

# PROCMURA *Newsletter*

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## EVOLVING A GUIDING ETHIC FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION AND MUSLIM DA'WAH

A vocation in Christian-Muslim relations is not an easy one. One of the many reasons why it is not easy is because Christianity and Islam are universal religions with universal claims that have an appeal to all human beings. These universal appeals and claims make the two religions to be mission-oriented as they seek to invite all and sundry to embrace their claims of truth about God.

For Christianity, the invitation is to anyone and everyone to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus the Christ and accept Him as one sent by the triune God to be Lord and Saviour of the world. For Islam, the invitation is to anyone and everyone to accept the absolute oneness of God (*Allah*) and the prophethood of Muhammad and submit themselves to Him (*Allah*) and thereby tread the straight path that leads to Him.

An invitation to come to God through Christ and an invitation to submit to God (*Allah*) and acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad is not the problem in Christian-Muslim relations in Sub-Saharan Africa where religious freedom generally remains the norm and not the exception. What the problem may be and definitely is, in some countries, comes when Christians and Muslims engage in fruitless and futile arguments and debates sometimes referred to in the East Africa sub region as *mihadhara*. These *mihadhara* are provocative in many ways as they tend to attack the essence of the neighbour's religion. PROCMURA's experience around the African continent shows clearly that religion is, and can be an emotive issue that touches the hearts, minds and souls of human beings. Distant and contemporary history is full of lessons whereby people do not take kindly to any denigration of their religion. At a time that we talk about positive tolerance of religious differences and the value of religion as a transformative force in African societies, we cannot by acts of commission (still embarking on sterile and provocative religious debates) or omission (refusing to acknowledge that such debates are recipes for unhealthy relationships) and hope to have peace. Peace is not something that comes in easy. We have to work for it. In fact we have to avoid acts that lead to situations of none peace.

In Christian-Muslim relations, PROCMURA has always said that there are gatherers and scatterers. The gatherers are those who are sensitive to the essence of the different religious faith traditions and recognise them as such even if they do not agree with all or some of it. It comes in our coined phrase "we accept you as you are and not as we want you to be". The scatterers are those who think that since they believe that their religion is the one and only true religion, they will have to caricature, condemn, insult, disdain and insinuate the neighbours' religion and irritate its adherents. For these people "You are as good as you accept their religious faith otherwise you are anything else but a good neighbour".

Christian and Muslim religious leaders will have to enter into constructive discussions with practitioners, sponsors and advocates of *mihadhara* to dissuade them from casting insinuations on the neighbour's religion. For in doing so breeds conflicts which eventually could turn violent. In PROCMURA, we

recognise that to embark on Christian Mission and all that it entails, and Muslim *da'wah* and all that it entails are mandatory for Christians and Muslims respectively. We, however, suggest that in preaching adherents of both religions, should talk about the good of their own and not the bad of the other.

**Rev. Dr. Johnson A. Mbillah**