

Partnership visit to Cameroon from 20 – 28 July 2012

The aims of the visit were to strengthen existing partnership with the Presbyterian Church Cameroon (PCC) Buea and to meet with Universite Protestante D’Afrique Centrale (UPAC) staff at Yaounde, Cameroon - another partner organisation based in Cameroon

- To discuss various MCB grant options and new application guidelines and processing timetables
- To meet with the ex-SALT student to consider the impact of scholarship on PCC as a Church
- To visit NMA post holders and discuss progress of programmes
- Evaluate possible people-to-people programmes with partners as well as discuss MCB pre-placement visit recently made by Rev Daniel Morris-Chapman Pratt (prospective mission partner)

Meeting with Rev Fonki Forba in Douala – ex SALT student

I arrived at Douala on Friday 20 July, met by Rev Fonki before proceeding to the hotel after dinner. The next day we had the opportunity to discuss how his postgraduate experience at Queen’s Foundation has benefitted the Church. Rev Forba is the senior pastor of the East Mungo South Presbytery. He was very thankful for the MCB scholarship offered him and grateful that this discussion was taking place – one of 25 presbyteries in Cameroon.



He mentioned a few positive changes since his return in August 2011 following his dissertation on poverty alleviation in Cameroon.

- He has strengthened his participation in the local Prison ministry by visiting at least once a month and administering Holy Communion during prison fellowship. Also his church provides transport fares for newly released inmates to enable them return to their communities and homes
- The Church now celebrates an Agape meal on the last Sunday of each month with the community. Fonki commented how the church is packed full with non members and church members who bring all kinds of food for all to dine together. This practice has endeared the church to the community and gives opportunities to share the good news about Jesus as well as demonstrate His love
- There are many street kids in Douala and the church now offers a meal a day to 60 street kids, clothes, offers counselling and spiritual guidance as and when needed. A house has been rented to care for them however insufficient funding has hampered its progress.

Rev Forba pastors a large English- speaking congregation in Douala –the French speaking commercial capital of Cameroon. There are two Sunday services 7.30am – 9.00am and 9.30am – 11.30am, an

active youth church, a vibrant choir and participative elders. The church service was extended due to a special fund raising service for Douala Street kids programme managed by the church.

Meeting with Rev Asana – Moderator of PCC

We left Douala for Buea about 80 miles away and had a lovely meal with Rev Asana’s family. We discussed various ways of strengthening existing partnership and I updated him about existing programmes and met with some PCC staff:

- SALT scholarship

The UK border now requires IELTS for UK university postgraduate applicants. However MCB also supports a south-to-south scholarship programme. A special case may be considered for study in UPAC, Yaounde –the French speaking Cameroon. This would enable ministers to lead both French and English speaking congregations. The old Western Cameroon i.e. both Southern and Northern areas were part of Nigeria pre-independence, therefore English speaking. However the Central and Eastern Cameroon are French speaking.

- NMA programmes

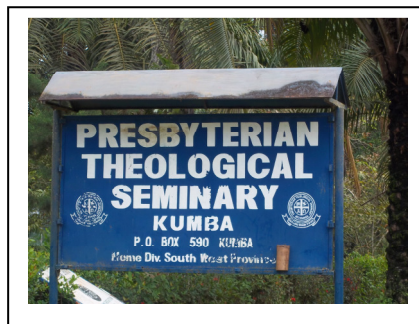
There are two sponsored NMA programmes currently running at PCC. Rev Asana asked if he could submit another application since he missed the 2012 deadline due to problems with the office server. 2013 NMA application form will be sent next Connexional year. The NMA programme beneficiary was in Northern Cameroon on a training seminar with Church women leaders.

- People-to-people programme

MCB mission partners made a pre-placement visit to the Presbyterian Theological College at Kumba. PCC looks forward to having Daniel and Grace serving in Cameroon and agrees to provide a secured accommodation and support for the young family. Volunteers are also welcome especially medical professionals.



College premises



Staff quarters

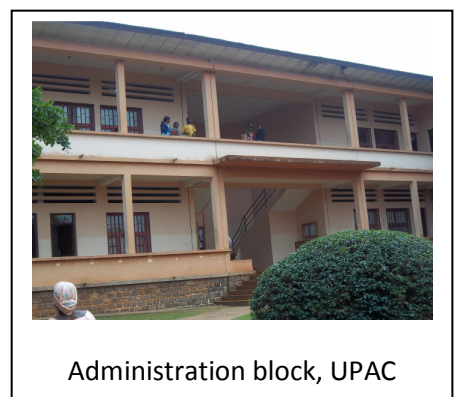
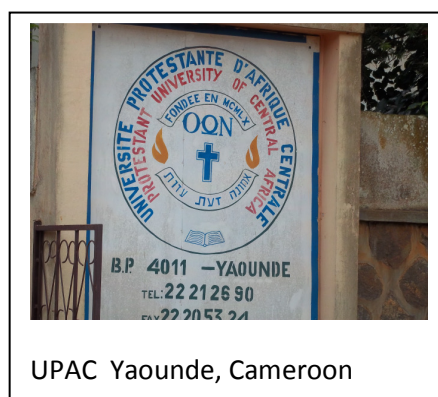
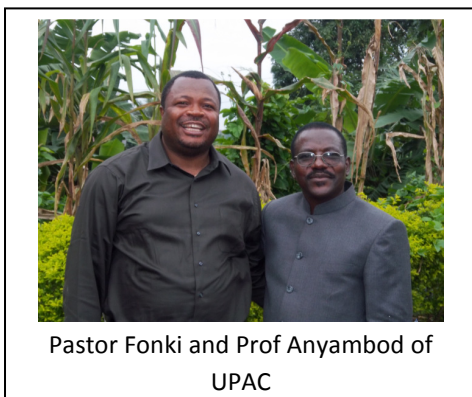
Visit to Presbyterian Theological College (PTC), Kumba

I visited PTC on Tuesday 24 July and met with one of the senior lecturers, the Financial Clerk and librarian of the school. Fifty seven students enrolled for the Bachelor’s programme at the seminary last year and were on summer holiday during my visit. I had the privilege of inspecting the accommodation provided for Daniel and Grace which was being renovated. I also met with Rev Mbengu , a former SALT student who completed his postgraduate studies at Pretoria and was so grateful for the scholarship award as he now lectures at the seminary.

Also I visited Presbyterian Girls High School and the historic church built over 100 years ago at Limbe where the missionaries set foot at the shores of Cameroon. The church building was recently renovated by support from locals and British Methodists (funds raised via Rev Peter Ensor).

Visit to Universite Protestante D’Afrique Centrale (UPAC), Yaounde

I travelled over three hundred miles to Yaounde from Douala to meet with Professor Emmanuel Anyabom – the Rector of the university and UPAC staff. He was most appreciative of the long standing support from the British Methodist Church and commended MCB’s commitment to supporting theological education in Francophone Africa. The university is the oldest ecumenical protestant institution in Cameroon and trains ministers from West and Central Africa as well as Madagascar and it has trained many renowned African theologians. In the past decade, the student population exploded and newer faculties are now in operation e.g. Social Services, International studies, Medicine etc.



Prof Anyambod mentioned that UPAC did not get any annual grants for the past two years since 2010. I discovered that the annual form was sent to the wrong email address but this is now being processed. Before my visit, I ensured that the new rolling grant form was sent to UPAC to enable me explain the new grant application procedure. Prof Anyambod also asked if the SALT programme was still in operation because two UPAC administrative staff got scholarships sometime ago.

I also seized the opportunity to extend my condolence and prayers on behalf of Methodist Church Britain following the tragic loss of one of UPAC’s lecturers. The cause of sudden death was still unknown however there is universal support and prayers from all partners. Prof Anyambod mentioned that there was still ongoing investigation by security personnel.

People-to-people programme

In the past mission partners and volunteers have served as lecturers and/ or support staff in the institution. Volunteers and mission partners are welcome at UPAC particularly to help at the IT centre and the Medicine department. Language is not a barrier since Cameroon is a bi-lingual country – a wonderful opportunity to strengthen relations. It was a very fruitful visit.

Travelled back to the UK on Friday 27/28 July 2012.

*Dr Bunmi Olayisade
Africa Partnership Coordinator
August 2012*