

ACTEA eNEWS

FEBRUARY 2009

The mission of ACTEA is to promote quality evangelical theological education in Africa by providing supporting services, facilitating academic recognition, and fostering continental and inter-continental cooperation.

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1. Director's Team meeting news

The "D-team" consists of the ACTEA Director (Rev. Joe Simfukwe, Zambia), the Deputy Director for Administration (Dr. Rich Stuebing, Zambia), the Accreditation Officer (Dr. Stephanie Black, Kenya) and the Treasurer (Mr. John Stambolie, Zimbabwe). The Executive Committee asked these four members to meet at least twice per year to promote the work of ACTEA in the absence of Rev. Philippe Emedi, who is on doctoral study leave in South Africa.

They first met together in Johannesburg in October 2008, and their second meeting took place at the Theological College of Central Africa in Ndola, Zambia, on January 27. They confirmed the appointment of Ms. Sarah Fundulu as ACTEA Administrative Assistant (replacing Mr. Chammah Kaunda, who worked with Rev. Emedi in RSA). Discussion was focused on financial matters and the revision of *ACTEA Standards* (with special emphasis on developments in distance education and IT delivery systems).

2. ACTEA Council meeting in August

ACTEA would like to give notice that an ACTEA Council meeting (one delegate from each accredited institution plus the Executive Committee) will take place in Nairobi, Kenya, beginning on Friday evening, August 14, 2009 and ending on Sunday afternoon, August 16. Many from East Africa will have attended the OCI leadership seminar in Kampala during the preceding week and will be passing through Nairobi, so ACTEA wants to take advantage of this opportunity to save on travel funds. The ACTEA Executive Committee will meet on Monday.

Items on the Council agenda tentatively include a speaker on recent global educational developments, discussion of newly revised *ACTEA Standards*, an evaluation of Christian universities in Africa and an open discussion time with the ACTEA Executive Committee after recent changes in personnel.

The cost will be limited to a basic participation fee, so a lack of finances should not be a reason for absence. Please keep these dates free on your calendar if you are the representative from an accredited institution. If the regular delegate is unable to join us then, another representative may be nominated. Please join us in prayer for the donor

who expressed interest in enabling ACTEA Council to meet, so that the necessary funds for transportation costs (mainly for those coming from West Africa) will be provided in good time.

3. New edition of African journal

AICMAR, the African Institute for Contemporary Mission and Research, announces the publication of volume 7, 2008. This issue contains papers by primarily Kenyan scholars and includes several book reviews on new titles of interest to the ACTEA family. For orders and enquiries contact the Managing Editor, Mrs. Fran Etemesi: fran-btr@africaonline.co.ke or write to her at:

P.O. Box 1129

Kakamega 50100

Kenya

Subscription rates, including airmail postage, packing and bank charges—

3 issues: East Africa K.Sh.1,200/ Other African countries £12 or US\$15

5 issues: East Africa K.Sh. 2,250/ Other African countries £20 or US\$30

4. NEGST PhD programme announcement

The Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST) announces that the closing date for applications to their Ph D programme has been extended until March 15, 2009. Dr John Kitur of the Ph D department at NEGST says, “What gives NEGST PhD the cutting edge is its relevance to the African realities coupled with academic excellence.” NEGST currently offers two degree programmes—Biblical Studies and Translation Studies—and students from the two tracks work together in an integrated programme.

Application forms may be downloaded from their website www.negst.edu and questions may be sent to phd@negst.edu or admissions@negst.edu. The mailing address is

PO Box 24686
00502 Karen, Nairobi
Kenya

5. Keeping Up — a book review from *BookNotes for Africa*

Oden, Thomas J.

How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007. 204 pp, hb, \$19)

Amid growing global interest in African Christianity, Oden’s latest book must surely now take centre stage. Oden sets forth the stirring thesis that the Christian thought and theology which proved formative for the development of early Christianity and Christian culture was distinctively African. The common perception is that Christianity in Africa is a relatively recent arrival from the West; Oden asserts the opposite: Christianity in Africa is ancient, and it moved south to north out of Africa. The support for this thesis is not so much an argument as it is an outline of an argument, one which he calls on African scholars to make, and to substantiate by extensive research into the early African origins of Christianity. Oden’s interests in early African Christianity emerged out of his work over much of the past fifteen years as series editor of the twenty-eight volume *Ancient Commentary on Scripture*. Oden states that he and the

other editors “were astonished to find such a large percentage of texts from Africa or influenced by African writers among the patristic comments on verse after verse of Scripture”. The title and thrust of the book reflects Oden’s sense, solidified through years of working in primary texts, of the profound extent to which writers on the African continent played a decisive role in shaping fundamental features of Christian thought and theology.

Some readers may question whether a shared geography will be a sufficient basis for African Christians to embrace as their own heritage the work of the early fathers of Northern Africa. But Oden calls on young African Christian scholars to do the hard textual, linguistic, and archaeological work necessary to recover this early witness to apostolic truth. “The rising charismatic and Pentecostal energies are stronger emotively than intellectually” and “may not sustain African Christian through the Islamic challenge”. Oden argues that the necessary resources to meet the challenge are abundantly available within early African Christianity.

It is the task of African scholars to deliver this “unreceived gift” of an early “African orthodoxy” which is both authentically African and faithful to apostolic truth. In doing so, African scholarship may also once more play a decisive role in shaping the global Christian mind. One key question, however, is whether leaders of the Church in Africa will embrace this vision, and therefore release young African scholars from the task of leading institutions in order to take up this more sweeping task?

[Review supplied by "BookNotes for Africa", a specialist journal that offers 40+ such reviews per issue on recent Africa-related publications relevant for theological educators and libraries in Africa and elsewhere. The subscription rate within Africa is US\$8 for four issues (airmail) or \$12 to overseas addresses. Send inquiries and orders to: BookNotes for Africa, PO Box 250100, Ndola, Zambia, or email Stuebing@post.harvard.edu]

"I strongly recommend BookNotes for anyone wanting to keep apprised of the African intellectual scene."

Dr Scott Moreau, Editor, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*

6. ACTEA-GATE Workshops for Theological Educators

ACTEA's partnership with Global Associates for Transformational Education (GATE) continues to move forward, offering professional development for theological educators in Africa. GATE was formed by a group of US seminary professors "to build excellence in theological education." GATE's passion is to enable theological educators in the Majority World to rethink educational goals and methods, moving from transmissional to transformative modes of ministry training.

The first ACTEA-sponsored GATE workshops, taking place in Kenya and Ethiopia at the end of March 2009, are already oversubscribed. Additional workshops for Southern and West Africa are in the planning stages for 2010. For more information, please contact Dr. Stephanie Black, ACTEA Accreditation Officer, at drstephanieblack@gmail.com.

7. Contacting ACTEA

General ACTEA correspondence can be sent to Rev. Joe Simfukwe, ACTEA Director, at actea.africa@gmail.com or PO Box 250100, Ndola, Zambia. Accredited institutions may send their annual reports to the same address or contact the Deputy Director for Administration, Dr. Rich Stuebing, through email at adm.ass.actea@gmail.com.

Enquiries regarding Affiliate or Candidate institutions can be sent to Dr. Stephanie Black, ACTEA Accreditation Officer, at drstephanieblack@gmail.com. Correspondent schools should send information to the ACTEA Administrative Assistant, Ms. Sarah Fundulu, at adm.ass.actea@gmail.com.