

All African Theological Education by Extension Association (AATEEA) 4th Conference in
Addis Ababa from 11th – 16th October 2014
Theme – Fostering sustenance through partnerships

Aims: To support and network with AATEEA participants at this conference
To contribute and represent MCB views on TEE as well as learn from the experience

I arrived on Saturday 11th October and met with Rev Kangwa- co-ordinator, AATEE executive as well as Prof Ian Torrence (Church of Scotland), Bart and Natalie from the Netherland. Arrivals took place all day and preparations for next day. On Sunday 12th October, many others had arrived and we all worshiped at the International Evangelical Seminary in Addis Ababa –the message was based on God’s command to care for the poor and the needy – Deut 15¹⁰, Lev 25³⁵, Ex 23¹⁻⁹.

AATEEA conference was officially opened by Mrs Susan Sikaneta, Zambia ambassador to Ethiopia and the permanent representative at the African Unity. There were about thirty five representatives from about 30 African nations (twenty five men and ten women). She spoke about the crucial contribution by TEE in African nations to teach scriptures as a transformative tool in shaping moral attitudes, characters, leaders and destinies. She mentioned the need for fight against misuse and misinterpretation of God’s words for personal and national gains. The Church is the echo of God’s voice. She then encouraged a submission of theological contributions to 2063 paper being developed for Africa so as to have a spiritual element in African’s future plans. 25 African countries were represented such Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Senegal, The Gambia, Malawi, Mauritius, Angola, Namibia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, Uganda, Ethiopia as well as partners - AACC, Netherlands, Norway and the UK (British Methodists, Church of Scotland & Feed The Minds)



Ethiopian Praise



Ethiopian Christian worship



Ethiopian Christian musicians

Later I met with Margaret Mumbingigi – secretary at TEE Kenya (Presbyterian Church of East Africa). The organisation started 31 years ago and over 210,000 students have passed through. Its major source of income was sale of produced resources at affordable prices and the courses were accredited by the Presbyterian University of Kenya. Formerly there were two modules offered but this has increased to five namely – Children’s ministry, Prison ministry, Psychological counselling and both basic and advanced TEE modules. Completing one of the courses is a pre-requisite for eldership in the Presbyterian Church. TEE Kenya has developed links with Rwanda, Tanzania, US and the UK. It is ecumenical in nature.

TEE Gambia started in 2010 by Rev Sam Thomas of the Lutheran Church of Gambia. There are currently six members and the centre is located in Brikama.

TEE Zambia was represented by Rev Acskon Banda though other members were also present. It conducts training for trainers and servers ecumenical members in Zambia. Leadership courses are offered at basic and advanced levels though flexible to deliver bespoke courses as and when required in Zambia and elsewhere.

TEE Southern Africa has over 3,000 enrolled students. Entry levels vary from those with basic literacy to Professors all interested in church leadership training. The length of study varies from one to twenty years and TEE SA serves seven major denominations in Southern Africa. In 2005 the college started delivering higher qualification courses as well as training lay leaders though no postgraduate courses yet due to challenges with accreditation. Its key relationships are with churches e.g. trains Catholic deacons and provide resources for 350 catholic schools in South Africa. It also helps resource African Independent Churches and Pentecostal ministries. TEE SA sometimes secure funding for students pursuing basic qualifications



AATEEA conference organiser



kenyan representative at the conference – Margaret



TEE participants at AATEEA conference

TEE Ethiopia takes theological knowledge to its people rather than them coming to the college. It is organised by Mekani Yesu – the largest Lutheran church with over 7 million members. Its seminary focuses on three courses – School of Music, Leadership and management and Theology. We were treated to traditional Ethiopian worship in existence since the time of the Ethiopian eunuch in the Acts of the Apostles. The Ethiopian Orthodox church goes back to 3000BC when Sheba met Solomon. Ethiopia became a Christian nation 300 years ago when declared by its kings. In 1959 the indigenous church was headed by an indigene but not the king because in between the years there was the challenge of communism in the country causing closure of many churches. In 1960 Makane Yesus Theological Seminary was built and later the TEE model brought to Ethiopia from Latin America in 1963. It was beneficial because newly trained ministers at the seminary did not return to the villages but took up employment in the city however TEE was a field based programme for all. The initial concern of the church was to educate its church members later it became ecumenical and promoted the fact that theology should not be limited to professionals. It became an effective tool for address socio-economic matters and its mission statement is to reach, equip and make people and lay preachers effective in using the word of God. Student feedback confirmed the positive influence TEE has had on the moral fabric of the society as well as equipping church leaders where there were insufficient ministers.

Partners were invited to share and I shared the new restructure of the learning network and the two institutions now delivering theological courses. Similar to TEE, online courses, short courses, lay preachers and worship leaders training for the British Methodist are still ongoing and such resources and courses were being developed by our Methodist theologians.

Other issues discussed were *Decentring Education, Gender Justice for Community Transformation, Economic Justice* and the *Prosperity Gospel, Standardization Quality and Harmonization*. Questions raised were;

- How frequently was the TEE curriculum reviewed and what were the drivers?
- How were students equipped to engage socio-politically in their communities?
- What were the differences and distinctions between the seminary courses and TEE courses?
- How does TEE help in the formation of student to become ministers?

Strengths and weaknesses of African Regional TEE

Strengths

Field based programmes
 Regular seminars held close to students
 Affordable
 Student interaction facilitated
 Applied learning
 Varying entry levels
 Bespoke course for churches, organisations or schools

Weaknesses

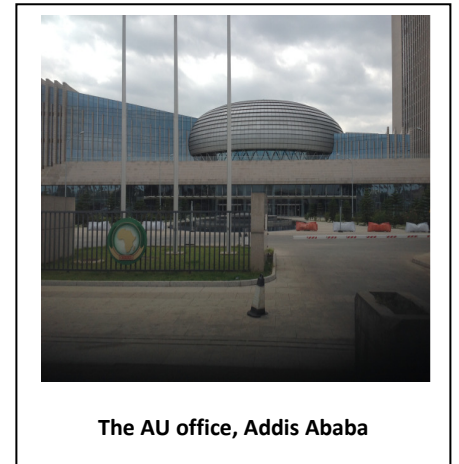
Costly and challenging accreditation process
 Resourcing and access to materials
 Challenges of distance learning
 Security/ risk issues
 Language challenge
 Illiteracy



Founding African leaders - 1963



AATEEA conference members at AU Office, Addis Ababa



The AU office, Addis Ababa

It was a great opportunity to network and understand the role of TEE in spreading the good news as well as equipping the saints to do the work of ministry. Participants were also encouraged to document stories and important information on theology from African perspective.

We also had the opportunity to visit the African Unity Office and the conference was invited to contribute theologically to the **2063 document** – paraphrased as the **Africa of our dreams** in 50 years to come!

Thank you