



PROCMURA Newsletter

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LAMBETH PALACE | LONDON, UK



“ One of the awards I am able to grant to people who have given long and exceptionally distinguished service to the Anglican Communion is the Cross of St. Augustine.”



The Most Rev. and Rt. Honourable Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury

THE CHAIRPERSON OF PROCMURA RECEIVES A DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

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THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE *UMMAH* AS UNIVERSAL CONCEPTS THAT STAND THE RISK OF BEING MANIPULATED TO CREATE DISUNITY BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN AFRICA

It is well known that the universality of Christianity can ordinarily be seen by the fact that Christians are spread throughout the globe. On Christian solidarity in a spiritual sense, however, the universality of Christianity is seen by the Christian understanding that all Christians belong to the body of Christ – the Church. This concept means that all Christians everywhere and anywhere belong together in a mystical union that transcends political borders, colour or race. In Christ there is no east, no west, no north, no south, no white, no black etc.

It is also well known that the universality of Islam is also seen by the fact that Muslims are spread throughout the globe. The unity of Muslims, however, is seen in terms of the Islamic concept of the universal *Ummah* (Community) which Muslims everywhere and

anywhere belong. This form of unity is understood to be both temporal and spiritual and thus transcends established borders of nation-states/countries. In the *Ummah* there is no east, no west, no north, no south, no white, no black etc.

The critical question for Christians and Muslims to ask themselves is whether they are African Christians and African Muslims or Christian Africans and Muslim Africans. In other words, whether they are Christians and Muslims who happen to be Africans or they are Africans who happen to be Christians or Muslims. We need to conceptualise this even when it comes to our own countries. Taking Ghana my own country to illustrate the point that we wish to put forward, the question needs to be asked: Are we Ghanaian Christians or Christian Ghanaians? In a similar vein, are we Ghanaian Muslims or Muslim Ghanaians?

We are aware that there are deep theological considerations to take into account when we attempt to answer these questions. Barring such considerations, the question far from being theological in the context in which it is asked, is an existential one. It is existential because there is evidence to suggest that because of the concept of the body of Christ and the *Ummah* Christians and Muslims in some parts of Africa tend to be antagonistic or even fight against one another when European and or the United States of America (perceived to be Christian) are at war with a Middle Eastern country or a predominantly Muslim populated country. Such conflicts are sometimes interpreted as a war between Christendom and Islamdom or historically speaking, the caliphate.

From PROCMURA's vast experience, we can say without reservation that unless and until Christians and Muslims in Africa accept that they belong to their respective countries and that such countries belong to the continent of Africa which is their continent, they will fight proxy wars in the name of the Body of Christ and the *Ummah* and end up destroying their countries and their continent.

On the political level, politicians capitalise on these Christian and Muslim solidarities and carry out their political campaigns making some unsavoury appeals to what they call the Christian or Muslim votes. The danger in these are that in some countries some religious groups take stock of how many of their co-religionists are in parliament and even plan to increase the number of their co-religionists in parliament. Some political parties and governments are even evolving rotational systems of governance whereby when the president of a country is a Christian, the vice president must be a Muslim and vice versa. On the facial level this may seem harmless to being recommendable. Looking at it deeply, however, the situation could lead to what PROCMURA refers to as "Religious Tribalism" where people vote for one or the other candidate not because they have good policies but simply because they share a religion with that person.

As Africa struggles to work on negative tribalism/ethnicism from the religious perspective, we will need to be careful so as not to replace it with "Religious Tribalism" which in our view, will militate against the unity of nations more than negative tribalism/ethnicism has ever done and continue to do.

Rev. Dr. Johnson A. Mbillah
General Adviser

The Youth as Agents of Peace:

A conference where even adults could not restrain themselves from participating
Thiadiaye, SENEGAL | 29 April – 2 May 2013



Youth participants' group photo

The Youth Programme is one of the core PROCMURA programmes that requires special focus with well-articulated themes. It goes without saying that in any society the youth are the bedrock of tomorrow and they need to be given the chance today so that they may build on their tomorrow.

In Christian-Muslim relations, religious extremism can easily create bad neighbourliness, and lead to violent conflicts. In the world today where unemployment, desperation and hopelessness are taking a toll on the youth, manipulation is sometimes rife in society.

The youth more often than not operate on the group mind of collective action that can be destructive since they can easily be used by both political and religious leaders to cause disorder.

Operating on the principle of '*Catch them young*' PROCMURA organised a Christian and Muslim Youth Conference in Thiadiaye, Senegal.

The main objective of this conference was to consolidate the principle of peace within religions and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims which Senegal is widely regarded as one of the models of such peaceful co-existence in Africa.

The conference was in line with PROCMURA's belief that peace and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims that exist anywhere cannot be taken for granted but worked on in order that, extremist elements may not unduly infiltrate what appears to be the norm and turn the situation into turbulence.

The urgency of targeting the youth in Senegal (as shall be in other neighbouring countries) is informed by the situation in Northern Mali where an intolerant religious ideology targeting Sufism which finds its varieties in Senegal, allies itself in politics to create strife of massive proportions. The value of this conference was clearly demonstrated by the presence of Muslim leaders

of the Sufi orders of Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya Murids, the Niassènes among others, and Christian leaders from the Lutheran, Methodist, Catholic, the Protestant Church in Senegal, Presbyterian, Baptist among others who joined their youth in the conference and spoke passionately on the need to avoid religious extremism and build on the religious tolerant society that Senegal prides itself with.

In all, twelve (12) imams, sixteen (16) pastors, fifteen (15) adults of the two religions and forty eight (48) youth participated in the conference.

During the opening ceremony, two political leaders from the region of Senegal participated and recounted the situation in northern Mali and appealed to the Senegalese religious leaders and their youth to eschew intolerance and build a society worth emulating in Africa where Christians and Muslims live peaceably.



Religious leaders' group photo

The PROCMURA Francophone West Africa Regional Coordinator and Area Adviser of Senegal, Pastor Joseph Diouf and the General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, were the principal facilitators at the conference which also had various speakers on peace, tolerance, youth in nation-building and women issues. The Chairperson of PROCMURA Area Committee in Senegal Pastor Philippe Jean-Baptiste MENDY served as chair of the conference.



Rev. Dr. Mbillah(right) and Pastor Joseph Diouf (second left) with some of the participants

PROCMURA is guided by the principles of collaboration and cooperation thus: PROCMURA works with all organisations whose objectives are in whole or in part that of PROCMURA's. PROCMURA works with all but is subsumed by none. It is in the light of this principle that PROCMURA received and accepted invitations to participate in a number of conferences that had focuses similar to that of PROCMURA.

Vienna, Austria

During the opening ceremony of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Interreligious and Intercultural Centre (KAICIID) in Vienna on 26th November 2012, PROCMURA was invited to provide some input. The chairperson of PROCMURA most Rev. Dr. Josiah Idowu-Fearon and Sister Mary Goretti Kisaakye who coordinates the PROCMURA Area Committee work in Uganda participated. They both presented papers on the Best Practice on Christian-Muslim relations in Africa with a focus on what PROCMURA does.

Doha, Qatar



Participants group photo

In another development, the General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah on the recommendation of Dr. John Taylor, Member of the Advisory Board of the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID), participated in the tenth anniversary celebration of the organisation. Over 2500 participants from around the world attended the celebration with several presentations made on various topics related to interfaith dialogue and the peace of the world. Rev. Dr. Mbillah was pleased to meet other participants who were aware of PROCMURA and even had participated in its programmes saying that it was encouraging to have such an experience and to interact with so many people within and outside the margins of the great conference.

Upon his return to the office, Dr. Johnson Mbillah briefed members of staff saying that was very pleased with the opportunity to be part of the exchange and sharing in plenary, workshops, and



From left to right Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah , Most Rev. Dr. Mouneer Hanna Anis, and Sheikh Abdul Wahid Pedersen,

informal discussions. He said that apart from the new friends that he made, he also met friends of PROCMURA from the Middle East, North Africa, Sub Saharan Africa, Asia and Europe and held discussions with them in the margins of the great conference.

Some of the people he met were the Bishop of the Episcopal/Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and Horn of Africa, Most Rev. Dr. Mouneer Hanna Anis, Sheikh Abdul Wahid Pedersen, and Secretary General, Danish Muslim Aid, Dr. Aboubacar of the University of Senghor.

Addis Ababa

On May 11th 2013, the Respect Foundation which is part of the Gülen Movement, organised its 2nd Annual Dialogue Forum in the African Union with the theme “Establishing & Sustaining the Culture of Coexistence and Mutual Understanding”. The forum took place at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa.

The General Adviser of PROCMURA was invited as one of the special dignitaries to the conference and accorded the honour of presenting certificates to participants who were identified from around the world by Respect Foundation as having worked tirelessly in promoting its ideals and goals. The Chairman of Respect Foundation (Kenya) Mr. Fatih Akdogan, invited the General Adviser as a gesture of admiration of PROCMURA's commitment in promoting peace and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Africa.

PROCMURA was commended for its input in promoting interfaith relations in general and Christian-Muslim relations in particular and for its pioneering work in the field for over 50 years.



Dr. Mbillah (centre front) with other participants during the meeting

The Chairperson of PROCMURA Receives the Distinguished Service Award

Lambeth Palace | London, UK



From right to left, The Archbishop of Kaduna Province, Most Rev. Edmund Akanya, Cardinal John Onaiyekan, The Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah pose for a photo with The Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Justin Welby

The Chairperson of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), and who is also the Anglican Bishop of Kaduna Diocese of the Church of Nigeria, (Anglican Communion) Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, received a distinguished service award for his exceptional and extensive work in Christian-Muslim relations and dialogue within and outside the Worldwide Anglican Communion and his invaluable contribution to promoting peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Africa in general and the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

Announcing the award, the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev. and Rt. Honourable Justin Welby said: "One of the awards I am able to grant to people who have given long and exceptionally distinguished service to the Anglican Communion is the Cross of St. Augustine."

The Cross of St Augustine is an award of merit in the gift of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is awarded to members of the Anglican Communion who have made significant contributions to the life of the world-wide Communion, or to a particular autonomous Church within Anglicanism. It is also awarded to members of other traditions who have made a conspicuous contribution to ecumenism. It is the second highest international award for service within Anglicanism. The Archbishop described Bishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon as a tireless servant of the Lord who has displayed courage and vision in often the most difficult of circumstances.

The Award report is available on <http://www.procmura-prica.org/files/Chairmans-Award-2013.pdf>

CAMEROON:

Cameroon is Back in PROCMURA's Fold

Kribi | 13-17 May 2013



Participants group photo

The Republic of Cameroon which was one of the pioneer countries to adopt the PROCMURA model of Christian Faithful Witness in an Interfaith Environment of Christians and Muslims that Respects the Spirit of Good Neighbourliness and Christian Constructive Engagement with Muslims for Peace and Peaceful Coexistence relapsed to near oblivion as far as the work of PROCMURA is concerned.

Those who are conversant with the history of PROCMURA will be well aware that Pierre Benignus one of the fore fathers of PROCMURA died in the Cameroon Mountains following the plane crash in 1963 while on PROCMURA's duty.

Moreover, the 5th General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Johannes Haafkens begun his work with PROCMURA in the 1970s in Cameroon and after serving as a General Adviser until 1996 he returned to Cameroon to lecture in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at the Protestant University in Yaoundé.

Also, the 6th General Adviser of PROCMURA, Dr. Stuart E. Brown, upon leaving office also worked for some time in northern Cameroon.

For unforeseen circumstances, the efforts of the two General Advisers did not hold ground after their departure.

Through a concerted effort by the President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren in Cameroon, who is also President of the Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon, Rev. Robert Goyek, the PROCMURA Central Office with its Partners ICCO & Kerk in Actie, Mission 21, Mission Afrika among others, a landmark conference for Protestant Church Leaders of Cameroon was held in the coastal town of Kribi, South of Cameroon from 13th to 17th May 2013. The principal objective of the conference was to reinitiate PROCMURA's work in Cameroon and to get a formidable Area Committee formed to steer up the affairs of PROCMURA.

At the close of the conference, the forty-three (43) church leaders from different denominations elected a seven (7) member PROCMURA Area Committee with Rev. Robert Goyek who is well versed with PROCMURA activities as its chairperson. PROCMURA is optimistic to see a rebirth of its activities and determined to ensure that it does not enter into oblivion as it happened in the past.

The General Adviser with the support of the PROCMURA Programme Assistant, Ms. Florence Iminza facilitated the conference. Ms. Iminza, took the opportunity to hold informal discussions with women participants in regard with PROCMURA's focus on Women in Christian-Muslim relations.

PROCMURA Accompanies the AACC at its Jubilee General Assembly

Kampala, Uganda | 26 May - 9 June 2013



Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah making a presentation during the AACC Jubilee Assembly

Just like governments, the Church in Africa faces several challenges that require visionary leadership with focused objectives to attend to such challenges. It is in line with this that PROCMURA in its twin relationship with the AACC was given the opportunity to make an input at the AACC Jubilee Assembly whose theme was: “God of Life, Lead Africa to Peace, Justice and Dignity”.

PROCMURA's vision statement of a “Continent where Christians and Muslims constructively work together for peace and peaceful co-existence towards the holistic development of the human family and the environment endeared it to make a contribution based on the Jubilee Assembly theme.

On account of this, PROCMURA and many members of its Area Committees who were present at the invitation of the AACC as leaders of churches had a strong presence of five (5) members of staff led by the General Adviser with different but overlapping roles aimed at enriching the Jubilee Assembly and appropriating the agenda of PROCMURA.

The General Adviser facilitated two workshops at the main assembly grounds at the Munyonyo Commonwealth, Speke Resort in Kampala, Uganda. The theme of both workshops was: ***Peaceful Co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Africa and Beyond.*** The objective of these workshops was to drum down the message that Peace, Justice and Dignity cannot be obtained if Christians and Muslims in Africa (and by extension the world) do not work together to eschew religious extremism and be proactive in promoting peace and peaceful co-existence towards the spiritual, moral, physical and economic development of the peoples of the continent.

Apart from facilitating the two workshops, the General Adviser and the PROCMURA Area Adviser for Ghana, Rev. Dr. Nathan Samwini who was invited as a member of the AACC Theology and Interfaith Advisory Committee, served as resource persons at the AACC International Theological Institute (26th May - 9th June). The Theological Institute brought together ninety five (95) ecumenical students from all over Africa, and some parts of Europe, at the St. Mary's Ggabba National Catholic Seminary to look at contemporary theological issues in Africa. The PROCMURA Programme Assistant, Ms. Florence Iminza participated at the seminar.

Two members of staff from the Central Office in the names of Ms. Dinah Mombo and Paul Mwalavu were at the PROCMURA stand which was provided for exhibiting its publications as well as providing information on its mission and vision, organisational structure, its presence and its work within its constituencies in Africa.

In the margins of the proceedings of the week-long Assembly, the General Adviser and the Team Leader, Finance and Administration held several informal discussions with Partners and members from its constituencies in Africa.

The presence of the PROCMURA team and their input in the Assembly received commendation in terms of the work and importance of the organisation. This was evidenced by the addresses of the General Secretary of the AACC Rev. Dr. André Karamaga, and the President of the AACC Archbishop Valentine Mokiwa.

In his address to the General Assembly, the General Secretary talked about the AACC sister organisation “PROCMURA” that is deeply involved in working for constructive relations between Christians and Muslims in the continent and how that is contributing immensely to bring peace between Christians and Muslims particularly in Nigeria and acknowledged as such by the political leadership of that country. On his part, the President of the AACC lamented on growing tensions between Christians and Muslims in some parts of the continent and called for concerted efforts to attend to the situation.

The Archbishop praised PROCMURA's commitment to this cause and called on the church in Africa to take the issue of Christian-Muslim relations seriously.





KENYA:

Christian Women Leaders to Turn Walls of Separation into Tables of Constructive Relationships

Limuru | 24-27 June 2013

Women participants during one of the meeting sessions

Just in six months after her appointment as the Programme Assistant in charge of Literature & Communication and Women Issues in Christian-Muslim relations, Ms. Florence Iminza was ushered into her niche by taking charge of a national conference for thirty three (33) Christian women leaders from nine (9) counties in Kenya, which was held at the Jumua Conference and Country Home, Limuru, from 24th to 27th June 2013.

Women leaders came from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, The Anglican Church of Kenya, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya, the African Brotherhood Church, the Salvation Army, United Society of Friends Women (USFW), and the Methodist Church of Kenya.

The counties represented include; Machakos, Garissa, Kilifi, Kitui, Nairobi, Kisumu, Kakamega, Vihiga and Mombasa. The Conference theme was Understanding Our Muslim Neighbours for Constructive Relationships.



Ms. Florence Iminza making a presentation

For the first time, women found themselves sitting in a very unique forum as Church leaders from different denominations and also from different regions in the country that are predominantly Christian or Muslim. The experience was new and exhilarating.

For some, they were amazed that there is so much to learn about women issues in Christian-Muslim relations as gathered by PROCMURA for many years which appeared to be similar or different. Contrary to the perceptions of many present, they learnt that it is possible to access and read the Holy Qur'ān which is "literally" inaccessible to them in their life and ministry.

To buttress this need they requested PROCMURA to arrange for them to access the Holy Qur'ān so as to enhance their understanding of their Muslim counterparts.

The mode of presentations ranged from lectures to sharing of real life experiences with Muslim neighbours. During the discussions, issues of common concern among them were voiced notably the way women bring up children and engraving a belief system that leads to a radical transformation on the views of their Muslim neighbours. The pertinent question was, 'if Islam and Christianity are religions of peace, why would relations between Christians and Muslims in Kenya and by extension Africa today be jeopardised?

The PROCMURA's principle of Christian witness that respects the spirit of good neighbourliness and the call to faithful and responsible Christian witness sufficed. The need to maintain the Gospel's integrity as well as its truth that has been able to withstand the test of time and human history was also emphasised.

The general mood that prevailed was an urge and courage to go out and rebuild broken bridges with, "our Muslim sisters in the simplest manner possible, thus, beginning from the now known to the unknown, as exemplified by one of the lecture byte prepared and presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor St. Paul's University, Prof. Esther Mombo, 'an invitation to talk over a cup of Kenyan tea or a plate of 'pilau' over issues that concern us as women in the community".

After the conference, Christian women leaders committed themselves to head up for the task in their own regions in the very subtle ways possible in the hope and prayer of turning walls of separation into tables of constructive relationships.

A detailed report on the conference will be available on our website <http://www.procmura-prica.org>



PROCMURA Team Leader, Finance and Administration, Ms. Joy Wandabwa making a presentation



Finishing in progress



Office space

THE COMPLETION OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROCMURA NEW OFFICE COMPLEX:

....WE ARE ALMOST THERE | NAIROBI, KENYA

The construction of a three-storey PROCMURA office complex, two of which shall be rented out is very near to completion. The contractor has confirmed that the offices will be handed over to us on 30th September.

We are indeed very grateful to God who gave us the insight and courage to embark on this journey towards financial sustainability and to our constituencies and Partners who did all that they could to support this venture.

Looking for Office Space?

We would like to encourage sister organisations who would want to share the building with us by

renting either the first or second floors, to contact PROCMURA the Team Leader - Finance and Administration Ms. Joy Wandabwa. We will gladly welcome you if you are able to meet the professional assessment of the cost of each rentable floor. It is important to say that there is already a growing queue of prospective tenants.

Also important to note is that we have not committed to renting to any of them yet and shall begin to do so as soon as possible but not later than 30th September 2013. We will do so with the understanding that tenants will move in as soon as convenient.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania:

Consultations with Christian and Muslim Leaders and organisations on Christian-Muslim relations in the country.

13-16 July, 2013

Bangui, The Central African Republic:

Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders Consultation and Conference on Conflict Prevention, Peace and Reconciliation for Development.

25-26 July 2013.

Kumasi, Ghana:

West Africa Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI) Conference.

5-9 August 2013

Douala, Cameroon:

Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders Conference on Peace and Development.

12-16 August 2013

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia:

The General Adviser to participate in the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) Regional Conference on "The Image of the Other"; Interreligious and Intercultural Education - Best Practice in Africa

25-26 August 2013.

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