



# Diakonia Interdenominational Services for Counseling, Evangelism and Teaching (DISCET)

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## **DISCET NEWSLETTER, JAN--MAR 2024**

*DISCET helps to meet the emotional and spiritual needs of post-war Sierra Leone society. It trains counselors to help individuals deal with relationships and trains church leaders to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the unsaved.*

### **DISCET STAFF MET IN A RETREAT TO PLAN THE 2024 FISCAL YEAR**

The year 2024 started with DISCET staff participating in a three-day planning retreat for DISCET activities and programs. The retreat started with a retrospective of 2023 activities. It looked at DISCET gains and failures in the previous year. Every department was closely examined as the retreat took notes on areas that needed improvement. The retreat took note of the poor attendance at the 2023 annual Thanksgiving service, which is DISCET's main local fundraiser. This poor attendance was due to the several programs organized by different organizations and churches that day. The retreat decided to move the DISCET Thanksgiving service from the second Sunday to the fourth Sunday of March every year.

The retreat also noted with concern that few evangelism seminars, trainings, and conferences were done in the year under review. These evangelism seminars helped to enlighten and motivate church leaders to engage in aggressive evangelism. The church needs these pieces of training to capacitate its leaders and motivate them into soul-winning ventures, resulting in growth both physically and spiritually. The reason for this lapse was also captured, as there is no officer currently serving the Field and Evangelism Department. The immediate recruitment of this officer and other needed officers was also discussed and agreed upon. In light of this, vacancy advertisements are circulating in print, electronic, and social media for the immediate recruitment of officers to fill these vacant positions.

The retreat also considered local fundraising as a major event in the DISCET fiscal year calendar. Many fundraising ideas were tabled at the retreat. After scrutiny, the meeting arrived at a few lined up for implementation in 2024 as pilot cases.

The meeting also took into consideration the passing away of some old local supporters and donors of the organization to the cold hands of death, while many others have reached retirement, and the need for the recruitment of new ones cannot be downplayed. The retreat decided to recruit new friends and supporters of DISCET. The meeting also recommended the recruitment of a staff that will interface between the Secretariat and the Friends and Supporters of DISCET through information dissemination, prayers, etc.

## DISCET 15<sup>TH</sup> COUNSELING GRADUATION CEREMONY

As the need for counselors continues to increase in the West African coastline country of Sierra Leone, DISCET also accelerates the reproduction of more counselors to mitigate the menace of drug and substance abuse by youths and young adults in the country. With the escalating economic hardship in the country, many Sierra Leonean youths and young adults have reverted to the use of harmful and deadly drugs and substances like Kush. In March alone, official reports of victims of this harmful drug claimed the lives of 137 youths in the Western Rural District of Sierra Leone. Taking nationwide statistics will land us in thousands that were buried by the government in March only. The need for counseling to restructure the mindset of the victims of these drugs cannot be overemphasized. On January 26, 2024, DISCET graduated 35 counselors in professional counseling. This graduation preceded a one-year intensive course for two



batches, one batch for January to June and the other batch for July to December. The counselors were encouraged to go out there in their schools, colleges, and communities and help people in need. The theme for this year's graduation ceremony was "Christian Counseling: A Great Tool to Overcome Mood Disorders, Addiction, and a Host of Life Challenges Today." The guest speaker was Dr. Veronica Ngaunja, a medical pediatrician

specialist who runs one of the most famous children's hospitals in the country. She spoke about how counseling plays a pivotal role in the development of any nation. As humans, from time to time we go through the stresses of life, thereby hindering our ability to effectively produce.

## DISCET UK BOARD CHAIR AND OTHERS VISITED THE DISCET SECRETARIAT IN FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE.

The DISCET (UK) Board Chairman, Rev. Steve Cleary, arrived in Sierra Leone on Friday, February 16th, this year. He came together with a Canadian missionary, Rev. Ken Wiebe, for

an Anglican conference known as SOMA. Steve and Ken took advantage of this visit to meet and have lunch with the DISCET staff in Freetown. All DISCET staff working at the Secretariat was taken to Noreska Restaurant at the St. John roundabout for a treat. During this meeting, the Chairman of the UK Board spoke to each staff member personally about the importance and relevance of their work. He, however, expressed concerns over how DISCET-trained counselors are adequately supervised so that they don't water down what they have learned from DISCET, thereby eventually destroying the good image and integrity of DISCET.



Some suggestions came up on how to handle this concern. DISCET Administration, together with the counseling unit, is currently working on ways to ensure thorough supervision of their counseling activities out there on the field.

The former DISCET UK board chairman, Rev. Simon Holloway, and Bro. Andrew Henderson visited the DISCET Secretariat on the 15th of March. They had fellowship with the DISCET staff, and encouraged them to work hard on their assignments. They bid the staff farewell as they depart for their Mount Zion lodge.

In another development, the DISCET UK Board Chairman met with the DISCET Sierra Leone Board Chairman, Rev. Ishmael Beresford-Cole, the Chairman of the Finance and General Purpose Committee, who also doubles as the organization's treasurer, Mr. Walter Carew, and the DISCET Director, Rev. Steven A. Mahoney, at Pulse Restaurant on Monday, March 4, 2024. This meeting aimed to find common ground with the Sierra Leone Board Chair on the following:

- a) DISCET SL to start inputting realistic figures in its annual budget for implementation;*
- b) The need to adequately supervise DISCET-trained counselors to maintain standards;*
- c) DISCET SL to increase its local income generation to support its annual budget adequately;*
- d) Overseas experts from the UK to do short-term work in DISCET SL, etc.*

The Sierra Leonean board chair thanked the UK board chair for the concerns and assured him of working with other board members and the administration to address the above-mentioned concerns.

### **COOLING OFF AND REFRESHING TIME AT THE HOME OF REV. DR. MODUPE & MRS. OLIVE TAYLOR-PEARCE**



The four missionaries, Rev. Steve Cleary, Rev. Ken Wiebe, Rev. Simon Holloway, and Bro. Andrew Henderson, had dinner with DISCET staff and other friends of the Taylor-Pearce's in the home of Rev. Dr. Modupe and Mrs. Olive Taylor-Pearce. It was a time of reminiscences for Simon, Steve, Ken, and Uncle Modu.

They shared stories of Sierra Leone in the 1970s about evangelism, discipleship, and youth camps.

The dinner ended in an atmosphere of singing and praising God for the great things He has done in Sierra Leone through these missionaries.

    The End