

## Press Release

Voicing its commitment to „defend the God-given dignity and rights of all, especially the oppressed,” the Second Missiological Seminar on the Life and Ministry of Rev. Gudina Tumsa, with the theme “Church and Society,” concluded a four-day conference on May 3 at the Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary in Mekanissa, Addis Ababa. Recalling Rev. Gudina’s “vision of a multi-ethnic Ethiopia, in which every ethnic group is fairly represented,” the seminar sought to relate the legacy of Rev. Gudina to the critical issues that face the church today. Regarded as martyr of the church, Rev. Tumsa was kidnapped and subjected to extrajudicial execution by the military dictatorship on July 28, 1979.

Sponsored by the Gudina Tumsa Foundation (GTF) in consultation with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), the seminar brought together 250 participants, including pastors, lay leaders and evangelists from many of the regions of Ethiopia, as well as from Germany, Norway and the United States.

The President of the 65 million member Lutheran World Federation, Bishop Christian Krause, was welcomed by EECMY President, Rev. Itessa Gobena, who referred to the internationally recognized churchman’s leadership in areas of ecumenical relations and in the struggle for human rights and justice. Bishop Krause spoke about of his long personal friendship with Gudina Tumsa and his family, relating in particular his final encounter with Rev. Gudina, during which his friend and colleague adamantly refused the offer of safe haven outside the country, choosing instead to remain in Ethiopia with his people.

During the seminar the life and ministry of Rev. Gudina was compared to that of German Lutheran pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose commitment to follow Christ’s example in giving his life for others, led to his participation in a movement to rescue Jews and to bring down the Nazi dictatorship. For his non-violent resistance to the Mengistu government, Rev. Gudina has also been compared to the American civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr.

In a communiqué issued at the close of the seminar, the participants, recalling that “Rev. Gudina welcomed the charismatic renewal of the church in his own day,” urged that it be welcomed also today, “but within the larger context of the sacraments, liturgical worship, a theology of the cross, academic theological study and holistic ministry”. They also supported the determination of the EECMY to adopt a plan to become financially self-supporting at all levels.

In order to “carry on research, study and seminars (also on the regional level in Ethiopia) on the continuing significance of the issues raised by [Rev. Gudina’s] life, ministry and thought,” the participants also called on the leadership of the EECMY and the Board of the Mekane Yesus Seminary to consider the establishment of a professorship at the seminary in Rev. Gudina’s name.

Deep thanks were expressed to the Berliner Missionswerk (Berlin Mission) for its on-going support for the collection and publication of Rev. Gudina Tumsa’s writings and for the financial support of the Evangelisches Missionswerk (Association of Protestant Churches and Missions) in Hamburg, Germany, and the Lutheran World Federation for their financial support for the seminars which have been held