

# Yearly Report 2014 of the Intercultural Church Akebulan- (Global Mission) e.V.

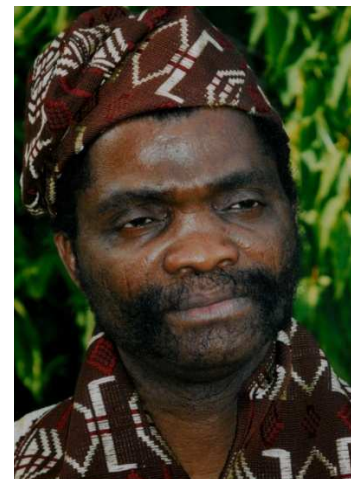


Dear Friends of Akebulan,



How are you? What did you experience during the last year?

For Akebulan, 2014 was a special year through manifold aspects. It started, when we gave our best to back Family Shakunle during the hard times of the severe sickness of Bro Lere. When after weeks and months, his condition had finally improved; his weakened body was hit by an infection which it couldn't overcome any more, so he died. He left behind his wife and four children. We are grateful for all prayers, visits and practical help that carried the family through. Also, we are glad because of the family's faith and witness that they felt God's presence and comfort all the time for themselves and, too, felt that Bro Lere received help and inner strength through the prayers. The memorial service which we celebrated in July in his remembrance was sustained by this witness of hope and faith.



A second feature in 2014 was our annual general meeting in March. When our rather weak financial situation was unfold, our members spontaneously decided to help by special offerings to carry our basic costs. Thanks to God, they managed to put this into practise, so that Peter was very relieved at the year end, stating that this was the first year after long time when he didn't have to bother about the continuing existence of Akebulan. Special thanks to all of you and also to the faithful donators from outside our church who support us for long time, already! Concerning our finances, we also need to mention that thanks to a last assistance of our former administrator Michael Fleischer, we were able to bring our report of our inclusion project to a successful end. This means, Aktion Mensch e.V. accepted how we spent the money as well as our inter-

nal efforts and even paid the balance; this helps. We are very grateful for this sponsoring and for the ongoing positive cooperation with Pastor Daniela Nischik from the Evangelical Blind People's Service of Berlin e.V.



In fact, our Inclusion Gospel Project also this year was very successful so that we will not only continue it in 2015, but thanks to their explicit invitation also were able to apply for further support from Aktion Mensch e.V. We hope that if this works, we can undertake a short choir journey in Brandenburg. In 2014, we did two performances; one at the summer festival of Berliner Stadtmission and like 2013, one at the yearly advent celebration of the Evangelical Blind People's Service. Stefanie Lahya Aukongo supported our singing at the last one as a special guest. At our first workshop in 2015, she will come with two friends from her women's Gospel choir to teach us some of their songs. Between our two performances, there was not much time left to practise. This was why some of our members came up with two ideas: First, they asked us to take audio records of our workshops which they can use at home for further practise. Secondly, they asked if we could meet more often so that there is not such long breaks in between, especially when they cannot make it one time. So we have planned to meet every six weeks instead of every two months in the New Year. At this point, we also contribute our special thanks to ABSV (State's Blind People's Service of Berlin) who continuously allow us to use their rooms for our meetings and who almost every time serve us their nice food in the canteen. In addition, we are very glad that the relationships among our choir members and the work of the Evangelical Blind People's Service are being increased through our project. Let us give two examples: One family asked Daniela Nischik to baptise their daughter Charlotte, and one woman called Silke organised two small excursions for the group.



Now I come to the third point why 2014 was a special year for Akebulan. The first point was the case of Bro Lere's severe sickness and early death in our midst which was very sad but also sustained by faith. The point "finances" is something rather pragmatic, but also very important. Number 3 is something cheerful which tells about the extensive engagement of our church members: In September, we were able to hold our second women's conference. This is a festive service for everybody, organised and operated by the women of our church. Again, Sis. Maureen sewed almost all women's dresses with a common cloth and beautiful individual design. Again, Sis. Vida organised that we got that cloth for a good price from a factory. Sis. Christine, again, taught us two songs that we could perform; one was in English and one in her mother language from Kenya. Again, the Akwaba Gospel Choir blessed our service with their awesome singing.



Our guest speaker, this time, was Pastor Maame Leticia Aidoo, the wife of our senior partner Pastor Dr. Jere Aidoo. She spoke about the topic "Prayerful women make a difference", and she encouraged us by many lively examples from her rich experiences. Phinissia was so kind to practise another song with the children during the preaching, which they then also presented to the congregation. After service, we again had a delicious buffet. Everybody enjoyed the preparation times as well as the event, itself. Special thanks to all co-workers and to our guests who honoured the invitation and celebrated with us!



We are also very grateful that one woman in our midst, a sister from Mozambique, did not get deported back home but finally found work and got another visa. God is good! We also thank "Asyl in der Kirche" who were very helpful in this situation.

Now I will continue more chronologically: In February, a group of social workers whose employers are the two State Churches came to Akebulan. This was through contact with Prof. Werner Kahl and the Evangelical Mission Academy in Hamburg. They had asked that Pastor Peter introduced our church to them.



In March, we had another meeting for intercultural learning in cooperation with the ecumenical movement in Berlin. This time, we were invited to celebrate with a small group called the "Old Catholics". In a seeming contradiction to their name, they don't exist very long. The name refers to the fact that they have not overtaken all regula-

tions of the Catholics; for example, their priests are allowed to marry. Together for Berlin e.V. organized another "Transforum Conference"; this time with the focus on intercultural churches. There was a much higher presence of Christians from different countries in the world than at their former conferences. This was obviously because of the topic, but in our opinion also because of the work of the "Forum Intercultural Relationships", in which Pastor Peter is still an active member. Together with the leader Thomas Hieber, they hold a workshop which was very well frequented. Later in the year, Thomas Hieber together with his wife moved to Hamburg to help establish a similar work like the forum. Here in Berlin, Dr. Bianca Dümling overtook his work. She has been a part of the forum for long, has studied Diaconic Science and has worked in a large intercultural church networking in Boston/ U.S. for three years. At the end of the month, Peter was invited to preach in Mülheim.



In April, there took place another theological studies' day at Himmelsfels in Spangenberg. This time, Peter and Steffi went there, together. It was an interesting ecumenical exchange about biblical interpretation and today's practises of anointing and healing. At Good Friday, there was another traditional Baptism Service at Südstern Church with different intercultural churches. This time, Pastor Peter could baptise Jakob Shakunle. His father was still alive by that time, so Jakob could tell him about it and receive his blessings.

If you have been able to read our earlier yearly reports, you might remember that during the last years, Akebulan had been actively involved in the Ecumenical Pentecost Services in our church neighbourhood Borsigwalde. These were special experiences with colourful services and friendly, open encounters with our neighbours at the refreshments, afterwards. In 2014, this couldn't be organised, again, for the first time since we had become a part of it. The people are still interested in it, but the new Catholic Bishop of Berlin had made a decree that all Catholic churches in Berlin are now obligated to hold "normal" Catholic Masses on every Sunday as well as on every church holiday. This makes it virtually impossible, too, to find any alternative date. We believe this is not only very disappointing for us, but also a real setback because it undermines the ecumenical movement in the whole.

In June, together with our networking partners APPA e.V. (African Pentecostal Pastors Association) we had our yearly conference, again. At one weekend, the pastors met to take time for intensive prayers and consultations with one another. In November, Pastor Frank Sarfo celebrated his 50th birthday in the new rooms which his church had been able to find by the grace of God. In December, Akebulan was able to invite the pastors and their wives into the African restaurant „Relais de Savanne" to have our annual pastors' dinner.



Again, more chronologically: We, Family Arthur, moved into the first floor of Steffi's parents house, in August. This is a clear improvement for us which we are very grateful for. At the end of the year, one sister who had just given birth to her second son, was also able to get an apartment outside the refugees' home in our church neighbourhood. Thanks to all who have helped her to realize this important step! Her husband hopes to join them in two years time from Italy.

In September, we did not only have our women's conference and the one performance of our inclusive Gospel choir, but also some meetings with our umbrella organisation, the Mülheimer Verband e.V. First, the pastors met for a cake-/ coffee-/ teatime in our church garden; then we women joined them for dinner at the Pache's Family house down the street. Later, the association also made a conference. During these meetings, Peter was able to share some thoughts and he told the pastors that because of the ending of his scholarship for his intercultural theology studies in Hermannsburg, he didn't know how to further finance them. This resulted in an aid appeal in the various churches which brought so many donations for him, that Peter was not only able to pay for the current semester. But he will also be able to afford the next one and a half years together with the rent deposit from our old apartment which we got back. We are extremely grateful for this since the studies are very valuable for Peter in its contents and open better employment opportunities for him, later. Concerning employment, we have to mention that since the end of November, Pastor Peter started to work as social counsellor in a refugee camp of Berliner Stadtmission. We as family are especially grateful for all these developments... Through the medium of our senior friend Pater Rohrmayer, a group of evangelical vicars came to visit Akebulan where Peter lectured to them about African churches.



RACIBB e.V. (Council of African Christians in Berlin/ Brandenburg) underwent a crisis in 2013 which limited their activities quite much in 2014. But still, they had their monthly meetings and were able to continue the tradition of organizing the Berlin closing service for the intercultural church week in Germany. In addition, Pastor Miguel celebrated a joyful wedding ceremony after long years of his successful marriage, and Dr. Tobbit celebrated a festive birthday party.



In cooperation with the Ecumene in Berlin/ Brandenburg and SSIP (Social Science Studies for Intercultural Perspectives), we had an ideas workshop in November about what it means to be a Christian in an intercultural surrounding. This had developed out of several meetings and was supposed to give opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences in a larger group. The work is a continuation of what the late Dr. Roswith Gerloff had

started in our midst. Out of this work we want to develop a cooperation with the university in Hermannsburg. Last February, some master students came from there to visit our church where Pastor Peter told them about the African international church networking in Berlin, using APPA e.V. und RACIBB e.V. as samples. In November, Professor Ludwig came also to town to contact the group. This February, he will come again to continue the plans and also get to know some represents from the networks. The zeal is that in future, master students from Hermannsburg will come to Berlin and do researches in the African churches for their writings.



Also in November, we celebrated our 8th church birthday in a small scale. In December, we were first invited to the mentioned Advent celebration of the Evangelical Blind People's Service and later celebrated Christmas very cheerfully in our church. At the end of the year, we again had our traditional half prayer night. After this, our pump broke down and couldn't be repaired any more. So we had to buy a new one together with our landlord Dr. Knappe and we are very grateful that now since the 18th January, we can come together in our rooms, again!



Our children ask very clever questions and when we talk about our faith, I can see how much they understand from the Bible, already, and that they really think twice about how they can transfer their knowledge into their everyday life. Unfortunately, we don't have many of our kids together at once on the single Sundays so that it is very difficult to let them participate in topics in a longer context. Also, it is not really possible to prepare presentations for special events like our women conference or our Christmas service.



Our worship team is very engaged in their worship leading. In May, they met once on a Saturday. But it is not possible to organise them to practise together on regular basis... As church, we celebrated our birthdays together. In March, we dedicated little Chukwuka to the Lord.

In the „African district“ in Wedding, people have planned to build a Christian intercultural kindergarten. They are waiting for a good half year now to finally get the construction permission which the senate has passed, already. Steffi is supposed to create a communication bridge, then, between the parents and the Kita.

Again, we say special thanks to all our network partners and our umbrella organisation for the fruitful cooperation, Aktion Mensch e.V. for their donation, all our supporters for their friendly contributions, our members for their faithfulness, reliability and their ongoing engagement and last but not least everybody who carries us in prayer and our good Lord for all the good He does to us!



**We wish all of you a joyful and blessed New Year 2015!**

**Yours sincerely;**

**Peter and Steffi Arthur and Akebulan e.V.**

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