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MERF's Augustine Programme

By Pastor Timothy Burden, Coordinator



MERF Lokichoggio trainees come from South Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania

The Augustine Programme provides intensive biblical training for God's servants in MERF fields. It was developed for those in church leadership lacking opportunity for Bible and Christian doctrine education, especially in war-torn South Sudan. Over the years, the programme has extended to train church leaders in Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania and beyond.

During Covid, online Bible study resources were developed. Now some are being adapted to Indonesian languages. Most engaging to both young and old, the 6-minute illustrated simple catechism video series is on YouTube: www.merf.org/thecat (Please enjoy & share the link.)

Augustine

Was born in 354 A.D. in the Numidian city of Tagaste,

now Souk Ahras, Algeria. His search for truth led him to Carthage, Rome, and Milan, where he was captivated by the preaching and Christ-like love of Ambrose. He began reading Paul's Epistles. One day, after a conversation that led to deep personal conviction of sin, specifically his addiction to lust, God powerfully spoke to him through Romans 13:13-14 and he came to faith in Christ.

Returning to North Africa, he became the Bishop of Hippo and served God's people through his powerful pastoral preaching of Scriptures.

His belief that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God and that God feeds souls through the preaching of His Word, led him to open a training school for clergy. This had a great

impact on the church in Africa. Augustine was also the first man in church history to write a manual for preachers. This positively impacted preaching during the following centuries.

The same conviction, that the Bible is God's authoritative word and that God's people are fed by the preaching of it, lies behind the four units of MERF's Augustine Programme. The course was established in 2003, but is regularly reviewed, revised and developed to maximize clear presentation of the biblical content. Preparations are underway for PowerPoint presentations and workbooks on Isaiah, as well as for a survey of the Pentateuch. Most importantly, study materials are designed as tools to be taken home to teach others.

The Augustine Programme is taught intensively over

a period of three months in MERF's Lokichoggio ministry centre, located in Kenya. (MERF's Centre was established just south of the South Sudanese border due to the continual unrest and armed conflicts in South Sudan.)

Lokichoggio

Here most of those enrolled in the course are pastors, evangelists or choir-men from South Sudan. Others from northern Kenya and Tanzania join them in classes of 25-30 trainees. The course runs three times a year with different visiting teachers from faithful churches focusing on the various units. As well as attending himself, one senior Tanzanian pastor has regularly sent young men to be trained. This has led to continued engagement to encourage churches in Tanzania.



Ethiopia study group

Tanzania

Repeated requests for more materials for church leaders brought about MERF’s current project of establishing a Reformed lending library in Mwanza in northern Tanzania on Lake Victoria. This has so far been hampered by transport difficulties. *Please pray that the consignment of books will arrive.*

Also, as MERF Augustine Programme coordinator, I will be addressing church leaders on the Five Solas of the Reformation at a July Reformed Church of Tanzania conference. These studies will then be included in Unit 2 of the Augustine Programme. My wife, Rosalind, will lead teaching sessions for ladies.

Two other Tanzanian Lokichoggio graduates have teamed up using the Augustine Programme material in an organized training programme for pastors and evangelists from villages in the Mwanza region. Men come for two weeks of training at a time on sections of the programme. So, rather than an intensive three months, the whole course will be spread over an extended period. Arranging trainee accommodation for two weeks is a problem. *Please pray for a resolution.*

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian team has a very active training programme. They hold 3-day training courses at the invitation of churches in various

parts of the country. Weekly evening classes and 21-day courses are held at a purpose-built training centre.

These 21-day courses lend themselves to using units of the Augustine Programme material either by a visiting teacher or the Ethiopian team leaders themselves. They have translated parts of the material into Amharic.

Testimonies from a teacher & students

Pastor Miramoe Nickleby “By God’s grace we had 25 students of different nationalities participating in the learning sessions. I managed to teach the Pastoral Epistles & Homiletics. We had wonderful times in each

session; every learner participated fully in reading the Bible and doing class tests/ assignments. Through this system, some of the trainees who had difficulty in reading the Bible learned to read efficiently.”

Gilo Otholi Oboya “I have been equipped with head, heart and hand knowledge to work to serve, guided by the serving style of the Lord Jesus. The persistent efforts of teachers enable us to know how to spell the words and read God’s word and preach it. Your commitment means a lot to me personally. Thanks.”

Joseph Lokoyo Manath “I gained more knowledge. Christians are justified by faith. When I go back to where I came from, I will encourage the brothers who are in our church to continue to grow in understanding the Word of God.”



Pastor and Mrs Timothy Burden



Augustine Programme Workbooks

“What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”
— 2 Timothy 2:2