

The African Christian Pulse

February 2008

Issue No: 2



The AACC General Secretary Bishop Dr. Mvume Dandala (standing) addressing the chairman of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Committee, Dr. Kofi Annan at the Serena Hotel, which is the venue for the mediation.

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AACC General Secretary Dispels Rumours of World Body Leadership Takeover

Bishop Mvume Dandala, current General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), has quashed rumours that he is a likely candidate to take over the leadership of the World Council of Churches (WCC) when the current General Secretary, Rev Dr Sam Kobia's term comes to an end later this year.

Responding to a journalist from one of the daily newspapers in Kenya, Bishop Dandala said he was shocked and surprised to learn that Rev Dr Sam Kobia had announced that he would not be available for another term in office.

"Together with others we have pleaded with him to continue in this work, but, as he believes that this is an intensely personal decision, he is asking us all to allow him to make up his mind," Bishop Dandala said.

Speaking to press on 21st February at the AACC headquarters, Bishop Dandala stated categorically that he had never considered taking up the leadership of WCC and that newspaper reports to this effect had come as a total surprise to him. He added that he had also not been approached regarding the position.

A request for him to take up the position would greatly derail his plans and would require him to weigh carefully the priorities of the church in Africa. He said his commitment at this point in time was to the church in Africa, and his plans were to continue serving the continent even when his time at the AACC comes to an end.

Bishop Dandala went on to say that he would have difficulty taking on such a role given that Dr Kobia was in that position supported by the African church as well as churches elsewhere. He said Africa should reflect carefully on and



AACC General Secretary, Bishop Mvume Dandala

understand the implications of Dr Kobia's resignation.

"As far as the AACC is concerned and as far as I personally am concerned, Dr Kobia should have taken a second term," said Bishop Dandala and added that the church in Africa had never shown any signs of unhappiness with Dr Kobia's leadership. "Indeed, we have been proud of and supportive of his leadership. We also believe that he brought a new dimension to the ecumenical movement by dedicating much-needed time to visit countries and people that are experiencing difficult times," .

Bishop Dandala defended Rev Dr Kobia on the issue of his doctorate, alleged to have been awarded to him by a non-accredited university. He questioned how Rev Kobia would have known that the university where he pursued his second doctorate was not recognised. Bishop Dandala said there was nothing that, "in our judgement, would undermine the integrity of Rev Dr. Kobia."

On his vision for the church in Africa, Bishop Dandala said he wished to see it become directly involved in

the desperate current issues in the continent

"Here at the AACC we have prioritised helping the churches in Africa to be effective advocates for the weak and the poor. We have also been very committed to the idea of the church playing a role in the empowerment of our people," Bishop Dandala said.

He pointed out that the church was playing a highly significant role in regard to issues of health and education in many countries in Africa the service structures of which would have otherwise collapsed. Assisting churches to be strong in such ministries had therefore become AACC's priority.

Also as an ecumenical body in Africa, Bishop Dandala said the issue of church unity and getting the church to work together as one body and cooperate, was another AACC priority.

He further underscored the critical role the church in Africa was playing regarding global issues. As the conscience of the people, he said that the church in Africa ought to fulfil its responsibility on how the global community deals with the weak and poor; those advanced in technology and those who are not. He added that the church had an obligation to remind the world of some values in the continent that have been forgotten by those who do not live there. Such values include neighbourliness and sharing, which are "uniquely held in Africa." Bishop Dandala said that the ideology of an economic market is a major threat to the spirit of sharing and neighbourliness, hence the African church must speak with power to the rest of the world on such issues.

The AACC General Secretary also took issue with the huge profit the developed world reaps from Africa,

saying that the grants the continent receives from the developed world do not compare with the profits they reap from Africa. He said this was a contradiction by those shouting about the poverty of Africa, as they take a large profit and complain about Africa. In this respect, observed Bishop Dandala, the onus continues to be on the churches of Africa to speak the truth to the churches and countries of the world.

Meanwhile, questions about Rev Dr Kobia's resignation are coming at a time when a senior German bishop, Martin Hein of Kassel, has been critical of his general performance during his term at the WCC to a German Protestant news service - EPD. Hein said that WCC decisions had been taken without broad discussion, and that the General Secretary was often on the road. His criticism has been seen, in some quarters, as critical since

German churches provide close to one third of the budget of the WCC.

The WCC brings together about 350 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches, which constitute 560 million Christians in some 110 countries. In the history of WCC, no General Secretary has served just one five-year term and Rev Dr Kobia, a Methodist from Kenya will be making history. ♦

The Crucial Role of the AACC in Africa

"The challenges of Africa call for deeper and more empathetic research approaches," this was said by the General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Bishop Dr Mvume Dandala. He added that the local church is pivotal in the process.

Bishop Dandala expressed these sentiments in his opening address at a two-day consultation with AACC partners whose objective was to review the activities of the AACC in the last two years and its projection for the year 2008. The meeting took place between 19th February at the organisation's headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

Underscoring the AACC's role in the dispensation, Bishop Dandala said no success had been achieved in overcoming Africa's challenges, hence the need for a dedicated approach to equip the church in Kenya to realise the goal. He said AACC's role was to provide and nurture the space for churches to walk together in faith and with their ecumenical family in order to reach out for new mission frontiers and to renew the continent with gospel-based values.

Bishop Dandala was quick to point out that AACC was not competing

with other ecumenical movements within the areas of its operation, but rather promoting strategic ecumenical alliances that contribute to the actualisation of a coherent ecumenical movement.

partners' consultation about AACC, they had concluded that AACC was a terminal case and doubted whether it could actually be the focal point of the ecumenical voice in Africa. This, he said had changed as they had come today to Nairobi with a feeling of coming home and are proud of the new developments.

The AACC head said the process of reinventing the church and the ecumenical movement in Africa had already begun in anticipation of the forthcoming General Assembly, and that AACC is mobilising churches to discern, interpret and respond to the challenges facing the people of the continent, especially with regard to human dignity. Bishop Dandala said that it has to live



Bishop Dandala with Mr. Martin Bloecher

"We have engaged initiatives that seek to mobilise the churches for common action and cooperation, as well as nurture ecumenical solidarity with the weak and the suffering in Africa," Rev Dandala said.

Earlier in the chapel, Mr. Martin Bloecher, a partner from EMW in Germany, praised the AACC for the achievements it had made in the last two years and said that the last time partners were in Nairobi, there was apprehension. In their own

out its vision to explore and nurture a common understanding of faith and act prophetically in word, life and service for the healing of the continent.

He reiterated that the AACC was committed to operating with honesty, integrity and in a spirit of love, and that its programmatic life was structured around restoring, healing and rebuilding the continent. The AACC therefore seeks to identify the immediate challenges facing Africa that call

for a common witness of the church.

He said Africa was on the verge of a major ecumenical paradigm shift and that the 9th Assembly will be the watershed moment of this shift. He asserted that the church has to be the spring of hope to every community in the continent; hence it has to gain a new perception of the reality of poverty and marginalisation and should not give up hope just like Jesus did even when tested to the limit on the cross.

Bishop Dandala maintained that the church in Africa must be encouraged to realise its responsibility to promote the economic wellbeing of the poor and oppressed from the vantage

point of how they perceive their own situation, their response to it and their relationship with God in Christ Jesus.

Africa's hope, Dandala said, is not and cannot be based on the fickle and fragile political life of institutions, but rather on the faith and strength of the African people. The Bishop challenged the church to keep hope alive, even when the continent is still languishing in a state of impoverishment.

He noted that Africa has contributed significantly to the global economy not only by virtue of abundant natural resources but also through human capital, and therefore it should be assisted in appreciation of this contribution, to come out of its myriad problems

. "We have chosen to invest in hope for Africa because her contribution to the well-being of the world greatly exceeds her own needs," he remarked.

Bishop Dandala paid glowing tribute to the partners for their support, both financially and morally. He said the partners together with the churches in Africa and the global ecumenical movement had shown amazing solidarity with the AACC, especially during difficult times. To the partners in particular, Dandala said that the AACC could not have made it without their support. He thanked the partners for sharing their resources with the AACC, which was an indication that "we are inescapably part of each other." ♦

Women Bare the Brunt in Post Election Violence

Women and children living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps have borne the greatest brunt of post election violence in Kenya. This point was made and confirmed during a meeting organised between the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Living Letters team.

An international ecumenical delegation, Living Letters was sent by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to pay a solidarity visit to the Kenyan churches and share in their pain during the time of political chaos. The meeting, which was attended by Norwegian and Fin ambassadors, took place on 2nd February at the AACC Archbishop Desmond Tutu Ecumenical Centre Guest House.

Many of the participants at the meeting, drawn from different denominations, professional and political backgrounds, had been to various camps to see firsthand what their fellow sisters were going through. Many of the women they encountered had been so traumatised by violence that they could not even talk.

Expectant women, some as young as 17 years, faced life-threatening challenges in the camps due to lack of health care facilities and poor hygienic conditions. Some delivered prematurely due to the extreme anxiety of prevailing circumstances. These women have not been able to access reproductive health care services, further complicating their case.

Lactating mothers, the YWCA-K women participants said, were particularly vulnerable. They faced the danger of losing their babies to ailments because they were not able to produce enough milk to feed them and were unable to get to a clinic for treatment. An appeal was made for women's special needs, which included sanitary towels.



Mrs. Phoebe Asiyo (standing) addressing members of the YWCA-K

They were also unable to access maternal health care further placing their lives at constant risk.

It was also reported that women were being harassed by men they live with in the camps, with some even snatching food from them

and coercing them to have sex in exchange for some favour.

While IDP camps in Nairobi and its environs reported enough food, in Nyanza province the story was different. Water and food supply was in acute shortage. In many camps threats of waterborne diseases were looming.

A number of children in the camps had been separated from their parents, most of whom having been killed in the violence, while some parents were unaware of the whereabouts of their children.

Sharing concern for their women colleagues, the participants said most women in the camp, some of whom were migrant workers, had expressed the desire to be evacuated and repatriated to their ancestral home to begin new life.

Commenting on the violence that rocked the country because of the disputed election results, the women said it was shameful that some people took advantage of the unemployed youth and financed them to cause mayhem. The women pleaded for restraint and asked communities not to take revenge as this would only aggravate the already serious situation. They noted that a number of youth wanted the violent status quo to remain as it provided them with employment. Acknowledging that there was a lot of bitterness in the country, the YWCA women expressed a message of forgiveness. They asked mothers to tell their children not to seek revenge.

As women, they said, they had a stake in restoring normalcy. A former member of parliament, Mrs Phoebe Asiyo, lamented the unfortunate situation in Kenya. She said no one expected the situation to erupt to the proportion that it had. Lending their support to the ongoing mediation led by former UN General Secretary Dr Kofi Annan,



YWCA-K praying for peace in Kenya at their meeting with members of the Living Letters

the women felt they had been sidelined yet their voice is very crucial in peace building. They also took issue with the church, saying its credibility was at stake since many church leaders took sides in the political situation in the country.

The women took issue with tribalism and wondered how they would manage to win the confidence and trust of each other since there was so much hatred between communities. They recommended that the use of Kiswahili be promoted over the use of ethnic languages.

Rev Phyllis Byrd of the Presbyterian Church noted that even the establishment of churches in Kenya by the missionaries was ethnic based. She said the church should be an all-inclusive institution and not based on ethnicity. She used as examples churches like Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and Assemblies of God in Kenya all of which are ethnic based. PCEA and Assemblies of God are dominated by the Kikuyu tribe, Methodist by the Meru, SDA by the Kisii and few Luos bordering them, while Friends Quakers and Salvation Army are dominated by the Luhya community. ♦

Youth Challenged to Seek African Consciousness

Young people have been challenged to find the spirituality of self-consciousness that will enable them not only to liberate themselves, but also their own communities.

The challenge was given by the AACC general Secretary, Rev Dr Mvume Dandala in a speech he gave at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), General Secretaries' meeting in Nairobi on 25th February 2008.

Referring to the experiences in his own country, South Africa during the struggle against apartheid, Rev Dandala said that it is when Africans find the spirituality of self-consciousness that they will be freed from any sense of accountability to the 'big brother syndrome'. Black consciousness will free Africans to fashion values that emanate from their own sense of history and destiny as a people.

"Black consciousness provides us with a spirituality that enables us to be explorers of our life and heritage," Rev Dandala said.

He lamented that the spirituality brought by the missionaries does not fit in the African culture

because it advocated for individualistic lifestyles at the expense of one's original traditional community whereby a new Christian convert was to substitute his community with the missionary community. Rev Dandala said that while the colonial agenda managed to transform and empower Africans through education and new faith, it alienated them from their intrinsic communities, integrating them into an alternative but alien community, although never being fully accepted as equals by the colonizers.

This, Rev Dandala said, has seen the entire African continent suffer from an inferiority complex and a lack of self-confidence. The continent should therefore be allowed to define and articulate its own collective self-understanding.

Rev Dandala said black people everywhere must come together and ask themselves questions such as 'who am I as a black person before God and people? Besides what the developed world says about us, who do we say we are as African? Who have we, over the centuries, understood ourselves to be?'

He challenged Africans to tell their story of courage and heroism in impossible situations and not end there, but to embrace black consciousness that frees us from a big brother syndrome to which we are supposed to always be accountable. It allows Africans to fashion values that emanate from their own sense of history and destiny - the Church has to lead the continent on this journey. ♦

AACC Gears for Future Self Reliance

It was a joyful moment as the AACC staff and other invited guests gathered at the AACC Ngong Road property on the 4th of February 2008 to witness the ground-breaking ceremony to

commission the construction of the Ngong View Apartments. All gathered to worship and thank God for His faithfulness towards the AACC.

The occasion was graced by Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi as the guest of honour, and AACC founder member Rev Dr John Gatu, various consultants for the project, the contractor, AACC legal advisor and the AACC staff.

Rev Kayigamba led the congregation in choruses and hymns of worship, while Archbishop Nzimbi preached the word.

Speaking during the ceremony, Rev Dr Dandala, the AACC General Secretary thanked the guest of honour, Archbishop Nzimbi for taking time out of his busy schedule to be with the AACC on the occasion.

"Today we launch a major challenge to reinvent the solid base of the church in Africa," the General Secretary said.

He applauded the men and women of great faith who had dreamt of a strong church in Africa and hence started the AACC. The vision has lived on and will go on to generations to come. Rev Dr Dandala said that AACC will nurture and grow that which had been entrusted to it by its founders who invested in land and prayed to God to bless them abundantly, thereby fulfilling the God-given vision.

The piece of land on which the flats will be built was donated to AACC by a missionary in 1978 and for a long time, it has housed the AACC staff, in line with the organization's policy, to afford quality and decent housing for its staff.

The property to be developed is constitutes the AACC's seven-year strategic plan, which runs from 2008 through to 2010 and the venture is meant to enhance the financial base of the organization. When completed, the 24 apartments will be sold off and the proceeds used to develop other AACC properties in Nairobi.

Rev Dr Dandala was optimistic that the property will attract buyers so that the money can be used for God's work and to develop the church in Africa. "Although the whole process is a challenge, with prayers and determination, all will be well," the General Secretary said.

Performing the actual ground-breaking and dedication of the property to commission the construction of the flats, Archbishop Nzimbi prayed for the contractors and hailed the AACC General Secretary for many positive changes he has brought to the organization since he joined it as its leader.

Rev Dr Gatu echoed Archbishop Nzimbi's words that the AACC has moved to greater heights under the leadership of Rev Dr Dandala and hoped that it will continue in the same momentum. ♦

A New Beginning Beckons Kenyans

Kenyans have been called to envisage a new beginning despite the recent chaos that engulfed the country following the disputed December 27th presidential elections. The call was made by the Inter-Religious Forum to the public during their prayer for the nation attended by President Mwai Kibabki, a section of his cabinet and members of parliament from both sides of the political divide.

The prayers that were broadcast live on national television, Kenya Broadcast Corporation, on 8th February, saw different religious groups converge to seek God's intervention in the crisis in the country.

"We must stop the temptation to stigmatise some communities on account of their leaders or the activities of a few individuals," said the religious leaders. "We must engage in activities that promote a united rather than a divided Kenya," they added.

The leaders expressed their concern for the wide gap between the rich and the poor, not just in resources, but in the socio-economic skills as well. As a religious organisation, the leaders affirmed that they were committed to making a contribution towards addressing the problem.

The Inter-Religious Forum is an initiative of different faiths, that includes Muslims, Hindus and Christians, comprising Protestant churches, the Catholic Church, Evangelical churches, as well as the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) that was formed after the December elections to seek ways of restoring peace and tranquillity in Kenya. The forum is chaired by the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Nzimbi.

Speaking at the prayer meeting, Bishop Dr. Mvume Dandala, the AACC General Secretary, said that Kenyans had been robbed of their good relationship with one another but there was hope that God would heal the land. He added that people must be accountable to God in all that they do. Bishop Dandala's message to the people of Kenya was that God is a God of justice and he alone is able to bring divine justice out of his abundant grace and mercy.

"God's divine justice neither hurts nor destroys. If we open ourselves to God's justice, it will heal our land. We have a responsibility in the name of God to prepare the people of this land for God's justice," Bishop Dandala said. He

added that God's justice calls on everyone to recognise that all have sinned and therefore nobody should plead his innocence before God. He said no one was innocent in the Kenyan crisis and cautioned against self justification. He reminded the people to humble themselves before God like the biblical tax collector who asked for God's mercy and forgiveness. Bishop Dandala warned of the impression created in the crisis by religious people, that they were angels while others were devils.



From second left to right, Mr. Bright Mawudor, Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi, Rev. Canon Peter Karanja, Bishop Dr. Mvume Dandala and Rev. Dr. Japhet Ndhlovu at the KICC

He said the people of faith under God's obligation had to help the nation understand God's forgiveness. To God, Bishop Dandala said, there is no tribe.

The forum offered prayers for repentance; for political leadership; for justice and reconciliation and for reconstruction and restoration. Different communities were represented by people of faith who interceded and pleaded for God's forgiveness on their behalf for the wrongs committed in the crisis.

Speaking at the forum, President Kibaki acknowledged that prayer is a powerful tool for national reconciliation. He urged all Kenyans

to go before God in faith for the healing of the land. The President said that all people are one and the same except that they speak different languages which is a product of circumstance.

The Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) leader, Hon Raila Odinga was represented at the prayer meeting by Hon Omingo Magara who said that the country was bleeding and required healing based on justice and love. He affirmed that the ODM was committed to the on-going

mediation led by former UN General Secretary Kofi Annan and members of the eminent person's team, namely former president of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa and former First Lady of South Africa, Graca Machel.

A Muslim cleric cautioned that healing

would only come if people prayed from the depth of their hearts and not merely by mouth.

On his part, the general secretary of the National Christian Council of Churches (NCCK), Rev. Canon Peter Karanja told the audience that as religious leaders, they had taken partisan positions and in the process contributed to the crisis, so they needed to repent and begin anew.

The prayer meeting concluded with a joint communiqué, which was signed by the Rt Rev Benjamin Nzimbi. ♦



Bishop Dr. Johnson Tilewa

Anglican Diocese of Gambia Counts its Blessings

"We are honoured by God who has called us to His presence to live according to His will and to be empowered by Him." These were words of Bishop Dr Johnson S Tilewa during the Bishops' Charge held at St Paul's Parish Church in Faraja, Gambia held between January 30th and February 3rd 2008.

"...all that is good in our lives, and the way we have been blessed as a Church, is a result of God's goodness. It is therefore fitting to have as our theme; "Ebenezer...this far has the Lord brought us," Bishop Tilewa said.

Bishop Tilewa told the Synod that as a Church, they were honoured by God to be created in His image, adding that God has called Christians to live according to His will and to be empowered by His Spirit and thus, recognize His rightful place in 'our lives and the world in which we live in.'

Bishop Tilewa stressed that the evil seen in the world is a result of failure to recognize God as supreme.

Recounting God's goodness to the Anglican Diocese of Gambia, Bishop Tilewa told the Synod that the year 2007 was full of blessings because there was evidence of restoration and revival work. Among the notable activities that took place during the year were the installation of Lay Leader, Bro. Victor Clayton to serve as full time

lay leader at St. Cuthbert's Base and the construction of 12 study bedrooms by the New Gambia Industrialists. These facilities will put into use under the Estate Committee. In order to reduce dependency, the bishop said plans were underway to develop a diocesan property in the greater Bunjul area with funds from Oikocredit.

A key event was the dedication of the Cathedral of St. Mary, which was refurbished and a state-of-the-art public address system installed, courtesy of the children of the late Rev Canon (Lt Col) Henry and the late Mrs Patience Hunter.

Another activity he mentioned was the initiation, by the Episcopal Development Fund, of the Church of Gambia as part of the anti-Malaria campaign.

Bishop Tilewa further hailed the visit made by a group from their Diocese to the USA, which led to the inauguration of Gambian Christians in the USA.

Bishop Tilewa concluded by saying "...as we look back over the past year, we will give thanks to God for His goodness. We will look to the future in faith and confidence that God will continue to be with us every step of the way." ♦

AACC/NCCK Pay Solidarity Visit to IDP Camps

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in collaboration with the National Councils of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) on 6th February organised a solidarity visit to some camps of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kenya during which they also donated foodstuff and non-perishable items to the displaced people.

machetes and arrows directed at them by their aggressors.

Karathimo, one of the IDP camps located in Limuru town, 30 km west of Nairobi, hosted over 1000 IDPs. The number, however, kept fluctuating, with some IDPs leaving the camp to join their relatives while new ones arrived. By the time of the AACC/NCCK visit, there were 300 children in the camp, most of whom were below the age of 7. Some of the children were unaware of the whereabouts of their parents.

A Red Cross officer volunteer told the AACC/NCCK team that there were more men than women at the camp, mostly from Central Province, the Kikuyu tribe.



AACC chaplain, Rev Geoffrey Kaigamba handing over relief donation to a Red Cross staff at Karathimo IDP camp

The team that included the AACC chaplain, Rev Geoffrey Kaigamba heard heartrending stories about the IDPs, who have suddenly been made destitute in their own country. Majority of those affected were from Rift Valley Province and were forced to run for their lives when violence erupted. Everything they had spent years building went up in flames. Some people lost family members, while others nursed injuries sustained from



IDP camp at Tigoni Police Station

The supply of relief food in this particular camp was overwhelming, and some of it was being distributed to other centres. However, services like health facilities and sanitary towels for women and undergarments for both men and women were badly needed.

At another nearby camp the group visited in Tigoni police station, which accommodated Luos and Luhyas from western Kenya. Most of who these workers were from flower farms and the Bata Shoe Company who were forced to leave their stations, but managed to bring along their household belongs. Although food supply was in plenty, there was need for vegetables and fruits. Some of the

IDPs, the AACC team learned, were still working during the day and coming back to the camp.

Another camp visited is located at the Kikuyu police station. It was noted that relief supplies for the IDPs came from individuals, companies and NGOs but not from the government.

The last camp visited was in Kabete Police Station. Here the IDPs were people who had rented houses but were threatened by outlawed militia known as Mungiki to vacate their rented houses. Although they moved with their household items, they faced harsh conditions, specially the children who spent old nights with little or no food upply in the open because no

tents ad been erected for them. Because of its geographical position the place is extremely cold at night. The desire expressed by most IDPs to be relocated to their ancestral homes had been honoured and evacuation was in the process, dependant on the availability of transport. In addition travelling was not safe as militias erected roadblocks and singled out travellers perceived to be enemies of their communities. These people were flushed out of the bus and killed. In one incident, a victim had his head chopped off in full view of other passengers. ♦



Top left: Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka receiving peace candle from head of the Living Letter delegation at his Jogoo House office, right, Kalonzo and government officials holding hands in prayers with members of the Living Letters, and below, members of the Living Letters at the NCCK headquarters with Rev. Canon Peter Karanja on the left.

WCC LIVING LETTERS TEAM BRING A CANDLE OF PEACE TO KENYA

The WCC Living Letters team was in the country recently to stand in solidarity with the Kenyan people, following the disputed December 27th general elections that plunged the country into unprecedented violence.

The Living Letters is an ecumenical team that visits a country to listen, learn, share approaches and challenges in overcoming violence and in peace-making, and to pray together for peace in the community and the world.

The group, held meetings with various groups in the country, including Kenya's Vice President, Hon Kalonzo Musyoka, the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), Rev Canon Peter Karanja, and a group of Christians calling themselves the Nairobi District Coordinating Committee. The team also visited the internally displaced people (IDPs) in Nairobi and Nakuru.

The meeting with the Vice President coincided with the unfortunate killing of a Member of Parliament, from the Rift Valley Province of Kenya; only two days after another one had been killed in Nairobi. Lamenting on the unfortunate happenings, Hon Kalonzo, appreciated the visit by the Living Letters, terming them 'ambassadors of good will who had come to stand by Kenyan Christians, at a time when the country was bleeding.

Lamenting the unfortunate happenings in the country, Kalonzo said he was happy that the Koffi Annan mediation team would bear fruit.

Reacting to the Vice President's sentiments, head of the team, Dr. irkpatrick said that his team was in the country to judge or challenge the elections, but to bring hope to the government and the churches to overcome the challenges facing them. He added that since the politicians from the different political divide had worked together before for many years, they should be able to sit and address the challenges facing them today.

Speaking at the meeting, Ms Nyarzai, General Secretary of the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) said, that as women, they were wailing with the women of Kenya. She stressed the need to assure women of security against the violence being perpetrated against them in the IDP camps and hoped that justice will be done against the perpetrators of violence.

The team said the situation needed more than talking and prayers for the country, but prayers, especially for those in camps more than ever before, needed to be offered continuously. To signify the need for peace in the country, the team

handed over a candle of peace to the Vice President a sign of peace to the country.

Rev Karanja told the team that the situation in Kenya has not been occasioned by the December 27th election but by long standing issues that are political, economic and social in nature. The problems, Rev Karanja said, have to be dealt with at three levels: short, medium and long term.

Responding to Rev Karanja's message, the Living Letters team asked how the church was responding to the government's directive of "shoot-to-kill" order, closure of the IDP camps and ordering them to go back to their homes, and the ban on live broadcast. In response, Rev Karanja defended the government on the 'shoot-to-kill' order, arguing that hard decisions at times must be made and that people must take responsibility for their actions. The government had to use force to stop the violence, which was degenerating into genocide and also slap ban on the media to control what was going out to the people.

The Living Letters team presented a candle of peace and a bottle of prayer circle to Rev Karanja at the end of the meeting. ♦