

### E-Learning - enhancing theological Education in Kenya by Dr. David Field

The Kenya – Ethiopian Annual Conference is a vibrant growing conference with limited resources. Until 2018, the region had no institution to train its pastors. Some of the pastors had received training at Pentecostal Bible Colleges and others had no training. Seeing the need for a well-educated ministry, the United Methodist Men in the Nairobi district took the initiative to propose the establishment of a theological college. Rev Wilton Odongo – the District Superintendent of the Nairobi District and Africa University Graduate – was appointed Dean of the newly established Wesleyan United Methodist Training College in a part time capacity. Due to limited resources the College meets three times a year in a high school building in Nairobi when the school is on vacation. Between these intensive blocks, students complete assignments at home. The college had been exploring the possibility of using internet-based learning.

Organised by the Endowment Fund for Theological Education in the Central Conferences, a workshop for e-learning was organized for several countries in East Africa. It provided an



*Rev Wilton T. Odongo*

opportunity for Rev Odongo and other members of his faculty (who all teach part time) to develop new skills. During the workshop, Rev Odongo tested the potential in an online seminar of the European Methodist e-Academy with students from Russia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia. Rev Odongo led a lively and penetrating discussion comparing the situation of Methodist Churches in Europe with those in Kenya. This online seminar demonstrated the potential of e-learning particularly when the workshop

participants noticed that a student from Bulgaria joined in the seminar using his smart phone as he travelled on a bus. The newly established “Pamoja, a Methodist Network — East Africa e-Academy” will link together colleges in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Burundi. It aims to produce online courses which will be used among the colleges of the East Africa network for those periods when students are not present at the residential seminars. It will also enable the colleges to reach students who are unable to attend fulltime classes.

Reflecting on this Rev Odongo said: “Access to theological education through e-learning is going to transform theological education in East Africa”. These sentiments were shared by Ms Mercy Rehema. Ms Rehema who is a lay person, a graduate of Africa University, MF Norwegian School of Theology, and the University of Oslo. She teaches courses on sociology of religion and social ethics at Wesleyan United Methodist Training College. She said of the training event. **“This experience is definitely life changing.”**



*Ms Mercy Rehema*