**KENYA METHODIST UNIVERSITY**

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Dear Friends,

This comes, as always, with thanks for your prayers and correspondence, and, at this special time of year, with best wishes for a Happy Christmas.

There have been several significant developments since I last wrote, both within and beyond the university, and I will try to summarise them in the following paragraphs.

Within the university, the most significant development has been the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor after an interregnum of 6 months. Prof. Henry Kiriamiti was inducted into his new office at our Graduation Day ceremony in July. He is a Meru Methodist layman, and came to us from Garissa University, which closed down after the terrorist attack earlier this year. One of his first decisions was to reduce students’ fees with a view to attracting more students and thereby strengthening the university’s financial position. He is also cutting back on what he considers to be unnecessary expenditure. It is too early to say for sure whether the strategy is going to work in the long term, but the present signs are promising.

The other major development was the news that the university would be given 38,000 theological books from Wesley College, the (now closed) Methodist ministerial training college in Bristol. This generous donation will instantly double the university’s library holding and potentially give KEMU one of the best theological libraries in Kenya. You may recall my previous concern for the poor quality of the theological section of KEMU’s library here at the main campus, and I see this turn of events as an answer to prayer. Let us now pray that the books may soon be cleared through the port of Mombasa, that they will catalogued without undue delay, and that they will then be well used.

Otherwise I am pleased to be able to report that the visit of Malcolm and Janet McCall during the second trimester, about which I wrote in my last prayer letter, went very well. During their stay Malcolm taught Homiletics and Modern Church History, and Janet gave individual tuition in English. Their ministry, both in the lecture rooms and outside, was greatly appreciated by students and staff alike.

Personally, I have continued to enjoy my own teaching work, and have also now completed writing Distance Learning materials for 11 courses in the B.Th. programme. The proposed M.Th. course, however, which was devised over a year ago, and approved by the Department and Faculty, has yet to be considered by the Dean’s committee before going to the Senate. Let us pray that this blockage may be overcome.

Beyond the university, I had the opportunity at the end of July to take part, for a second year running, in a training week for potential future leaders of the Methodist Church in Uganda held at the YWAM Centre near Jinja (where the River Nile emerges from Lake Victoria). Once again, we had about 60 participants and an international team of lecturers assembled by the Cliff College International Training Centre, and the participants clearly found the week stimulating and helpful. Our prayer continues to be that that they may find suitable opportunities for effective service in the Church. In January, the MCU will become a separate ‘Synod’ of the MCK, with its own Bishop, and our hope is that some of the young people we have trained will be accepted for training at a more advanced level at KEMU for full-time ordained ministry. It is also possible that there will be a further training week at Jinja next year.

From Uganda I travelled to Marakwet in North West Kenya for a few days. As you may recall, I spent some time with the new Methodist churches there around Easter this year, and it was encouraging to visit them again. The congregation of the recently built Karena Church, where I preached on the Sunday of my visit, almost filled the building and was said to have been the largest ever seen in that particular church, and this was even before it was officially opened (an event which took place a few weeks later)!

Otherwise I have continued to have many opportunities to preach in the Methodist churches of the Meru region, where there continues to be much growth. According to the latest available statistics, the MCK as a whole has roughly trebled in size over the last 25 years (to over 160,000 members), and shows many signs of spiritual vitality and commitment. We praise God for all that he is doing, and pray that the faith professed by so many, not only in the MCK, but also in the other denominations in Kenya, may increasingly be reflected in the quality of their lives and in the depth of their impact on Kenyan society as a whole.

One thing we may be especially thankful for is the fact that there have been no major terrorist attacks within the last six months, and that the British Foreign Office has declared a larger portion of Kenya’s coastline to be out of the danger zone. We may see here another answer to prayer. Let us now pray that this new period of peace and stability may long continue.

Next year, God willing, I shall be on furlough in UK for three months (from about mid-May to about mid-August) and look forward to meeting many of you again during that period.

Wishing you every blessing in Christ,

Peter