

Meeting Critical Needs on the African Continent

AFRICA UNIVERSITY

Rukudzo Murapa

As The United Methodist Church plans for General Conference, it should be proud of what it has accomplished in Zimbabwe. Africa needs Africa University today more than ever!

— **Aubrey K. Lucas**, president emeritus of the University of Southern Mississippi and member of the Africa University Board of Directors.



It is now a little over 11 years since Africa University first opened its doors to its first group of 40 students representing six different African nationalities. That historic event marked the realization of a dream which has ushered in a new world of hope for the young women and men of the African continent and, indeed, for the growth and future of The United Methodist Church on that vast continent. Africa University has witnessed more than 1,000 of its students graduate and assume positions of influence in their respective countries on the continent. Some of them have proceeded to pursue graduate studies in many universities, both on the African continent and overseas.

Today, Africa University has a student population of over 1,200 drawn from 22 African nationalities enrolled in five fully operational faculties (colleges). About 49 percent of the student population are female. There is also a deliberate policy to recruit academic and senior administrative staff from throughout Africa. Indeed, it is this cultural and demographic diversity that gives Africa University its unique character, making it the envy of many institutions of higher learning in Africa.

In addition to the two pioneer faculties of theology and agriculture and natural resources, there are the faculties of education, management and administration, and humanities and social sciences. In 2002, the AU Board of Directors approved the establishment of a sixth faculty, health sciences, which began offering courses in nursing education and public health in January of this year.

Outside the traditional faculties, the university has established an Institute of Peace, Leadership, and Governance (IPLG), which offers graduate (post-graduate) degrees and diplomas in the areas of peace, conflict-resolution, conflict transformation and conflict management, mediation, leadership, and governance.

The AU Outreach Office also mounts a series of activities for the community beyond the university. For Africa University, that "community" reaches beyond the university's

immediate environment in Zimbabwe to cover the continent as a whole. A key component of the Outreach Office is the Emergency and Disaster Response Management Program. This program aims at capacity building and training for persons working in disaster/conflict situations throughout the continent. Participants come from various African countries for training activities lasting between two and six weeks. Africa University runs the program with financial and technical support from Action by

Churches Together (ACT) and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Over the past five years, the Outreach Office has trained more than 300 participants in the Emergency and Disaster Response Management Program from 35 different countries. The program is deemed so important that we now have a number of participants coming from outside Africa, including such countries as New Guinea, Indonesia, Fiji, India, and Sri Lanka.

In addition to the community-oriented activities run by the Outreach Office, each Faculty runs its own outreach activities, some of which are intended to be income generating. For example, the faculty of education runs a project aimed at upgrading the skills of schoolteachers, members of school advisory committees (parents), and government staff working with schools. Known as the Educational Leadership Management and Development Program, it is run in collaboration with the University of Fort Hare in South Africa and is funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

The faculty of agriculture and natural resources runs a number of activities in its Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) aimed at upgrading the knowledge and skills of small-scale farmers as well as facilitating the ability of such farmers to secure financial and technical support from financial institutions. The faculty of management and administration runs a project carried out in conjunction with Kalamazoo College (Michigan) that trains prospective entrepreneurs in starting their own businesses.

For its operations, the Africa University relies on apportioned funding from the church. In principal, this amounts to \$10 million per quadrennium, or \$2.5 million per year. In reality, however, the university realizes about \$1.8 million per year.

Student tuition fees are another important source of income for the university. However, due to the poor economic conditions prevailing in most African countries, tuition fees are generally set at fairly low levels. In fact, a large number of the students depend on scholarships drawn from the University's Endowment Fund, as well as direct or designated scholarships.

AU has benefited a great deal from financial support for specific activities from philanthropic foundations, including

Rockefeller, Ford, and W.K. Kellogg as well as from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Commonwealth Secretariat, and bilateral agencies.

For capital development (residence halls and other campus buildings), the university has relied on local churches and annual conferences of the UMC and individual benefactors and families. In addition, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, has been an invaluable source of funding for the construction of major buildings on campus.

Africa University has many international friends. In the past, the German Foundation funded construction of a building. The Korean Methodist Church contributed \$1 million (U.S.) for the university chapel.

The university is profoundly grateful for the support it has received from these various sources and prays that partnerships will continue to grow. In particular, we appeal to individual churches, districts, annual conferences, and jurisdictions to consider providing support for the construction of student dormitories. Currently three (and at times four) students are living in rooms built for two students.

As you can see, the needs of the university continue to grow and so does the need for continued financial, material, and moral support from the church. Statistics show that the church is growing faster in Africa than in any other part of the world. The thirst for education among young African women and men is as strong as is the need for developing new leaders for the African continent. The church also requires a new and more enlightened leadership if it is going to continue to flourish.

These and other compelling reasons, make it absolutely necessary for The

United Methodist Church to re-double its efforts to realize the apportionment targets set by the General Conference for Africa University. Our appeal is for

the UMC, in keeping with its John Wesley tradition of "giving all you can" to education, to honor the apportionment commitment so that Africa University can meet its obligations. Specifically, we appeal to the delegates to the 2004 General Conference to support two major items related to Africa University:

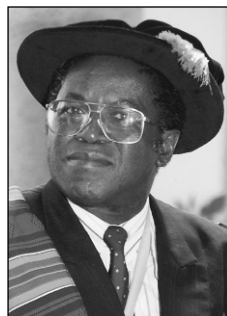
100 percent remittance of the \$10 million apportionment

100 percent remittance of the \$10 million World Service Special

Consider this: Reaching 100 percent of the \$10 million apportionment for Africa University would mean only 29 cents per member per year.

Our appeal is, therefore, not for additional funds, but simply for the

church in the new quadrennium to reach 100 percent apportionment receipts. Africa University is meeting the critical needs on the African continent. Africa—and the world—needs Africa University today more than ever. □

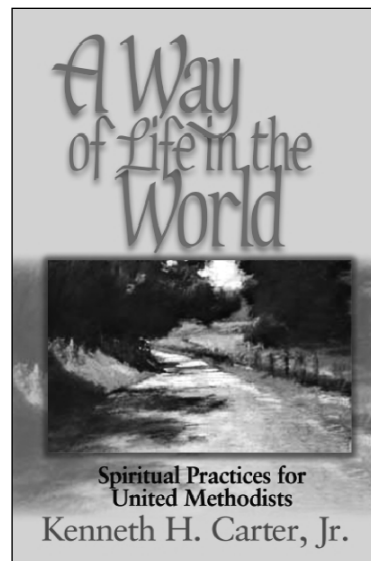


Professor Rukudzo Murapa is vice chancellor of Africa University in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe.

To Learn More

Go to www.africau.edu or email audevoffice@gbhem.org

What Does It Mean to Be a United Methodist?



Kenneth H. Carter, Jr. believes that to be a United Methodist is to live a particular way of life and follow a particular form of discipleship. In *A Way of Life in the World: Spiritual Practices of United Methodists*, he identifies six essential practices in the United Methodist tradition: searching the Scriptures, generosity with the poor, testimony, singing, Holy Communion, and Christian conferencing. This book provides not only an understanding of what the central United Methodist practices are, but also how they can be taught.

ID3-0687022460. Paper, \$13.00

Published by



Abingdon Press



Cokesbury

Shop by phone, in-store, or online

Cokesbury.com | 1.800.672.1789

CIRN068801 PACP00209695-01