

NETACT ANNUAL REPORT

AUGUST 2002 Lilongwe Malawi

1. SUMMARY

We're thankful to report that most of our goals, which were set at last year's Annual Meeting, are either achieved or is in the process of being addressed. Contributions by the Elmer Hartgerink Trust (\$39 000) and other smaller donations made this possible.

The development and introduction of the HIV/AIDS program for the NetACT institutions took a lot of time and effort. Rev. Christo Greyling was asked to develop and present these courses at the different member institutions. Because the institutions differ greatly in terms of capacity, culture, context and resources, we decided to pilot the course at Justo Mwale Theological College, Lusaka, Zambia and Murray Theological School, Morgenster, Zimbabwe. From the feedback of the two institutions the course was well accepted and in most cases a life changing experience for the people who attended it.

NetACT seems to become well known in theological circles - we received several requests from institutions as far as Cameroon to learn more about NetACT's activities and the possibility of becoming a member of the Network. A Norwegian Missionary Society, and a Lutheran network requested cooperation.

NetACT's activities received coverage in the local and national media.

We were fortunate to receive Prof. George Hunsberger (January to March 2002) from Western Theological Seminary, Holland MI, as a guest lecturer, while our own lecture exchange program worked well. The writing of handbooks on African Congregational Theology is in progress.

Most of the institutions received their computers. It seems as if Megkon, the computer consultancy company, is experiencing difficulty to get the system functioning. At this stage we are negotiating with them – at least to see that all computers are properly installed and in a working condition. This part of the work is rather frustrating. The University of Stellenbosch is assisting us in looking for an alternative way to get and keep the network in a working condition.

2. COMPUTERS

Thus far all the institutions received their computers. All equipment has been paid for. However, it seems from the feedback of the different institutions that they had great difficulty to get the computers to work. At this stage it is really a "hard nut to crack". We are working on this with Mr. Piet Albertyn, Managing Director of Megkon. We held a telephone conference in June between Prof. Jurgens Hendriks, Executive Director of NetACT, Mr. Piet Albertyn, Ms Hannatjie Jacobs, Project Manager and Mr. Pietie Traut, from the Information Technology (IT) Division of the University of Stellenbosch. Mr. Albertyn formed a new company (Wellness Dynamix) and has difficulties to deliver some

of the services that were promised. In the end we agreed that Mr. Albertyn should at least see that our computer system is functional before we make new arrangements.

3. ACCREDITATION & RATING OF INSTITUTIONS

NetAct should have access to the curricula of all institutions in order to be able to advise people where to go if they want to study. We therefore need the curricula as well as the application procedures of the participating institutions. A subcommittee, which will consist of Dr. Riaan Venter, Dr. Saindi Chipaengwe and Rev. Evert van den Ham, will assess the curricula and make recommendations to the institutions for improvement. At this stage we have not yet received all the necessary information.

Overseas students from seminaries in like Princeton, Columbia Atlanta and several European universities visit the University of Stellenbosch on a regular basis for periods of up to six months. Some are interested in visiting the other NetACT institutions. Once the NetACT office has curricula and programs of the NetACT Institutions, it will be able to negotiate short visits. Foreign students should pay their own travel costs and board and lodging. Tuition, however, should be free. The meeting should decide whether this arrangement is in order.

4. SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

There are constantly requests for scholarships. This needs our urgent attention. We should at least have something to help key personnel and young leadership. The University received money from a variety of small donors with which the Executive Director helped NetACT people. We will inform institutions if funds are available. The Executive Committee will decide on a procedure to distribute available funds evenly between institutions.

Meanwhile, Prof. Martin Pauw from the Commission for Witness (CFW) in the Western Cape, issued guidelines to institutions that want to send candidates to Stellenbosch. The guidelines are attached.

5. LECTURER EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

Prof. George Hunsberger from Western Theological Seminary was the guest of NetACT and the Faculty of Theology from mid-January until the end of March. He attended a Theological Conference at JMTC in Lusaka and visited the NetACT institutions in Malawi and Mozambique. His visit was in many ways a breakthrough and a major step forward in developing the relationship between continents and institutions.

Prof. Bernhard Combrink and dr. Ben du Toit presented courses in New Testament at JMTC and Zomba Theological College respectively. NetACT paid the travel expenses. Rev Christo Greyling's HIV/AIDS courses will be discussed below.

Rev. Johan Theron, of the King Fisher Mobilising Centre in Cape Town approached NetACT and volunteered their services to the NetACT institutions (free of charge). KFMC is a mission society doing outstanding work in South Africa. They are very good in presenting practical courses that empower faith communities and Christian leaders to do

ministry and mission work. We invited them to introduce their work to NetACT institutions. The meeting will have to decide whether they want to recommend their courses under the category of lecture exchange.

Funding: At this stage travel allowances can only be supplied when funds are available. Institutions have to provide board and lodging to guest lecturers.

Without specific requests, it is not possible to raise funds in this regard. We therefore need to receive requests for guest lecturers well in advance, which mean that we need to receive requests for 2003, 2004 and 2005 as soon as possible. Institutions requesting for a guest lecturer should indicate what they have to offer to the guest lecturers. Realistic exposure to the institution and country is important information and makes the exchange more attractive.

6. HIV/AIDS PROGRAM

The presenter of NetACT's HIV/AIDS program, Rev. Christo Greyling, has been on a reconnaissance visit to Murray Theological College at Morgenster, Zimbabwe and Justo Mwale Theological College (JMTC) in Lusaka, Zambia from 21 – 24 April. At first we were skeptical about a “preparatory visit”. We know now that it would have been a disaster without it!

The first course was presented at Morgenster (13 – 17 May) and then at JMTC (20 – 24 May). The NetACT office prepared the notes (100 pages). We also discover how time-consuming and expensive it was to travel in Africa! The feedback, however, is overwhelmingly positive (attached).

Our HIV/AIDS budget is quite positive at this stage because Rev Greyling is now employed by World Vision and could not find time to visit the remaining institutions before the annual meeting. We are negotiating to address our HIV/AIDS objectives by partnering with World Vision. We hope that it will be possible for Rev Greyling to present the course at all the remaining institutions and to develop a second module as well as to guide us on a training curriculum for leadership development in congregations. The latest information on the negotiations will be given at the meeting.

7. FINANCIAL REPORT

The financial reports are attached. The University of Stellenbosch administered the money, and we managed to keep well in our budget for this financial year. The finances are divided into five accounts – NetACT Computers, Administration, Weidenhof house, Travel & Meetings and HIV/AIDS Project.

The Executive Committee has to negotiate a budget for 2003.

8. CONSTITUTION

NetACT's draft constitution was written by the Executive Committee and given to the Rectorate of the University of Stellenbosch for consideration and legal advise. The process was delayed because a new Vice Rector was appointed. Attached are the draft constitution

and the letter of the Executive Director explaining the difficult position in which NetACT finds itself at present. The Board will have to make a few decisions in this regard and provide guidance in the way the Executive Director should negotiate with the University. The University is very positive about NetACT.

New members: while we are in the process of drafting our constitution it seems to be wise not to get too many members on board simply because of the funding implications. We do, however, think that it is important to negotiate to get at least one Protestant-Reformed theological school in Namibia and Angola to join NetACT. As a guideline we propose that other institutions that want to join NetACT can do so on a provisional basis if they accept our (draft) constitution and pay their own travelling and boarding expenses.

9. NetACT HOUSE (WEIDENHOFSTREET)

We had several meetings with the head student of the NetACT house and University people to discuss needs, reparations and improvements. The University attended to reparations and improvements. Most of the more expensive work was done in July (when there were only a few students) and not yet reflected in the financial statement.

We are getting a growing number of requests for accommodation for women and for couples. At present we would like to recommend that women stay at the accommodation available at the Faculty. Those who want to bring their spouses along will have to do their own negotiations and funding.

10. THEOLOGICAL HANDBOOKS

The next draft of *Studying Congregations in Africa* will be available at the meeting. We recommend that it be used in the next year and that we plan our next annual meeting to concentrate on working on forthcoming publications. *Studying Congregations in Africa* should then be finalized and printed. The meeting should decide on the most urgent book projects to be initiated.

11. ADMINISTRATION

The NetACT Office was “established” and equipped in October 2001. Ms. Hannatjie Jacobs was appointed and served as Project Manager of NetACT. She is responsible for the administration and logistics of NetACT in conjunction with the Executive Director. It is not possible to manage NetACT’s work without a Program Manager. Ms Jacobs is doing a very good job and we are thankful for her service.

Next meeting: I want to propose that we have a four-day meeting in August 2003. Two days should be allotted to the Board of Directors meeting and two days should be spent working on theological handbooks (for which we have to divide in groups). People to attend the meeting should be the Board Members as well as those partaking at the planning and writing of the proposed handbooks. The Board should decide on a venue. It was a privilege to serve NetACT.

Prof. Jurgens Hendriks
Executive Director: NetACT

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