



Good News Theological College & Seminary

# NEWS To Our Friends

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Report on Dr. Oduro's USA Speaking Tour



Rev. Dr. Thomas Oduro  
Principal, GNTCS

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[www.globalhz.org](http://www.globalhz.org).

USA Contact:  
Rev. Lynn Hansen  
4188 Shirlee Lane N.  
Shoreview, MN 55126  
[hansen@gntcs.org](mailto:hansen@gntcs.org)



In Minnesota at First Lutheran Church in Albert Lea, Thomas spoke to three services including a childrens' sermon with Reverend Daniel Baker, a former schoolmate from Luther Seminary.

## Principal's Report, Speaking Tour of the USA (26 Sep – 19 Nov 2008)

### *Reason and Purpose*

The trip was organized by the North American Committee for the Development of Good News Theological College and Seminary (NACD-GNTCS) to afford friends, partners and supporters of the seminary the opportunity to hear the history, ministries, challenges, and needs of the seminary – all this was to excite the desire to help the seminary in many ways.

### *Meetings*

#### *In Minnesota:*

##### **North Haven, St. Paul – North Haven Baptist Church.**

I gave a presentation at a Wednesday evening Missions forum of the church. This is where Pam Jervis and Joel worship. North Haven Baptist Church has been supporting the seminary. The interaction during and after the presentation was enthusiastic.

##### **St. Paul - Luther Seminary**

I gave a presentation at a Mission Forum. It was attended by students and professors.

##### **St. Paul - Bethel University**

I gave a lecture at Prof. Herb Klem's class. *Doing missions in the 21st Century: the paradigm of AICs.*

### **Roseville - Calvary Baptist Church**

I gave a 3 minute greetings at all the three services of the church. After the three services I made a presentation. Close to 60 people attended the presentation.

### **Roseville - Anyoak Christian Fellowship**

Worshipped with this fellowship of Sudanese refugees in the Twin Cities.

### **Elk River – Central Lutheran Church.**

I gave a presentation to members of the Missions Board and other interested people. Their excitement was very warming. The church donates over \$1,000.00 every month to the seminary. After the presentation they renewed their pledge to support the seminary.

### **Albert Lea – First Lutheran Church**

Preached at all the three services of the church. In the church hall a TV monitor highlighted some history and activities of at the seminary, downloaded from the seminary's website, gntcs.org.

### **Maplewood – Maplewood Covenant Church**

Though few people attended the presentation, their interest was great. Immediately after the presentation they began asking how they can acquire computers for the seminary.

## ***In Illinois***

### **Chicago- Head office of the ELCA**

I had a meeting with Tammy Jackson, Director of International Leadership Development. I renewed friendship with some personnel I know at the Headquarters.

### **Pembroke – Pembroke Reformed Church**

I joined them to celebrate a Friday Family Fun night and gave a brief presentation.

## ***In Pennsylvania***

### **Philadelphia – City Church, (Presbyterian)**

I gave a presentation after the church service.



*Meeting with two friends at Pembroke Reformed Church*

### **State College – University Mennonite Church**

I made a presentation on an evening.

### **State College – Penn State University.**

- Gave a lecture at the class of Professor Philip Jenkins. *A brief history and contributions of AICs.*

- Had a phone conversation with Beryl Brubaker, acting Provost of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) about the possibility of affiliating the seminary with the EMU.

### **Johnstown – Allegheny Mennonite Conference**

A Presentation to the delegates at the Conference. Over 100 delegates attended the Allegheny Conference. The delegates represented Mennonite congregations from Pennsylvania, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, and Washington DC. There has never been a time when so many Mennonite leaders in America have heard the Good News Theological College and Seminary's story in America.



*Speaking at joint service in Belleville.*

### **Belleville – Joint service of Maple Wood & University Mennonite Churches**

- I gave the sermon. This was the first joint service between the two congregations. Some members of the congregations visited the seminary in May 2008. As a result, the chapel was packed, the team that visited Ghana wore GNTCS tie-dye clothing, African songs were sung, and big fellowship meal was served after the service.

- I led a Morning devotion at the Belleville Mennonite Elementary School.

## ***In New York***

### **Long Island, NYC. – Gateway World Christian Center.**

I gave a presentation to the youth of the church during a mini all-night service.

## ***In California***

### **Los Angeles – Ascension Lutheran Church.**

Preached at two services. A forum was created for me to interact with the members after the service.

### **Glendale – Southwest California ELCA Synod Office.**

Preached at a church service for the staff of the Bishop's court. After the service I was asked to meet some pastors from the ELCA and Missouri Synod who had met to deliberate on immigration issues affecting their members.

### **Los Angeles – Ghanaian Association of Southern California.**

Had a meal and conversation at Ngoma Restaurant with some members of the Ghana Association of Southern California. Some of them commented that they now understood the challenges and contributions of the AICs better. They congratulated the founders and staff of the seminary for the vision and ministry to the AICs.

### **Pasadena – Fuller Theological Seminary**

Taught at the class of Prof. Roberta King. I was asked to make a presentation about the major characteristics of worship among AICs.

### **Rancho Palos Verdes – African Descent Strategy of Southwestern California Lutheran Synod.**

I interacted with the leaders, distributed brochures of the seminary and spoke briefly about the seminary during the retreat.

### **Los Angeles – African Mennonite Mission Empowerment (AMME)**

I had a meeting with Rev. Olufemi Fatumbi and Dr. Stan Friesen about the possibility that member churches of AMME group could have a relationship with the seminary. The following day I had a meeting with the leaders of the AMME.

## ***Outcomes Concerning Personnel***

### **Faculty/Staff Development**

I had a meeting with Tammy Jackson, Director of Leadership Development of the ELCA on 16 October 2008. Topics discussed were:

- (1) Humphrey's Application to do Master of Theology in a Lutheran Seminary/University leading to a PhD in the Old Testament.
- (2) Expatriate Faculty to teach at the seminary.
- (3) Scholarship for staff taking courses in Ghana, and
- (4) Enquiry about the funding of a Sabbatical leave for a staff of GNTCS.

Rev. Millicent Yeboah-Asuamah is being considered for a Master of Arts degree program in the New Testament at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. Initial arrangements for the commencement of the programme in 2009/2010 academic year was began at the office of Marie Hayes, the International Students Coordinator of Luther Seminary.

Steve Wiebe-Johnson, the Mennonite Mission Network's African Director, has agreed to fund someone recommended by the seminary to do a Master of Divinity (MDiv) program at a Mennonite Seminary.

According to Tammy Jackson non-Faculty staff could further their education in their respective fields in either Kenya, Tanzania or South Africa. She, however, advised that we wait till the ELCA appoints a West African Director.

Expatriate Professors - A formal request for Lutheran expatriate professors and scholars/ministers has been made to the Rev. Stephen J. Nelson, Director for International Personnel, of the ELCA. He has promised to work on the request.

Pastor Rich Schoenert of Calvary Baptist Church, Roseville, Minn. has agreed to visit the seminary in 2010. He will teach and interact with students and some AIC leaders and members.

Other pastors and professors who have expressed interest are: Rev. Dr. Tyrone Partee, pastor of Olivet Lutheran Church, Hawthorne, CA. He holds a D.Min. in Pastoral Care and Counseling. Bishop Jeff Wright, Conference Minister of the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference. Prof. Philip Jenkins, Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Humanities, of the Pennsylvania State University also has expressed interest. Dr. Ralph Watkins of Fuller Theological Seminary would visit the seminary in the Summer of 2009. Drs. Stan and Delores Friesen have reiterated their desire to teach at the seminary.

## ***Outcomes Concerning Education***

### **Affiliation with a University**

Two Mennonite Universities (Bluffton and Eastern Mennonite) and Bethel University, a Baptist University were contacted for possible affiliation. Eastern Mennonite University was very optimistic that an affiliation could be possible but it would take some time; it would also be dependent on the assessment of the head of the Business Department of the University and the availability of funds to coordinate the venture. Jim Rosenberger, Chairman of the Board of Mennonite Education Unit, has requested that a formal letter be written by the seminary to him so that he could include it in the agenda for the Board's meeting with Presidents of Mennonite universities in January 2009.

Dr. Ralph Watkins, Associate Professor of Society, Religion and African Studies of Fuller Theological Seminary, has promised to link Fuller to Good News. He was excited about the programs and ministry-focus of Good News. He was of the view that Good News suits institution he has been looking for in Africa for several years. For a beginning he has promised to visit the seminary with some student of Fuller in the Summer of 2009. In an email subsequent to our meeting, he wrote: "I am amazed at how God brings people

together... We are excited about the partnership we plan to form with ... Good News." He has also promised to find some money to support the seminary. Dr. Watkins is also the Assistant Dean of African American Church Studies Programme of Fuller Seminary. A professor of Bethel University has promised to test the waters about the feasibility of an affiliation and report to me later.

### **Library**

While in St. Paul, Minn., I selected 18 boxes of books for the seminary and three boxes each for two Nigerian Bible Colleges. The books were selected from the book depot of Lutheran International Library Assistance Program (LILAP) at the premises of Luther Seminary. Shipping cost for the 24 boxes has been paid by LILAP. The books would, however, be shipped by the East-West Interknit, one of the seminary's partner institutions.

I selected a box of books from the Lutheran University Press, at Edina, Minn. East-West Interknit has promised to ship the books. I made an appeal to members of Ascension Lutheran Church in Los Angeles to consider stocking the seminary's library with books by and about African-Americans. I am happy about the African-American link to the seminary.

### **Centre for the Research of African Independent Churches.**

On 21 October 2008, Steve Wiebe-Johnson and I met with Richard Preheim, Director of the Historical Archives of the Mennonite Mission Network. Richard and Bruce Yoder have selected some documents that are being printed on CD for use at the proposed Center for the Research of AICs in Ghana. More documents would be added to the ones already selected.

### **Computers**

Thomas Lewis, the CEO of Safe Harbor Systems (SHS) is willing to ship refurbished computers with internet connections to Good News. SHS will also train someone to set up the computers at Good News. All this would cost \$5,000.00 for shipping 20 computers.

### **Infrastructure**

While making a presentation at Calvary Baptist Church on 12 October 2008 the Lord touched two people's hearts. Mr. Roger Adams decided to find some groups to fund some of the uncompleted projects while Joan Spilde, a Prospect Research and Grant Writer, decided to write a grant for all the projects and submit the grant writing to Roger. Let us pray that the Lord would continue to touch hearts for His own glory.

The University Mennonite Church and Maple Wood Mennonite have began serious talk about sponsoring the seminary as a result of the visit some members of the two churches paid to the seminary in May 2008 and my interaction with members of the two churches. I do not know what

area they want to sponsor but it could be that for a start they would commit themselves to the completion of the Erma Grove Female dormitory.

## ***Outcomes Concerning General Support***

### **African Mennonite Mission Empowerment (AMME).**

At a meeting with leaders of AMME on 18 Nov. 2008 at the worship center of All Souls Christian Center Inc. in Los Angeles, Ca., I made the following proposal to the AMME: AMME to have a working relationship with GNTCS, member churches of the AMME to affirm GNTCS as one of the training centers for their leaders and members in Africa, AMME to serve as base support and promotion of GNTCS in the west coast of the USA. GNTCS, on the other hand, would serve the AMME in the following ways: Stay in touch with the AMME., i.e. giving news and information about what is happening at GNTCS, give some discount of tuition fee to students sponsored by AMME member churches, mail copies of External Audit report to the executive members of AMME, mail copies of the Journal of AIC Theology, a journal published by the seminary when there is money, to member churches of AMME, GNTCS to act as an institutional agent for AMME congregations in Africa, GNTCS to run seminars and conferences for congregations of AMME when requested, GNTCS to cooperate with AMME in the area of Church planting and mission.

Prior to the meeting, I drafted the proposal with Dr. Stan Friesen and Rev. Olufemi Fatumbi, the Secretary of the AMME. At the leaders meeting of the AMME on 18 Nov. 2008, the proposal was adopted in principle, pending a vote on it at their next meeting in January 2008. Bishop Jeff Wright, the Conference minister [head] of the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, after hearing the proposal remarked, "This proposal is an answer to a 15 year prayer request." Leaders of the meeting further remarked that GNTCS could liaise with Heston College, a Mennonite college and open possibly open a campus in Los Angeles so that those who would study at Heston, would transfer their grades to GNTCS for further studies.

Leaders of the AMME promised to continue brainstorming about the proposal and inform the seminary soon. The excitement at the meeting was great. The AMME is a unit in the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, a conference of about 60 Mennonite congregations. Steve Wiebe-Johnson, Africa Director of the Mennonite Mission Network and Dr. Stan Friesen, one of the pioneer lecturers of the seminary conceived the necessity of the meeting between me the AMME; they further coordinated the meeting. At the meeting that approved the proposals in principle, was Dr. Friesen. He travelled for over 3 hours to draft the proposal and attend the meeting.

Other groups that are considering supporting the seminary are: University Mennonite Church, in State College, Pa., Maple Grove Mennonite Church in Belleville, Pa., and Ascension Lutheran Church, in Los Angeles, Ca.



*Connecting with people after the joint service in Belleville.*



## *Thank You*

I am grateful to God who has made all things possible and overwhelmed me with His goodness. He gave me travelling mercies; He also gave me good health. He gave me the wisdom to speak, teach, preach and answer questions. He also gave me His glory. Truly, all those who put their trust in Him shall never be disappointed (Rom. 10:11).

I thank the executive members of the North American Committee for the Development of Good News Theological College and Seminary (NACD-GNTCS) – Lynn Hansen, Herb Klem, Albert Botchway, Dale and Marilyn Hedstrand – for planning and raising funds for the trip. I also thank the regional coordinators – Annette Jones, Steve Wiebe-Johnson, Pastors David Miller, Allan Kauffman, and Albert Starr

Jr. for making the necessary contacts, leading me to the contacts, giving me some tours, and praying with me.

My special thanks go to those who shared their homes with me – Gerry & Elizabeth Gutierrez (Philadelphia, Pa.), Dale & Marilyn Hedstrand (Shoreview, Minn.), Paul & Jayne Bischoff (Wheaton, Ill.), Steve & Dorothy Wiebe-Johnson (Elkhart, Ind.), David and Mary Miller (State College, Pa.), Herb & Marlene Zook (Belleville, Pa.), and Albert & Judith Starr Jr. (Los Angeles, Ca.). I was honored by Dale and Marilyn Hedstrand when they gave me their truck to drive while in Minnesota.

Thanks to the pastors who graciously gave me their pulpits to preach in their churches. To the professors who gave me the opportunity to teach in their classes, and church leaders who allowed me to sit in their ecclesiastical meetings, I say, thank you! There are those who gave me gifts and gave money to the development of GNTCS. What a joy to receive such instant generosity! Lynn's coordination was par excellence. Everyone admired the professional quality of the brochures and the Power Point presentation.

To those who travelled long distances to meet me and those who invited me to eat with them, I clasp my hands and bow in thanksgiving. I appreciate the activities of all those who did other things without my knowledge but contributed to the success of the trip.

May God reward the tenacity of Jemima, my wife, who bore the brunt of my absence. I am thankful to the Board of Governors of GNTCS for allowing me to take the trip at the time the academic year was in session. I salute the Vice Principal and the other Faculty and staff of the seminary for steering the affairs of the seminary in my absence.

May we all continue to pray that the seeds that have been planted will bear much fruit – to the glory of the Triune God. AMEN.

Thomas Oduro



*Dr. Oduro with the executive members of the African Mennonite Mission Empowerment (AMME).*



## **Good News Theological College & Seminary**

c/o Rev. Lynn Hansen  
4188 Shirlee Lane N.  
Shoreview, MN 55126

# **Report on Dr. Thomas Oduro's Speaking Tour of the USA**

*Dr. Oduro presenting Good News Theological College & Seminary at Calvary Church in Roseville, MN.*



**“Never in the history of the seminary has the history, ministries, achievements and challenges of the seminary been publicized to so many people.”**

**~ Dr. Oduro**