FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO HEAR
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Emerging Theologians on Mission and Evangelism

Edited by Amélée Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Pamela D. Couture, and Samuel George
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Contributors

Elorm Nick Ahialey-Mawusi from Living Generation Church is a Togolese postgraduate student at Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Bonn, Germany. His interest is in cross-cultural mission and ecumenical *diakonia*.

Sharaz Sharif Alam is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan who studied theology in Pakistan and in South Korea. His motivation to be a GETI student was the relationship between ecumenism and mission as one unit. It polished his understanding regarding Mission and Ecumenism to witness to Jesus Christ in his own cultural context.

Monica Auma Amayo is a theology student at Kenya Methodist University. She has been Secretary General of Kenya Methodist University Students Organization (KeMUSO) and is interested in mission and evangelism especially among young people or youth in her society and the whole world.

Éder Beling is a theology student at Faculdades EST, the theological school of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil. He has researched architecture, sacred space, and liturgy as well as homiletics and language. He was motivated to participate in GETI 2018 as it was an opportunity for common sharing, common hearing and common speaking about mission and discipleship in every possible place, country, or culture.

Rubén David Bonilla Ramos is a Methodist from Puerto Rico and is currently finishing his M.Div. degree, hoping to continue on to doctoral studies. He was intrigued and motivated to participate in GETI 2018 because of its diverse ecumenism and the different views that a worldwide audience of young theologians would have on missiology.
Matthias Ehmann is a pastor in the German Bund Freier Evangelischer Gemeinden, a lecturer in missiology and intercultural theology at the Theologische Hochschule Eweresbach and a doctoral student at the University of South Africa. His interests in theological research are in the field of missional church in a European context. GETI 2018 was an incredibly enriching opportunity to get to know different perspectives of global Christianity.

Mutale Mulenga-Kaunda belongs to the Pentecostal tradition and is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her motivation for GETI 2018 was her personal concern for women’s experiences in the church, her passion for God’s mission in the world and specifically with African women who are on the margins in society and in the church.

Kamogelo Monoametsi is from South Africa and a full-time Methodist itinerant minister and post-graduate theology student. The challenging disruption of ecumenism in the South African post-Apartheid era is a deep concern for him, and hence he felt compelled to participate at GETI 2018.

Amber M. Naylor is an M.Div. student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, USA. She is a Reconciling United Methodist. She is the founding president of Acting Out Awareness, an NGO that partners with communities to use storytelling and performance for social change. She came to GETI 2018 to be part of a church that courageously challenges injustice and advocates for the marginalized.

Bassey Obio is a minister of The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. He is interested in research areas involving missiology of trauma, governance/democracy, injustices, poverty and interreligious or interfaith crisis. GETI 2018 opened his eyes more to the beauty of unity in diversity. God made us different and unique, but with the overall goal of complementing each other in the missio Dei.

Nataly Lucía Romero Maita is a pastor of the Methodist Church of Peru. Her research interests are women of the Old Testament, reading the Bible in a feminist perspective, and feminist hermeneutics. She wanted to participate in GETI 2018 in order to meet different kinds of Christians and accept our differences while searching for unity.

Gabriel Stana Bogdan from the Romanian Orthodox Church is both a doctoral student of mission and ecumenism and a professor at the Theological School Targoviste in Romania. He identifies his research areas as the lifelines of church and particularly ecumenical missiology as a ‘life’-centric discipline important for the witness of the church.
Ximena Ulloa Montemayor is working with Bautistas por la paz (BPFNA) as a co-manager for the Global Baptist Peace Conference, scheduled to take place in Colombia in 2019. She collaborates with several networks and is interested in motivating local communities to work ecumenically and to see and think differently about missiology.

Emma van Dorp is a member of the Reformed Church and a student of theology at the University of Geneva. She researches the ecumenical movement and the place of the church in the European pluralistic society. Her participation in GETI 2018 aimed at discovering contextual theologies and learning more about the actions and impact of the ecumenical movement.

Joshua Z. Zonita is a pastor in the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches and professor at the College of Theology of Central Philippine University. His research interests are globalization, constructive theology, migration, diplomacy, and conflict management. He participated in GETI 2018 because he found the programme timely and deeply enlightening for his comprehensive exams study.

Pamela D. Couture holds the Jane and Geoffrey Martin Chair in Church and Community at Emmanuel College, Victoria University, in the University of Toronto. An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, she is author of, among other publications, *We Are Not All Victims* (2016), and *Child Poverty: Love, Justice, and Social Responsibility* (2007).

Samuel George is Principal of the Master’s College of Theology, Serampore University, and head of its department of theology. Among his many publications is *The Historical Particularity of Jesus: A Dialogue with the Hindu View of History* (2014), and he has served as editor of *New Life Theological Journal* since 2011.

Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué is a theologian originally from Togo. She serves as professor of ecumenical ethics at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey and as programme executive for Ecumenical Theological Education in the World Council of Churches in Switzerland, which sponsors the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute. Her research and publishing centre on intercultural theology and issues posed by migration and religion and violence.
Editors’ Preface: Journeying Together and Hearing New Voices

GETI 2018 in Arusha as ecumenical pilgrimage

Voices of young people and emerging theologians need to be heard more intentionally at major ecumenical events. Younger theologians are keen to contribute to the life, witness, and debates of the churches and to experience first-hand how the ecumenical movement continuously grows and journeys together, despite and through differences.

That was the message conveyed by the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) at the World Council of Churches’ 10th Assembly in Busan, South Korea, and it set the tone for the GETI meaning in 2018 as well.

Thus GETI 2018 in Arusha, Tanzania, illustrated what Philip Potter may have imagined when he spoke at the assembly in Vancouver in 1983 about the churches’ discovery of being “a fellowship of learning.” Potter described in very candid and humble words this subtly growing consciousness of learning as an ecclesial ideal. He emphasized ecumenical learning not as a static possession but as a “means by which people allow themselves to be opened to the realities of God’s word in the context of harsh realities.” Whether 35 years ago or today, that learning cannot be relegated to specific programmes but remains an integral part of the life and witness of the churches, lest they become inward-oriented and ossified.

GETI 2018 was designed as a specific programme that allowed 110 emerging theologians from 41 countries and 15 church families to accompany the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) in Arusha, Tanzania;
still, GETI 2018 very much carried the spirit of Philip Potter’s understanding. Ecumenical learning is transformative, particularly when it leads to encountering unexpected dimensions, to relate the unfamiliar with what the ecumenical family shares, and to discover together glimpses of a reality in which God’s word has become flesh. In a simple, unassuming, and imperfect way, GETI 2018 attempted to model for the participants, academic facilitators, and staff such a journey: a pilgrimage of justice and peace which incorporated a cognitive, spiritual, and geographical dislocation.

An ecumenical learning experience in Africa

How can we provide the most conducive space that allows a culturally and confessionally diverse community to gain knowledge in a more traditional, as well as in more innovative sense? Such a question guided an international team of twenty-four experienced, ecumenical theological educators who prepared a six-months-long academic study and exposure programme. GETI 2018 invited facilitators and participants into a journey of learning shaped around five core study areas related to the CWME Conference theme, “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship.” They designed four assignment tracks that guided the entire study period, from the e-learning phase to the submission of the final research papers: letter writing, creative writing, visual and bodily expression, and academic writing. Some of this work was presented on the floor of the CWME.

During the residential phase of GETI 2018 in Arusha, practical theologizing marked this ecumenical journey in unique ways. A service-learning day dedicated to the study of climate change and sustainability unfolded as a pilgrimage by itself. The common prayer in the early morning hours under open skies set the tone for the subsequent planting of twelve *cordia Africana* trees on the campus of Tumaini University, our hosting university in Makumira. The GETI 2018 community celebrated God as creator of all life, lamented the fragility of creation, confessed humanity’s sin for this reality, and planted together small signs of hope. This kind of experiential learning was deepened by an exposure visit to local church projects focusing on alternative energy production. For those encountering the African continent for the first time, the opportunity to engage with living conditions and the creative models that address global challenges with specific regional impacts, such as climate change and food (in)security, embedded this encounter in the educational concept of GETI 2018. A “living library” session conducted by the participants, who
invited one another to read in the “living books” their stories of celebration, lament, and transformation, constituted another valuable learning element. The emerging theologians at GETI 2018 reminded the participants, facilitators, and delegates that the mission of the church today is not only about how the Word takes root in every culture of the world but also about how the world – and more specifically, how the life stories of people and the story of all creation – offers meaningful comments on the story of Christ.

Translating the word, transforming the world: a living message to take back home

The GETI 2018 community prepared the *sokoni* (marketplace) activities, the evening programme, and the midday prayer on the youth day of the CWME conference, and, through these, cultivated the conversation with the conference delegates and showcased the diverse ways in which the GETI 2018 theme, “Translating the Word, Transforming the World,” resonated within the cultural, confessional, and social experiences of the participants. GETI 2018 demonstrated not a harmonized, uniformed ecumenism but one that integrates diversity and sometimes contestation – an ecumenism that transforms the world by rooting the word in us and transforming ourselves. GETI 2018 modelled a modest yet practical form of building ecumenical relationships and made the theme a living message to take back home and to share with others.

During the pilgrimage at GETI 2018, organizers and facilitators recognized that a wider audience should hear the emerging and powerful voices of the participants. *For Those Who Wish to Hear: Emerging Theologians on Mission and Evangelism* is a collection of 14 articles offered by GETI 2018 participants as part of their study requirements. They have been assembled to represent the breadth of participants’ engagement with the themes of the CWME conference and do not fully represent or align with any official church position. As editors, we sought to retain the fresh voices from different regions and church traditions and the themes close to the authors’ hearts, minds, contextual locations, and engagements. The ecumenical movement has always been strong when it decidedly articulates that staying and moving together includes creating spaces for new, sometimes uncomfortable and even dissenting expressions of what it means to be united in Christ and serving the world.
In what follows, these emerging theologians have journeyed together and articulated themselves in many fresh voices of ecumenism: on the one hand, clear, loud, vibrant, enthusiastic; on the other, critically questioning, thought-provoking, lamenting, committing, and hoping. It is for us, for all who wish to hear, to read their words and reflect on how to constantly grow as a fellowship of learning. We pray they will be heard far and wide.

Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Pamela D. Couture, Samuel George
April 2019
To the one who wants to hear a beautiful song:

In 2017, while finishing my bachelor exams, I saw on Facebook that the World Council of Churches was organizing a Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) on mission and evangelism in March 2018 in Arusha, Tanzania. I was excited because the GETI 2018 description included two subjects I am passionate about – the ecumenical movement and mission today.

Every week, starting in January 2018, we participants wrote papers on texts sent by the GETI organization. The e-learning phase prepared us for the GETI 2018 event, as it introduced the subjects we would talk about. Finally, March came, and I left for two weeks in Tanzania, ready to come back as a transformed disciple.

My transformation started with the first three days at Tumaini University Makumira. I met the GETI 2018 students from all around the world and got an amazing introduction to African and intercultural theology. But the transformation really happened at the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, which took place at the same time. There I saw young students ready to establish a dialogue with many church leaders. That dialogue transformed me, and I would like to share this with you.

Nights and days filled my ears with new sounds. The sounds of Tanzanian nights were the songs of many animals living together in one land. When the sun rose, humans did the same for ten days. Their song had many voices, and all wanted to sing together to show a church in unity.
There are two sets of sounds I want to remember from the GETI 2018 experience, animal and human. The night sound was a reminder that God’s whole creation has a voice. If you listened carefully to the sounds of the different animals, you wouldn’t hear perfection in any one of them, but they sounded perfect when they were united.

I believe GETI tried to do the same: to unite imperfect voices to create a beautiful song together. Here imperfection means that we all have ideas and concepts, but they are all incomplete. This is the first thing I realized when we started talking with each other. Each of us came with ideas on how the church should fulfill God’s mission, but we quickly understood that our ideas needed to be modified. Our ideas are incomplete because they are influenced by our education system based in a specific context.

At that moment our conversation could have gone in two directions. The first would have been to continue using our voice to argue in favour of our idea. The second would have been to enter into a kind of conversation that humans are not used to, which involves learning to use our voice only when we have heard and respected what the others have told us. I am grateful that the GETI students chose the second path, because these conversations taught me a lot.

Humbleness, humbleness, humbleness . . . this word resonated in my head from the beginning of GETI. It is what I learned the most in those conversations. When we really listened to each other, we learned about the other in a different way. We didn’t see them as an agent only useful to approve our idea, but as a person who could also teach us their idea. The person talking before you wasn’t just an agent filling your need to be heard. They became the person you wanted to be more heard in the world. I define humbleness as the desire to put the needs of another person before your own needs, and I believe this is what the GETI students did for ten days. We learned how to listen to the other and how to respond, acknowledging what the person said.

When I saw all the students ready to embrace that kind of conversation, I knew my mind would be filled with new knowledge because we were applying the concepts I read about. Through my studies, I have discovered an interest in dialogue and including all voices in our communities. At GETI, these concepts were used and tested in our conversations. I will explain how we did this by the example of my small group. In our first group session, we introduced our ideas on how we could create a small community with trust and respect. To do so, we talked about the importance of relationships and the space between two people as sacred. In the following days, we proposed methods to include each member in our discussions.

The first method started with one member of the group remarking on what we learned during the presentations. This person then asked another member
of the group to share their thoughts. The second person did this with the third one, and so on. This method is often used in groups that do not know each other well. It is a good way to allow everybody to speak. But we understood that we didn’t really listen to each other, because we were concentrating on what we ourselves would say. So we tried the same method, but before we talked, we had to say a few sentences on what the last person had said, to be sure we really heard their voice. These discussions were good because I got to see if the ethical and sociological concepts learned in class were possible in a multicultural group. These concepts often propose a new form of dialogue. The first step is the preparation, before the dialogue itself. Both persons who want to share their thoughts have to be ready to learn from the other. This is essential, because if both parties just want to teach the other, the dialogue will become two monologues.

After GETI 2018, I can say that this preparatory phase is important and useful for the dialogue. The method of using what the other said to preface our remarks was very interesting and made us acknowledge each other better, because we knew that each of our voices was respected and heard. The only difficulty that came with this method was the lack of time to make decisions. As we understood the arguments of each person linked to their culture, we didn’t want to put their idea aside, so we tried to include each argument, but it took more time. Yet I believe that the church is ready to take up the challenge, because we tried to apply this African proverb every day:

*If you want to go fast, walk alone.*
*If you want to go far, walk together.*

The last point I would like to mention is the importance of storytelling. In Arusha, I truly heard the voices, firstly, because of our willingness to learn from the other, and secondly, because of their beautiful voices. Many people from GETI and the conference were courageous enough to share their stories. The main thing I learned is that storytelling has to have its place in our dialogues. I have never read about storytelling in books, but I believe that it is the final point missing for a new form of dialogue. Through storytelling trust arose in our discussions and this allowed us to better acknowledge the other. Each person brought life to their theological education by telling how they used their concepts in life.

I have included only a few points of what I experienced in Tanzania. There are more, but these cannot be put into words because they were mostly feelings. Being part of GETI 2018 touched my entire being through these dialogues that became the most beautiful human song I have ever heard.