

**Glasgow Churches Together
Annual General Meeting on
25th October, 2010**

**Racial Justice and Minority
Ethnic Churches Together in
Scotland (MECTIS)**

REV FRANCIS ALAO

I am grateful for this opportunity to address this group on Racial Justice work in Scotland especially the formation of Minority Ethnic Christians Together in Scotland. There is a dilemma facing racial justice work in Scotland as it is. The dilemma is the task of identifying the difference or point of intersection between equality strands and social inclusion in a broader context. The wider society has unfortunately and erroneously limited social justice to a clamour for enforcement of equality strands, at least as obvious from the campaign. The Church community however, is struggling with a feeling that this is right but it could be more than that.

A research carried out recently on the topic 'Non Western Christians in Scotland: Mission in reverse' revealed the following submissions;

According to Keneth Ross, In 2005, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland received for the first time a report which assessed the impact of this development on church life in Scotland.

It also raises question on what effect this development is having on the life of the church and on the profile of Christianity in Scotland.

It is clear that through the immigration of non-Westerners, Christianity in Scotland is finding new forms of expression. What will be the chemistry between the old and the new? Will they react against each other and go their separate ways? Will well-established Churches give the cold shoulder to new groups whose spirituality seems strange? Will newcomers shun the older churches, writing them off as dull or dead? Or will they find fruitful forms of interaction? Will Christianity be found fragmented into groups united by their ethnicity, including groups of ethnic Scots? Or will ways be found to show that the faith which unites is stronger than any identity which divides?

Although the research added that these are questions to be answered in the next generation but we felt that next generation is just too far away to wait before proffering solution to these questions. Especially as the Christian faith is at the danger of becoming extinct or at least becoming a minority faith in its own land of origin.

In recent years there have been understandable concern on the issue of migration as it affects Europe. Scotland as a nation, being located somewhat remotely on Europe's north-western seaboard, Scotland has rarely been a first port of call for non-Western immigrants to Europe. Nonetheless such immigration is clearly increasing and Scottish society is consciously taking on a much more multi-ethnic character as a result.

Though the Church, like the nation, of Scotland has a strong history of international involvement, its home base has remained strongly ethnic Scottish in character.

Will this change as the proportion of the population of non-Western origin increases, including in its ranks a significant number of professing Christians?

The findings of the report are that non-Western Christians are coming to Scotland and contributing to Christian mission through a number of channels.

Some of these Christians especially those who have been ordained ministers or have been involved in mission work elsewhere do not hide the fact that they see Scotland as a mission field that need to be recultivated.

After the celebration of bicentenary anniversary of the abolition of slave trade in 2007, it was observed that it would be a good idea if ethnic minority Churches who hitherto had been operating as splinter groups could come together on a united platform. A few African and Asian ministers who have been meeting under the auspices of The united Pastors Forum came together to form Minority Ethnic Christians Together in Scotland.

The general purpose of MECTIS is to enable and support minority ethnic Christians in Scotland in their partnership and work with other local and national organizations.

- to grow together in faith
- to work in partnership with established mainline churches

- to represent the voice of Minority Ethnic Churches to authorities as necessary and
- to challenge exclusion and racism.

MECTIS was registered as a limited company in 2008 and since over fifty emerging churches have been registered as members with a sizable membership of individual minority ethnic families who are members of mainline churches.

MECTIS has enjoyed an appreciable support and friendship from ACTS which was cemented through a joint service between the two groups to mark Racial Justice Sunday 2010. This was also made colorful with the official launch of MECTIS in same event.

With the support of ACTS and Scottish Churches Racial Justice Group, the new Scottish Churches Racial Justice Officer, Rev Francis Alao took considered it expedient to inject more oxygen into an existing body like MECTIS. This he hoped would serve as a platform to enhance partnership and good ecumenical relations between the established mainline Scottish Churches and emerging ones, particularly those led by folks that have come to settle in Scotland. This was put in perspective with a three year plan aimed to develop and empower MECTIS to greater heights , and this among other things, hopefully will be funded by CTBI Racial Justice fund .

Future

MECTIS is expected to be given an adequate publicity that it deserves.

To develop the group to have ecumenical capacity

To enable member churches and groups to work together on matters of shared interest.

To provide a good platform for the Emerging Churches & other ethnic minority Christian groups to have a common and united front

To partner with the traditional and established churches in Scotland especially ACTS member Churches.

To address problem of poverty and social exclusion amongst the ethnic minority communities in Scotland, both in the urban and rural areas

To join force with the Scottish Church community to ensure justice and fair play both within the church and Scottish wider society

Anticipated Deliverables in the next couple of years

To launch local MECTIS in all the major cities in Scotland

Also to empower these local groups to reach out to various ethnic minority communities and families in rural areas of Scotland so as to support them in whatever way that could make their stay in Scotland worthwhile.

To organize seminars, workshops and other enlightenment programmes for empowerment and capacity building.

To provide a resource base for the Minority Ethnic Churches and Christians.

Mectis Office Bearers

Chairperson Rev Lukas Njenga

Vice Chairperson (1) Sheem Gill

Vice Chairperson (2) Pastor Terzgwe Abu

Secretary Dr Nelu Balaj

Treasurer Eileen Baxendale

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