

ACTEA eNEWS

APRIL 2013

Greetings from ACTEA! A great deal has been happening in recent months, so ACTEA wants the wider family to be aware of a number of items, as explained below. If you know of other interested people who may not be receiving eNews, please let us know.

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1. ACTEA has a new name!

ACTEA announces a change of its name to the **Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa**. The acronym ACTEA remains the same because it continues to have good name recognition. Other sister organizations in ICETE use the word association because they do more than accreditation, and ACTEA agrees.

2. ACTEA staffing

Many of our readers will have heard of the shocking and unexpected death of the ACTEA chairman, Dr. Douglas Carew (Sierra Leone), in November, only three weeks after he chaired the ACTEA Executive Committee that met in Nairobi after the ICETE consultation. Dr. Carew's untimely death and other factors caused a significant shortage of ACTEA personnel, so a small team met in Nairobi in February to plot the way forward. They included Dr. Desta Heliso from Ethiopia, Dr. Bungishabaku Katho from DRC, Rev. Joe Simfukwe from Zambia, Dr. Stephanie Black from AIU (Kenya), Dr. Paul Sanders from ICETE and Dr. Rich Stuebing (ex-Zambia, now USA).

Of the many decisions made at that meeting, a few are highlighted here:

- **The Executive Committee will be enlarged** in order to include a wider representation of the ACTEA family, both geographically and linguistically.
- **The ACTEA office will move to Nairobi, Kenya** from its present location in Ndola, Zambia. We already have a place to rent and a part-time office administrator, so we hope to announce further details soon. Being closer to the AEA (Association of Evangelicals in Africa) continental office should have practical benefits to ACTEA.
- Several donor organizations have indicated clear interest in supporting the **hiring of ACTEA staff** in 2013, so plans are in motion to do that. Soon ACTEA will give more details on the positions that will be filled.
- **Dr. Rich Stuebing** has agreed to be the **ACTEA Interim Coordinator** for the rest of 2013, so he will carry most of the administrative responsibility until the designation of a full-time ACTEA Director. He will also be the main link with ACTEA institutions at the various levels of the accreditation process and will be assisted by the ACTEA Executive Committee, which will meet again in Nairobi on

August 10. Dr. Stuebing taught in Zambia for more than forty years and has a Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Some institutions will be familiar with his thesis, the ACTEA monograph *Training for Godliness in African Theological Education*.

3. How to contact ACTEA during the interim period

Until the Nairobi office is operational, the best way to contact ACTEA is to use the email address of the Director (actea.africa@gmail.com) or the Deputy Director (adm.ass.actea@gmail.com). Dr. Stuebing is available personally at rwstuebing@gmail.com.

4. ACTEA Council will meet in Nairobi on November 15/16, 2013 SAVE THIS DATE!

All accredited institutions are asked to send a representative to this important meeting, so please let the ACTEA office know who will attend. If transportation costs are a major hindrance, ACTEA may be able to help with a subsidy for those travelling from a distance.

5. ACTEA Librarians' eNews

ACTEA friend David FitzPatrick from the Bible Institute of South Africa has agreed to coordinate another issue for us. If you know of a topic or an article that would be of interest to ACTEA Librarians, please contact David directly at dfitz@bisa.org.za.

6. ACTEA Associate status

ACTEA is happy to announce the official approval of this new type of accreditation, which is custom-made for institutions that already have recognition from another organization (usually the government). The process is shorter, costs less and seeks to maintain an evangelical ethos at the institution concerned. More details may be obtained from the ACTEA office.

7. A call for prayer

ACTEA staff and committee members greatly appreciate your prayers for these days of transition. Please remember staffing concerns, moving the office, relationships with ACTEA institutions, finances, services (such as Librarians' eNews) and donor support.

8. *BookNotes for Africa* reviews

Supplied by BookNotes for Africa, a specialist journal that offers 40+ such reviews per issue on recent Africa-related publications relevant for informed Christian reflection in Africa, of particular interest for theological educators, libraries and researchers in Africa and elsewhere. To date BookNotes has published more than 1100 such reviews. The subscription rate within Africa is US\$10 for four issues (airmail) or \$15 to addresses overseas. Send inquiries and orders to: BookNotes for Africa, c/o R. Stuebing, 612 Messiah Circle, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 USA, or email BookNotesForAfrica@gmail.com

Engelke, Matthew

A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. 319 pp, pb, \$27

This book is an anthropological analysis of an unusual branch of the well-known Zimbabwean independent/indigenous church group known as the Masowe Apostles, which traces back to Johane Masowe and his 1932 vision in what is now Zimbabwe (there is a helpful biographical section on Masowe).

The particular group studied here meets on Fridays, not on Saturdays as most of the other groups do, and is therefore known as the Friday Masowe. The other distinctive of this group, and an important focus of this book, is that they do not read the Bible. This AIC insists on having a "live and direct" faith, not one that depends on a material book, claiming that Jesus and the apostles did not have a Bible either, so biblical truth is greater than the biblical text. They depend on the Holy Spirit alone, and healing is a major emphasis, as with other Masowe groups.

Engelke states the main focus of his concern in the concluding chapter: “The problem of presence [i.e., the Holy Spirit] is a problem of representation—of how words, objects and actions get defined as such and, in the process, become significant”. The author is an anthropologist of religion at the London School of Economics, and this book won the 2009 Turner Prize for Ethnographic Writing. Engelke provides helpful historical and cultural background, noting that individual dependence on the written word can replace the African traditional emphasis on community. He also outlines how the Friday Masowe outlook relates to that of other Africans such as Desmond Tutu, and political leader Canaan Banana of Zimbabwe (the former said the Bible led to liberation; the latter to exploitation—because the missionaries gave Africans the Bible and took their land).

The author also shows familiarity with Zimbabwe church historians Terence Ranger and Clive Dillon-Malone who have both written on the African Apostles. Because it is primarily an ethnographic study and sometimes relies on technical terminology, this is not a book that will have wide interest outside of southern Africa and cultural anthropologists. Readers may well be frustrated that, as an anthropologist, the author hesitates to make moral judgments on issues such as a key contact/leader being convicted of raping the women who came for healing (“for me it is a sociological point, not a religious one”).

Most Christians will also be rightly startled and troubled by the group’s avoidance of Scripture. The Friday Masowe seem a striking example of how an AIC group that considers itself Christian can depart from basic Christian understanding and practice in its responsiveness to context.

Ndjérareou, Abel

De Quelle Tribu Es-Tu?

Abidjan: Les Editions PBA, 2007. 143 pp, pb

[address order inquiries to: abel.ndjerareou@gmail.com]

Ndjérareou, originally from Chad, was formerly Dean of the Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui (FATEB/BEST) in the Central African Republic. Ndjérareou aims to bring a theological, missiological and ethical approach to bear on the problem of tribalism, in brief to answer the question, 'what does God say?' The book consists of four chapters, 'God's Reply', 'Jesus' Reply', 'The Church's Reply' and 'The Church Leaders' Reply'. Ndjérareou considers the biblical approach to ethnicity, particularly emphasising the implications of the creation of all human beings in God's image, and the malignant effects of the Fall on every human relationship, including ethnic difference. In 'Jesus' Reply' he argues from the Great Commission that the great purpose of Christ's work was to create one great new family out of all the nations, such that the church is a new and unique tribe.

In the last two sections he applies the biblical teaching to the church and its leadership, where too often the blood of tribe carries greater weight than the blood of Jesus. Accordingly, he calls on the church and its members to recognise their transformed identity and to live it out; and on its leaders to fulfil their prophetic, intercessory and teaching roles with respect to tribal difference, and themselves to be an example to those they lead. The book is clear and easy to read, and it communicates the author's own passion and conviction. It is much enriched by anecdotes drawn from Ndjérareou's personal experiences of tribal tensions and conflict in Chad, and of the way in which Christians and churches have responded.

Ndjérareou might perhaps have given more detailed attention to the nature of ethnic or tribal identity, which tends simply to be accepted as a given. There is also very little discussion of the positive value of ethnic difference in the purpose of a God who has so obviously made a world of rich and teeming variety and diversity. The problem with ethnicity, or tribe, is not so much ethnic difference as such, which has immense potential for the mutual enrichment of human beings, but that of the too frequently hostile human response to those who are 'other'. Nevertheless, the book is a significant

contribution to evangelical African reflection on a critical issue, where professing Christian believers, including evangelicals, have so often lost their way with disastrous consequences.