



PROCMURA RECEIVES A PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR ITS WORK ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN AFRICA

The much anticipated Affirmation Award to PROCMURA that was announced by the Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ in March 2011, was awarded during a colourful ceremony in Nashville, Tennessee on July 11, 2011.



Rev. Dr. Mbillah(second left) receives the Affirmation Award on behalf of PROCMURA from Rev. Dr. David Vergas(right) and Rev. Dr. Cally Rogers-White(second left) applauding is Rev. Sandra Gourdet (left)

The ceremony which took place during the General Assembly of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ International Dinner in the Grand Ballroom of Nashville's Renaissance Hotel, was attended by over 600 dignitaries of various nationalities from Central America, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Africa and the host nation, the United States of America.

In a background document announcing the Award, Rev. Sandra R. Gourdet, Global Ministries Area Executive for Africa, praised the pioneering role of PROCMURA as the only Christian organisation in the African continent "Which is dedicated to building bridges of

understanding, promoting mutual respect and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims throughout the entire continent." She further praised PROCMURA for, "...having successfully assisted many of the churches in Sub-Saharan Africa to embark on positive tolerance and acceptance of religious plurality, as well as providing forums for solving conflicts between adherents of the two faiths and collaboration on national issues." The Rev. Gourdet recalled that PROCMURA pioneered Christian and Muslim joint peace missions in the Sudan in the early 1990's and emphasised on how PROCMURA's leadership in Sierra Leone and Liberia, teamed up with Muslim leaders of those countries in persuading warring factions to negotiate peace.

"This award", concluded Rev. Gourdet in her announcement, "is an affirmation of PROCMURA's faithful contributions toward peace between the religions and for serving as an effective tool in Christian witness in Africa, often as the unsung hero."



Rev. Dr. Mbillah (left) poses with Rev. Sandra Gourdet (right) displaying the Award

In an elaborate write-up which apparently provided good grounds for PROCMURA to be selected for the award in the first place, the Rev. Gourdet made it clear that the Affirmation Award was for PROCMURA's "monumental work on Christian-Muslim relations on the continent...and for its outstanding service that goes beyond the call of duty."

She said that one other significance of the award which was instituted in 1985 is that many of the individual recipients were persons who walked paths to stand firm on their principles of justice, peace and liberation among other true qualities of Christian witness. On a personal note the Rev. Gourdet said to the General Adviser "Congratulations on your hard work and your faithful commitment. We all count it a privilege to walk in solidarity with you and PROCMURA."

On the most important day of the life of PROCMURA, in terms of international recognition in one event when it received an award for its service to God and humanity, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah on his return informed his dedicated staff that he felt overwhelmed as never before in his nearly 12 years of service in PROCMURA as General Adviser. He said that he would have felt lonely, since the Chairperson of PROCMURA, Rt. Rev. Dr. Josiah Idowu Fearon had to cancel his trip to Nashville because of national duties he had to carry out in Nigeria. However, said the General Adviser, God continues to work in a

mysterious way when upon arrival in the USA he recognised that there was a very strong African contingent which had flown in for the meetings.



The African contingent cheerfully displays the Award

The contingent, Dr. Mbillah explained, was made up of Rev. Dr. Moiseraele Prince Dibeela of the United Congressional Church of South Africa (UCCSA), Bishop Samuel Mkhonta and his wife Mrs. Make Mkhonta of the Kuchany' Okusha Zion Church of Swaziland, Rev. Sementh Serenguana, President of the United Church of Christ in Mozambique and his wife Christina Serenguana, and lastly Mrs. Megan Baxter,

Director of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) College, Johannesburg, South Africa.

They supported him immensely and ensured that the general mark of excitement and joy in the African continent was appropriately observed when he received the award from the common Global Ministries Board Co-executives Rev. Dr. David Vergas and Rev. Dr. Cally Rogers-White, with Rev. Sandra Gourdet standing by the General Adviser to offer support. Mrs. Make Mkhonta initiated an African joyful ululation that was commensurate with what PROCMURA was experiencing.

After receiving the award the General Adviser in a very excited mood thanked Global Ministries and the two churches, United Church of Christ and the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ for their recognition of PROCMURA's work and emphasised that the award was for the entire continent of Africa.

Prior to receiving the award the General Adviser made various presentations at the General Synod of the United Church of Christ in Tampa, Florida (July 1-5) and at the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Mbillah and Dr. Naeem Baig from the Islamic Circle of North America gave lectures on Christian-Muslim relations in Africa and in the United States of America where nearly 300 persons attended.



Cross section of participants at the plenary

In order to provide our partners and our constituencies the opportunity to have a feel of what happened in Nashville we have posted audio-visual briefs on our website, www.procmura-prica.org, and encourage all to visit.

It is our prayer that God continues to provide us with the insight and resources to make a difference in Christian-Muslim relations in Africa, and by doing so live up to our vision of a continent in which peoples of various religions live with their religious differences in peace.

Report Compiled by PROCMURA Staff.

SNAP SHOTS



