

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

May 2017

Dear Friends,

It is good to be in touch with you again and I want to thank you for any prayers you have been able to offer in support of my work since I sent my last prayer letter. As you will see in the following update, many of our prayers have been positively answered:

Regarding the university as a whole, though the period of austerity is not yet over, recruitment continues to be enhanced by batches of government-sponsored students, and we live in hope that the resulting increase in fee income will enable the university to clear some of its debts and finance other necessities. Meanwhile, in our department of Theology, Religious Studies and Counselling, our staffing has been strengthened once again this trimester by the return of Rev. Dr. Malcolm and Mrs. Janet McCall from Scotland, who have come for the third time as visiting lecturers and are, between them, teaching four courses.

Regarding the 38,000 donated theological books from Wesley College, Bristol, the good news is that at the beginning of the year the university was able to employ extra library staff to begin the task of processing these books, which had been stored in some containers on the campus since their delivery to KEMU last May. Slowly, we are working our way through this valuable collection, which will greatly benefit our students for years to come. The main current problem is that of finding the extra shelving space required for the books, once they have been processed, but I believe that this problem can and will be solved in the near future.

Regarding my own chairmanship of the department, I am pleased to be able to report that the operations of the department have stabilized following the sudden and untimely transfer of my immediate predecessor at the end of last year, and that I was able to carry out a revision of our B.Th. and Certificate programmes during my time in office. However, I found the burdens of this office, together with my teaching load and the additional responsibility of sorting out the Wesley College books, too much to carry all at once, so I decided to step down from the chairmanship at the end of March. The department is now being led by a very able Kenyan colleague, Rev. Dr. John Njoroge.

Regarding my immigration status, I am happy to be able to say that significant progress was made at the beginning of this year. The renewal of my work permit was approved and my status as a Kenyan resident endorsed on my passport. When I collect my new resident card on my next visit to Nairobi, I will then be able to renew my Kenyan driving licence. The only disappointment lies in the realization that next year I will have to go through the process all over again! However, in the light of lessons learnt from recent experience, I believe the process will go more smoothly next time round.

Another blessing for which I give thanks is the provision of a new car. The Suzuki I had been loaned by the Methodist Church in Kenya developed major gear problems last year which could

not be solved by the local garage which specializes in this brand, so I gave the car back to the church and (with money sent by the British Methodist Church's World Church Relationships Office to the MCK for this purpose) received in its place a comparatively new Nissan X-Trail, just imported from Japan. So far it is running very well and proving to be very helpful in facilitating my journeys.

I am also pleased to be able to report that the Kinoru church, to which I am attached, continues to flourish, and is attracting new members all the time. It has even been called by our Presiding Bishop 'the fastest growing Methodist church in Kenya'. Moreover, its daughter church at Makutano, a shopping centre about half a mile away, is also blossoming. The rented hall used by this new congregation is being filled to capacity every Sunday morning, and there are now plans to purchase the site on which the hall stands and put up a new galleried church building to accommodate the increasing numbers.

Perhaps I could end with three particular prayer requests:

You have probably read or heard about the famine conditions in East Africa resulting from the poor rainy seasons we have had recently in this part of the world. Providentially, the Meru region has not been badly hit, but areas to the north of Meru in northern Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan, are really suffering. One further development has been the invasion of white-owned conservancies by pastoralists seeking fodder for their animals, which led to the shooting of two white landowners in separate incidents. We need to pray for more rain in these areas, for wisdom to be given to the leaders of the nations affected, and for more famine relief from the international community.

Kenya, like the UK, is facing a general election this year, except that the campaigning is spread over a much longer period: it started at the beginning of the year, but polling is not until August 8th. Another difference is that here the results are likely to be disputed by the losing parties and widespread violence may follow. We need to pray therefore that the election process will be conducted fairly by the election officials, with no 'rigging'; that the results will be credible and will not occasion violence on the part of the losers; and that those who are chosen to hold public office may be people of integrity, who will wisely and unselfishly serve the interests of the people they represent.

Finally, this trimester, for the first time, I am teaching the university course on 'Christian Beliefs'. This is a compulsory course for all university students, including those who are not (yet) Christians, and the lectures are delivered in the university chapel to accommodate the hundreds of students who attend them. This is obviously a golden opportunity to present the Christian faith at some depth to believers and unbelievers alike, and I would be grateful for your prayers that I may be guided in my preparation and delivery of these lectures, and that the words the Lord gives may take root in the minds and hearts of the hearers, and may bear fruit in their lives.

Yours in Him,

Peter