

**Ev.-luth. Missionswerk in  
Niedersachsen (ELM)**

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December 22, 2003

**Commemoration of Gudina Tumsa's Birth and Death in 2004  
at a Consultation at Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany, September 17-20, 2004**

Dear friends and fellow-partners of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus,

*"It has been stated that a Christian is a citizen of a given country and as such under the laws and policies of that country. Because he is under the laws of the country of which he is a citizen, it is his duty to pray for the peace of that country and cooperate with his fellow-citizens for its well-being. The only limitation to his cooperation or obedience to the laws of his country is if he is commanded to act contrary to the law of God (Acts 5:29: We ought to obey God rather than men)."*

(The final paragraph of what has been called Gudina Tumsa's last will and testament, "The Role of a Christian in a Given Society", July 1979, written shortly before his death.)

The coming year 2004 is an anniversary year which the EECMY intends to commemorate. Rev. Gudina Tumsa, its General Secretary from 1966 to 1979, was born on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1929, and would have been able to celebrate his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2004 had it not been for the fact that he was abducted by the military regime of the time and killed on July 28, 1979, 25 years ago next July. In due course the EECMY will be announcing just how it wishes to commemorate these two events in Ethiopia.

In the meantime, President Iteffa Gobena of the EECMY on his recent visit to Germany discussed with us how the year 2004 might also be commemorated by our partners overseas with the collaboration of the EECMY. After further consultation with one another and with Lensa Gudina of the Gudina Tumsa Foundation, it was agreed that our two church organizations should take the initiative to invite representatives of the partner churches and organizations of the EECMY to come together with representatives of the EECMY and of the family of Gudina Tumsa at a Seminar/Consultation. At this event to be held here in Germany, we should discuss what Gudina Tumsa's life and ministry meant for the church and its partners back then, and what his continuing legacy means both for the church and its partners today, 25 years after his witness as a leader of his church was so deliberately and tragically cut off by his extra-judicial execution. It is fitting that we should come together for common reflection, because it was he, you will recall, who proposed the creation of the EECMY's "Committee on Mutual Christian Responsibility" (CMCR).

**We are writing this letter to invite you to send about three representatives of your church, mission or organization to this Consultation. In addition, we anticipate that persons who knew and worked with Gudina Tumsa will want to participate.**

The Consultation will be held in Wittenberg, the university town from which the Lutheran/Protestant Reformation led by Dr. Martin Luther spread in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Today, too, it is a centre for theological and social reflection and renewal. The Consultation will be held at the Luther Zentrum Wittenberg under the leadership of the former President of the Lutheran World Federation, Bishop (em.) Dr. Christian Krause. The Consultation itself will take place under a motto formulated by Gudina himself in the final writing he left for his church ("The Role of a Christian in a Given Society", July 1979):

**"The Life of a Christian is a Life of Witness to the Risen Lord."**

**In Memoriam: Gudina Tumsa (1929-1979)  
A Critical Assessment after 25 Years**

**Luther Zentrum Wittenberg**  
Altes Rathaus, Markt 26  
D-06886 Lutherstadt Wittenberg

**Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup> - Monday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

The lectures and discussions will draw upon

- personal reminiscences of Gudina which participants have had,
- the chief writings of Gudina's which were published last spring by the Gudina Tumsa Foundation: **Witness and Discipleship**. Leadership of the Church in Multi-Ethnic Ethiopia in a Time of Revolution. The Essential Writings of Gudina Tumsa, General Secretary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. Addis Ababa 2003
- Øyvind Eide's book: **Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia, 1974-85**, Oxford 2000
- the report volume from the First Missiological Seminar sponsored by the Gudina Tumsa Foundation with the cooperation of the EECMY in 2001: **The Life and Ministry of Rev. Gudina Tumsa**, General Secretary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), Addis Ababa 2003
- and the lectures and discussions from the Second GTF Missiological Seminar on "Church and Society", held in Addis Ababa at Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary in 2003, which are still being edited for publication.

Though there still may be considerable disagreement about various aspects of the legacy which Gudina left behind, it is the desire of the EECMY and all of us as its partners to engage in discussion with one another about the significance of that heritage for the present challenge to the EECMY in Ethiopia and the churches world-wide.

Wittenberg, pointing as it does to our common heritage, can offer the place where the process of listening to and understanding one another can be enhanced. In a critical look at the challenge of the Gudina legacy we will be asking what that legacy means for us today.

The exact programme and the lecturers have yet to be decided on in detail. Topics, which will of necessity be touched on in one way or another, are:

**I. The Mekane Yesus Church in the Ethiopian Revolution**

What can we all learn from this experience?

**II. The Understanding of the Church's Mission and Ministry in the World**

The Call for "Wholistic Ministry" in the Work of the Church

**"Interdependence in the Body of Christ": Trying to Meet Together the Challenge of Church Growth in Ethiopia and the Dwindling Resources of the Partners**

**The Charismatic Movement in Ethiopia, Africa and World-Wide as a Challenge to Our Churches**

**The Biblical Bases for the Churches' Engagement in Social and Individual Human Rights Issues/Cases**

### **III. Church Unity and "Ecumenical Harmony"**

**Ethnicity, Diversity, and the Unity of the Church**

**"Ecumenical Harmony" between Evangelicals and Orthodox - in Ethiopia and World-Wide**

We shall try to arrange things in such a way that participants can visit the historical sites where Martin Luther lived, where he taught, and where he preached, and get an insight into the breadth of concerns of the Lutheran Reformation.

Participants from the EECMY and the Gudina family will be present. Participants from the partner churches, missions and organizations will travel and attend at their own expense.

The exact cost for each participating organization will depend on the number of persons attending from Ethiopia. We anticipate having about 50 persons in attendance, including about 5 from Ethiopia, whose costs, we believe, should be shared among us.

**Please let us know:**

1. Whether your church, mission or organization intend to send participants;
2. Whether you have suggestions for topics to be included, or preferably excluded;
3. Whether you can suggest persons who might speak to one or the other of the topics to be discussed.

**Hoping that you will be able to attend, we are looking forward to your considered response to this invitation.** You may write to either of us with a copy to the other. At the latest, we would like your general **response by the forthcoming CMCR meeting in Addis Ababa.**

Wishing you God's blessings on your work, and in your meditations and reflections during this Christmas Season,

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Hermann Domianus, Secretary for Ethiopia of the Ev.-luth. Missionswerk

Rev. Gerd Decke, Secretary for the Horn of Africa of the Berliner Missionswerk

P.S. Under separate cover you will be receiving from Berlin copies of the two volumes, **Witness and Discipleship**, and **The Life and Ministry of Rev. Gudina Tumsa.**

cc: Rev. Itessa Gobena, President, EECMY  
Mrs. Lensa Gudina, Manager, Gudina Tumsa Foundation  
Bishop (em.) Dr. Christian Krause, Luther Zentrum Wittenberg