



Union of Oromo Evangelical Churches of Europe

Tokkummaa Woldootii Oromoo warra Wangeelaa Awurooppaa

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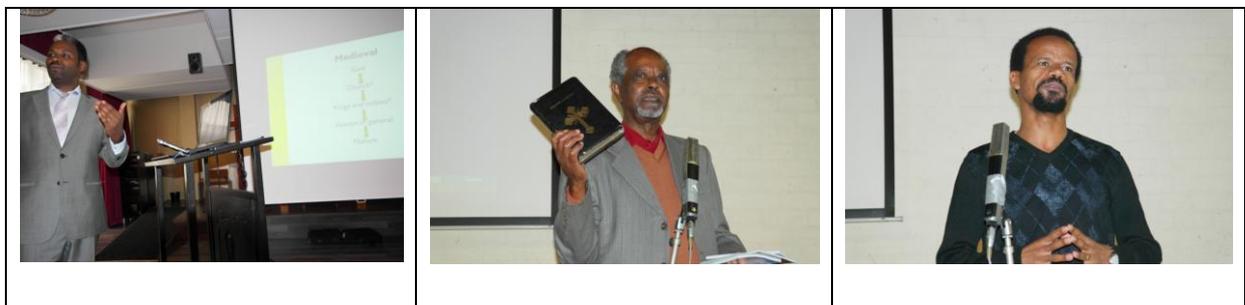
The First UOECE Workshop Concluded Successfully!



A three day long workshop aimed at fostering and strengthening the relationship between Oromo churches and Oromo communities in Europe concluded successfully in Utrecht, The Netherland on September 22, 2013. This first in its kind workshop was organised by the Union of Oromo Evangelical Churches in Europe (UOECE) and hosted by two sister churches in Holland; namely Oromo Evangelical Church in Utrecht and Oromo Evangelical Church in Amsterdam.

On his opening speech, Mr. Robsan Mako, the Chairman of UOECE outlined the purpose of the workshop and emphasised the need for building ties between communities and member churches which eventually pave the way for effective dissemination of the gospel.

Thought provoking and stimulating papers focusing on church and politics and church and culture in the Oromo context were presented by three authors. Rev. Dr. Tasgara Hirpo, Evangelist Wake Jao and Evangelist Galati Hailu from Hermansbourg - Germany, Oslo - Norway and Amsterdam – the Netherlands respectively presented highly educational, insightful and well researched papers which opened a forum of discussion for participants.



Evan. Wake Jao

Rev. Dr. Tasgara Hirpo

Evan. Galati Hailu

Rev. Dr. Tasgara Hirpo who has a lifelong experience in the areas of evangelism, human rights and culture presented two papers namely “ the Christian faith and culture”; and “Christianity and politics.” Rev. Dr. Tasgara asserted in his paper that both politics and faith had to do with the life of the whole human being, and many Christians in the past had been struggling with it for centuries to find a solution for questions arising from time to time. Since there are no ready-made answers, it is appropriate and timely now for all Christians in Ethiopia to try to find their own answers in the light of the Holy Scripture, he added.

According to the paper presented by Rev. Dr. Tasgara the issue of the gospel and culture is one of the hot debates among international Christian communities of this time. Christians who received the gospel message through the Western Missionary movements of the colonial era are now discovering that the bible is the only authority to be followed and, traditions and cultures that were introduced by the gospel messengers are to be re-

evaluated. In Ethiopia, where not only culture but also economy and politics are dominated by the Semetic minority of the North, such domination will continue to create more problems and political instability among nations and nationalities. Therefore, this burning issue needs to be addressed timely, recommends the paper.

The article presented by Evangelist Wake Jeo discussed the contemporary situation of Oromo people at home and abroad while assessing the participation of Oromo Christians in the current national political movement. The article shaded light on the positive contribution of Oromo Christians in the liberation struggle and stressed that the blaming of Oromo Christians as if Oromo Christians made the liberation struggle sluggish was a baseless accusation and one should first examine the contribution of individual Oromo Christians and what the church was doing to strengthen Oromummaa. At the core of Evangelist Wake's article are the theological and sociological responses to apolitical Oromo Christians argument accompanied by recommendations which push the apolitical Oromo Christians to accomplish their responsibility as citizens.

Evangelist Galati Hailu discussed in his paper the role a Christian community plays in the mission agenda of the church and its implication for Oromo Diaspora church in Europe. According to this article Oromo churches in Europe need to focus on rendering holistic service, strive for cultural transformation through contributing to the development of Afan Oromo literature, work to promote effective leadership through helping Christians as change agents and catalyst in the community, and finally advocating peace and justice.



A group photo showing participants partially.

The participants of the workshop who came to gather from nine different churches in nine different European cities discussed passionately and deeply on the issues touched upon by the papers and generated points of ideas to be worked on and implemented in the near future. Moreover, it has been agreed that participants will conduct similar workshops for church ministers in their respective congregations soon.

The main objective of Oromo Evangelical Churches in Europe is to disseminate the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ among the Oromo speaking community and beyond. But misunderstanding from both sides has created a gap. The main purpose of this workshop, therefore, is minimizing the gap by bringing about a better understanding.

		
Mrs. Ragatu Olana	Mr. Ebisa Olana	Mr. Eyasu Bula

The ideas generated by the participants were presented by group representatives at the end of the workshop

According to some participants of the workshop the understanding gained helps much in minimizing the gap and misunderstanding between the church and the Oromo community whom the church is intended to reach and subsequently paves the way towards an effective work of evangelism.

The UOECE strongly believes that such a workshop equips church ministers and assists them to teach their respective congregations on how to hold Christian values with them while partaking in the ongoing Oromo political and social movements at home and here in the Diaspora.

Besides presentations of research papers and discussions on the topics, the unique gathering was characterized by powerful sermons, prayer sessions and uplifting worship services. Evangelist Petros from Oromo Evangelical Church of London and Evangelist Gute from Amsterdam ministered at the workshop. Ashenafi, Ragatu, Gadisa, Asefa and Bungula participated in the worship service by singing, leading the worship services and prayer during the workshop.

		
Evan. Petros ministering at the workshop	Asefaa, Ashenafi & Ragatu leading the worship service	Evan. Gute ministering at the workshop.

The three-day workshop was concluded with a vibrant and blessing spiritual conference on which many believers from different cities of the Netherlands took part.

UOECE is planning to organize similar workshop in April 2014 which will take up different relevant issues. The exact time and place will be announced later on.

Finally, the chairman of the Union urged the participants of the workshop to put the training into practice in promoting Gospel among Oromo communities and churches in Europe and beyond. He also thanked the host churches - Utrecht and Amsterdam Oromo Churches - for unparalleled and exemplary hospitality they have shown to the participants of the workshop.

He has also made a number of announcements regarding the important projects that the Union has been working on this year. He announced that the digitisation of Oromo Bible is almost finalised and soon become available for use.

He also announced that the Union will start broadcasting gospel to Oromo listeners in East Africa and southern Europe from November 2, 2013 in Shortwave and medium wave. Listeners in the rest of the world can follow the programme Live and recorded online.