

KENYA METHODIST UNIVERSITY, P.O.BOX 267-60200, MERU, KENYA

Christmas 2018

Dear Friends,

This is to wish you all a Happy Christmas, to thank you for your prayers, and to share some news of developments which have taken place in my part of the world over the past 6 months.

The second half of this year began very happily with a retreat for British Methodist mission partners drawn from Africa and the Carribean, organized by the World Church Relationships office in Methodist Church House in London and held at hotels near Kampala and Jinja in Uganda. We were blessed through the ministries of a retired Anglican bishop of Kampala and a Dutch retreat leader from Jinja during the course of the week-long retreat, but perhaps even more through the opportunity of just meeting one another, sharing, worshipping, and praying together, visiting some local places of interest together (including the source of the Nile on Lake Victoria and the Namugongo Martyrs' Memorial), and joining in the worship of some local Methodist churches on the Sunday. It was a wonderful time of refreshment and renewal.

Back in Kenya, we praise the Lord that the political scene is now calm after the turbulence which surrounded the general election last year. We may also praise the Lord for the fresh attempts made by the government of President Uhuru Kenyatta to combat the evil of corruption which is endemic in so many African countries today. In fact, the number of stories appearing in the Kenyan press of people in high places being taken to court on corruption charges over the past few months has been comparable with the number of stories appearing in the British press concerning 'Brexit' during the same period. It has been a particular source of satisfaction for me to see the chief government anti-corruption agency being headed by the recently retired Anglican Archbishop of Kenya, Eliud Wabukala, who was one of my students at St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, in the 1980s. We pray that these fresh attempts to quell corruption will have some long-term effects, not only in reducing its incidence but also in raising the level of awareness of its moral unacceptability and damaging economic impact among the Kenyan population as whole.

The fact that KEMU itself has not escaped this scourge was made public at our Graduation Day ceremony held in October. I have reported the financial difficulties KEMU has been experiencing in previous prayer letters, but now it has been officially stated that this situation has been caused not simply by stiffer competition from other universities and falling student numbers but also by the corruption and mismanagement of a previous administration. The current administration is now struggling to pay its creditors by selling a tower block it owns in Nairobi, but substantial debts will still remain to be cleared even if this sale goes through. Meanwhile the staff are not being paid on time and not long ago some vehicles were confiscated under a court order to be auctioned off to meet the legitimate claims of former staff members whose services were prematurely terminated

without due compensation. We need to pray that wise decisions will be made to put KEMU back onto a firmer financial footing.

On a happier note, I am pleased to be able to report that, despite continuing austerities, the administration decided to restore the employment of temporary library staff for the processing of the 38,000 books which were donated by the British Methodist Church from the now-closed Wesley College, Bristol. I see this as an answer to the prayers for which I asked in my last prayer letter. Our hope now is that this whole operation of sorting, reclassifying and cataloguing books from this collection will be completed by the time I leave KEMU next year. The collection will significantly enlarge our existing stock of theological books and will hopefully serve generations of theological students to come.

Otherwise, during this past trimester, I have enjoyed teaching Hebrew, Greek, New Testament, Methodism and Homiletics to the theological students, and Christian Beliefs to about 260 students from other departments. I also held a two-hour question-and-answer session with members of the university's Christian Fellowship, and have had more opportunities to preach on Sundays in Methodist churches around the Meru region. On my days off I have continued to explore the beautiful countryside which surrounds us here at KEMU on the north-eastern slopes of Mt Kenya.

Next trimester will be my last at KEMU before retirement, and I would be grateful for your prayers as I go through the process of relocation, particularly in making arrangements for the shipping of my goods back to UK and in finding a new home (probably in the Salisbury area). I would also be grateful if you would pray for the theological department I will leave behind, that it may find suitable staff members who will be able to deliver the courses which I have been teaching during these past five years.

I hope to write to you all again next summer from UK to update you on my news and inform you of my new address. Meanwhile I wish you every blessing for the Christmas period and the coming New Year.

Yours in Christ,

Peter