

"Ludwigsburger Kreiszeitung" June 12, 2007:

Kenyans on Rebmann's Traces

Representatives of different churches traveled together - "The visit is for us as important as going to Mekka for Moslems"

GERLINGEN/Germany. A group of 19 Christians from Kenya stayed yesterday afternoon in Gerlingen to get to know the homeland of the missionary Johannes Rebmann.

Translated into English from the German text of MS. SABINE REIFENBERGER

One week Church Congress in Cologne, then a few days in a parish in Biberach, in between a detour to Gerlingen: In spite of the tight travel schedule the Kenyan group was in best mood when arriving at the parish house. They saluted their hosts with loud cordially "Jambo" shouts. "It's something very special for us to have guests from Kenya", agreed Mr. Wolfgang Steng, First Councillor of the town Gerlingen, and Reverend Ms. Pfarrerin Ursula Ripp-Hilt from the parish Matthäusgemeinde.

More excited were the visitors: "A trip to Gerlingen is for a Christian Kenyan nearly as important as the going for Mekka to Moslems", said Reverend Moses Nthukah. He organises the visit of the Kenyan group together with Edzard Albers, who is Reverend in Biberach.

Albers and Nthukah learned to know each other during their theology studies in Kenya. "There everyone knew Johannes Rebmann", beared Albers, in mind. Like the most Germans he firstly didn't associate a lot with the name. Back in Germany he researched and caught up on the Gerlinger.

"Johannes Rebmann is very well known in Kenya, he is as important for us as Martin Luther for the Germans", said Nthukah. "He lived together with the people, learned their language and translated the Bible for them."

Approximately 70 percent of the Kenyans are Christians, therefrom nearly 40 percent Protestant. The participants of the party come from different regions of Kenya and from different churches. "Some are Anglicans, others Lutherans, others belong to non-denominational churches", said Nthukah.

There's in some cases competition between the different groups: "That's why the trip to Germany is a opportunity for us, to grow tighter together as Christians", said Nthukah.

On the Church Congress in Cologne he noticed especially the openness of the European Christians: "We could hear eg. speeches about homosexuality and religion", said Nthukah. "That's good, because in Kenya there is no public discussion about the topic." The tour to Germany got great attention in Kenya: "There was a church service for the delegates with about 1500 attenders at church, also the Kenyan TV reported", said organizer Albers. That affects the participants of the party: "They are very thankful that they could come to Germany", knows Albers. Moses Nthukah hopes that in future more of this fellow Kenyans will learn to know the hometown of the missionary Rebmann: "I wished that many more Kenyans could come to Gerlingen."



Photo: Alfred Drossel - The party is looking forward to the day in Gerlingen/Germany

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