

SHARING KNOWLEDGE WITH PARISHES-PASTORS'TRAINING SEMINARS

Custodians of the Creation: God is our Host and Guest!

From 10 to 16 June 2018 two batches of more or less 100 pastors, from different protestant churches of Rwanda, alumni of the Protestant University of Rwanda [PUR-PIASS] met in the Huye campus for capacity building seminars under the PUR program known as *Sharing Knowledge with Communities*. This activity is a PUR two years program run with part of the funding provided by Churches helping churches, of the protestant churches in Germany. It consists in a week long sharing knowledge from research conducted and published by the Protestant University [PUR-PIASS]. This two years phase2 was launched 1 September 2017. The program aims at reaching directly 500 participants comprising 200 pastors; 200 pastors' spouses and 100 lay persons. Participants interact through work in group discussions, in plenary ending in the identification of key areas of commitments to implement in their respective ministry. Participants men and women, occupy various senior positions in their churches and took time to share experiences of their ministries with their colleagues; they enjoyed refreshing their work experiences with academic reflections on current challenging issues. The trainings are documented by the Protestant University of Rwanda, translated and published into the Kinyarwanda language. The present training sessions focused on two books:

- a. Governance in the Protestant Churches. Rule of Law, Participation, Transparency, accountability and other virtues. Where do the churches in Rwanda stand?[PIASS 2017]. This study was conducted within the protestant churches with the aim of assessing how the churches understand the principles of good governance, and how they are implemented; intending to elaborate and publish a barometer of good governance within the churches.

- b. Together for a sustainable environment. This volume is a compilation of various ethical, theological and biblical reflections on the environmental crisis.
- c. Three other publications are part of the package that documents this two years program: a volume on ecumenism in Rwanda; a volume on the legacy of the Reformation and a volume on various issues compiled for the Pastors' spouses training.

Participants told of the new insights they gained from the seminar on environment:

The urgent call for the theology and for reconciliation with the environment; the existence of a chart of the environment published by the Protestant Council of Churches in 2012; the fact that the land groans for justice and protection; the huge size of the annual destruction of the environment; God as our host and guest; some populations who live friendly with the creation in the Pacific, the Americas, Africa; the call for a day of commemoration together with the environment; the resources created by God are enough to sustain all created beings, but greed prevents this to happen; and finally, the participants learnt that wastes are important sources of domestic energy and fertilizers.

Participants committed to engage a praxis for change

Teaching Christians to work hard and to leave a better world to their children and to next generations; teaching Christians to avoid greed that exhaust the planet and the environment; given the relation humans have with the creation, participants committed to initiate a day of the environment with biblical teachings on the environment; they committed to set up clubs for the protection of the environment; they also vowed to tree planting, water protection and to organize competition in parishes for the promotion of the environment. Considering that churches have lands and properties, they committed to create in the headquarter the parish a model land and setting for the protection and conservation of the environment so as to teach the population do the same in their properties. With regard to the wastes that become big polluters if abandoned untreated, participants committed to initiate activities for the recycling of the wastes; they committed to implement the CPR chart of the environment. For networking and link, they set up a WhatsApp group address to catch up and to interact on the progress made in the implementation of these commitments.