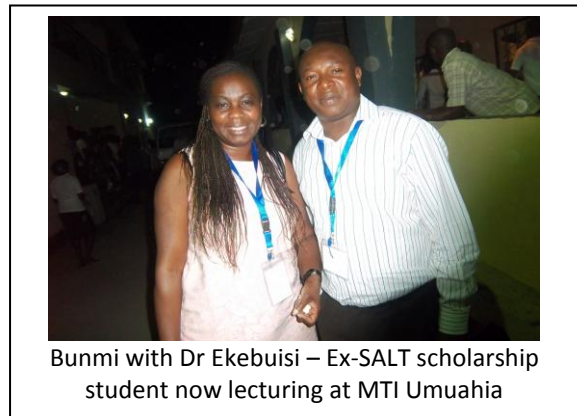


Partnership visit to Benin and attended the WMEI summit at Akwa Ibom State – Nigeria from 2nd – 15th January 2014

I was invited to the World Methodist Evangelism Institute (WMEI) Summit at Ukana, Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria where I participated in and presented one of the Discovery sessions on The Social Mission of the Church using the MCB model of serving alongside African partners. The aim of my partnership visit to Benin was to meet with the EPMB church leaders as well as MCB mission partners proposing to serve in Benin for the first time as their current contract with MC Sierra Leone ends in 2014.

Meetings with past SALT students now part of MCN leadership team

The Very Reverend Etim obtained a SALT scholarship and completed a Masters programme at Queen's Foundation Birmingham in 2011. He is now one of the Bishops of Akwa Ibom and participated actively at the summit. It was an opportunity to also meet Rev Dr Ekebusi who completed his PhD programme at Trinity College Ghana in 2013 under the South-to-South SALT scholarship and was back as a lecturer at Methodist Theological Institute Umuahia. Several MCN Bishops at the Leadership Training held in Cliff College in 2013 were at the summit plus lecturers of the three MCN seminaries –many were past recipients of the SALT scholarships and told me they were very grateful for the investments made in their career prospects by MCB.



Bunmi with Dr Ekebusi – Ex-SALT scholarship student now lecturing at MTI Umuahia

Meeting with the recently elected Prelate of MC Nigeria – His Eminence Samuel Emeka Uche

Prelate Uche summarised MC Nigeria's mission priorities under four headings:

1. Growth spiritually
2. Growth numerically
3. Growth financially
4. Infrastructural development

Evangelism has taken a prime place as MCN seeks to be one of the largest vibrant church winning souls for Christ in unreached areas of Nigeria and its surroundings. Newly formed churches would be exempted from paying assessment in the first few years and the Director of Evangelism has identified areas for increased evangelism thereby attracting enhanced support from the Connexional office. MC Nigeria was still considered the largest Methodist Conference in Africa with over 2 million members and still growing.

Other issues discussed at our Partnership meeting

- **Exchange issues** – Prelate Uche was keen to promote exchanges with other Methodist Conferences within and without Africa e.g. schools exchange, mission hospital personnel exchange, seminary lecturers, women's groups etc
- **SALT programmes** – He was very appreciative of the past support in this area and MCN as part of its mission priority has now focussed on training laity to improve its participation in evangelism and church leadership.

- **Personnel assistance for MC Sierra Leone** – Rev Arnold Temple – President of MC Sierra Leone has asked for a MBA graduate with experience to lecture at MCSL seminary and support MCSL Connexional office for two to three years since the former MCB mission partner had to leave for health reasons. MCN would try to source out a competent person within its Conference and liaise with me. MCSL also asked for a property manager as well to assist MCSL with its asset management and development e.g. having a property register.
- **Interfaith issues** - Boko Haram's ongoing onslaught of civilians was still occurring in North Western Nigeria with an increasing number of refugees fleeing to Northern Cameroon. MC Nigeria plans to work with UMC Nigeria based in Northern Nigeria to develop a unified strategy in addressing this terrible situation. MCN would update me on this soon.
- **Liaison with Pan African Methodist Conference** – Heads of African Methodist Churches plan to discuss Pan African issues thematically at a round table to promote an active African Chapter of the World Methodist Council and endorse ministerial exchanges. Further development to be communicated to me
- **Grants and reports** – I informed Prelate Uche that MCN annual grant report was still outstanding but was reassured that it was already in the post. An e-copy was to be sent as soon as possible in case it delayed due to the busy Christmas period. MC Nigeria mentioned its struggles to appoint medical doctors to work in the rural health clinics at Ado Odo and Irem. I advised it should consider submitting applications under the National in Mission Appointments as this has been ongoing for three years (similar to Kenya situation)
- **Zonkwa Theological College** – the only Methodist Seminary in Northern Nigeria only offers Certificate courses and it wishes to progress to delivering Diploma courses. MCN leaders are to discuss how this could be achieved and what support MCB could offer in this regard e.g. staff development, library services etc. I would be updated after the review
- **Mission Partners** – MCN has strengthened its support for neighbouring Methodist Conferences to improve relations with the Methodist family worldwide. MCN has sent and is supporting mission partners in Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Benin Republic and Togo. It supported MCSL with its recent WCC subscription payments and trained two MC The Gambia ministers by offering them scholarships at its seminaries. MCN was very appreciative of the MCB mission partners serving in Nigeria and welcomes continued partnership in this regard.



Zonkwa TC lecturers at the WMEI Summit
2014



Former Archbishop Ladigbolu with
Prelate Uche of MCN and Bunmi

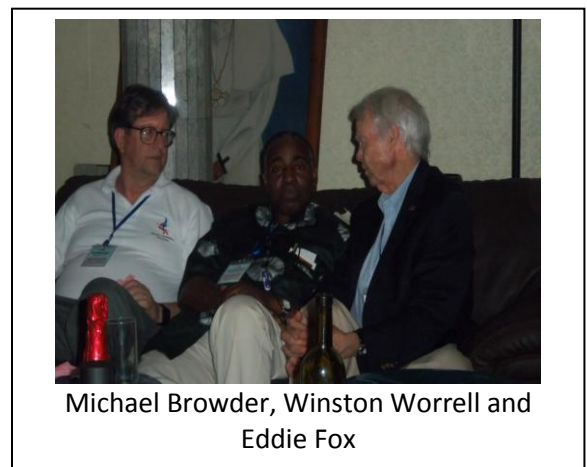
- **World Methodist Evangelism Institute Summit at Akana, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria**
I arrived in Lagos on the 2nd of January 2014 and later flew in to Uyo capital of Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria with other delegates attending the WMEI summit from various World Methodist traditions. On the 4th of January 2014 we were formally hosted by the Governor of Akwa Ibom State – Dr Akpabio and several other dignitaries. The WMEI Summit was officially opened on the 5th of January 2014 and several dignitaries gave short welcome speeches namely Bishop Ivan Abrahams – the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council (WMC), Ex- Prelate Sunday Mbang – former

Chairman of WMC, Dr Eddie Fox – Executive Director of WMEI, Dr Winston Worrell – Director of WMEI and Dr Arun W Jones – Dan and Lillian Hankey Associate Professor of World Evangelism. We were all welcome by Bishop Sunday Onuoha – the WMEI Regional Secretary of Africa West and by the Chairman of the planning Committee - what a glorious day with delegates worshipping at various Methodist Churches to witness and participate in the vibrant Covenant services in Akwa Ibom.

On following days we had morning prayers led by United Methodist Churches, Nazarene West Africa, Wesleyan, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), AME Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Salvation Army and Methodist Church Nigeria. We had Faith –Sharing sessions led by Eddie Fox, Israel and the Nations in the Old Testament led by Arun Jones and Transformational Leadership using Moses as a model led by Ivan Abrahams. Winston Worrell encouraged intentional and effective evangelism by sharing our testimonies with people and telling God about others. We shared personal encounters with Jesus in one minute and prayed for each other in the next one minute! It was a confidence building exercise.



Ivan Abrahams with Bunmi at the WMEI 2014 summit



Michael Browder, Winston Worrell and Eddie Fox

Interfaith sessions (Christian – Muslim Relationships) led by Rev Dr Michael Browder (a UMC pastor and Harvard graduate with speciality on World Religions), Former Archbishop Ladigbolu and Bishop John Wesley Yohanna of UMC Nigeria. These were very lively and interesting sessions and the speakers were very contextual and informed. Bishop Ladigbolu was a Seminary lecturer formerly a Muslim and now doing vast work with Muslims in his home state – Oyo state populated by 75% Muslims. Bishop Yohanna lives in the North Western region of Nigeria – Taraba state and mentioned that Muslims were more informed about the Old Testament and its ways of living than the dispensation of love and grace the New Testament. Therefore it is incumbent on Christians to show love even if we have to lay down our lives and pray for the perpetrators as we should not engage in violence. He further confirmed that perpetrating issues surrounding the Boko-Haram ordeal were politics, poverty, ignorance and the belief that Islam is supreme particularly as the current political leader of Nigeria is a Christian. To date over one thousand deaths have been reported by the UN. Rev Michael Browden highlighted the good attributes about Islam – dedicated to prayers, knowledge of the Quran, promotes good works, focuses on the five pillars of Islam rather than denominational differences and acknowledges Jesus as a great prophet. However the main difference between Islam and Christianity was that Islam is based on works – at the end of life your good works will be judged against your bad works to determine IF you make heaven. Whereas Christianity is based on belief in Jesus – John 3:16 -18 and considers Him more than a prophet (divine) - Son of God. Islam got the name of God –Allah from Judaism and Christianity during the time of Mohammed however it is up to us to decide if we serve the same God based on nomenclature or character! We all had a joint fasting and prayer time on Wednesday 8th January and open air evangelistic event later in the evening. It was a brilliant and refreshing time together though many leaders and few speakers were unable to attend due to cancelled flights based on the weather.

Partnership visit to Eglise Protestante Méthodiste du Bénin

I arrived in Cotonou Airport, Benin Republic on Sunday 12th January and was later joined by Michael and Joanna Tettey with their two daughters – Joelle (8) and Jannelle (3). We had a joint meeting with Dr Moise the chair of the Good Samaritan Hospital, Porto Novo and with Dr Antoinette – the Medical Director, using the services of Constant Lokoussou as our interpreter. After several discussions, they appreciated our visit and confirmed the needs for Michael's skills as a Hospital Administrator and that of Joanna as a Mid-wife/ Nurse tutor. We later visited the hospital and met with staff who were excited to meet us.

The hospital was constructed by funds raised locally from donations, a bank loan and a MCB grant of £45,000 that was 10% of the budget which EPMB was grateful for. Staff moved into the building seven months ago even though aesthetic work has not completed but the space was needed badly. The hospital serves the community and gets no subvention from the government. Patients pay affordable prices for quality health care delivery and income helps balance the books. The board of management has ten members including a youth, a woman, the chaplain and other members with essential skills. There are five doctors and several nurses though short term medical personnel and final year doctors are welcome to serve with this noble organisation as it is a very good hospital being managed on meagre resources yet considered a mission priority of EPMB. We visited other important sites e.g. UPAO.



Dr Antoinette and Dr Houssou at the Porto Novo meeting with the Tetteys



EPMB President – Rev Alagbada with the Tetteys at Cotonou, Benin Republic

Meeting with President of EPMB Rev Dr Alagbada and the Secretary of Conference – Rev Djarra We all travelled to Cotonou – about one hour drive from Porto Novo after viewing three schools for Joelle and Joanna Tettey. We managed to arrive at the English International School in Cotonou at 4.40pm and met the School Headmistress. She kindly received us though she was on her way home and showed us round the premises. Both Michael and Joanna were happy with the school as it correlates with the British system peradventure Joelle sits for her 11+ exams in 2017. This confirmed their decision to reside in Cotonou and travel to Porto Novo if the placement was accepted. Rev Alagbada and Rev Djarra were very pleased to welcome us all and for the consideration to serve in Benin Republic. WCR, EPMB and the Tetteys would continue discussions and arrange necessary logistics if this new contract was to start in September 2014 alongside schooling for Joelle and Janelle Tettey. In the meantime the family would take French lessons and support for translation at the hospital would be considered.

Thank you

*Dr Bunmi Olayisade
Africa Partnership Coordinator*