was mainly a problem of poor leadership. This is often because people seek public office for personal gain. Corruption has unfortunately become a way of life with many African leaders choosing that path and external agents contributing too for their benefit. The challenge has been that Africans do not get angry about what should anger them. Trivial thieves are hung but corporate thieves let loose. Opposition leaders accuse the government because they do not have the opportunity themselves and do the same when they do.



Dr Mary Mkandawire from Malawi with other participants

Africans need to know what they want for themselves because the world knows what they want from Africa. Most followers are ignorant and this perpetuate the situation because leaders are being elected for the wrong reasons not because of their policies or performance. Many African leaders think more about the next election than the next generation. Disappointingly the Church has been complacent and conforming. However things can change when the Church wakes up and finds its voice. It should seek to transform rather than conform. Change has to come from within by people speaking out against the practice and calling it what it is – a scandal! The church has to live up to the standard it claims and refuse to be intimidated when told not to meddle in politics. Instead it should challenge its society to reward hard work, excellent performances with great results rather than those seeking quick unsustainable solutions. Africans were called to subdue the earth and Christ would ask us what we did with our talents and the resources invested in Africa when He comes!

- **The Biblical vision of Food Security and Job Creation in Africa by Dr Raphael Edou**

There were four dimensions to consider – Availability, access, stability and utilization. The aims are to overcome undernourishment and address hunger indicators. In the world, 1 billion people suffer hunger of which 239 million are in sub-Saharan Africa. The major challenges are climate change mostly due to deforestation, population growth, destruction of forests due to immediate monetary gains, exploitation of trees, pollution, misuse of water, modified rainy seasons etc. It has been projected that up to 30% of arable land may be lost in 15 years if nothing is done.



Bunmi with Dr Raphael – Minister from Benin

What next? Africa has to focus on environmental protection as well and possible job creation in this sector to address the problems of hunger and environmental challenges. This is an issue of governance so leadership could allocate appropriate resources, inform the people, communicate the vision and collaborate with stakeholders. Everyone has a talent to contribute and so we can pass on a good legacy to the young ones!

- **How can effective leadership alleviate poverty and hunger?**

Poverty is not accident; it is man-made and can be removed by the action of humans – *Nelson Mandela*. Poverty is not only caused by economic and political causes, it has a spiritual element to it and that is –the mindset! A mind set or thought pattern of

hopelessness makes one accept things as unchangeable. However there is something we can all do! As leaders, we have to resolve to make positive impact in our communities or nations. Identify the practical obstacles to overcome. Ensure Agriculture research institutes work closely with schools, institutions, communities and other stakeholders because many conduct researches but not involved in food production. Churches should help organise members or communities as co-operatives to increase production, marketing and processing. Governments should honour the 10% allocated from the national budget to support agriculture in their countries.

- **Developing leaders in healthcare by Dr Mary Mkandawire**

It is proven that poverty is associated with poor health. There are many causes of health inequalities, however very little is to do with infection or disease incidence. Numerous health determinants were due uncontrollable factors

such as age, gender, environmental factors as well as choices such as individual lifestyles, social and community networks. Our living and working conditions directly impact on life standards for example food choices, education, working environment or unemployment, water and sanitation, healthcare services and housing. Considering that most factors impinging of health care delivery are outside the health sector, leaders need to do more to improve infrastructure, education standards, housing, sanitation, water quality, employment etc to support better health status for its citizens.

- **Ubuntu and the African healthcare system by Professor Mftuso-Benge**

The community morale anywhere is based on individual values and humans have moral reasoning standards based on knowledge, skills and virtues. Bioethics is the critical objective of systematic analysis and interpretation of human morality and non-partisan applicable to all professions. A nation has natural resources, financial capital, human

capital (manpower), social capital (society and social networks) and moral capital (skills, attitudes and knowledge). For so long, the moral capital in Africa generally and Malawi in particular has promoted community cohesion and helped care for the disadvantaged. However, increasingly the moral capital is eroding particularly among leaders and the Church has a role to pay in advocating for and delivering (where possible) good health care services. Church leaders should model self leadership before leading and therefore challenge political leaders to exhibit self-control above self interest. Preserving and promoting a good moral economy advances efficiency, compassion and the good news of Christ.



Cameroonian representatives at the conference

- **Conflict in South Sudan: Challenges and the way forward – by Christian parliamentarians Paul Bonju, Ann Lino and Aggrey Idri**

Background – South Sudan has endured four decades of war. The first started in 1955 until 1972 at Anyaya (interpreted as poison). There was calm for 10 years. By 1983, another war broke out when Sharia law was imposed in Sudan and Arabic made the administrative language. Two million people died as a result of the conflict exacerbated by famine and diseases and four million people displaced from South Sudan. The civil war lasted 22 years until a peace agreement was signed in January 2005. Later that year, the rebel leader -John Garang was killed in a plane crash after becoming the Vice President of the country. Then the third war commenced soon after 2005, preparing South Sudanese for referendum that took place in 9 January 2011. With a 98.9% support, South Sudan was declared an independent nation but borders were not established. The fourth crisis started due to unresolved border issues and power struggle among South Sudan People Liberation Movement leaders. There has been loss of lives, direction, properties and livelihoods. However with South Sudan being mostly Christians (65% - 80%), the politicians seek to work together. A peace agreement was signed on 15 December 2013 which has been the basis for cooperation till date.

The opposition in South Sudan mentioned that the basis for the breakaway was because the fundamentals of good governance were not implemented i.e. to build peace; one must have peace within oneself. There should be proportional sharing of positions and resources across the country. As at 1 May 2015, inflation had risen to 600% in South Sudan, everything and anything in Sudan has been imported which is unsustainable. He commented that if success is not shared, sorrow and poverty would continue to pervade the country in spite of the goodwill of friends and partners of South Sudan. The recent sanction on the country has forced everyone to remain in the country to



Sudanese parliamentarians – Paul and Aggrey at ABLI

experience the hardships together as well as seek solutions. Aggrey said that programmes should be prioritised with strategies and service deliveries considered first. He rounded up by sharing that mediators should not have conflicts of interest to ensure that truth; reconciliation and healing were promoted during mediation. South Sudanese should remember to thank God and external partners. Many of the issues coming up to the surface were because previously everyone was preoccupied in surviving the wars but now available funds have brought up undercurrent situations and problems affecting national administration. As leaders, Africa should seek to churn out *job creators* rather than *job seekers* as it addresses pertinent challenges on the continent.

Ann spoke about spirituality in South Sudan. Even though many are professing Christians, the very rate of illiteracy meant much most were still connected to traditional beliefs. Politics is rife with nepotism and tribalism. Youth and women do act on tribal lines and there is an open market for guns as well as high national budget being spent on security/ military at the expense of other important sectors. Currently there is lack of personnel to lead in peaceful times since many of the politicians were freedom fighters. There is the need to strengthen local churches, send faith representatives to visit other countries and support the role of local churches in advocacy. There is the need to for post-trauma healing because children still prefer to play with guns than other toys.

Church leaders at the forum came around the South Sudan leaders to pray for and with them. In summary there was the need for implementation and delivery of significant services such as education, agriculture, healthcare etc in South Sudan. There was a need to break the cycle of wars so they could move from being peace-keepers to peace makers. One of the key issues facing South Sudan has been rejection and there is the need for healing, renewal of minds, new ways of relating, need for accountability and performance measurement to monitor progress based on Matthew 18¹⁵⁻²⁰.

- **Leaders of today or tomorrow by Justice Dr Chifudo Kachale based on Daniel 1¹⁻²¹**

Based on the above text, Dr Kachale raised five points expected of leaders

1. Submit to Sovereign purposes of the Lord - Dan 1¹⁻²
2. Embrace adversity with humility and hope – Dan 1³⁻⁶
3. Refine talents for relevant service of society – Dan 1^{4,5,17-20}
4. Vow never to forsake the Lord - Dan 1⁸⁻¹⁶
5. Expect the ending legacy of an obedient life - Dan 1²¹

2 Kings 24¹⁴ confirmed the difficult circumstances through which Daniel lived. Daniel was a youth with little support system. However youths have no or little baggage, a blank slate as it were. Therefore God does not need our permission to use youths for His purposes. To be a good leader, one has to be a good follower and also seek to empower others alongside you. Honour leadership and seek to be a solution rather than a problem like Daniel. With



Dr Kachale – Malawian Judge with Bunmi

privileges come responsibilities therefore use your talents to change the story of Africa. There are things only you can do however refine your skills for optimal execution of tasks. Africa's greatest squander is not its natural resources but its human resources. There is a difference between existence and living. Leadership is about influence not position. Get your identity in God. Life is intentional and full of choices; nevertheless it is your decision. Daniel made a decision and he was the only one of his peers that maintained his Jewish name. Governments changed but Daniel stayed. Take courage, one person can make a huge difference. We have no clue of what God is offering us - to be like Him and escape the corruption in the world! Teach the truth – it is the key to the destiny of great leaders.

The conference ended with ABLI Malawi declaration 2015 by reaffirming our belief that the Bible has an important role to play in the Public as well as Private. Participants commended the willingness of both sides of South Sudan to journey towards peace. There was an appeal to African societies to welcome strangers and refugees fleeing persecution. At the same time there was an offer of respect and peace to Muslim neighbours. In all this, we ask God's blessings over Africa. We ended up the conference with celebrations and thanksgiving for a great conference.